

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Park Lane College

May 1995

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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

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

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

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

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

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FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 58/95

PARK LANE COLLEGE
YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE REGION
Inspected December 1994 - February 1995

Summary

Park Lane College provides a wide range of business, management, professional, vocational and basic education courses for the Leeds Metropolitan District. The college has strong links with Europe through student exchanges and an international business club. It has wide-ranging links with employers, the community and higher education institutions. The governing body, college management and staff have a clear sense of shared purpose. This is evident in the consultative planning process. Teachers have a thorough understanding and up-to-date knowledge of their subject area and relate it effectively to appropriate business and commercial contexts. There is a well-documented quality assurance policy which covers all aspects of college provision. Students receive comprehensive guidance and counselling throughout their programmes of studies. The college should: ensure that more appropriate teaching methods are used for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; improve the monitoring of action plans; ensure that annual course reviews are carried out more consistently; extend links with local schools; develop further the management information system; improve students' punctuality and attendance on some courses.

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

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science, mathematics and computing	2	Health and caring	2
Professional and management studies	2	Humanities	2
Business and finance	2	English and performing arts	2
Business and administration	2		
Leisure and tourism	1	Adult education	1
		Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	4

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INTRODUCTION

1 Park Lane College was inspected in two stages between December 1994 and February 1995. A team of 10 inspectors spent a total of 47 inspector days in the college from 30 January to 3 February 1995 examining cross-college issues. Earlier, 60 inspector days were devoted to the inspection of specialist subject provision. In all, inspectors visited 280 classes, examined samples of students' written work and held discussions with college governors, college management, staff and students, parents, employers, representatives from the Leeds Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), head teachers, and other members of the wider community.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Park Lane College is the largest of the nine further education corporations in Leeds and one of the largest providers of business and management courses in the country. The college was established in 1966 to provide general, commercial and secretarial education. The largest site of the college is in the city centre. There is also an annexe in the city and a site some three miles to the north of it. The college also uses some 45 smaller community centres to the south, east and north of Leeds.

3 Leeds has a population of approximately 750,000. The city's economy is based on a wide variety of industrial and commercial activities including clothing, engineering, financial services, distribution, hotel and catering services. The unemployment rate in the Leeds travel-to-work area was 8.8 per cent in 1993-94, compared with an average of 10.3 per cent for the Yorkshire and Humberside region. Unemployment is highest amongst people from minority ethnic backgrounds; unemployment among the African-Caribbean and Asian communities is more than twice that of the average for the city.

4 At the time of the inspection 18,583 students were enrolled at the college. Of these 2,440 were undertaking full-time courses and 16,143 were undertaking part-time courses attending in a variety of modes including day release, block release and evening only. Enrolments by age and level of study are shown in figures 1 and 2. Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figure 3.

5 Although the bulk of the college's provision is in business, general, vocational and adult education, new courses have been introduced in animal care and nursery nursing. The college also provides a varied range of leisure courses through its adult and community work. Curriculum areas are grouped into five departments: business studies; management and professional; vocational education; arts and sciences; adult and community education. Cross-college responsibilities are undertaken by the principal, vice-principal and managers for personnel, finance and management information, marketing, students affairs, and administration. Together this group of 12 departmental and cross-college managers form

the college management team. The number of full-time equivalent academic staff has increased by 13 per cent since 1992 and in the same period the number of support staff has grown by 11 per cent. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

6 The college has many European partnerships and a well-established international business club with wide membership from business organisations within Leeds. These links provide opportunities for staff and students to take part in a variety of exchange visits.

7 The college's stated mission is to 'serve the community of Leeds Metropolitan District by providing individuals with business, vocational and general education in order that they can enrich their lives, develop their confidence and take their productive places in society'. The college is committed to increasing its provision for unemployed and adult students.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

8 College managers and teachers are well informed about national policy and targets for further education. This has been achieved by planned staff development for course teams, the setting of growth targets, and regular briefings by senior staff. Student numbers have increased 100 per cent during the period 1990-94. The college exceeded its growth target for 1993-94. A wide range of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) or equivalent programmes are offered at levels 2 and 3 and beyond. Eighteen new programmes have been introduced during the 1994-95 academic year, including seven at intermediate level and five at advanced level.

9 There is a wide range of business, professional and management programmes, embracing more than 100 courses ranging from the intermediate General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) in business to higher national certificate courses in housing, business and public administration. The college is a regional centre for trades union studies and offers management training to NVQ level 5 standard. The general education provision includes 28 General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), 29 General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) and 11 GCE advanced supplementary (AS) courses. Most of these courses are well subscribed. Students have the opportunity to combine vocational and academic studies. The college is making good progress in developing flexible methods for teaching the curriculum. For example, a number of vocational programmes have entry points in September and January, and course modularisation is at an advanced stage on a number of programmes. The range of learning packages assembled for courses has made flexible attendance patterns possible.

10 There are extensive community partnerships which include links with the youth service, the Department of Employment, social services, the local education authority and local community groups. Some 8,000 students are taught in 45 centres throughout Leeds and the surrounding area. There is a well-established and effective process for reviewing new

course proposals. Local interest has led to the setting up of classes in Arabic and Islamic studies at one centre in south Leeds.

11 There are strong links with higher education institutions. There are three access to higher education programmes run in conjunction with the two city universities, one of them aimed particularly at students from minority ethnic backgrounds. Access programmes recruited over 100 students during the 1994-95 academic year. The college also runs the foundation year of a science degree in partnership with Leeds University, and there is collaborative teaching with Leeds Metropolitan University on a teaching certificate programme.

12 Links with employers are maintained through eight advisory boards which cover the major curriculum areas of the college. The advisory boards meet each term and provide opportunities for employers to contribute to curriculum development. Close links have been established with the Leeds TEC. For example, the TEC has supported a collaborative venture involving the college and International Business Machines which has resulted in a multi-media resource being developed to raise awareness about NVQs. Under the education business compact students can be assigned to city companies so that they can do research and collect information for projects.

13 Work experience is organised through a central placements office which has a database covering more than 2,000 companies. Detailed procedures have been developed including a code of conduct for students and an employers' assessment form. All students on placements are visited by college tutors. Approximately 1,250 work placements were organised during the last academic year. A wide range of cost-recovery work is undertaken for local employers in the areas of customer care, modern languages, management NVQs and basic-skills training. This realised more than £600,000 in the last financial year. There is, however, no business plan for the commercial work of the college, and income targets are not set.

14 An external agency is used to assess the cost effectiveness of the college's advertising and media promotion, and the success of promotional activities leading to enquiries and subsequent enrolments is carefully monitored. The schools liaison team is small, relying mainly on marketing staff who are invited to visit only about a quarter of Leeds high schools. Joint curriculum developments with schools have been successful in the past, but the franchising of vocational programmes has declined from 11 to five institutions this year. Regular open evenings are held to promote college courses, and the college has started advertising on bus routes. The college has succeeded in increasing the number of school leavers enrolling by 32 per cent over the last two years. Parents of 16-19 year olds are invited to attend initial interviews for prospective students and careers events.

15 The college has extensive links with other countries, particularly those in the European Union. A numbers of students and staff take part in

exchange visits to France, Germany, Spain and Greece. A European studies module has been introduced into all full-time programmes and language tuition is offered to students on vocational, academic and professional programmes. English as a foreign language is offered at six levels, and in the 1993-94 academic year involved 436 students. An international business club was formed in 1989 to provide a consultancy to local employers about opportunities in Europe. It currently has a membership of over 150 companies.

16 A revised equal opportunities policy has recently been approved by the governing body. It includes a detailed complaints procedure. All course handbooks contain a statement of the college's policy for equal opportunities, and an equal opportunities committee monitors its implementation. In the city of Leeds there is an minority ethnic population of 10.5 per cent, and about 18 per cent of the students attending the college are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The college charter and other major publicity materials, are available in some minority ethnic languages. Sixty per cent of all enrolments are women, and there are some courses specifically for women, such as 'women into management', and a national certificate computing stream for women.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

17 The Park Lane College corporation has 16 members, eight of them experienced in business areas relevant to the college's activities. Others include a representative from the Leeds TEC, a member representing community interests, the principal, a representative of the student body, a member of the college staff, and three co-opted members.

18 The chair of the corporation and principal meet weekly. Governors have a clear understanding of their statutory duties and are aware of the distinction and relationship between governance and management. Governors support the college mission statement and take an active part in strategic planning. They were also involved in the Investors in People and Charter mark awards. They have contributed to the development of policies for health and safety, equal opportunities and staff appraisal. The governing body receives minutes of meetings of the academic board and is informed of major curriculum developments. The committee structure makes use of governors' background and expertise. Corporation meetings are held quarterly. The governors are well informed about financial matters; they receive a quarterly statement of income and expenditure, budget variance and cash-flow forecasts. Governors have attended seminars and talks by outside speakers and senior management. Although governor training is seen as a continuing process, governors have not considered their training needs in a systematic way. The governing body has agreed a code of conduct for members to ensure that individual governors share equally in the responsibilities and accountabilities of the corporation. At the time of inspection there was no register of governor interests.

19 The current management structure has been in place since 1992. The college management team comprises the principal, vice-principal, five directors and five functional managers responsible for administration, personnel, finance and management information, marketing, and student affairs. The directors have the responsibility for the college's academic programme. The college management team regularly monitor the strategic plan. The team's roles and responsibilities are understood by staff and there is effective line management. Teachers and support staff have ready access to managers. There are clear lines of communication. The flow of information across the college is maintained through regular cross-college meetings and a monthly open forum meeting at which a member of the management team deals with current issues. The strategic planning process is well defined and consultative: it involves managers, teachers and support staff. Course programme leaders meet once a week to discuss course management and curriculum planning issues. The management team has set performance targets related to the college's strategic objectives.

20 The college's average level of funding for 1994-95 is recorded by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) as £16.56 per unit. However, the college assesses its unit of funding as £15.88. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges in 1994-95 is £18.17. This year, the college has an estimated expenditure of £12.3 million. Summaries of the college's estimated income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1995 are shown in figures 5 and 6.

21 A system of delegated financial budgeting has been introduced for part-time salaries and consumables. The budgets are delegated to curriculum directors, with further delegation to programme area leaders where appropriate. Budget allocations are made on the basis of past funding and agreed student growth targets. The college management monitors expenditure. Directors receive monthly reports of planned and actual expenditure. The college computerised management information system provides more than 30 different regular reports. Payroll and personnel are maintained on a separate system. Teachers make little use of the information system because it does not provide reliable information. A project management group is reviewing the system with the help of outside consultants. The college has not developed methods for calculating unit costs by course.

22 Teachers, programme managers and curriculum directors are involved in determining enrolment targets. Data on student retention and absences are monitored manually by course teams. Curriculum directors receive data from the computerised management information system every term. The college student retention rate for 1993-94 was 79 per cent. Intended student destinations are recorded on a central database.

Programme managers follow up actual destinations by post, telephone and informal enquiries, but the information obtained is not collated across the college. The college careers office maintains its own database for higher education applications. Information on the higher education destinations of previous students is obtained from Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) and this is used effectively to inform course marketing and publicity.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

23 The college is welcoming and sensitive to the needs of students. Prospective students receive details about college provision through a range of well-produced prospectuses and course leaflets. 'Local Choices', a college newspaper which gives details of its courses at local centres, is distributed to over 300,000 homes. Students speak highly of the college's quick response to course and career enquiries and of the quality of advice and support from staff on their first contact and throughout the admission process.

24 The college has units for central admissions, career and educational counselling, and welfare. They provide impartial advice and guidance throughout the year. Special telephone 'hot lines' are open during the summer months after GCSE and GCE A level results have been released. The staff within the units have a close working relationship and conform to a professional code of practice. Community-based provision also has an effective impartial guidance service.

25 Learning support is provided through the learning centre and a range of subject-based open-access workshops. Additional learning support is provided for 567 students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities on mainstream courses.

26 Extensive childcare facilities are available to students through 55 places in the city centre site and 234 more at 21 sites in the community. The fees for this service are subsidised by the college.

27 The careers and educational guidance unit provides a comprehensive service to all existing and prospective students through personal interviews or the open-access careers workshop, where an adviser is on duty to help callers use the facilities. In 1993-94 interviews were conducted with all prospective full-time students. Nearly 500 students used the drop-in facility to find out more about opportunities in their intended vocational fields and nearly 5,000 used the careers and education guidance services.

28 College admission procedures are well-defined and service standards have been established for responding to enquiries. All applicants for full-time courses are interviewed as are a number of applicants for part-time courses, for example, mature candidates for access to higher education courses. Each student applying for GCSE and GCE A level courses has an in-depth interview lasting about 20 minutes with a careers guidance specialist. Students spoke highly of the helpful admissions

procedures which had clearly influenced some of them in their choice of college.

29 The induction programme is well structured and adapted to the differing requirements of subject areas and the variety of attendance modes. Its basis is the college handbook which provides a good introduction to college services and facilities, including counselling, welfare, learning support, and resource workshops. Specific course handbooks provide a comprehensive guide to programme requirements. However, the aim proposed for induction of 'stimulating student interest and reflecting the ethos of the programme' is not always met.

30 The college has a policy and procedures for accrediting prior achievement. Interviews are arranged in the careers and educational guidance unit. Those taking advantage of the opportunity of accreditation include students in business studies wanting to undertake distance learning and women returners to work studying for the NVQ in business administration and management.

31 All full-time students have a personal tutor to provide guidance and support. Students have a learning agreement and student planner. Tutors negotiate a learning contract with students. Full-time students have action plans with targets which are regularly reviewed. On most courses their progress is recorded on records of achievement, but this practice is not uniform across the college. Support for part-time students is more variable. It is well structured on the mature access programmes, but there are no formal arrangements on other courses such as the national certificate programmes. Many part-time students have few opportunities to discuss course-related and personal problems with tutors. There was no structured tutorial programme for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, so records of achievement for such students were incomplete and individual learning programmes were not fully discussed.

32 Class registers are used to record student attendance and a summary is logged onto the college information system three times a year. Procedures for dealing with attendance problems are devolved to each personal tutor. There were inconsistencies in the way absences were followed up. For example, absences on day-release programmes were not always reported to employers. There were also cases where poor punctuality disrupted the teaching process. The college has set a target of 85 per cent attendance for all students. At the time of the subject inspections attendance levels varied between 64 and 82 per cent, with low figures recorded for English, science and humanities subjects.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

33 Of the 280 sessions inspected, 67 per cent had strengths which clearly outweighed weaknesses. In 11 per cent of sessions weaknesses outweighed strengths. The following table shows the grades awarded as a result of the teaching sessions inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level		9	26	12	3	0	50
GCSE		4	15	8	0	1	28
GNVQ		5	18	5	6	0	34
NVQ		3	5	4	0	0	12
Access/higher education		6	4	0	0	0	10
Access/further education		0	1	1	0	0	2
Other vocational		12	30	15	3	0	60
Basic education		10	9	3	0	0	22
Other		11	20	12	18	1	62
Total		60	128	60	30	2	280

34 The majority of teaching sessions were well planned. Teachers showed a thorough understanding of their subject and an up-to-date knowledge of the business world. They drew on their own commercial experience to relate theory to actual commercial practice. Students benefited from a wide range of teaching and learning experiences which included lectures, assignments, case studies, group work and tutorials. In all programme areas, students demonstrated levels of knowledge and skills appropriate to their stages of study. Staff and students enjoyed good working relationships. Teachers had high expectations of students. In most classes teachers provided regular feedback to students to assist the learning process. Information technology was a well-integrated element of subject teaching. In a few classes insufficient attention was paid to the needs of individual learners, both in the way the class was conducted and in materials used. In a few classes there was too much reliance on the dictation and transcription of notes. In others teaching and learning was hindered by the poor punctuality of students.

35 In leisure and tourism, teaching was well organised. Lesson plans were well co-ordinated with schemes of work. Activities were relevant and purposeful. For example in a leisure and tourism class students had to carry out research on two holiday destinations. They worked together effectively, allocating duties within the group, and presented their findings to teachers in a well-organised and skilful way. Teachers used well-produced handouts. In a few classes, however, teachers did not have sufficiently high expectations of their students.

36 In humanities, the teaching of psychology and sociology was characterised by good staff-student interaction. Lesson planning was thorough and consistent with course schemes of work. Teachers made

regular checks on students' understanding. Students submitted assessed work on time. Teachers returned work by the promised date and their marking included detailed comments. In history and law comprehensive course handbooks have been produced by teachers. In a few classes there were insufficient checks on students' understanding, and in others there were few opportunities for students to develop their oral communication skills. In modern foreign languages, the teaching and assignments were well prepared. Teachers had high expectations of the students and successfully created the confidence that enabled classes to be conducted almost entirely in the foreign language. Students on teacher training courses were engaged in both theoretical and practical activities. A wide range of assessment methods was used. These were related to the skills which teachers need to develop. For example, in one class students presented a particular teaching strategy that could be used on teaching practice. They were encouraged to evaluate their own performance and take part in the evaluation of their peers. The session developed students' understanding of the need to plan their teaching and include the use of appropriate aids.

37 Teaching in health and caring was well prepared. The teaching employed a wide variety of activities including lectures, role play, group work and planned work experience. Assignments were prepared to a standard format and linked theory to practice. Work was returned promptly with constructive comments. Students were highly motivated and enthusiastic about their course of study.

38 In computing, teaching methods included group activities, practical work and student presentations. Lessons were well prepared and supported by professionally produced learning materials. Assignments were designed to integrate several subject areas. Teachers made good use of commercial visits and information technology applications to stimulate students' interest. In mathematics, however, teachers seldom used information technology or engaged students in group work. Students were not encouraged to consider and discuss mathematical concepts. In science, teaching was well organised. Students were well informed of the course objectives and the assessment requirements. In most classes teachers took account of the diverse backgrounds and educational needs of students and there were regular checks on students' progress.

39 In the majority of management classes, the teaching was carefully planned to suit the needs of students. They were given assignment targets which were reviewed regularly as part of their individual action plans. Teachers had high expectations of students. In trades union studies a wide range of teaching strategies included the use of case studies. In most professional studies classes there was good subject coverage and clear practical applications were made. In general, the teaching methods suited the topic and the needs of the students and integrated information technology. In some classes the pace of work was too fast and teachers made insufficient checks on students' progress. Group work was poorly

managed in some classes. There were instances of students spending too much time copying notes from overhead projector slides and poor use of handout material. In the certificate of personnel practice classes, students regularly made presentations, which extended their self-confidence and improved their communication skills.

40 The business administration sessions were well managed. Teachers coped well with groups of students from a diverse range of educational backgrounds. Business administration training workshops provided students following NVQs with a range of practical tasks that complemented classroom teaching. Students took a good deal of responsibility for their own learning, using well-structured and professionally produced learning materials. Teachers carefully monitored students' progress and provided support as required. Some sessions, however, were handicapped by outdated information technology equipment and the lack of relevant software.

41 In business and finance most students were involved in role play, group exercises and self-directed practical work. Teachers showed an up-to-date knowledge of the subject and illustrated theory effectively with relevant commercial examples. Lectures were supplemented by practical workshops. In a few classes there was a lack of clarity about objectives. Some assignments were returned to students with inadequate teacher comments on the standards achieved.

42 In English classes, students were engaged in both theoretical and practical activities. The assessment of coursework was thorough, and students' progress was recorded in detail. In a few classes, there was little use of audio-visual or other teaching aids in situations where they would have enhanced the learning. In art and design, there was good rapport between teacher and students. The majority of classes were professionally relevant and practical. In a few classes there was insufficient attention to drawing from observation and too much emphasis on secondary source material.

43 Teaching in adult and community education was characterised by good staff-student interaction and support. Students' progress was closely monitored. Teaching was well planned and teaching methods were sensitive and carefully matched to students' needs. Students showed confidence in their abilities and talked readily about their difficulties and their achievements.

44 There is a firm commitment within the college to accept students with a wide range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In most classes, however, teaching and learning was not adequately linked to the individual programmes of study of such students. Core skills were taught in isolation from any vocational or practical context. Some students have benefited from work experience placements, but the link between placements and individual learning programmes is not always developed sufficiently. Most teachers used inappropriate teaching strategies and

were insensitive to the learning difficulties of individual students. For example, there was too much emphasis on teacher directed whole-group activities. This prevented individual students from achieving at their own level. There was little planned use of information technology to support students' learning. Assessment strategies to monitor individual students' progress were underdeveloped. Students with visual and hearing impairments did, however, receive effective support as did students with physical difficulties on mainstream programmes.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

45 Students worked enthusiastically, demonstrating and applying their knowledge and skills in a variety of contexts, and readily taking responsibility for their own learning. For example, students on the GNVQ health and social care programme organised a successful two-day event about the dangers of smoking. Students of leisure studies run their own travel office and business students on the GNVQ intermediate programme operate a branch of one of the major banks at lunchtime.

46 Written work was generally of a high standard. In the teacher training programmes students produced detailed portfolios of work. Students on the national certificate programmes produced well-researched work. On some intermediate programmes, however, note-taking skills were not well developed and the work in some students' folders was poorly organised.

47 The core skills of communications and information technology were well developed on vocational courses but less effectively developed on academic programmes. In a business studies national diploma group, students were able to debate effectively the arguments for and against the United Kingdom opting out of the European Social Chapter. Numeracy skills were not consistently developed across the college. Some students needed to resort to electronic calculators for even the simplest calculations. The physical fitness element in the uniformed services programme was well developed.

48 Students developed their ability to work in groups in many programmes, and achieved particular success on modern foreign languages courses. There were exceptions to this in mathematics, and business studies and students on the national certificate course in business studies expressed concern about the lack of opportunities for group work.

49 Retention levels for the 1993-94 academic year ranged from 90 per cent on foundation programmes to 76 per cent on advanced courses. On professional body courses and intermediate programmes, the retention rate averaged 83 per cent. The retention rate on two-year programmes over the period 1993-94 averaged 60 per cent. It was particularly poor for part-time GCSE A level programmes where the course completion rate was 38 per cent and for full-time advanced vocational courses where the figure was 49 per cent.

50 According to the Department for Education's 1994 performance tables, 95 per cent of students in their final year of study on vocational courses were successful. This measure places the college in the top third of colleges in the further education sector. This represents an improvement on 1993, when 88 per cent of students were successful. Students aged 16-18 and entered for AS/A level examinations in 1993-94 scored on average 3.8 points per entry (where A=10, E=2). This places the college in the middle third of sector colleges for academic programmes, based on the Department for Education data.

51 Results for advanced business courses in 1994 were close to the college average for vocational courses, with 94 per cent of students gaining a national diploma and 93 per cent a national certificate. There was a pass rate of 83 per cent in the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) first diploma. NVQ passes in business administration averaged 72 per cent; they were particularly good at level 3, but only 58 per cent of students achieved level 2. RSA Examinations Board (RSA) single subject pass rates (including modern languages) compared favourably with national norms, and there were 100 per cent passes in a number of programmes. There were good results in the first diploma in information technology applications, where 92 per cent of students were successful. In contrast, the national diploma in computing had a success rate of 52 per cent. One hundred per cent pass rates were achieved in national diploma courses in travel and tourism and leisure. All diploma candidates in social care were also successful, though the poor retention rate had reduced their number. Seventy-one per cent of students were successful in the intermediate GNVQ in leisure and tourism.

52 In 1994, pass rates for students aged 18 and over on most GCSE courses were close to the national averages for further education sector colleges. There was a 57 per cent pass rate at grades A-C in English and a 38 per cent pass rate in mathematics. The provisional national averages for 1993 for these subjects were 72 per cent and 51 per cent respectively. One hundred per cent pass rates have been achieved in GCSE accounts over the past three years. In science and the social sciences, results were above the national figures but in humanities subjects, there were some poor results in GCSE law, politics and history. In 1994 at GCE A level, psychology and sociology had pass rates at grades A-E of 96 and 87 per cent respectively. The pass rate at grades A-E for GCE A level accounts has averaged over 80 per cent, and for economics 71 per cent, during the last three years. The GCE A level results in humanities and art were generally satisfactory. For English and mathematics at GCE A level, pass rates at grades A-C were similar to the national figures with the exception of pure mathematics where the pass rate was only 50 per cent in 1994. Sixty-seven per cent of students on the access to higher education course were successful.

53 Up to the present academic year there has been little opportunity for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to acquire nationally-

recognised qualifications. There was little recorded evidence of the progress made by students in these categories, even after attending the college for several years. Students on the 'fast forward' programme are making progress and enjoying their studies.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

54 The college has recently produced its own student charter. This contains commitments on a range of college services to students and other clients. Several of these are stated in the form of measurable targets, for example, to arrange an interview within 14 working days of receiving an application for a place on a course. Performance against these targets is displayed on college notice boards and action is taken to improve performance. The college handbook gives further details on charter requirements. Students and teachers are well informed of the charter and its implications. The college is one of only four in the country which have received the charter mark in recognition of its response to the national charter requirements.

55 There is a comprehensive policy on quality assurance which covers all aspects of the college's work. The college's strategic plan commits the college to strive for continuous quality improvement through systematic planning and continuous review. Co-ordination of quality initiatives is achieved through three committees of the academic board: the academic standards committee, the quality council, and the staff-development committee. Quality and its control is given a high priority within the college. It is well supported by the staff-development programme.

56 Many of the college's service units have developed service standards by which their performance can be measured. However, not all units produce annual reports of their work and those that are produced seldom evaluate performance against these standards. Key college procedures relating to admissions, complaints procedures and the provision of work experience are well documented, but there are no documented procedures relating to the development of new courses.

57 A feature of the work of the quality council is the establishment of quality circles to evaluate and manage improvements in college services. Such initiatives have been effective in improving the quality of the refectory and college communications.

58 The quality of the college's provision is monitored regularly through questionnaires addressed to a number of the college's clients including past and present students and employers providing work experience or releasing employees to study. Results are presented to the quality council for appropriate action. For example, the work experience survey indicated that employers would like more information on college courses and on the students they were educating and training. The college has responded by involving employer boards more in the process of work experience and by ensuring that employers have information about students before they

arrive on work experience placements. Careers staff also visit employers to discuss what they might expect of students on work placements and what students might expect in return.

59 Procedures relating to course quality are well documented. Each programme team is required to create a folder of information relating to the management and quality of each course and produce their own quality targets which relate to the department's development plans. An audit team regularly examines the contents of these folders, supports programme teams, and reports to the academic standards committee. The response to this requirement has, however, been uneven. Some programme teams have yet to create folders, and others have not fully developed their targets.

60 Programme teams are required to prepare mid-year, annual and triennial reports on their provision. This involves the useful discipline of collecting relevant statistics and reporting on the implementation of action plans. The triennial review is presented by the course team to the academic standards committee. Standard forms for the collection of statistics and the recording of comments are provided, but teams are free to choose their own form of presentation. The variety of styles of reporting makes it difficult to gain a rapid overview of the quality of provision and not all the reports are fully completed. Weaknesses revealed by the review process were not always acted upon. For example, on one course comments made by students concerning the need for more feedback on homework appeared to have been ignored. On another course, weaknesses in the provision for students with special needs were not addressed.

61 The professional development of full-time and part-time staff is well managed, and has been recognised recently by the award of Investor in People. The programme identifies the needs of individual staff through job development interviews, staffing audit, and each department's development planning processes. However, not all staff have received the necessary support. For example, further support and training are needed by some staff acting as mentors to new staff and by others teaching students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A report on the staff-development programme is presented to the staff-development committee annually. Notable features of the management of staff development include a cost benefit analysis, a project to develop a profile of the competences needed in each job and support for staff to achieve relevant NVQs.

62 A quality-assessment report was written by the college to support the inspection process. It used the inspection headings outlined in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement* and made a clear and detailed assessment of the college's strengths and weaknesses. There is substantial agreement between the report and the judgements made by the inspection team.

RESOURCES

Staffing

63 Teaching staff demonstrate high levels of enthusiasm and commitment towards their work. Ninety-six per cent possess a degree or equivalent professional qualification and 87 per cent have a teaching qualification. There are eight qualified librarians, each of whom is attached to a group of course teams to facilitate communications between teachers and the learning centre. Part-time staff contribute relevant commercial experience to the teaching.

64 Technician and other support staff are sufficient to maintain services to teaching and administrative functions. They work in careers guidance, work experience placements, publicity and marketing, reprographics, information technology, audio-visual aids and the administration of nursing and nursery facilities. They are employed in the ratio of 1:3 members of the teaching staff.

Equipment/learning resources

65 The college is well equipped in all subject areas. A 'room standard' has been established for the equipment and furnishings necessary to create an environment conducive to learning. Most teaching rooms have an overhead projector and a whiteboard. There is an effective equipment replacement strategy, based on a central purchasing system, to which the employer boards and staff in the different curriculum areas have contributed. Reprographics equipment is available throughout the main college site and at the Potternewton annexe.

66 The main learning centre incorporates the library and learning workshop facilities. Learning centres in other locations are linked to the library catalogue and there is a rapid response book delivery system. An exception is the recently-acquired Vicar Lane House where there is no library provision or link to the central catalogue. Part-time students at the management centre are, however, too far away from the central site for ready access to the learning centre. There is close liaison between the librarian and teaching staff on the use of the learning centre and on the purchase of materials and bookstock.

67 There was a considerable investment in information technology equipment in 1993-94, amounting to over £350,000. There are over 500 computers for students' use. A large open-access area with computer workstations for class use has recently been created on the ground floor of the central site. In a few curriculum areas, there is a lack of up-to-date software suitable for commercial applications.

Accommodation

68 The central site where most of the teaching takes place is in the city centre. Three miles to the north of it is the management and trades union

studies centre at Potternewton. This comprises a grade II listed building and a temporary annexe used for the teaching of trades union studies. Other properties are leased to provide community-based education in a number of locations around the city.

69 The buildings at the central site and the main building at Potternewton have been refurbished to a high standard. The entrance concourse at the main site is spacious and welcoming. It houses a comprehensive range of student services located there for ease of access. Childcare facilities have been established at 21 college locations. The college buildings have been adapted by the use of ramps and lifts, to provide access to all parts of the college for students with problems of mobility.

70 The central site is decorated and furnished to a high standard. Most of the owned and leased properties have been refurbished to create a pleasant learning environment. Provision at the St Anne's annexe for art and for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is poor. Some staff rooms are overcrowded. The management of the accommodation is well planned. All buildings are cleaned to a high standard.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

71 The college has made significant progress towards its mission to provide high-quality business, vocational and general education. Particular strengths of provision are:

- effective governance and management with strong support from the governing body
- comprehensive links with employers, the community and higher education institutions
- a wide range of courses which reflect the needs of the community
- strong European links which enhance the curriculum for staff and students
- responsive guidance and counselling service for students
- competent and committed teaching staff
- comprehensive quality assurance procedures
- good staff-student relationships.

72 If the college is to maintain and improve the quality of its provision it should address the following issues:

- the development of the college management information systems
- teaching and learning strategies for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- links with local schools
- the punctuality and attendance of students
- greater consistency in the quality of annual course reviews.

FIGURES

-
- 1 Percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)

 - 2 Percentage enrolments by level of study (1994-95)

 - 3 Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1994-95)

 - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994-95)

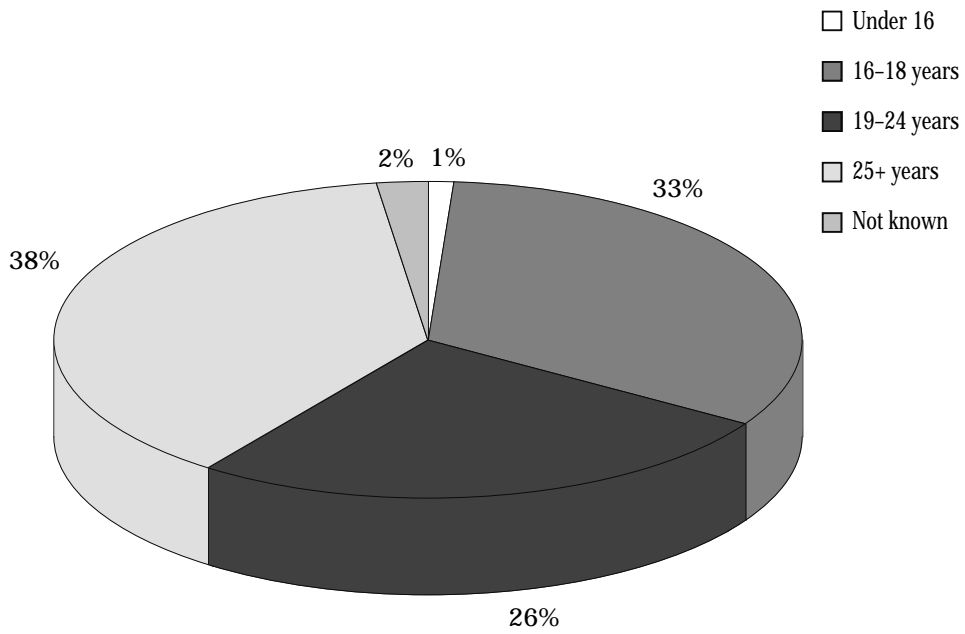
 - 5 Estimated income (for 12 months to July 1995)

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

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

Figure 1

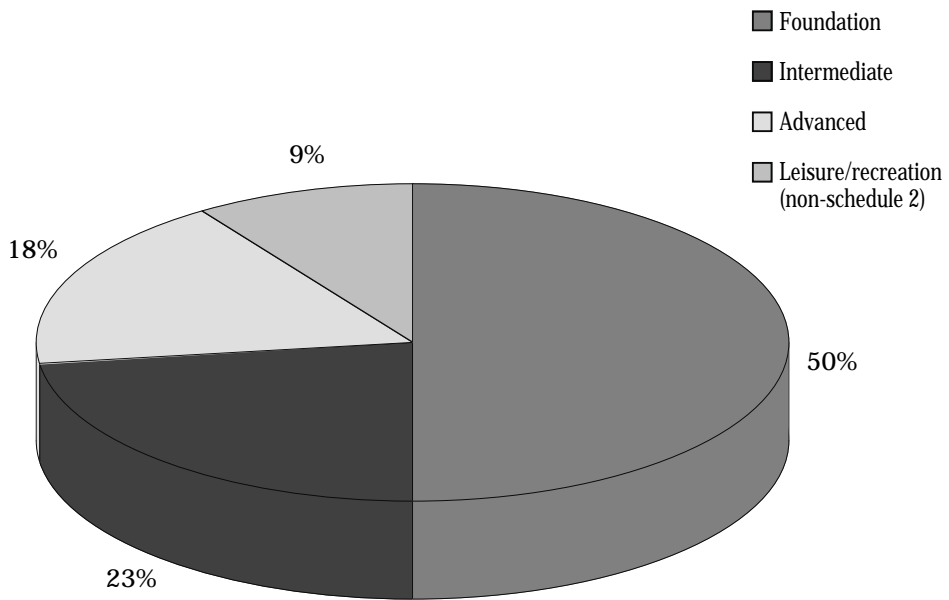
Park Lane College: percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)



Enrolments: 18,583

Figure 2

Park Lane College: percentage enrolments by level of study (1994-95)

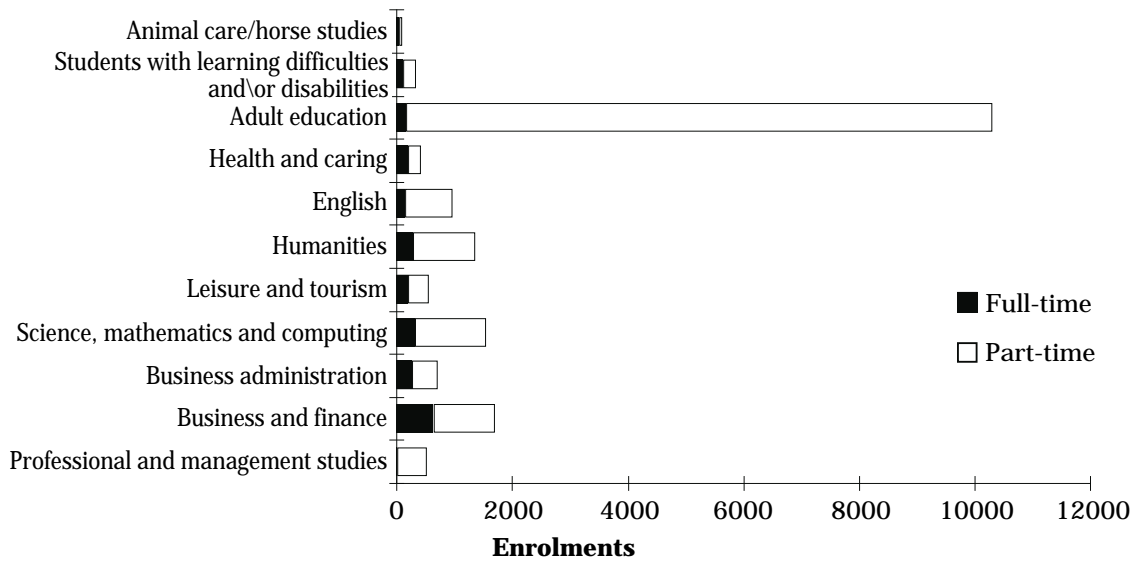


Enrolments: 18,583

Note: this chart excludes 88 higher education enrolments.

Figure 3

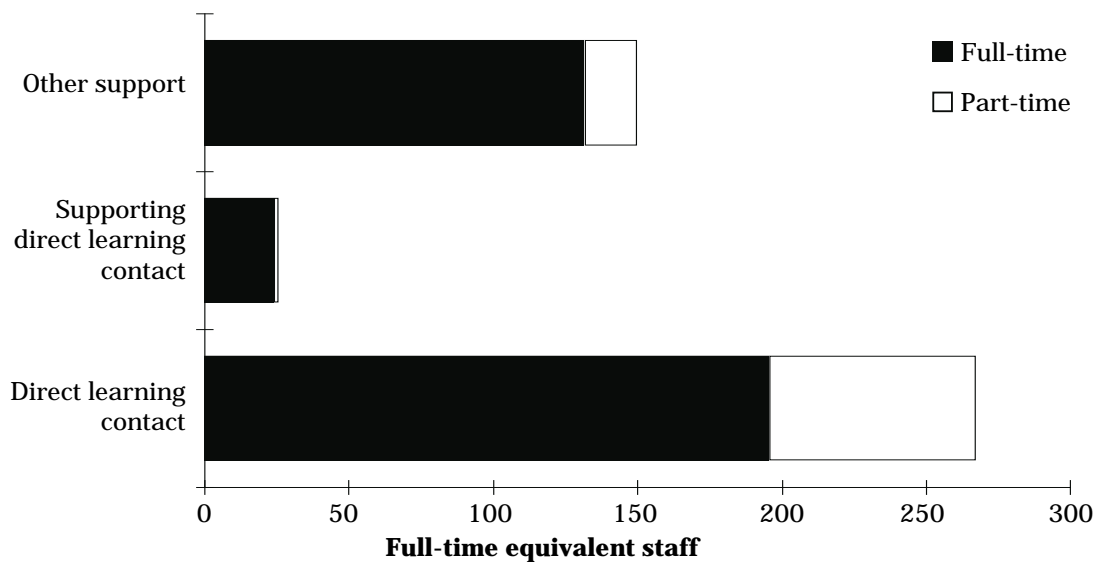
Park Lane College: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1994-95)



Enrolments: 18,583

Figure 4

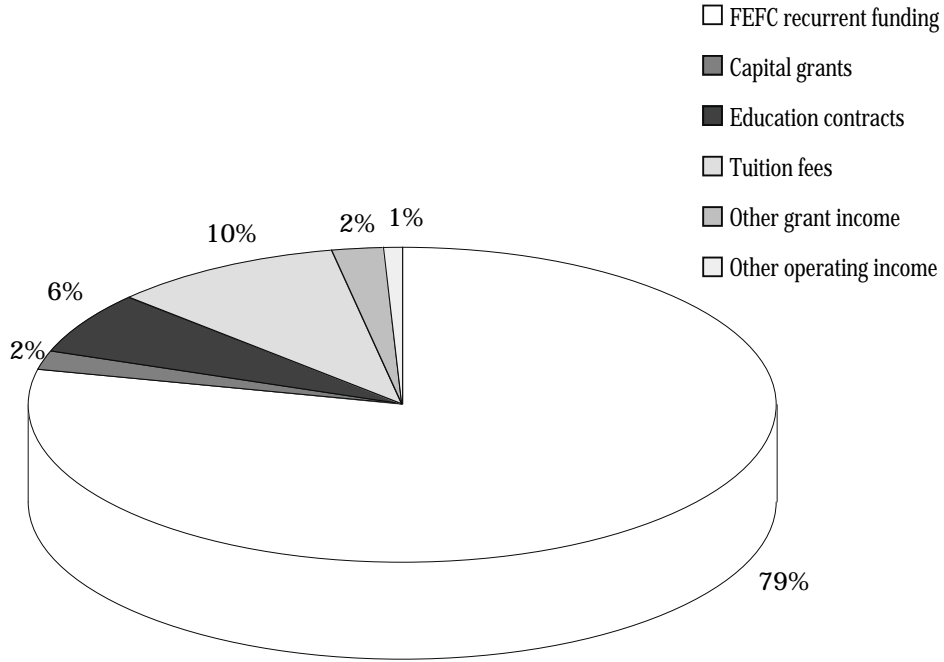
Park Lane College: staff profile - staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994-95)



Full-time equivalent staff: 443

Figure 5

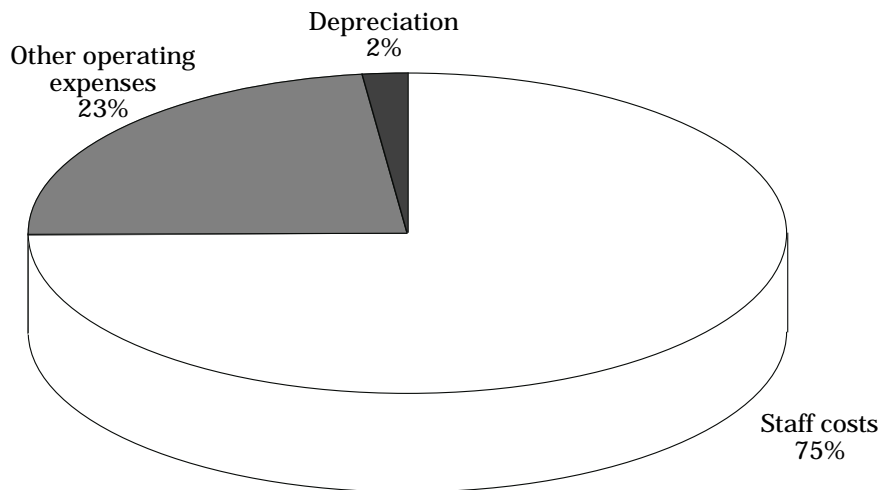
Park Lane College: estimated income (for 12 months to July 1995)



Estimated income: £12,373,000

Figure 6

Park Lane College: estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)



Estimated expenditure: £12,311,000

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