

**REPORT  
FROM THE  
INSPECTORATE**

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**Herefordshire  
College of  
Technology**

**February 1995**

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**THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL**

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## **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 07/95

## HEREFORDSHIRE COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY

### WEST MIDLANDS REGION

Inspected May–October 1994

#### Summary

Herefordshire College of Technology is the major provider of vocational and adult further education in the former county of Herefordshire. The needs of adult students, including the unemployed, are well catered for. Support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has been increased. The college corporation takes a close interest in the college and offers effective strategic guidance. The management structure of the college was reorganised in August 1994. There are close and effective links with local industry, commerce and the local training and enterprise council, but links with schools are more variable. Although staff are well qualified, there is a need to update the commercial and industrial experience of many full-time staff. The quality of teaching is variable: standards need to be raised substantially in a number of areas. The implementation of college-wide policies for tutorial support, including admission procedures, should help to reduce the high student drop-out rate. The management information system requires substantial improvement to enable the college to monitor its performance effectively. The development of unit costs will also assist management. More rigorous analysis of examination results, and better reporting to parents on the progress of 16 to 18 year old students, are required to help to raise standards of achievement. Library books in many curriculum areas are dated and there is a lack of effective liaison between the library and academic staff. The quality and quantity of information technology equipment should be improved. Many rooms and workshops would benefit from redecoration and there is a need to improve access for students with restricted mobility.

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

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

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Computing, mathematics and information technology	4	Hospitality and catering/leisure and tourism	4
Construction	2	Care and community studies	2
Engineering	2	Humanities	4
Business and finance	2		

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## **INTRODUCTION**

1 Herefordshire College of Technology, in the county of Hereford and Worcester, was inspected in three stages. The college's specialist programme areas were inspected in May and October 1994. Enrolment and induction were inspected in September 1994, and cross-college aspects in October 1994. Five full-time and nine part-time inspectors spent a total of 60 inspector days in the college. Inspectors visited 145 classes, scrutinised representative samples of students' work and held discussions with members of the corporation, senior managers, staff and students. Meetings were held with a number of external groups, including parents, and representatives from industry and commerce, Hereford and Worcester Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and the community. The inspectors also had access to extensive documentation relating to the college and its courses.

## **THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS**

2 The college is situated in a residential area of Hereford city. It shares a site with a sixth form college and a college of art and design, and there is a large secondary school adjacent. Its catchment area incorporates the city itself (population 49,000) and the former county of Herefordshire. Within this area, the college also serves five market towns. Rural population density is low and many people work in agriculture. The area has low minority ethnic numbers and an ageing population. Many retired people are moving into the area and young people in the 15-24 age group are moving out. Rural transport is poor and students' travelling times are often lengthy.

3 Hereford is a tourist centre and has several branches of the armed services based nearby, although the Credenhill Royal Air Force base is due to close shortly. There are few large employers. Forty-three per cent of employment is in production, and 57 per cent is in service industries where part-time employment (25 per cent) has increased significantly. Unemployment, at 9 per cent, is declining in the city and is generally lower in the catchment area than county, regional or national averages.

4 The number of 16-19 year olds is predicted to rise slowly from 1994, but competition for school leavers is intense. The percentage of the post-16 age group remaining in full-time education continues to rise, and is the highest rate in the West Midlands. Percentage enrolments by age are shown in figure 1.

5 The college's main site buildings date from the late fifties to the early seventies, but also include several adjacent late Victorian houses. There are two sites near the town centre, one housing a motor vehicle section and the other a specialist school of farriery. Teaching also takes place in three local education authority buildings and several suites of offices are rented by college training organisations. The college has a restaurant and a day nursery for 36 children of students and staff.

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6 The college's structure has recently been reorganised. Divisions, schools and cross-college directors of quality and marketing have replaced departments. There is a director of curriculum services who is responsible for curriculum development, guidance and assessment, core skills development and learning support.

7 A broad range of courses is provided, including a substantial amount of craft work. The teaching is organised in eight schools: business and administration; management, computing and educational studies; academic studies; caring and community studies; hospitality, tourism and leisure; built environment; rural crafts; and engineering. The college caters for a wide range of student abilities from students with special needs to those capable of achieving higher national diplomas. Percentage enrolments by level of study are shown in figure 2. Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum areas are shown in figure 3. The college manages adult education provision within Herefordshire and has a successful adult training unit which specialises in government-funded training schemes for the unemployed.

8 There are currently 123 full-time lecturers, 134 part-time lecturers and 112 full-time equivalent support staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

9 The college aims to be the major centre of excellence for Herefordshire in the provision of further and higher education and training which lies within its areas of expertise, while also providing for a national and international market where possible. There is a particular focus on increasing the number of adult students.

10 Operational objectives have been grouped into a number of aims concerned with management, curriculum, marketing and quality. Broadly, these aims relate to the provision of a relevant and flexible curriculum which is widely accessible and enjoys good levels of student support. Further aims include more efficient management of the planning cycle and the pursuit of efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of the curriculum and the use of resources.

### **RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION**

11 The college provides a broad range of courses and has responded well to the changing needs of individuals and employers widely dispersed across rural Herefordshire and beyond. A particular strength is the breadth of the vocational provision. The college has good links with a wide range of outside organisations, although this is not uniformly the case across all vocational areas. There are some effective links with 11-16 schools, but those with the few 11-18 schools are more limited. Liaison between college subject specialisms and secondary schools is generally weak. The college is a member of a new 'Marches' initiative, a consortium of schools and colleges. There is scope for the college to undertake market research and analysis of training needs more vigorously.

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12 The college is aware of and is responding to national policies and priorities for further education and training. It has increased its student numbers in line with national targets and plans further increases. Learning support for students has been increased with the aim of reducing the number of students dropping out of courses and increasing success rates. There are good relationships with the local TEC. The college operates a variety of TEC-funded programmes for young people, adults and business. The alteration of TEC-funding arrangements at short notice has brought positive and constructive responses from the college.

13 The college offers a wide range of vocational and non-vocational courses. Apart from specialist colleges of agriculture and art, it is the major provider of vocational education in the former county of Herefordshire. It has substantial provision in business studies and management; hospitality and catering; leisure and tourism; social care; engineering; construction; and computing. Some specialist courses are provided at a wide range of levels, up to higher national diploma level. Introductory courses are provided for those returning to study and there is provision for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In some vocational areas, such as blacksmithing and farriery, the college makes a significant contribution to the national provision. The college offers a limited range of General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) courses. This is appropriate given the substantial provision of these courses for school leavers at the sixth form college on the same site. In some subjects, such as mathematics, the range of provision is limited. There is also limited provision in modern languages; few full-time students have access to language learning opportunities. The range of language provision for part-time study is wider and there are opportunities for students to go on to work at the higher levels. The introduction of General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) has broadened the range of student opportunities significantly. A revised timetable allows students to combine GCSE and GCE A level study with a choice of GNVQs in five vocational areas.

14 The college makes varied provision for adult students. A course to prepare students for entry to higher education has been introduced recently to broaden the range. It offers opportunities for students to study full time, or part time during the day, in the evening or by flexible attendance at different times convenient to themselves. There is a well-established 'flexible study' programme which allows opportunity for varied attendance patterns for those studying GCE A level and GCSE subjects. There is provision for recreational adult education in Hereford and in a number of rural centres in surrounding market towns.

15 In most vocational subject areas, staff are in regular contact with local firms with the aim of providing programmes which meet the requirements of the local labour market. There are good links between engineering and the Hereford Engineering Group Training Association. Many of the engineering courses attract young women, although not in large numbers,

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and mature students. In construction, an advisory committee meets regularly and provides good contact with employers. The small business unit, based in the recently-established Business Link, provides valuable training support for new and established small businesses, much of it funded by the TEC. There are good links between the computing section and local industry resulting mainly from the work experience component of existing courses, and involvement with the Young Enterprise Scheme. In hospitality and catering and leisure and tourism there is also effective liaison with outside bodies.

16 Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is increasing. Separate provision is made by the assisted learning section in the school of community and caring studies. This section caters for both young people and adults, and some of the provision is located outside the college in Hereford and Ross-on-Wye. There are strong links with the careers service and regular contact with parents and social services to report on the progress of such students. Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also made in several vocational subjects.

17 The number of unemployed adults has increased significantly in recent years, from 437 in 1991-92 to 1,058 in 1993-94. This reflects the success of the college's adult vocational training and guidance centre which is responsible for advertising, recruitment, pre-course guidance and enrolment. Courses have been designed to encourage entry to the college, including one specifically for women, and taster courses in vocational subjects. Recruitment to recreational adult education courses declined by 42 per cent in 1993 when the full cost of fees had to be charged.

18 The college has a limited but expanding range of international links. There is a long-standing student exchange arrangement with a college in Germany. Funding has been obtained through a number of European schemes for student placements in tourism and for the planning and extension of existing links.

19 The college has expertise in open learning through its open-learning network. This is a small unit which provides materials and consultancy on a commercial basis for business and other colleges. Some use is made of the expertise of this unit within the college, and there is scope for an extension of its role as the college develops different approaches to teaching and learning.

20 There is a small central marketing unit which has recently taken on responsibility for a co-ordinated admissions system. The unit provides valuable information for college managers on potential market opportunities and initiates promotional activities. There is good liaison with other units in the college concerned with external links such as the open-learning network and flexible arrangements for studying.



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## **GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

21 The corporation board has 11 members including the principal. There are no staff or student members. There is one vacancy for a co-opted member. Members are representative of the local community and have backgrounds in construction, manufacturing, education, catering, the health service, and commerce. They show an enthusiastic commitment to the college. All of the present business members transferred from the previous governing body at the time of incorporation. With one exception they have served the college for more than four years, and two of them, including the chairman, for more than 12 years. There is a close working relationship between the chairman and the principal. Members are aware of their roles and responsibilities and are kept up to date through seminars and presentations arranged in conjunction with board meetings. They are involved in college affairs in a variety of other ways. The board receives regular financial reports and indicators of the college's performance, including examination results.

22 The corporation has three scheduled meetings a year, and additional meetings as required. There are two main subcommittees of the board: finance and general purposes and audit. There is a sub-group on remuneration which reports to the finance and general purposes committee. Meetings are well recorded.

23 The corporation board has provided strategic guidance in the planning process. The strategic plan sets out general statements of intent and these are followed by detailed plans of developments for particular areas of college provision indicating aims, objectives and action plans. Responsibilities for implementation are allocated with clear timescales. The plan is informed by a very detailed needs analysis of the local area. However, this document does not have conclusions from which college objectives can be easily identified. Each academic school has recently produced a comprehensive position paper which illustrates an awareness of the importance of securing student growth through vigorous marketing.

24 The college has a current statement of safety policy which allocates line management responsibilities. An annual review is carried out by a health and safety support team and a committee monitors policy through termly meetings. In addition, safety audits are undertaken twice a year. A detailed safety manual is in draft form. Line responsibility for implementation of the equal opportunities policy lies with the director of quality in respect of students and with the vice-principal in respect of staff, but there is no formal monitoring system. There has been no formal staff training in equal opportunities. There is no overall policy for student support although the director of curriculum services has line responsibility and monitors effectiveness through the student services committee.

25 There was a major reorganisation of the management structure in August 1994. The present senior executive team comprises the principal, vice-principal, and finance and administration director. Three divisions are managed by senior strategic managers who have responsibility for a

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total of eight academic schools, as well as a number of cross-college areas. A further member of the senior management team has cross-college responsibility for the design and development of the curriculum, student services and the library. There are two other senior managers. One has responsibility for quality and staff development and reports directly to the principal. The other has responsibility for marketing and reports directly to the vice-principal.

26 Overall, the new structure makes responsibilities clear and understood, although the mechanisms for ensuring the effectiveness of the interlocking roles of the heads of schools, their divisional directors and the director of curriculum services are not yet fully in place. The place of modern languages within the overall curriculum structure is awaiting a college decision.

27 The senior executive and management teams meet regularly. A meeting for all heads of schools has recently been introduced. There are various liaison, policy and consultative committees which meet termly. Within divisions communication practices vary and in most cases they are effective; generally heads of schools have weekly or fortnightly meetings. A college newsletter provides monthly briefings for staff supplemented by occasional cross-college meetings on major current issues. The academic board has recently been reconstituted and provides a forum for academic views.

28 Appropriate attention is given to the financial management of the college. The financial operating budget is produced by the finance and administration director after discussion with the senior executive team. This is approved by the finance and general purposes committee and the full corporation. Monitoring is carried out on a college-wide basis by the finance director. It is the intention to extend the delegation of budgets to all heads of schools. The basis for financial allocations is mainly historic, but in addition the senior executive team deploys staff resources according to the curriculum offered. Some team leaders were unaware of how financial allocations were made. Monthly financial statements are produced but there is no system for regular detailed analysis of variations from the budget. There have been regular budget-holder reviews of performance since the early part of the academic year 1993-94.

29 The budgetary system does not permit the formal assessment of unit costs by division or school, and there are no formalised central performance indicators. The college is in the early stages of developing new systems with the advice of external consultants.

30 The college's average level of funding per unit for 1994-95 is £18.09. The median for general and further education colleges is £18.17. Summaries of the college's income and expenditure for 16 months to July 1994 are shown in figures 5 and 6, respectively.

31 The average drop-out rate at the college was in excess of 20 per cent in the 1993-94 academic year and this is a cause for concern. Hitherto,

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the college has not collated statistics on completion and withdrawal rates to enable comparisons year by year. It now plans to do this.

32 In the past, the college management information system has been recognised as being inadequate. A new system has recently been installed and new staff recruited. A total restructuring of the management and organisation of data took place in August 1994. New procedures have been developed and a great deal has been achieved in a short time. However, there is a need to continue to improve the accuracy, efficiency and responsiveness of the management information, and to make better use of the data provided. This requires the support and co-operation of the heads of schools in providing accurate information on time. Heads of schools currently have little confidence in the information provided, and do not utilise the management reports that can now be made available to them. Management reports are generally issued only in response to a request rather than provided on a regular basis. The monitoring of students' destinations requires improvement. The college is piloting the new Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) individual student records system.

#### **STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

33 At the time of the subject inspections in May 1994, an uneven pattern of guidance and support was evident. The college lacked an institution-wide system for interviewing and induction and both the pattern and content of course tutorials were inconsistent. In some cases, the quality of guidance and support was linked to unacceptably-high non-completion rates.

34 The restructuring of the college management involved the regrouping of a number of college functions under the central control of the newly-created director of curriculum services. Further developments are planned. The organisation and management of student services are now more cohesive and managers are potentially well placed to address some of the shortcomings evident in the earlier part of the inspection process. It is too early to judge fully the impact of this change.

35 The design and content of the prospectus are modified each year and the prospectus is distributed to the majority of students aged 16 and over through their secondary schools. The director of marketing and representative teaching staff attend school careers conventions. These are supplemented by school information days, which have recently replaced open days. Pupils visiting the college indicate their areas of interest in advance and are received in small groups by staff from the relevant sections of the college. Many of the mature students come to the college as a result of personal recommendations. The college's reputation in farriery and rural crafts attracts students from a wide area.

36 A planned central admission system was not in place to coincide with the redrawing of organisational boundaries in August. All full-time entrants have an interview. The college recognises inefficiencies in the

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previous interviewing system where practices differed markedly from department to department, and impartiality of advice could not be guaranteed. There is no systematic use of records of achievement. New leaflets on central-support services have given clearer information to potential students. There is a high-quality arrangement for the accreditation of prior learning which has operated across the college for several years. All groups have access to accreditation of prior learning, although the effort involved in gathering evidence mean that the take-up is relatively small.

37 The recent development of higher national diploma work has added a significant group of young adults to the student population. In catering for these, the college provides an efficient accommodation service which assists over 600 students in finding lodgings annually. A free bus service has recently been introduced to improve access to the college from outlying areas. For the unemployed, high-quality career and benefit guidance is given in a dedicated, adult vocational guidance unit. This unit enjoys close working relations with the local benefit office. All students have access to a personal counsellor and there is a medical centre on the main site, staffed by a qualified nurse. Both services are well used and contribute significantly to the welfare and well-being of students.

38 In September 1994, the college introduced a cross-college induction programme for the whole college. Study skills packages were distributed to all full-time students during the induction period. The speed of the introduction of this programme precluded wide consultation; consequently, student and staff reaction was mixed. The lack of time meant that staff could not adapt the study skill materials for specific group use, and some students felt the induction period was too long. Tutors commented on the efficient way that they had been able to deal with college-wide services at induction, the usefulness of the greater part of the study skills material and the speed with which they had become acquainted with their new students, all of which represented an improvement on the previous year. This was borne out by students' responses to questionnaires.

39 Diagnostic screening in basic skills has been introduced for all GNVQ students. A new learning support service, staffed by 13 trained support assistants, has been put in place to deal with the needs of the large number of students which this screening identified. This indicates the increased importance that is being attached to individual student support.

40 General tutorial support remains variable, although the college operational plan intends a central system to be in place within a year. The good practice which existed in some schools has now been extended to all GNVQ students, but on other courses, tutorial guidance remains a matter for the schools. The improvement of this service is an important issue and the college has appointed a lead tutor to develop a coherent policy. Attendance is monitored and transfers between courses are logged and procedures for transfer are centrally defined. Arrangements for informing

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parents about students' progress could be improved. There were a few instances of inadequate or misleading information about courses.

41 A careers service facility is provided by the county careers service. The absence of a college-wide careers service makes for inefficient use of the careers officers' time. Heavy demand for appointments at crucial times has resulted in delays in giving advice on entry to higher education. The benefits of the service would be enhanced if the college liaised more closely with the careers office on a day-to-day basis, particularly as the tutorial programme develops and tutors become more knowledgeable about their students' career aspirations.

42 Students' rights and responsibilities are adequately outlined in the college charter and in student contracts.

### **TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING**

43 In four of the seven curriculum areas, there were coherent programmes that met the needs of students. In September 1993, a new framework for delivering GNVQ and other programmes was introduced for hospitality and catering, and leisure and tourism courses. At the time of the May 1994 inspection these programmes were not meeting the needs of the students and an interim grade 5 was awarded. The college has re-designed these programmes: a re-inspection of this area of work in October 1994 showed that some improvement had taken place but weaknesses still outweighed strengths and the areas were graded 4.

44 Relationships between staff and students were good. Teachers generally have sufficient subject expertise. In all subjects, learning was reinforced by the use of teaching and learning aids. In construction, care, and some humanities courses, students were provided with high-quality supporting information, though the quality of this was more variable in other subjects. In business studies, assignments were used to encourage students to work in teams and to develop skills such as problem solving and decision making. The use of examples drawn from local firms stimulated students' interest and assisted in the development of investigative skills. In construction, the distribution of assignments should be more equally spread throughout the course.

45 There were marked variations between subjects in the quality of the 145 teaching sessions inspected. Forty-five per cent of sessions had strengths that clearly outweighed the weaknesses and 31 per cent of sessions had a balance of strengths and weaknesses. Twenty-four per cent of sessions had weaknesses that clearly outweighed the strengths which is a higher percentage than is usually found in inspections. The majority of these were in the hospitality and catering, leisure and tourism, humanities and mathematics provision. The following table summarises the grades given to each of the teaching sessions inspected.

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**Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study**

<b>Programmes</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Totals</b>
GCE AS/A level		2	5	4	0	0	11
GCSE		0	1	6	4	0	11
GNVQ		0	2	2	5	5	14
NVQ		4	18	9	4	4	39
Other		5	28	24	7	6	70
<b>Total</b>		<b>11</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>145</b>

46 Teaching and learning strategies used in business studies sessions were designed to encourage students with different abilities to succeed. They contributed to the development of competence both in occupational skills such as office work, and in written and oral skills, although some students still needed a greater amount of support. The quality of teaching in computing classes was generally good. Clear explanations were provided during whole-group work, and there was appropriate use of directed questions to which the students generally responded well.

47 Teaching and learning schemes for social care and nursery nursing were comprehensive. A variety of approaches provided opportunities for students to become involved in a range of activities, and there were good examples of role play and simulation exercises. Students' work placement experiences were effectively drawn upon by many teachers. Students showed an understanding of the theoretical background as well as the practical application of what they were learning, and were encouraged to ask questions and seek clarification of difficult areas.

48 Most engineering classes were clearly presented and stimulating, and provided good integration of theory and practical work. There were well-planned arrangements for work experience for all full-time engineering students, some of which led to offers of employment being made to the students. For example, at the time of the specialist inspection, jobs had been found by 60 per cent of students on the full-time motor vehicle course. In a minority of engineering classes, there was insufficient questioning of students to check that learning had taken place, and extensive dictation of notes by some teachers was wasteful of time and counter-productive to students' learning.

49 The majority of construction classes were well managed and well taught. Lesson plans related to the appropriate level and stage of the course. In some cases, the co-ordination of theory and practical work required strengthening. There were examples of practical work and assignments being completed before the related theory had been taught. On occasions, there was a delay in teachers giving marked work back to students.

50 Detailed schemes of work were used for most humanities subjects, with the exception of language courses. Attendance was poor in several

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GCSE humanities classes. Some students were not sufficiently challenged to develop their oral abilities, to present arguments logically or to develop their understanding of new concepts. In the weaker humanities classes, many students were not interested or involved in their work. In contrast, there was some stimulating teaching in English and on access courses, and an exciting GCE A level communication studies session brought together oral, research and presentational skills. Modern foreign language classes were generally carefully prepared. A variety of teaching and learning methods allowed students to practise listening, speaking, reading and writing in the language they were learning. In some lessons there was an over emphasis on grammar at the expense of the development of language skills, and some lessons were conducted almost entirely in English. There was no system of assessing and recording students' progress on FEFC-funded vocational part-time language classes.

51 Some GCSE mathematics classes had weaknesses that outweighed the strengths. These included lack of structure and poorly-motivated students. There was a high level of absenteeism. Learning support materials were of poor quality and in some cases out of date. Several students did not have access to an appropriate text book. Some students' achievements in course work were not recorded.

52 In hospitality and catering, many teaching and learning schemes were ill devised or badly executed, especially in the workshops and simulated working environments. Students sometimes had to carry out work in these areas without prior theoretical knowledge or on-the-job skills training. Some of the basic skills learned in the practical classes were not followed through in the training restaurants and other training facilities. A new approach to delivering programmes through supported self-learning packs, which involve little formal teaching, was introduced in September 1993. GNVQ and national diploma students on leisure and tourism, and hospitality and catering courses, attended the same daily workshop rooms in order to use resources or seek teacher support. At the time of the May 1994 inspection, few students attended and little teacher student interaction took place. Many students were unable to manage their time, and the lack of structure and direction resulted in poor motivation and high absenteeism. The majority of the GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism students left the course. Less than half of the first-year advanced GNVQ leisure and tourism students continued into the second year.

53 The re-inspection of leisure and tourism in October 1994 found that the college had made major changes since the first inspection. Many of these will take time for the benefits to emerge, but some changes have had immediate results. There is now a suitable balance of teaching and self-learning. Students are better motivated and there is less absenteeism. A range of sports options is available. A new travel shop on the campus will provide retail travel work experience from November 1994.

54 Information technology is currently provided by individual schools and this leads to inconsistencies in teaching and content. There are

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examples of college-wide materials to assist students in using the technology, but much of it is available for reference only. Non-standard hardware and software across the college prevents students from utilising the equipment effectively.

### **STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS**

55 Well over half of the students enrolled at the college are aged 20 or over. They pursue a wide range of courses and aim at qualifications at all levels from foundation to higher national diploma. On some vocational courses, for example the private and executive secretarial diploma, students achieve multiple awards as part of their programme. An increasing number of vocational programmes are taught in unit-based schemes, in which students achieve credit for separate units as they progress through the course.

56 Many students enjoyed their studies and spoke with some enthusiasm about their experience of the college. However, surveys of students' opinions, conducted in the summer of 1994 revealed that a significant proportion of those responding were not satisfied. For example, one in five was not satisfied with the teaching on the course and one in three would not recommend the course to a friend.

57 In most of the sessions inspected, satisfactory standards were achieved in students' written work and they were able to demonstrate an ability to apply their knowledge and understanding.

58 Good examples of skills development included the many students in business studies courses who were developing appropriate mathematical and information technology skills. They were able to work effectively as members of a group. Most contributed to discussion, particularly on GCE A level and management courses. In construction and engineering, the quality of written and practical assignments was good. Engineering students worked well in groups, and hospitality and catering students were able to work as effective members of a team. In computing, students' responses to internal assessments showed good knowledge and understanding. Students in modern languages kept well-organised folders and workbooks. Most were making progress in language skills; some were achieving impressive levels of fluency and understanding. In social care, students' written work demonstrated initiative and was generally of good quality. Information technology was being used to produce or contribute to assignment work.

59 There were some examples of less-satisfactory development of core skills. In construction, note-taking had not been monitored by tutors and some students' notes were poorly written and badly organised. Although construction staff were committed in principle to ensuring that students earned their results, some high grades had been awarded to assignment work which was only of an average standard. Standards of work in humanities were generally appropriate but limited attention was paid to the development of study skills and core skills, including information



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technology. There was evidence, in communications studies for example, that insufficient assistance in developing information technology skills had hampered students' work. Students in hospitality and catering had opportunities to apply their skills in well-equipped realistic work environments but professional skills in food production and service, and core skills, were not being fully developed. In leisure and tourism, the adoption of a new self-study approach to learning had made it difficult for students and tutors to ensure that all aims and objectives of the course were being achieved, particularly the core skills. The quality, depth and breadth of work was very variable. Internal assessments in GCSE mathematics were also variable in quality, ranging from poor to good.

60 Sound practical sessions were observed in business studies, construction and engineering. In all but a very few cases, students worked in safe and supportive environments and were mindful of safety considerations.

61 Completion rates in a number of areas give cause for concern. College records show that the withdrawal rate for full-time students in 1993-94 was more than 20 per cent. On one vocational course there was a drop-out rate of 62 per cent and a number of other courses had high rates of non-completion.

62 Student success rates in examinations over the past three years have been variable. In many vocational areas they are good. Each year 100 per cent pass rates are achieved in a significant number of courses and the college has students who gain regional and national recognition for their high levels of achievement. A student on the certificate in education had recently been presented with a City and Guilds (C&G) silver medal, and also won the regional award of the National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education for outstanding adult learners.

63 According to returns published by the Department for Education in 1993 the college was ranked 112 out of 334, in the table of college examination results for students in their final year of study for the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national or C&G national diploma, with 88 per cent of students achieving the qualification. During the inspection it was reported by the college that this ranking was based upon inaccurate information unintentionally provided.

64 In business and finance, the BTEC programme results have been high. Just over 90 per cent of students on national programmes gain a full award. Business administration pass rates for the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry examinations in a typical year are usually between 80 and 100 per cent. The National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) business administration results at secretarial levels 2 and 3 are equally good. Success rates on management studies courses range from 86 to 100 per cent.

65 Results in caring and nursery nursing have been creditable. The percentage pass rate in nursery nursing, for example, was 94 per cent in

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1993 and 100 per cent in 1992. There was considerable evidence of students with modest entry qualifications achieving good standards. Most progressed to further training or care-related employment.

66 Examination results in engineering have generally been satisfactory and some were excellent. The few poor pass rates were the exception rather than a continuing trend. Results on construction courses have been variable. Construction craft studies results have ranged from a 40 per cent to a 100 per cent pass rate. There is a general trend towards higher grades. For example, in technician studies pass rates for national diploma courses improved from 40 per cent in 1991-92 to 80 per cent in 1992-93.

67 Success rates for the students who completed computing and modern languages courses were satisfactory or better. In 1993, a 97 per cent pass rate was achieved in the C&G information technology examination. In the BTEC national diploma in computing the pass rate was 75 per cent. The overall pass rate for the small number of students entered for the RSA modern language examinations in 1993 was 84 per cent.

68 In leisure and tourism, the unsuccessful implementation of a radical approach to teaching and learning for GNVQ had led to considerable student dissatisfaction. There were high rates of non-completion and only seven out of the 36 students enrolled on the GNVQ intermediate programme had achieved the award by October 1994. National diploma results in 1993 were 61 per cent for students aged 16-18 and higher for those aged 19+. In hospitality and catering, students had in the past been mainly successful. It was too early to draw conclusion about the new NVQ arrangements.

69 At GCE advanced level, the total number of full-time and part-time students entered in 1993 was 175, in a total of 17 subjects. The college was ranked 284 out of 388 in the table of examination results for 16-18 year olds in further education sector colleges. For the 49 full-time students aged 16-18 taking two or more GCE A levels the average points score was 7.1 (where A=10, E=2). The average points score for 17 year old students in further education and tertiary colleges nationally was 10.1. The average overall pass rate for students from the college aged 16-18 was 68 per cent, similar to the national average for the group in further education colleges. The pass rate for students aged 19+ was 66 per cent. In 1994, the overall pass rate at GCE A level was 83 per cent. Three students of the college achieved one of the top five highest scores in the United Kingdom in human biology, English and law, respectively. Pass rates in business studies were significantly above the national average in both 1993 and 1994.

70 In 1993, the GCSE results for full-time students aged 16-18 were very variable, with the percentage of grades A-C ranging from 30 per cent for history to 90 per cent for business studies. Overall, college pass rates were good in human biology, business studies, geography, and German. The percentage of grades A-C in English and mathematics was slightly below the national average.

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71 Students' achievements in humanities were uneven and often poor, and there was significant variation from year to year in most GCE A level subject pass rates. Achievement in GCE A level communication studies was better and there were some signs of strength in psychology.

72 In 1993, the majority of full-time students who gained an award went on to further or higher education or employment. Of the 145 students who obtained two or more GCE A levels or BTEC national diplomas, 93 per cent went on to further or higher education or found employment. Approximately two-thirds entered higher education. At foundation and intermediate levels, 90 to 100 per cent of the students entered further education or employment.

### **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

73 The college has produced a satisfactory self-assessment report and has recently introduced a quality framework based on experiences of quality assurance of selected courses over previous years. Course monitoring, evaluation and review procedures have recently been introduced. Staff-development activities have been mainly associated with cross-college requirements. The college is committed to achieving the Investors in People award by 1996.

74 The college charter was produced after consultation with members of the corporation, the college staff and students. It has been circulated to all full-time students and a selection of vocational part-time students, and is available to all students. References are made to employers and the local community. The process of monitoring and evaluating the response to the charter is being developed.

75 A well-devised quality manual has been produced and circulated to all full-time staff and selected part-time staff. The manual was developed by the director of quality with contributions from the staff. Staff have received training on the quality procedures. The manual is currently incomplete but includes information about the quality framework and the monitoring and evaluation of courses. This latter section was developed from two years experience of several courses which were used as pilots. The quality procedures are being used on all the full-time and the first year of part-time vocational courses from the start of this academic year. If implemented rigorously, these procedures have the potential to improve the quality of courses within the college.

76 The membership of a quality executive group has been chosen so as to provide an objective view of the review process. Course logs and reviews are analysed annually by the quality executive group. Included in the reviews are statistics on drop-out rates, targets and examination success. The completion of these sections in particular, and the reports in general, was variable. Some contained detailed information useful to the improvement of quality; others were superficial. There is a need to undertake reviews at module or subject level in most courses. The quality

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executive group respond formally to all reports, provide guidance to course teams on the reviews, and instigate further meetings when necessary. The pilot course reviews have seen an improvement in some courses but performance indicators should be used more effectively and the quality of analysis strengthened.

77 Student surveys have been undertaken three times a year for the last two years. Much of the information collected relates to college-wide facilities and services. The results produced have been analysed and as a consequence, some improvements have been made. Data at course level are now being collected in some areas. The setting of targets for numbers and examination performance are not fully integrated into the course review system. Value-added data on students' levels of achievement in relation to their entry qualifications are not collected and analysed centrally or at a course level. Year-on-year analysis of examination results is not undertaken and the general quality of information about examination results should be improved. The college management information system was unable to provide accurate management information. Good practice was not being identified and disseminated throughout the college by the quality assurance process.

78 There is no formal staff-induction programme. New staff receive a half-day induction talk from the quality manager. There is a small amount of documentation available. A monitoring system is used for staff new to teaching. There is no staff handbook. The quality manual is seen as being the main source of information. There is however, a good handbook provided for part-time staff. There is also a handbook for college managers on personnel practices, policies and procedures which contains clear and comprehensive information.

79 A staff-appraisal system has recently been introduced and some staff have undergone appraisee training. A small number of staff have been appraised at each level.

80 Staff have been counselled regarding their staff-development requirements and a needs analysis is undertaken with all new staff. The budget for staff-development was reduced by about 30 per cent in the last academic year. Priority was given to cross-college areas such as quality assurance and middle-management training. GNVQ and NVQ assessor training have been undertaken and this has resulted in a significant number of staff achieving Training and Development Lead Body qualifications. Staff delivering GNVQ core skills are undergoing training in information technology. There have been few staff-development opportunities at the specialist subject level. Currently staff undertaking development activities are only required to complete an evaluation form which indicates their level of satisfaction of the course. Only recently have procedures been put in place for staff to disseminate knowledge gained from staff-development activities.

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## **RESOURCES**

### **Staffing**

81 In recent years, the college has adjusted its staffing profile to achieve a balance of teaching and support staff which is more closely matched to its needs. The student to staff ratio has risen to 15:1. In most curriculum areas the college has sufficient numbers of suitably-qualified and experienced teaching staff who are effectively deployed. Almost all staff have relevant professional and technical qualifications and a significant proportion hold first and higher degrees. Three-quarters of full-time staff are on permanent contracts and one-third have worked at the college for 15 years or more. The low turnover of staff provides a firm foundation of experience and continuity. However, there is need for many full-time staff to update their commercial and industrial experience. The college is making increasing use of part-time and support staff in some areas to provide specialist teaching.

82 The college is well supplied with suitably-qualified and experienced administrative and technical staff, although some areas of the college have limited access to them. The college needs to review their deployment to provide a more effective college-wide service. Technician support for information technology is insufficient and could be more effectively deployed. There is only one reprographic assistant and the needs of classroom teachers sometimes take second place to whole-college requirements for the production of materials. In some areas of the college, support staff could undertake some of the tasks currently undertaken by teaching staff. There have been examples, however, of support staff being used inappropriately to carry out assessments.

83 Women are not represented at senior management level. The gender distribution between curriculum areas reflects traditional patterns; there are no female staff in the division of technology and only one male member of staff in the school of caring and community. Despite this, the college succeeds in recruiting a small but significant number of men to caring courses and women to technology.

### **Equipment/learning resources**

84 The college plans the allocation of new equipment, according to criteria aimed at obtaining value for money. Equipment is regularly audited by heads of school and records kept. The college has substantially increased the equipment budget this year in comparison with previous years. The quantity of equipment is adequate to meet the present teaching and learning needs. The quality is more variable. The majority of the equipment held in the college is over six years old and some engineering equipment is very old. The supply of teaching aids meets the basic teaching requirements. The quality of furniture is variable and in many areas, is poor. In GCSE courses, the quality of learning aids was poor and there was a distinct lack of such facilities in leisure and tourism. The equipment

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is well maintained, though there are no planned maintenance policies or procedures.

85 There are insufficient up-to-date computer work stations available for student use. There is no cross-college information technology policy. In the past departments have determined their own information technology requirements and this has resulted, in some instances, in incompatibility between computer hardware and software packages. This prevents students from effectively utilising what equipment is available. Much of the equipment is incapable of running modern software. An information technology co-ordinating committee has recently been formed. If the college is to achieve the effective use of information technology to a satisfactory standard across the curriculum, these weaknesses should be addressed.

86 The library plays only a limited role in the support of learning. In many subject areas the books are dated and little used, and occasionally there was a mismatch between the books and course requirements. There were only isolated examples of effective links between library staff and subject sections. The college's strategic plan and operational plan makes no reference to the role or planned development of the library. The location of the librarian in the new division of curriculum services provides the opportunity for defining more clearly the role of the library and ensuring a closer relationship with the schools. There is only limited monitoring of the extent, quality and effectiveness of library provision.

87 The library provides a pleasant working environment although the number of study spaces at 150 is significantly below the most recent Department for Education norms which suggest a need for 400 spaces. There has been investment recently in a computerised library management system and good liaison with the county library service in the implementation of this new system. Recurrent resources for the library are significantly below national norms.

88 There are collaborative arrangements for library provision between the three colleges on the site, although those with the sixth form college are expected to end in 1996.

### **Accommodation**

89 The college is located on 11 sites within a two-mile radius of the main campus in Hereford. The main campus is shared with a sixth form college and an art college and this prevents the college from having a clear identity for visitors. The majority of these sites are located in pleasant landscaped areas that are well maintained. The buildings are a combination of traditional and more recent buildings, constructed at various times during a period of 150 years. The external fabric on nine sites is good. The friary centre is in poor condition and beyond economic repair and the Newton Road annex is also in poor condition. The campuses are clean and well maintained.

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90 The college has produced an accommodation strategy that assesses existing land and buildings against the strategic goals of the institution in order to meet the diverse needs and new curriculum developments. Many parts of the college require redecoration and refurbishment particularly in classroom and workshop areas. There are no toilet facilities in the workshop block on the main campus. The college has a planned maintenance programme and some areas have been upgraded to a good standard.

91 Most buildings only afford access to the ground floor areas for those with restricted mobility but the college is addressing this as a priority. Room size and layout are adequate for teaching but there are space restrictions in construction and in the language laboratory. Poor room design in leisure and construction prevented students from having a clear view of the blackboard and other teaching aids. Storage facilities throughout the college are limited.

92 The self-study centre, the information technology centre and business studies areas provide good learning environments and many rooms have good levels of natural daylight. Stimulating wall posters were displayed in languages and in leisure and tourism rooms. The lack of car parking spaces is a serious problem on the main campus which the college has to solve if it is to maintain its planned growth targets. The new reception area and the information centre at the main campus are welcoming.

93 The college maintains an up-to-date assets register and monitors the use of space effectively. Students complained about the lack of social accommodation.

### **CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES**

94 The college has recently begun to make progress towards its aim of being a major centre of excellence for education and training in Hereford and the surrounding area. Strengths include:

- the governors' commitment and contribution to the strategic guidance of the college
- a revised management structure which clearly allocates key responsibilities
- appropriate attention to financial planning and procedures
- a broad range of vocational courses well attuned to local needs and supported by good links with industry and commerce
- a flexible range of courses for adult students including support for the unemployed
- increasing provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- efficient recruitment and marketing
- a recently-introduced, college-wide induction programme and the reorganised management of student services

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- procedures for the accreditation of prior learning
  - the substantial recent increase in funding for equipment
  - good-quality accommodation in the self-study, information technology and business study areas
  - the good external condition and management of most college accommodation.

95 To further its mission the college needs to address the following substantial issues:

- the implementation of new management proposals for cross-college roles, modern languages, and college-wide policies for tutorial support
- further development of the analysis of unit costs
- development of policies to reduce the high drop-out rate of students, and to raise students' success rates in some curriculum areas
- substantial improvement of the management information system
- full implementation of a central admissions system with consistent college-wide procedures
- improvement in reporting to parents on the progress of 16-18 year students
- improvement in day-to-day liaison with the local careers service
- ensuring that best practice in teaching is widely spread through the college to assist improvement in the significant number of weak areas identified during the inspection
- regular evaluation of examination results as a basis for future policy
- the introduction of value-added analysis for monitoring levels of examination performance
- more effective deployment of technicians
- updating the commercial and industrial experience of many full-time staff
- substantial improvement in the support for and services offered by the library
- substantial improvement in the information technology provision including a centralised purchasing policy to ensure greater uniformity and increased access by students
- improvement in students' social accommodation and the management of car parking
- the need to improve access for students with restricted mobility
- better decoration of some classroom and workshop areas.



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## FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage enrolments by age (1994–95)

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

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

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

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  - 5 Income (for 16 months to July 1994)

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  - 6 Expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)

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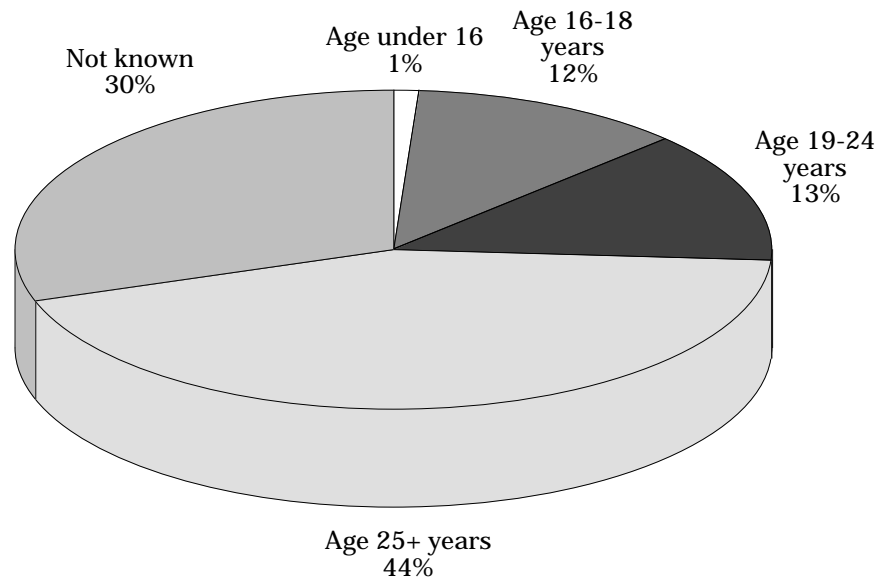
**Note:** the information contained in the figures was provided by the college to the inspection team.

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**Figure 1**

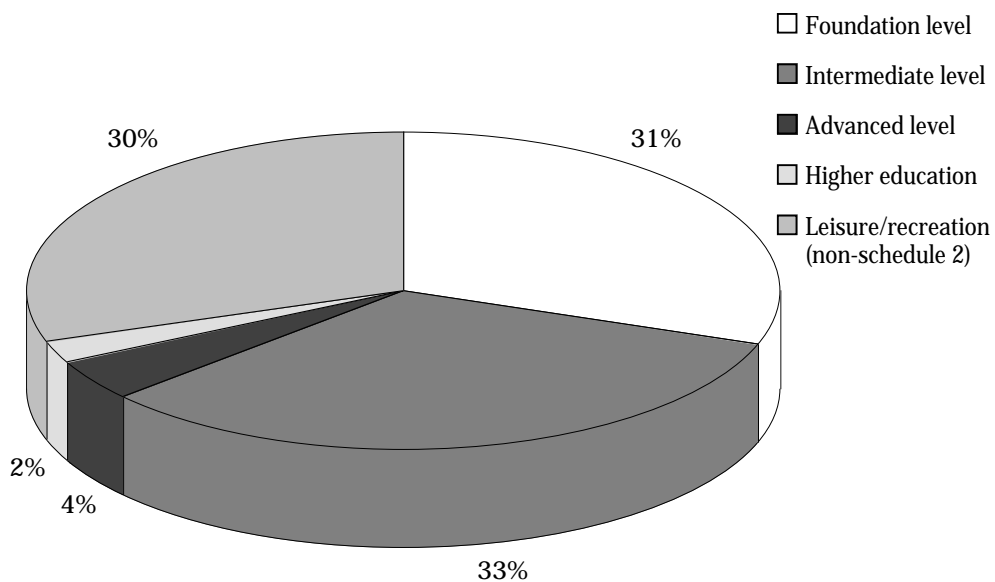
**Herefordshire College of Technology: percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)**



Enrolments: 14,715

**Figure 2**

**Herefordshire College of Technology: percentage enrolments by level of study (1994-95)**



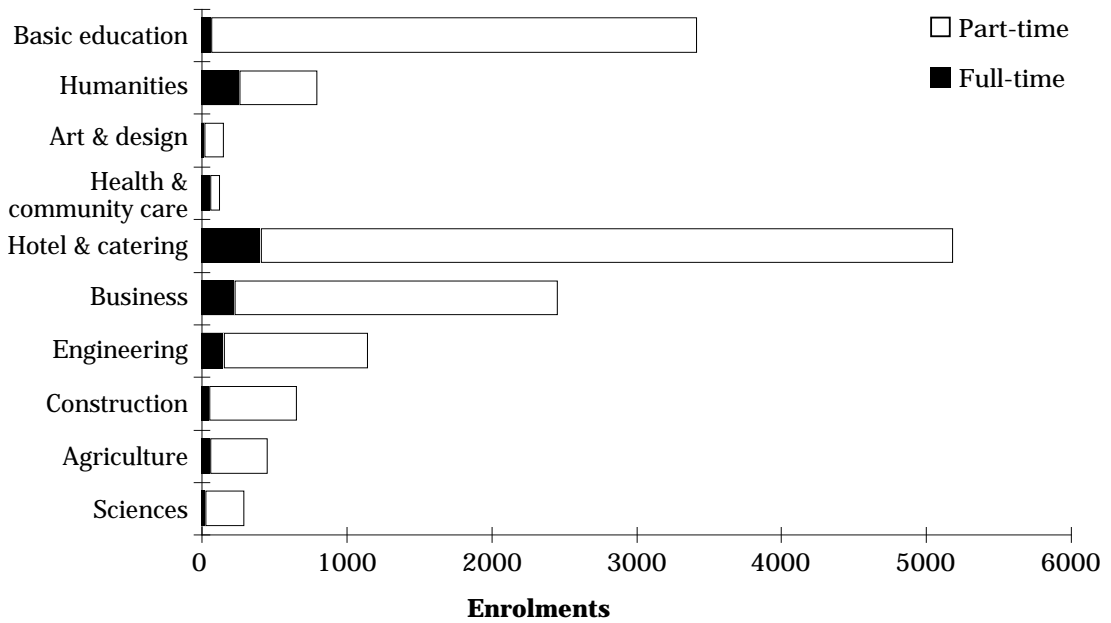
Enrolments: 14,715

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**Figure 3**

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**Herefordshire College of Technology: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1994-95)**



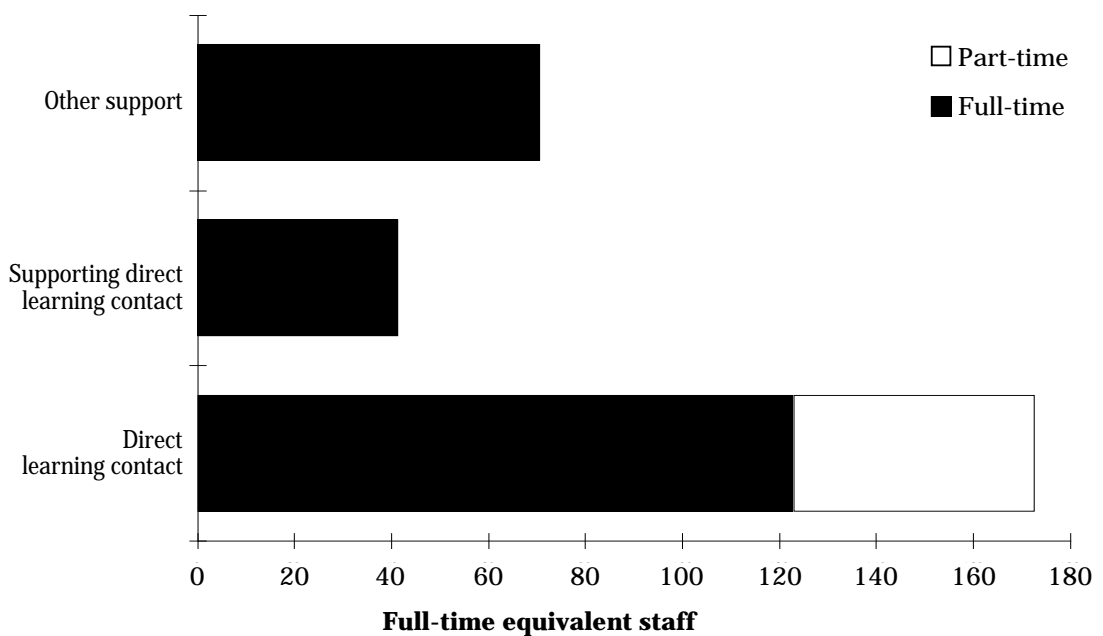
Enrolments: 14,715

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**Figure 4**

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**Herefordshire College of Technology: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994-95)**

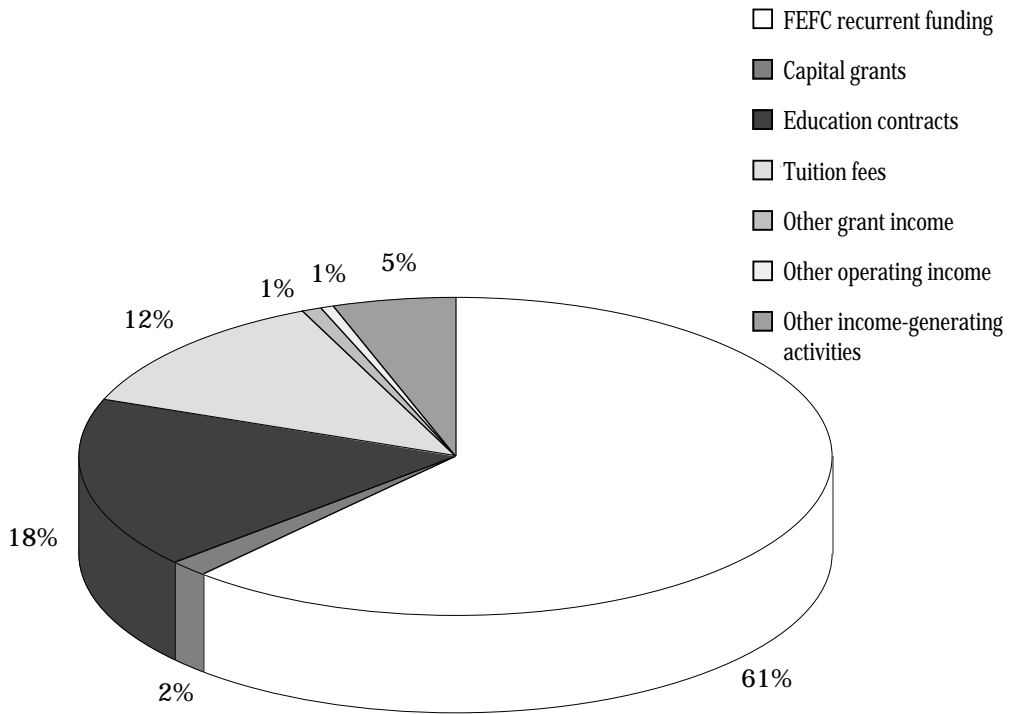


Full-time equivalent staff: 285

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**Figure 5**

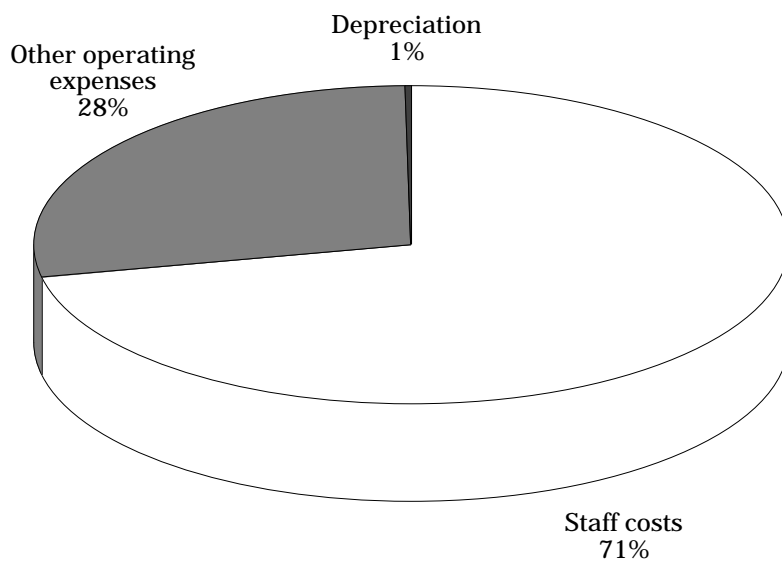
**Herefordshire College of Technology: income (for 16 months to July 1994)**



Income: £10,513,000

**Figure 6**

**Herefordshire College of Technology: expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)**



Expenditure: £9,864,000

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