

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Lambeth College

May 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 53/97

LAMBETH COLLEGE
GREATER LONDON REGION
Inspected March 1996-January 1997

Summary

Lambeth College has made significant progress towards achieving its strategic aims. The college offers courses in all 10 FEFC programme areas. Governors bring valuable commercial and professional experience to the college. Managers, teachers and governors of the college are committed to maximising the achievements of students. There is an ethos of continuous quality improvement in the college which is supported by well-established quality assurance systems. Managers set targets and make effective use of performance indicators. Comprehensive staff-development opportunities are available to teachers and support staff. Students on many courses benefit from the effective use of work experience to enrich their learning. Good welfare, childcare and learning support services are available to students. The well-resourced libraries and study centres provide a stimulating, and supportive learning environment for students. A major building and refurbishment programme has resulted in many attractive teaching and communal areas. In order to build upon its strengths the college should: ensure consistent implementation at course level of policies and procedures; improve the quality of some course reviews, self-assessment reports and teaching in some areas; improve retention on many courses; establish stronger links with employers in some vocational areas; improve the effectiveness of tutorials in some areas; ensure that teachers have opportunities to update their professional skills and gain relevant commercial and/or industrial experience; improve the quality and level of careers advice and guidance; and continue to implement the accommodation strategy.

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

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Mathematics and computing	2	English and communication studies, psychology, sociology and politics	2
Sciences	2		
Construction	3		
Engineering	3	Basic education, ESOL and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	3
Business studies	3		
Health and community care	2		
Art and design	3		

INTRODUCTION

1 Lambeth College was inspected between March 1996 and January 1997. The college's induction and enrolment procedures were inspected in September 1996. Twenty-one inspectors spent 77 days in the college. They visited 206 classes, and scrutinised students' work and documentation relating to the college and its courses. Meetings were held with college governors, managers, teachers, students, employers, the training and vocational education initiative project manager for Lambeth and representatives of the careers service, the local authority, and the Focus Central London Training and Enterprise Council (TEC).

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Lambeth College is a large tertiary college situated in the London Borough of Lambeth. The college was formed in 1992 from the merger of Vauxhall College, Brixton College, and South London College. The college inherited 11 sites which have now been reduced to five. In 1993, the college formally took over the sixth form work of the local authority, but there is a substantial number of school sixth forms in neighbouring boroughs, and in grant-maintained and church schools. Four further education colleges and a denominational sixth form college are within easy travelling distance. The London Borough of Lambeth offers a community education service, and works collaboratively with the college to provide prison education. Following the collapse of the South Thames TEC, the college now falls within the area covered by the newly-created Focus Central London TEC.

3 The population of Lambeth is approximately 240,000 and includes people from a rich diversity of cultural backgrounds. Over 30 per cent of local people are from minority ethnic communities, a figure which rises to 50 per cent for people under the age of 25. More than 100 languages are spoken in Lambeth homes, predominantly of African-Caribbean and African origin. By any measure, the borough is disadvantaged; it comes third out of 366 authorities in England in the 'worst wards' measure of urban deprivation. There are many refugees and asylum seekers in the borough, many of whom are students at the college. Most Lambeth residents travel to work outside the borough. Unemployment rates of 17.2 per cent overall and 23.2 per cent for adult males are significantly higher than the averages for London as a whole. Nearly a quarter of unemployed people in the borough are under 25. The unemployment rate for black people is twice that for white people. There are nearly 9,000 single parent households in the borough. The number continuing their education after the age of 16 is rising, but is still lower than the national average.

4 On 1 November 1996, 7,672 students were enrolled at the college, of whom 47 per cent were male and 53 per cent female. Eighty-four per cent of students are aged over 19. The largest minority ethnic groups in the

college are African and African-Caribbean and, together, they represent 56 per cent of the students. Thirty-two per cent of students are white and the remaining 12 per cent represent Asian and other minority ethnic groups. The majority of enrolments are for substantial part-time 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. The college employs around 750 staff, a full-time equivalent of 537. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents is shown in figure 4.

5 The college's mission statement commits the college to 'increase the skills of the people in its borough and beyond, enabling them to enjoy developing their full potential throughout their life, to the benefit of themselves, their employers and their community. It will do so by offering post-16 provision of:

- education and training
- accreditation and guidance

which is accessible, cost effective, high in quality and which ensures equality of opportunity'.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

6 In order to meet the needs of the local community, the college has made substantial changes to its course provision. A particular feature is the range of courses available for those students who have few formal qualifications on entry to the college. These include courses leading to general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) in five vocational areas at foundation level, GNVQs in eight areas at intermediate level and a wide range of access to higher education and pre-access courses. Access courses are modular and many allow students much flexibility to attend at times of their own choosing. All access courses, and many other courses which previously led to college certificates, now lead to qualifications accredited through the London Open College Federation. There are good opportunities for progression from foundation to higher level courses at the college.

7 The college offers courses in all 10 Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) programme areas. Specialist courses in dental technology are offered at the Tower Bridge Centre. Building restoration and conservation is a developing area in the school of building crafts, and the college has been involved in a number of prestigious projects including the renovation of St Pancras Chambers, construction work at the Globe Theatre, and the conservation of war memorials in northern France. These projects provide opportunities for unemployed students to gain valuable practical experience. Advanced GNVQs are provided in three vocational areas. There are seven Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diploma courses and a wide range of vocational qualifications leading to national awards. While the range of full-time courses is wide in most vocational areas there are few part-time and short courses. The

college provides some staff-development courses at cost, including some on equal opportunities, but there is scope to further develop income-generating work.

8 There are strong links with employers in dental technology but few in most other vocational areas. The college has recently introduced a common framework for liaising with employers but it is not yet fully established. A work-based learning unit set up in 1996 has streamlined the organisation and administration of work experience for students.

9 Vocational courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities lead to appropriate nationally-recognised qualifications in construction, engineering and information technology. Pupils from 13 special schools and units attend vocational classes at the college. These classes are funded largely by the college. In 1996, 43 per cent of the students who had attended these classes progressed to study on full-time courses at Lambeth College. There is foundation level provision of English for bilingual students at three of the college centres, and vocational courses at foundation level at all centres. These courses offer suitable progression opportunities to students who complete preliminary courses provided by the local education authority (LEA) at centres in the community. The college provides courses designed to make construction, electronics, and new technologies accessible to women. Programmes are offered for young people who have not succeeded on traditional education and training schemes. The college has made successful bids for European funding to support such courses.

10 Full-time general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) and general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) courses are available at the Norwood Centre. Students on these courses represented 7 per cent of enrolments in 1996. Sixteen GCE A level and 11 GCSE subjects are grouped into four 'packages', in business, science, media and social care which all include GCSE English language. Students who are not yet ready for GCSE English have few alternatives and this has resulted in a significant number of students enrolling on the GCSE course, but not completing it.

11 There are strong and effective links with more than 20 community groups and external organisations including the Brixton Top Cats, the Inner City Young People's Partnership, and the Prince's Trust. There is an agreement with five higher education establishments whereby students are guaranteed an interview for their chosen higher education programme. Four per cent of the college's provision is franchised to local organisations, which deliver training in basic education, electrical installations and refrigeration. The college sponsors the educational provision at HM Prison Brixton.

12 Since its establishment in 1992, the college has improved working relationships with the 10 local authority secondary schools. Joint activities have included a conference on progression from schools to college held at the Oval Cricket Ground and staff-development opportunities for school

teachers held at the college, as well as the resurgence of a local Education Business Partnership.

13 The collapse of South Thames TEC in 1994 caused a significant disruption to the college's TEC-related work. However, the college has established a productive relationship with the Focus Central London TEC and has been successful in bids for funding. The development fund in 1996-97 has been used to establish a centre for diagnosing dyslexia, following research which identified this as a significant gap in provision locally. The single regeneration budget has helped provide computer literacy training for local residents in Brixton and Peckham using a converted double-decker bus which has 12 computer stations upstairs and a creche downstairs. The college became an active participant in a competitiveness fund project in Internet/multimedia technologies with seven other colleges in 1996. The project aims to establish video-conferencing facilities for colleges. The college currently has very limited direct involvement in youth credits and modern apprenticeships.

14 The college produces attractive publicity materials. Leaflets, press and radio advertising, launches of new courses, and award ceremonies are widely used as means of promoting the college and the achievements of its students. The college commissioned a survey of labour market needs in 1994 and also analyses other sources of labour market intelligence. So far, such analyses have led to the college focusing more on aspects of publicity and the promotion of courses. The college is working towards a systematic analysis of market trends to inform curriculum development plans.

15 Equality of opportunity is implicit in all aspects of the college's work, and is reflected in the range of courses provided for students from groups which have not usually entered further education.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

16 Since the formation of the college from three separate institutions, the governors and managers have developed a strong, single college ethos. From a difficult financial position and a poor reputation locally four years ago, considerable progress has been made in reducing costs and raising the college's profile.

17 The corporation of 16 comprises 11 independent members, a member nominated by the TEC, one co-opted member, a staff governor, the principal and one governor nominated by the college's academic board. Three of the governors are women and two are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The areas in which governors have expertise include law, accountancy and finance, industrial relations, personnel, equality of opportunity, information technology and work in the community. Six of the governors have been members of the governing body since 1992, when the college was formed, and have provided stability to the board.

18 The governors are highly committed to the college and attendance at full board meetings from October 1995 to May 1996 was 78 per cent. The board delegates appropriate powers to the principal and the roles of managers and governors are clear. Members are active and well informed in their support for the college. They make effective use of their experience in carrying out the business of the corporation, and draw on external expertise when appropriate. For example, they arranged for a presentation from representatives of the Colleges Employers Forum and a teachers' union in order to consider new teaching staff contracts from an informed position.

19 The meetings of the corporation board are conducted effectively. A senior member of staff has recently been appointed whose sole responsibility is to act as clerk to the corporation, senior management team, academic board and other committees. There are six subcommittees of the corporation; audit, finance and general purposes, remuneration, planning and performance, search, and student affairs. Each committee has clear terms of reference and a member of the senior management team acts as a contact to each committee. The staffing committee has been discontinued, and while the governing body makes broad policy decisions in this area most personnel issues are delegated to the principal. The finance and general purposes committee monitors staff appointments, and governors have a representative on the college's working party on appraisal.

20 Governors have a register of interests, and a draft code of conduct has been agreed. Governors review their training needs, which are addressed by a training programme. They also attend an annual, residential training and development event. Effective systems for the induction and mentoring of new governors are in place. The governors review their performance against targets which are set and reviewed annually. Since incorporation governors have been primarily concerned with financial matters. Some governors have effective links with curriculum areas and there are plans to extend such links. Governors are well informed through the subcommittees of the corporation about the extent to which the college meets its targets. In consultation with the principal, targets for the improvement of students' achievements are agreed for courses where governors have concerns. There is an effective working relationship between the governors and the college's senior management team.

21 The senior management team, which comprises the principal and the directors of finance, human resources, planning, learner support and curriculum, meets weekly. The principal holds fortnightly meetings with individual members of the team. In addition to their corporate responsibility, each director, with the exception of the director of finance, has responsibility for one of the college's centres and acts as a mentor to a group of heads of schools. The team has a clear view of the college's aims and an operational plan for achieving them. The senior management

team has improved management information, attends effectively to financial matters and is continuing to address staffing and accommodation issues. The team systematically plans all aspects of its work. The activities of the team are reported weekly in the college staff bulletin and, through directors, information is conveyed directly to heads of schools and college services.

22 The college has a comprehensive strategic planning process which is based on a continuous cycle of review, evaluation and development. Staff are involved in the process through the production of school operating plans. These plans, together with market research information, advice from the academic board and the college mission, combine to determine the curriculum offer. The views of the TEC are sought and the plan adapted accordingly. Governors are consulted at various points in the cycle and they, and the TEC, give final approval to the plan. The published plan is implemented and regularly reviewed. The strategic plan is the corner stone of much of the college's decision making and staff are becoming increasingly aware of its significance.

23 The academic board, which meets every six weeks, acts as an effective advisory group to the principal and senior managers on matters relating to the curriculum. The membership comprises members of the senior management team, heads of schools, five elected teaching staff, and two elected support staff. The board has five subcommittees: information technology; language and numeracy; quality; staff development; and equal opportunities. In addition, there is a board of study for each of the college's major programme areas. The academic board reviews the reports of each subcommittee.

24 The college has policies in place for health and safety, equal opportunities and many aspects of cross-college and curricular activities. Management responsibility for each is clear. Policies are reviewed and monitored by the subcommittees and reports are considered by the senior management team.

25 Teaching staff are managed by 12 heads of schools, most of whom also manage an aspect of cross-college provision, such as the development of GNVQs or European development. Lines of accountability are generally clear within schools. Enrolment, retention and achievement targets are set and monitored effectively. Lines of communication are clear and well understood, but there is some variation in the effectiveness of course management. Heads of schools meet fortnightly with the curriculum director, have meetings with a member of the senior management team who acts as their mentor and meet regularly, as a group, with the principal. Each school has a management team, comprising the head of school and the course managers, which meets weekly. Course teams meet each week and are generally well informed about college procedures and policies, although not all curriculum managers ensure their full implementation. For example, procedures relating to attendance and punctuality are not always followed.

26 The college has recently improved its management information system which now produces extensive, accurate, and timely information on students, performance indicators and their achievement against targets. Clear, regular reports are provided for the senior management team, governors and heads of schools. Heads of schools will shortly have computerised access to management information. Although most data required to inform management decision making are available from the system, students' destinations are not yet collected and analysed systematically. A new system of electronic attendance monitoring has been installed but, as yet, this has failed to provide adequate reports on attendance to heads of schools or tutors to enable them to analyse attendance patterns and address retention problems promptly. Enrolment targets are set and were exceeded in 1994-95 by 9 per cent, and in 1995-96 by 5 per cent.

27 The college monitors and analyses performance indicators to inform all financial planning. The delegation of the consumables budget to curriculum schools is calculated using a formula based on enrolments which is well understood by heads of schools. The financial controls and reporting are clear and comprehensive. Curriculum area costs are monitored centrally. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are shown in figures 5 and 6. The college's average level of funding for 1996-97 is £25.39 per unit compared with £26.63 in 1995-96. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges is £17.97 per unit.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

28 The college provides a wide range of student support services under the director of learning support who is a member of the senior management team. The service is responsible for student admissions, enrolment and induction, the tutorial system, and additional learning support. It also provides guidance, professional counselling, welfare services, childcare and financial help for students. Services are effectively managed across centres. There are clear aims and objectives for each service that are understood and supported by staff. There is an extensive range of expertise amongst support staff who are knowledgeable about recent legislation and its impact on students. The college has been successful in obtaining additional funding from the TEC, the Further Education Development Agency and other external agencies to develop its work in supporting students. Staff receive relevant training for their roles.

29 Recruitment practices are effective. Prospective students learn about the college at open days and other events, such as visits by staff to local schools, parent evenings and careers conventions. There is a well-designed and easily understood prospectus which contains information about courses, entry requirements, progression opportunities, enrolment fees and sources of financial help.

30 The processes for dealing with applications are well organised and efficient. There is a cross-college admissions team with an admissions unit on each site. Enquiries and applications are dealt with by well-informed, experienced and qualified staff. All full-time students are interviewed by a teacher prior to enrolment. Students who do not have the required qualifications undertake written tests to determine their level of ability. The student support team has produced useful guidelines to help teachers in this work. The enrolment procedures observed by inspectors were effective and well organised. Students who have not yet chosen a course are directed to appropriate staff for guidance. Students speak warmly about the quality of support given in choosing their courses. Opportunities for students to have their previous experience assessed and accredited are limited currently, but pilot schemes are operating in business administration and dental technology courses.

31 An induction programme is provided for all students. During induction, students are introduced to their courses and college services such as the library, study centres, childcare facilities, counselling and welfare. A student handbook, given out at induction, contains useful information, including the college's charter. It also includes advice on students' rights and responsibilities. As part of induction, teachers set students assignments to identify how familiar they are with their chosen vocational areas. The quality of these assignments varies across the college and some are set at an inappropriate level. The college is aware of the need to share good practice and is developing model assignments.

32 There is an effective system for identifying students' needs for additional learning support. Of the 2,500 students screened in 1996, about 1,000 were identified as needing support. Learning support sessions in literacy and numeracy are available at all of the college's centres. Each of the college's centres has a well-equipped study centre which plays a key role in ensuring that students are provided with additional learning support. The effectiveness of additional learning support is monitored weekly and the progress of individual students is recorded. The quality of learning support varies. Teachers of computing classes were observed taking account of the needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Additional support in literacy and numeracy was clearly valued by art and design students. In social care, staff are not always sure how to advise students on the use of the study centres although students are encouraged to support each other through learning 'buddies'.

33 Students on full-time courses have tutorials each week for two hours. One hour is dedicated to group work and the other hour is spent on the development of study skills and individual action planning. Students on substantial part-time courses receive a one-hour group tutorial each week. The college has improved the tutorial arrangements and has introduced a file which contains useful guidance for tutors on topics such as action planning, recording of achievements and health and safety regulations. There is also a system for providing individual students with mentors,

some of whom are former students. Despite the college having established a common framework and guidelines to assist tutors, there remains considerable variation in the effectiveness of tutorials.

34 Students benefit from comprehensive counselling and welfare services. There are four welfare officers, two of whom are qualified counsellors, who cover the five centres. Two youth workers have recently been appointed to address the problems encountered by the increasing number of younger students. Professionally-qualified, experienced and dedicated staff provide a confidential service which is highly regarded by staff and students. The problem most commonly expressed by students is financial hardship. They can apply for support from the access and hardship funds. More than 50 students have received amounts ranging from £20 to £200 from the access fund of £70,000 since September 1996. The college's hardship fund of £21,800 is divided between the college's centres to cover emergencies. Other sources of funds available to students are the governors' fee remission scheme and external charities such as The Sir Walter St John's Educational Charity. The college's nurseries, at three of its centres, cater for about 75 children of students. Some students currently receive allowances towards nursery or registered childminder fees. The college has identified a level of need for support that cannot be fully met from the college's budget. Managers are aware that there is a need to prioritise the demands on this service.

35 The college has a service level agreement with the newly-established careers and guidance company for South London to provide students with careers advice and guidance. The service is not particularly effective. Careers advice for students has reduced over recent years. The college is aware of the urgent need to improve this aspect of provision and has installed a comprehensive careers information library on all sites.

36 Students on courses designed specifically for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive an appropriate level of well-planned support. Through the established links with 13 specialist schools and units, staff are able to discuss individual students' needs before they enrol. The college also provides additional learning support for around

60 students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who attend mainstream courses. Support includes the provision of communicators for students with a hearing impairment. The college successfully helps dyslexic students by providing them with a qualified teacher who gives specialist tuition. A disability statement has been approved by the governors. It provides a comprehensive description for prospective students and external agencies of the services available to students, parents and carers.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

37 The strengths outweighed the weaknesses in 52 per cent of the teaching and learning sessions inspected. This is lower than the national

figure of 63 per cent for all lessons observed during the 1995-96 inspection programme according to the Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1995-96. In over 15 per cent of lessons the weaknesses outweighed the strengths, compared with a national figure of 8 per cent. The average attendance in the classes inspected was 66 per cent. This is well below the figure of 76 per cent for all classes in 1995-96 reported by the *Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1995-96*. There were some classes, in business, for example, where 50 per cent or more of the students were absent. The following table summarises the grades awarded to the sessions inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade 1	2	3	4	5	Totals
Access to higher and further education	3	11	10	4	0	28
GCE AS/A level	8	5	5	0	0	18
GCSE	3	4	2	2	0	11
GNVQ	2	8	11	9	0	30
NVQ	2	8	7	1	1	19
Basic education	1	2	9	4	0	16
Other*	22	29	22	9	2	84
Total	41	67	66	29	3	206

**includes BTEC first and national diplomas and other vocational qualifications.*

38 The preparation and planning of courses and lessons is generally sound. The majority of courses have schemes of work and, in many cases, these are shared with students. Useful course handbooks containing information about assessment and guidance on studies are given to students during induction. Planning in art and design makes provision for students to explore cultural differences using topics which relate to their everyday experiences. Schemes of work are underdeveloped in English and in some other GCE A level and GCSE courses. The various elements of GNVQ courses in art and design are not yet properly integrated.

39 Relationships between students and teachers are good. Most students enjoy their studies. Most teaching and learning is marked by mutual respect in classrooms. On some courses, students sign agreements which acknowledge their rights as well as their responsibilities. Teachers are enthusiastic and committed to helping students to be successful. Most students are responsive and keen to learn. There are many cases where teachers use a range of teaching methods to stimulate learning which recognises the differing abilities and experiences of students. One teacher's approach to tackling complex poems in a GCE A level English class was to highlight the important features of a poem in a table as an aid to analysing the poem. The teacher showed how this method could be used in

examinations. Students appreciated this approach. Teachers make effective use of targeted questions to check that learning has taken place in many classes. On social care and business courses, and in some classes for students whose first language is not English, the interchange and discussion of ideas is encouraged by small group work. In a minority of lessons, notably in construction, engineering and art and design, students experience poorly-paced, uninspired teaching in which they are given little opportunity to participate imaginatively in the work.

40 The quality of teaching of key skills is variable. Vocabulary exercises and financial calculations helped to promote the development of key skills in business lessons. Teachers in some social science classes give appropriate attention to transferable study skills such as reading, oral fluency and note taking. Key skills are less well developed in construction and building crafts courses. The use of information technology by students in lessons and in the presentation of assignments is variable.

41 The majority of students on vocational courses undertake work experience as a part of their studies. In some cases, this is very well managed and monitored. Computing students, for example, complete a project as part of their work experience and their skills are assessed against a standard list. Assignments on courses in health care and childcare are closely linked to work experience. On some vocational care courses, the use of practising professionals to teach aspects such as child protection adds an important professional insight to students' learning. Some students on construction courses are able to participate in projects outside the college. The college's excellent dental laboratory encourages students to develop the high professional standards required in commercial laboratories. In business studies, whilst students participate in work experience as a part of their course, the teaching they received was mainly theoretical and rarely referred to current commercial practices.

42 Teaching aids are effectively employed in some lessons. Effective use is made of overhead projectors and other practical equipment in social care. Teachers in business and construction use videos and models effectively to stimulate learning. In business, structured activities provided in the training offices keep students fully occupied and higher level students support those working at lower levels. There is little evidence of the development of appropriate audio-visual and learning support materials to help students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

43 In many lessons teachers provide work which challenges the students and helps them to develop their ability to work on their own. Students in computing take a mature and self-disciplined approach to their work and are encouraged to overcome problems themselves. Attractive, well-constructed worksheets in computing provide a range of activities which cater for students' differing skills and abilities. In art and design, some lessons encourage students to work on their own while, in others, students are given insufficient opportunities to demonstrate their skills.

In the part-time business choice programme, designed to meet the needs of adult returners, students can choose a range of options which are supported by learning packages, which enable them to work at their own pace.

44 Students on separate specialist courses for people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from the support of a committed team of teachers. Recent restructuring of courses has increased students' opportunities to achieve a nationally-recognised qualification. Although the quality of teaching in this area is sound overall, and is sometimes exciting and challenging, teachers do not always effectively develop their ideas, and some teachers use only a limited range of teaching methods. Teachers of vocational skills do not always sufficiently understand how learning difficulties and/or disabilities can affect students' ability to learn, and in some sessions activities were inappropriate. Lessons for students whose first language is not English are generally well planned and teachers use a variety of methods effectively. Detailed schemes of work, and stringent assessment and verification procedures, provide a standardised basis for provision in this area.

45 There are many examples of comprehensive assessment schemes within which students receive a continuous update on how they are progressing. For example, in computing, science, social care and English, homework and assignments are set regularly, marked and returned, in most cases annotated with critical but helpful comments. Many teachers are careful to correct errors of grammar and spelling in written work. Feedback to students on their work in construction, and on some GCE A level and GCSE courses, is not always sufficiently clear.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

46 Students who attend regularly work well in lessons and enjoy their studies. In the better sessions observed, students were responsive, supportive of one another and able to work well in groups. Students' diligence and commitment were evident in computing, politics, psychology, sociology and access courses. Students on the foundation GNVQ in art and design were enthusiastic about a project in which they explored the emotional connotations of words through a range of media and colour.

47 Assessed coursework generally meets the standards of awarding bodies. Students' assignments in construction and health and community care were of an appropriate standard, and in English, politics, psychology and sociology, were sometimes of high quality. In radio and journalism, assignments showed that students were confident about working in a realistic, professional context. Work was well presented in computing and often wordprocessed. In GCSE mathematics, students' coursework showed a developing ability to apply their knowledge and understanding.

48 Students in engineering and construction, and in art and design, achieve appropriate standards in practical work. In photography some

adult students produce creative work of high quality. The videotapes of media students also demonstrate work of a professional standard. Some practical craft work done by nursery nursing students is also of a high standard.

49 Students' ability to use information technology varies across the college, with those whose courses include substantial elements of computing being most successful. Students demonstrated a wide range of information technology skills on business courses leading to national vocational qualifications (NVQs). In their presentation of assignments on access to science and dental technology courses some students' use of information technology was outstanding. Health and community care students, on the other hand, used little information technology in their assignments.

50 In 1994-96, there were 1,619 students enrolled on two-year vocational courses, of whom 782 completed their studies and 623 achieved a pass. In 1995-96, of the 6,273 students enrolled on one-year courses, 4,217 completed their studies and 2,734 passed. These figures include many adult students whose results are not taken into account in the tables of vocational achievements produced by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE). Seventy-one per cent of the 51 students in their final year of study on the advanced vocational courses included in the DfEE's 1996 performance tables were successful. This places the college among the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. Thirty-two per cent of the 135 students on intermediate vocational courses were successful which places the college in the bottom 10 per cent on this performance measure. Significant numbers of students fail to achieve certification within the target time.

51 Students' achievements on advanced level courses are generally good. Students studying for the BTEC higher national certificate in dental technology and the BTEC higher national certificate in engineering achieved a 90 per cent pass rate in 1996. Pass rates for students taking BTEC national diplomas and certificates in science, computer studies, engineering, construction, and dental technology were above national figures in 1995 and 1996. Results in business studies have been more varied. While the majority of students on business courses achieve at, or above, national average pass rates, and 92 per cent of students enrolled in the BTEC national certificate programmes at Brixton received the full award in 1996, no student enrolled on the same programme at the Clapham Centre achieved a pass. Students on most health and community care courses achieved pass rates which were at, or above, national averages and 100 per cent pass rates have been achieved in 1994 and 1995 on the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education diploma in nursery nursing. Over 90 per cent of students on RSA Examinations Board (RSA) counselling courses achieved a pass.

52 Outcomes at intermediate and foundation levels are mixed. Pass rates in science and engineering are generally at, or above, national

averages. The change from the BTEC first diploma to GNVQ intermediate information technology was accompanied by a significant drop in pass rates in 1996; at Norwood, no student achieved the full award. Pass rates on the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) intermediate level information technology courses continue to be high. Pass rates were below national averages on most intermediate level business courses and in art and design in 1996. Pass rates for students studying at foundation level in science, information technology and art and design, and for students studying business studies at Norwood, were at, or above, national averages.

53 In most NVQs, the records of achievement of individual units show steady progress towards certification. In construction, 123 students gained NVQs at level 2 in 1996, representing a 78 per cent pass rate, and 42 per cent of those enrolled achieved NVQ level 3. Just over half of the 110 students who took NVQ level 2 in business were successful. In contrast, only 13 per cent of students on the NVQ level 2 in accounting were successful. NVQs in health and community care have been recently introduced and, as yet, few students have completed their programmes.

54 GCE A level results have been steadily improving in most subjects, although there is some variation in the same subjects offered at different centres, and between one-year and two-year courses. Students aged 16 to 18 entered for GCE A level examinations in 1996 scored, on average, 3.2 points per entry (where grade A=10 points, E=2). This places the college in the middle third of all colleges in the sector according to the tables published by the DfEE. The number of students on two-year courses gaining A to E grades in biology, physics, English literature and mathematics has more than doubled over three years and is now comparable with national figures. There have also been marked improvements in photography, psychology, and government and politics. Students following two-year courses in law and sociology are now achieving pass rates which are above national averages. English language and business studies pass rates remain well below national averages. None of the 14 students enrolled in the mathematics evening class at Brixton achieved a pass.

55 Eighteen per cent of full-time GCSE students gained four A to C grades in 1996. Students who completed the recently-introduced double science award had a high level of achievement in 1996, with the proportion obtaining grades A to C, 30 per cent above the national figure. GCSE pass rates in most subjects lie below national averages, although 69 per cent of students taking English at the Norwood Centre obtained grades A to C, well above the proportion of students achieving such grades nationally.

56 Until recently, there was little opportunity for basic education students and students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to gain nationally-recognised qualifications. All courses are now externally accredited and, although comparative data is not comprehensively available, the trend in achievement overall has been upward. There are some areas where

students perform particularly well. Students on the pre-foundation, 'towards independence' course accredited by the Awards Scheme Development and Accreditation Network achieved a 100 per cent pass rate in 1995. Achievement in basic education is more varied, with pass rates ranging from 100 per cent on an Associated Examining Board's literacy test, to only 33 per cent on a C&G numeracy test. Accreditation through the London Open College Federation has been introduced for students on English courses for speakers of other languages (ESOL). ESOL students taking units on these courses had an average pass rate of 50 per cent, and ESOL students taking mainstream vocational qualifications had an average pass rate of 38 per cent.

57 Completion rates across the college are poor but improving; in 1995-96, on average, a quarter of those enrolled on courses failed to complete. There are a few examples of courses where most of students regularly complete their studies, including science and dental technology, where the average completion rate is over 90 per cent. However, in engineering, of the 34 students initially enrolled in the two-year C&G electronics servicing course, only three students remained on the second year of the courses in 1996, one of whom passed. In construction, many students fail to complete their course, with only 29 per cent of students completing a plumbing and masonry course. On average, nearly half the students enrolled on business courses leave before the end. Completion rates are also poor in many GCE A level and GCSE programmes, most particularly in evening classes. The college only retains 36 per cent of its two-year GCE AS/A level students and 57 per cent of its GCSE students.

58 Access courses are offered in most programme areas and pass rates are consistently good. Most students completing access courses gain places on courses in higher education. There is also good progression to university from GCE A level courses in humanities and science subjects. Increasing numbers of students on advanced level vocational courses in science, computing and health and social care are gaining places on courses in higher education.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

59 Since its formation the college has made significant progress in the development of quality assurance systems. The quality assurance policy reflects the college's mission statement. The strategic plan contains a section on quality assurance and staff development. The director of curriculum, supported by the quality development manager is responsible for quality assurance. There are clear reporting lines for the outcomes of the course review process through the boards of study to the quality development subcommittee of the academic board, the senior management team and the recently-formed planning and performance committee of the corporation. The first report of performance against 14 indicators has been made to the planning and performance committee. Managers are responsible for quality assurance in their areas, providing support for staff

where it is needed and identifying related training needs. The quality development committee monitors the implementation of the quality assurance policy. A range of existing quality assurance procedures, such as course reviews, responses to external reports from awarding bodies, complaints, and the procedures for the internal verification arrangements for courses are being reviewed currently by the quality development committee. Some new procedures such as a triennial course audit are being developed. All of these arrangements will be summarised in a quality manual due to be produced during 1997. Quality standards have been in use for some time for most of the college's support services. In a few areas, standards require further development.

60 There is a well-established system for the annual review of courses which has been improved over the four years of its operation. The streamlined procedures in use this year are based on termly reviews carried out by course and service teams. The reviews take into account students' views and make use of performance indicators for enrolments, students' achievements and retention. Course reviews are evaluative, although there is some variation in their quality and their level of detail. The college has recognised that further development is needed in carrying out course reviews and has planned a suitable programme of staff development. Course managers report in detail on courses where the agreed targets have not been met and where they have been exceeded. Heads of schools and the head of learning resources and admissions produce annual self-assessment reports and operating plans which identify action to improve quality, timescales and those responsible for ensuring action is taken. The self-critical course reviews have led to significant improvements, such as better students' achievements in GCSE and GCE A level courses, improvements in the course information produced for prospective students, and a better library service.

61 Students' views on their courses and the service the college provides are obtained through the use of questionnaires, students' representation on course teams in the case of full-time courses and the tutorial system in the case of part-time courses. Attendance by student representatives at course team meetings is variable. Students are not always aware of the outcomes of questionnaires. However, students' views are taken into account by course teams in drawing up their action plans. Employers' views on the quality of courses are obtained through the employers' liaison groups, but these do not all meet regularly. The franchise steering group monitors the quality of collaborative provision. Reports show that provision has been reviewed and action plans prepared and implemented.

62 In addition to the course review system, there are other procedures which address quality issues. The most significant are; retention monitoring, procedures for the internal verification of courses, the system for responding to reports from awarding bodies, and the proposed triennial course audit. The policy on retention requires that attention is paid to all

aspects of students' recruitment, guidance, support and the quality of teaching and learning. Progress on improving retention is reviewed by managers, and considered by the senior management team once a term. Retention rates have improved for part-time courses in 1996-97. The detailed and thorough procedures for assessment and verification at present cover only GNVQ and NVQ courses. Staff consider that the procedures have improved the consistency of approach to setting and marking assignments and the standards of students' work. It is planned to adopt this good practice in other courses such as access and BTEC programmes. Heads of schools complete an action plan to address issues raised in reports from awarding bodies. Their implementation is monitored by the quality development manager.

63 The staff-development policy relates staff development to the college's strategic objectives. A staff-development manager, assisted by an administrator, work to the director of human resources. This year, £316,494 has been set aside for staff development which represents 2.4 per cent of the staffing budget and 1.5 per cent of the total college budget. A proportion is allocated to a college-wide programme of staff development and to specific activities, such as teacher training; the remainder is shared between the directorates and schools. The senior management team considers the bids and allocates the funds. Current priorities for the college-wide programme include improving the quality of teaching, management training, training for new roles and the raising of awareness of issues relating to equality of opportunity. Funding has been set aside for the updating of teachers' commercial and industrial experience; last year four teachers took advantage of this opportunity. The staff-development committee is responsible for the planning, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of staff development and reports to the academic board. All training events are evaluated by the participants. Staff development is monitored by the director of human resources and an annual report is considered by the academic board.

64 There is a planned programme for teachers on GNVQ and NVQ courses to obtain relevant assessor and verifier qualifications. Targets have been set for the achievement of these awards. Good progress is being made in reaching these targets.

65 There has been a procedure for staff appraisal in place for teachers for some years but it is only slowly being implemented. The revised system introduced this year includes procedures for both teachers and support staff. Although appraisal is not mandatory for support staff, some have chosen to participate in the scheme. To date, about two-thirds of teaching staff have been appraised, including the principal and all senior managers. The figure varies considerably between schools and is 100 per cent in the schools of science and dental technology, and building crafts. The system reviews progress against objectives and offers the opportunity for staff to identify their training needs. Classroom and task observation is included.

66 There is a termly induction programme for all new full-time staff, and a suitable programme for new part-time teachers. There is a one-day event on equality of opportunity at which attendance is mandatory. There is a probationary period for new staff and for those who have been promoted. This scheme includes a review of progress, which for teachers incorporates classroom observation. Each new member of staff is assigned a mentor. The staff-development manager gives confidential support to probationers and managers. Staff must complete the probationary period successfully before their appointment is confirmed.

67 The first students' charter was developed before colleges were formally required to produce one. The revised document is incorporated in the students' handbook. Relevant extracts are displayed in classrooms, libraries and study centres and included in the prospectus. The charter sets out clearly what students can expect of the college, and what to do if they have a complaint. Quantitative standards have been set in some areas. The achievement of standards set out in the charter is monitored by course and support service teams and any action taken is reported to the senior management team. The charter is available in a number of community languages. Students demonstrate a high level of awareness of the charter and what it means to them. A charter for employers, parents and community groups is being developed.

68 Last year, as part of the course review system, heads of schools and services produced self-assessment reports which were then used to prepare the college's self-assessment report. The reports followed the headings set out in Council Circular 93/28, Assessing Achievement and set out strengths and areas for development. All were evaluative and referred to sources of evidence but they varied in the degree of useful detail which was included in them. For example, the strengths and weaknesses of students' achievements were listed by course in one report, but not in another. The college's report contained an evaluation of strengths and weaknesses in the text. The judgements made matched those of the inspectors, but some significant strengths and weaknesses were missed out. The action points related to self-assessment are contained in the strategic plan.

RESOURCES

Staffing

69 The college employs 595 members of staff, of whom 64 per cent are teaching staff and 36 per cent support staff. Forty-seven per cent of college staff are male and 53 per cent female. Three of the college's senior management team of six are women, as are eight of the college's 12 heads of schools. Thirty-seven per cent of college staff are from minority ethnic groups, compared with 30 per cent in the local post-16 population. There is a suitable balance between full-time and part-time teachers in most curriculum areas, and teachers are effectively deployed.

70 Most teaching staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. Eighty-three per cent of full-time teachers have first degrees or equivalent qualifications. Twenty-seven per cent of teachers have a higher degree. Seventy-five per cent of full-time teachers have a formal teaching qualification, although in some curriculum areas, for example in building crafts and dental technology, the percentage is lower. Most other staff have relevant craft, technical or other specialist qualifications, and some teachers have significant commercial or industrial experience. Many part-time teachers also have appropriate professional qualifications and are currently practitioners in their own field. Although training and development opportunities enable teaching staff to obtain additional qualifications, there is some variation in the number of teachers engaging in professional and commercial up-dating. Some teachers lack the range of teaching and information technology skills to extend students' knowledge.

71 Well-qualified and experienced support staff provide a high level of service across the college. Technicians and support staff provide an efficient media and print service, and information technology staff provide helpful support to staff and students. A good level of technical support is provided in specialist workshops, and examples of flexible and effective support were seen during the course of the inspection, for example in the deployment of technician/instructors in engineering. Support staff are well integrated with the life of the college. Opportunities for training and professional development are provided for all staff, and support staff contribute to college committees. In a number of curriculum areas, support staff attend curriculum area team meetings and contribute to the course planning process.

72 The college has established a comprehensive range of personnel policies and procedures since incorporation. Staffing and employment-related policies have been updated, and a manual issued to all staff. The college is actively monitoring the staffing profile and the deployment of staff across curriculum areas, and has been systematic in its approach to the management of reorganisation.

Equipment/learning resources

73 The college has well-resourced and well-managed libraries at each of its five centres. The five libraries between them contain approximately 75,800 volumes, subscribe to 338 periodicals and newspapers, have 384 study spaces, and spend £26 per full-time equivalent student a year on books and other resources. There is a wide range of audio and video tapes, and compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases. Some libraries provide open access computer facilities, and there is on-line access to the Internet. Subject librarians have effective links with course teams, and they sit on college committees, boards of study, steering groups and cross-college curriculum groups. Library staff measure their performance closely against service standards, and the libraries provide welcoming and valued learning environments.

74 The college has five well-resourced study centres which are used for the provision of additional learning support and by students for individual study. Equipment includes computers and reading monitors for visually-impaired students. Study centre staff have regular meetings with library staff, heads of schools and course managers to ensure the effective provision of study centre support. The study centres contain additional study spaces, as well as networked and other computers, audio-visual equipment and a range of open and flexible learning materials. The space available for students to study privately is sometimes inadequate at peak times.

75 The college has good information technology equipment. There are information technology workshops on all sites, which are used extensively for group teaching and by individual students. There are approximately 850 computers available to students across the college as a whole, providing a ratio of full-time equivalent students to computers of 6:1. The college has made a strategic commitment to integrate information technology across the curriculum and in support services, and there has been substantial investment in new resources. Some specialist computer resources are available for students with learning difficulties and, in some curriculum areas such as business studies, students benefit from the provision of up-to-date software. Access to information technology in some curriculum areas, however, is restricted. For example, there are few software packages in accounting and mathematics, and there is no course-specific software for basic education students.

76 The standard of specialist equipment in most vocational areas is good. Equipment levels are particularly high in some aspects of engineering, where there has been considerable recent investment in sound engineering, computing and microelectronics, and in the business practice offices and some areas of art and design. Equipment in some vocational areas, for example in sciences, is old and needs updating. Heads of schools have submitted costed three-year replacement and new purchase programmes for capital equipment for which funds have been set aside. Classrooms are generally well equipped. Most rooms have an overhead projector, screen, whiteboard, and curtains or blinds, and there is adequate access to audio-visual equipment. The college has developed specifications for a model classroom, and has converted a number of classrooms to this new standard.

Accommodation

77 The college occupies five centres, at Brixton, Clapham, Norwood, Tower Bridge and Vauxhall. The administrative centre is at Clapham. The centre at Tower Bridge is a Victorian listed building, while the other centres comprise post-war, multi-storey buildings of various designs. All have a range of specialist and general teaching and other accommodation. An extensive building works and refurbishment programme has been carried out over the past two years, and the college has produced a

10-year planned maintenance programme, based on a comprehensive condition survey carried out by external consultants. The college's accommodation strategy is closely linked to the strategic plan. The college recognises the need to improve further the quality of much of the accommodation and to reduce the total area, which is greater than required.

78 Significant improvements have been carried out to entry foyers, nurseries, libraries, study centres and cafeterias, and the centres provide a generally attractive and welcoming environment. There is good signposting at all centres, and access for wheelchair users is good with the exception of the Tower Bridge Centre. There is well-furnished specialist teaching accommodation in business, construction, engineering, hairdressing, journalism, photography and social care. Most general teaching classrooms are bright, comfortable, spacious and well decorated, and provide an attractive learning environment. Some accommodation remains in poor condition. Some specialist science laboratories at Tower Bridge are in need of refurbishment; some basic education accommodation is in a poor state of repair; some construction rooms are untidy and in need of redecoration; and some general classrooms on all sites provide an unsatisfactory learning environment and lack visually interesting display material.

79 Social and recreational facilities are adequate. There are gymnasias at the Brixton, Clapham, Norwood and Vauxhall sites, and a large swimming pool at Clapham, which is currently undergoing refurbishment. Some outdoor spaces, however, remain drab and uninspiring. Buildings and corridors are clean and tidy. The management of site services, which is now the responsibility of an external facilities management company, is professional and well organised.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

80 Major strengths of the college include:

- the good progress made towards achieving strategic aims
- a committed, experienced and active governing body whose members bring a wide range of professional and commercial expertise
- managers and teachers who are committed to maximising the achievements of their students
- commitment to quality assurance and continuous improvement through well-established systems
- effective use of target setting, performance indicators and action planning
- consistent improvements in pass rates on courses in some curriculum areas
- the wide range of vocational courses

-
- the extensive range of support and welfare services for students
 - the comprehensive staff-development programme for teachers and support staff
 - the quality of additional learning support
 - the well-managed and well-resourced libraries and study centres on all sites
 - the quality of the accommodation where building and refurbishment has taken place.
- 81 The college should address the following issues:
- the failure of some course managers to implement fully some policies and procedures
 - the variable quality of course reviews and self-assessment reports
 - the need to improve the quality of teaching in some areas of work
 - the limited extent of industrial and professional updating undertaken by some teachers
 - weak links with employers in some vocational areas
 - the variation in tutorial support across the college
 - the poor quality of careers advice and guidance
 - the need to continue to improve retention on many courses
 - the need to implement the accommodation strategy to improve the quality of accommodation and space utilisation.

FIGURES

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- 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 July 1996)

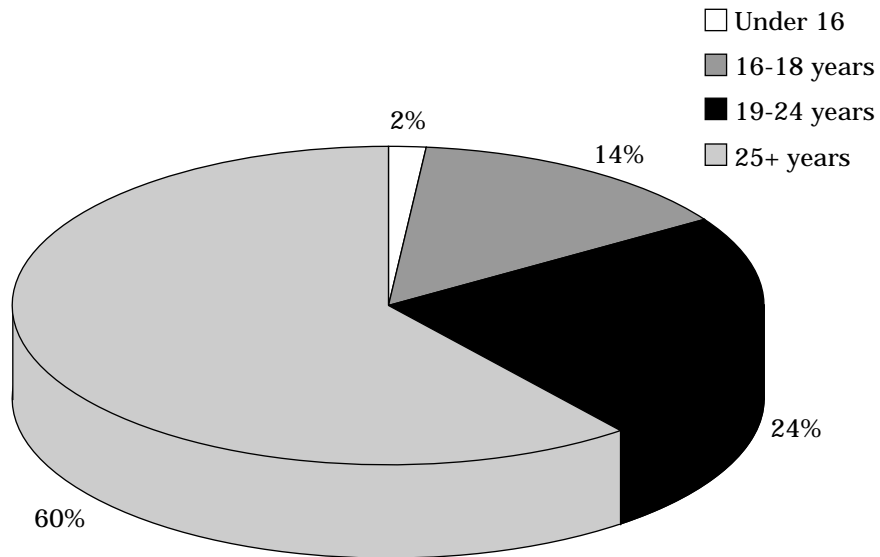
 - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1996)

 - 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

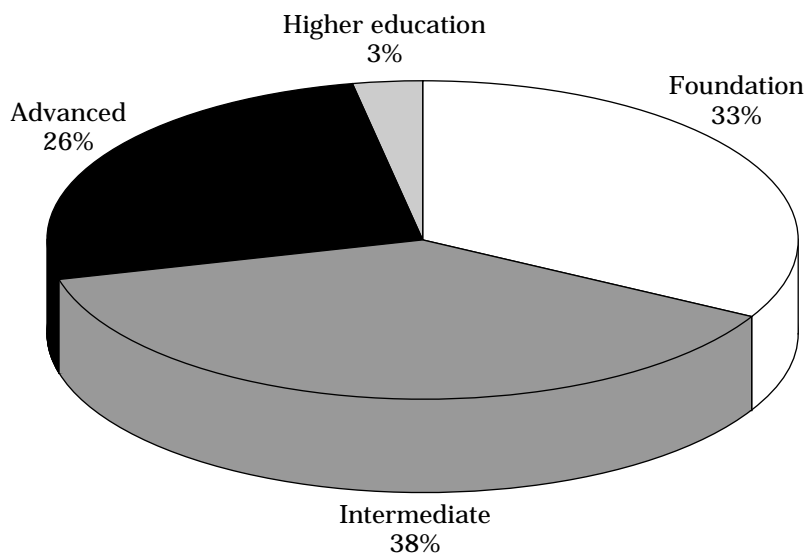
Lambeth College: percentage student numbers by age (as at November 1996)



Student numbers: 7,672

Figure 2

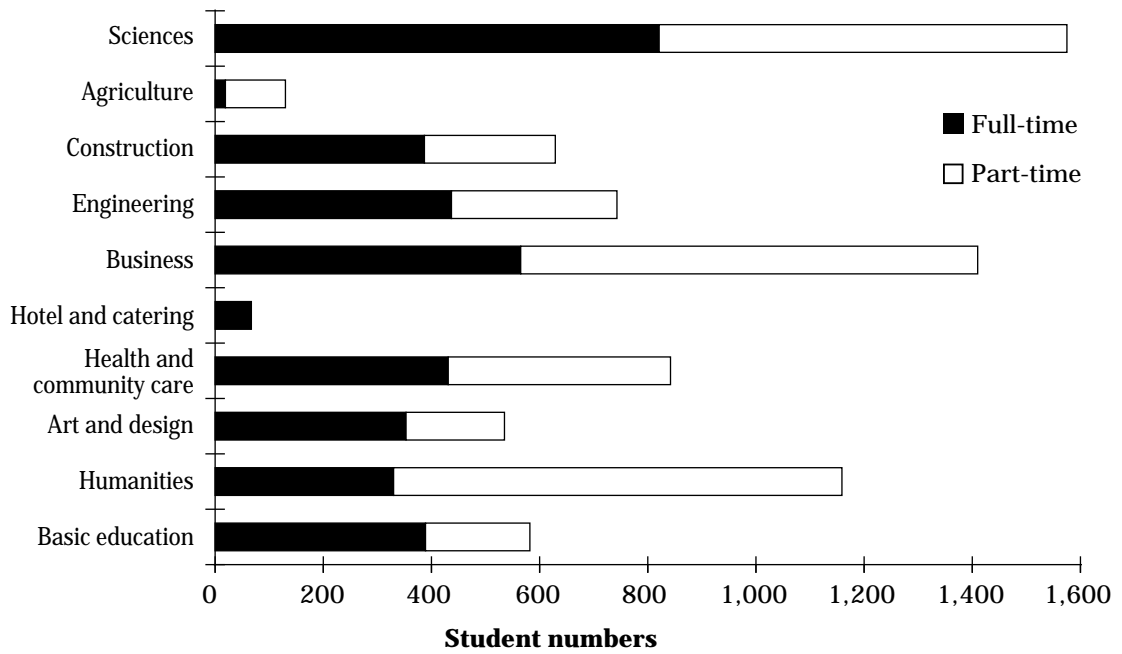
Lambeth College: percentage student numbers by level of study (as at November 1996)



Student numbers: 7,672

Figure 3

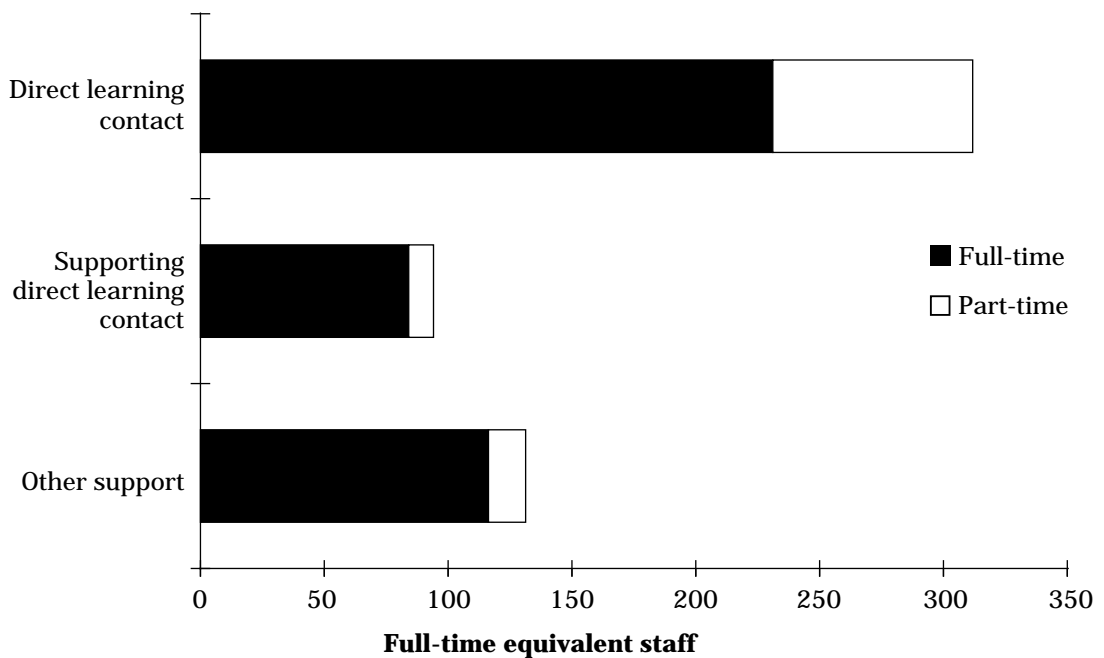
Lambeth College: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1996)



Student numbers: 7,672

Figure 4

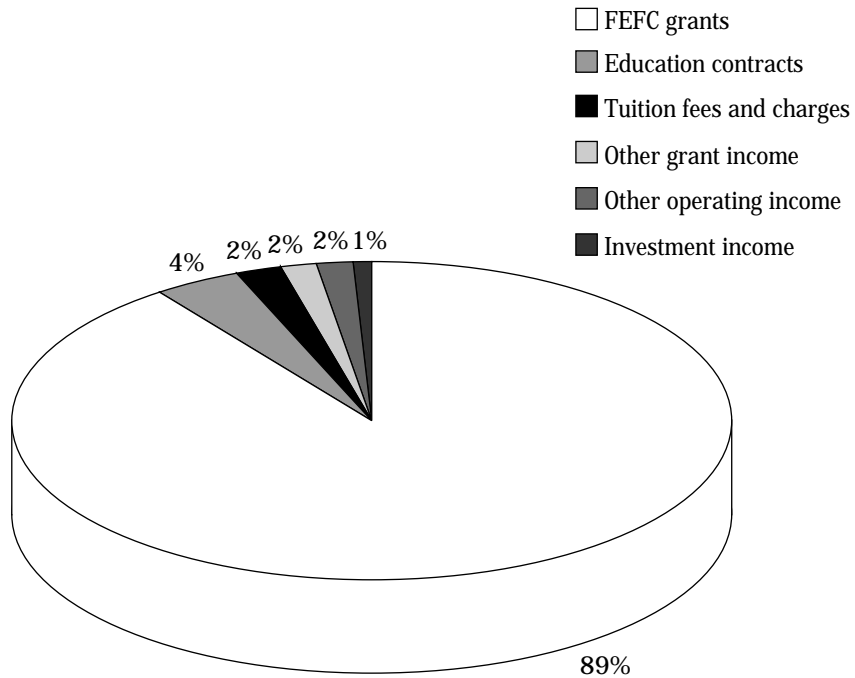
Lambeth College: staff profile - staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at July 1996)



Full-time equivalent staff: 537

Figure 5

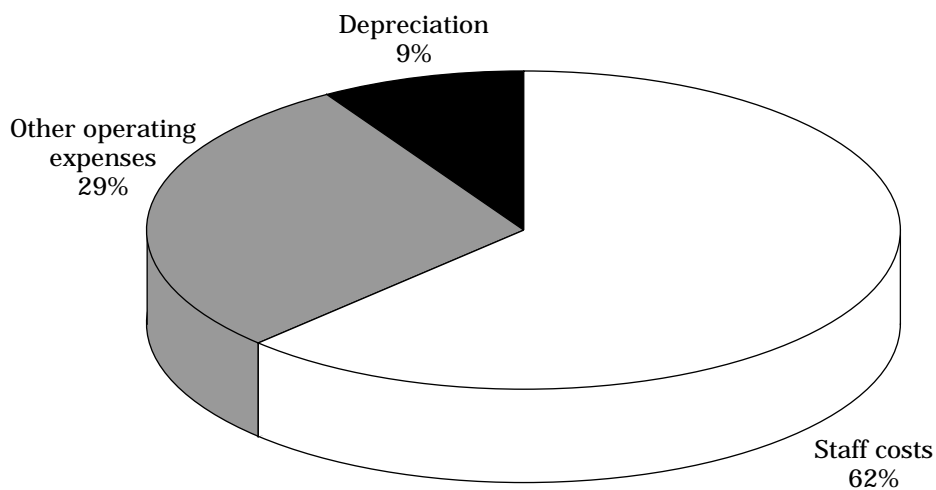
Lambeth College: income (for 12 months to July 1996)



Income: £23,957,000

Figure 6

Lambeth College: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)



Expenditure: £26,746,000

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