

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

John Ruskin College

March 1997

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL**

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

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

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GRADE DESCRIPTORS

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

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

College grade profiles 1993-96

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

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 26/97

JOHN RUSKIN COLLEGE
GREATER LONDON REGION
Inspected August-December 1996

Summary

John Ruskin College offers a wide range of GCE A level courses. It has provided GNVQ courses at three levels for several years and it has recently introduced courses for adults. It effectively promotes equal opportunities and has strong community links. Teaching is generally of a good standard and students achieve high pass rates in most GCE A level subjects. A high proportion of students progress to employment or higher education. The arrangements for the recruitment, guidance and support of students are well planned and effective. Students' attendance and progress is monitored closely. Students and their parents are kept well informed of progress. Arrangements for governance are effective. Corporation members represent a wide range of community interests. They are supportive and hard working. They take a keen interest in students' achievements. The college is well managed and staff are supported by a reliable and accurate management information system. Communications within the college are good. Staff are well qualified and have extensive teaching experience. Students have good access to information technology facilities. Most general and specialist equipment and accommodation is of a high standard. To build on its achievements the college should: improve the low success rates on many GNVQ courses; improve the quality of its leisure and tourism and hotel and catering provision; strengthen its quality assurance system; improve links with employers and improve the quality of some faculty plans.

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

Aspects of cross-college provision	Grade
Responsiveness and range of provision	1
Governance and management	1
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	1
Quality assurance	3
Resources: staffing	2
equipment/learning resources	2
accommodation	2

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science	2	Health and social care	2
Mathematics	2	Art and design, including music and performing arts	2
Computing, information technology and electronics	3	English	2
Business studies, economics and law	2	Languages, social sciences, history, geography and physical education	2
Leisure and tourism, hotel and catering	4		

INTRODUCTION

1 John Ruskin College, Croydon, was inspected between August and December 1996 by 19 inspectors who spent a total of 70 days in the college inspecting curriculum areas and aspects of cross-college provision. The inspectors observed 163 lessons and tutorials and examined students' written and practical work, together with a wide range of documentation about the college and its courses. Meetings were held with governors, college managers, teaching and support staff, students, parents, employers and representatives from local schools, community groups and the South London Training and Enterprise Council (TEC).

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 John Ruskin College was established as a sixth form college in 1988, following a reorganisation of post-16 education in Croydon. The college occupies a single site at Selsdon in the south-east of the borough, on the edge of green belt land. Eighty-four per cent of the college's students come from maintained schools within Croydon. There are two other further education colleges in the borough and many independent schools in Croydon and the nearby borough of Bromley have sixth forms. Consequently, competition for students is intense.

3 Employment in the borough is mainly office-based, with financial and business services accounting for nearly a quarter of jobs. The distribution and retailing sectors employ about one-fifth of the labour force. The manufacturing sector has been in decline, but some light manufacturing activities remain, including electronic and electrical engineering. The unemployment rate in the borough is 10 per cent.

4 At the time of the inspection, 1,647 students were enrolled at the college. Of these, 1,279 were full time and 368 part time. Almost all of the full-time students are aged 16 to 19. The part-time students are mainly adults, enrolled on evening and Saturday courses. Student numbers by age, by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3, respectively.

5 There are 83 full-time equivalent teaching staff and 26 full-time equivalent support staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4. The college is managed by the principal, two vice-principals and four assistant principals. The college is organised in five faculties: English and expressive arts; humanities and social sciences; mathematics, business and economics; science, technology and computing; and one which manages all of the general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) courses.

6 The college's mission is to be a leading provider of a quality educational service to students from a variety of backgrounds who wish to continue education and training after 16. It emphasises the importance of providing a framework for individual guidance and counselling, and of encouraging all students to work to their maximum potential. The mission

also recognises the importance of staff training and development for the delivery of a quality service.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

7 The college is highly responsive to the needs of its local community. Since 1992 it has developed a broad range of courses. Entry to the college does not depend on academic ability, although minimum qualifications are required for entry to some courses. In 1996-97, 57 per cent of full-time students were enrolled on general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) courses, 5 per cent on general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) courses and 38 per cent on GNVQ courses. Twenty-nine GCE A level courses are provided, including 11 in a modular format. Eight GCE advanced supplementary (AS) subjects are also taught. Recently, the number of GCSE subjects has been reduced to 13 as the college has increased its range of intermediate GNVQ courses.

8 The college has provided GNVQ courses since 1992. Most of its increase in student numbers is the result of increasing the range of these courses. The college promotes equality between advanced GNVQ and GCE A level courses by applying the same entry criteria. Full-time students are able to study for advanced and intermediate GNVQs in art and design, business, health and social care, hospitality and catering, leisure and tourism, science and information technology. In 1996-97, 46 students were enrolled on foundation GNVQ courses in business and health and social care. Most foundation students who are successful stay at the college since they are given the opportunity to progress to an intermediate GNVQ course in any vocational area. Students who apply for foundation or intermediate GNVQ courses are assessed at entry to determine the level of course they should follow.

9 Students on GNVQ advanced courses may include a GCE A level in their programme of study. Eighty-seven students took this opportunity in 1996-97. GCSE subjects may also be studied with GNVQs. Additional GNVQ units and national vocational qualifications (NVQs) are not yet offered. Full-time students are encouraged to participate in a range of additional activities. Some activities lead to qualifications in languages, sports leadership and information technology. In all, 22 different activities are available. Participation is voluntary and about one-quarter of full-time students take part.

10 Part-time courses for adults were introduced in 1993. The college carried out market research into local community needs and consulted other providers before planning its adult and continuing education programme. Since then it has undertaken further surveys and developed its programme in response to changing local needs. In 1996-97, there were over 350 part-time students enrolled on part-time courses by December 1996. Five GCE A levels and four GCSE courses, as well as several language, information technology and drawing courses, are

offered. Most courses are provided during the evening. Some information technology courses are available on Saturdays. A daytime course for adults called 'new horizons' provides information technology skills and other work-related skills to meet the needs of adults who wish to return to work.

11 The college has an influential equal opportunities committee which has produced a range of relevant policies. The committee receives regular reports on a range of issues such as student recruitment from different ethnic groups. These show an increasing proportion of minority ethnic students and an increasing number of students who speak English as a second language. Support for these students is provided by a language support teacher employed by the local education authority (LEA). Currently, this is not sufficient to meet the needs of everyone who could benefit. There is no separate specialist provision for students with learning difficulties, since provision is made at a neighbouring college. A recent initiative has been to establish additional numeracy and communication classes for GNVQ foundation students who have significant basic skill needs. The college co-ordinator for equal opportunities has recently received the MBE for services to multicultural education.

12 The college has extensive links with European countries. Students have recently worked on projects in Finland, Luxembourg and Poland. There are also strong links with community organisations in the public and voluntary sectors. One of these resulted in an innovative and successful project to provide courses in computer literacy for parents of pupils at a local primary school. The project is supported by the development fund administered by the TEC. The college has worked closely with the school in carrying out the project and intends to extend the scheme to other activities. The college is also a leading participant in a TEC-funded project to develop multi-media and Internet services for businesses. The TEC regards the college as responsive and considers the primary school scheme to be particularly effective.

13 Some valuable links with employers have been developed to support GNVQ courses. Many GNVQ students undertake a period of work experience. Students in art and design and leisure and tourism have been involved in a range of projects to meet employers' needs. In one of these projects, leisure and tourism students ran Hever railway station in partnership with a railway company; a number of students subsequently gained employment related to this. In science and information technology there are few opportunities for work-related activities. The college has begun to consider training for local businesses. It has carried out some market research and gained approval to offer NVQs in customer care and information technology. This has not yet resulted in any training.

14 The college is effectively promoted on a modest budget. The college produces informative prospectuses for full-time and continuing education and it publishes a brochure advertising post-16 provision in the borough. These publications are supported by a range of leaflets on courses and subjects. There is a well-developed programme of liaison activities with

schools within the borough. The promotion of full-time courses to schools outside of the borough is limited to the distribution of leaflets; nevertheless, an increasing proportion of full-time students are recruited from outside Croydon. Most staff understand the significance of national targets for education and training and the role of the college in contributing to the targets.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

15 The corporation has 14 members. They have diverse backgrounds and a wide range of experience. Six of the governors are women and five are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The governing body includes the principal, seven business members, a nominee from the TEC, a member of staff from a higher education institution, two elected staff governors and two co-opted members, one of whom is a teacher of the deaf. The college's two vice-principals also attend corporation meetings. Members are aware of their responsibilities and understand their role and that of senior management. They have confidence in the principal and her senior managers. The powers delegated by the corporation to the principal are clear and appropriate. Members use their experience in areas such as business, law, education and finance to scrutinise and question information and the recommendations of college managers.

16 The corporation manages its business effectively. There is a clear schedule of meetings and an agreed timescale for the distribution of agendas, papers and minutes. The clerk to the corporation provides a high-quality service and sound advice on appropriate matters. Members speak highly of the quality of information provided to them by the clerk and by managers. The corporation has policies regarding attendance at corporation and committee meetings. Attendance at meetings is good at around 90 per cent. The committees of the corporation are audit, finance and personnel, and remuneration. They have clear terms of reference and produce thorough reports which inform corporation decisions. A code of conduct has been adopted by the corporation and a voluntary register of interests is maintained.

17 Corporation meetings are held six times a year. Governors receive regular written and oral reports from the principal, including a detailed annual report on students' achievements. These reports stimulate a good standard of debate amongst governors who are ready to query low pass rates. Members express a clear understanding of their duty to ensure the financial health of the college and to improve the quality and standard of its provision. However, they have little involvement in curricular matters.

18 The strategic management group comprises the principal, two vice-principals and four assistant principals. The vice-principals are responsible for administration and personnel, and finance and resources, respectively. The assistant principals are responsible for guidance and support, staff development, the 16 to 19 curriculum, and continuing education, respectively. The heads of the five faculties are responsible for

course teaching and the line management of staff. There are weekly meetings of a joint management team comprising the strategic management group and the five faculty heads. Management meetings are conducted with a clear focus and direction. Minutes are detailed and identify timescales and accountability for action. The management structure is understood and supported by staff. Roles are clear and do not overlap. Managers have a shared sense of purpose and they work together effectively. They take a close interest in the day-to-day operations of the college.

19 Strategic planning takes place according to a clear timetable and with appropriate consultation amongst staff at the college. Priorities are agreed by senior managers and governors. The draft plan is discussed by the strategic management group and at faculty meetings and support staff meetings. It is then presented to the corporation for final approval. Staff consider the process helps them to understand the ethos and objectives of the college.

20 Faculties prepare development plans to a common format, in line with the college's strategic plan. These plans vary in quality and some fail to identify priorities, responsibilities and timescales. In the past, support areas have not been required to write development plans, but pilot plans are currently being produced by the learning resources and office services managers. Course management is well organised and effective. There is good documentation to support the teaching of courses, including assessment policies and records of students' progress. Informal meetings of all the course leaders provide good opportunities to discuss day-to-day issues. Staff teaching the same or similar subjects also meet regularly to discuss aspects of course planning and to share good practice.

21 There is an appropriate committee structure and programme of college meetings. Faculty heads meet together weekly and there are monthly faculty meetings. The minutes of some faculty meetings are good, but others do not identify responsibilities and timescales for action. The college's curriculum board comprises two assistant principals, five faculty representatives, an equal opportunities representative, a student and appropriate co-opted members. Board meetings provide a valuable opportunity to discuss and disseminate information about curriculum developments.

22 Communications within the college are good. A communications policy, containing helpful guidelines for staff, reflects the college's commitment to an open and consultative approach to management. Senior managers are very aware of the views of staff and students. The college's weekly newsletter, which is distributed to staff and governors, contains a wide range of information, including changes in courses, examination results, notes on the college environment, Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) news and information about study trips.

23 The college has a reliable management information system which effectively meets the needs of managers. Managers receive regular reports

on, for example, applications, enrolments, retention, students' achievements and students' destinations. This information is accurate and managers have confidence in the system. However, in some faculties, information is not sufficiently analysed and evaluated. For example, reasons for low retention are not always sought. A vice-principal chairs a college management information group which monitors and reviews the college's information needs and ensures that the information requirements of external agencies are met. The college is continually improving its systems. To make the best use of the information available, some managers require further training and others would benefit from on-line access to data. The process of budgeting and the way in which funds are allocated in the college are clear and understood by staff. Budget holders receive monthly reports providing up-to-date information on expenditure.

24 The November 1996 individual student record return indicates that the college will meet its target of 189,000 funded units of activity for the year. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are shown in figures 5 and 6. The average level of funding per unit was £20.85 in 1995-96 and is £20.40 for 1996-97. The median for sixth form colleges in 1996-97 is £19.36 per unit.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

25 The good management and caring attitude of the college is best exemplified by the way in which it recruits, guides and supports its students. In almost every area, capable staff follow well-thought-out procedures which effectively meet students' needs. The college has detailed information about the academic and personal progress of its students. The students are aware of this and appreciate the close interest shown in them by staff.

26 There are established and effective procedures for recruiting students from schools in the borough. Senior managers and a team of four liaison staff, each responsible for a group of 11 to 16 schools, work with the schools to provide information on the college, for example, at careers conventions or lunchtime talks. Pupils receive invitations to open evenings at which prospectuses and subject brochures are available. Applicants from the borough's 11 to 16 schools are interviewed, usually at their school, by a member of the strategic management group or a faculty head. Other applicants and current students wishing to progress within the college are interviewed at the college. Interviews are conducted with integrity, the students' interests being paramount. After the interview applicants are invited to follow up any queries they might have. Parents are invited to contact the college for further information. Students cite the good academic reputation, friendly atmosphere, approachable staff and adult environment among the main reasons for choosing the college.

27 All students who accept the offer of a place attend an open day in July which forms part of their induction to the college. Existing students play a substantial role in hosting the day. Teachers are available for

consultation. A survey has shown that students are very satisfied with the open day, feeling that it helps them to find out about the college and makes them less nervous.

28 Enrolment is well organised. New students have to discuss their course or subject choices with specialist teachers in the light of their GCSE results. Students wishing to change their original choice are advised to discuss it with their parents and are given an explanatory letter to take home. Many parents attend the enrolment session and are involved in final decisions about courses. Administrative staff work closely and effectively with teachers and managers so that by the third day of term course lists are available and tutor groups can be formed. New students are introduced to college facilities and their courses before second-year students return.

29 The enrolment of adult students is friendly and unhurried. Good advice is given and tea and coffee is provided. There is a room for private counselling, if needed. Students felt very well supported during enrolment. On-course support is provided by a named tutor. Part-time adult students have access to the same services, such as careers advice and learning support, as full-time students.

30 Tutorial support is well organised by the faculties. In almost all cases, faculty heads are able to match students to a tutor who teaches them in one of their subjects. Each of the 72 tutor groups contains students from different years, enabling new students to benefit from the experience of their older peers. Close contact is maintained between tutors and students through daily, 10 minute registration periods and a weekly tutorial. Tutors have discretion over the use of tutorial time, provided they cover key topics such as careers planning and higher education applications. Materials are available to help tutors with particular topics such as health education. Attendance at talks by outside speakers in tutorial time is good, since most tutorials are timetabled in a common slot. Tutors are well supported by their faculty heads, who are tutors themselves. Most staff are skilled in their tutoring role. Students have regular individual interviews with tutors to review progress and prepare reports. Tutors give good, sensitive advice to students and involve parents when appropriate. Parents appreciate the extent to which they are kept informed about the progress of their children or any problems relating to them. In a few GNVQ tutor groups, numbers are large and it is difficult for tutors to deal with all issues within the scheduled tutorial time.

31 Tutors and faculty heads work closely with teachers to monitor attendance, academic progress, behaviour and the overall well-being of students. A system exists to alert tutors and faculty heads of problems at an early stage. When problems are identified solutions are sought in close consultation with the student. In general, the system works well.

32 Students may change their course or subject choice in the first few weeks of term. The procedures for this are appropriate and ensure

consultation between all parties involved. Later changes to individual programmes involve more detailed counselling and consideration by all the staff involved, including careers advisers when necessary. Once a change has been decided upon, a new individual timetable is quickly produced. The college monitors the number of students who change courses and has discovered that students who left the college in 1996 made fewer course changes than their predecessors. The college believes that this is due to improvements in the initial advice and guidance that they received.

33 Students are kept well informed of their progress through written reports. These reports are sent to parents prior to parents' evenings. The reports include the student's own self-assessment, developed with the help of the tutor, and the average level of attainment of the teaching group. This provides a benchmark to judge individual progress. As well as providing useful guidance to students and parents, the reports assist tutors when they write references for applications to higher education.

34 The college has a policy of enabling students who arrive from schools with a national record of achievement to continue to maintain it during their period of study. In practice, this is given low priority by tutors. In most tutor groups, the onus is on students to ask for help with this task and few do so.

35 A disability statement, required by the *Disability Discrimination Act 1995*, has been drawn up and approved by the corporation. The provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well managed. Students requiring support are identified and interviewed at an early stage and their needs are properly assessed. Practical support for students with disabilities is arranged in advance and the college employs a full-time care assistant who can respond quickly when the need arises.

36 The need for learning support is identified in several different ways. Students who indicate particular needs on their application forms will be individually assessed before enrolment. As a result, about 20 students receive support in one-to-one sessions. In addition, students can ask for help themselves or be referred by a teacher. Teachers receive advice on how to identify and support learning needs. There is also a policy of identifying talented students and providing help to ensure that they reach their full potential. All foundation and intermediate GNVQ and GCSE students are assessed for their basic skills needs. For 1996-97, 44 students have been identified as likely to benefit from extra help and, of those, 40 receive weekly support. These include all students on foundation courses. Some staff teaching basic skills lack relevant experience, and the effectiveness of their teaching is being monitored. Language support for students who are speakers of languages other than English is available, but currently the college does not meet the needs of everyone who could benefit.

37 Students have good careers education and advice which they value. An experienced careers co-ordinator works with two external careers advisers who provide a total of 870 hours a year. Careers advice is offered at key points during the year, such as open evenings, enrolment sessions and parents' evenings. GNVQ groups have talks on the opportunities for employment and progression which are open to them. Individual interviews are readily available to all students, on an appointment basis or at times of students' own choosing. Careers staff reinforce work done in tutor groups in connection with applications for higher education courses. A higher education evening in May is attended by representatives from 25 institutions. There is a small, well-equipped careers office which incorporates two interview rooms and several computers with careers software.

38 Personal and welfare counselling is provided by a small number of staff and volunteers, including a governor. Students can request an interview or be referred by teaching staff. All applicants are screened before being referred to the most appropriate counsellor, and the numbers receiving counselling are recorded. Students are referred to specialist outside agencies where appropriate. Only one counsellor has a full counselling qualification, although all are studying for qualifications. The service is well publicised through notices in classrooms. The college also provides financial support for students whose parents receive income support, by waiving registration fees, subsidising lunches and contributing to the cost of educational visits.

39 The student council, comprising tutor group representatives, meets weekly. Most of the council's business is connected with social events such as discos and fashion shows, and with fund-raising for charities including the Cot Deaths Society and Help the Elderly. The council helps to co-ordinate the participation of students in open evenings and induction days. It also represents the student body on the curriculum board. Currently only about half of the tutor groups send a representative to meetings.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

40 Inspectors observed 163 lessons. In 67 per cent strengths outweighed weaknesses. This is higher than the average of 63 per cent for all lessons observed during the 1995-96 inspection programme, according to the *Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1995-96*. The weaknesses outweighed the strengths in only one lesson. This compares well with the 1995-96 average of 8 per cent recorded in the same report. The average level of attendance in the lessons observed was 82 per cent. The lowest level, 77 per cent was in leisure and tourism, and hospitality and catering, and the highest, 94 per cent, was in sport and physical education. Students were generally punctual. The following table summarises the grades awarded to the lessons inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level		13	52	28	0	0	93
GCSE		3	9	4	0	0	16
GNVQ		12	15	19	1	0	47
Other		3	2	2	0	0	7
Total		31	78	53	1	0	163

41 Relationships between teachers and students were generally friendly and mutually respectful. Nearly all lessons were well planned. Lesson plans were completed to a standard format, and were used effectively by teachers to guide their teaching. All courses had clear schemes of work. The college has an effective system for monitoring and reviewing these schemes. The thoroughness of course documentation is a strength of many programmes.

42 In business, health and social care, art and design, humanities, science and computing the strengths of the teaching clearly outweighed weaknesses. Students in science carried out their work with enthusiasm and teachers made good use of a range of teaching aids. In computing and information technology, many lessons were taught in an enthusiastic manner and, in one session, effective use was made of a display monitor to enable students to follow the progress of the lesson from their workstations. A teacher on a foundation level GNVQ programme in business effectively broke a long lesson down into short tasks suited to the ability of the students, holding their attention throughout the lesson. In the better lessons in health and social care, students were able to link theory and practical understanding in an enthusiastic and effective way. In an advanced GNVQ health care lesson, students were required to give a presentation of their work. The teacher skilfully prompted, questioned and praised students to encourage them. Effective teaching by teams of teachers in art and design gave students a good opportunity to learn from a range of staff expertise. In a drama session, the teacher used several well-paced activities, all firmly focused on clear objectives, to secure the lively participation of a mixed ability group of students. Teachers of modern languages had high expectations of their students and set work which stretched them intellectually.

43 Weaknesses in these curriculum areas included a small number of lessons where the teaching and pace of work were slow and students were uninvolved. Poor preparation for one lesson led to students wasting time at their computer stations. In a few lessons, learning objectives were unclear. The dominating approach adopted by teachers in some lessons inhibited students' participation. Some students were occasionally insufficiently challenged or stimulated by the work. The emphasis placed on technology in graphical communications meant that insufficient time

was spent on graphic design. In some humanities lessons, there was a lack of variety in teaching methods.

44 The teaching and learning in mathematics, leisure and tourism, hospitality and catering, physical education and sports coaching had a balance of strengths and weaknesses. Teachers of mathematics were competent. Most classes were carefully prepared and students' class work was well monitored. However, in some mathematics lessons there was little variety in teaching methods, insufficient use of information technology and too few opportunities for students to participate. A few mathematics lessons did not allow for the variation in students' abilities. In sports coaching and physical education programmes, students have good relations with teachers. Students who experience difficulty with the theoretical aspects of the course are well supported. The effectiveness of one coaching session was reduced because the teacher had to deal simultaneously with two groups of different abilities. In leisure and tourism, and hospitality and catering, most lessons had a clear sense of purpose. In the better lessons students were well motivated. In one intermediate level GNVQ leisure and tourism lesson, where a mixed ability group was discussing a topic, the teacher maintained firm control while encouraging a lively debate. Some less successful lessons lacked direction and teachers sometimes answered their own questions before students had time to respond. In some hospitality and catering lessons, both years of the advanced GNVQ were using the base room at the same time. This was ineffective as the teacher's attention was split between the groups, both of which wasted time. The concentration on assignment work in some lessons sometimes resulted in students undertaking practical work before they had covered the supporting theory.

45 It is college policy to integrate the teaching and assessment of key skills with vocational units on all GNVQ courses. Students on the GNVQ programmes in science, business studies, and leisure and tourism have many opportunities to develop and practice their information technology skills. The policy of integration has led to art and design assignments which require students to demonstrate numeracy and information technology skills. For GNVQ classes in health and social care, key skills are systematically covered in lessons.

46 Assignments, projects and homework are regularly set according to clear schedules on most courses. However, the timing and deadlines for some assignments in leisure and tourism made it difficult for students to complete work within the specified time. Assessment criteria are made clear to students on all courses. Students' work is appropriately marked and promptly returned. On most programmes, teachers give effective written feedback to students on all aspects of their work and discuss it with them on an individual basis. Teachers record students' marks and assessment grades thoroughly and students are informed of their progress on a regular basis. Health and social care students benefit from a programme of projects, such as a week-long visit to Romania to assist in a

relief programme. This led to the runner-up award in the 1996 City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) community care Beacon Award. Another example of such projects was a one-week project when students had the experience of running a creche.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

47 Students at John Ruskin College enjoy their studies. Most work hard, participate enthusiastically in class and are well motivated. Over the last three years students have performed consistently well in GCE A level examinations. Students on GNVQ programmes generally achieved less well. In 1995-96, completion rates varied widely between courses. Many one-year vocational courses, GCE A level courses and GCSE courses had good completion rates, often 100 per cent. However, completion rates were poor on many two-year vocational courses which ran from 1994 to 1996, the poorest being 44 per cent on a GNVQ course in information technology.

48 Most coursework is of a high standard. In particular, the work produced by students of English, music, drama, theatre arts and physical education was good and well presented. However, some of the portfolios produced by students on the advanced level GNVQ in hospitality and catering did not provide sufficient evidence of appropriate key skills. Students' assignment and practical work in art and design was often of a high standard. Science students carried out practical work with enthusiasm and demonstrated good practical skills. In computing, electronics and text processing the standard of practical work was generally good and students clearly enjoyed practical sessions. During practical sessions some GCSE drama students demonstrated talent for acting and improvisation.

49 In 1996, students aged 16 to 18 who entered for one or more GCE AS/A level examinations scored, on average, 5.0 points per entry (where grade A=10 points, E=2). This places the college in the top third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure, based on the data in the performance tables published by the DfEE. In 1996, there were 982 entries for GCE A level examinations in 27 subjects. The completion rate over the period 1994 to 1996 was 74 per cent. The overall pass rate (grades A to E) was 89 per cent of entries. An analysis of the performance of those students entered for GCE A level examinations over the last three years is given in the following table.

GCE A level examination results 1994-96

	1994	1995	1996
Number of GCE A level entries	827	882	982
Average points per subject	4.9	5.1	5.0
Average points per candidate taking two or more GCE A levels	14.1	14.5	15.4
Average number of passes per student	2.2	2.2	2.4
Percentage passing two or more GCE A levels	85%	86%	87%

50 The college subscribes to an independent external service which provides an analysis of the value added to students' achievements by comparing their actual performance at GCE A level with their predicted performance based on GCSE achievements. The value added to students' achievements over the three years has been 0.3 points for 1994, 0.1 points for 1995 and 0.3 points for 1996. Analysis also shows that over the last three years students have achieved significantly higher grades than those predicted in mathematics, business studies, physics, French, government and politics, and electronics. They have performed significantly less well than predicted in art and design, and geography. The following table gives a summary of the grades achieved by students over the last three years.

Grades achieved by GCE A level students 1994-96

	1994	1995	1996
Number of GCE A level entries	827	882	982
Grades A to E (%)	87	87	89
Grades A to C (%)	51	52	52

51 Notable features of the GCE A level examination results for 1996 include the following:

- all students entered for further mathematics, electronics, art and design, French, music and psychology passed
- pass rates were above 90 per cent in a further seven subjects
- there was a high proportion of grades A to C in further mathematics, electronics, business studies, music, French and government and politics
- pass rates were below national averages for all entries in biology, chemistry, mathematics, geography and German.

52 In 1995, there were 387 entries in 18 subjects at GCSE. The overall pass rate at grades A to C was 70 per cent. In 1996 there were 430 entries in 12 subjects at GCSE. The overall pass rate was 57 per cent. In 1995, the pass rate for English was 82 per cent. This excellent pass rate fell to 62 per cent in 1996, though the latter was still above the national figure of

57 per cent for all entries. In 1996, the pass rate for mathematics was 50 per cent, compared with the national figure of 47 per cent. In most other subjects, including English literature, French, Spanish, geography and sociology, pass rates in 1996 were above national averages for all entries. Results were particularly good in French (91 per cent) Spanish (100 per cent) and drama (86 per cent). In biology and religious studies pass rates in 1996 were below national averages for all entries. Results were poor in law with 44 per cent achieving A to C grades.

53 The DfEE's 1996 performance tables show that 63 per cent of the 92 students, aged 16 to 18, in their final year of study on advanced vocational courses at the college were successful. The tables also show that 40 per cent of the 156 students on intermediate vocational courses were successful. In each case, by these measures, the college is placed in the bottom third of colleges in the sector. The main features of students' achievements on vocational courses include:

- poor overall pass rates on all GNVQ courses over the past three years, where out of a total of 734 enrolments, 565 completed their courses and 322 were successful, giving pass rates of 44 per cent of enrolments and 57 per cent for students who completed the course
- pass rates in 1996 of 38 per cent of enrolments and of 54 per cent for students who completed the GNVQ courses
- pass rates in 1996 which were the same as or above the national figures on foundation GNVQ courses in business, leisure and tourism, and health and social care, on the intermediate course in art and design and on the advanced GNVQ business programme
- pass rates in 1996 which were below the national figures on the foundation GNVQ course in information technology, on the intermediate GNVQ courses in science, information technology, business, hospitality and catering, leisure and tourism, and health and social care, and on the advanced GNVQ courses in information technology, leisure and tourism, health and social care, and art and design
- good retention rates in 1996, which included rates between 90 per cent and 100 per cent on the GNVQ foundation courses in leisure and tourism, and on the intermediate courses in science, health and social care and leisure and tourism.

54 In the past, the college mainly recruited students aged 16 to 19. In the last four years it has increased provision designed for adults. The number of students enrolled on these courses has risen from 18 in 1993-94 to over 350 in 1996-97. Many of the examinations taken by adults were first offered in 1995-96. In 1996, adults sitting GCE A levels achieved 100 per cent success in art and in English, although the numbers involved were small in both cases. Many adult students enrol at the college with the intention of improving their information technology skills. In 1996, all students who completed RSA Examinations Board (RSA) courses in text

processing, desktop publishing, computer literacy and information technology passed the examination.

55 Progression rates to higher education by students taking GCE A level programmes have been good over the last three years. In 1996, 60 per cent of GCE A level students progressed to higher education and a further 36 per cent gained employment. Of the students completing the advanced level GNVQ in business in 1996, 67 per cent gained employment and 33 per cent progressed to higher education. Sixty-nine per cent of the final year advanced level GNVQ art and design students gained employment, the rest entered higher education. In health and care, and information technology, most advanced level GNVQ students gained employment. The percentages taking up places in higher education were 19 per cent and 30 per cent, respectively. Nearly half the GCSE students completing courses in 1996 enrolled on further courses at the college for 1996-97.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

56 Although college staff are self-critical and committed to improving the quality of provision, the present quality assurance system is not yet fully effective. The system has some good features. There are cycles for course reviews, surveys of students' views and staff appraisal. There are guidelines for the planning and delivery of courses. The college has recently completed the first draft of a manual for quality assurance, which introduces a number of new procedures. Since September, a senior manager has had responsibility for quality assurance. This is expected to lead to new systems, improved documentation, greater consistency in implementation and better co-ordination of quality assurance across the college. In the past, the college has lacked effective procedures and clear standards to guide practice.

57 The new quality assurance manual focuses on the teaching of the curriculum. It also describes the system for the management of quality assurance. Curriculum quality will be primarily assured through surveys of students' views, self-assessment by teachers at course level, lesson observations, monitoring of course statistics, and faculty and course action plans. It is a well-thought-out document, but it is too early to judge whether or not it will lead to improvements.

58 Course reviews are a central feature of the current system. Course leaders are expected to collect together examination results, completion rates, value-added data, students' destination data and the results of surveys of students' opinions. The information is evaluated by the course team and improvement targets are set for the next year. Reviews are passed to the faculty head and then to the assistant principal responsible for curriculum. If results are poor, the faculty head and course leader are asked to produce a report giving explanations and plans for action. This procedure has been used on several occasions, for example, following the poor 1996 GCE A level geography results.

59 The course review system has some positive features, but it lacks any requirement for course teams to evaluate teaching. The course review form does not give sufficient space for some answers and some key questions on teaching require description rather than analysis. The standard of course reviews varies widely. Most are thorough, but a few either lack rigour or avoid key issues such as course management and teaching. Some focus too heavily on students' attitudes. Where there is only one teacher for a particular subject, that person produces the review. The lack of opportunity to discuss issues with other staff limits the value of the process for these staff. Value-added information becomes available after the end of term. This is too late to include in formal course reviews. Some teachers analyse value-added information, but others do not see how it can be used as a tool for analysis and improvement.

60 Students' views expressed in surveys at the beginning of the year about enrolment and induction indicated a high level of satisfaction. In 1996, 97 per cent were satisfied with enrolment arrangements and 94 per cent with induction. There is also an end of course survey covering students' overall experience at the college. Some course leaders also carry out surveys at other times. For most students on two-year courses there is no survey at the end of their first year. On some courses, there is a reluctance to seek and consider students' views on the teaching of courses. On other courses, such views are welcomed and used to inform planning. The year end review is summarised for the whole college. It shows very high levels of students' satisfaction with advice, guidance and tutorial support. Students were also satisfied with preparation for examinations and feedback on their progress. There was less satisfaction with learning resources, sports and social facilities. In these areas, satisfaction ratings were about 75 per cent in 1996 compared with 85 per cent in 1995.

61 In September 1996, the college made a formal commitment to achieve the Investor in People award by September 1997. It has carried out staff and management surveys and is on target to achieve the award by the planned date. Staff appraisal is well established and accepted by staff. The system covers teaching and support staff and it includes observation of both groups, either in lessons or at work. To date, two-thirds of staff have been observed. The main purpose of the college's staff-appraisal system is to identify the professional development needs of staff and monitor progress towards them.

62 Staff-development needs are also identified as a result of course review, or by the individuals themselves. Applications to attend courses must be related to course or faculty development, or to needs identified at appraisal. Much staff development takes place inside the college. Staff must complete an evaluation of all their development activities. One development initiative has involved staff acting as reviewers of courses in other colleges in Hampshire and Surrey. This has spread good practice and given staff valuable experience of involvement in a review process.

There is a clear induction policy for new teaching staff which includes mentoring by an experienced colleague for the first year. This is now being extended to support staff.

63 The college charter covers a wide range of issues. Bullet points set out the learning and support to be provided by the college. In some cases, the statements lack precision. For example, a time limit is not stated for marked work to be returned to students. It is accepted by the college that a revision and updating of the charter is needed. The complaints procedure clearly outlines the stages for making a complaint and includes an appropriate appeals procedure.

64 The college's self-assessment report follows the headings of Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. It is well written, and all major weaknesses are identified as well as strengths. It includes actions to address weaknesses, and identifies responsibilities and target dates for action. The judgements made are generally consistent with those made by the inspection team.

RESOURCES

Staffing

65 The teaching staff are well qualified. Eighty-four per cent have degrees and 97 per cent have teaching qualifications. In most areas, staff have appropriate teaching qualifications and experience, but there are not enough staff with basic skills teaching experience. In physical education, there is a need for qualified specialists or instructors to assist with the practical components of courses. In business studies and music, the college benefits from the experience of staff who are GCE A level examiners. Progress towards assessor and verifier qualifications has been slow in several areas. In art and design, hospitality and catering, and science, no staff have achieved the qualifications. In business studies there is no qualified internal verifier. There has been better progress in health and social care, and information technology. Most curriculum areas are staffed by teachers with many years of teaching experience. Over 75 per cent of the teachers have been at the college for more than five years. More than 40 per cent have taught at the college and its predecessor schools for more than 10 years.

66 In general, there is an appropriate balance of full-time and part-time or fractional staff. Eighty-seven per cent of all teaching is by full-time staff. In art and design, there is effective use of practising artists and designers. Staff are very committed to the college and to the care of its students. For example, drama and music staff work many additional hours preparing dramatic productions and concerts, and sports staff organise several college sports teams. About 10 per cent of the teaching staff are from minority ethnic backgrounds. This compares with about 18 per cent of the local community and 30 per cent of college students.

67 The level of commercial and industrial experience varies between curriculum areas. Leisure and tourism teachers have business or travel industry experience. In health care, two of the three full-time staff have professional backgrounds in nursing. Art and design staff have relevant experience. Teachers in many other areas, for example business studies, languages, music, drama and the sciences, have limited relevant commercial or industrial experience.

68 There are sufficient numbers of appropriately-qualified library, administrative and technical support staff. There is good technical support for music, art and design, and computing. In science, technicians sometimes assist students in practical classes by acting as demonstrators. The drama section lacks a technician who has stage, sound and lighting expertise. There is no specialist technician to support the small electronics division. The college personnel function is well managed. Deployment of staff is efficient. Appropriate personnel procedures are in place and all staff have up-to-date job descriptions.

Equipment/learning resources

69 General teaching rooms are well equipped and carefully looked after. They have whiteboards and overhead projectors and there is a good ratio of one television and one video machine for every two classrooms. A major strength is the provision of at least one computer in every classroom.

70 There is sufficient good-quality specialist equipment for science, mathematics, languages, English and health and social care. The recording studio and music technology facilities are of a high standard. The latter include synthesizers, a 24-track mixing desk and computer workstations with keyboards. Physical education equipment is of good quality. It includes a wide range of teaching aids, for example, models of the respiratory system and of shoulder, knee and hip joints. There are well-equipped language laboratories. There is an extensive range of books and equipment for art and design students, in particular, for those studying graphical communications. However, there is a need for further equipment in the new print-making room. The resources available for hospitality and catering are not adequate and do not reflect industrial practice. The standard of equipment severely limits opportunities for food preparation and for food and drink service. Specialist equipment for leisure and tourism is also limited and there is little use of the travel office.

71 The college library is small for the number of students. It contains 90 study spaces, 14,650 books, and a wide range of compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) disks, cassettes, newspapers and periodicals. There are additional book collections held by faculties to support some subjects. In some areas, for example, mathematics, the college purchases class sets of textbooks. In most areas, there are sufficient books, but there is a shortage of books in a few subject areas, including psychology, history, politics, leisure and tourism and hospitality and catering. The college has an 'open learning' centre. It has seating for 39 students and a relevant

stock of self-study materials which students can use to support their courses or to study for additional qualifications. It is staffed for most of the time. The European Centre has 10 language booths and is the base for all European materials and project work.

72 The college has 282 computers for students, giving a ratio of one terminal for every 5.8 full-time equivalent students. All students have good access to information technology. On computing and information technology courses there are sufficient machines for students to have one for their own use. Sixty-one computers are available for students to use at times of their own choosing. Most of these are in the information technology centre. This is open until 19.00 hours on two evenings a week, and is also open on Saturday mornings. Most of the computers are modern and many are linked to the Internet.

Accommodation

73 The college occupies a single site in the south of the London Borough of Croydon. The buildings were modernised and extended in 1992. They are well maintained, attractively decorated, and give pleasant views over the surrounding countryside. The site is well served by buses, and there is a small number of parking spaces for students. Only one room is inaccessible to wheelchair users.

74 The accommodation was originally designed for a much smaller number of students. As a result, communal areas and some teaching rooms become overcrowded at times. General teaching accommodation and most specialist rooms are of a good standard. Many rooms contain posters and displays of students' work. All science teaching takes place in well-designed specialist laboratories. There is a well-equipped base room for physical education theory classes. There is good accommodation for music, including a large room suitable for group rehearsals, a music technology studio and two further practice rooms. Art and design has appropriate facilities including studio spaces and a small computer suite. Some drama sessions take place in the hall, which provides a good facility for such activities. In contrast the drama base room is unsuitable for group work or examination performances. Accommodation for hospitality and catering courses is poor and does not provide a setting for practical course activities which reflects those of the industry.

75 The college has a welcoming reception area and a large hall which is sometimes used for private study. Other facilities on the site include a gymnasium and a weights room, two tennis courts and a football pitch. Students also use off-site sports facilities such as the National Sports Centre at Crystal Palace. The college canteen seats 104 students. It is about to be refurbished. This is expected to improve the speed of service. Unlike other areas of the college, the canteen is often noisy and untidy. There is a recently-refurbished common room designed for up to 150 students.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

76 The main strengths of the college are:

- a generally high standard of teaching
- good examination pass rates in most GCE A level subjects
- a wide range of GCE A level and GNVQ provision and a developing range of part-time courses for adults
- supportive and hard-working corporation members who represent a wide range of business and community interests
- effective and efficient management, supported by a reliable and accurate management information system
- good communications within the college
- sound pre-course guidance for all applicants, and well-organised and effective enrolment and induction
- good support from tutors, who know their students well and who keep parents well informed
- an established appraisal process for all staff which identifies staff-development needs
- well-qualified staff with extensive teaching experience
- good specialist equipment in most curriculum areas
- good access for students to information technology facilities
- generally good teaching accommodation.

77 The college should address the following issues:

- the low success rates on many GNVQ courses
- the lack of experience of staff who teach basic skills
- limited links with employers
- the poor quality of some faculty development plans
- the need to strengthen the quality assurance system
- the variable quality of course reviews
- the slow progress of staff in some areas towards the achievement of assessor and verifier awards
- poor equipment and specialist accommodation for hospitality and catering and leisure and tourism.

FIGURES

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

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

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

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

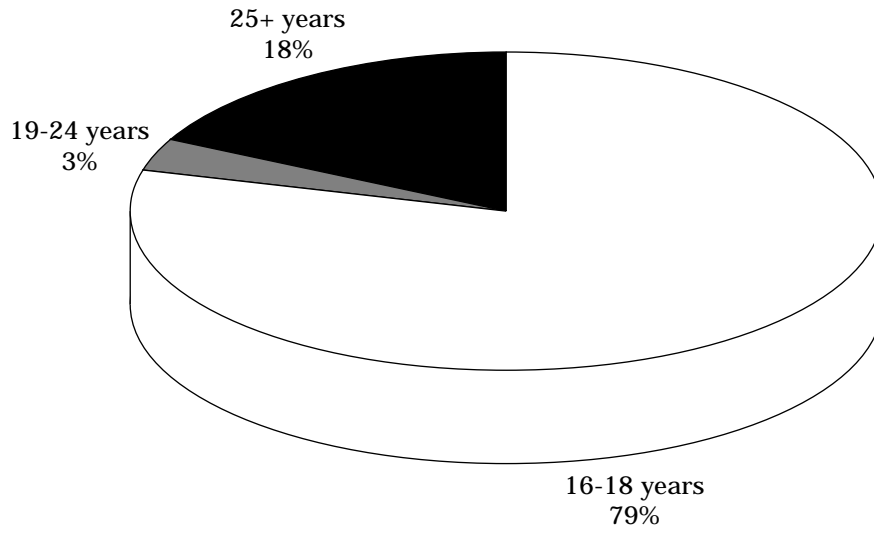
 - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1996)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)

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

Figure 1

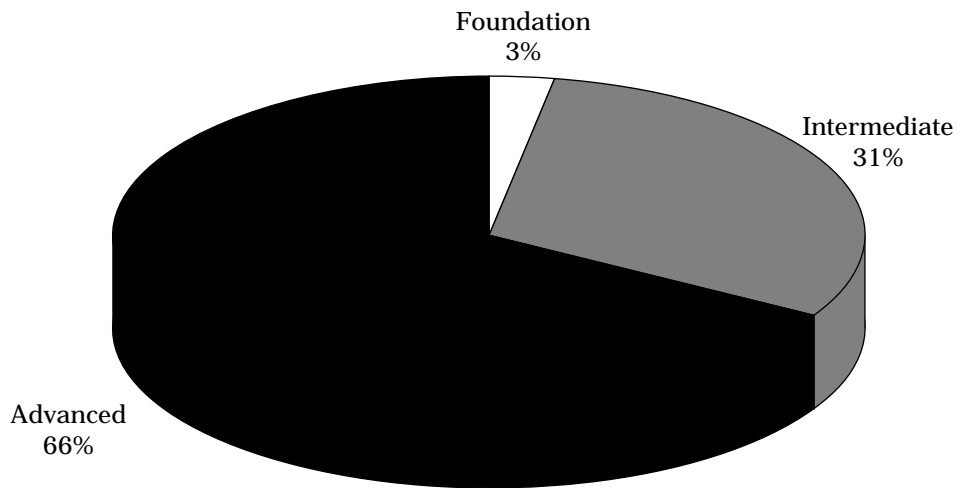
John Ruskin College: percentage student numbers by age (as at November 1996)



Student numbers: 1,647

Figure 2

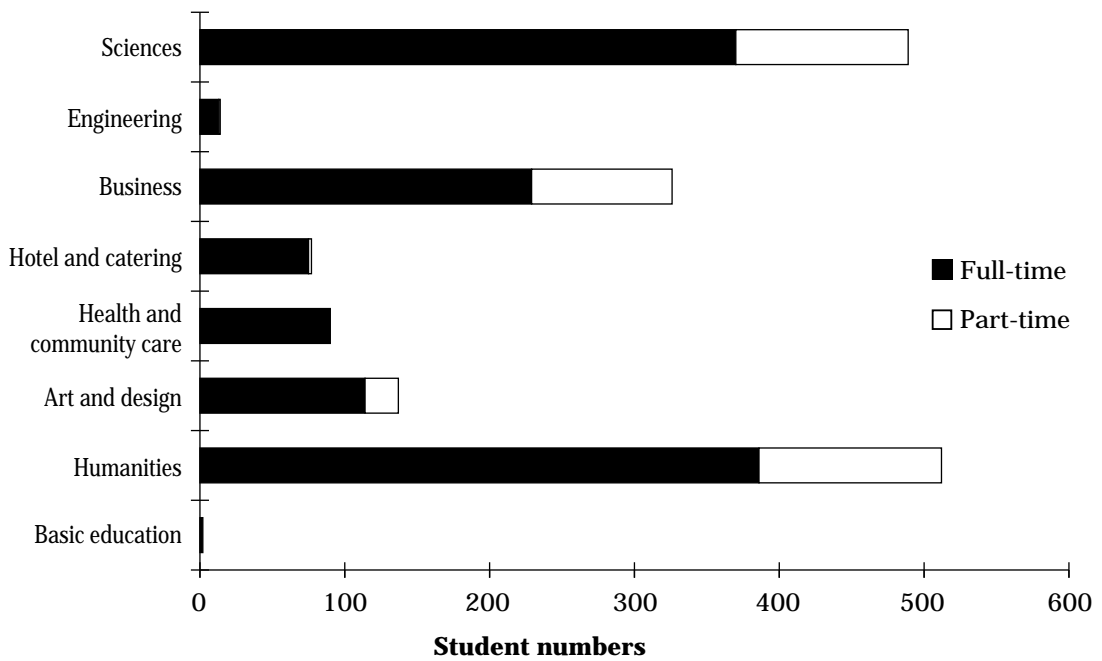
John Ruskin College: percentage student numbers by level of study (as at November 1996)



Student numbers: 1,647

Figure 3

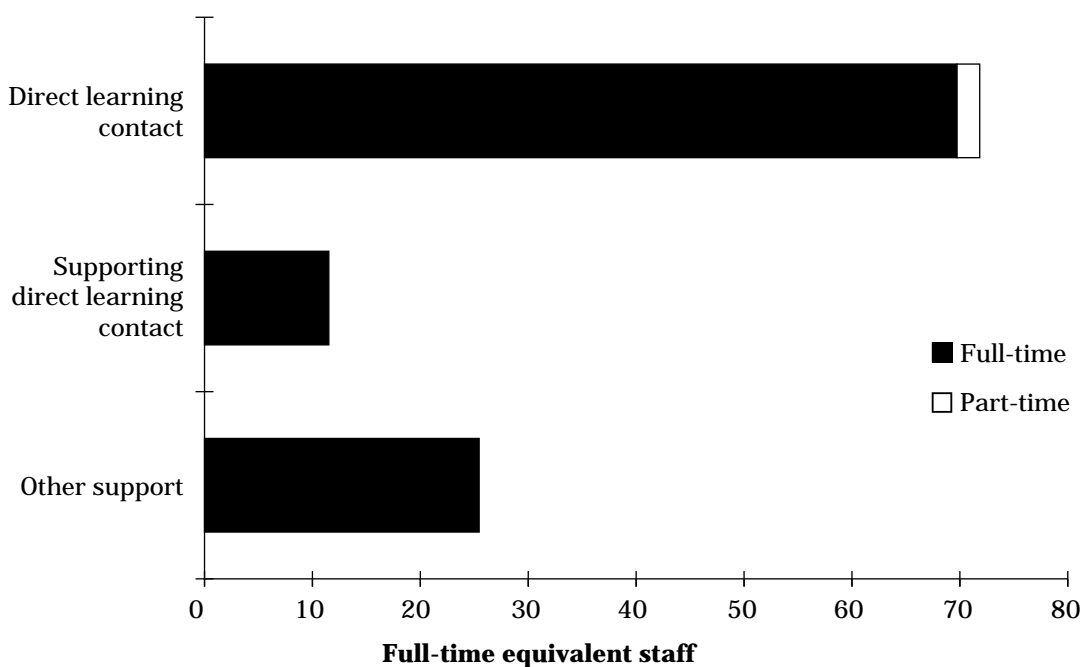
John Ruskin College: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1996)



Student numbers: 1,647

Figure 4

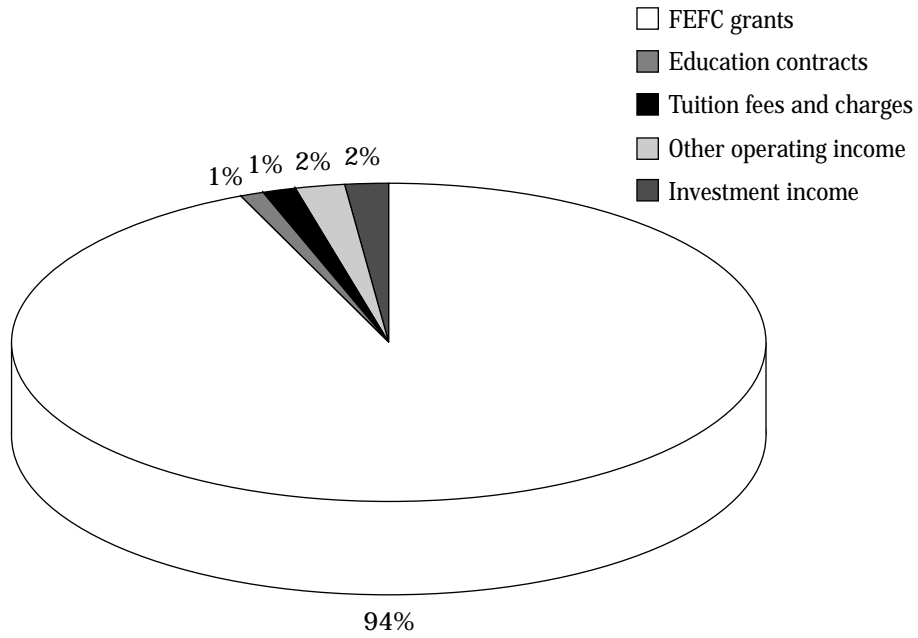
John Ruskin College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at September 1996)



Full-time equivalent staff: 109

Figure 5

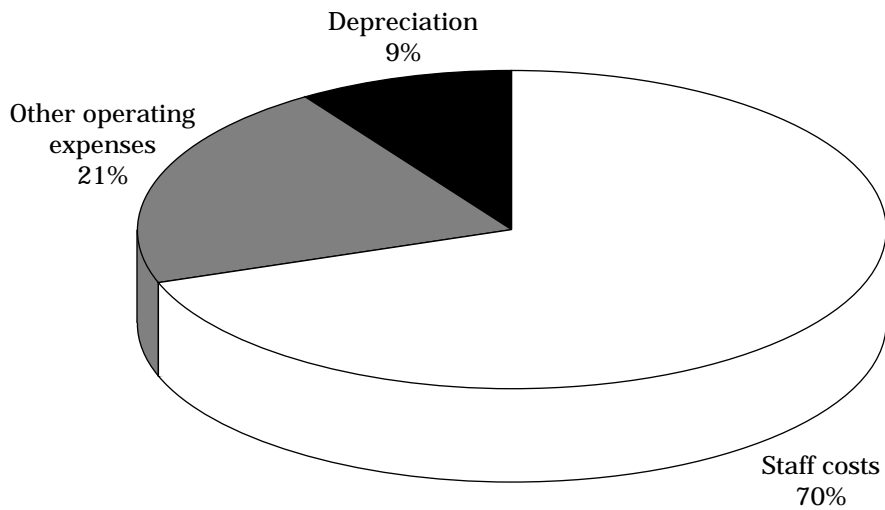
John Ruskin College: income (for 12 months to July 1996)



Income: £4,072,000

Figure 6

John Ruskin College: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)



Expenditure: £4,134,000

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