

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

The Isle of Wight College

September 1995

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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The Further Education Funding Council has a legal duty to make sure further education in England is properly assessed. The FEFC's inspectorate inspects and reports on each college of further education every four years. The inspectorate also assesses and reports nationally on the curriculum and gives advice to 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 105/95

THE ISLE OF WIGHT COLLEGE

SOUTH EAST REGION

Inspected January 1994–May 1995

Summary

The Isle of Wight College is the only further education college on the island. It works closely with local business and community organisations in meeting the particular needs of an island community. It offers a comprehensive range of programmes, including many higher education courses. The college is widening access to its programmes and is making them increasingly flexible. It promotes its work well. The college is well governed, and internal communication is good. Staff are appropriately qualified, care for their students and provide good teaching in most areas. There is good support for adult basic education students and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The college has impressive computing facilities. It should: strengthen its financial controls and reporting; improve its management information system; address the excessive range of roles and responsibilities of senior managers; improve the speed with which decisions can be made; improve its quality assurance system; and rectify the hazardous conditions in the ceramics area. Other weaknesses include: poor examination results in some areas; the need to improve the management of student guidance and support services; and the lack of an equipment replacement policy and an accommodation maintenance schedule.

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

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science and mathematics	3	Hotel and catering, and leisure	3
Agriculture and amenity management	2	Health and community care	2
Construction	4	Hairdressing and beauty	2
Engineering	3	Humanities	3
Business and administration	2	Basic education	2

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INTRODUCTION

1 The inspection of the Isle of Wight College took place in three stages. The college's enrolment and induction procedures were inspected at the beginning of the autumn term 1994. Specialist subject areas were inspected mainly between 30 January and 2 February 1995 when seven full-time and six part-time inspectors took part for a total of 43 inspector days. They visited 180 classes, attended by 1,599 students, examined students' marked work and spoke with staff and students. Inspection of aspects of cross-college provision took place from 2 to 5 May 1995, when seven full-time inspectors took part for a total of 24 inspector days. Meetings were held with members of the corporation board, the senior management and college management teams, heads of division, staff with cross-college responsibilities, teaching, support and administrative staff, and students. Inspectors talked with a group of employers, the chief executive of Wight Training and Enterprise, the local training and enterprise council (TEC), and parents of students attending the college. They examined policy statements, documents describing internal systems and controls and minutes of major meetings.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 The Isle of Wight College is situated on the outskirts of Newport, the county town of the island. The college opened in January 1951, initially to provide courses in construction and engineering. It is the only college on the island and seeks to serve its whole community. Poor rural transport, the island situation and high sea travel costs prevent many local people from travelling regularly to the mainland. The college, therefore, offers a wide range of courses despite the low numbers which some recruit. It also offers courses in a nearby industrial unit, at the college farm at Branston and in the three prisons on the island.

3 At the time of the inspection, the college had 7,166 students, excluding those taught under the prison contract. Enrolments by age and level of study are shown in figures 1 and 2. The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) funded enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figure 3. The college employs 359 full-time equivalent staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

4 The work of the college is organised in 14 teaching divisions: adult and community education; business information systems; business studies; care; countryside and amenity management; electrical and electronic engineering; food and hospitality management; foundation studies; hair, beauty and sport; management and professional studies; mechanical and production engineering and construction; office administration; ASET, the college centre responsible for delivering TEC sponsored courses; and prison education.

5 The college operates in a highly competitive environment for recruiting school leavers. There are five high schools on the island, each

with its own sixth form. In September 1994, 87 per cent of 16 year olds on the island remained in full-time education or studied under the training credits scheme. Out of 1,284 16-year old pupils leaving school, 389 progressed directly to the college. This represents an increase of 7 per cent in market share for the college in this academic year.

6 Ninety per cent of businesses on the Isle of Wight employ fewer than 10 people. Most jobs are in metal manufacture, distribution, tourism, care and public services. The 10 largest employers, one of which is the college, account for 30 per cent of employment on the island. Unemployment is seasonal. It fluctuated between 9.8 per cent in the summer months of 1994, slightly above the national rate of 9.4 per cent, and 11.7 per cent in January 1995.

7 The college's mission is to help to develop the community through offering good-quality education and training. In seeking to achieve this, the college works collaboratively with other island organisations to meet local needs. Senior college staff are members of key community bodies.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

8 There is a comprehensive range of vocational and academic programmes. General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) are offered at a variety of levels in many curriculum areas. There are full-time National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) programmes in accounting, administration, beauty therapy, catering and hairdressing. The college provides full-time Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) first and national diplomas in countryside studies and national diplomas in engineering, health studies, computer studies, nursery nursing and sports studies. Marine studies will be introduced subject to approval from the awarding body. There is a limited range of courses in agriculture and horticulture and the college plans to develop courses in animal care and environmental conservation in response to changing job opportunities. The college has recently introduced 20 subjects at General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) for full-time study. An extended range of 24 subjects is planned for September 1995. A one-year GCE programme is also available. The college offers a broad range of General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) subjects. There is flexible and extensive provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which includes the 'significant living' courses for adults.

9 Over 12.5 per cent of full-time students are taking degrees or other higher education courses. Courses in five curriculum areas are franchised from Bournemouth University. The college plans to extend its higher education provision. Students from the mainland come to the Isle of Wight College to study in some areas. The annual budget for franchised higher education is approximately £0.5 million.

10 The college intends to modularise the timetables of all full-time students in 1996, to give them greater choice. Modularisation is already widening some students' opportunities. The accreditation of students'

prior learning, which would also assist access, is not readily available except in management and professional studies. Some curriculum areas have introduced weekend working. The college has a day nursery with 50 places which is run in partnership with St Mary's Hospital, NHS Trust.

11 Part-time vocational courses include a broad range of management and professional courses. The college offers access to higher education programmes in various forms, including an evening course for those at work. Short courses for overseas students are available. There is a wide range of topics for study in the evenings as well as work-based programmes for adult students. The college has prison education contracts with Her Majesty's prisons at Albany, Camp Hill and Parkhurst. At the time of the inspection, approximately 400 prisoners a week were engaged in study programmes.

12 There are close working relationships at management level with the TEC, Isle of Wight Industrial Training Services and the chamber of commerce. Links with the TEC at curriculum level are underdeveloped. The work of ASET has been reduced because of changes in government funding. Short-course activity is limited except in business studies. The college is increasing its consultancy work not only for companies on the island but also for those on the mainland and in Europe. Teachers have a general appreciation of the national targets for education and training. Relationships with the local education authority (LEA) are good. The college is represented on the island's Council of Heads and is keen to maintain close relationships with local schools, although this is becoming increasingly difficult because of competition to recruit 16-year-old students.

13 The college marketing team consists of the director of planning and marketing, the marketing officer, the press and liaison officer and administrative staff. A marketing centre is located at the college reception area. Customer enquiries are monitored. The college has had a marketing function for some time but it has only recently developed a co-ordinated marketing strategy. There is much to do in making staff aware of the scope of the marketing function. The college has carried out some customer satisfaction surveys but it lacks methodical market research. It recognises the need for this and for firmer links between market research and strategic planning.

14 An associate vice-principal is responsible for local, national and international liaison, and external funding. The college has good overseas links with, for example, Spain and Japan, and it is exploring a connection in South Africa. Teaching divisions have good contacts with employers who praise the speed with which the college responds to their requirements. The college holds information evenings and it is represented at school careers events. It organises roadshows and places many newspaper advertisements. There is an appropriate range of promotional material of generally high quality, some of which is commercially sponsored. Some internally printed leaflets, however, are poorly designed.

The booklet promoting ASET has been amateurishly corrected and presents a poor image. Promotional literature does not adequately describe the opportunities available for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

15 The director of student and learning services chairs a group of managers working on equal opportunities. They have recently produced a new, unified equal opportunities policy. The new policy relates primarily to students but it contains some rather confused references to staff. There are no accompanying procedures or guidelines for complaints. There is a policy for equality of opportunity in employment but there are no associated procedures. There are only general references to equal opportunities in the current students' handbook and the college charter, but these have been revised for September 1995. Responsibility for policy implementation lies with the equal opportunities 'cluster group'. Detailed recommendations for action were made by the group to the senior management team but there has been no response yet, despite a special meeting held to discuss the group's recommendations. There has been little formal staff training, either on promoting equality of opportunity or managing equal opportunities issues, and none is planned.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

16 The corporation board has 17 members who between them have a wide range of relevant expertise. Many are influential members of the local community. Ten are from the business community, there are representatives from the TEC and the LEA, and a co-opted member from the social services department. Members also include a lecturer, one member of support staff, one student and the principal. At the time of the inspection there was a vacancy for a business member. Some continuity from the former governing body has been maintained and the gradual introduction of new members has provided fresh insights and experience. Governors, other than those who are staff or students, are each associated with a teaching or support division and with a member of the senior management team. They are expected to visit their contacts to improve their understanding of the college and to make staff aware of their support and interest.

17 The corporation has established five committees: finance; staffing and personnel; physical resources; curriculum; and audit. There is a properly ordered calendar of meetings and committee minutes are regularly available for information or approval at full corporation meetings. Agendas are carefully planned and items are marked for information, discussion or decision. Papers are well prepared and are received by members in good time. Governors report that the duties placed on them by government and the FEFC make considerable demands on their time. They have undertaken some training and are beginning to evaluate their own performance.

18 During the early period of incorporation, the distinction between governance and management was not always strictly observed in coping with new demands on the college. The need to establish a framework consistent with the articles of government, within which the principal manages the college, is now recognised. The chairman of governors appraises the principal, sets targets annually and monitors progress in meeting these targets.

19 The senior management structure has undergone a number of changes during the last five years. In many cases, these have been no more than minor redistributions of duties and responsibilities after resignations or retirements. Changes introduced in September 1994 doubled the number of senior managers (directors) to 10. These 10 directors, each of whom has responsibility for a cross-college function, and the principal now constitute the senior management team. Meetings are held fortnightly with formal agenda, minutes and action points. Each director chairs, and is a member of, several groups working on cross-college issues. These are called 'clusters' and consist of directors and other staff. At the time of the inspection, there were 17 clusters, without terms of reference or determined membership. The status of clusters is subject to various interpretations by managers and staff and there is confusion about whether they are policy-making, task, consultative or decision-making groups. Despite these ambiguities, some clusters have done worthwhile work, for example, on quality assurance procedures and the introduction of GNVQ courses. The role of these groups should be clarified and the outcomes of their activities monitored more closely in order that their contribution to the new structure can be evaluated.

20 The senior management structure generates a plethora of scheduled meetings in addition to daily, informal gatherings. The same issue is often debated at several meetings, some of which have members in common, or is considered by a number of individual directors before decisions are made. This duplication of effort makes decision making slow. Some directors also have a substantial teaching commitment and it is questionable whether they will be able to sustain their range of work as the new structure matures.

21 The curriculum, support and administration services are organised in 14 teaching divisions and four non-teaching sections. This structure is well established and the heads of most divisions provide good leadership. Responsibilities are clearly defined and allocated and communication is generally effective. Divisional meetings are held regularly and are minuted. In the non-teaching sections, the links with the appropriate director are clear and well understood and decision making follows a logical path. However, in the teaching divisions decision making has become more complex. At times, it is delayed because of the need for heads of division to consult two or more directors who may have responsibility for different aspects of each issue.

22 The heads of the teaching divisions, learning-resource centre, the management information system, finance, and administration sections join the senior management team to form the college management team; a total of 29 staff who meet fortnightly. The terms of reference of this group include the formulation, communication and review of corporation policies relating to all areas of college activity. In practice, however, the meetings have mainly provided an opportunity to share information.

23 Communication in the college is good and staff are satisfied with it. Governors, the principal and the directors are accessible. Staff appreciate the opportunity for regular, informal meetings in small groups with the principal. There are regular staff briefings and a popular staff bulletin. Minutes of all management meetings are published. Corporation and committee minutes of unrestricted business are available in the library. The academic board, which meets twice a term, is the main forum for debating curricular matters. Its membership consists of the senior management team and elected representatives of academic and curriculum support staff. Its role is advisory to the principal and it liaises closely with the corporation curriculum committee. There is a clear sense of college community and staff are aware of the issues which the college has to face.

24 The 1994-97 strategic plan and the annual operating statements were largely the work of senior managers. The current planning cycle is well managed, based on systematic review of the earlier plan and staff at all levels are involved. Development planning at divisional level is effectively supported by directors, although some of the documentation lacks detail. Governors are involved appropriately in the planning process. The director of planning and marketing is responsible for drafting the strategic plan, which is then considered by the senior management team. The college is working towards more precise definitions of performance indicators.

25 Personnel and health and safety policies have been reviewed and have been approved by the corporation. Responsibility for them is clearly allocated. The college has an environmental policy.

26 Procedures for calculating budgets are widely published and are understood by staff. Priorities are set in relation to college objectives. Provisional allocations of staff and supplies are systematically adjusted in the light of recruitment. Both the corporation finance committee and the college's internal auditors have identified weaknesses in financial control and reporting, including the absence of a mechanism for preventing curriculum areas from overspending. New controls have not yet taken full effect. The college needs to evaluate more precisely the efficiency of its activities, for example, by developing unit costing. Summaries of the college's estimated income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1995 are shown in figures 5 and 6. The college's unit of funding for the year 1994-95 is £17.40 per unit compared with a median of £18.17 per unit for general further education and tertiary colleges.

27 Management information is inadequate. Information is held on three separate computer systems and the generation of information on staffing, student enrolments, examination results and destinations, is difficult, slow and sometimes unreliable. Data held in divisions sometimes differ from those held centrally. The collection of data requires greater central control and verification. The college has underestimated the scope and complexity of the reporting required for college-level analysis and decision making.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

28 A new structure for guidance and support services was introduced at the beginning of the academic year and four senior managers have responsibility for different parts of it. Their workload does not allow them sufficient time to be fully effective and this has hindered developments. Co-ordination of the parts of the service is loose. There is no general policy for guidance and support, and no operational objectives.

29 Formal relationships with the island's high schools are becoming more difficult and college staff have limited access to some of them. Information about college provision does not reach all 16 year old pupils. Personal contacts and the county careers service help to overcome some of these obstacles. Despite the college's prominent advertising, some students said that they spent a year studying in a school sixth form when, had they been better informed, they would have chosen to come to the college. This view was supported by students' parents. More comprehensive information about courses should be available at an earlier stage in the year.

30 In September 1994, the college created a new post of admissions and careers counsellor and established a centralised admissions process. There is a new centralised 'green, amber and red' system for scrutinising students' application forms, which is used to check whether students have made appropriate choices, need guidance or are enrolled on suitable programmes. The system shows promising signs of being effective for next years students.

31 Enrolment of full-time students is efficient and in some courses it is woven imaginatively into the induction process. In others, staff perceive it as an administrative chore. Some courses hold a barbecue before the start of a new academic year for new students to meet those in their second year. Materials are available to guide staff in planning induction programmes. The college has surveyed students' views, which vary across the teaching divisions, and is attempting to establish consistency in the quality of induction

32 Most full-time students take diagnostic tests during or prior to induction to identify their abilities in numeracy and literacy. Individual programmes are devised, and additional one-to-one tuition is given where it is needed. Some students report that they would not have been able to cope with their studies without this support. Help is available for students

with dyslexia and this is valued by those who use it, including some on higher education courses.

33 All full-time students have a tutor and most say that their tutors are accessible and generous with their time. There is no agreed policy on the role of tutors and practice varies widely. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and adult basic education students receive thorough pre-entry and on-entry assessment. Each student has a tutor, a period of induction and a negotiated learning plan. Good tutorial practice was observed in some other teaching divisions, where there was sensitive awareness of students' personal and study needs, and regular action planning was taking place. All of this was valued by students. However, in some divisions, there is no timetabled tutorial time and it is left to individual students to decide whether or not to refer to their tutors. This lack of structure means that students often approach their tutors only at crisis point and receive little systematic advice on their progress. There is no common tutorial period for GCE A level students, no tutorial programme for tutors to deliver and tutorials are not highly regarded. The college has not yet addressed the needs of part-time students. Their enrolment is not as carefully structured as for full-time students and some part-time students perceived it to be very disorganised. There is no formal induction programme. Guidance and support are dependent on the initiative of individual tutors. A consistent approach for all students could usefully be based on the best existing practice and introduced across the college.

34 Full-time students are fully aware of the student services offered by the college. Student services' staff visit most tutor groups during the induction period and information about their work is included in the student handbook. The accommodation and welfare services are highly regarded. The enthusiasm and commitment of staff, and their prompt response to students' concerns, encourage students to seek the help they need. Increasing numbers of students encounter personal and social problems which interfere with their studies and a counselling service is available for three days a week. It is already used fully and is likely to require additional resources in the near future.

35 There is a reasonable supply of up-to-date information on careers. Preparation for working life is generally covered well on vocational courses, partly through work experience, but it is inadequately addressed for those students following non-vocational courses. The admissions and careers counsellor has recently created a programme to help students make decisions about their next steps. County careers officers, based in the college for three days a week, contribute well to this programme.

36 The new appointment of a student liaison officer is proving beneficial. The student association for further education has been revitalised and the executive is now energetically promoting social activities and events to raise money for charity. Good relationships have been established with the higher education students' union. There is a new programme of elective

activities which are largely sporting and recreational. They are free, including transport to venues, and they are attracting more students than in the past. Further developments of the programme are planned; these might include cultural activities. This initiative has already helped to bring together students from across the college, regardless of course or level of study.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

37 Of the 180 sessions inspected, 57 per cent had strengths which clearly outweighed weaknesses. Only 6 per cent had weaknesses which outweighed strengths. A summary of the inspection grades is given below.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level		0	3	9	3	0	15
Basic education		8	6	3	0	0	17
GCSE		1	3	4	1	0	9
GNVQ		3	6	7	3	0	19
NVQ		8	28	17	0	0	53
Other vocational		4	15	16	2	0	37
Other		3	15	10	2	0	30
Total		27	76	66	11	0	180

38 The average attendance level in the teaching sessions inspected was 79 per cent. The highest attendance rates were 82 per cent in business studies, 84 per cent in care, 87 per cent in countryside and amenity management and 89 per cent in science. Attendance in the remainder of the areas inspected was between 68 per cent and 78 per cent. Some classes had up to 40 per cent of students absent. A high proportion of absentees are adults, many of whom are reported as having difficulty attending because of domestic or personal problems.

39 Most courses are well planned. There are schemes of work with clear aims and objectives and schedules for distributing, collecting and marking students' work. Some courses, such as those in construction, lack co-ordination because teachers do not share their schemes of work. Many lessons are well planned. Activities are carefully related to students' abilities and there are appropriate worksheets and texts. Some teachers, however, do not use lesson plans. There were instances of materials or handouts being forgotten by staff, poorly prepared or inappropriately used handouts, insufficient time allowed for students to complete practical tasks, and a failure to achieve intended outcomes by the end of lessons because of poor planning.

40 Students are often encouraged to take some responsibility for their own progress. In hairdressing, beauty therapy and office administration

lessons, for example, students are supported well by staff when devising their own action plans or setting objectives for practical work. Staff are adept at recognising when to intervene and when to withdraw, as students gain confidence in setting their own targets and recording progress. In construction, such good practice was notably neglected.

41 An example of good practice in an NVQ level 2 hairdressing lesson in hair diseases began with the teacher helping students to consolidate earlier learning. Students worked well as a whole group, answering increasingly searching questions. They divided into small groups according to their levels of knowledge and understanding. Different written exercises were tackled by each group. Some students were developing their basic knowledge of hair diseases before being assessed, while others were learning about the effect of general health on the condition of hair. The teacher spent time with each group, asking detailed questions about these topics. Students then worked individually or in small groups, completing sections of their portfolios of evidence as they progressed. Time was allowed at the end of the lesson for students to review the lesson and establish the foundation for the next one.

42 Students in a BTEC higher national certificate in business lesson prepared well for role-play. They were given informative handouts describing the context of the activity and their roles. They assumed the guise of managers with relish and had a lively debate about management issues. After the exercise, the teacher handled the debriefing well and, by the end of the lesson, students had gained some valuable insights into management problems.

43 Staff in catering, hairdressing, and beauty therapy have developed good realistic working environments which provide students with opportunities to practice skills in a commercial setting. Some assignments and class activities are based on 'real life' case studies. For example, in the area of countryside and amenity management they were based on a commercial farm, enabling students to explore business possibilities in a realistic way.

44 Teachers use a range of teaching methods, particularly to meet the varying needs of adult students. For example, the curriculum in office administration is organised into clearly-defined modules of three hours. Students can begin them at will, good records are kept of individual progress and there are assignments attached to each module. In most cases, this use of modules works well. Sometimes, however, the more able students are not sufficiently stretched and some assignments are set before students have developed the skills required to deal with them. In other areas, some teachers fail to vary their lessons sufficiently. There were, for example, instances of teachers reading aloud either from a handout or textbook for nearly half a lesson and, in one instance, not giving a copy of the text to students. In some lessons, little use was made of information technology or video equipment when it would have been appropriate to do so. Sometimes, too much reliance was placed on copying

notes either from the board or from the overhead projector, the latter often being difficult to read.

45 In some lessons, for example in office administration and engineering, insufficient account was taken of students' prior experiences. In the majority of engineering lessons, students contributed little to discussion. In engineering and humanities sessions, teachers often relied on volunteers to answer questions and many students remained silent throughout. Students were not encouraged to pursue lines of enquiry during questioning. In some cases, students' answers to questions revealed gaps in their knowledge, which teachers neglected. Lessons were too relaxed, their direction was sometimes lost and inspectors judged that students should have covered more ground in the time available. In office administration, there were instances of staff working at the pace of the slowest learners, so that the more able students were not sufficiently challenged.

46 In most areas, students' work is marked thoroughly and comments are clear and helpful. In construction, however, assessment criteria were rarely given to students and teachers' comments on marked work were often brief, bland and inconsistent. In business studies, hairdressing, beauty therapy and countryside and amenity management, adequate initial coaching is given to students, progress is monitored carefully and achievement is recorded in detail. In some practical sessions, students needed more help in learning to use equipment. For example, in engineering and office administration, students lacked confidence and needed more guided practice before using machines independently.

47 Students on adult basic education programmes and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, benefit from well-planned lessons. Most activities combine care and protection on the one hand with building students' independence on the other. A particularly good example was observed during a lesson on the 'significant living' programme. Students were briefed carefully to travel for the first time on public transport from Ryde to Newport. Earlier preparation had included shadowing staff on the same journey. Staff asked pertinent questions to ensure that students could recall earlier lessons. Students were told clearly what to do if anyone got lost. They all arrived on time at the agreed destination. They were able to describe their experiences clearly, had enjoyed the challenge and gained sufficient confidence to undertake further journeys.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

48 Most students enjoy their studies and speak clearly and knowledgeably about their work. Students are often able to put forward coherent arguments and enter into effective discussion during teaching sessions. They work well in groups and develop a high degree of professionalism in many areas including care, catering, and hair and beauty, particularly where relations with clients are concerned. Students' written work is generally good and in most subjects it showed a thorough

understanding of the subject. Written communication skills are less well developed in catering and craft engineering. Some students in these areas are disadvantaged in examinations that have an appreciable written content. Good practical skills are attained in construction, hair and beauty, engineering, catering, science and agriculture and horticulture. Practical work is normally carried out competently and with due regard to health and safety, although difficulties associated with inappropriate accommodation were noted during the inspection of science, catering, art and design, and construction.

49 In management and professional courses, results over a three-year period are particularly good. In most cases they are well above national comparators. Pass rates always exceed 75 per cent. This year, the college has been designated one of the very few national centres of excellence by the National Examining Body for Supervisory Management. Results in the BTEC national diploma, first diploma and national certificate in business and finance, and Association of Accounting Technicians final examinations are also at or above national averages. Retention rates in these business studies programmes are more variable and in some they dropped noticeably in 1993-94. In office administration, most courses lead to NVQs and students progress at their own pace through individual programmes. Student tracking systems demonstrate that the majority of full-time students gain full awards at level 2 in 36 weeks or less and achieve the full level 3 award within a further 36 weeks. RSA Examinations Board (RSA) and Pitman single subject results are uneven, with wordprocessing results being generally better than those in typing. The high pass rates achieved by full-time students taking examinations for the Association of Medical Secretaries, Practice Administration and Receptionists and in RSA medical audio-typing are not matched by part-time students.

50 In information systems, the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) information technology results for the last two years have been good, with over 90 per cent of those entered for the examination passing. In care, there have recently been changes in the courses offered and overall trends are not evident. The 1994 results are generally satisfactory and some are particularly good; for example, in the RSA certificate in welfare studies (95 per cent pass rate of those who entered) and the C&G childcare courses (100 per cent). Pass rates in the BTEC diploma in health studies courses average at about 70 per cent over three years, but the BTEC first certificate pass rates have been poor at around 50 per cent. Retention rates in care are generally over 80 per cent.

51 Examination results in leisure, travel and tourism and catering are uneven. In the BTEC national diplomas, pass rates over three years have ranged from 67 to 93 per cent, while in the first diplomas they are spread even more widely, from 41 to 92 per cent. Results in craft catering examinations are equally variable and are better in examinations which are largely practical than in those where there is substantial written and theory content. This is true for both full-time and part-time students. Retention rates are variable but are better in catering than in leisure and tourism.

52 Engineering results over three years give a very mixed picture in a complex web of related courses. In the BTEC national diploma in engineering results are poor, but in the national certificate, first certificate and higher national certificate, pass rates are generally good. The national certificate and higher national certificate results in electrical engineering are poor. Some of the mechanical engineering craft results are reasonable, whilst those for basic engineering competencies are very poor. Fabrication and welding results are good, as are electronic servicing results. Motor vehicle results vary from moderate to very poor. Retention rates are poor on a number of courses. Staff should make greater efforts to understand the reasons for these apparent anomalies and rectify them.

53 Construction results are generally poor on all the BTEC diploma and certificate courses. In the national diploma, pass rates have been approximately 50 per cent of those entered for the examination and national certificate pass rates have fallen over the last three years from 80 per cent to only 26 per cent, largely due to declining retention rates. Results on all the construction craft courses are unsatisfactory, although they are slightly better in yacht and boat building. There are very low initial numbers and poor retention rates on most construction and boat building courses, to the extent that some groups are too small to provide an appropriate stimulus for students.

54 Achievements in hair and beauty are variable, with the better results occurring in hairdressing. In NVQ level 2 and advanced hairdressing, pass rates are over 90 per cent, whilst in the Institute of Hair and Beauty Certificate, results have fluctuated greatly between 29 and 73 per cent over the last three years. Retention rates are generally good in the hair and beauty division. Students on the full-time BTEC first diploma in countryside studies have achieved well over three years. Pass rates in the part-time courses in agriculture and amenity horticulture at NVQ level 1 and 2 and those leading to Institute of Groundsmanship, Royal Horticultural Society, and C&G qualifications vary from 50 per cent to 100 per cent. Students on these courses have very different levels of ability and include many with learning difficulties. Many adults enrol on horticultural courses to acquire knowledge rather than a qualification.

55 GCE A level and GCSE results are very mixed. GCE A level results refer mainly to part-time students, because wider GCE A level provision for full-time students began only in the current academic year. Of the 20 GCE A levels run over the last three years, students achieved pass rates at or above the national average for general further education colleges in English and history; four other subjects consistently achieve pass rates over 75 per cent. In contrast, the pass rates in business studies, sociology and physics are consistently below national averages. In a number of subjects, entries are so small that no reliable conclusions can be drawn. In GCSE the outcomes are equally mixed. Sociology, English and mathematics have pass rates at grades A-C which are well above national averages and computer studies, physics and chemistry have rates which

are well below. Levels of retention were satisfactory in 1991-92 and 1992-93, but fell markedly in 1993-94.

56 Seventy-six per cent of the 239 students aged 16-18 years were successful in their final year of study on vocational courses included in the Department for Education 1994 performance tables. This places the college among the bottom third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. The 62 students at the college aged between 16-18 years old, who took two or more GCE A levels in 1994, scored on average 3.1 points per entry (where A=10, E=2). However, most students entered for GCE A level examinations are aged 19 years or over.

57 Students have done well in sporting and other fields. An Isle of Wight College student is the under-19 national pentathlon champion and a member of the Great Britain under-21 squad. Another has reached national standard in the triathlon and a student came second in the national under-19 trampolining championships. A number play football to league standard. One student has been a medical assistant in Romania, another went on a missionary trip to Ecuador, and a third won first prize in a national competition to design a game for people who have restricted mobility.

58 Of the 627 students who left the college in 1993-94, 16 per cent went into higher education, 24 per cent into further education and 28 per cent into employment. The remaining 15 per cent were classed as 'other' destinations. Although the college makes strenuous efforts to track departing students, the destinations of 17 per cent of leavers are not known.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

59 Staff are aware of the college's commitment to its charter, although some of them remain unconvinced of its value. The thoroughness with which teachers present the charter to students varies considerably. The original version was produced within tight time constraints and there was limited consultation. The college has established a group to review the charter which includes employers, governors, students and staff.

60 The college has a documented quality assurance policy. It recognises, however, that the policy represents only a starting point and that much remains to be done. The college intends to involve a wide range of staff in developing quality assurance. It is moving cautiously and the rate of development is slow. Work yet to be done includes the establishing of standards and targets. A brief set of draft college standards has been produced for discussion. They are insufficiently precise, failing to lay down measurable goals against which performance can be gauged. Divisional and course standards have yet to be devised.

61 Course review is established where validating bodies have demanded it, though in construction, in particular, it is underdeveloped. Procedures were introduced for all full-time courses in the academic year 1993-94

and for part-time courses at the start of this academic year. The new process which has been influenced by the framework in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement* includes a 'first impressions' questionnaire, a survey about induction, a mid-year and end-of-year course review. It involves students, employers and staff and includes scrutiny of moderators' and verifiers' reports. In some cases, the quality of review is very good. In others, analysis is shallow and conclusions are vague. At its best, there is thorough and analytical discussion which leads to coherent action plans and subsequently to improvements. Heads of divisions submit proposals for action to senior managers, for response within a 21-day deadline. Sometimes the replies are piecemeal because of the number of senior managers involved. Course teams are expected to consider performance indicators, such as the achievement of enrolment targets and course retention and progression rates but, in practice, this is not always done. Performance indicators are not defined clearly and there are no centrally-set targets. The result is that there is no means of measuring progress from year to year.

62 Responsibility for leading quality assurance lies with a member of the senior management team who is widely respected. The director leads a group of four senior managers which is developing quality assurance procedures and is consulting widely. Quality groups have been established to deal with the charter, staff appraisal, verification and quality audit. Responsibility for operating the system is divided between two people, one dealing largely with curriculum matters and the other with staff development. This may lead to difficulties of co-ordination as the system progresses.

63 Staff development and appraisal are seen as integral parts of the quality assurance system. A staff-development policy has existed since 1991 and has been updated regularly. It states clearly the priority areas under which approval may be sought and there are explicit links to the strategic plan. Staff are aware of the college's priorities and heads of teaching divisions check applications against college objectives before approving them. There is an induction programme which new staff have found helpful, though their views expressed in a subsequent review of the programme have indicated areas which might be improved. New teaching staff benefit from a mentor scheme. Although the policy applies to all staff, in practice, support staff have a less extensive induction and the mentor scheme is not available to them. The college should consider whether a standard scheme might be provided for all staff.

64 The 1994-95 budget for staff development is £70,000, representing 1.5 per cent of the college's recurrent income. Staff at all levels report no difficulty in obtaining funds for activities which align with college priorities. Staff who attend externally-run training activities are required to complete an evaluation, so that the college can judge their usefulness. The system might be further improved by publicising more widely the outcomes of these events.

65 There are separate but equally well-documented appraisal schemes for teaching and support staff, both of which have been agreed with the relevant unions. They include classroom or task observation. Some of those who have completed the appraisal process report that it has been rewarding. However, the scheme for teaching staff is running behind schedule. It is two years since the first appraisal took place and only some 30 per cent of appraisals have been completed. Work on the scheme for support staff began later but only three members of the support staff have started their appraisals.

66 Part of the college's quality strategy is the achievement of the Investors in People award. The college has made a thorough comparison of its current activities with the Investors in People standards required for the award. Progress beyond this point has been slow. The original target of achieving the award in June 1995 has been extended to December, but it remains ambitious. The TEC supports what it considers to be a well-directed though slow-moving effort.

67 The college's self-assessment report was produced by the senior management team, assisted by three members of the corporation board. The report provides a useful overview of the college's activity under the headings in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. There is some correlation between the conclusions of the college's report and those of the inspection. The report is, however, mainly descriptive and it omits some key issues, such as evaluation of examination results.

RESOURCES

Staffing

68 The college has 118 permanent teachers (112 full-time equivalent) and 210 part-time teachers (133 full-time equivalent). Sixty-eight of the full-time teachers are men and 50 are women. There are 94 full-time and 46 part-time administrative and technical support staff, of whom a third are men and two thirds women. Staff turnover is low. Almost 50 per cent of teachers have spent more than 10 years at the college. Teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced for the courses they teach. Almost 90 per cent of full-time teachers have a teaching qualification. Teachers in some curriculum areas maintain good links with business and industry, and with professional bodies. Most teachers working on vocational programmes have industrial experience, but in many cases it was gained long ago. Few teachers have achieved the Training and Development Lead Body assessor and verifier qualifications. Part-time teachers make an important contribution to the college through their up-to-date business experience.

69 The director of human resources has responsibility for personnel and staffing. He is assisted by a professionally qualified personnel manager and a personnel officer. The college has recently produced a staffing plan.

A number of policy statements have been developed, including those for equal opportunities, discipline and grievance. The college has produced a new contract for teachers which is nearing the end of its consultation period and a ballot on its adoption will take place shortly. Although the college monitors and keeps details of its staff, information is held on various databases and is not easily accessible. This makes the production of even basic staffing information difficult. It would improve management if all staffing data were brought together in one system.

70 There are detailed procedures for appointing staff which include steps for establishing the job specification for each post, for short listing candidates, and for interviewing. The college records reasons for non-selection. It has recently decided to give feedback to all unsuccessful interviewees and will also provide reasons to those who are not short-listed. A relocation grant is available to assist new staff.

Equipment/learning resources

71 The college has a good range of teaching aids, including overhead projectors, screens and boards in most rooms. Video playback equipment is located in selected rooms around the college making it readily accessible. The quality of furniture in classrooms varies considerably. In engineering science rooms, for example, it is in poor condition.

72 The college has a small but attractive library. A display of journals visible through a large window is eye-catching. The library has 25,000 books and the range of these is good in most curriculum areas. A small but adequate collection of books is held at the college farm. The librarian regularly reviews the books with subject specialists to withdraw unwanted stock. All books are listed on the computerised catalogue which is available on the college computer network. The number of disks for the compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) database is increasing steadily. Two hundred journals are taken. There is a large collection of 3,500 videos. The library has 40 study spaces, including 16 in a small inner room, which are dedicated to silent working. The budget has been increased to extend the range of books required for higher education courses in particular, although all students benefit from this improvement. The book and journal budget for 1994-95 is £36,500, or £16.66 per full-time equivalent student.

73 Specialist equipment is adequate in most curriculum areas but, in some, much of it is old and in need of replacement. Old equipment is reasonably well maintained, but the amount of equipment which needs replacing is growing. The college does not have a replacement policy for major equipment and despite the possibility of relocation to another site at some time in the future, it should address this.

74 There is a range of equipment to support engineering courses, including manual and computer numerically controlled machine tools and a good computer-aided design facility, with the computers linked directly to the machine tools. Although most of this equipment is old, it is in good condition. Electrical and mechanical engineering laboratories contain

equipment which is old and needs replacing. Electronic equipment is generally of a good standard. The motor vehicle section has lacked investment for some years. It has acquired two modern engines recently, but does not have a modern car for students to work on. Consequently, the section cannot offer NVQ courses; it provides the underpinning knowledge for students sent to college by a local training provider. Equipment for construction courses is generally fit for its purpose, but some is old and will soon need to be replaced.

75 The college has three well-equipped production kitchens for catering and hospitality courses. Modern appliances have been obtained through electricity and gas board sponsorship. There is good equipment for hairdressing and beauty. Facilities and equipment for sports and leisure courses are limited and the college uses private sports halls, playing fields and a swimming pool. The fitness centre has a limited range of equipment but a wider range will be installed in the new sports hall in the summer. There is a small range of studio television and recording equipment to support media studies courses. Science equipment is inadequate for advanced level courses in physics, chemistry and mathematics, but is satisfactory for biology and for general science in vocational courses.

76 The range and amount of computing equipment are good. There are 315 modern computers, available for students' use, giving a ratio of one machine to every seven full-time equivalent students. The main computing facility is in a single location, with good open-access facilities supervised by a demonstrator. There are other computing rooms for specialist use in some curriculum areas. Most computers, including many of those used for administration, are on the college network, and electronic mailing is being introduced. The college has become the Internet point of presence for the Isle of Wight, Southampton and Portsmouth. In return for placing the equipment in the college, the company has provided free access to the Internet and a large number of individual Internet addresses.

77 The college has a small farm of 33 hectares with a commercial sheep flock and an intensive beef unit. A small animal unit is used for countryside courses. It also enables the college to host parties of school children on activity outings. There is a good range of equipment for the specialist courses offered. A horticultural unit of three hectares on the main campus, appropriately equipped, supports country and amenity management courses. It includes over 3,000 permanent plants, the largest collection on the island.

Accommodation

78 The college has three sites. The main campus is close to Newport town centre. The mechanical engineering workshop is in an industrial unit close by, and the agricultural unit, Holliers Farm, is about eight miles away. The main college has a number of buildings of varying styles and ages. One-storey and two-storey brick buildings with flat roofs, were erected in the early 1950s. More were added in the 1970s and 1980s and

there are nine mobiles. Some of the necessary refurbishment of the older accommodation is in abeyance because negotiations are taking place to finance the building of a new college on a new site. Plans have been drawn up and planning permission is being sought. A new multi-skills unit of 3,500 square metres is being constructed on the main site, ready for September 1995. It will accommodate mechanical engineering, motor vehicle, construction trades, and boat building workshops in a large, open area, and also provide a gymnasium, fitness centre and sports hall.

79 The reception centre is located at the furthest point from the college entrance and poor signposting from the students' car park makes it difficult to find. Reception, the library, student services, the refectory, the snack bar and travel shop are all clustered around a pleasant open area. The college grounds are well maintained, and there are trees and shrubs in all open areas. There is a day nursery for infants from three months to school age which is housed in two of the mobiles. The mobiles have been re-painted, but still leave room for some improvement. The college has worked to improve access for students with restricted mobility. The main science laboratories are now the only areas inaccessible to those using wheelchairs. There is a pleasant student common room, with a range of table sports and electronic game machines, as well as coffee tables and chairs. Enhanced extraction equipment has been installed to limit any discomfort caused by cigarette smoke.

80 Art, fashion and care courses take place in a modern building. Pottery classes, however, are held in a basement. It is a small, overcrowded area, containing a number of potters' wheels. The ceilings are low. The kilns are close to the door and, in the event of fire, emergency exit from the room would be impossible. The college should deal with this hazard urgently. In construction, an enclosed woodwork machinery area is shared by students working in boat building or carpentry and joinery. Because of poor lines of vision between the workshops and the machinery area, students often use the equipment without supervision.

81 The buildings are generally sound, though there is need for constant maintenance. The college has produced an accommodation strategy and a planned maintenance schedule, but it is little more than a description of the state of the buildings with a list and cost of the proposed work. There is no timescale for the work to be carried out. The senior technician responsible for day-to-day maintenance is not familiar with the schedule. Staff make requests for maintenance on job requisition forms and constant repairs keep the maintenance staff fully occupied. The college should plan a strategic and working maintenance programme. There is no planned decoration schedule, though some areas are identified for attention each summer holiday.

82 The college does not regularly calculate a room utilisation figure. Although figures for room use are derived from estimated demand at the beginning of the year, no monitoring takes place.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

83 The main strengths of the college are:

- governors with key connections in the island's community
- a comprehensive range of programmes at a variety of levels
- effective promotion of its courses
- good support for adult basic education students and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- good internal communication
- a well-qualified and enthusiastic staff
- good teaching in most areas
- good computing facilities.

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

- the excessive range of roles and responsibilities of senior managers
- slow decision making resulting from the current management structure
- weaknesses in financial control and reporting
- ineffective co-ordination and management of students' guidance and support
- poor examination results in some areas, particularly in construction
- inadequate management information
- the further development of the quality assurance system
- the hazard in the ceramics area
- the lack of an equipment replacement policy and an accommodation maintenance schedule.

FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage enrolments by age (as at February 1995)

 - 2 Percentage enrolments by level of study (as at February 1995)

 - 3 Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at February 1995)

 - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at February 1995)

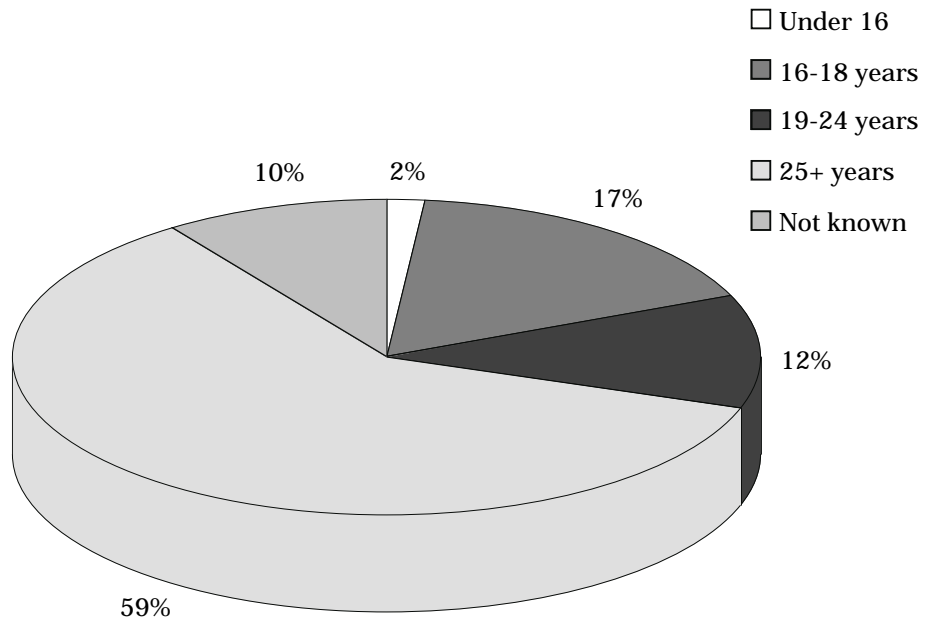
 - 5 Estimated income (for 12 months to July 1995)

 - 6 Estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)

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

Figure 1

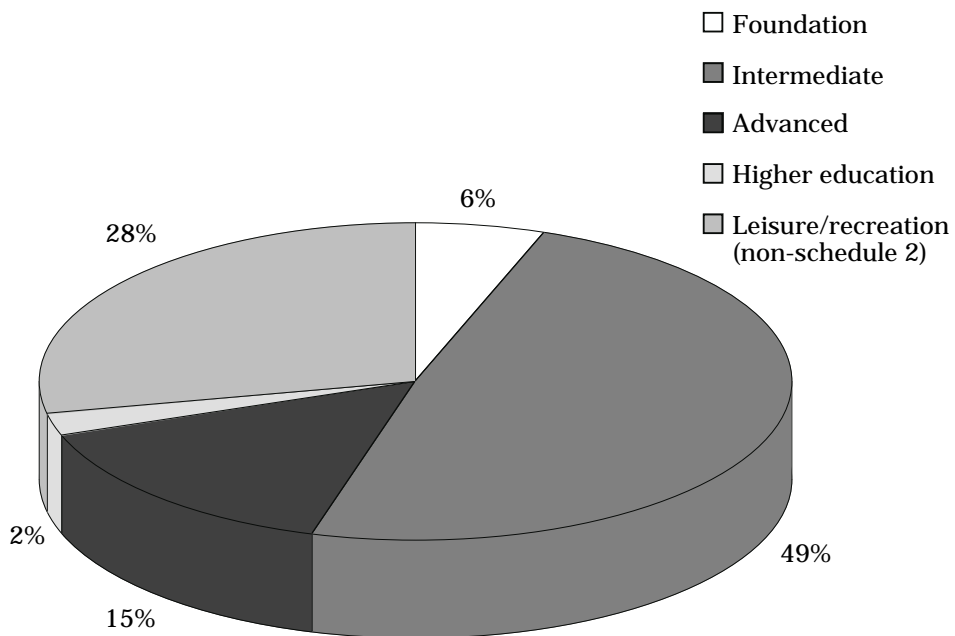
Isle of Wight College: percentage enrolments by age (as at February 1995)



Enrolments: 7,166

Figure 2

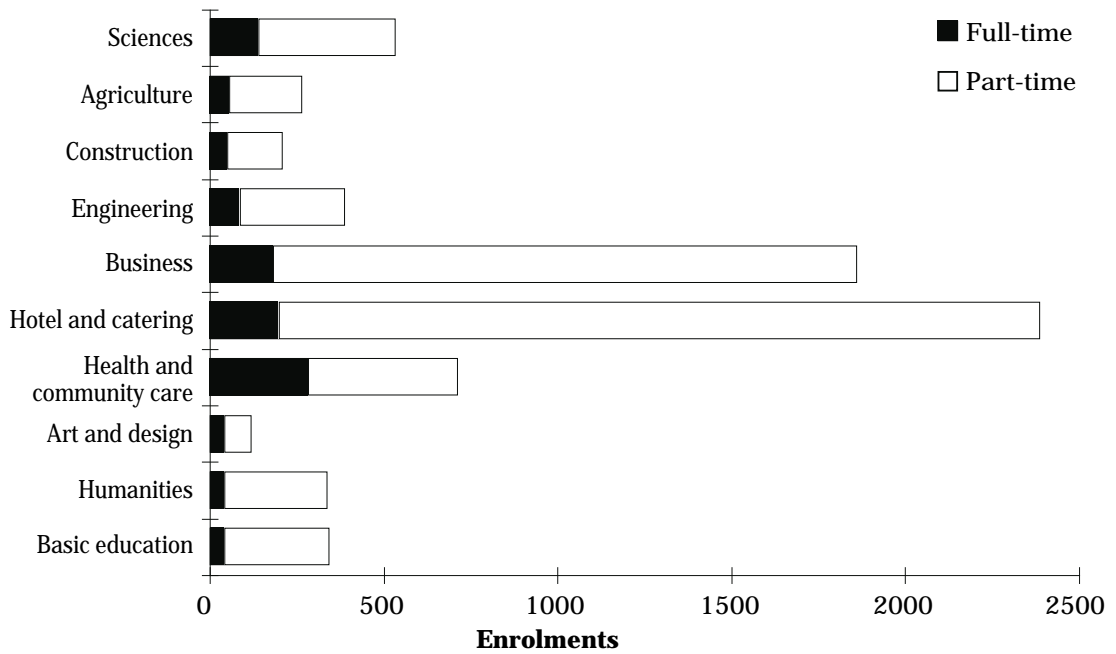
Isle of Wight College: percentage enrolments by level of study (as at February 1995)



Enrolments: 7,166

Figure 3

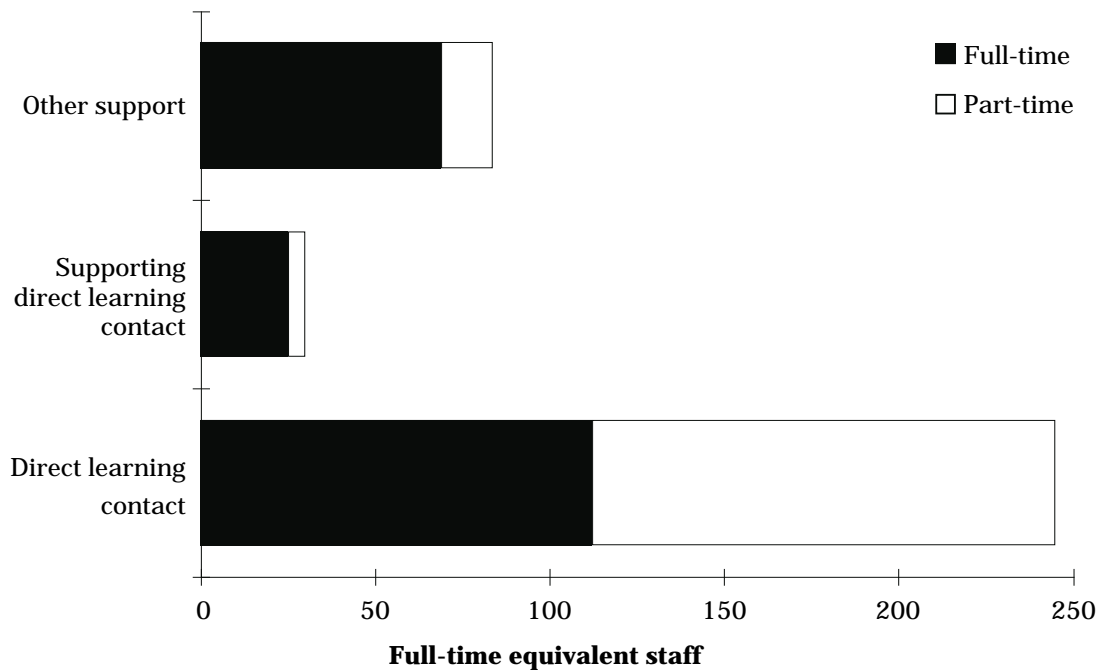
Isle of Wight College: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at February 1995)



Enrolments: 7,166

Figure 4

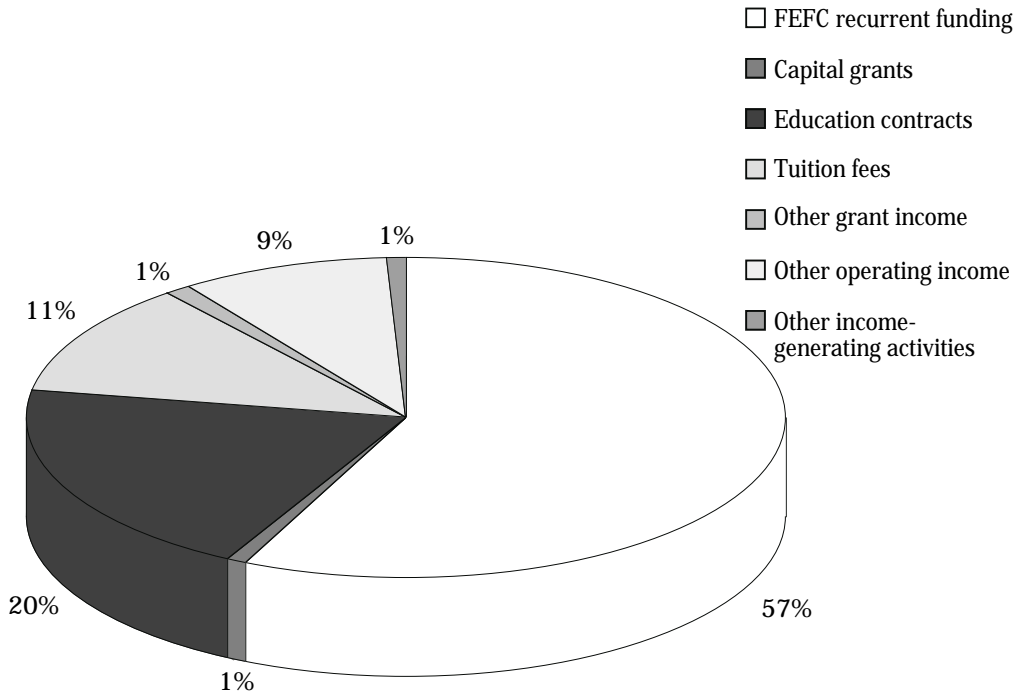
Isle of Wight College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at February 1995)



Full-time equivalent staff: 359

Figure 5

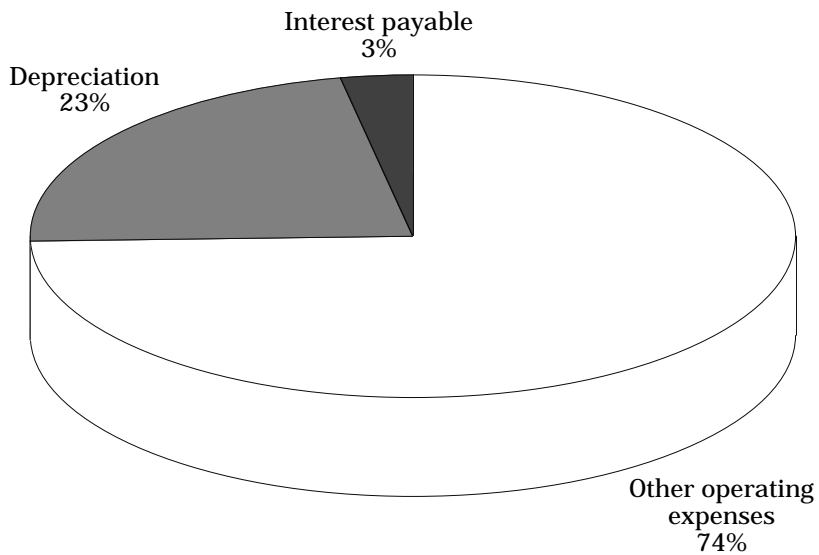
Isle of Wight College: estimated income (for 12 months to July 1995)



Estimated income: £7,969,000

Figure 6

Isle of Wight College: estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)



Estimated expenditure: £8,314,000

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