

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Melton Mowbray College

March 1995

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

THE FURTHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL

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

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

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.*

*Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
Telephone 01203 863000
Fax 01203 863100*

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 15/95

MELTON MOWBRAY COLLEGE

EAST MIDLANDS REGION

Inspected August - November 1994

Summary

Melton Mowbray College, Leicestershire has widened its portfolio of courses, and has achieved particular success in recruiting mature students by offering flexibility in the times during the academic year at which students can start their courses. Governors have a clear understanding of their responsibilities. They work effectively with managers and are actively involved in the life of the college. The senior management team share a sense of purpose and give strong leadership. Management decisions are generally well founded on data provided by the management information system. There is a strategy for the phased implementation of quality assurance procedures. The staff-development programme is linked to the aims contained in the strategic plan. Students benefit from good counselling and guidance services, transport and creche facilities. Much of the teaching and promotion of learning is of high quality. Examination results are generally satisfactory and sometimes good. College accommodation is purpose-built and in good decorative order, but it is not being fully used. The targets set for student recruitment over the last two years have not been achieved. There are good external links with employers and other community groups although these are not consistently effective across the college. There are no procedures to assess the performance and effectiveness of the corporation and senior management. Quality assurance procedures and staff appraisal are not yet being implemented consistently throughout the college. The college has no plan for replacing equipment.

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		3
Resources:	staffing	2
	equipment/learning resources	3
	accommodation	2

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science, mathematics and computing	3	Care	2
Engineering	1	Performing arts	2
Business and secretarial	2	English, sociology, psychology and access courses	2
Catering	2	Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	2

CONTENTS

	Paragraph
Summary	
Introduction	1
The college and its aims	2
Responsiveness and range of provision	9
Governance and management	22
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	32
Teaching and the promotion of learning	43
Students' achievements	52
Quality assurance	62
Resources	70
Conclusions and issues	84
Figures	

INTRODUCTION

1 Eighteen registered inspectors visited the college for 67 days between 23 August 1994 and 25 November 1994. They observed 134 learning sessions and the work of approximately 1,600 students. Discussions were held with staff, students, college governors, representatives from industry, the local community, and from the Leicestershire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). The strategic plan, policy and other documents, and samples of students' work were also examined during the inspection.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 The Melton Mowbray and District County Technical College was founded by the joint enterprise of the trustees of the Melton Mowbray Town Estate and the Leicestershire Education Committee. The College was formally opened on 2 December 1937. The property in King Street offered by the trustees to the Education Committee at that time is owned and used by the college to this day. The college benefited from major new building in the early 1970s.

3 The college is in a county town and serves a predominantly rural community. There is also significant local industry and commerce, including food processing, engineering and manufacturing, and a variety of professional services. Advanced coal mining is being developed at the recently opened Asfordby pit within three miles of the town centre. The area is well served with post-16 education and training; within a 10-mile radius there are a sixth form college, an 11-18 school and a post-16 agricultural college. Melton Mowbray also has a 14-18 upper school, originally a grammar school. Youth training is provided by a single agency for Melton and Rutland, with offices in Melton Mowbray and Oakham.

4 The college grew rapidly between 1990 and 1993. Total enrolments for 1993-94, including leisure and recreation classes, were 4,944. Enrolments by age and level of study are given in figures 1 and 2. Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figure 3. The college operates the community education programme in Melton Mowbray, with funding from Leicestershire County Council. At the time of incorporation, the college inherited from the county council an indoor leisure centre and a theatre.

5 The college has recently been adopted as an associate college of De Montfort University. Higher education and degree programmes in engineering and the performing arts are offered by the college to students enrolled with the university.

6 The college's work is grouped into four curriculum sectors: technology and science, business management and service industries, visual and performing arts, communications and general education. The cross-college areas of administration and finance, curriculum and staff development, and client services are the responsibility of three directors. With the principal, they form the senior management team. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is given in figure 4.

7 The main aim of the corporation is to secure the survival of a locally-managed and responsive further education establishment, leisure centre and theatre to serve the communities of Melton borough and Rutland. The college intends to achieve this over-riding aim by maintaining a viable size and range of facilities and specialisms appropriate to the needs of the community that it serves. It is committed to meeting the demands upon it with a friendly, professional and caring service.

8 The college intends to continue concentrating on full-time programmes with breadth and quality which will attract students and allow them to make progress. It will seek to develop further flexible approaches to teaching and learning to cater for the widest possible range of individual students' needs and circumstances. The corporation will also seek to extend the college's range to meet the requirements of a wider market.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

9 The governors, management and staff are aware of and respond to the government's aims and policies for further education. This has been an area for training and discussion through seminars, general staff-development sessions and academic board meetings. These aims and policies are addressed by the college's strategic plan, the salient points of which have been distributed to staff.

10 Sharing a site with the public library, theatre, leisure centre, and careers service, the college plays an important part in the life of the local community. The leisure facilities are owned and operated by Melton Leisure Services Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of the college. Recruitment is affected by the small size of the town, the rural nature of the surrounding area and the lack of good transport links.

11 The local community has traditionally regarded the college as a technical institution offering vocational training. The college itself is seeking to establish a broader image and gain a reputation as a centre for mature students. There has been a dramatic increase in the proportion of full-time students aged 19 or over: from 20 per cent in 1989-90 to 42 per cent in 1993-94. Courses now offered cover both academic and vocational areas. Recent emphasis has been on increasing full-time programmes, including General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) provision, and courses for adults returning to education. New subjects have been introduced and the range of outside contacts extended. Despite this, some of the new courses have not managed to recruit sufficient students to form viable groups.

12 The college markets its provision locally but also projects itself as a national centre of excellence for the performing arts. It attracts some students from overseas, and expects to attract still more in the future. Initiatives are under way to attract students from South Africa, Hong Kong and Poland.

13 In response to local demand, and to keep up recruitment levels, the college has adopted a flexible system which allows entry at many points during the academic year to courses designed to suit individual needs and requirements. After initial entry, counselling is used to test whether students are taking courses suited to their needs and abilities, whether they need any kind of learning support, or whether a change of course is indicated. In some curriculum areas there are problems in retaining students and this is being addressed by improving student support services and strengthening the tutorial system.

14 The college faces strong competition for students from other further education colleges. It has good links with schools in the area, with the exception of the neighbouring upper school for 14 to 18 year olds. The college also visits schools outside its immediate catchment area. College staff take part in careers conventions, and sometimes makes arrangements for pupils to attend the college for 'taster' days in specific vocational areas of study. Attempts to build closer co-operation with the neighbouring upper school, through link courses and careers conventions have not met with success. Nevertheless, the college continues to attract some 20 per cent of the age 16 leavers from this school. The Junior Engineering Technicians Club has recently been introduced to capture and retain the interest of 11-16 year olds. The club meets weekly and has so far been well attended.

15 Melton College has been designated an associate college of De Montfort University and a close alliance is being forged. Future plans include a package for overseas students which would take them, through further education, to a guaranteed place in higher education. The college leases some residential accommodation for such students. Three-way compacts have been developed with the university and 11-16 schools to offer a similar programme for local students, taking them through from age 14 to a guaranteed place in higher education provided they reach appropriate standards.

16 There are substantial links with local employers in respect of course provision, work placements and recruitment. The college is proactive in seeking to establish short courses for employers. The services to business unit is a part of Melton Leisure Services Limited responsible for developing full-cost training and conference programmes for local employers. Course provision has been built up through a process of listening to and co-operating with local companies. The college's readiness to provide courses at times and places to suit its customers has led to repeat business and further development of short courses. The college has established a strong network of contacts with industry and has a reputation for responding quickly to employers' needs.

17 Some of the larger local companies are involved in planning and providing courses, and the college helps by preparing course brochures and training handbooks. The college has not set up employer advisory

committees, but in such a small and close-knit community it is able, with the help of its business governors, to tap into the active network of local employers. The present level and quality of provision is well regarded by employers in certain sectors. One employer who felt that the college had not kept pace with change in a particular area of work, and that opportunities were being lost, was unaware that the college had already identified this as an issue and was addressing it in its curricular planning. Employers generally felt that they were given a clear idea of what was expected of them in respect of work placements, and college staff visited students on placements regularly. The views of employers are taken into account when assessing student performance. In one area of work placement, the relevant employer felt that students were not properly prepared for the realities they were likely to meet in the workplace.

18 Relationships with the local TEC are good. The college has been a major beneficiary of funds from the TEC's flexible funding allocation, particularly for short courses for business. The college has been described by the TEC as adaptable and imaginative in introducing schemes based on better-than-average labour market analysis. The TEC also made a substantial contribution towards the funding of the college creche. At present, the college is not a local managing agent for TEC programmes, and it receives relatively few TEC-sponsored students, but closer relationships are now being developed. The advent of youth credits and the modern apprenticeship scheme have provided an impetus for co-operation rather than competition. Negotiations have been going on for some time to form a consortium to offer a modern apprenticeship programme, and a pilot scheme will begin in the new year. Local employers have applauded the college's decision to retain an engineering facility. This is acknowledged as going against the economic tide but is in line with local need and could eventually serve a wider community. Both TEC and PICKUP funding have been used to identify training needs, and to support the training of work-based assessors by college staff.

19 A 'women into engineering' course was run from 1992 to 1994 with funding from Leicestershire County Council. A substantial women's access programme is co-ordinated by the college in co-operation with sponsored external institutions, which is a major achievement in such a rural area. This outreach work covers five centres in Leicestershire and Rutland including Melton. There are over 100 women on roll at each of the four outlying centres and 20 at Melton. Many of the participants are from isolated rural communities. The scheme has been successful in overcoming the main barriers to access: lack of transport and childcare provision. It includes flexible access training workshops for NVQs, and information technology training to improve keyboard and other skills. There are opportunities for women to progress to further courses at the college.

20 Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported. Relationships with outside agencies are strong. Most of the

main site is accessible to wheelchair users. There are a number of students with visual or hearing impairments on vocational and academic courses. Provision for blind or visually-handicapped students is recognised as excellent by the Royal National Institute for the Blind, with which there is good liaison. The college draws such students from outside the immediate area. The college's commitment to flexible learning is apparent in the range and design of courses for students with learning difficulties. Courses are modular in design, with their various elements brought together to produce courses tailored and timetabled to match individual students' abilities and requirements. Course provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities features prominently in the prospectus for both full-time and part-time courses. There are some separate courses for such students, and a number are on mainstream courses. The aim of learning support is to enable all students to take a full part in the life of the college. In many cases, the separate courses prepare students to go on to the college's mainstream programme. Where necessary, 'care in the community' funding pays for special individual help to students. Successes include students who have come out of social services day-care and into full-time education.

21 The college has published an equal opportunities policy which is monitored by a client services sub-group. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is higher than in the local population, partly due to the popularity of the performing arts courses with students of Afro-Caribbean origin.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

22 The governing body has 16 members. It consists of seven independent business members, a representative from the local TEC, three co-opted members, the principal, two staff, a student representative and one community organisation nominee. The governing body has taken prompt steps to remove a governor who became ineligible through non-attendance. There is a spread of expertise, including personnel, marketing, legal and financial experience, from a range of local organisations and businesses. There are no formal arrangements for governor induction, which is a matter of some significance since approximately one third of the governing body will change between September 1994 and January 1995, after a long period of stability which has produced a sense of unity and purpose. A briefing pack is being developed to help newly-appointed governors quickly make an effective contribution.

23 The governors are active and effective in supporting the work of the college. A good example is the initiative of a governor with a business background who instigated a collaborative programme of exchanges amongst local companies to provide engineering apprenticeships, and placed it under the college's management. In another case, two governors from the audit subcommittee joined the internal auditors for a day to

familiarise themselves with the audit trails and prepare for the audit report. Governors have a clear understanding of the rules within which they operate, and a commitment to contribute to the attainment of national targets. Governing body and committee meetings are well attended. The corporation reviews its own effectiveness informally; it has yet to develop and institute a formal system to measure its own performance.

24 There is a separation of governance from management, with appropriate delegation to the principal, and clear and proper lines of accountability. The governors have committees which mirror the directorate responsibilities. In addition, there are subcommittees to deal with audit, community issues and remuneration. All committees have clear terms of reference, although there are no mechanisms in place to review them regularly. There is effective delegation of powers to subcommittees, and the governing body ratifies recommendations after appropriate discussion or refers them back. All governors are actively involved in committee work, and understand the basis for monitoring key aspects of performance. All governor agendas and papers are circulated in good time, and supported where necessary by helpful commentaries and short presentations. The governing body monitors progress in the implementation of policy, and has established procedures for checking the college's financial health. Governors have adopted policies on health and safety, equal opportunities and personnel. No clear environmental policy has been formulated, although one is planned. There has been minimal governor involvement in the development of the college charter, and little appreciation of its importance as a potential marketing and monitoring tool. No consideration has been given to the production of an annual college report.

25 Governors are keenly aware of their responsibilities with regard to conflict of interest. They have recently adopted a comprehensive code of conduct which each governor will be expected to sign. It stresses their duties towards the college and the high standard of behaviour expected of governors. A register of governors' interests is not at present being maintained. It is planned to update the audit of governor skills. There is an excellent working relationship between the chairman and principal, and effective arrangements for consultation on important issues.

26 Enrolment targets for full-time students have not been achieved for the last two years. For the academic year 1993-94 the target was 913 full-time students and the enrolment was 802. At November 1994, the number of full-time students enrolled was 745, compared with the target of 889. The main areas of under-recruitment were business and care. A shortfall of this size has given special urgency to the need to explore new markets and to extend flexible methods of working. There is a developed strategy to preserve the college and the service it offers to the community, and a working group of governors and directors has been formed to draw up an operational plan for 1995-96, using contributions from curriculum

areas and the best data available from the management information system.

27 There is a shared sense of purpose in the directorship with strong leadership from the principal, who delegates large areas of responsibility. The organisational structure under the principal, consists of three directors, four sector managers, an information technology manager, and administration and technical managers. There are also four activity managers and area leaders. The basic directorate structure has been in place for three years and serves the college well. However, incorporation affected some roles more than others, and assigning priorities is something which needs greater attention to ensure individuals do not become overloaded. The management structure, lines of communication and accountability are clear. Staffing resources are effectively monitored and controlled using data from the central management information system. From director downwards, staff with management roles understand the organisational objectives, and work towards them. There is a strong ethos of teamwork in the organisation, actively encouraged by the principal. There is also a high level of concern for efficiency and cost-effectiveness. In some areas with a high proportion of part-time teaching staff, improved co-ordination and staff management is required to avoid problems of communication and control.

28 The strategic plan is being implemented, although not all targets have been met on time: examples include the late approval of the charter and the absence of the promised environmental policy. The transition from monitoring to action, though evident in staffing and financial planning, is not fully developed in some key areas such as quality assurance and space utilisation. A more systematic approach, with all decisions recorded, would be helpful. There is a clear strategy for the allocation of physical resources but resource needs are not effectively prioritised in every area. Alternative sources of funding have yet to be fully exploited. Quality assurance systems and review procedures to assess the effectiveness of management have yet to be addressed, and no performance measures or targets have been adopted.

29 There is a high-quality, user-friendly, and relevant management information system, developed largely within the college. The system is used and is highly prized by the principal, the director and sector managers together with those activity and curriculum managers who have access to it. Responsibilities for implementing and monitoring policies on equal opportunities, health and safety and student support have been assigned. The day-to-day implementation of the health and safety policy and codes of practice is variable, and this was particularly noted in engineering and performing arts. The governors monitor staff recruitment practices to ensure that no discrimination is taking place. Retention rates are monitored formally three times in the year, and action is taken at regular intervals. Student destinations are also monitored, but the rate of returns and the quality of information are patchy.

30 College managers should continue their close monitoring of performance indicators. They should also ensure that the targets set in the strategic plan are achieved. This planning and assessment is vital since the level of resource that such a small college is able to commit to new initiatives and the scope for innovative developments is limited. The college finds difficulty exploiting all the opportunities it has created.

31 The college's income and expenditure for 16 months to July 1994 are given in figures 5 and 6. The college's average level of funding for 1994-95 is £19.06 per unit. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges is £18.17.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

32 The college has well-documented procedures for the recruitment, guidance and support of students. To ensure that prospective and existing students receive good and impartial advice, when they need it, a student advice centre has been established to co-ordinate and improve a service previously dispersed, and to make it more user friendly. The centre is staffed by four activity managers dealing with student support services, student welfare, learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and work experience placements. It has rooms for confidential interviews. Reference materials are available, to complement those provided in the library and in the careers service office. The college management recognises the need to provide a proper reception service in the unit. At the moment, it is staffed occasionally by business administration students as part of their practical experience in reception duties.

33 Steps are being taken to meet the imperative need to increase recruitment. The college has produced prospectuses and information leaflets of good quality, and promotes itself through local radio interviews and newspaper articles. Sector managers responsible for specific curriculum areas produce copy for news articles. The college also advertises its courses in the local free newspaper.

34 The Leicestershire Careers Service has an office based in the college and its officers work closely with student-support services. Careers officers visit all schools to offer school leavers and other pupils impartial advice on future careers and courses of study. Information from careers interviews with school leavers is sent to the college's sector managers responsible for recruiting students. Careers advice and guidance is also given to mature students. Other initiatives to provide guidance and promote recruitment include a drop-in advisory centre in the town centre during the summer months; an advice desk within the job centre; a jobs fair held in conjunction with the Employment Department; and visits to RAF camps. Field workers from the access team visit groups in the community to provide advice and guidance on career and course opportunities.

35 Student details are recorded on a computerised system used for tracking students. Where a student is uncertain which career or course to

take, guidance is provided. When students are certain about the course they wish to take, they complete an application form and are interviewed by the appropriate admissions tutor. At this stage, admissions tutors complete an interview form recording both the offer and acceptance of a place. Students are asked to bring their records of achievement with them to the interview, but not all do so. Facilities and structures exist for students' prior learning and experience to be accredited and to count towards the achievement of qualifications. In engineering and business administration, there are examples of good practice in giving credit for previous experience towards an NVQ.

36 Free buses are provided to support students living in the Grantham and Stamford areas of Lincolnshire, Loughborough and other areas. The college has contracted services for four buses. Other students travelling to the college by public transport are issued with a bus pass. For students living in remote areas, taxis are provided. This is a considerable commitment by the college, which this year allocated £35,000 for student transport.

37 Induction activities have clearly stated and appropriate objectives. Initial induction is conducted over a two-day period at the beginning of the academic year. At this stage, students are given a variety of information, including the student handbook. Having accepted a place, students are required to complete a 'learner agreement', complementary to the student charter, which specifies what the college undertakes to provide and the responsibilities of the student during the course of study. Induction continues over the next few weeks in programmed tutorials and, during this period, personal tutors conduct diagnostic assessment and opportunities are made for the librarian and the careers guidance and welfare counsellors to meet students to tell them about the colleges' facilities and services. Students may transfer from one course to another, up to the first half term of the first year.

38 New arrangements for personal tutoring have recently been introduced, mainly for the benefit of full-time students. Tutoring for part-time students varies between courses. However, all students are allocated a personal tutor responsible for monitoring all aspects of their performance. The usual structure for students on full-time courses includes a one-hour timetabled period, which may be used for individual or group tutorials. Beauty therapy and hairdressing are exceptions to this pattern, because it is thought that the nature of the courses demand a flexible approach. A committee of link tutors meets to discuss key issues and exchange information about new developments. This cross-college arrangement helps to promote good practice and develop consistency. A tutor resource pack has been produced and the staff handbook details the services provided by the student advice centre. The current tutorial system provides a framework for the development of consistent personal tutoring, building on existing good practice. However, though much has been achieved in a short time, practice has not caught up with documented procedures.

39 Learning support is provided for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It is also available for students who need to improve their basic skills in numeracy, literacy and information technology. The further development of the basic level open-learning centre, to complement existing workshops in mathematics, English and information technology, would assist students needing additional support in the development of basic core skills. Screening, using materials from the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit, is conducted by personal tutors at the beginning of the academic year to help identify students' competence in these skills. Additional learning support is currently provided for 35 students. Although students with the most urgent needs are being supported, the system of support needs to be strengthened and broadened in line with the plans for the open-learning centre. This would help a larger number of students with a range of diverse learning needs.

40 The quality of provision made for student counselling and advice is good. A qualified student counsellor is based in the new student advice unit. She is assisted by a full-time welfare adviser who concentrates on financial and accommodation aspects and student union liaison. A range of outside agencies support the service. From the beginning of the current academic year, a member of the teaching staff was appointed to the student advice team to develop and co-ordinate work placement of students across all vocational sectors. All full-time students have the opportunity to undertake planned residential experience as an integral part of their course linked either to their work experience or provided through education visits.

41 The college has a well-resourced creche. Some 80 places are provided on a sessional or daily basis, and in the current session 140 children have been accommodated. Priority is given to the children of full-time students. The cost to the student is 80 pence per hour, although students facing financial hardship may be helped from access funds.

42 Throughout the year, advice is available to students on ways forward after the completion of their courses. Personal tutors and the student advice centre staff provide tutorials on higher education opportunities and how to apply for them. Information on entry procedures is circulated to key personal tutors. In comparison, assistance to students planning to enter employment on completion of their course is less well organised. Careers service personnel are available for consultation and personal tutors give some advice to students needing help. When asked what their intended destinations were, 53 per cent of students indicated that they would continue in further education, 11 per cent that they would go to higher education and 30 per cent that they hoped to take a job.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

43 The grades awarded to the sessions inspected are shown below. Seventy-nine per cent of teaching and learning sessions displayed strengths which outweighed weaknesses. This profile is better than that which is found in the majority of colleges.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCSE AS/A level		11	13	4	1	0	29
Basic education		2	6	5	0	0	13
GCSE		1	8	1	0	0	10
GNVQ		3	4	2	1	0	10
NVQ		8	8	2	2	0	20
Other		18	24	9	1	0	52
Total		43	63	23	5	0	134

44 In the mathematics workshop, teaching and learning were sensitive to the needs of students and their level of confidence. Students were well supported by the staff and the learning materials provided. In science classes, good teacher-student relationships, a variety of teaching methods, and attention to the development of core skills all contributed to effective learning. The weaknesses observed were mainly cases of poor basic technique: for example, failure to ensure that all students could see the video properly. In both theory and practical sessions inspected, computing students were generally well supported, and a range of teaching strategies was used constructively to maintain their interest.

45 Engineering programmes were well organised and the structure of NVQ programmes was such that individual schemes could be built up for students. Comprehensive records were kept of students' progress. Schemes of work covered appropriate material, allowed students on craft courses to progress at their own pace, and promoted the personal development of the student. Students' interest was maintained by using a variety of activities. There was no overall timetable of assignments. Staff-student relationships were good, and staff had a sound knowledge of their subject areas.

46 There were good examples of a flexible approach to teaching mixed-ability groups of secretarial students. Individual programmes were planned to suit the particular needs of each student. A mix of full-time and part-time provision allowed for flexibility of hours and variable starting points, which helped adult students. Knowledgeable staff supported by well-planned resources gave individual attention to student needs. In a minority of sessions, staff experienced difficulty in coping with flexible, mixed-ability teaching. In business studies sessions, effective use was made of the work experience of staff and students, particularly with mature students on the Institute of Supervisory Management course. Students made use of their own resources: for example Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national certificate students demonstrated examples of accounting by looking at employers' published accounts. In the majority of business studies sessions, students were eager to make contributions. Most staff showed competence in a variety of teaching

styles, including group work, and practical work, and students generally maintained a high level of interest in the course. There was a poor level of interaction between teachers and students in some national diploma business and finance sessions.

47 There were high standards of teaching in catering, although the range of skills required for certain NVQ competencies in food preparation and service was not being covered effectively. Tutors had sound subject skills and knowledge, and offered appropriate advice and support. Assessment of student work was fair. Practical skills were demonstrated competently, with reinforcement of good hygiene practices. There was some conscientious record-keeping, but this was not uniform. A high proportion of catering students required special support in numeracy and literacy, but their record of attendance at core skills workshops was poor.

48 On care courses, the majority of sessions were of high quality. Tutors displayed good classroom control and a variety of teaching methods. Exposition and questioning techniques were used to particularly good effect. Most sessions included a student-centred element which was well structured, and related clearly to previous learning and to the vocational context of care. A minority of sessions were unsuccessful for a variety of reasons. In some cases, students received too much dictation. In others, students' lack of preparation prevented the tutor from effectively developing the work, as intended. Core skill units on General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) programmes are primarily presented as self-standing units. There is little attempt to integrate them with other aspects of the programmes. Schemes of work were available for all subject areas, but generally lacked sufficient reference to teaching methods, learning activities or assessment.

49 Performing arts students were given plenty of opportunity to work on their own. The performing skills of one part-time teacher who is a member of an independent dance company, made her demonstrations for students particularly effective. Staff and students enjoyed excellent relationships and there was mutual respect. Most students were making good progress with their studies. Programmes of learning were well planned and documented. For example, the project briefs in the BTEC performing arts course have clearly stated aims and objectives, and define common skills and methods of assessment. BTEC students were also given an excellent course guide. In some sessions, the objectives and the context for practical sessions were insufficiently clear. The concepts underlying practical skills were sometimes not made explicit; there was a lack of summing-up, and the recording of progress as a basis for the next session. In a few sessions, the work was too slow or lacked professional rehearsal discipline. Dance teachers coped well with a considerable variety of student ability and experience.

50 All sessions observed in English and communication studies were of a high standard. The teaching was good. There was co-operation between staff and students, and the use of high-quality handouts as stimulus or back-up material.

Teachers used a variety of teaching methods, including seminars, play-reading with discussion, workshops, and lecturing. Students were encouraged to work in groups when appropriate, and generally worked well. In social studies, teachers posed clearly-focused questions to reinforce learning. Problem-solving activities and small-group work were followed up with effective feedback. There was a review of learning in all classes.

51 Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities attend mainstream classes, with special additional support, or study on courses which are specifically designed for them. Many have individually-designed timetables. A blind student was studying wordprocessing skills within a vocational course, and materials had been modified using a tape recorder. In the performing arts, a student with dyslexia was allowed to submit work on audiotape. The majority of teaching sessions were of a satisfactory standard. There are good arrangements for briefing staff in the vocational and academic areas on students' difficulties and needs and in some cases teachers made effective use of this information. Significant strengths included some of the learning in real work situations and students' general awareness of learning objectives. Individual programmes for students were challenging and enjoyable although some students had little opportunity to take decisions for themselves. Some teaching was over directed, poorly planned, not differentiated, and unclear in its purpose. Some teaching groups were too large for effective individual attention, and a number of teachers failed to comment effectively on students' written work.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

52 There are more students over the age of 19 taking GCE A levels than 16-19 year olds. In 1992-93, the college's GCE A level pass rate was 75 per cent. The national average for general further education and tertiary colleges was 66 per cent. Students aged 16-18 entered for GCE AS/A level examinations in 1993-94 scored, on average, 3.4 points per entry. This places the college among the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure, based on data in the 1994 performance tables published by the Department for Education.

53 In 1992-93, the overall success rate for all students gaining A-C grades in General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) subjects was 57 per cent, which was above the national average of 50 per cent for general education and tertiary colleges.

54 In 1992-93 the percentage of 16-18 year old students gaining a BTEC or City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) qualification was 78 per cent, which was below the national average for all schools and colleges of 81 per cent. Individual examination pass rates varied from 100 per cent in C&G brickwork and masonry and C&G community care practice, to 65 per cent in C&G cookery for the catering industry.

55 Ninety-four per cent of students in the final year of study on the vocational courses included in the Department for Education's 1994 performance tables were successful. This places the college among the top third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. For other vocational qualifications in the summer of 1994 an overall pass rate of 66 per cent was achieved. Individual examination pass rates varied from 100 per cent in, for example, C&G community care practice, to 50 per cent in C&G cosmetic make-up.

56 In science, students generally enjoyed their work and class folders were organised and well presented. Examination results in GCSE human biology are better than average for the sector, but GCE A level science results are worse. Science students are able to carry out practical work and field trips effectively. Computing students produced some good-quality assignment work consistent with their range of abilities. Students in the mathematics workshop produced work of an appropriate quality, corresponding to the general level of ability of the students observed. Engineering students worked enthusiastically, especially in practical sessions. They were developing appropriate levels of skills and knowledge, and were observed carrying out practical work safely and competently.

57 In catering, students showed a high level of practical skills in both restaurant and kitchen work, but their communication skills were less good: restaurant workers were not able to describe dishes accurately to customers. Examination pass rates on catering courses are high. Catering students showed a good understanding of the issues under discussion. Their files and assessment profiles were well organised. Assessed work demonstrated a broad range of student achievement which was appropriate to the level and type of programme being studied. The best assignments were well referenced and demonstrated the application of theoretical concepts but the majority lacked effective evaluative and concluding sections and insufficient attention was paid to quoting reference material correctly. In sociology and psychology, student coursework projects successfully demonstrated the ability to apply theory to practice. In both subjects, the level of student work was, in general, appropriate to the level of the course.

58 Secretarial students achieved high pass rates in skills examinations. They produced well-prepared NVQ portfolios providing adequate evidence of ability. The overall success rate in NVQ and private secretary's certificate awards is also high. In 1993-94, some 95 per cent of candidates completing the BTEC national diploma in business and finance successfully achieved their awards. However, there was a low completion rate at the end of the first year of this course in 1994; only 26 per cent of enrolled students progressed to the second year. The completion and pass rate for Institute of Supervisory Management has been above 80 per cent for the last two years, and there were pass rates of 100 per cent for day and evening courses in 1993-94.

59 Performing arts students were generally enthusiastic and industrious, although they enjoyed practical work much more than theory. Students' knowledge was good and they were able to use it effectively. They worked well in groups, co-operating easily, and demonstrated good practical skills, particularly in dancing and acting. Students also worked in community theatre outside the course, and this work was accredited as part of the national diploma in performing arts. Levels of achievement in course work and examinations were high, partly owing to the good basic skills which students learn in voice, drama and movement. Performing art students were successful in achieving places at a specialist higher education institutions.

60 Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enjoyed their study and felt a sense of achievement. The course completion rate is excellent. Although accreditation systems for students on special courses for students with learning difficulties are under developed, there was some evidence of progression from one course to another. Particularly significant is the movement of students from specialist courses to other vocational and academic courses. Although most students were actively and fully involved in planning their own learning, there were occasions when this did not happen.

61 The extent to which core skills were developed varied across different programmes in the college. All full-time students are tested to determine their level of skill in literacy and numeracy, and support is available for those requiring extra tuition. In science, students had very little opportunity to use computers. Engineering and business studies students had good opportunities to develop information technology and groupwork skills. Business studies students worked in groups or undertook role-play activities to develop team communication skills. In catering, there was insufficient attention to literacy and numeracy and a seeming lack of interest in information technology. In the care area, assignments made good use of wordprocessing skills and students worked effectively and co-operatively in group situations. Sociology and psychology students made little use of wordprocessors in presenting their course work projects. The development of study skills was explicitly included in some performing arts sessions. Wordprocessing facilities were available, but students were not encouraged to use them.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

62 Staff within the college are aware of the commitments in the national charter for further education. The college has produced its own college charter and distributed copies to students. Students had little say in its development. Many standards of service outlined in the college charter are contained in other publications, such as the marketing literature and the student handbook. The charter mentions other client groups but it is not addressed to employers, parents or other community customers and is not distributed to them. The document is visually unappealing and unlikely

to attract students' attention or encourage them to retain or consult it. It is not clear how the college intends to monitor and develop the charter.

63 The college has produced a self-assessment report using the headings in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. The document is largely descriptive. Assessments of quality are implicit in text, but there is no explicit consideration of strengths and weaknesses. The report incorporates judgements made by Further Education Funding Council specialist inspectors. It acknowledges the need for remedial action in some areas, often those on which inspectors have commented, but there are no accompanying plans for action.

64 The college has a clearly-articulated quality assurance policy. There is a three-phase strategy for its implementation, but no operational plan to ensure that development is consistent throughout the college. The new assurance strategy builds on existing practice.

65 The first phase of the quality assurance system is based on existing procedures for course review and evaluation, gives course teams the responsibility for monitoring their own courses and seeks to foster a culture of systematic improvement. The second phase concerns the introduction of standards into the course review process. The final stage will be the development of systems to monitor data against performance indicators in order to evaluate and improve performance. Implementation of the strategy has just moved into the second phase. The course review system is generally well established for vocational courses, but the quality of these varies considerably. The mid-course review documents provide no data on student retention, and this has been identified as a priority for action. There is no formal system for the review of GCSE and GCE A level courses. The college is considering how best to bring them within the system.

66 At present, the system does not provide a framework for action following course review, to ensure that targets for improvement are set and that progress towards them is monitored. The college has produced a draft document on target-setting, concentrating on student retention rates and examination results, which has been circulated to course teams for comment. The results of course team reviews are presented to the director of curriculum and staff development who is a member of the senior management team. However, there is no machinery to ensure that course reviews and assessments influence development planning within sectors or strategic planning for the college as a whole. Sector managers receive course reviews but they are not responsible for course quality, the review process, or the action to be taken as a result of course review. No member of staff has a remit for quality assurance in connection with their curriculum responsibilities other than as a member of the course team.

67 Support staff have devised a policy for customer care and procedural documentation. This is clear and comprehensive. The procedures contain a few targets and performance measures, but the majority are concerned with conformity. The college recognises the need to introduce more

measures of performance. In client services, a system of annual reporting had been initiated but no common framework was provided and the results were variable and largely descriptive. Elements of student services are monitored through surveys of students' opinion undertaken by course teams. Students are invited to comment on the quality of teaching and learning but there is no attempt to find out how far they are satisfied with communal areas, leisure and refectory facilities. However, some activity managers undertake specific targeted surveys to inform their planning.

68 The college has a staff-development policy and is working towards the award of Investors in People status by 1996. Staff-development plans form part of the annual planning cycle and are evaluated by a subgroup of the governing body. There is a staff handbook, and a staff induction procedure has been developed and is being put into effect. Induction is essentially an initial familiarisation exercise. There is no continuing programme of support. A staff-development strategy and policy document file is available to all staff. Staff-development objectives are closely linked to the college strategic plan. There is no structured mechanism for disseminating the outcomes of staff-development activity. Appraisal documentation has been developed but appraisal of academic staff below the level of sector leaders has yet to be implemented. It is intended that 20 staff should be appraised during 1994-95. Staff have been trained to make appraisals. No structured training programme is planned for those being appraised but briefing notes have been prepared for them.

69 Staff-development activity is seen as of equal importance for all staff. Support staff have the opportunity to work for vocational qualifications and take part in courses on such subjects as time management, personal effectiveness and assertiveness. The college encourages professional development and two members of staff are undertaking initial teacher training. The director of administration and finance is intending to extend staff-development planning for support staff and to institute a system of appraisal for support staff.

RESOURCES

Staffing

70 A human resources strategy forms part of the strategic plan. It identifies the need to recruit staff to match college requirements; to develop effective processes for recruitment, induction, employment and managing change; to develop an understanding of the college's responsibilities as an employer; to gain external recognition for processes and procedures through Investors in People; and to communicate effectively, and to ensure that accurate data are available. The responsibility for personnel management is shared between the principal and the directorate. External consultants are used as necessary.

71 There is a full-time equivalent staff of 88 teachers and 76 support staff. Overall, there is a sensible level of part-time staffing, accounting for

35 per cent of the hours taught. The percentage varies from less than 1 per cent in engineering to 75 per cent in art, craft and fashion. The latter figure includes a considerable amount of community provision. There are small administration teams which provide good support for a variety of functions including finance and administration. Premises staff undertake minor maintenance work and have contributed to improving the quality of the premises.

72 All of the senior managers have, or are working towards, a higher degree in management or management in education. All but six of the full-time staff have a teaching qualification. Two are currently following a certificate in education course; three others appointed in September 1994 are expected to start such a course in the next two years. Twenty-seven of the full-time teaching staff have a first degree and seven have higher degrees. The age profile of the full-time staff in the four teaching sectors is reasonably balanced. The profile shows that technology, communications and business have the largest proportion of staff in the 46-55 age band, while art has the largest proportion in the 36-45 age band. Art has expanded rapidly in the last two years and has recruited younger staff. All the motor vehicle staff are over 60.

73 Teaching staff are generally well qualified and competent. They have appropriate vocational skills and a good range of professional work experience, though they do not all work equally well in teams. For students with learning difficulties, there is a committed team of self-motivated staff who are dedicated and mutually supportive.

Equipment/learning resources

74 The strategic plan includes an equipment strategy which sets objectives for the period 1994-97. It identifies the need for information technology equipment, for management information systems, and for equipment allocations to match identified priorities for development. These objectives are well on their way to being achieved. The total spent on equipment in 1993-94 was approximately £90,000, which represented 5 per cent of the replacement value. The sum allocated for materials and consumables to the four curriculum sectors in 1994-95 is £61,000. The funds are distributed on the basis of student hours, staff numbers, and a weighting for specialist needs. The final allocations were agreed between the academic managers. Technology receives the largest share, with the other three sectors receiving approximately the same amount. The college's equipment strategy does not include a planned programme for the replacement of equipment.

75 Specialist equipment has strengths and weaknesses. In science, some subject areas have old or inadequate equipment. In engineering there is a good range of equipment appropriate to the programmes offered. Some workshop equipment is old but still suitable for teaching basic skills. In catering, specialist equipment is up to industry standards. The care section has a generally adequate range of teaching and learning aids.

Provision for haircare and beauty has been enhanced by a new beauty room. In performing arts, there is a fully-equipped professional theatre, but electronic equipment for music requires better care and storage facilities. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have appropriate access to the college's specialist resources.

76 There are modern computers with appropriate industrial or commercial software. In business studies, students use unsuitable wordprocessors. The information technology suite, secretarial workshop, and engineering suite have modern machines, but despite the new computers the information technology suite presents a dated image. A new plan for information technology is currently under development. There is limited documentation to support students using the new software, although the use of commercial instruction publications is being reviewed. At present, there is no plan for the systematic replacement of information technology equipment.

77 The library is a shared resource with the Leicestershire Libraries and Information Service, which rents the main part of its building from the college. There is a service-level agreement for services provided specifically for the college. Staffing levels are appropriate. There is a college librarian and a library assistant. The library consists of the main public library plus college areas for specialist books, administration, computer databases, and audio-visual aids including stationery sold to students. There are study booths and open desks within the public area. The public bookstock can be searched via a computer database. Some, but not all, of the college books are on this database. The library allocation for new stock, materials and equipment is top-sliced from the general college budget. The library has public opening hours of 55 hours per week, and access to the college stock is available outside normal college hours. The library has been accepted by two higher education validation teams as suitable for their purposes. In most curriculum areas the library stock is adequate for current students, but in performing arts, media, hair and beauty the current stock is inadequate. There are a limited number of books in the library to support the windows software now in use across the college.

Accommodation

78 The college is located on two sites close to the centre of Melton Mowbray. Public transport in the area is good. The main site, which is full owned by the corporation, is on the western edge of the town centre. On it are a number of associated facilities, including the town's leisure centre and theatre. The college acts as landlord for the town library and careers service. The King Street annexe is in the centre of the town, five minutes walk from the main site. The building is owned by the college but the land belongs to Melton Mowbray town estate. A day care centre is leased from Leicestershire County Council. There is little room for expansion on the current site other than on an adjacent plot which used to be a bus depot. Part of this land has been purchased by the county council

for a road improvement scheme. There is limited car parking space. Car parking on the main site is for members of staff only. There is a large public car park nearby. The college also rents adjacent land to provide a small amount of extra parking space.

79 There is a summary of the accommodation strategy in the college strategic plan. A separate accommodation strategy has been produced which provides a synopsis of the present and future accommodation needs. All teaching is in purpose-built permanent accommodation. There is one terrapin hut which is now used infrequently. On the main site there are five blocks, four constructed in the 1970s and one in the 1930s. The King Street building, also constructed in the 1930s and now used as the art centre, has been extensively refurbished. The accommodation strategy identifies a need for student residential accommodation and makes proposals for meeting it. The short term solution is to maintain an accommodation list, to collaborate with Brooksby College for use of eight beds in their residential accommodation and to lease further accommodation in the town. Although on the main site, the library is not in a central location for college students. Students with limited mobility have to leave the college buildings and enter the library via an external ramp. Plans to redevelop the area have been drawn up. Issues concerning potential change of use of the area have still to be resolved and await decision by the assets board.

80 The general quality of the accommodation is good. Accommodation for specialist teaching is of a high standard, though better in some subject areas than others. There is high-quality teaching and rehearsal space for performing arts, including a professional performance space in the theatre. The electrical laboratory looks old-fashioned and needs improving. Painting is conducted in a room with no sinks. The hairdressing salon is also dated and its appearance does not convey industrial realism. However, accommodation is being systematically upgraded. Many rooms have been carpeted and redecorated to provide a pleasant learning environment. Major repairs have been carried out recently. Flat roofs have been, or are in the process of being, repaired, and most buildings will soon be in a good state of repair. The boilers have been replaced, and should be more economical to operate in the future. The refectory has been refurbished recently and provides a pleasant environment. It is also used as a communal meeting area. There is a second snack bar for light refreshments which also acts as a meeting place. The theatre's light refreshment area is used during the day as a staff lounge. It is a useful facility but the furnishings are poor. The student advice centre provides a pleasant environment, with good access.

81 A review of the access for students with physical disabilities was carried out in November 1992, and an improvement plan has since been implemented. Wheelchair users can reach most areas of the main site. Toilets for disabled users have been installed in the leisure centre. The centre has been used for a number of special sports events. The ground

floor of the engineering block is accessible but not the upstairs classrooms. Block E has limited access. King Street has good access to the ground floor, including a new toilet for people with disabilities.

82 The college has sufficient space for the current student numbers. A system to monitor the utilisation of the accommodation is being introduced this term. It is integrated with the college management information system and will be able to provide information on the numbers of students in a room, the capacity of the room, and the number of hours the room is occupied. College statistics indicate that the average utilisation of teaching rooms is approximately 45 per cent, based on a 40-hour week.

83 In 1992, the college employed external consultants to carry out a survey of the condition of college buildings and produce a five-year maintenance plan. The survey provided detailed information on all the college buildings and placed them in five categories of physical condition ranging from 'very good' to 'very poor or dangerous'. It prioritised repairs and recommended a costed five-year programme of improvement. It also recommended a day-to-day maintenance budget of £25,000. These recommendations have been translated into a planned maintenance programme running up to and including 1996-97. The programme relies upon Hunter monies for its completion.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

84 The college is making progress towards achieving its mission. Its particular strengths are:

- its responsiveness to employers and groups in the community
- good governance and management
- a high-quality management information system
- flexible points of entry to courses over the academic year
- effective support for students including counselling and guidance, transport and creche facilities
- high-quality teaching and learning in many areas
- good examination results in some curriculum areas
- a strategy for the phased implementation of quality assurance
- staff development linked to the strategic plan
- well-qualified teaching and support staff
- purpose-built permanent accommodation which is in good decorative order.

85 If it is to continue to improve, the college should address the following issues:

- student recruitment against targets
- greater consistency across the college over external links with employers and community groups

-
- quality assurance procedures for governance and management
 - consistency of tutorial practice and the maintenance of records of achievement
 - poor examination results in some areas, particularly on several GCE A level courses
 - development of an operational plan to ensure consistency in the implementation of quality-assurance procedures
 - the implementation of staff appraisal
 - the lack of a replacement plan for equipment
 - the low utilisation of accommodation.

FIGURES

-
- 1 Percentage enrolments by age (1993-94)

 - 2 Percentage enrolments by level of study (1993-94)

 - 3 Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1993-94)

 - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1993-94)

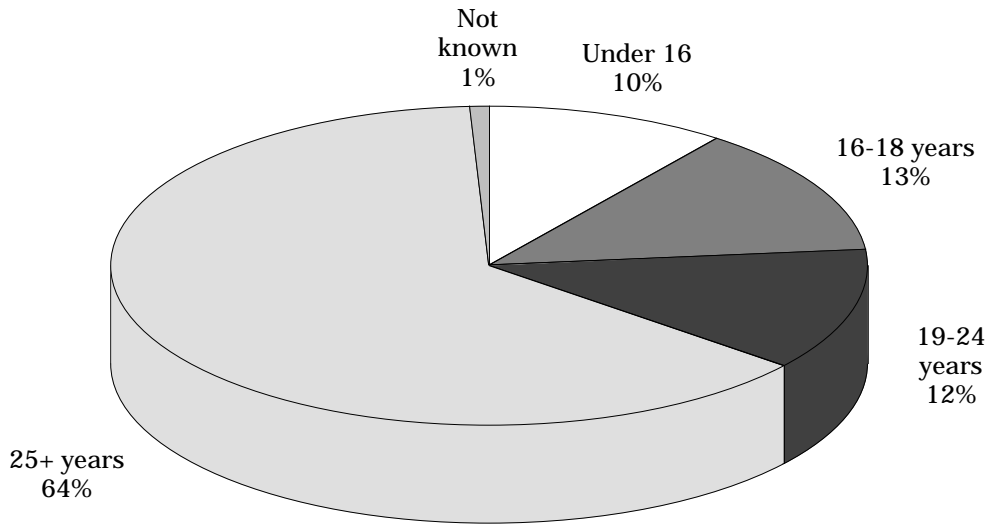
 - 5 Income (for 16 months to July 1994)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)

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

Figure 1

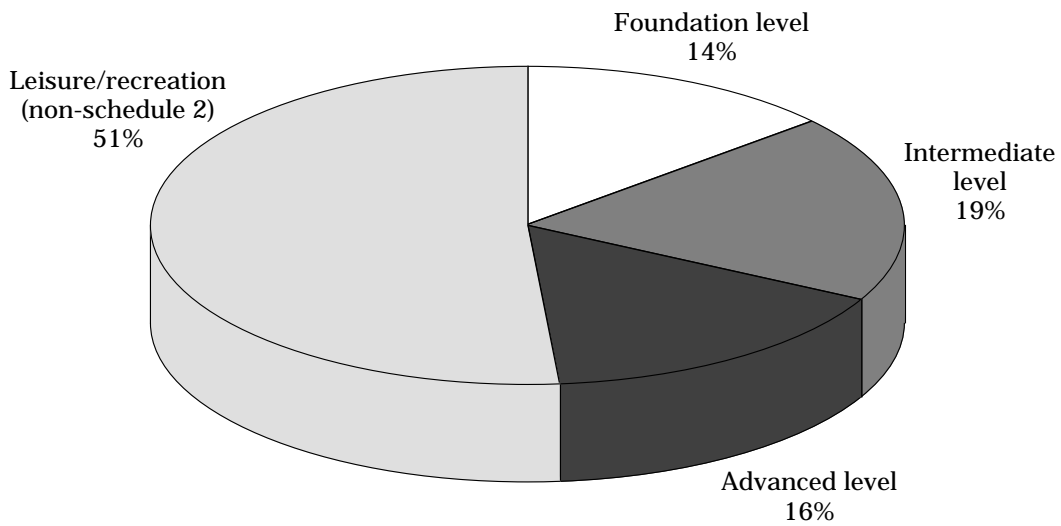
Melton Mowbray College: percentage enrolments by age (1993-94)



Enrolments: 4,944

Figure 2

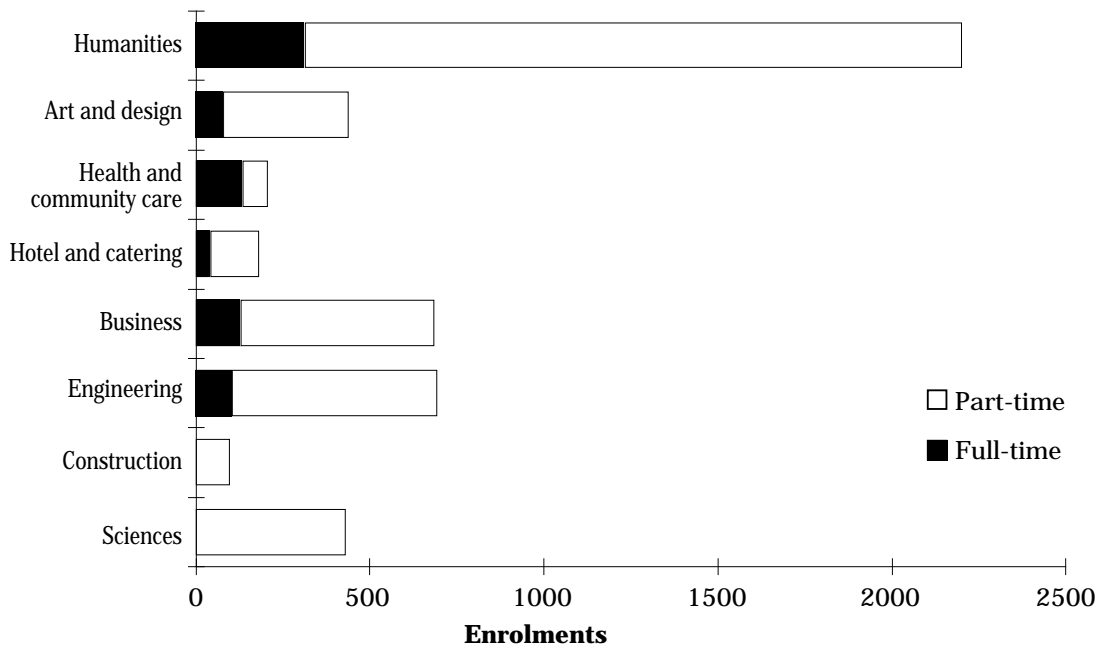
Melton Mowbray College: percentage enrolments by level of study (1993-94)



Enrolments: 4,944

Figure 3

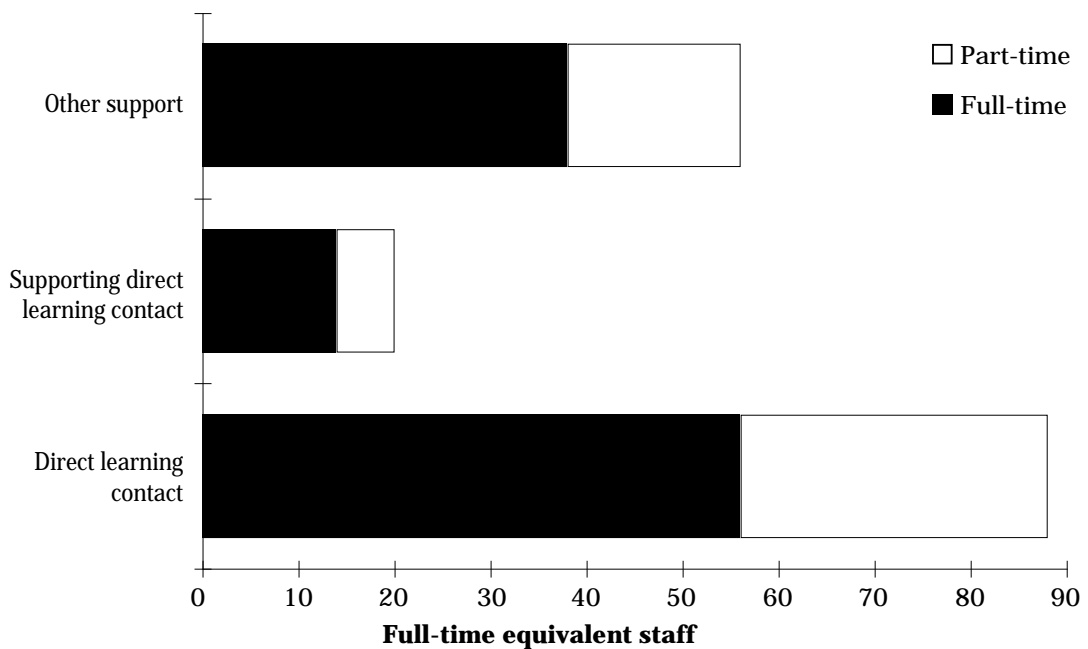
Melton Mowbray College: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1993-94)



Enrolments: 4,944

Figure 4

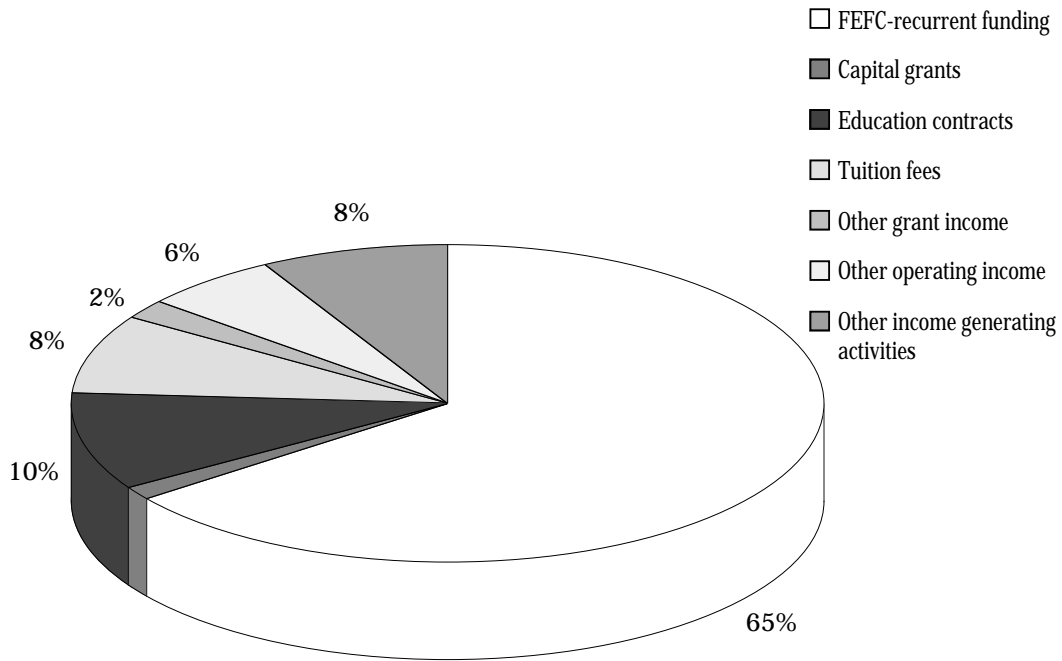
Melton Mowbray College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1993-94)



Full-time equivalent staff: 164

Figure 5

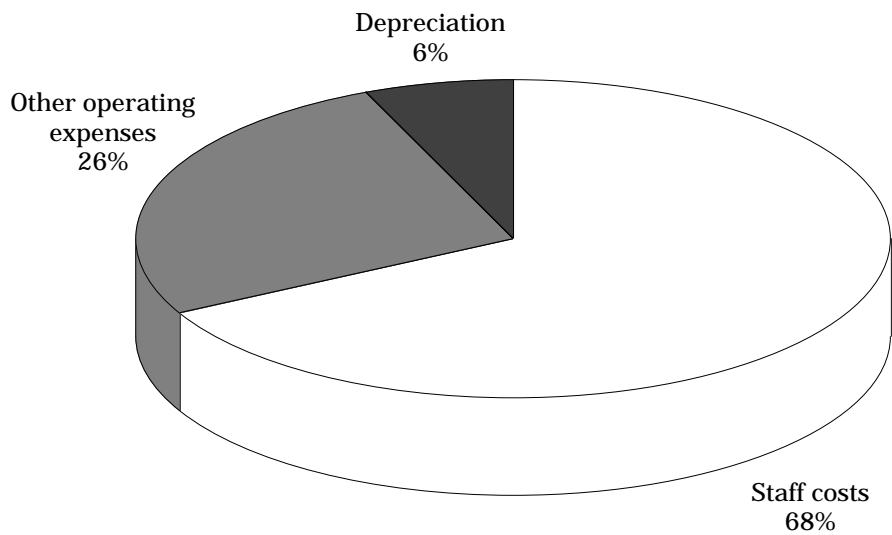
Melton Mowbray College: income (for 16 months to July 1994)



Income: £5,218,000

Figure 6

Melton Mowbray College: expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)



Expenditure: £5,276,000

Published by the
Further Education Funding Council
March 1995