

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Moulton College

July 1994

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

THE FURTHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL

The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) has a statutory duty to ensure that there are satisfactory arrangements to assess the quality of provision in the further education sector. It discharges the duty in part through its inspectorate, which inspects and reports on each college in the sector every four years. The Council's inspectorate also assesses and reports on a national basis on specific curriculum areas and advises the Council's quality assessment committee.

College inspections involve both full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have specialist knowledge and experience in the areas they inspect. Inspection teams normally include at least one member from outside the world of education and a nominated member of staff from the college being inspected.

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

The procedures for assessing quality are described in the Council Circular 93/28. In the course of inspecting colleges, inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out in the reports. They also summarise their judgements on the balance between strengths and weaknesses using a five-point scale. 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 58/94

MOULTON COLLEGE

EAST MIDLANDS REGION

Inspected March 1994 – May 1994

Summary

Moulton College in Northamptonshire specialises in courses related to the land-based and construction industries. Teaching and learning are generally of high quality, preparing students well to meet the vocational demands of the land-based industries. Well-designed courses, such as those in equestrian studies and small animal care, develop skills and personal qualities which are sought by employers. The college has a well-managed resource base in terms of accommodation, equipment and staffing and the estate is effectively operated as an educational resource. Both on the estate and throughout the institution, there is a responsiveness to changes in land-based industries and a move towards diversification and growth. Strong links exist with other education providers and a range of land-based industries. Residential students are provided with caring support. The college manages change effectively, helped by the flexible attitudes of the staff. Management information systems and quality assurance procedures require further development. In addition, there are weaknesses in college-wide learner support and in some aspects of admissions procedures and guidance. A few courses have poor retention and success rates. If students' and employers' needs are to be better satisfied, the college should increase the flexibility of the curriculum and develop a clearer focus for its market research.

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

Aspects of cross-college provision	Grade
Responsiveness and range of provision	2
Governance and management	2
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	3
Quality assurance	3
Resources: staffing	1
equipment/learning resources	2
accommodation	1

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Information technology	2	Construction	2
Agriculture	2	Business & management	2
Horticulture	3	Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	2
Equestrian studies	1		

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INTRODUCTION

1 Moulton College was inspected between March and May 1994. Forty-eight inspector days were used during this period for the inspection of specialist subjects and aspects of cross college provision. A lay inspector joined the team for two days to examine progress on the college charter. In all, inspectors visited 79 classes, examined samples of students' work and held discussions with staff, students, college governors, representatives from local schools and colleges, employers, the development officer from the Northamptonshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and an officer from the farming and wildlife advisory group.

2 The inspection was carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines set out in Council Circular 93/28. The framework describes a four-year inspection cycle. When this cycle becomes fully established, colleges will have the opportunity to respond to the findings of earlier inspection visits before their quadrennial inspection and the subsequent published report. As the inspection of Moulton College occurred early in the cycle, the opportunity for such a response was not available.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

3 Moulton College, formerly the Northamptonshire College of Agriculture, is situated in the village of Moulton, five miles north of Northampton. Established in 1921, the college is now building upon its long tradition with a view to becoming the regional centre of excellence for the land-based and construction industries. More than 80 per cent of the college's full-time students are Northamptonshire residents and many travel to Moulton daily by college transport. Several of the neighbouring counties to the south and east have little or no specialist full-time further education provision for the land-based industries and Moulton is actively marketing its programmes in these counties.

4 The main college site has a range of teaching, recreational and residential facilities. Adjoining the main site is the 370 hectare college farm, an equestrian centre and commercial horticulture unit. A further 68 hectares were added to the farmed area on a tenancy basis in 1990. The estate provides a teaching and training centre for college students in agriculture, equestrian, horticulture, floristry, engineering and other rural activities. With total sales approaching £1 million per annum, the estate also provides farm, horticulture, retailing and dairy processing businesses. This is particularly valuable for students on courses which include a management element. As part of a rationalisation of local provision, further education construction training was transferred from Nene College to Moulton in September 1993.

5 Though the farms serve an educational need, they are managed commercially and attention is paid to ensuring that all units perform to commercial standards. The college is a recognised centre for conferences, seminars and short courses arranged for local and regional producers both by the college itself and the many commercial organisations which

service the relevant industries. Residential lettings for schools, special needs, Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) organisers and youth and tourism sectors of the holiday market are being encouraged. The college operates a brokerage and managing agency for the administration of traineeships in agriculture, horticulture, floristry, building studies and small animal care. It currently caters for some 20 students following the TEC-funded 'learning for work' scheme in a range of subject areas.

6 The college has a full-time equivalent staff of 55 teachers and 66 support staff. A staff profile expressed as full-time equivalents is shown in figure 1. At the time of the inspection there were 2,406 students on roll. Of these, 432 were full-time students, 1,122 were part-time vocational students and 852 were students following non-vocational adult education classes. The college offers both full-time and part-time courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Enrolments by age and level of study are shown in figures 2 and 3. Full-time equivalent enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figure 4. Since 1989, the college's full-time equivalent student numbers have increased more than four-fold. Of those full-time students who have withdrawn from teaching programmes during this academic year, approximately 50 per cent have withdrawn for finance-related reasons. No new discretionary awards are being offered within the county. The college is modifying its course structures to try to ensure that land-based students are not debarred from attending on financial grounds. The college has the benefit of a trust fund, endowed by the Harrison family in the 1930s which provides an annual income from which a number of student bursaries are granted annually.

7 The mission of the college is to become the centre of excellence for education and training for the land-based and construction industries by providing relevant cost-effective vocational, non-vocational and adult education for everyone over the statutory school-leaving age who requires it, and, in co-operation with schools, for young people in the final years of compulsory education. The objectives of the college over the next four years include providing specialist courses for United Kingdom, other European and overseas residents; providing a suitable learning environment for students of both sexes with varying abilities and interests; meeting the needs of both employers and employees; providing the opportunity for each student to reach his or her own optimum educational and personal development potential; helping the community to enjoy their leisure time; maximising efficiency of provision and developing commercial activity; maintaining and improving the quality of education and associated services; and reviewing and developing marketing and publicity procedures.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

8 The college is growing rapidly. It achieved a 27 per cent growth in

enrolments between 1992 and 1993. Initial figures for 1993–94 indicate the college has exceeded its target growth by an additional 18 per cent. The college intends to expand by over 20 per cent a year for the next three years as a means both of increasing the choice available to students and of reducing unit costs. Enhanced marketing has doubled the number of applications to full-time courses compared with those which had been received at an equivalent stage in 1993.

9 The National Targets for Education and Training have had an impact on strategic planning and staff show an awareness of national issues. There is effective liaison with the TEC, both at strategic and operational levels, and strong links with the Construction Industry Training Board. The head of the construction division is well informed about training issues and, in particular, the need to compensate for the decline in traditional intakes through the provision of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and the introduction of General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs), to start from September 1994.

10 Moulton College has very positive links with other further and higher education providers in Northampton through its membership of a compact with Northampton College and Nene College. This initiative was launched in October 1993. Through the compact, the three major further and higher education providers in the town are seeking to develop a common strategic plan to rationalise provision in the area. This has begun with the transfer of further education work from Nene College to Northampton and Moulton Colleges. The aim of the compact is to maintain a comprehensive curriculum offer for the area which provides a variety of progression routes for students. Moulton College teaches the equine studies module of the Nene College combined studies degree. The two institutions are working together to provide a jointly-designed programme for a group of colleges in Hungary, including one agricultural college, which are coming together to form a university. The heads of the three Northampton colleges, together with a governor from each corporation, meet termly to develop strategies and work towards the development of a joint plan.

11 Moulton College has strong and productive links with local schools. It is an active member of the north Northamptonshire tertiary cluster and through this group seeks to co-operate with schools to maximise the opportunities for 16–18 year olds, without duplicating provision. From September 1994, the college will offer its own specialist General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) programme and through the cluster it will offer a range of GCE A levels in combination with GNVQ and NVQ subjects. The college also co-operates with local schools to deliver a national curriculum key stage 4 vocational course. Link programmes have been thoughtfully developed with local and special schools to include students with profound and multiple learning difficulties and this has led to the development of the full-time rural skills course. The programmes involve effective relationships with the local schools and with social workers. Northamptonshire Curriculum Industry Partnership and school

staff have been seconded to the college as part of their programme of staff development. Adult education classes are offered in partnership with Northamptonshire local education authority (LEA) and independently on a marginal cost basis.

12 There is close and effective liaison with the land-based industries through corporation members, who are able to represent the views of the comprehensive range of industries within the sector from which they come, and through representatives from industry on the advisory panels, which are well established in all programme areas except construction. It is intended that a construction advisory panel be set up during the academic year 1994–95. Through these links the college is able to respond to land-based industries' need for an increasingly skilled and flexible workforce. The college has been responsive in supporting the trends within the agricultural industry towards diversification, greater mechanisation and new technology. Such innovations as the outdoor pig unit and organic farming unit are examples of the college's swift response to industrial needs. In addition, and as a further response to changing patterns of work, business and management studies at Moulton College are not restricted to a particular division but included in various courses across the college. The only discrete business course is the GNVQ in business with additional equine management. Another example of diversification in response to industrial change is the provision for small animal care. The college has established good links with the small animal industry in Northamptonshire and there has been effective consultation with subject advisory group members, such as company veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and retail units, on the design of existing and future course provision. There are some 187 commercial small animal enterprises in Northamptonshire. The small animal care courses recruit strongly and provide an effective route into employment.

13 There has been poor recruitment to some courses in horticulture. The college has conducted a limited amount of market research to establish the needs of the industry in the region. Although the advertising and promotional material is attractive and well written, its focus and audience require clarification. There is evidence of some effective linkage between horticultural provision and industry, such as the delivery of courses to staff from the in-store garden centres of a national superstore chain. This good practice should be built on and shared across the division.

14 For students wanting a career in equine studies and horse management, there is a good range of full-time opportunities catering for students with different academic achievements and practical experience. The college has a good reputation within the industry and the availability of British Horse Society qualifications as a course option increases students' routes for progression.

15 The college is expanding its links with the European Community through the training programme for the Euroform Project. There are frequent student exchanges between Moulton College and students in

countries throughout Europe, including Portugal, France and Holland. The college also has links with agricultural colleges in eastern Europe and the third world.

16 Within the county of Northamptonshire the college is seen as playing an important role in promoting the public image of the land-based industries. The college holds a series of annual events, which attract substantial numbers of people to the estate to enjoy such activities as lambing Sunday and the charity fun day. The college also hosts the regional office of the Farm and Wildlife Advisory Group which is an independent charity providing conservation advice. The group has a good working relationship with the college and makes a small contribution to college courses.

17 The college has a clearly-defined equal opportunities policy but there is little evidence of a programme of action to implement it. Students' course preferences generally reflect typical balances between men and women. Although some female students study construction and agriculture, there are few male students taking equine studies. Only a small number of the students from ethnic minority backgrounds attend courses other than construction. The college takes little initiative to attract groups traditionally under-represented in further education. The lack of flexibility in its curriculum structure is a barrier to the recruitment of those part-time students who require alternative forms of study and attendance.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

18 The governing body comprises 13 independent members, two co-opted members, a representative of the TEC, the principal and two staff members. There is no student representation on the governing body. The independent governors are mainly senior managers drawn from agriculture and construction-related industries. There is also representation from the legal profession and estate management.

19 The respective roles and responsibilities of the corporation board, principal and senior management team are clearly documented. The corporation board has agreed terms of reference and delegated powers for all its committees. The principal and senior management team have responsibility for recommending policies to the board and for seeing that they are implemented. All the college's policies have recently been reviewed, including those for health and safety, equal opportunities and staff recruitment. The role of the corporation board in approving policies and monitoring the performance of the college is facilitated by the college's committee structure. There are two governors on each college committee and the detailed knowledge they acquire is used to good effect in assisting the corporation board to deal efficiently with agenda items brought to it from other committees.

20 The college's unit of resource for 1992-93 was £3,262 per weighted full-time equivalent student. The median for agricultural colleges nationally was £3,587. Summaries of the college's income and expenditure

are shown in figures 5 and 6.

21 The board monitors the financial and resource management of the college through its finance and general purposes committee which receives regular financial summaries and oral reports. The variance in budget income and expenditure between successive years is used extensively by governors to monitor the financial state of the institution. The audit committee has developed an appropriate monitoring role: it receives, analyses and comments on internal audit plans and reports. To date, the board has not routinely reviewed the achievements of the college's students. A quality working group consisting of governors has recently been formed to develop a set of performance criteria which is intended to provide a strategic overview of this aspect of college performance. The board has not yet formally considered performance criteria against which it can monitor its own performance.

22 The college's management structure was revised at the beginning of 1993. The present structure consists of the senior management team, including three heads of division with a co-ordinating role for curriculum and financial matters across their divisions, eight subject managers with responsibility for co-ordinating the work of a number of courses in specific curriculum areas and course managers who deal with the operation of specific courses. The new structure operates effectively and all staff have job specifications. Line management responsibilities are clear and staff are kept informed of operational decisions. The college has achieved a successful integration of the construction department, which transferred from Nene College in 1993.

23 The annual planning cycle provides an opportunity for divisions to review objectives and set new curriculum and student enrolment targets. Staff at all levels in the college are involved in the consultation process associated with the development of the curriculum and divisional strategic plans.

24 A revised system of budget allocation based on a formula linked to full-time equivalent student numbers has been introduced into the college for the new academic year. In some divisions, responsibility for budgets has been extended to subject managers. The staff understand the strategy for internal financial allocation and, where staff are new to budgetary responsibilities, initial support is being provided. Responsibility for part-time staff budgets is now being devolved to divisional heads. Staff and other resources are efficiently deployed and managed. Performance indicators are used effectively to monitor resources and are evolving as management needs change. Comparisons are made between current indicators and past performance and variance is monitored. Enrolments are reviewed against targets and reports are regularly provided to the chair of governors.

25 There has been a planned development of the college computer management information system. A system manager provides the expertise that enables the college to produce reports to meet the external

demands for information and internal management requirements. Developments currently taking place include the staff information record, to meet FEFC requirements. Financial packages are compatible with the student and resources system enabling performance indicators to be produced which combine information for students and financial information. The system has the potential to offer further assistance to teaching staff. It does not currently support statistical information requirements at all levels across the institution. Retention rates and student achievements are recorded on the computer system but student destinations are kept separately.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

26 The quality of college publicity is good. A wide range of leaflets and booklets backed by press advertising, locally and nationally, maintains a high public profile for the college, and particularly for its specialist courses. The college has invested in equipment display and attends most regional agricultural and equine shows. A commercially-run farm shop, horticultural centre and ice cream business, all with a reputation for quality create a positive image and extend the college's marketing activities. The college's enquiries office for personal callers is not well situated and the service it offers would be strengthened if professional advice were more readily available.

27 Regular and comprehensive links with pupils at secondary schools, particularly those in the last two years of schooling, make them aware of the opportunities which Moulton College can offer. Apart from their attendance at over 30 careers conventions and parents evenings within the last year, staff also make frequent liaison visits to schools. School pupils of all ability ranges regularly visit the college. Taster courses and farm visits for school pupils are regular features and taster courses for adult students are provided during adult learners week. The horticulture division has formed an imaginative link with the school sector through its compact with a Buckinghamshire school to work on the development of their grounds. Students from the college also work with the pupils. The local TEC acknowledges the success which the college has achieved with school pupils with learning difficulties, on link courses which the TEC partly funded.

28 Systems are in place to deal efficiently with written applications and telephone enquiries. Careers officers and teachers are regularly briefed on the study opportunities offered by the college in order to provide pre-entry advice for full-time school leavers. An appeals procedure is in place for students who feel that their application has been handled unfairly. There is no college-wide structure for the accreditation of prior learning at entry. Few staff have assessor award qualifications and this prevents the systematic implementation of accreditation of prior learning on NVQ programmes.

29 Students receive an effective induction. The programme is supported by booklets which outline programme structures, assessments, college services and appeals procedures. An initial diagnostic assessment is taken by all full-time students, though insufficient use is made of the results in providing effective individual support programmes where it would be appropriate. The college tutorial system is well managed. There is sound use of individual action plans to assist students' learning. Students are aware of the specialist help available in personal and careers counselling. The support and welfare services available to residential students are good. Residential staff are committed and considerate to the needs of students of all ages. Leisure and recreational facilities are adequate. Childcare provision has been reviewed and new facilities will be available from September 1994.

30 Learning support across the college is weak. Specialist additional support in basic skills is provided at a minimum level, but within an inadequate resource base. The liberal entry policy for new GNVQ courses necessitates comprehensive core skill support which is, as yet, not available.

31 Careers advice is provided in tutorials and through specialist careers counselling provided by the local education authority careers service. No formal careers education programme is in place. Careers resources are inadequate and not easily available to students with the exception of some specific land-based resources. The college has a good record in enabling students to move into employment from specialist courses, especially those in equestrianism and small animal care.

32 There is a college policy that all full-time students should leave with a record of achievement. The record of achievement is well developed on youth training and training credit schemes but this system is not implemented for all full-time students. Very few final-year students had begun work on a record of achievement at the time of the inspection. However, students receive progress reports, to which they contribute, three times a year. Attendance is effectively monitored. Systems are in place for following up full-time student absences, but there are no college-wide procedures in place for part-time students, except within youth training and training credit schemes. For a mainly specialist college with substantial residential provision which attracts students from a wide geographical area, the phased withdrawal of discretionary awards by some local authorities could significantly reduce full-time recruitment.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

33 The following table summarises the grades given to the teaching sessions inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
NVQ		5	10	1	1	0	17
GNVQ		0	1	0	0	0	1
Other		16	32	12	1	0	61
Total		21	43	13	2	0	79

34 Over 80 per cent of the sessions inspected had strengths which clearly outweighed weaknesses. Twenty-seven per cent of sessions were graded 1.

35 In agriculture, teachers employed a wide range of teaching methods including practicals, assignments, classwork exercises, and tutorials. Most lessons were carefully prepared, set in the context of previous work, presented enthusiastically and pitched at an appropriate level. Frequent opportunities were taken to relate theory to practical experience on the farms and in countryside management. In the majority of sessions, the teaching was well structured and the variety of activities held students' interest. Assessments were well designed and there were useful mechanisms for assessing students' practical abilities and personal skills on practical work on the college farm. Active steps were taken to elicit students' opinions through questioning and in group tutorials. In countryside management the timetable arrangements for the machinery class were changed in response to students' views.

36 On the vocational courses in small animal care attention was given to the provision of specific industry-related elements. The teaching provided an appropriate emphasis on health and safety, employment legislation and the management and care of a diverse range of small animals. There was effective coverage of legal and ethical issues such as the Dangerous Dogs Act, and the use of animals in medical and cosmetic research. There was an excellent rapport and lively interaction between staff and students, which contributed much to the students' development of personal confidence and communication skills.

37 Staff teaching on construction sessions displayed sound technical and up-to-date knowledge of their subject, which was frequently linked to the theory of other related subject areas and relevant site practice. With few exceptions, students were complimentary about the opportunities provided for tutorial support and about the feedback on their progress provided by tutors. Staff maintained comprehensive records of students' progress, particularly in craft areas. In all construction programmes, both full-time and part-time students were assisted to develop individual action plans.

38 In equine studies, the teachers were knowledgeable and experienced. There was a high standard of teaching in the practical riding classes; the work was well structured, and the teachers used their knowledge of

individual students' ability to develop their skills and confidence. Routine stable duties provided good opportunities for assessing and developing students' technical and personal qualities. However, assignment briefs were of variable quality; often they were insufficiently specific about expected outcomes, or the weighting given to particular assessment criteria.

39 In horticulture, most teaching was closely related to relevant commercial contexts. In some instances the standard of the teaching was poor: lesson plans were insufficiently specific in terms of method; some groups were poorly managed, and there was insufficient differentiation of activities to cater for the wide ability range of the students. Insufficient emphasis was placed on developing students' study skills. There was also inadequate attention to the development of practical skills, particularly hard landscaping. In contrast, design skills were being developed well in floristry and landscape design.

40 In business studies, appropriate materials, assignments and exercises were related to the students' major interest or specialism alongside the development of business skills. There was a strong emphasis on the development of core skills.

41 Information technology sessions on the various programmes were coherent, well structured and relevant, and students worked with high-quality resource material. In a few sessions where students worked independently at their own rate, the tasks were too easy for some.

42 Certain weaknesses in teaching and learning were common to several areas. Some of the individual assignments lacked specific criteria to help students to pitch their work at an appropriate level and to enable them to see how they might develop further. The quality of teachers' comments on students' written work was inconsistent. Classroom teaching sometimes lacked variety and there were a few examples of students spending excessive amounts of time copying notes, which were not well ordered and of limited value for reference or revision. The implementation of individual students' action plans, including the setting of short-term targets and the monitoring of performance against those targets, was haphazard.

43 Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities consisted of an extensive range of part-time courses and one full-time course. Staff have high expectations of the students. Students felt that they had positive relationships with tutors and that they were achieving process. Students on the rural skills course had their individual learning plans reviewed regularly. Generally, however, the assessment of students' learning difficulties is not sufficiently thorough. A more formal system is required to ensure that all students' needs are diagnosed so that appropriate support can be provided. The use of experienced vocational staff to teach those with learning difficulties is helpful but there is an urgent need for more staff development in relation to learning difficulty and associated classroom management.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

44 Students generally enjoy their studies, are highly motivated and speak enthusiastically about their courses. Only a small minority of students display any lack of enthusiasm. The majority of students are developing skills, knowledge and understanding appropriate to their levels of study. Students' responses to internal assessments vary but are generally within the range required by the assessment criteria. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities on the rural skills course were not able to gain accreditation for their work if they failed to achieve the standards required for NVQ foundation level. In most areas, particularly small animal care, assignments are well researched, well presented and of a high standard.

45 Group working, information technology and study skills are particularly well developed across a range of courses. Students on a national certificate in agriculture were able to analyse questionnaire responses in groups, arrive at conclusions, then analyse findings and represent them graphically using computers. There were many examples where communication skills, including oral presentation skills, were of a high standard relative to the level of the course. The standard of mathematics generally meets course requirements but algebra causes problems and there are limited materials to support students with difficulties in this area.

46 In 1992-93, 78 per cent of intermediate level diploma students and all advanced diploma students were successful in gaining their target qualifications. All part-time students undertaking NVQs were successful in level 1 awards and 80 per cent gained level 2 awards. Value-added ratings are not currently used to measure achievement.

47 In 1992-93, some 85 per cent of all full-time final year students completed their course and undertook the final examination or assessment. There were variations in completion rates on particular courses. Only 67 per cent of students who originally enrolled on the first diploma in small animal care took the final assessment. On the advanced national certificate in agriculture the figure was 80 per cent. On the national certificate in horticulture, only 65 per cent of completing students were successful. On national certificates in agriculture the figure was 75 per cent.

48 In January 1994, 54 per cent of students who left at the end of the 1992-93 academic year with an intermediate vocational diploma or NVQ level 2 went on to another further education course. Thirty-seven per cent entered employment. Students leaving with an advanced diploma or NVQ 3 did not all proceed into work or education immediately: 53 per cent entered employment, 13 per cent progressed to other further education courses and 7 per cent went on to higher education. The destinations of all full-time students in 1992-93 were; higher education 2 per cent, further education 38 per cent, employment 44 per cent and other 16 per cent.

49 In February 1994, there were 355 full-time students attending the college compared with 413 enrolments in September 1993. This represents a 14 per cent drop-out rate. By May 1994, the number of enrolments had risen to 372, with full-time students recruited from adult programmes. This gives an improved position, but does not disguise a retention rate on original enrolments of 75 per cent in 1992-93 and 86 per cent in 1993-94. In 1992-93, follow-up questionnaires showed a variety of reasons for drop-out in the previous year, including financial and personal problems, employment or dissatisfaction with the course.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

50 The college has made a positive response to the Charter for Further Education and a working group has been established to prepare the college's own charter by the end of July 1994. Many policies and procedures which will be incorporated in the charter are already in place, but the working group will have to consider additional statements on a number of key areas of commitment if the college charter is to fully reflect the national charter. Staff within the college are generally aware of the content of the national charter.

51 There is an overall policy on quality and its assurance which was recently approved by the governing body and the academic board. Implementation is at a very early stage, but there is a general acceptance of the need to undertake a strategy for quality monitoring and enhancement.

52 The strategy for quality monitoring is designed in such a way that it takes account of college requirements and those of examining and validating bodies, employers and the TEC. A series of subject advisory panels has been developed, building on the previous good practice of advisory groups. The contribution of these panels to the monitoring of quality indicators is at an early stage of development and their structure and attendance pattern is variable across subject areas.

53 A series of performance indicators have been identified which will be used to measure performance against national, local and college targets. These indicators are divided according to area of activity. Initially, key indicators in each area have been chosen for immediate attention. The information underpinning many of these indicators is already being collected, but there are no common formats for the institution as a whole and the college is addressing this issue. The governing body has yet to receive performance indicator data on a regular basis. The college management information system is not currently effective in assisting the quality assurance system. Computer hardware and input problems need to be overcome in order to provide the proposed range of performance indicators.

54 The current system for course review and evaluation is being developed to monitor courses more effectively. Student evaluation questionnaires are administered three times a year and there is a system

of student review meetings. Course team review meetings are held for each of the college's courses. There is evidence of positive action resulting from the review process, but responses have not been consistent. In some subject areas the course review system is poorly developed. The problems of standardisation and implementation are currently being addressed and a uniform course evaluation procedure is being introduced. Not all staff are equally aware of the developments taking place in respect of quality assurance.

55 Final course evaluation reports, currently produced at the course team level, are variable in quality and content. The new system, which is being introduced gradually during the current academic year, is intended to ensure that the reports have a common format and contain a set of standard performance indicators and a summary of evaluative comments.

56 The college has a linked programme of staff appraisal and staff development. The staff-appraisal scheme focuses clearly on individual staff development requirements. The consultation is carried out by trained appraisers, usually the line manager, and includes self-appraisal and target setting. Teaching staff should all have completed their first appraisal by the end of the current academic year when an evaluation of the scheme will be undertaken. Non-teaching staff were later in starting their appraisals and the process will not be completed during this academic year. There is no formal element of classroom observation included in the appraisal scheme, nor is it planned as part of the college's new quality assurance system.

57 The staff-development policy and outline plan are linked to the college's strategic plan. The college has made a commitment to the Investors in People programme and is currently responding to an action plan in preparation for formal assessment for the standard. Eventually the outcomes of appraisal will be incorporated into the system for decisions about staff-development priorities. Future action plans will need more detail and refinement if they are to enable detailed monitoring against the strategic plan and the outcomes of appraisal. Certain key areas of staff development have not been identified by the current system, particularly training for handling learning difficulties and learner support.

58 The staff-development programme includes a half-day induction session for new staff which concentrates on familiarisation with the college, its policies and procedures. This is followed by induction in the relevant programme area. There is no set programme for continuing induction. Currently a pack of material is provided to new staff. It is intended to replace this with a staff handbook. Non-teaching staff do not have a formal induction. An evaluation of induction takes place and results indicate a general satisfaction with arrangements. Part-time staff have the opportunity to participate in staff development and appraisal, and there are arrangements for payment for attendance at course team meetings.

RESOURCES

Staffing

59 There have been considerable changes to the staffing of the college in recent years. Until five or six years ago the staff were predominantly specialists in agriculture. A programme of early retirement, new recruitment and job changes has enabled the college to diversify its range of courses and to match them with appropriate staff. Currently staff are well qualified to teach the college's courses and have relevant industrial experience. Approximately one-quarter of the full-time staff have degrees and three-quarters have a teaching qualification. However, there are some key areas where teacher training and staff development are required. Steps are being taken to address this. The college plans to increase the overall proportion of graduates and trained teachers. The college was restructured in 1993 to form three teaching divisions within which subject areas are located. The number of administrative staff has been increased recently to take on the additional responsibilities associated with incorporation. There is an effective level of technical support.

60 A new system has been introduced to plan the level of staffing in the college and staff deployment. This is based on projected full-time equivalent student numbers by course and by subject area within courses. A careful check is kept on lecturers' teaching hours. Little remission from teaching duties is provided. The personnel committee keeps an overview of the college's staffing establishment and the need for any changes. Careful calculation enables areas of over and under capacity to be identified and the maintenance of efficient levels of staff utilisation.

Equipment/learning resources

61 In all programme areas, the provision of specialist equipment is good. The new information technology suite has been well equipped with 28 computers, and there are now 44 computers available to students. Access to these is good: the computer suite is open until 21.00 hours on weekdays and from 09.00 to 12.00 hours on Saturdays. All classrooms are effectively equipped with overhead projectors, screens and writing boards. A member of the teaching staff has some time remitted from teaching to act as a manager for audio-visual aids and he is assisted by a part-time technician. An adequate budget is provided to equip classrooms and to provide staff with effective access to videotape recorders and televisions, slide projectors, photographic facilities and other audio-visual equipment and materials. Staff are able to request off-air video recording and have good access to photocopying facilities.

62 The college library has significant weaknesses. The book stock of 6,500 books, many of which are out of date, is inadequate to meet the needs of the college. The shortage of stock has been aggravated by a high level of pilfering. A security system has now been installed. Other weaknesses are the shortage of study spaces and the arrangement of the library on two floors. The two floors reduce the effectiveness with which

the library staff can be utilised. The office accommodation in the library is extremely cramped and does not provide a satisfactory working environment for the library staff. The college wishes to ensure that the library meets the growing demands made upon it by an expanding and diversifying student population. College policy encourages increased self-study by students and significant extra resources are being provided to augment the book stock. An extension of the library is one of the priority areas for capital development in 1995-96. The strengths of the library include good accessibility, a wide range of periodicals, and effective links with teaching staff.

Accommodation

63 The college manages its accommodation resources effectively. A significant proportion of the available teaching space, some 75 per cent, consists of mobile classrooms and almost all the remainder has been converted from former use, including farm buildings. The college campus is clean, tidy and well signposted and the college grounds are well maintained. The growing demand for accommodation for administrative staff has been met by converting former staff flats. This new accommodation is satisfactory though cramped. Office accommodation for teaching staff provides adequate working space and storage facilities.

64 The specialist accommodation is of a high standard. There is, for example, an excellent new purpose-built craft workshop for construction. The accommodation for animal care is good and there are two new well-designed science laboratories. A recent refurbishment has provided light, airy accommodation for information technology. Access to buildings for students with restricted mobility is generally good. There are ramps in many areas and chairlifts to the teaching kitchen and to the first floor of the block which holds the library and information technology suite.

65 There are procedures in place to ensure that repairs are rapidly carried out and the college has a planned programme of maintenance. In the current financial year, the maintenance programme has been extensive and has included the redecoration and refurbishment of some of the many mobile classrooms. The furniture in some classrooms is old and is showing considerable signs of wear.

66 The college monitors the utilisation of its teaching spaces. Procedures for the formulation and implementation of an accommodation strategy have involved close consultation with the staff in the specialist divisions, the corporation and the senior management, and professional advice from a company of architects and surveyors. In 1993, some £800,000 was spent by the college in the development of new accommodation. Another large development programme is planned this year which includes the construction of extended teaching facilities at Stud Farm, extensions to the small animal care unit and an extension to the library. The college displays an impressive capacity to provide new and converted accommodation to meet its changing needs.

67 The quality of student residential accommodation is adequate. The college provides residential accommodation for students in three hostel blocks. The original number of 100 bed spaces was increased in the 1993–4 academic year by converting single rooms to twin rooms. This has spread the fixed costs over a larger number of students, raised income levels and increased residential capacity to cope with the growing student enrolment at the college. However, the newly converted twin rooms are cramped and have very limited storage and study space. Plans are in hand to provide a total of 240 bed spaces through further conversion to twin rooms. Adequate social and recreational facilities are provided. An appeal has been launched by the college governors to raise funds for the erection of a much-needed sports and social club.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

68 The college is making good progress towards achieving its aims. Particular strengths of the provision inspected are:

- the skills and personal qualities developed by the majority of students which are sought by employers in land-based industries
- the generally high quality of teaching
- the strong links with other education providers and land-based industries
- the effective operation of the college estate as an educational resource
- responsiveness to changes in land-based industries
- well-managed accommodation, equipment and staffing
- effective management of change, assisted by the flexible attitudes of staff
- caring support for residential students
- the rate of growth and diversification.

69 If it is to maintain and improve the quality of its provision and the standards of achievement of its students, the college should address the following areas:

- effective implementation of the quality assurance policy
- increasing the flexibility of the curriculum to respond to students' needs
- improvement of learner support
- improvements in some aspects of admissions procedures and guidance
- the focusing of market research to ensure greater responsiveness
- improvement of retention rates and success rates on a few courses
- continuing development of the college management information system.

FIGURES

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

 - 2 Percentage enrolments by age (1993–94)

 - 3 Full-time enrolments by level of study (1993–94)

 - 4 Enrolments expressed as full-time equivalents by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1993–94)

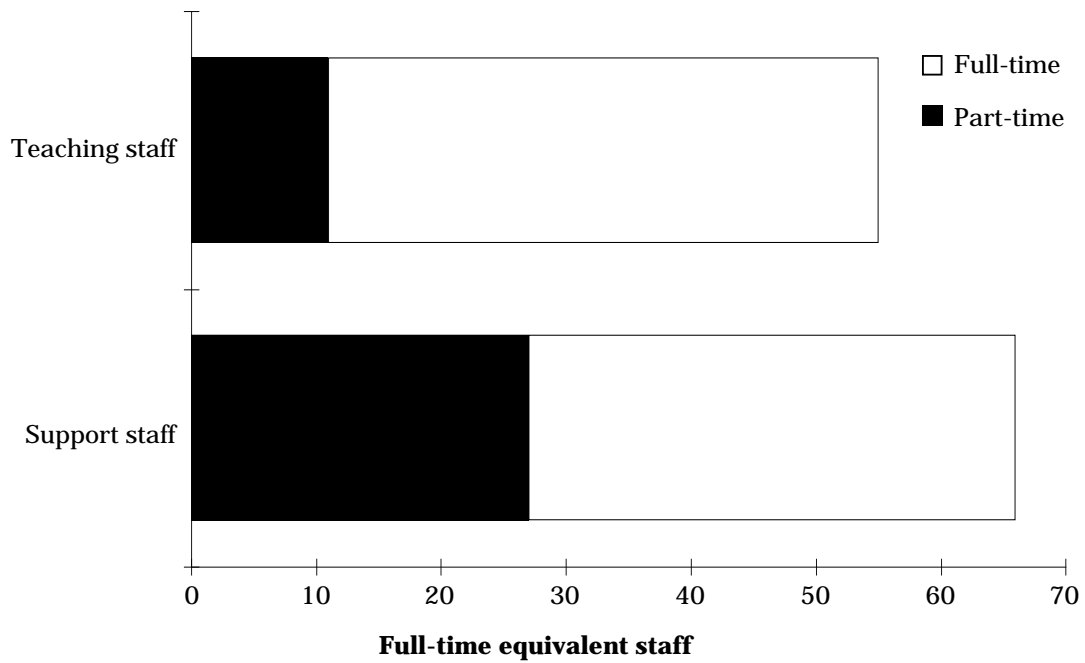
 - 5 Recurrent income (16 months to July 1994)

 - 6 Estimated expenditure (16 months to July 1994)

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

Figure 1

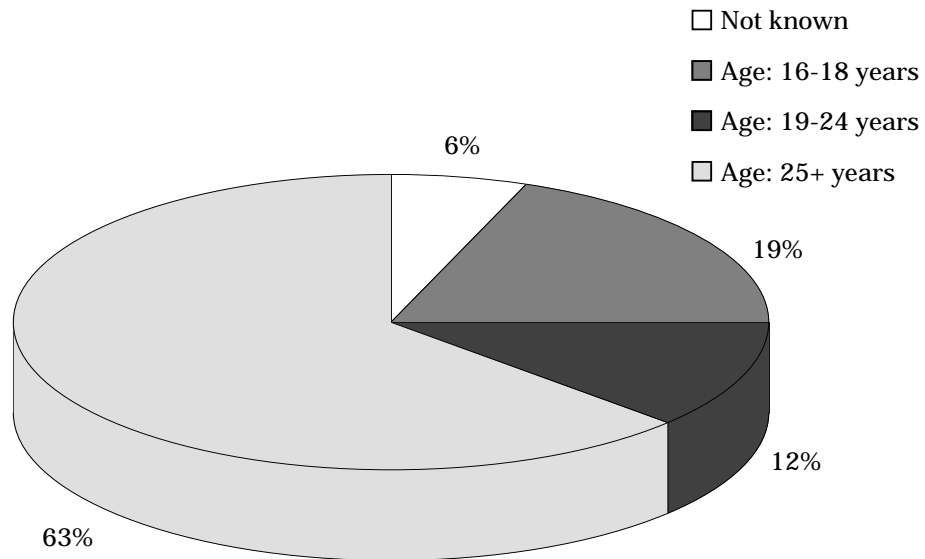
Moulton College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1993-94)



Full-time equivalent staff: 121

Figure 2

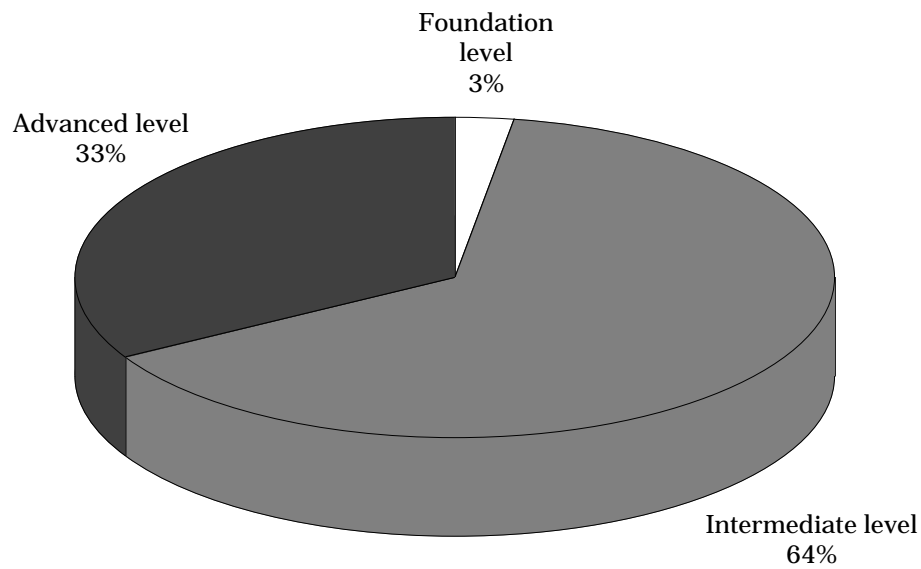
Moulton College: percentage enrolments by age (1993-94)



Enrolments: 2,406

Figure 3

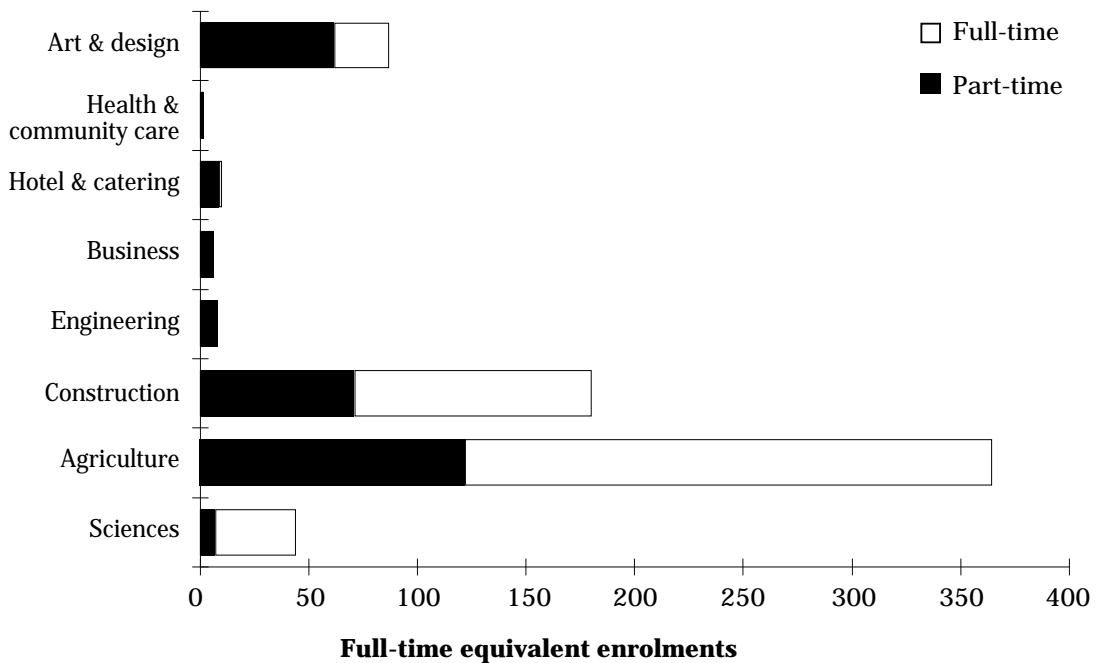
Moulton College: full-time enrolments by level of study (1993-94)



Full-time enrolments: 432

Figure 4

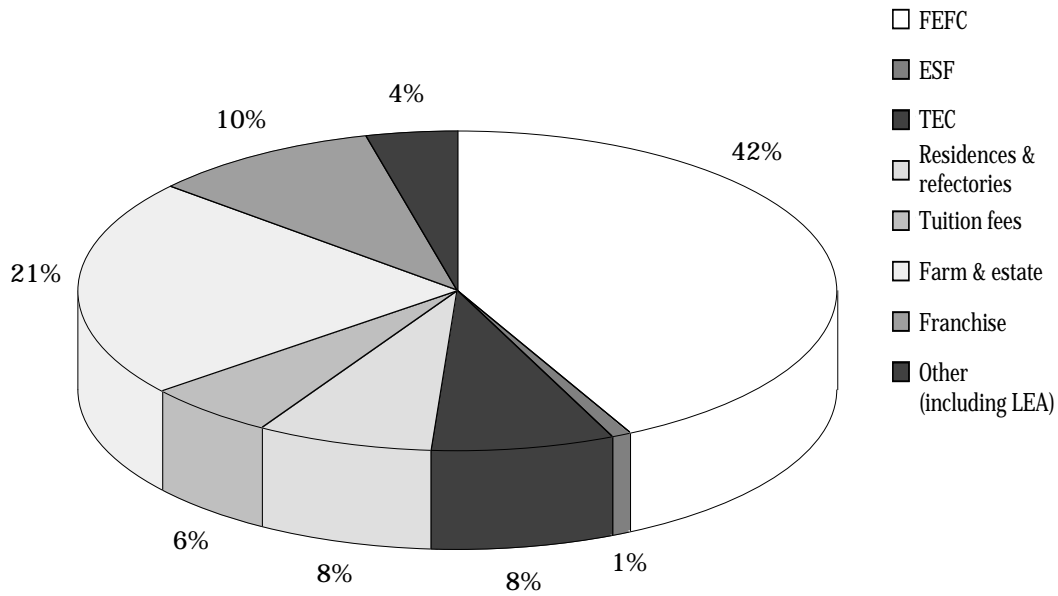
Moulton College: enrolments expressed as full-time equivalents by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1993-94)



Full-time equivalent enrolments: 703

Figure 5

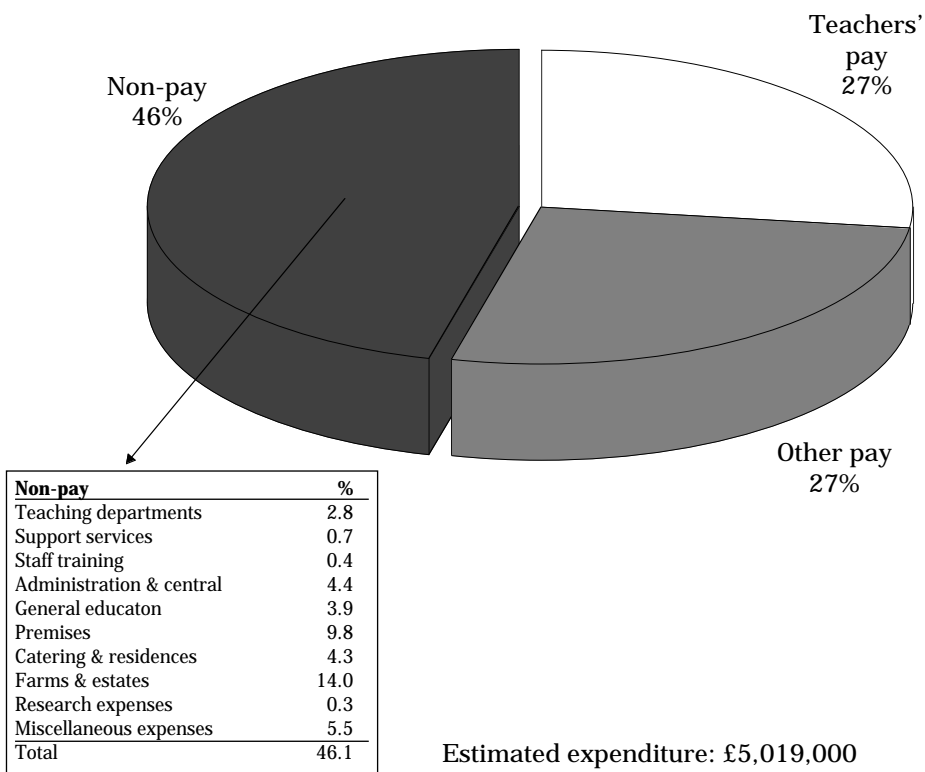
Moulton College: estimated income (16 months to July 1994)



Estimated income: £5,156,000

Figure 6

Moulton College: estimated expenditure (16 months to July 1994)



Estimated expenditure: £5,019,000

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