

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Lackham College

April 1996

**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 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 1995, some 208 college inspections had been completed. The grade profiles for aspects of cross-college provision and programme areas for the 208 colleges are shown in the following table.

College grade profiles 1993-95

Activity	Inspection grades				
	1	2	3	4	5
Programme area	9%	60%	28%	3%	<1%
Cross-college provision	13%	51%	31%	5%	<1%
Overall	11%	56%	29%	4%	<1%

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 46/96

**LACKHAM COLLEGE
SOUTH WEST REGION**

Inspected May 1995-January 1996

Summary

Lackham College in Wiltshire specialises in providing education and training in a wide variety of land-based industries and rural and countryside-related work. There has been a significant growth into new areas of full-time provision. The college has many strengths which include a wide range of programmes, high-quality teaching, good examination results and retention levels, strong links with schools, other colleges, the local community and overseas, effective recruitment and induction of students, and the quality and accessibility of the new accommodation. Other strengths include: the close involvement of corporation board members in the life of the college; the wide range of additional activities available to students; the well-qualified enthusiastic and committed staff; the provision of library and learning resources; and the attention given to health, safety and security. Staff-development and appraisal systems are effective. Weaknesses include some aspects of marketing; the implementation and monitoring of equal opportunities; the variable nature of tutorial support; the provision of careers education and counselling; and the lack of knowledge of the charter by students, parents and employers.

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

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Animal care and equestrian studies	1	Agricultural engineering	2
Agriculture, countryside and farm mechanisation	2		
Horticulture and floristry	2		

INTRODUCTION

1 Lackham College, Wiltshire, was inspected between May 1995 and January 1996. A team of eight inspectors spent a total of 47 days in the college. Inspectors visited 69 classes, examined students' work and held discussions with governors, parents, staff and students. An inspector attended a meeting of the corporation board. Inspectors also met representatives of local employers, schools, the community, Wiltshire Careers Service and Wiltshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC).

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 The college was established by Wiltshire County Council in 1946 to provide training and education for the local agricultural community. It quickly established an additional specialist role within the south-west region in agricultural engineering. More recently it has broadened its provision to offer courses in horticulture, floristry, countryside management, animal care, food, leisure and tourism, business administration and equestrian studies. The college is based on one site near to Lacock, a National Trust village approximately three miles from Chippenham. Lackham House, a grade II listed building, houses some administrative support staff and accommodates some teaching. The 212 hectare estate includes the college farm, ornamental gardens and grounds, woodland, river and water courses. A tourist facility, Lackham Country Attractions, provides a valuable resource for schools and the local community and supports college courses, in particular, the leisure and tourism programmes. Facilities include an agricultural museum, a rare breeds collection and access to the college's gardens and riverside walks. There is on-site residential accommodation for 126 students.

3 Growth has been a major priority for the college. In the last five years, new full-time courses have been introduced into all major curriculum areas. In November 1995, there were 1,173 students enrolled, 437 of whom were studying full time. Short courses in food and craft subjects run throughout the year, and the college expects to recruit a further 750 part-time students before the end of July. 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. The college employs 123 full-time equivalent staff, 43 of whom are teachers. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

4 There are five further education colleges in Wiltshire, the nearest of which is Chippenham College. For most of the college's courses there is direct competition with other land-based industry colleges, the nearest three being Hartpury College, 48 miles to the north-west, Sparsholt College, 62 miles to the south-east and Kingston Maurward College, 65 miles to the south. For farm mechanisation programmes, the nearest direct competitor is Moulton College in Northamptonshire, a distance of 110 miles. For higher education work in engineering, the nearest college offering similar programmes is Rycotewood College in Oxfordshire, a distance of 82 miles.

5 The work of the college is organised into four departments: agriculture and estate; horticulture and floristry; food, leisure and tourism; and agricultural engineering and farm mechanisation.

6 The college's mission is to provide high-quality practical education and training with an emphasis on rural and countryside-related work. Within the strategic plan there are firm commitments to promoting equality of opportunity, improving quality and efficiency in all aspects of college work, developing links with employers and other education providers, maximising the college's contribution to the achievement of national targets and to continuing the professional development of college staff.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

7 There is a comprehensive range of full-time vocational courses. First diploma programmes are available in agricultural engineering, agriculture and animal care. At national level, there are courses in agriculture, farm mechanisation, horticulture, floristry, animal care, woodland water and game, countryside management and rural administration. General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) are available at advanced level in agricultural engineering and at intermediate and advanced level in leisure and tourism. Leisure and tourism and rural administration may be combined with equestrian studies or outdoor pursuits to provide a dual qualification and several students take advantage of this. There is a higher national diploma course in engineering, with the option of specialising in either agricultural engineering or water and environmental engineering.

8 A wide range of programmes for part-time students is available. These include National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in agriculture and floristry at levels 1, 2 and 3 and horticulture at levels 1 and 2. Approximately 150 youth trainees attend the college under a contract with Wiltshire TEC. Short courses in important work-related skills and for general interest start at a number of points during the year. For 1995, these included courses in food, tractor maintenance, garden design, animal care, horse management, calligraphy and agriculture. Higher national certificates are offered in agriculture, with the opportunity to specialise in either arable crop management or dairy enterprise management, and in engineering.

9 Sporting and special interest activities which are available to students include traditional indoor and outdoor team games, squash, clay pigeon shooting, a multi-gym and an indoor pistol range. By arrangement, students have access to shooting and fishing on the college estate. Other activities include quiz teams, tractor pulling and special interest clubs, including animal care. Students are able to take additional tests for certificates relevant to their course of study. For example, in agriculture, estate and farm mechanisation, students can take proficiency tests in fork-lift truck driving, the use of chain saws and in the use of pesticides to improve their employment prospects.

10 The college is increasingly moving towards more flexible approaches to study. For example, open learning materials are available for some national diploma work in machinery, buildings, and basic engineering principles, and for students working towards the national certificate in horticulture. Open learning support materials are available for some NVQ work. In animal care, several older students with previous experience have submitted evidence to enable them to achieve exemptions from some modules of their courses. In all national diploma sandwich courses, students who can provide evidence of appropriate prior knowledge and experience are exempted from their second-year work placement. A part-time course leading to Society of Floristry examinations is run on a Sunday to maximise opportunities for attendance.

11 The college uses a range of methods to publicise courses and special events including careers evenings in schools, open days, stands at trade and county shows, posters and advertisements. Although enquiries for courses are followed up, there is little evaluation of the success of each method of publicity. Accurate labour market information on which the college can plan courses and events for the future is not yet available. The prospectus and course leaflets are attractively presented and recently won commendation in the Heist Further Education marketing awards. However, the information contained in publicity material does not convey the flexibility of the programmes which the college offers. Equal opportunities is not actively promoted within course literature. Some employers and community representatives interviewed by inspectors were unaware of the full range of college activities and facilities.

12 Industrial liaison committees have been established across the college. These are working well. For example, a specialist subgroup was set up to liaise with pet store managers prior to the launch of a linked part-time training programme in animal care. In engineering, modules have been discontinued and others introduced as a result of feedback from employers.

13 Links with schools across the region and with local further education sector colleges are strong. Schools across a wide area are offered taster days for a range of year groups. A three-day residential programme at Easter is available at moderate cost to enable prospective students to experience the programmes of the college more fully. Representatives of schools interviewed by inspectors found the college welcoming and flexible in responding to their individual requests. Five special schools make use of the college's resources and specialist facilities. A range of programmes is available for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Forty-eight students followed these programmes in 1994-95, with eight progressing on to courses at the college. Chippenham and Trowbridge Colleges make use of Lackham College's facilities for equestrian and surveying work, respectively.

14 There are many facilities for school parties, families, local residents and tourists. Lackham Country Attractions, open from April to October,

comprises an agricultural museum, gardens, woodland, riverside walks and rare animal breeds. In 1995, there were 15,000 visitors. Shooting and fishing is available to groups on a commercial basis. Community and special interest groups, for example, the National Farmers' Union and the local gardening club, meet at the college. There are facilities for wedding receptions to be held at the college. During August, there is a holiday club for children of school age which offers a wide range of countryside activities. The local riding and driving for the disabled group uses college facilities on a weekly basis.

15 There are varied overseas links, including a number of consultancy and development projects. Work placements are arranged in France and Holland. A project in Khazakhstan to support new private enterprise brought 12 farmers to Wiltshire for a programme of college study combined with work on local farms. The deputy principal, who is also director of studies, has recently worked with a college in Kaliningrad to advise on systems and course programmes. Close links with Africa provide opportunities for regular work placements and visits. The college now provides bursaries to students from Lackham-Bowiri, a developing agricultural community project in Ghana, and to students from Zimbabwe.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

16 The corporation board comprises 17 members. At present there are three female members, 12 male members and two vacancies. One of the vacancies is for a representative from Wiltshire TEC. There are two elected staff members. The board has four standing committees: finance and employment; audit; search; and remuneration. The standing committees of the board are supplemented as required by committees and working parties for special purposes. Most board members link with a specific area of the college's work and provide regular reports to the full board. This process ensures greater awareness by board members of the work of the college.

17 Recently, the board has undertaken a self-evaluation of its work and performance and has identified a series of action points to improve further its effectiveness. These include reviewing the range of performance indicators adopted, and closer monitoring of particular strategic objectives.

18 The strategic planning process has involved board members, college managers and staff. Plans produced by sections and departments in the college are closely linked to strategic objectives. At all levels in the college, decisions taken on issues such as the introduction of new courses, major items of expenditure, and staffing appointments link closely to the achievement of the strategic plan.

19 The college has in place a number of policy statements, including those for health and safety. Arrangements for implementing and monitoring the health and safety policy are supported by a health and safety committee, chaired by the principal. Support is provided by the

college health and safety officer. The committee reports to the corporation board and has issued a series of detailed health and safety codes. In contrast, the equal opportunities policy is concerned solely with staffing appointments. It is not supported by an action plan or committee structure.

20 The senior management team comprises the principal, the deputy principal/director of studies, the finance manager, and the administration/personnel manager. The four heads of academic departments, who are responsible for staffing and the allocation of resources, report to the principal. Within departments, curriculum team leaders, each of whom is responsible for a designated group of courses, report to the deputy principal/director of studies. Most full-time teachers and some part-time teachers act as course managers, reporting to curriculum team leaders.

21 The college has an extensive structure of committees and working parties. The senior management team meets weekly. The senior management forum comprises the senior management team with the addition of academic departmental managers and four cross-college managers. This group meets monthly and advises principally on planning issues. The academic board is responsible for advising the principal on the academic work of the college including arrangements for admission, assessment and the examination of students. Minutes of the academic board are submitted to, and commented on, by the corporation board. Another group, the resources board, which includes the senior management forum and other cross-college managers, meets quarterly. Other management groups include a health and safety committee, a staff liaison committee, a building development committee, a welfare and amenities committee, and a staff-development and staff review monitoring committee. Curriculum team leaders meet regularly with the deputy principal/director of studies. Full staff meetings are held three times each year and an informal weekly meeting of staff, named the college 'shout', provides a regular communication channel, as does the monthly newsletter 'Lackham Lowdown'. Although this large committee structure ensures that staff are fully consulted on a range of issues, it is time consuming. In some cases, there is significant overlap between the agendas of the various meetings. For example, capital equipment allocations for 1995-96 have been considered by the resources board, the senior management forum and the senior management team.

22 The college's average level of funding for 1994-95 was £22.62 per unit. The median for agricultural and horticultural colleges was £24.58 per unit. For 1995-96, the college's average level of funding is £21.76 per unit and the median for agricultural and horticultural colleges is £23.15 per unit. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 month period to July 1995 are shown in figures 5 and 6.

23 Financial allocations to meet day-to-day running costs are allocated to departments. This year, funds for consumable items have been allocated

according to a formula which takes account of student enrolments. The calculation of unit costs is planned for 1996, but is not currently undertaken. There is a clear process for the allocation of funds for larger capital items. Departmental managers receive accurate monthly management accounts on committed expenditure and income.

24 The college uses computerised management information in a number of ways. The maintenance of student records and of comprehensive staffing information is incomplete. Although some applications, for example those for timetabling, room utilisation and payroll work well, all components of the system are not fully integrated. There is an action plan to extend and improve the system. However, the achievement of some of the improvements identified depends on the purchase of further equipment.

25 Enrolment targets have been achieved. In 1994-95 there was an overall 9.1 per cent growth against a target of 8.1 per cent. Within this figure there are wide variations. For example, there were significant increases in enrolments in animal care, equestrian work and woodland water and game. There were reductions of over 20 per cent in the areas of engineering, farm mechanisation and rural administration. This year, the college expects to exceed its enrolment target.

26 Retention rates are monitored. There is evidence that action has been taken to address the causes of student withdrawal. For example, improved arrangements have been negotiated with Wiltshire local authority in respect of home to college travel arrangements and costs, and in respect of discretionary awards. Students' intended destinations are collected in June. At this time, many students have firm job or higher education offers. As from 1996, information will be collected in the autumn following course completion to reflect more accurately the actual destinations of students.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

27 Full-time applications are handled efficiently. The administrative work of recording, checking and acknowledging applications for courses and inviting students for guidance interviews is undertaken centrally. Students are then interviewed by the relevant course manager, often with parents in attendance. The college has set and achieved targets to ensure that unnecessary delays in this process are avoided.

28 The guidance interview is intended to ensure that students have sufficient information about the content and demands of their chosen course. If applicants are found at interview to have significant, relevant previous experience, they can be referred to the college tutor responsible for accreditation of prior learning. Sixteen students are currently in the process of obtaining accreditation through this route.

29 Residential students commence their enrolment and induction programme on Sunday afternoon. They are joined by other full-time

students on the Monday. The one-week induction programme is well planned. It includes a variety of college-wide and specific course activities. For example, detailed course information is provided, there is health and safety training and, in many cases, a detailed assessment of students' practical skills. Students are encouraged to talk to their course manager about concerns or worries and, in some cases, arrangements are made for students to transfer to other college programmes. Part-time students can enrol by post or at the first meeting of the course.

30 Course managers act as personal tutors. On all courses there is a timetabled tutorial period. In addition to their group tutorial, full-time students are supposed to receive a one-to-one tutorial every four to six weeks. One-to-one tutorials include completion of personal development plans which form the basis for recording students' progress and achievements. Students' experience of the quality and regularity of the tutorial process was variable. Reports on students progress are prepared twice a year and, in the case of 16 to 18 year old students, reports are sent to parents. Parents spoken to by inspectors would welcome the introduction of parents' evenings to discuss their son's or daughter's progress more fully.

31 The college provides residential accommodation on campus for 126 students and there are 57 students in lodgings locally. Most students in the age range 16 to 18 are accommodated in college halls of residence. The senior warden is responsible for ensuring the welfare of students whilst on campus. The warden is supported in his work by seven assistant wardens, four female and three male. Duty rosters ensure that one male and one female warden are on duty each evening until midnight. Students were aware of how to make contact with wardens outside of duty hours. Emergency telephone numbers are provided to callers out of office hours by way of the college switchboard's messaging system.

32 Careers advice and guidance is available from the course tutors, the careers section of the library and the Wiltshire Careers Service. The careers service provides lunchtime 'drop-in' consultations on Tuesdays and students can make individual appointments on Tuesday afternoons. Take up of these services is low. This year there have been additional sessions on writing curricula vitae and on applying to higher education institutions but attendance at these has been poor. Some students were critical of the careers education and advice provided.

33 Provision of counselling at the college is limited. There is no professionally-qualified college counsellor on site, although some staff have attended short counselling courses. The college has a contract with a counselling service in Trowbridge to which a small number of students are referred each year. The college doctor holds a surgery on campus every Wednesday lunchtime and there are links with a number of specialist agencies and organisations. Counselling services are well publicised by posters around the college and students were aware of the provision available.

34 The college has well-developed provision for learning support. The application form allows students to indicate any specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities. All new full-time students are given the Basic Skills Agency's diagnostic assessment tests for literacy and numeracy during the induction programme. This year, 53 students have been identified as in need of further support. Half of these are following an agreed programme of support work and the remainder are in regular contact with the learning support tutor.

35 The college has a clear policy on attendance and students are well aware of the importance of regular and punctual attendance. A system of concern notes allows staff to notify course managers of any problems, including lack of attendance. The system is effective. An attendance of at least 85 per cent is required for admission to examination or assessment. Attendance during the inspection averaged 89 per cent.

36 The college makes appropriate provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are currently two students with visual impairment, two profoundly deaf, one epileptic and four with limited mobility. Where appropriate, students are provided with a reader and additional time in examinations. The learning support manager assists students when required.

37 Students are encouraged to become involved in the life of the college. There are seven officers of the student council elected by all students and a system of course representatives. The officers of the student council meet regularly with the senior warden and two members of the corporation board. Students reported that this was an effective way of registering views and concerns.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

38 With the exception of leisure and tourism provision, teaching sessions were observed and graded in all the college's major curriculum areas. Of the 69 teaching sessions inspected, 68 per cent had strengths which outweighed the weaknesses and 4 per cent had weaknesses which outweighed strengths.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GNVQ		1	2	3	0	0	6
NVQ		2	3	0	0	0	5
Other*		14	25	16	2	1	58
Total		17	30	19	2	1	69

**includes first and national certificates and diplomas in agriculture, horticulture and floristry, agricultural engineering, animal care, farm mechanisation, woodland water and game, countryside care and conservation, rural administration and examinations of professional bodies.*

39 Teaching throughout the college is well planned. In most cases, comprehensive schemes of work have been developed. Students receive a balanced programme of activities including lectures, classwork exercises, group discussions, individual tutorials and practicals. Course handbooks have been produced for all programmes. These provide students with clear guidance on assessments, although, in many cases, they lack detailed information on syllabuses. Handouts are used effectively on most courses to reduce the amount of note taking.

40 Classes observed on engineering courses often involved an appropriate variety of teaching methods. For example, in a design class, teams of students were devising a method of removing a sprocket from a shaft. The teacher provided encouragement and advice and towards the end of the session, students presented their ideas to the whole group. This was followed by a whole-class discussion. In some cases, new work was introduced too quickly, with no checking of previous knowledge. In a few classes, the teaching method did not cater effectively for the needs of the students. For example, the delivery of a formal lecture was not the most appropriate way to teach small groups of students.

41 Teaching in horticulture was planned carefully to match the size and ability of each class. New topic areas were introduced thoroughly with relevant practical examples to illustrate points. In a class on fire regulations and the care of hazardous substances, the use of practical examples drawn from students' own experience significantly increased the interest and understanding of the whole group. Teachers provided clear instructions for practical activities in floristry and horticulture, with the result that practical work was carried out confidently. In some classes, students' theoretical knowledge was tested regularly, for example, by exercises which involved them in identifying plant specimens. In a few classes, time was not managed effectively by the teacher and little learning took place.

42 Courses in agriculture include those in countryside, farm mechanisation and rural administration. Teachers were knowledgeable about their subjects and made regular reference to current industrial examples. Theory sessions were closely related to practical work. For example in farm mechanisation, points on valve clearance setting were discussed in class and illustrated on a worksheet. Students then used the worksheet and the engine manual to carry out practical work in pairs. The teacher observed and discussed progress with each pair, questioning and extending their knowledge. In a few classes, too much time was spent copying notes.

43 In animal care and equestrian programmes, teaching was of a consistently high standard. Theory was closely linked to practical activities. Practical work, for example in animal handling, is organised to cater for different levels of ability, with extra support sessions provided if required. A clear rota system in the animal care unit ensures that students develop handling skills and knowledge of care with a range of small mammals,

insects and reptiles. In one equestrian class, students learned the skills of lunging with posts, before progressing to working with the horses. Students were encouraged to share their experiences and to evaluate each other's progress. Excellent relations with staff encouraged students to raise points during teaching sessions to extend their knowledge and understanding.

44 Many students participate in work experience which ranges in length from a few weeks to a year. Placements are generally well planned and supported by detailed written guidance to students on work to be undertaken. In some cases, guidance to employers is provided, although employers interviewed by inspectors would welcome more specific information on assignments. Placements in floristry are designed to coincide with peak periods in the industry, for example, St Valentine's Day and Mothering Sunday. Students interviewed felt they had been well prepared for their placements and had been adequately supported by the college. Some students gain valuable experience in planning and organising activities through involvement in national and regional events held at the college, for example, wildlife conferences and horse shows.

45 Assignment work, generally closely related to the requirements of examinations, is set regularly. However, there are some sharp contrasts between course teams in the quality of assignments set. In engineering and agriculture, assignments are challenging and set in an appropriate practical context. A system of internal verification within the animal care section ensures that assignments set are checked and that grades awarded to students are monitored by the team. In horticulture, knowledge and understanding was sometimes tested through written assignments when a practical assessment would have been more appropriate. Feedback on assignments varies in quality. For example, in engineering and agriculture, technical points are marked in detail, but comments on report structure and conclusions are often few. In other cases, for example in equestrian work, there is insufficient feedback on technical points.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

46 Most students are highly motivated. In some cases, they contribute substantial personal time to college activities. For example, in 1995, animal care students built a cage for the college's coati mundi. They achieved a highly-commended award in the regional final of the British Sugar Trident Feeds enterprising student award, competing against students of up to masters' degree level. Students have been successful in regional and national competition work. Students in horticulture, floristry, agricultural engineering, and countryside and estate are encouraged to attend college on additional days to extend their practical skills and many take advantage of this.

47 Appropriate attention is given to the development of students' numeracy and literacy skills. Additional tutor support is provided in some sessions, for example in agriculture. In other cases, for example in animal

care, small groups of students who need help with written work receive a separate hour of support. Problem solving is a strong focus of engineering and farm mechanisation programmes, and students develop confidence in approaching unfamiliar tasks. All full-time students receive basic instruction in the use of computers and students in animal care make good use of information technology in their assignments. Study skills are emphasised in animal care, equestrian and horticultural programmes, but on some courses, for example in agriculture and engineering, students need further help with note taking.

48 In many cases, students demonstrate extensive knowledge of the technical aspects of their studies. Written work is generally well researched and adequately presented, but in engineering and agriculture the overall structure and organisation of written reports is sometimes poor. Assignments seen on animal care courses, floristry and countryside programmes were of a consistently high standard.

49 Students generally achieve high levels in practical skills which help them to obtain relevant employment. For example, floristry students are able to produce high-quality pieces within strict time constraints to match the needs of industry. Agricultural and equestrian students carry out farm and yard duties regularly and improve the speed and confidence with which they can undertake routine practical work. On equestrian programmes in particular, students work effectively as a team in carrying out yard duties. Health and safety is emphasised during induction and followed through by students in all practical activities.

50 Examination results for full-time students who complete their studies are generally good. Ninety-four per cent of students aged 16 to 18 in their final year of study on vocational courses included in the Department for Education and Employment's 1995 performance tables, were successful. This places the college in the top 10 per cent of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure.

51 Pass rates of 100 per cent in 1995 were achieved in the national diploma in farm mechanisation, GNVQ intermediate engineering, the national certificate in professional gardening and the national diploma in floristry. A few courses recorded pass rates of less than 80 per cent, for example, the national diploma in countryside management (75 per cent) and the national diploma in agricultural engineering (75 per cent). Results of the national diploma in animal care are not available as the first students are currently in their second year. Across all full-time courses inspected, 19 per cent of students passed at distinction level. Students in floristry, agriculture and horticulture are successful in gaining awards in regional and national competitions.

52 For part-time students on vocational courses who completed their studies in 1995, the overall pass rate was 91 per cent. Pass rates of 100 per cent were recorded in NVQ levels 1 and 2 in horticulture, forestry and agriculture. In a few cases, pass rates were below 65 per cent, for example

in Royal Horticultural Society horticulture examinations (62 per cent) and City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) phase 3 agriculture, records and accounts (64 per cent).

53 Ninety-one per cent of full-time students who were enrolled on 1 November 1994 stayed on their chosen course of study for the remainder of the academic year. In a few cases, students on two-year programmes finished their first year but did not subsequently return to college to complete their courses. This was sometimes due to obtaining full-time employment in their chosen vocational area.

54 Intended first destinations of students are collected. In 1995, the data indicated that 21 per cent enrolled on another further education course, 15 per cent progressed to a higher diploma or degree programme, and 58 per cent obtained full-time employment. Students completing agriculture, farm mechanisation, and floristry are particularly successful in obtaining full-time permanent employment. The destinations of 6 per cent of students are unknown.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

55 As the result of a consultant's report on quality assurance arrangements produced in 1995, a number of initiatives have been set in place. A formal college policy on quality and its assurance has been adopted and the post of quality assurance manager has been created. The quality assurance policy has been designed to cover all aspects of college operations from pre-entry to completion. A separate operational statement sets out eight objectives. Some of these objectives build on existing practice, but ensure greater co-ordination and monitoring of the work of course teams in setting assignments, undertaking tutorials and keeping course records. Others formalise existing systems, for example, in the creation of a college quality assurance manual and in responding at a college level to points raised by external verifiers and examiners. Much progress has been made, but it will be some time before the new systems are fully absorbed within existing college structures.

56 There is an established process of course review. Students complete questionnaires three times a year. The first term's questionnaire concentrates on obtaining feedback on marketing and induction, the second questionnaire focuses on facilities and course resources and the final questionnaire seeks information on students' perceptions of teaching and the promotion of learning. All questionnaires are analysed, and action plans are drawn up to implement improvements. For example, following the first questionnaire, the bus service timetable has been improved. The results of these surveys form a basis for an end-of-year course review meeting between staff and students, although employers are not involved in this process. Reports are prepared for a special meeting of the academic board.

57 Performance indicators, including targets for enrolments, retention and achievement are collected and monitored through the curriculum team leaders' group. This group, chaired by the deputy principal/director of studies, reports to the academic board. There is evidence that corrective action has taken place as a result of analysis of performance indicators.

58 The college was successful in obtaining the Investors in People award in April 1995. Staff development is closely linked to the strategic plan. There is an active programme of in-house events and staff regularly attend external events concerned with curriculum development. Some limited subject updating takes place. Staff are required to complete an evaluation form after each event attended. The success of individual events is also followed up during appraisal.

59 The college has a well-established appraisal system. Appraisal includes all full-time teachers and also part-time teachers who have a teaching load of at least 100 hours per year. Each teacher is appraised every two years, with an interim review every year. Targets are set and monitored and the appraisal process includes observation of a task. Teachers will normally be observed working with a group of students whereas staff who have a management role might be observed organising and chairing a meeting. A review system operates for non-teaching staff. This is similar to the appraisal system, but is conducted annually and does not include observation of a task. The systems are valued by the majority of staff.

60 The college has a thorough and effective staff-induction programme. Individual programmes are designed to meet the needs of all new and part-time staff. There is a mentoring scheme with a specific checklist for both mentors and line managers.

61 The college's self-assessment report has been written to the headings of Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. Most statements in the report are descriptive in nature. Strengths and weaknesses are not clearly identified, although a statement outlining achievement of strategic planning objectives is included.

62 The college charter clearly identifies the standard of service which the college aims to provide to full-time and part-time students and to local employers. These standards cover specific areas including the handling of applications, the assignment policy and the learning agreement. All students receive a leaflet about the charter, but the leaflet does not indicate where full copies of the charter can be obtained. The college does not have a standard complaint form and enquirers are advised to write to individual college managers. As a result, there is no central record of the number of complaints raised, or a system for monitoring progress on complaints. Very few employers, parents or students interviewed by inspectors were aware of the existence of the charter. College staff were aware of the charter and its contents.

RESOURCES

Staffing

63 Most staff throughout the college are enthusiastic and well motivated. Full-time teachers generally have appropriate academic and professional qualifications. Seventy-eight per cent of full-time staff have a recognised teaching qualification, and a further 10 per cent are currently undertaking training. In leisure and tourism, the two full-time staff primarily involved in managing and teaching these programmes do not have formal qualifications in this area, although both have undertaken work placements to familiarise themselves with the sector. Where required, staff contribute to the work of other departments, for example, a countryside teacher contributes to leisure and tourism courses.

64 In newer sections, for example in animal care and equestrian studies, staff have recent and substantial industrial experience. In some areas, for example, in agricultural engineering, the industrial experience of many teachers is dated, although they keep abreast of current developments through close links with industry. Their understanding of current issues was evident in their teaching.

65 The numbers of full-time teachers achieving relevant assessor awards is growing. Seventy-three per cent of teachers have achieved the basic assessor unit. Teachers acting as primary assessors hold additional units. Appropriate staff in all curriculum areas have obtained units for internal verification and accreditation of prior learning.

66 The use of part-time teachers varies between departments, from 6 per cent in agriculture to 35 per cent in food, tourism and leisure. Some part-time teachers have a regular weekly teaching commitment; others provide short blocks of specialist input as required, for example, window dressing on floristry courses and specialist short cookery courses. Part-time staff have appropriate industrial experience and the college encourages them to take a formal teaching qualification to support their work.

67 Professional, technician and clerical staff are appropriately qualified and experienced and efficiently deployed. Technicians are able to plan and organise their work and have some involvement with controlling budgets. In almost all cases they are responsible to heads of departments. Where necessary, technicians work across departments. Technicians interviewed by inspectors felt well informed about college issues and closely involved with their teaching teams.

68 Staff are used flexibly. New courses are staffed through retraining existing teachers and/or by making external appointments. For example, two full-time teachers who had relevant leisure interests in the area were retrained to meet the needs of the developing countryside management and fisheries courses. Later, additional staff from outside the college with

formal qualifications in these areas were appointed. When staff leave, vacancies are reviewed to allow reappraisal of work and responsibilities.

Equipment/learning resources

69 The library is well stocked with material to support specialist courses including books, journals and compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) database disks. There are also sections on careers, general fiction and a small historical collection. Careful management of the library ensures that it is able to provide a service of high quality to staff and students. Data are collected on the use of the library and books on loan to inform planning. Opening hours include access during the evenings and on Sundays. Security systems, including barriers, closed-circuit television and a parabolic mirror have been installed. There is a total of 44 study spaces.

70 Information technology resources are appropriate. There are 48 machines available across the college for use by students. All staff have access to a computer and there are sufficient networked machines and printers for students' use. A basic range of wordprocessing, spreadsheet and database software is available on every machine. This is supplemented by specialist business, accounting and engineering packages as needed.

71 Facilities for animal care, equestrian work and engineering are good. The animal care section has a wide range of animals including reptiles and amphibians, birds, tropical fish, small mammals and arachnids. There are 29 horses, eight of which are owned by the college with the remainder in livery. Stocks of machinery are sufficient to meet the needs of agriculture, farm mechanisation and engineering courses. Whilst updating of machinery remains a constant challenge for the college, in some cases, arrangements have been made with outside organisations for access to equipment.

72 Good use is made of the river which surrounds most of the college estate for fishing. In addition, the college owns carp ponds and has leased an eight-acre lake at Westbury for trout fishing. Dip wells have been installed to provide higher national diploma students specialising in water and environmental engineering with appropriate practical experience.

73 The estate is used effectively to support the work of agricultural courses. There are good links between the farm staff and teachers, and students are able to access farm information in a number of ways. The commercial farm enterprises of dairy, calves, beef and sheep are well stocked and are used extensively in teaching. Training in the care of outdoor pigs is provided on a pig unit which operates on land leased from the college. Winter wheat, forage maize and ley grassland are the major crops grown.

74 The plant collection is sufficient for students' use. Campus ornamental areas provide ample opportunities for a range of practical work. In season, plant sales are carried out in the walled garden as part of the Lackham Country Attractions. Overall maintenance of grounds and

gardens is satisfactory, but some areas do not set a good example to students. Plots for students allow them to develop their own work and gain a sense of achievement. The old walled garden with demonstration areas forms part of the Lackham Country Attractions. A two-acre anniversary garden, to commemorate the college's fiftieth year is currently being developed. It is intended to open this additional section to the public from summer 1996.

Accommodation

75 Since 1993, the college has undertaken an ambitious programme of building and refurbishment work, including restoration of the top storey of Lackham House, a major extension to the college restaurant and new student social facilities. Lackham House now provides eight general purpose teaching rooms, three information technology rooms and library facilities. These new rooms offer a good working environment. This contrasts more sharply with the 11 older classrooms and 14 mobile classrooms, most of which provide satisfactory accommodation for teaching purposes. Classrooms generally include appropriate and up-to-date wall displays.

76 The new student social area opened in January 1996 is centrally positioned on the campus. Accommodation includes a student union office, a games area, a licensed bar, separate common rooms for students and staff, a coffee shop serving snacks to students and visitors, two meeting rooms and a television room. The refurbished college restaurant is housed in a separate building a short walk from the student social area. There is satisfactory provision of indoor and outdoor sports facilities, including grass pitches. These are let to outside organisations when not in use by students.

77 Students on campus are accommodated in individual study bedrooms. The standard of accommodation is satisfactory. In addition to accommodation for hostel wardens, 18 staff houses are provided for staff where close proximity to the college is necessary for carrying out their duties.

78 Specialist accommodation is generally appropriate. Agricultural engineering workshops are adequate for use. Recent refurbishment has been carried out to improve the machinery classrooms and two laboratories. New curriculum areas, for example equestrian and animal care, are developing appropriate accommodation. The equestrian area has appropriate indoor and outdoor schools, stabling and storage. Leisure and tourism programmes have a designated base room. Most staff offices are located adjacent to specialist teaching accommodation. Overall, the quality of staff accommodation is satisfactory.

79 Accommodation is well managed. Essential repairs to buildings are carried out promptly. There is a programme for other maintenance work, including painting and decorating, to improve the campus, but much remains to be done. Space utilisation is monitored and is gradually

becoming more efficient. Allocation of teaching accommodation is computerised and all staff are able to access room availability. The system contains valuable detail on class size, teaching resources required and staffing. Security has been carefully installed to maximise and simplify effectiveness. Security lighting and closed-circuit television have been installed in some locations. Although some improvements have been made to signposting the various parts of the college, some sections are not clearly indicated.

80 Access for wheelchair users is provided to most parts of the campus. A lift has recently been installed in Lackham House, which provides access to the library and computing facilities. There are ramps in many parts of the campus. Where access is not possible, for example, to a number of the mobile classrooms, rooming is altered.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

81 Strengths of the college include:

- the comprehensive range of provision for full-time and part-time students
- effective links with schools, other colleges, the local community and countries overseas
- additional programmes of sporting and special interest activities
- the involvement of corporation board members in the life of the college
- high-quality systems for the recruitment and induction of new students
- the effectiveness of most of the teaching observed
- generally good retention rates and examination results
- the comprehensive staff-development and appraisal systems
- generally well-qualified, enthusiastic and committed staff
- high-quality provision of specialist facilities and of library and learning resources
- the attention paid to safety and security throughout the college
- the extensive programme of new and refurbished accommodation
- the attention paid to ensuring physical access to the campus for wheelchair users.

82 The college should address the following issues:

- more comprehensive marketing of some aspects of college provision
- the systematic implementation and monitoring of equal opportunities
- the variable nature of tutorial support provision
- the effectiveness of the present systems for careers education and counselling
- the lack of knowledge of the college charter by students, parents and employers
- the need to continue the improvement of accommodation.

FIGURES

-
- 1 Student numbers by age (as at November 1995)

 - 2 Student numbers by level of study (as at November 1995)

 - 3 Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1995)

 - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1995-96)

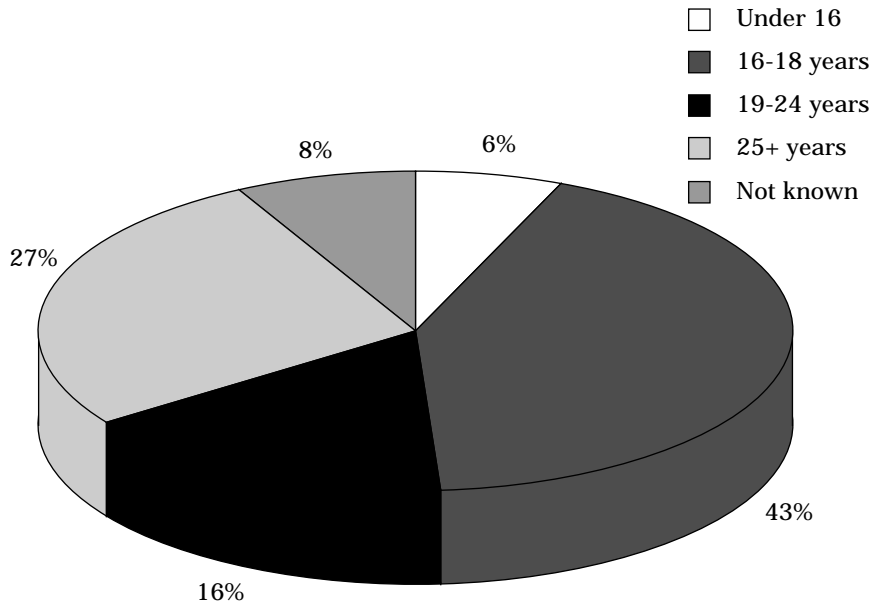
 - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1995)

 - 6 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

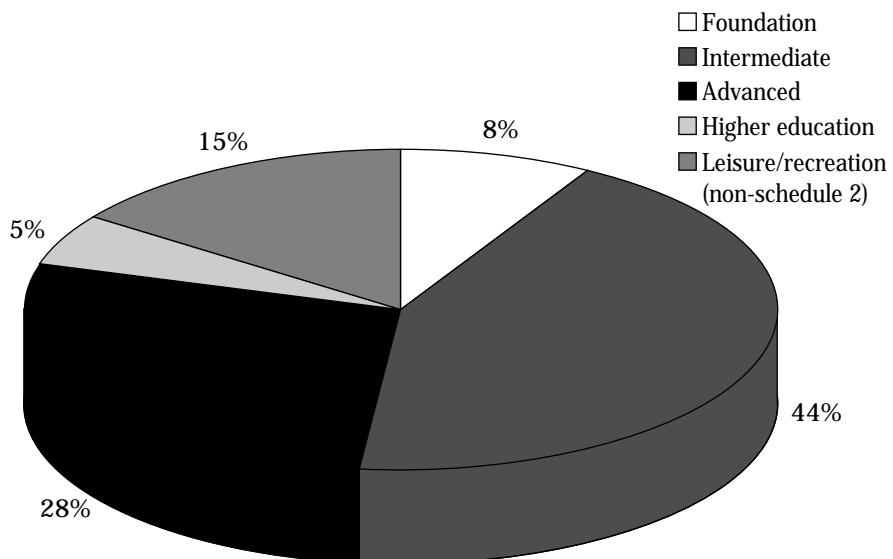
Lackham College: student numbers by age (as at November 1995)



Student numbers: 1,173

Figure 2

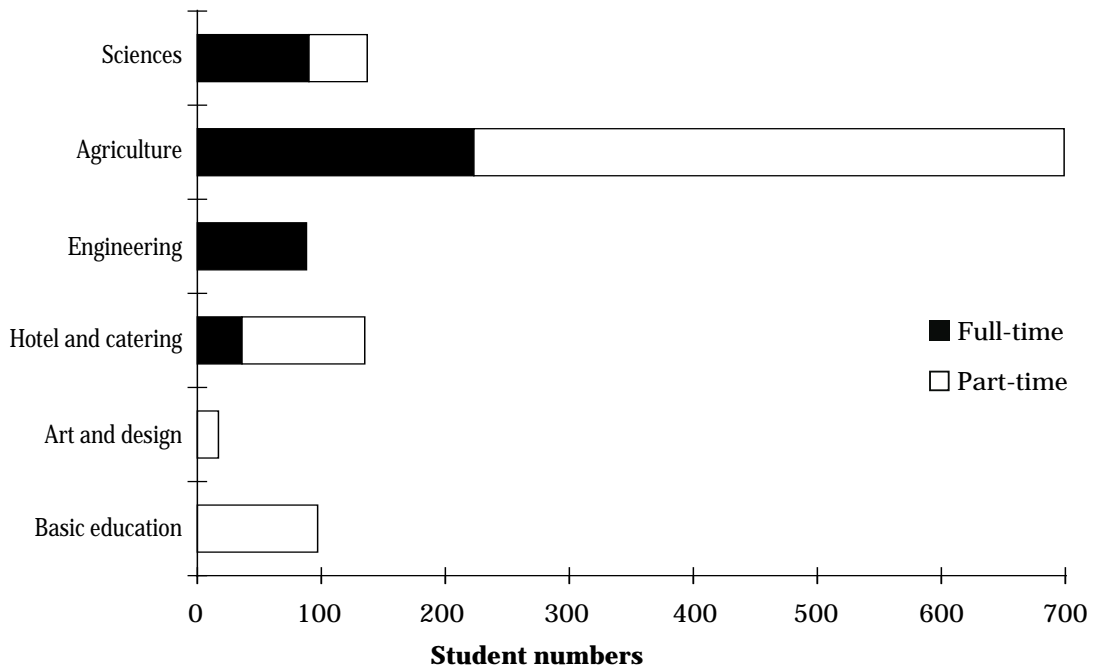
Lackham College: student numbers by level of study (as at November 1995)



Student numbers: 1,173

Figure 3

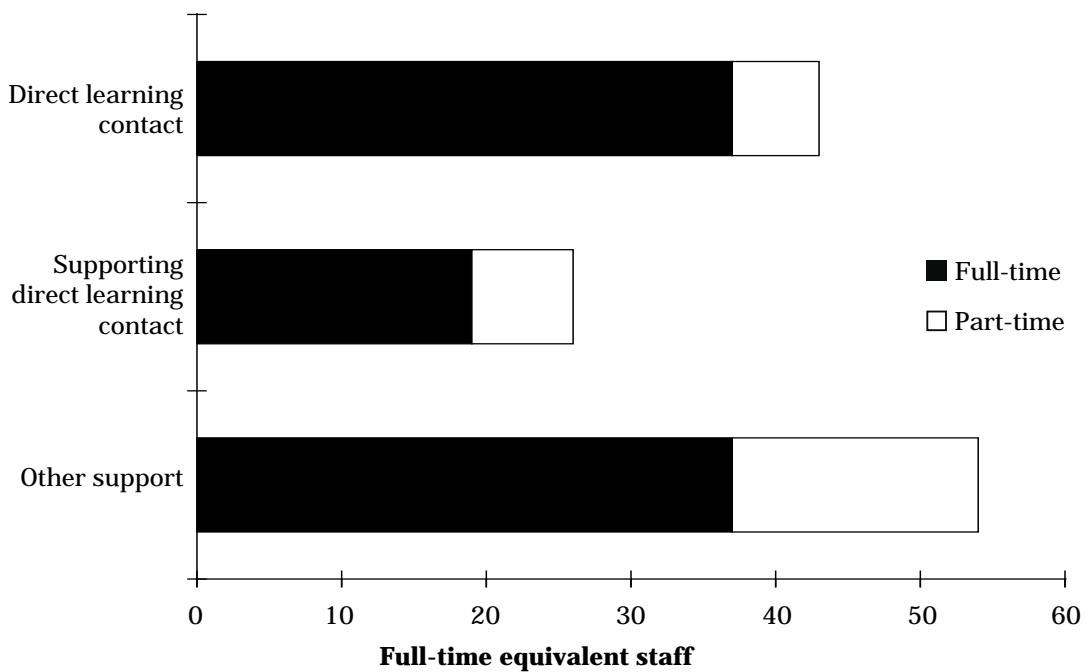
Lackham College: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1995)



Student numbers: 1,173

Figure 4

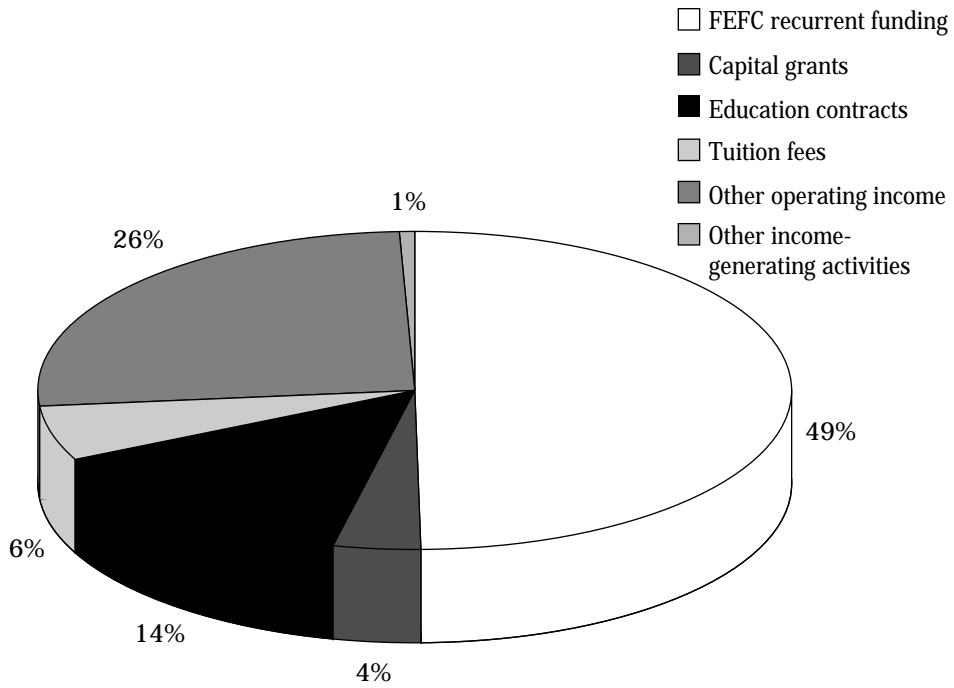
Lackham College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1995-96)



Full-time equivalent staff: 123

Figure 5

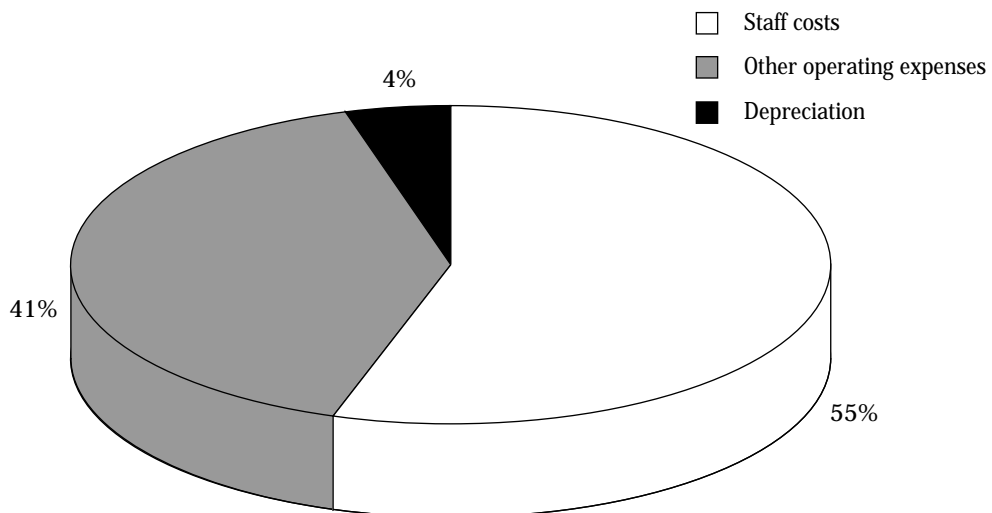
Lackham College: income (for 12 months to July 1995)



Income: £3,665,000

Figure 6

Lackham College: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)



Expenditure: £3,730,000

*Note: this chart excludes £2,000 interest payable.
The historic cost surplus for the period was £59,000.*

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