

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Wulfrun 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 57/97

WULFRUN COLLEGE

WEST MIDLANDS REGION

Inspected January 1996-January 1997

Summary

Wulfrun College in Wolverhampton offers an extensive range of academic and vocational programmes. It has strong and developing links with the local community. The members of the governing council work energetically on behalf of the college. The college offers an effective guidance and advice service for students. Teaching is generally well planned and based on detailed schemes of work. The work in media studies is particularly good. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well catered for. The accommodation is clean and well maintained. Equipment is generally of a high standard. To improve the quality of its provision the college should: review senior and middle management roles and responsibilities in the light of its strategic priorities; refine and strengthen its strategic planning process; ensure the reliability and widespread use of management information; set college-wide targets to improve students' attendance, retention and achievements; investigate the reasons for poor and worsening success rates on some full-time vocational courses; and develop an effective and comprehensive quality assurance system which includes rigorous self-assessment.

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		4
Students' recruitment, guidance and support		2
Quality assurance		4
Resources:	staffing	3
	equipment/learning resources	2
	accommodation	2

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Mathematics and science	2	Media studies	1
Computing	3	English and communications	2
Engineering	2	Social sciences	3
Business administration, management and business studies	3	Access	2
Health and care	3	Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	2

INTRODUCTION

1 Wulfrun College, Wolverhampton, was inspected in four stages. The college's induction and enrolment procedures were inspected in September 1996. Inspections of curriculum areas took place in January and November 1996, followed by an inspection of aspects of cross-college provision in January 1997. Eighteen inspectors spent 78 days on the inspection. They visited 213 classes, involving 2,158 students, scrutinised students' work and examined documentation relating to the college and its courses. They held meetings with members of the corporation, the college's managers and staff, students, parents, local employers, and representatives from local schools, Wolverhampton Metropolitan Borough Council, a number of community groups and the Wolverhampton Chamber of Commerce, Training and Enterprise.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Wulfrun College was established in 1949. In 1961 the college moved into purpose-built accommodation on a large campus in West Wolverhampton. Further building work was carried out in 1967 and 1987. The college shares the campus with two denominational secondary schools, both of which have sixth forms, and with part of the University of Wolverhampton. The college has permanent accommodation on four other sites. Access and business programmes are located in the nearby Newhampton Centre, a late Victorian building that formerly housed the municipal grammar school. A car body and repair workshop occupies modern premises in a former skills centre on an industrial estate. There is also a two-acre horticulture unit, and a centre called the open learning centre where students can follow individual study programmes in basic skills and information technology. This centre is managed jointly with another college. Adult and community programmes are provided in 27 locations across the Wolverhampton area.

3 The college serves a population of around 300,000 in Wolverhampton, South Staffordshire and East Shropshire. Much of the catchment area is within the Black Country conurbation. People from minority ethnic groups make up 16 per cent of the population, compared with 8 per cent in the West Midlands as a whole. Wolverhampton ranks as the twenty-seventh most deprived district in England in the Department of the Environment's *Index of Local Conditions*, 1991. Many school-leavers are poorly qualified. The percentage achieving the general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) at grade C or above in mathematics and English language is 9.2 per cent and 2.6 per cent, respectively, figures which are below average for England as a whole.

4 Between 1993 and 1996 the college increased its number of students by over 25 per cent. In the same period, the number of students aged 25 or over grew by more than 40 per cent, largely as a result of the development of community education programmes. In the academic year 1995-96, the college had 13,983 students enrolled of whom 12 per cent

were full time. 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 154 full-time teachers, 235 part-time teachers, and 115 business support staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4. The college competes for students with many other providers of education and training. Nineteen secondary schools with sixth forms lie within its catchment area. There are nine colleges of further education within a radius of 20 miles, the nearest being four miles away.

5 The college's mission states that 'as a major provider of high-quality education and training relevant to the needs of individuals, employers and the wider community, the college will be responsive, accessible and supportive, enabling all who use its services to realise their full potential'. The mission is supported by eight strategic aims. These are: 'to achieve year-on-year growth; to invest in the skills, development and effectiveness of all staff to deliver the college's mission; to promote inclusiveness, equality of access and opportunity in all aspects of the college's work; to enhance and develop partnerships with all sections of the community; to provide a broad, responsive, accessible and flexible curriculum; to provide rich and stimulating learning opportunities underpinned by effective guidance and support; to manage resources effectively and ensure that development is backed by sound financial planning; to maintain and develop systems of quality assurance based on a whole college commitment to continuous improvement'.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

6 The college has a portfolio of courses which covers all vocational programme areas. In a number of programme areas students have the opportunity to progress from foundation level to advanced level or degree courses. The college has recently broadened its curriculum through the addition of a community education programme, comprising 21 subjects. The programme was developed in consultation with a wide range of community groups. The college collaborates with the universities of Wolverhampton and Staffordshire to provide higher level courses in business studies, science, information technology and education.

7 Students wishing to follow programmes of study leading to general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) may choose from four subjects at foundation and intermediate levels and five at advanced level. Eighteen national vocational qualifications (NVQs) are available. The college provides 30 subjects at general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) and 26 GCSE subjects.

8 The college has taken steps to increase accessibility to its courses. The access to higher education programme is broken down into separate units. Modular GCE A levels have been introduced as they have become available. Some modules are provided during the day and also in the

evening to allow students more choice in the times they attend. There is a small but increasing range of Saturday courses. A number of NVQs, mainly in engineering and health and care subjects, are offered on employers' premises. Students who cannot attend college regularly have the opportunity to study a range of GCE A level and GCSE subjects on their own with tutorial support from the college. The development of study centres in many curriculum areas is increasing the opportunities for students to study on their own and at times of their own choosing.

9 The college works closely with the Wolverhampton Chamber of Commerce, Training and Enterprise. Communications between the two organisations are good. The college principal and the chief executive of the Wolverhampton Chamber of Commerce, Training and Enterprise meet regularly. The chair of the college's governing council is a member of the board. Funding from Wolverhampton Chamber of Commerce, Training and Enterprise and from City Challenge have helped the college to establish the business education centre at the Newhampton site and the open learning centre in the middle of the town. Though some vocational areas within the college have developed strong links with industry, there are no systematic arrangements across the college for developing, maintaining, or co-ordinating such links.

10 The college works with a number of other providers of education and training. It maintains a close relationship with Wolverhampton LEA and, through the technical and vocational education initiative, with consortia of local schools. The consortia provide the opportunity for the college and schools to work together on curriculum development for students aged between 14 and 19. The college is working with the consortia to ensure that the benefits of such collaboration are not lost when technical and vocational education initiative funding ends in August 1997. Links with the universities of Wolverhampton and Staffordshire have enabled the college to extend the range of higher education courses it offers.

11 One of the college's strengths is the way in which it caters for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Well-established links with special schools help to ease the progression of their pupils on to college courses. The college has a policy of providing support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities so that they can attend the courses of their choice. Around 70 adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities attend courses designed especially for them.

12 A small central team is responsible for publicising the college. Its programme of activities is set out in an annual promotion plan. The team maintains links with curriculum teams in the college through designated members of staff. The college has carried out a careful analysis of current marketing activities. The strategic plan for 1996-99 outlines steps which will be taken to establish more systematic arrangements for marketing. Little use is made of market research to inform strategic planning at curriculum area or college level. The Wolverhampton Chamber of Commerce, Training and Enterprise and the local authority provide

some labour market information. Individual curriculum teams and the community education team also gather their own data.

13 The college's mission statement and strategic aims reflect its concern for equality of opportunity. The governing council recently approved a revised equal opportunities policy, following extensive consultation inside and outside the college. The college has developed a comprehensive action plan in the light of the policy. It has met the majority of its targets to date. The student guidance and support team pays careful attention to monitoring and analysing the gender and ethnicity of those who use the service.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

14 The 18 college governors have a clear view of the way in which they wish to see the college grow and develop. In September 1996 they led the process of appointing a new principal. Governors have experience in the law, accountancy, the manufacturing and service sectors, education and local government. The governing council includes a representative from Wolverhampton Chamber of Commerce, Training and Enterprise, a community member, two staff members, one student member and the principal. Seven of the governors are women, and three are from minority ethnic communities. A nominations committee scrutinises applications from prospective governors to ensure that the council maintains an appropriate blend of skills and expertise. New members undertake an induction programme. The clerk to the governing council, who is also a member of the college's senior management team, is experienced and provides an efficient service to the council as a whole and to the committees that support its work.

15 Members of the governing council understand their role and responsibilities and work energetically on behalf of the college. The chairman of the council holds regular meetings with the principal. Governors regularly attend college events, such as awards evenings and exhibitions. They use their expertise to help in curriculum development, staff training, and the appointment of senior members of staff. All members of the council receive monthly financial reports and regular updates on the progress the college is making towards the implementation of its financial and strategic plans. The information they receive on retention and achievements is not sufficiently reliable or detailed to assist decision making. The members of the governing council have, as yet, no means of monitoring and reviewing their own performance. The executive subcommittee of the council is working on the development of an evaluation scheme.

16 The college's senior management structure dates from September 1995; it spreads managerial responsibility more widely than the previous structure. The college's senior management team comprises the principal, a deputy principal and five directors. The curriculum management structure dates from September 1994. The curriculum is managed through

14 schools, each with its own head. Three head of school posts were vacant at the time of inspection. The workloads of school heads are uneven. The overall management structure does not operate effectively. Managers' roles and responsibilities are unclear and not all are in line with the college's strategic aims. Those senior managers who remained in post after the 1995 reorganisation did not receive new job descriptions. The line management responsibilities of the two directors to whom the heads of school report are not clearly defined. The principal is currently reviewing her own role and the roles of her six senior managers in the light of the college's strategic aims. Senior managers will take up their new duties in mid-April. Changes to the college's middle management structure will come into effect at the beginning of June.

17 College managers work well together. They are concerned to promote an open style of management and good communications between staff. Members of the senior management team meet formally once a week. A college management group, which brings together senior managers, heads of school, and staff with cross-college responsibilities, meets fortnightly. Middle managers appreciate the opportunity this gives them to become involved in the management of the college as a whole. Minutes of all college-wide meetings, including those of the governing council, are available to all staff. Heads of school hold regular, minuted meetings with their staff. The academic board has become more active and business-like under the leadership of the new principal.

18 The majority of the college's staff have little experience of strategic planning. Their first involvement in the planning process came early in 1996, when a new plan, covering the period from 1996 to 1999, was drawn up. The college has established a strategic planning cycle, which is in its first year of operation. It is well documented, and a simple booklet explaining it was given to governors, staff and students. The college-wide strategic plan is imprecise. The statements in the plan do not link directly to the college's strategic priorities. There is no operating statement for 1996-97 to show what the college's priorities for the year are and how these are to be achieved. There are no college-wide performance indicators, or targets relating to students' attendance, retention, achievements or their progress into work or other stages of education. As part of the planning process, each school produces an annual operating statement. The statement links the school's objectives to the eight college-wide strategic aims. School plans lack detail. Few of them contain measurable targets other than for enrolments. Objectives are neither prioritised nor sufficiently linked to resources.

19 For 1995-96, the college set up a one-year finance action plan alongside the new strategic plan. The college met the objectives of this plan and established a further plan which builds on it. The finance plan is not explicitly linked to the strategic plan. This makes it difficult for managers to have a clear view of the cost of the various elements of provision and to make judgements on the effective deployment of staff and

other resources. Each school and cross-college area has its own budget for staffing and consumables. Budget holders are well trained in administering a budget and produce competent expenditure profiles. At present, budgets are allocated in accordance with projected numbers of enrolments. There is no tradition in the college of unit costing at school or programme level. Budgets are not explicitly tied to the achievement of the college's strategic priorities, or to a strategic view of curriculum development. This year the college has introduced a system for the termly adjustment of budgets.

20 The college's management information system is poor and a replacement system is being installed. The mechanisms for collecting data are inefficient. The information that the present system yields is unreliable and staff have little confidence in it. Data on students' attendance, achievements and progress into jobs or further and higher education are inadequate and incomplete. Few managers have access to information through the computer. They receive regular updates on enrolments and withdrawals, but other data come to them sporadically and in a piecemeal fashion.

21 The average level of funding for the college for 1996-97 is £18.77 per unit. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges is £17.97 per unit. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are shown in figures 5 and 6. The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) provided 79 per cent of the college's total income. The college has met or exceeded its unit targets for the past three years.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

22 The college uses a variety of methods to recruit students, including visits to schools and careers events, open days, 'taster' days, and advertising in the local press, on the radio and in community centres. A home page on the Internet regularly attracts enquiries from abroad. The prospectus for full-time students is informative and attractive. Some brochures for individual courses lack information on costs and progression routes. Course leaflets are available in Urdu and Punjabi. Students receive impartial advice and guidance before they enrol. The administration of applications and interviews for courses is efficient. There are clear procedures for following up course enquiries and tracking prospective students' progress through to interview.

23 Students spoke positively about the way in which enrolment was organised. It was carefully planned and took place throughout the summer. Waiting times were kept to a minimum. Enrolment documents were clear and helpful. The staff in the guidance and advice centre were friendly; they had sufficient time to discuss possible choice of courses with students. Better signposting would help prospective students to find their way more easily to the centre. During enrolment interviews some staff did not always ask about students' prior qualifications, motivation and career aspirations before suggesting possible courses. Telephone enquiries often interrupted interviews and there was sometimes a lack of privacy.

24 Induction was well organised and thorough. Students said that they found the college welcoming and the induction useful. There was a timetabled programme of activities, during which teachers paid particular attention to maintaining students' interest. Written materials to support induction were generally of good quality. Students were made aware of the possibility of transferring to another course should they wish. Arrangements for transfer are appropriate.

25 All full-time students are assigned to a tutor, and tutorials are timetabled. Most students find their tutors helpful and supportive. Schemes of work for tutorials are of variable quality. There are some inconsistencies of approach, for example, in drawing up action plans. Students receive guidance on maintaining their records of achievement, but in some programme areas this guidance is insufficiently clear. There is no overall planning, co-ordination or monitoring of the careers education that takes place in tutorials. The guidance and advice centre provides information on careers and further and higher education. There is a service level agreement with the Black Country Careers Service. Staff from the service visit the college regularly for interviews with individual students and to give careers talks.

26 The provision of additional support to help students improve their grasp of key skills and for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is effective. All full-time students are tested to establish whether they need additional support. For part-time students, testing is available on demand. Support for learning is provided in a number of ways, including group sessions, individual instruction, and drop-in workshops. Some learning materials are available on tape and in Braille. The school of learning support provides support for students requiring further help, for example, a signer is provided for students with hearing impairments. Attendance at support sessions is monitored.

27 The guidance and advice team provides an effective counselling service. Most of its members hold counselling qualifications and all work under professional supervision. Help is available from outside agencies if a student's problem is beyond the scope of the service. There are regular reviews of the counselling service. Students who had used the service, and those who took part in a survey of guidance and admissions, felt that it had met their needs. There are two funds to support students suffering financial hardship and their existence is well publicised. The guidance and advice team is responsible for allocating the funds, which they do on the basis of an interview. There are good childcare facilities: there is a nursery on the main site and a play group at one of the college's other sites. Most of the college's adult and community centres have creche facilities.

28 The accreditation of students' prior learning is not well developed across the college. Only one teacher holds the training and development lead body's qualification for accreditation of prior learning. However, the

few students from business studies who have completed the accreditation of prior learning process produced portfolios of evidence that were of high quality.

29 The college monitors attendance. If students are absent for more than two sessions, enquiries are made to find out the reason. Course tutors and heads of schools usually take action if absences persist. There is no college-wide monitoring of the reasons for absence. The system for recording absences does not provide the college's managers with regular and accurate information on students' attendance.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

30 Two hundred and thirteen teaching sessions were observed. Of these 64 per cent had strengths that outweighed weaknesses. The weaknesses outweighed strengths in 7 per cent of sessions. The profile of the college's grades is almost identical to the average for all lessons observed during the 1995-96 inspection programme, according to the *Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1995-96*. The average attendance in classes was 74 per cent. There was wide variation in attendance rates, from 90 per cent in science to 55 per cent in business studies. Poor and irregular attendance was observed in English, health care, and the social sciences. The following table summarises the grades given to the sessions inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programmes of study

Programmes	Grade 1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level	7	13	13	2	1	36
GCSE	5	7	8	1	0	21
GNVQ	5	18	9	3	1	36
NVQ	6	3	7	0	0	16
Access	6	8	3	1	0	18
Basic education	2	2	0	0	0	4
Higher education	1	1	1	1	0	4
Other	18	35	20	5	0	78
Total	50	87	61	13	2	213

31 Teachers in all curriculum areas maintained open and friendly relationships with their students, which helped to promote learning. They provided support for their students and responded well to their needs. Most planned their teaching well. They had detailed schemes of work which showed how the aims and objectives of courses would be met. Their lessons plans often stated clearly what students would be expected to learn. Though the college is well equipped, teachers in a number of curriculum areas made little use of teaching aids. Some handouts were poorly prepared. Work experience makes a valuable contribution to some full-time courses.

32 In mathematics and science, students generally had a clear idea of the nature and content of their courses. Teachers used a variety of methods to engage students' interest and to generate enthusiasm for their subjects. In the sciences, and particularly physics and biology, classroom activities regularly included presentations, laboratory work, workshops and discussions. Teachers of physics made particularly good use of demonstrations. These stimulated students' curiosity and helped to increase their understanding of the subject. In mathematics, there was some interesting and appropriate practical work. Teachers skilfully used questions to help their students to identify key mathematical concepts. Occasionally, students spent too long working on problems from books and lost concentration. Students made frequent use of the science open learning centre and the mathematics workshop. This encouraged them to work on their own. Insufficient use was made of computers in science teaching.

33 In computing and information technology classes teachers had clear objectives. They gave detailed explanations of tasks and regularly questioned students to check their understanding of the work they were doing. In many lessons, students worked alone at their computers for most of the time. The teacher helped individual students as required. From time to time, the whole group took part in a short discussion. This provided variety and helped to sustain students' interest. In a few GNVQ classes, teachers gave students insufficient individual attention and support.

34 In engineering, teachers used a variety of strategies to help students learn. There was excellent support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Staff from the school of learning support worked alongside specialist engineering teachers. Most students on GNVQ and NVQ courses had the opportunity to work as members of teams, learning at their own pace through well-planned, imaginative assignments and projects. For students on NVQ programmes, teachers had developed comprehensive learning and assessment materials. In a few lessons, the teaching lacked enthusiasm and imagination. Occasionally, the pace of delivery of the lesson was inappropriately slow.

35 Teachers of media studies were sensitive to differences in students' ability and built on their individual skills. Collaborative arrangements with a local theatre and radio studio and well-established contacts with many media enterprises provided students with realistic work experience. Students on two courses had the opportunity to make a weekly contribution to a one-hour programme on local radio; in a class preparing students for the programme the teacher reinforced the need for interviewees to encourage their interviewees. The students' magazine, *Wulfrun Files*, provided valuable opportunities to promote teamwork. Teachers encouraged independent practical work and students on performing arts courses threw their full energy and enthusiasm into their work. There was no provision to improve students' drawing skills; some basic

knowledge of draughtsmanship would transform students' storyboards into better documents for video work.

36 In business studies, the best teaching was carefully differentiated to meet the needs of individual students. Teachers set challenging tasks and students responded well. In business administration the standard of teaching was generally high, although not all lessons were set in the context of what had been taught before. In both areas, teachers encouraged students to develop independence and to work on their own. They used carefully-prepared handouts to support their teaching. Assessment exercises were well thought out. Teachers kept meticulous records of students' progress. There was a narrow range of teaching and learning activities on GCE A level and GCSE business studies courses. Some teachers placed too much reliance on teaching by means of question and answer. The behaviour of some students in the first year of the advanced GNVQ programme disrupted the class. Students' attendance at key skills lessons was poor.

37 On management and professional courses there were wide variations in the quality of teaching. In the better sessions; links were made to previous learning; there was a high level of student participation in group work; interesting case-study material was used; and teachers encouraged students to draw on their own experience. The less successful lessons were poorly structured and managed; there was a lack of attention to individual needs; some students spent their time on tasks that were too simple, or took little part in the work; some sessions were dull, with no change of activity for long periods. In some classes the layout of the room was inappropriate for the task in hand.

38 In health and social care, tutors used a variety of teaching methods. Teaching was generally well organised and lessons were well controlled. Teachers skilfully summed up key points on whiteboards or overhead projectors. They made frequent use of their own experience as practitioners to illustrate lessons. Teachers used a judicious blend of explanation and questioning, but students were rarely asked to explain their ideas in detail or encouraged to develop more fully the responses they gave to questions. Students made slow progress in several classes. Some assignment work was not sufficiently demanding and occasionally the assessment criteria lacked clarity.

39 Lessons in English were always well prepared and generally well taught. The range of chosen texts was imaginative. At its best, teachers' questioning was perceptive and challenging. Work in the study centres was well integrated with coursework. Teachers used a considerable amount of group work. Occasionally, group work was poorly managed and lessons lacked a clear focus. In communications, teaching covered the required areas of competence and gave students increased confidence. Teaching was organised to create opportunities for one-to-one teaching, tailored to the needs of individual students. Lessons had a sense of purpose

and written assignments were thoughtfully devised and helpfully marked. Some teaching took insufficient account of students' differing levels of ability. The pace of work in some lessons was too slow and the objectives too limited.

40 Lessons in sociology and psychology were generally sound. Students had many opportunities to work on their own, using resources prepared by the teacher. Teachers used a narrow range of teaching methods. Students were not given sufficient information about their progress. Teachers were inconsistent in completing the appropriate records. The college has recognised the need to improve recording and has implemented a new monitoring system.

41 On access to higher education courses the teaching was generally well organised and based on methods that were sufficiently varied to sustain students' interest. Teachers regularly organised group work and discussions. Students gave these activities their full attention and worked well throughout two and three hour sessions. Teachers paid appropriate attention to developing students' study skills and confidence. They corrected students' work thoroughly. Their corrections were sensitive to students' feelings and their comments were constructive.

42 The teaching of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities extended their skills, knowledge and understanding, and encouraged their personal development. Tutors chose a variety of teaching and learning methods that were appropriate for the subject being studied. They encouraged students to work on their own or in groups. Some practical workshops were too long and involved too much repetitive activity.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

43 Many of the students were well motivated and enthusiastic. They were attentive and conscientious in lessons, and made effective use of their time. In many curriculum areas they contributed confidently to whole-class activities and discussion. They worked successfully in groups when given the opportunity. They carried out practical work competently in science, engineering, childcare, media and performing arts. The quality of students' written work and other assignments was variable. In science, some students made systematic and careful records of their observations but there were too many cases where notes were made in a rather haphazard fashion. In GCE A level mathematics there were some well-organised and interesting projects on the analysis of raw data. In English, the quality of work was generally sound: some GCE A level work was outstanding but at GCSE level there were often too many elementary errors. Students on access to higher education courses worked to a good standard, displaying appropriate attention to presentation, accurate grammar and spelling. Students on professional business courses produced some projects and assignments of high quality. In health and social care, and in business studies, students' written work suffered from poor grammar and spelling. Photography assignments were usually of

high quality but in media studies some students did not plan carefully before making video recordings. In psychology and sociology, students' course files and essays were poorly organised.

44 Students generally developed appropriate levels of subject knowledge and understanding. The development of key skills was variable. There were some good examples of the application of mathematics to vocational areas and there was good use and application of information technology in some business courses. In a number of curriculum areas, such as science and humanities and some business and health and care courses, the use of information technology was not systematically developed. Although students in mathematics were adept at using computers, they did not use them to produce their written projects. Many of the students following key skills courses in communications contributed well in class and made effective use of their time in the study centre. In all courses, students developed useful personal skills that enhanced their career and job prospects.

45 Examination results for the majority of full-time advanced vocational courses are at or below national averages. The 1996 performance tables published by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) indicated that of the 313 students aged 16 to 18 in the final year of study on advanced vocational courses, 39 per cent were successful. This places the college in the bottom 10 per cent of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. The college has subsequently realised that it made an error in the data supplied to the DfEE. The actual total was 210 students, giving a pass rate of 58 per cent. This still represents a steady decline from 1994, when the pass rate was 85 per cent, and 1995, when it was 67 per cent. The decline is reflected in the pass rates for particular programme areas. For example, between 1995 and 1996, the pass rate for those completing their courses declined from 67 per cent to 41 per cent in business studies and from 64 per cent to 31 per cent in leisure and tourism. However, pass rates in the national diploma in social care have improved steadily over the past three years, rising to 100 per cent in 1996. In GNVQ advanced engineering, 93 per cent of those completing the course in 1996 passed.

46 Results for intermediate vocational courses have been variable but mainly below national averages in the past three years. Of the 57 students aged 16 to 18 entered for the intermediate vocational courses recorded in the DfEE tables in 1996, only 30 per cent were successful. This places the college in the bottom 10 per cent of colleges on this performance measure. In 1996, only students on health and social care courses achieved a pass rate approaching the national average. However, results for foundation level GNVQ were above the national average. Of the 41 students entered for foundation level GNVQ courses, 51 per cent were successful. Within this overall figure, pass rates ranged from 100 per cent on the business course to 32 per cent in health and social care.

47 Good results have been achieved in a number of courses in basic skills, including wordpower. Courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities accredited by the open college network have a record of 100 per cent success over the past three years. Most of the students who complete courses designed to provide access to higher education successfully gain the access certificate.

48 Just over 50 per cent of the college's students are aged 25 years or over and many take part-time vocational courses. Results and retention rates on these courses vary widely but are often good. There are consistently high pass rates in some business and computing courses, including business administration, shorthand, wordprocessing and computer programming. On professional and management courses, results and retention rates are variable. There are good results in supervisory management. In personnel practice there have been 100 per cent pass rates and good retention rates over the past three years. There is low achievement on some marketing courses. In Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) childhood studies, pass rates have been good for those completing the course. Teacher training programmes had 100 per cent pass rates and good retention rates in 1996. In engineering, results and retention rates vary but overall they are around the national average. In some photography and radio and journalism courses very few students were interested in seeking formal certification.

49 The 189 students aged 16 to 18 entered for GCE A level examinations in 1996 scored, on average, 3.6 points per entry (where grade A=10 points, E=2). This places the college in the middle third of all colleges on this performance measure, based on data in the 1996 performance tables published by the DfEE. There has been a small improvement since 1994, when 179 students achieved, on average, 3.2 points per entry. The proportion of students aged 16 to 18 completing programmes who achieve two or more GCE A level passes has improved over the past three years, from 64 per cent in 1994 to 77 per cent in 1996. The percentage of students completing the course but failing to achieve any qualifications has fallen from 11 per cent in 1994 to 4 per cent in 1996. The college has done work to identify the extent to which students' GCE A level results match predictions based on GCSE entry grades. This has shown that many students have low GCSE scores when they start their GCE A level courses. Over the past three years, there has been an increasing trend for students to achieve better results than might have been predicted from their GCSE performance.

50 The average GCE A level pass rate for all subjects in 1996 was 68 per cent, which is close to the average for colleges in the further education sector, excluding sixth form colleges. Results that were better than the national average were achieved in photography, geography and psychology. Results were well below average in human biology and business studies.

51 Of the 83 students who enrolled on the full-time, four-subject GCSE retake course, only 49 completed the course and, of these, only seven obtained four GCSEs at grade C or above; 24 students failed to achieve a single grade of C or above. At the subject level, GCSE results were good in mathematics and science but poor in computer studies, law and physical education.

52 Retention rates are generally poor. There have been some recent improvements, but many courses continue to have retention rates below 70 per cent and some below 50 per cent. The college is aware of this weakness and governors and college managers are taking steps to address the issue.

53 The college collects information on the destinations of full-time students. It is taking part in a project with the Wolverhampton Chamber of Commerce, Training and Enterprise which will help to develop a system for collecting information on the destinations of all students. Destinations data for 1996 have not been collated at college level. The destinations data for 1995, expressed as a percentage of those students gaining an award, are shown in the following table.

Destinations of full-time students in 1995

	Aged 18 or under	Aged 19 or over
Number of full-time students gaining awards	1,026	1,043
Higher education	13%	7%
Further education	51%	22%
Employment	9%	41%
Other	4%	3%
Unknown	23%	27%

QUALITY ASSURANCE

54 One of the college's eight strategic aims is 'to maintain and develop systems of quality assurance based on a whole-college commitment to continuous improvement'. As the college's strategic plan for 1996-99 makes clear, there is much work to be done before this aim can be achieved. Present systems are not sufficiently developed to help the college to achieve improvements in the key area of students' achievements.

55 The college has had a policy on quality assurance, an accompanying framework, and standards and procedures for some of its areas of work since 1994. The drawing together of documentation has progressed slowly. The college's handbook, which details the operation of the college's quality assurance system, was not distributed to full-time staff until December 1996. Part-time staff have not yet received it. Staff at all levels are

endeavouring to operate and extend the system. The lack of clear performance indicators makes the raising of standards and the improvement of students' performance difficult to achieve.

56 Of the cross-college services, only the library and the guidance and admissions service are currently involved in regular quality reviews. Progress in involving other cross-college services has been slow. The senior management team is not currently reviewing its own effectiveness, although there are plans to remedy this.

57 The college has developed standard procedures and documentation to assist in the process of internal verification. There are guidelines for sampling students' work and the college has carefully defined the responsibilities of all staff involved in the internal verification process. A recently-established GNVQ steering group should further aid consistency of approach.

58 The college obtains the views of students on their courses. It uses centrally-administered surveys after enrolment, at mid-course and at the end of courses. The surveys are tailored to different groups of students. The results of the surveys are fed back to course tutors, heads of school and the senior management team. Individual GCE A level subject-based surveys are also undertaken. Students confirm that the surveys have resulted in changes being made to some courses. There are no arrangements for systematically obtaining the views of employers or parents.

59 The great majority of full-time programmes and a substantial proportion of part-time programmes have course committees that include students. The minutes of course committee meetings are of variable quality and it is not always possible to track the progress of issues that have been raised to a satisfactory conclusion. All teams maintain standardised course review manuals. At the time of the inspection, some were incomplete; most lacked clear targets for action; few provided any analysis of trends.

60 There is a clear staff-development policy setting out the entitlement of all staff to continuous professional development. Staff development is well funded, with a budget of £65,000 for 1996-97. There is a further £25,000 of technical and vocational education initiative funding for training to support the development of the curriculum. In 1994, the college made a commitment to gain the Investors in People standard. Progress has been very slow. The principal and governing council recently stated their intention to achieve the standard by December 1997. The college's appraisal process, which is near the end of its first cycle, helps to determine the development needs of full-time teachers. The appraisal system includes classroom observation. The documentation used to support appraisal is well designed. Appraisers and those involved in classroom observation have received training to enable them to carry out their responsibilities. Staff appraisal, classroom observation and staff development are not clearly linked to the strategy for improving quality.

61 There is a comprehensive induction programme for all new full-time staff. All new teachers receive support from a mentor and have lower workloads than their more experienced colleagues. The college requires untrained teachers to obtain a teaching qualification within three years of taking up post.

62 In 1994, the college produced its charter. An updated version appeared in July 1996. It sets few measurable standards. The charter is clearly written. It has been translated into two community languages. It is also available in Braille, a large print version, and on audio tape. Separate sections within the charter refer to different groups of college users. All students receive a copy, and its importance is explained to them during induction. Students and community representatives were aware of the charter but employers were not. One franchise partner gave copies to students but admitted to not having read it. There are clear grievance and disciplinary procedures.

63 The college's self-assessment document follows the headings of Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*, although some issues are dealt with under inappropriate headings. The self-assessment does not derive from the college's quality assurance system. The document fails to identify some key weaknesses and overstates a number of strengths. It does not distinguish clearly between areas of activity where it would be natural to seek further developments and areas where there are serious weaknesses and immediate action is required. Few of the judgements are underpinned by evidence.

RESOURCES

Staffing

64 Most teachers are well qualified. Seventy per cent have first degrees, 11 per cent have higher degrees and 73 per cent have a teaching qualification. Teachers on a number of vocational programmes have little recent experience of industry or of professional practice. Progress towards training and development lead body assessor awards has been slow. Only 37 per cent of teachers have so far achieved such awards. The college has 11 permanent part-time teachers and many experienced visiting tutors who are well qualified for the work they do. There is an almost equal number of men and women on the staff as a whole. Male teachers outnumber female teachers. Most of the administrative staff are women. Eight per cent of staff are from minority ethnic backgrounds, compared with almost a quarter of the students.

65 Learning support, and administrative and technical support are provided by 115 staff on permanent contracts. They are sufficient in number and appropriately qualified. Sixteen per cent are graduates and almost all administrative areas are managed by staff with degrees. The college has taken steps to ensure that all staff are treated equally. Many

policies have been revised to remove distinctions between teaching and non-teaching staff.

66 Staff are not efficiently deployed. The college took steps in the last financial year to reduce the proportion of its income spent on staffing, but it is still high. A finance action plan has been agreed which aims in the short term to reduce the proportion from 75 per cent to 72 per cent.

Equipment/learning resources

67 The college has a costed strategy for replacing obsolete equipment. Most curriculum areas have the equipment and resources they need to support learning. Some equipment is of particularly high quality, such as that in the motor vehicle bodyshop, and in the new aromatherapy suite. Some classrooms, however, still have no basic teaching aids, such as overhead projector screens and whiteboards.

68 The library provides a good service, although study space is limited. It has long opening hours, during which qualified staff are always available. The library's budget increased significantly in 1996. It does not include the money that schools themselves spend on books. There have recently been many additions to the bookstock, and there is a wide range of periodicals. The computerised library catalogue does not contain details of books held elsewhere in the college. Book issues are recorded manually. In addition to the library there are separate well-equipped and popular open access resource centres in several curriculum areas, including information technology, mathematics and English.

69 The college is investing heavily in information technology. An information and learning technology working group leads developments. The ratio of computers to students is high, at one computer per five full-time equivalent students. The majority of the computers are of industrial standard. Most students have easy access to computers, and they are able to use a range of software. Effective technical support is available. There is no college-wide local area network and access to the Internet is limited, but these weaknesses will soon be remedied.

Accommodation

70 The college's accommodation strategy is out of date. The senior management team is preparing a new one that aligns with the college's strategic priorities. Room utilisation data are also in need of updating.

71 Most of the accommodation on the main campus is well maintained, in good decorative order, and clean. The recently-refurbished reception area is welcoming and gives a good first impression of the college. External and internal signposting is clear and helpful. There is easy access to the main building for students and staff with restricted mobility. Evacuation equipment for use in emergencies is in good supply. Most classrooms are of at least adequate size and are used flexibly. Some have been upgraded to a higher standard than the rest, and the college is planning further refurbishments. In a number of rooms, there are displays of students'

work. Those in the rooms used by media and childcare students are particularly attractive. The classrooms in the demountable buildings present a poorer image. Some are cold and draughty and most have no wheelchair access. The manufacturing workshops, administration area and nursery provide realistic-working environments of a professional standard. There is a well-equipped fitness centre and there are good sports facilities. Recreational accommodation for students is poor. There are no common rooms. The refectory is uninviting and not kept clean during and after periods of heavy use. Outdoor areas are well maintained, tidy, have no graffiti and have adequate lighting. There is insufficient parking space, especially in the evening.

72 The college has four subsidiary sites. The horticultural unit, which has an air of genteel shabbiness, is being carefully restored. The open learning centre, located in the middle of Wolverhampton, is attractively decorated and furnished. The car body and repair workshop occupies clean and modern purpose-built premises on an industrial estate. The Newhampton Centre has an antiquated appearance. Its classrooms are large for the groups that use them and have poor acoustics. There is no access to the building for people who use wheelchairs. Redevelopment work now in progress will overcome this problem. A new cafeteria, sponsored in the main by the borough council, is due for completion during 1997. Students will be able to use this facility. Space will also be available for the teaching of performance arts.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

73 The college's main strengths are:

- an extensive range of academic and vocational programmes, with an increasing focus on community provision
- an energetic and supportive governing council
- an effective guidance and advice service for students
- teaching that is usually well planned and based on good schemes of work
- good provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- particularly good provision in media studies
- well-maintained and welcoming accommodation
- high-quality equipment in most curriculum areas.

74 In order to improve the quality of its provision the college should:

- review senior and middle management roles and responsibilities in the light of the college's strategic priorities
- refine and strengthen its strategic planning process
- ensure that reliable management information is available to all who need it

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- set targets to improve students' attendance, retention and achievements and rigorously monitor progress towards them
 - investigate the reasons for poor and worsening success rates on some vocational courses
 - improve the co-ordination of the tutorial support and the quality of careers education
 - strengthen and co-ordinate formal links with employers
 - develop an effective and comprehensive quality assurance system including rigorous self-assessment.

FIGURES

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

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

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

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

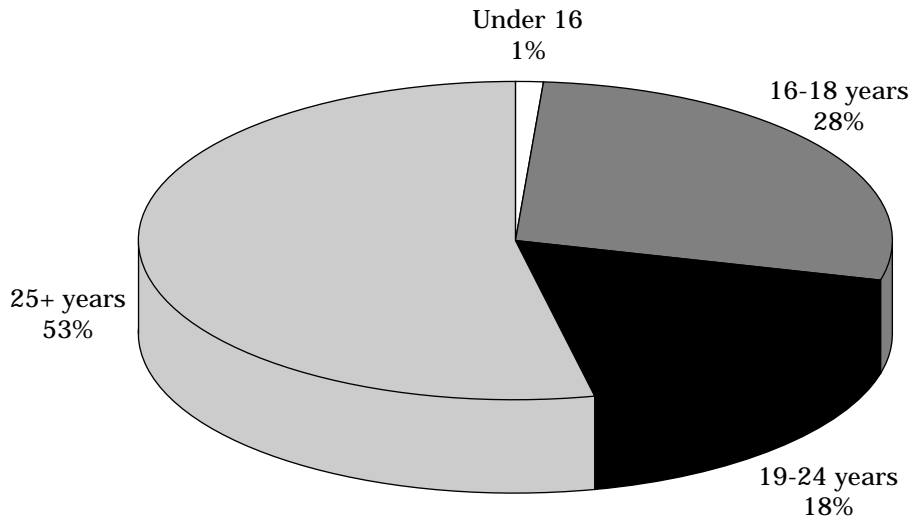
 - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1996)

 - 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

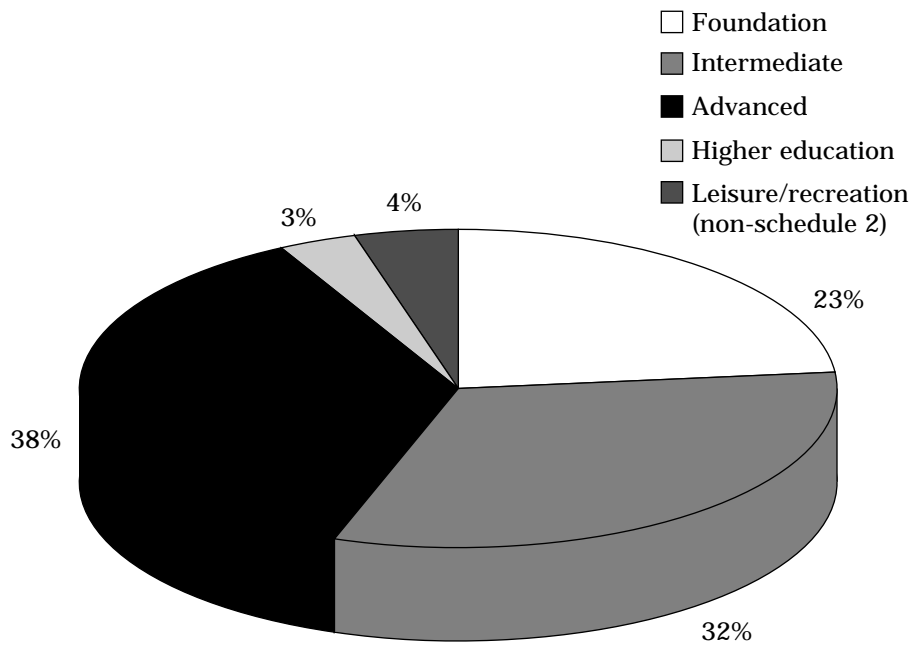
Wulfrun College: percentage student numbers by age (as at July 1996)



Student numbers: 13,983

Figure 2

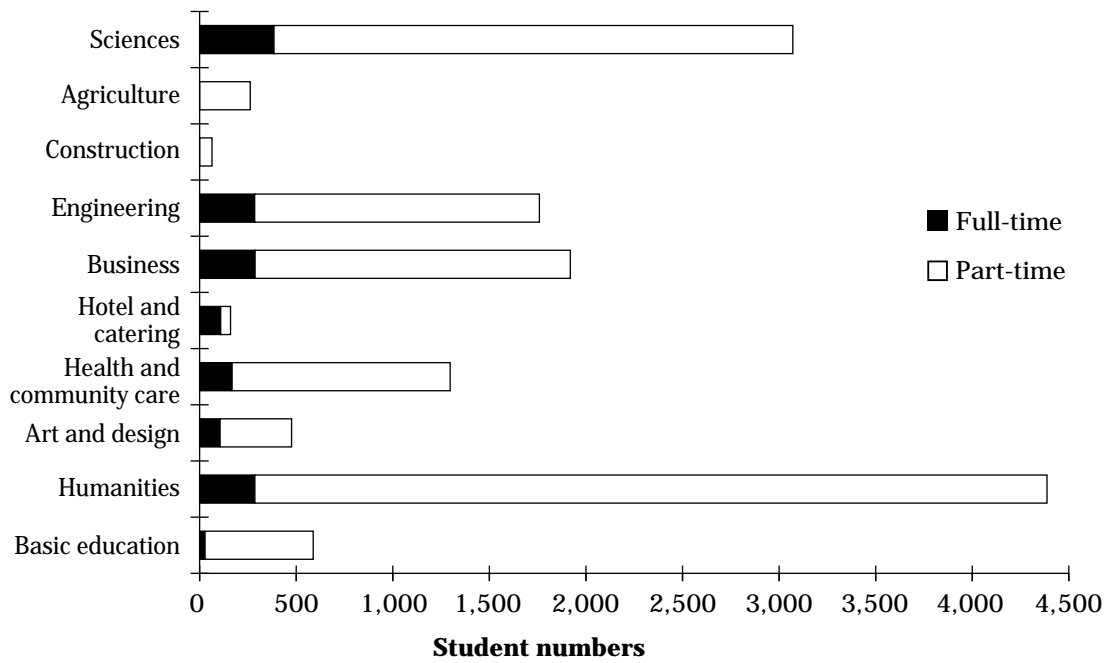
Wulfrun College: percentage student numbers by level of study (as at July 1996)



Student numbers: 13,983

Figure 3

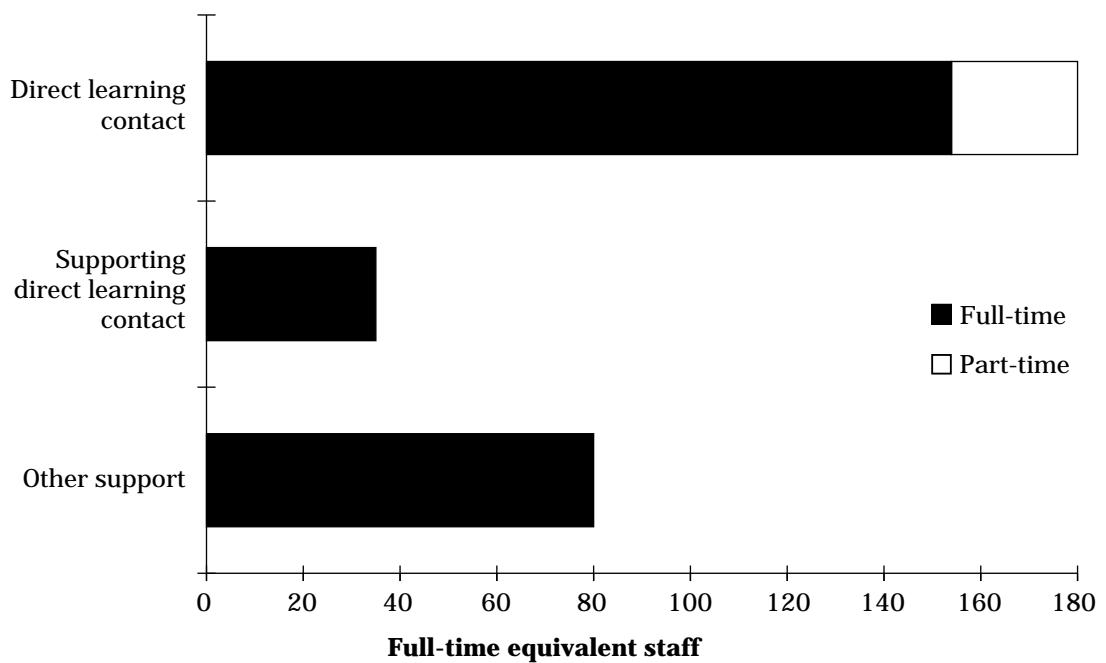
Wulfrun College: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at July 1996)



Student numbers: 13,983

Figure 4

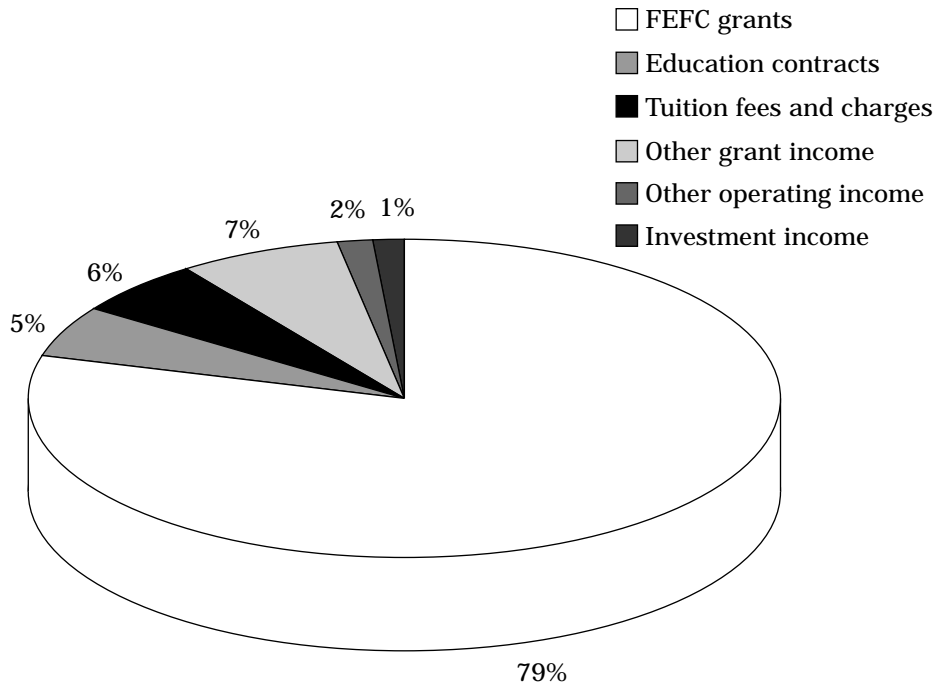
Wulfrun College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at July 1996)



Full-time equivalent staff: 295

Figure 5

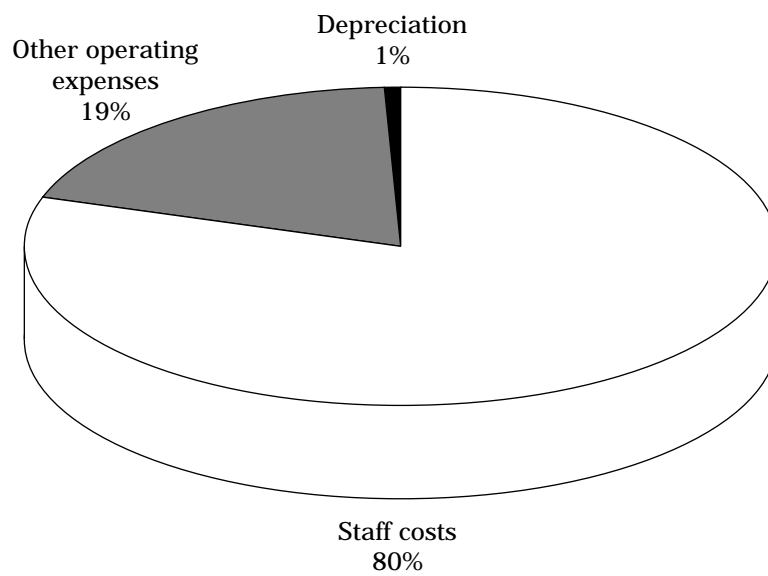
Wulfrun College: income (for 12 months to July 1996)



Income: £9,217,000

Figure 6

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



Expenditure: £9,841,000

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