

**REPORT  
FROM THE  
INSPECTORATE**

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# **Nelson and Colne College**

**August 1996**

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**THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL**

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

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

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# CONTENTS

	<b>Paragraph</b>
Summary	
Introduction	1
The college and its aims	3
Responsiveness and range of provision	9
Governance and management	18
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	28
Teaching and the promotion of learning	38
Students' achievements	51
Quality assurance	63
Resources	70
Conclusions and issues	83
Figures	

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## **GRADE DESCRIPTORS**

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

*The descriptors for the grades are:*

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

*By June 1995, some 208 college inspections had been completed. The grade profiles for aspects of cross-college provision and programme areas for the 208 colleges are shown in the following table.*

### **College grade profiles 1993-95**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Inspection grades</b>				
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Programme area	9%	60%	28%	3%	<1%
Cross-college provision	13%	51%	31%	5%	<1%
Overall	11%	56%	29%	4%	<1%

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# FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 101/96

**NELSON AND COLNE COLLEGE**

**NORTH WEST REGION**

**Inspected April 1995-May 1996**

## Summary

Nelson and Colne College is a successful tertiary college in East Lancashire. It meets many of the educational needs of its community and is becoming more responsive to local training needs. It works well with the local Asian community. Governance and management are strong. Staff are well qualified; they have relevant educational and industrial experience and plenty of opportunities for professional development. Arrangements for the recruitment, support and guidance of students are mainly effective. The college has well-developed, productive links with partner schools. Standards of teaching are generally high. Students work hard and make sound progress. Examination results are good. The college should: increase the range of programmes at foundation level; develop flexible arrangements which allow students more choice about how and when they study; improve arrangements for additional learning support; ensure that all sections of the college apply quality assurance procedures rigorously; improve the quality of equipment and accommodation where necessary; and generally improve the use of accommodation.

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

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

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Science	2	Art and design	2
Engineering	3	Humanities	2
Business	2	Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	3
Catering and leisure	1	Basic education	3
Health and care	2		

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## **INTRODUCTION**

1 The inspection of Nelson and Colne College took place in four stages in 1995-96. Business studies was inspected in April 1995, enrolment and induction in August 1995, the remaining programme areas in February 1996 and aspects of cross-college provision in the last week of April 1996. The inspection took 89 working days.

2 Inspectors visited 240 lessons and some tutorials. They examined students' work and talked to staff and students. One inspector attended a full meeting of the corporation. Inspectors took careful account of the college's statement of purpose, its strategic plan, self-assessment report and charter as well as examining a range of other documents, reports and minutes provided by the college. They had meetings with parents, students, members of the board, local headteachers, employers and representatives from higher education, the careers service, the youth and community service, the 'Pendle Partnership', and the East Lancashire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC).

## **THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS**

3 The college was established in 1972 as Lancashire's first tertiary college. It is the only college for students over the age of 16 in the Pendle district of East Lancashire. In November 1995 it had 5,555 students on roll; 1,644 were studying full time and 3,911 part time. Twenty per cent of full-time students and 12 per cent of part-time students were of Asian heritage. The college also provides, on behalf of Lancashire County Council, non-vocational education for 778 adults in over 30 centres throughout Pendle. The college operates on two main sites, approximately two miles apart: the Reedyford site in Nelson and the Barrowford Road site on the outskirts of Colne. Both sites are close to the motorway. It has two small centres in Colne and leases space for its management unit at Gawthorpe Hall, a National Trust property in nearby Padiham. The college is systematically refurbishing its two main sites and moving out of one of its smaller centres in Colne.

4 Local competition for students is strong. Within a 12 mile radius of Nelson there are three other general further education or tertiary colleges and a sixth form college. Two 11 to 18 schools are within six miles. There is also a private training provider about a mile from the Nelson site. The college has nine partner schools in Pendle: seven are for 11 to 16 year olds and two are special schools for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) results for Pendle school leavers are below the national average. In 1995, 34 per cent gained five GCSEs at grades A to C, compared with the national average for England and Wales of 43 per cent. The proportion of 16 year olds who stayed on in education after the age of 16 increased from 63 per cent in 1992-93 to 66 per cent in 1993-94. The proportion of Pendle school leavers choosing Nelson and Colne College has increased from 48 per cent in 1994 to 52 per cent in 1995.

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5 The borough of Pendle is a mixture of textile towns and small villages surrounded by countryside which is dominated by the historic Pendle Hill. The college is one of the largest employers. Over half the workforce is employed in the manufacturing sector, compared with less than a quarter nationally, although traditional employment in textiles, heavy engineering and aerospace is declining. The next largest employer is the service industry, which accounts for 40 per cent of the workforce. In 1994, the unemployment rate for Pendle was 7.4 per cent, the same as for the whole of East Lancashire. However, in the Whitefield ward, 23 per cent of the male workforce is unemployed. Whitefield also has one of the highest rates of youth unemployment in Lancashire; 31 per cent of its 16 to 24 year olds are unemployed. The minority ethnic community, mainly of Pakistani origin, makes up over 10 per cent of the borough's population. This community suffers severely from high levels of unemployment.

6 The college manages the curriculum through four faculties: humanities, science and technology; creative arts; business and service industries; and continuing education. Each faculty is managed by an assistant principal supported by middle managers who have responsibility for specific areas of the curriculum. Another assistant principal has responsibility for finance, estates and the management information system.

7 Programmes of study for full-time and part-time students are available in all curriculum areas except construction. Most enrolments are in humanities and most students are on advanced level courses. Student numbers by age, by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3, respectively. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

8 The college motto is 'where quality and care add up to success'. Its statement of purpose commits it to:

- meeting the education and training needs of its community
- providing a high-quality, supportive and flexible learning environment
- anticipating and responding to change
- seeking to widen access for all.

#### **RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION**

9 Students have a good choice of courses at advanced and intermediate levels, but there are only three foundation level courses. Provision in engineering, beauty and some programmes in music and care is limited. At advanced level there are:

- 30 General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) subjects and six GCE advanced supplementary (AS) subjects
- six General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) or equivalent, and one National Vocational Qualification (NVQ).

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At intermediate level there are:

- 15 GCSE subjects
- eight GNVQs or equivalent, and four NVQs.

At foundation level there are:

- two GNVQs or equivalent, and one NVQ.

10 The college encourages adults to return to study. It also provides specifically for people from minority ethnic communities. Some examples of this community provision are:

- 47 open college programmes
- basic skills workshops which students can visit at times which suit them during the day or evening
- classes in English and mathematics for speakers of other languages
- classes for women only and men only
- lessons at home for individuals or groups unable to attend college.

The college provides well for students with a wide range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In catering, these students can progress from specially-designed programmes to full vocational programmes as their skills and confidence increase.

11 Flexible patterns of study have been slow to develop. The college's two learning resource centres are not organised in ways which encourage or help students to work on their own and programmes do not give students enough choice over where, when and how to study. The college recognises that it will have to address this lack of flexibility as it attracts more adult students and moves into work-based learning and assessment. A few students have taken advantage of the opportunities to accredit their prior learning which exists in catering, business, science and management training. An appropriate programme of staff development is in place to extend the understanding and use of accreditation of students' prior learning.

12 Links with higher education are improving, but are not yet fully developed. The college has formal links with eight institutions, seven of them local. Together with Lancaster University it is running courses in the community for 85 local unemployed adults of Asian heritage. For example, there are courses in: health studies for women, welfare rights for women and an introductory course in information technology. Successful students receive qualifications from the Open College of the North West. The college works with three other institutions to provide training for student teachers.

13 The college's marketing is professional and thorough. The marketing strategy is sound and well documented and closely aligned with the college's strategic plan. The five marketing staff have well-defined responsibilities. They conduct effective market research and use this to



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inform planning. More information is required on the needs of adult students. Publicity material is of a high standard. It presents a clear corporate image.

14 The college has well-developed, productive links with schools. An effective schools liaison team covers the college's nine partner schools in Pendle and works further afield in East Lancashire and North Yorkshire. The principal meets with headteachers regularly. The college is at present negotiating a 'service level agreement' with 15 schools to identify their requirements and to make sure it meets them. It has offered local primary and secondary schools the opportunity to share college facilities, skills and experience. The college is working with three local schools to develop GNVQs and has joint subject panels in English, mathematics and science.

15 The college works closely with its local community. It is a member of the Pendle Partnership which plays a large part in planning for the regeneration of the area. It has recently shared in the European aid that the partnership has received through the single regeneration budget and plans to use the money to offer services and training for small local firms. Opportunities remain for the college to improve the services it provides to local industry. Some college courses have better links with industry than others. The college works well with East Lancashire TEC and is active on committees and working groups. It has strong links with local Asian community groups. Three support staff for adults work in the community. The college is working with the local authority on a joint mental health project.

16 The college has extensive links in Europe. Students have taken part in exchange programmes with Holland, Germany and Belgium. Catering students undertake work experience in Portugal and France. Twelve GCE A level students of art and design, together with the senior architect of Pendle Borough Council, prepared design ideas for three buildings in Kutna Hora in the Czech Republic. Staff have exchanged with teachers from Spain, Italy, France, Portugal and Greece.

17 The college has a strong commitment to equality of opportunity. Its policy and code of conduct are clear. The principal chairs the committee for equal opportunities which meets twice each term. The committee considers issues relating to all staff and students and it has a realistic programme of activities. A representative from the committee sits on all staff recruitment and selection panels.

#### **GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

18 The college has experienced much change over the last year. A new principal took up post in September 1995 and a new deputy principal in November 1995. In January 1996, the corporation board saw one-third of its membership, including its chairman, retire from office or resign.

19 The board of corporation has 15 members. They have a breadth of experience and expertise. Their backgrounds are in accountancy, law,

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personnel and industrial management, medicine and the public services. The board includes one member from East Lancashire TEC, one from the borough council, the principal, and an elected staff governor. The deputy principal is clerk to the board. There is no student representative but the board holds a formal meeting with the student council three times a year. In looking for new members, the board's search committee analysed the college's requirements and drew up detailed specifications for candidates. One seat was still vacant at the time of the inspection.

20 Board members strongly support the college. They see the college as having an important role to play in ensuring a prosperous future for the local community. All governors take their duties seriously and are generous with their time. The more experienced ones are well briefed and well trained. Recently-appointed governors are taking part in an induction programme. All members are actively involved in the college's planning process. Each year they join senior staff to consider strategic priorities for the coming year. The board has a clear view of its role and supports senior managers. Members have strong formal links with the college and serve with staff on advisory groups and the college's panel for quality assurance. They also participate in educational and social events organised by the college. The board's main subcommittee, the policy and resources committee, meets monthly.

21 The college is well led. The new principal and her deputy were vice-principal and head of faculty, respectively, in the college before taking up their new jobs. Their knowledge and experience of the college has helped them adjust quickly to their new roles. This continuity has been reassuring for staff. The principal, deputy principal and other senior managers have successfully communicated to staff at all levels a clear and realistic vision of the way the college needs to develop. The senior management team consists of the principal, deputy principal and five assistant principals. Most of its members have worked together for some years and the level of trust and co-operation is high.

22 The board recently approved a new management structure. The number of academic faculties has been reduced from five to two and the management of services across the college has been strengthened by the creation of three cross-college units. Assistant principals have been given more responsibility for strategic management and middle managers have greater autonomy in the day-to-day management of the faculties. The college urgently needs a manager for the various forms of learning which involve students working on their own using resources specifically designed for this purpose. It has plans to appoint one shortly. Arrangements for section leadership have still to be finalised. Staff understand and welcome the new structure, but it still has to prove itself. Not all staff yet feel capable of meeting the demands of their new roles.

23 Channels of communication between managers and staff, and between sites, are effective. The senior management team has an open

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style of management. It meets formally once a week. The agenda is published and a clerk from outside the team takes detailed minutes. Within two days, managers receive copies of the minutes and are responsible for passing on to their staff the information and decisions recorded. The college has scheduled weekly meeting times to make sure that line managers meet their staff and that programme teams and sections come together regularly. Part-time staff are encouraged to attend meetings and many of them do. The staff bulletin is a useful source of general information.

24 The college's statement of purpose is challenging but realistic. Staff understand and support it, and it is reviewed annually. It translates into a strategic plan and operating statements which have precise targets. The targets reflect the college's priorities and are reviewed regularly. All staff have the chance to contribute to the plan and to the annual operating statement. There is a detailed planning calendar and the senior management team makes sure that deadlines are kept. Faculty plans relate closely to the strategic plan and operating statements and the principal checks three times a year that faculties are making progress towards achieving their targets. Many sections have their own informal plans, but there is no way of recording the precise contribution they make to meeting targets. The decisions arising from annual programme reviews are not formally adopted as part of faculty plans.

25 Staff are well informed about budgeting. The principal and assistant principal in charge of finance have run workshops to ensure that staff understand how income is derived and allocated. Rigorous central monitoring ensures that staff do not overspend. A few managers cost programmes but this has little influence on programme planning. Generally, managers of faculties and sections do not plan over the long-term to make sure that they buy and replace smaller items of equipment as required. This has led to significant gaps of equipment in some curriculum areas.

26 The college has no development plan for its management information system. Staff are now making greater use of information from the system and have confidence in its accuracy. Not everyone has easy access to it, and not all staff are fully trained to use it.

27 The college's average level of funding for 1995-96 is £15.74 per unit of activity. The median for further education and tertiary colleges is £17.84. The college's estimated income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are shown in figures 5 and 6. The Further Education Funding Council's (FEFC's) recurrent funding provides 65 per cent of the total income. The college did not meet its unit targets in 1994-95 but expects to do so in the current year.

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## **STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

28 The college helps school leavers to make a smooth transfer from school to college. Its admissions policy and procedures are clear and emphasise equality of opportunity. The college provides sessions in schools aimed at giving pupils a general understanding of further education and offering impartial advice. Pupils have opportunities to sample courses. They receive effective guidance on the standards required to enter different levels and types of programmes. The college's points score system, based on levels of achievement at GCSE, together with each course's 'person specification', help guide students onto the right courses. Careers teachers in schools have found the system particularly useful in advising pupils.

29 Guidance for adult students is available in college and in centres throughout the community. Bilingual staff are available to ensure that members of the Pakistani community receive information and advice. Community outreach workers provide guidance. Publicity documents are clear, and Urdu translations are provided.

30 Enrolment and induction were generally well organised. However, there were not enough teachers available to provide specialist information to people enquiring about specific courses. The college did not have a system for tracking all students from the point of their enquiry to enrolment. Many of the induction sessions helped students to feel welcome as well as introducing them to the work. However, evaluation forms completed by students show that only 41 per cent of GCE A level students 'felt there was a clear induction programme'. During induction, opportunities are provided for students to transfer to more suitable courses and, if necessary, to other colleges.

31 Most students receive valuable support whilst at the college. All full-time students have a personal tutor whom they meet for an hour each week. There are visiting speakers and a bank of materials to support the tutorial curriculum, for example, on topics such as health education. In each faculty, a senior tutor is responsible for making sure the system runs smoothly and tutors meet regularly to consider tutorial matters. Some GCE A level students feel the time spent in tutorials is wasted and mature students on care courses say that they do not have enough individual support. However, most full-time students find tutorials well structured and helpful. Part-time students do not have a formal tutorial system, although some courses provide good tutorial support. There is a student council to represent students' interests but it is not as influential or effective as it might be.

32 Students receive substantial help from central student services as well as from their tutors. The main student services are at the Nelson site and students make good use of these. Access in the evening is limited. Staff cannot always manage to see students at other sites but they make considerable efforts to do so. A chaplain is available for half a day a week. There is a personal counselling service.

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33 Students like the way in which individual action plans help them to set learning targets against which they can measure progress. Tutors review progress regularly. In addition, the college sets aside time for more formal reviews of targets and action plans. Students update their records of achievement throughout their course. Most curriculum areas monitor students' progress and attendance well. There is a strong emphasis on involving parents, where this is appropriate.

34 The college has a productive partnership with the local careers service. Careers officers carry out individual interviews with all students who need assistance and focus their attention particularly on those seeking jobs. Careers guidance is expected to be provided as part of the tutorial programme. This happens in most, but not all, cases. Support with applications to higher education is well organised. The college does not have a careers education policy but is working on one.

35 Students with physical disabilities have good access to specialist equipment. The college also employs additional specialist staff, though it has experienced occasional difficulties in finding people with appropriate qualifications. Dyslexic students, and those requiring additional language support, have adequate help.

36 Many students who need additional learning support do not receive it. The college systematically screened all full-time students for the first time this year to identify those who needed such support. It was unable to cope with all those it identified. About 50 full-time students have opted to join the workshops used by adult students in basic education and some subject areas run their own support sessions. However, not all the students who were offered additional help are attending the sessions arranged for them. The college is placing an emphasis on developing materials for each course which will allow students to get extra help within their chosen subject. Staff development for those providing additional learning support is a high priority.

37 The college provides a nursery with 20 places for children aged two and over at the Colne site and subsidises some of the places. Some students from the Nelson site use it, but for other students it is difficult to organise.

#### **TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING**

38 Teaching is generally strong. In 68 per cent of the 240 lessons observed, strengths clearly outweighed weaknesses. Ten per cent of lessons had weaknesses which clearly outweighed strengths. The average attendance at lessons was 83 per cent, excluding lessons in business studies which was inspected the year before when figures were not collected. The grades awarded for the teaching sessions inspected are shown in the following table.

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**Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study**

<b>Programmes</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Totals</b>
GCE AS/A level		22	32	15	2	0	71
GCSE		1	2	5	2	1	11
GNVQ		8	15	6	1	2	32
NVQ		12	17	8	0	0	37
Other vocational		8	15	5	1	0	29
Basic education		1	5	4	2	0	12
Other		14	12	10	10	2	48
<b>Total</b>		<b>66</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>240</b>

39 Science courses are well planned and well organised. Teachers prepare fully and teach effectively. They help students to understand the work, and maintain their interest by presenting topics in different ways. They set assignments regularly and assess them accurately. Working relationships are good and students receive extra help and support where necessary. In GCE A level programmes the development of basic skills is neglected. In mathematics and computing, teaching is sound but lacks variety. Teachers do not encourage students to learn for themselves. They use few learning aids apart from printed handouts. In both science and mathematics, teachers and students do not make enough use of information technology.

40 In engineering, schemes of work and lesson plans are thorough. Lessons are usually varied and students are attentive. Occasionally, students spend too much time copying from the board and taking dictated notes. Teachers link theory and practice well and demonstrate work with tools and machinery effectively. Most students work confidently and carefully and reach a good standard of practical competence. Sometimes students do not wear protective clothing in workshops. Teachers provide clear information on assignments, the skills to be assessed and the criteria to be used in assessment. Core skills are included in assessments. Most students receive helpful comments on their progress. Students and teachers make insufficient use of information technology.

41 Catering teachers set professional standards, and students produce work of high quality. Teachers plan thoroughly and lessons are imaginative. Instruction is clear, logical and well illustrated. Much work takes place in realistic working environments. Students receive job descriptions and job cards covering each practical activity. At the end of each session, the teacher and students discuss the tasks and students complete diaries which they use later as evidence of their learning. Students develop their information technology skills. Teachers regularly test students' understanding. Together with students they effectively agree targets for improvement and keep comprehensive records of students'

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progress. Students with learning difficulties receive extra support during practical sessions and are involved in the commercial running of the college's bistro.

42 In leisure, course planning and lesson preparation are thorough. Some teachers are adept at helping students to develop skills in oral communication and teamwork. In the better sessions they set exercises which helped students to analyse and reflect. For example, groups of students discussed which of the people, in danger of being drowned in a flooded cave, they would rescue. Each of the groups gave a brief report on their decisions. The whole class then joined in a general discussion on the difficulties of arriving at consensus. Students have well-organised work experience which helps them consolidate and apply their learning. Assignments are relevant and clear. Some of teachers' comments on assessed work are brief and unhelpful. Although students are developing core skills as part of their work in lessons, they often fail to take the opportunity to practise such skills, for example by wordprocessing their assignments.

43 Most business studies lessons are appropriately demanding. Students learn through practical tasks and group work as well from teachers' exposition. All students are encouraged to answer questions and take an active part in discussions. Teachers make good use of students' experience at work or on work placements to make effective links between theory and practice. They set work regularly and keep full records of students' progress. In some lessons, students are unsure of what they are expected to achieve by the end of the lesson. Opportunities for students to prove their competence in core skills are sometimes missed.

44 Work in health and community care and hairdressing and beauty is well planned and co-ordinated effectively. Most lessons are successful. In health and care, teachers help students to understand their work by presenting the topics in different ways and using teaching aids such as video recordings. They make good use of evidence from recent research and draw on students' personal experience and the experience they have gained on work placements. Most students take part in classroom discussion and are prepared to ask questions. They are encouraged to use information technology. In hair and beauty, visiting speakers, specialist courses and outside visits all help to broaden students' horizons. Real clients and well-designed salons provide students with commercial experience and the opportunity to work to professional standards. However, links between practical and theory sessions are sometimes unclear.

45 In art and design, theatre studies and music the teaching is well planned. Teachers successfully convey their enthusiasm for their subject. They design classroom activities which allow students to develop practical skills by working on their own and in groups. Students develop and use information technology skills. In theatre studies, students are allowed to experiment but they also receive careful direction. Aspects of work in

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art and design are fragmented and underdeveloped because of accommodation difficulties and an absence of specialist expertise. However, art students are confident in their work and many achieve high standards. The music foundation course is too difficult for some students.

46 In general humanities, social sciences and teacher education, teaching is usually of a high standard. Lessons are mostly well prepared and enjoyable. Students learn by problem solving and exchanging ideas and are prepared to ask questions and contribute to discussion. Teachers use a variety of aids in their lessons, including video recordings and overhead projectors. Handouts are of good quality and helpful. Some teachers use information technology effectively. Visiting speakers extend students' understanding of theory by contributing examples from their practical experience. Geography students' coursework is impressive; some of it includes thorough research and analysis. In teacher education, students are encouraged to practise the role of teacher whenever possible.

47 English and communications teaching varies in quality. Schemes of work are not properly developed. Some teachers give students the chance to ask questions and to exercise initiative; others do too much of the work themselves. GCSE students do not have enough lesson time. Some lessons lack clear purpose and the pace of work is too slow. GCE A level students show a detailed knowledge of the texts they are studying. Teachers provide useful advice when setting assignments. Work is marked regularly. Many of the assignments returned to students carry extensive and helpful written comments from teachers but some of the marking is not detailed enough. Teachers rarely moderate the quality of written work by marking work from other classes. Handouts used in some lessons are poorly reproduced.

48 The standard of teaching in modern languages is high. Students and teachers prepare well for lessons, which are usually conducted in the language being studied. Teachers respect and value the experience and opinions of students. They encourage them to contribute and question. In one evening lesson, students showed communication skills of a high order during a discussion in fluent and idiomatic Spanish on the lives of retired people, a topic which was particularly relevant to the students attending the class. The planning and teaching of GNVQ language courses does not always suit the needs, abilities and interests of individual students. Some teachers are not fully competent in the use of the language laboratory or video equipment. Students and teachers do not use much information technology.

49 Some of the teaching in adult basic education and English for speakers of other languages is skilled and effective. Staff and students get on well. There are sound procedures for supporting individual students' learning. The emphasis is on individualised programmes in which teachers agree with each student the target for improvement. However, this approach has led teachers to rely too heavily on one style of teaching. There is too much use of printed materials and not enough working in groups. Some



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materials are of poor quality. Where teachers attempt to use more varied methods, the lessons are not always planned effectively. Sometimes, because of the wide range of ability in classes, students work on inappropriate tasks. Teachers generally keep full records of students' progress and achievements. However, some marking and some records are not up to date.

50 In vocational work, teachers have high expectations of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Students respond well to the challenges set and the opportunities to learn in real work environments. Teachers strike a good balance between instruction and practical activity. Students take some responsibility for their own learning and use their initiative. In an NVQ level 1 lesson about empathy, the teacher helped students understand the concept by skilfully using examples from their own experience. An extract from a video of 'Fawlty Towers' helped to maintain interest. However, many general education sessions are too long, particularly for students with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. Teachers have not thought enough about what students need to learn or the most effective ways to help them to do so.

#### **STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS**

51 Most students who stay the course achieve the qualifications for which they were aiming. They have positive attitudes, work hard and make impressive progress. Most are developing the specialist knowledge and skills they need and achieving high standards. Some students at all levels make basic errors in written English.

52 GCE A level examination results are very good. The 290 students aged 16 to 18 who entered for GCE AS/A level examinations in 1994-95 scored, on average, 5.3 points per entry (where grade A=10 points, E=2). Although this is lower than the previous year's score of 5.8 points, it places the college among the top 10 per cent of colleges in the sector on this performance measure, based on the data in the 1995 performance tables published by the Department for Education and Employment.

53 In 1995, the college had 847 subject entries from students from all age groups in 40 GCE A/AS subject syllabuses. The average pass rate was 87 per cent, which is well above the average for general further education and tertiary colleges and above the national average of 84 per cent for students of all ages in sixth form colleges. Fifty-six per cent of passes were at grades A to C, and a third of subjects had 100 per cent pass rates, over half the subjects had 90 per cent pass rates and most subjects had pass rates above the national average for sixth form colleges. Only in biology and German were results poor.

54 The college uses students' GCSE points scores to work out their expected GCE A level scores. For 1994, college figures show that 80 per cent of students' results at GCE A level were better than those predicted. College courses had achieved substantial added value for many students

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including almost all students with the minimum entry qualification of four GCSEs at grade C or above.

55 GCSE results for students aged 16 to 18 were less good than GCE A level results. The college had 286 entries in 13 subjects. The overall pass rate at grades A to C was 40 per cent. This was below the national average of 48 per cent for sixth form colleges, but above the average of 37 per cent for students aged 16 to 18 in general further education and tertiary colleges. Only three subjects (accounting, communications, Spanish) had pass rates above the national average. Pass rates were particularly poor in mathematics and European studies. GCSE results for students aged 19 and over were better. The overall pass rate in the eight subjects entered was 65 per cent. This was above the national average of 60 per cent for adults in general further education colleges.

56 In 1995, the examination results of full-time students aged 16 to 18 on vocational courses were good, although not as good as last year. Eighty-five per cent of the 139 students aged 16 to 18 in their final year of study on the vocational courses included in the Department for Education and Employment's 1995 performance tables were successful. This places the college in the top third of colleges in the sector, based on this performance measure. In 1994, the pass rate was 93 per cent.

57 On two-year vocational programmes, pass rates in 1995 were good in catering, art and design, health and community care, business studies, leisure, the medical secretaries' programme and science. Results in engineering were poor.

58 On one-year vocational programmes, pass rates in 1995 were variable. They were good in wordprocessing, where there were a high number of distinctions; above the national average in business studies and leisure; and poor in typewriting, engineering and public services.

59 Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make sound progress towards achieving vocational access certificates. On programmes in adult basic education and English for speakers of other languages, most students do not gain external qualifications and absence rates are high. In 1995, 40 per cent of adult basic education students on part-time programmes progressed to a range of 12 other courses in the college.

60 Retention rates for different programmes in 1995 ranged from 69 per cent to 89 per cent. Retention rates were: 89 per cent on one-year, full-time vocational programmes; 75 per cent on two-year, full-time vocational programmes; 69 per cent on GCSE courses, including particularly low retention rates on part-time programmes; and 84 per cent on two-year, full-time GCE A level programmes over the two years.

61 The college follows the progress of full-time students after they have completed their courses. In 1995, 55 per cent went on to higher education, 11 per cent continued in further education, 24 per cent went into employment, 1 per cent was unemployed, 1 per cent was described as 'other' and the destinations of 8 per cent were not known.

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62 The destinations of those leaving one-year full-time courses in 1995 were: higher education (1 per cent), further education (64 per cent), employment (14 per cent), unemployment (2 per cent), and training (3 per cent). The destinations of 16 per cent were unknown. Of the students who continued their studies in further education, 95 per cent stayed at the college.

### **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

63 The college's commitment to quality assurance and continual improvement is reflected in its statement of purpose. The college was the first in Lancashire to achieve Investor in People status. In 1993 it was one of only three further education colleges in the country to achieve the charter mark. However, procedures for assuring quality, particularly the quality of courses, vary in their effectiveness.

64 Policies and procedures for quality assurance are clearly defined. Senior and middle managers understand them well but other staff are less aware. Several aspects of the procedures are relatively new or in the process of being developed in detail. The college panel, which has central responsibility for quality assurance, includes three representatives from the corporation board. It receives reports from three committees responsible for the quality of the curriculum, human and physical resources. In turn, the panel reports to the corporation board. The curriculum quality assurance committee is well established, the other two committees are new. Detailed procedures and standards for all the college's services are in the process of development.

65 Curriculum reviews and evaluations vary in quality. The college provides guidelines for the programme reports which staff write each year. Reports should include information on actual enrolments, retention, achievements and destinations against targets. They should also include an analysis of students' views and a series of action points. Some reports, for example, those in physics, business studies and health studies, are evaluative and identify realistic action points. Other reports, for example, in music, engineering and for courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are mainly descriptive and have few action points. Faculties review the reports annually. The curriculum quality assurance committee is scheduled to review them every two years. At the time of inspection, the committee had been operating for about two years, but had reviewed only 60 of the 109 programmes.

66 The college has a systematic programme for obtaining the views of students by means of questionnaires. Questionnaires are issued three times a year. The marketing team analyses the responses and staff use the information in programme reviews. Although some questions relate to teaching and the promotion of learning, these aspects play a small part in monitoring and review. Students are not informed, as a matter of course, about the findings from the questionnaires.

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67 Procedures for staff review are effective. Full-time staff and those who work more than eight hours a week have annual reviews conducted by line managers. Managers and staff reflect together on the previous year's work, including the success or lack of it in achieving targets, and identify their professional goals and development needs for the next year. Together they agree a documented action plan. This year, a few teachers have volunteered to take part in a pilot scheme which includes classroom observation as part of the process of assuring quality.

68 The college allocates just under 1 per cent of its overall budget to staff development. To help prepare for their more substantial management role, 12 middle managers are currently following, on a part-time basis, a certificate in management studies programme. Staff are encouraged to share new knowledge and skills with colleagues after returning from courses or training events. Procedures are in place to evaluate the quality of development activities. Not enough attention is being given to preparing staff for future developments which include the development of more varied patterns of study and attendance for students. New staff receive an induction to the college and have personal mentors.

69 The college charter is comprehensive and clear. It was developed after extensive consultation and has been revised in the light of experience. Most staff are aware of its contents and implications. Monitoring of commitments has been effective. An introduction to the charter is an important part of induction for students. However, some students were unaware of the charter's contents and how to apply them.

70 The college's self-assessment report identifies strengths, sources of evidence and action points under the headings from Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. In the main, assessments were realistic and judgements were in accord with those of inspectors. The college did not attempt to grade the quality of its work.

## **RESOURCES**

### **Staffing**

71 The corporation employs 312 full-time equivalent staff. Of these, 171 are teachers, 45 directly support learning and 96 offer other support. Sixty per cent of teachers are full time. Forty per cent are female. Five per cent are of minority ethnic origin. Almost all are on flexible contracts.

72 Staff are well qualified and have appropriate experience in education, industry or commerce. However, the industrial experience of engineering staff is somewhat dated. Ninety-four per cent of full-time teachers have teaching qualifications. Some teachers of students with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties do not have specialist teaching qualifications. Almost half of full-time teachers have a first degree; a quarter have a second degree. About 60 per cent of them have qualifications as assessors or verifiers for vocational programmes. Forty

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per cent of part-time teachers have teaching qualifications, a third have first degrees and a tenth have assessor or verifier qualifications. The college encourages staff to gain teaching qualifications by following teacher training courses in college. This year, 22 staff are on these courses.

73 The college maintains a register of part-time teachers who have been interviewed for suitability. There are presently 400 on the register. Most part-time teachers receive good support from full-time colleagues and feel part of the college. However, in a few humanities subjects, and particularly on open college and GCSE courses offered in the evening, part-time staff do not have enough contact and support. At present, courses in adult basic education, English for speakers of other languages and engineering rely too heavily on part-time teachers. On some courses leading to GNVQs, there are full-time teachers who need better training if they are to contribute effectively.

74 There are enough teachers for the courses offered in all areas, except art and design which lacks a specialist in printmaking. Generally, staff have appropriate support from well-qualified technicians, some of whom have valuable industrial experience. However, there are not enough technicians to support information technology across the college and specialist information technology and graphics work in art and design. The maintenance of information technology equipment is a particular problem at the Colne site. The college is considering more flexible ways of providing support from technicians. There are not enough staff for the two learning resource centres, given the extended opening times. Clerical, administrative and support staff provide a good service.

### **Equipment/learning resources**

75 Equipment for catering is of high quality. Hairdressing and beauty therapy equipment and products are of the same standard as those used in commercial salons. Some engineering equipment is of industrial standard, but some workshop equipment is dated. Science has sufficient basic equipment. Students with learning difficulties use good-quality equipment in some vocational work. Specialist equipment is available for the teaching of modern languages but it is not accessible for all classes. The quality of some art and design equipment is unsatisfactory, and some is in need of renewal. Facilities for ceramics and print are good and there is an extensive range of high-quality equipment for music.

76 Most classrooms are equipped adequately. The geography resource base is particularly impressive and has attractive wall displays. Basic equipment is inadequate in a minority of rooms at the Nelson site and some parts of the Linden Road centre in Colne. Audio-visual aids and photocopying facilities are satisfactory.

77 The learning resource centres at the two main sites contain a good stock of periodicals and a satisfactory collection of videos and cassettes. Students make effective use of the compact disk read-only memory

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(CD-ROM) database facility to gain information for their assignments. Most students have access to enough books and materials. At the Colne site, there is a shortage of books for students on business studies and care courses. Links between the learning resource centres and curriculum areas are underdeveloped. Too many out-of-date books are still on the shelves of the resource centres.

78 In many subjects, students have access to up-to-date computing equipment. The college has also invested substantially to provide central information technology facilities which students can use as and when they choose. The overall ratio of computers to students is one machine for every eight full-time equivalent students. However, the available resources are not managed in such a way as to ensure that students make maximum use of them. At the Colne site, there are not enough facilities for students to use information technology.

### **Accommodation**

79 The college is in the middle of a process for rationalising its use of accommodation and improving its quality. It plans to concentrate the bulk of its provision on its two main sites by the end of this year. Accommodation at the Colne site has been remodelled and refurbished recently to a high standard. It is an impressive building from the outside, and is attractive and clean within. Specialist rooms for catering and business studies are of a high standard. Rooms for health and community care are good, although on occasions they are too small for the size of the groups using them. General classrooms are pleasant. Students who use wheelchairs, or who have difficulty managing stairs, have good facilities and easy access to all rooms.

80 At the Nelson site, although some specialist rooms are good, many general classrooms are of poor quality. From the road, the building looks inviting and well maintained. Its front lawns are used for competition croquet. Public areas and corridors are bright and clean; signposting is helpful. Engineering workshops, hair and beauty salons and three of the six science laboratories are of a high standard. Art and design studios are too small and awkwardly designed. The performance room for theatre studies is inadequate. Many classrooms used by humanities and mathematics students are austere and too small. The eight classrooms in huts are cold, noisy and bare. Almost 20 per cent of humanities students have all their lessons in poor classrooms. Students with restricted mobility cannot reach upstairs rooms.

81 The use of some rooms is inefficient. The college does not monitor room usage thoroughly. At the Nelson site, some better classrooms are vacant when poorer ones are in use. Sometimes students cannot use expensive equipment, for example in computing and modern languages because it is situated in rooms which are being used for lessons. Refectories at both sites are too small at peak times. Students at the Colne site have a

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common room but those at Nelson, where there are twice as many students, do not. The car park and driveways at the Nelson site are full of potholes.

82 The college's management unit in Padiham and its training facilities in a converted mill in Colne are of a high standard. In contrast, accommodation at the Victorian Linden Road centre in Colne, which is soon to close, is unsatisfactory. The hair and beauty salon on the third floor is inaccessible to students and clients who cannot manage stairs. There is no library or common room. The quality of some of the centres used by the college for adult education in the community is poor.

### **CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES**

83 The college's strengths are:

- strong governance and management
- a wide range of programmes of study to suit different needs
- generally high standards of teaching
- good examination results
- well-qualified, appropriately experienced staff who have many opportunities for professional development
- active and effective partnerships within the community
- purposeful links with the local Asian community and programmes designed to suit particular needs
- action to create greater equality of opportunity
- thorough marketing, and effective arrangements for the recruitment, support and guidance of all students
- well-developed, effective links with partner schools
- links with Europe which benefit students
- some accommodation and equipment which is of a high standard.

84 The college's weaknesses are:

- a small proportion of poor teaching which fails to engage the interest or attention of students
- insufficient support for the additional learning needs of some students
- few flexible arrangements to allow students choice over how and when they study
- insufficient provision related to the training needs of local industry
- inconsistent application of the comprehensive quality assurance procedures
- a management information system which requires improvement
- some poor accommodation; some inefficient use of accommodation.

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## FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage student numbers by age (as at November 1995)

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  - 2 Percentage student numbers by level of study (as at November 1995)

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  - 3 Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1995)

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  - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1995-96)

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  - 5 Estimated income (for 12 months to July 1996)

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  - 6 Estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)

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

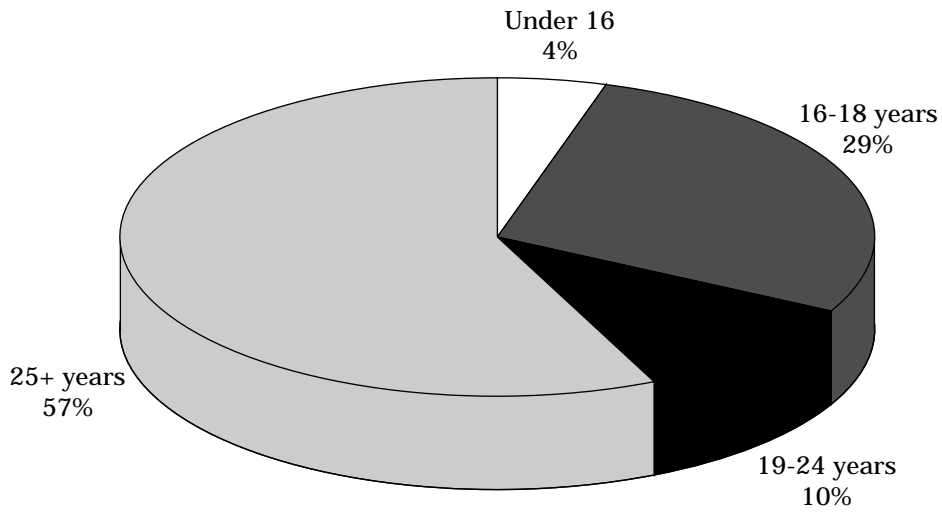
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**Figure 1**

**Nelson and Colne College: percentage student numbers by age (as at November 1995)**

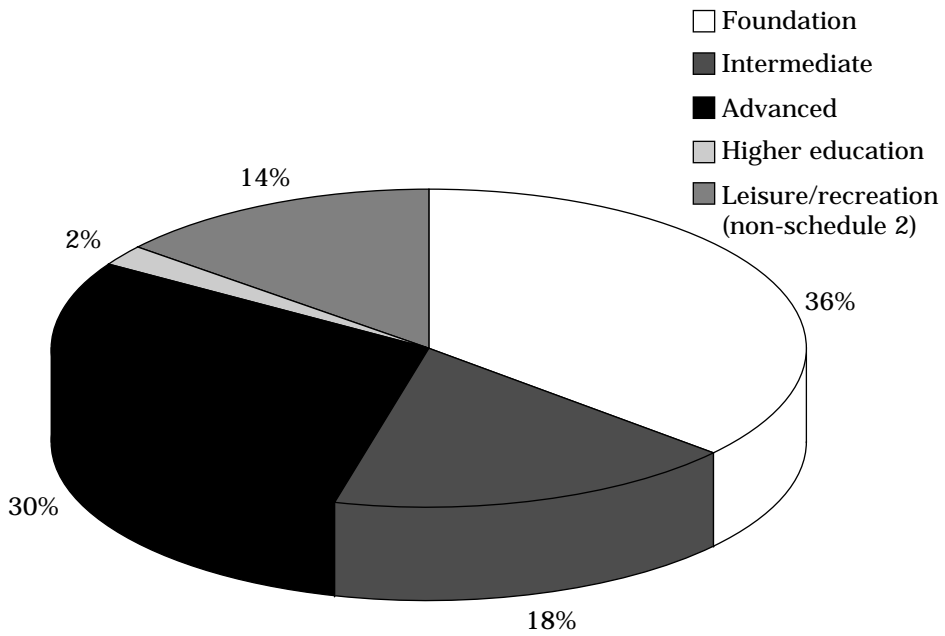


Student numbers: 5,555

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**Figure 2**

**Nelson and Colne College: percentage student numbers by level of study (as at November 1995)**

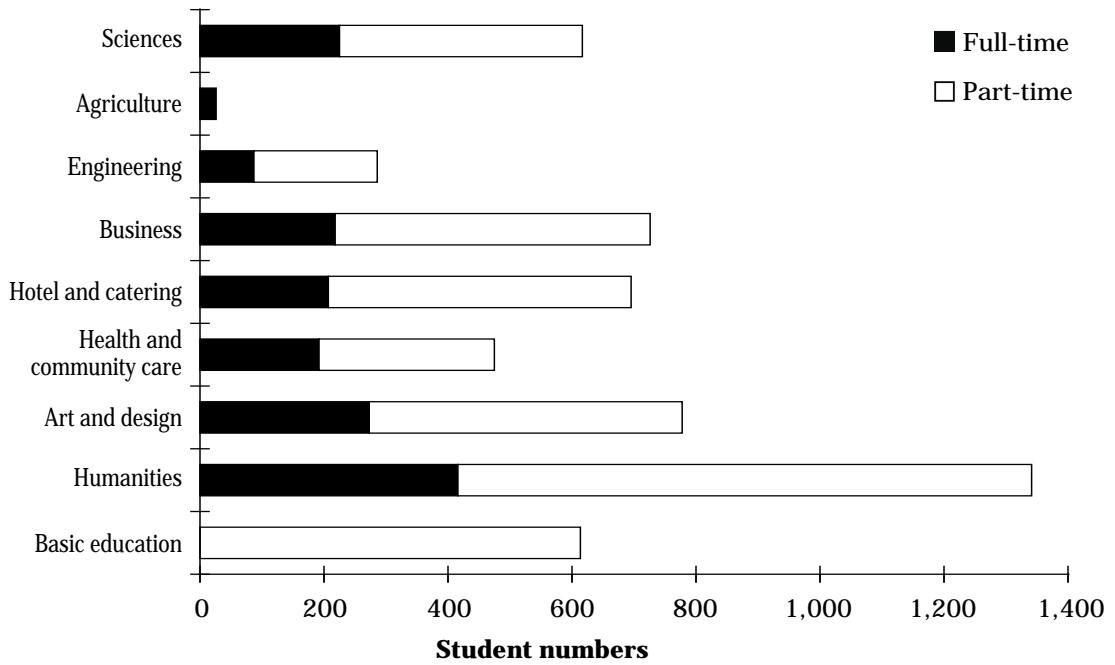


Student numbers: 5,555

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**Figure 3**

**Nelson and Colne College: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1995)**

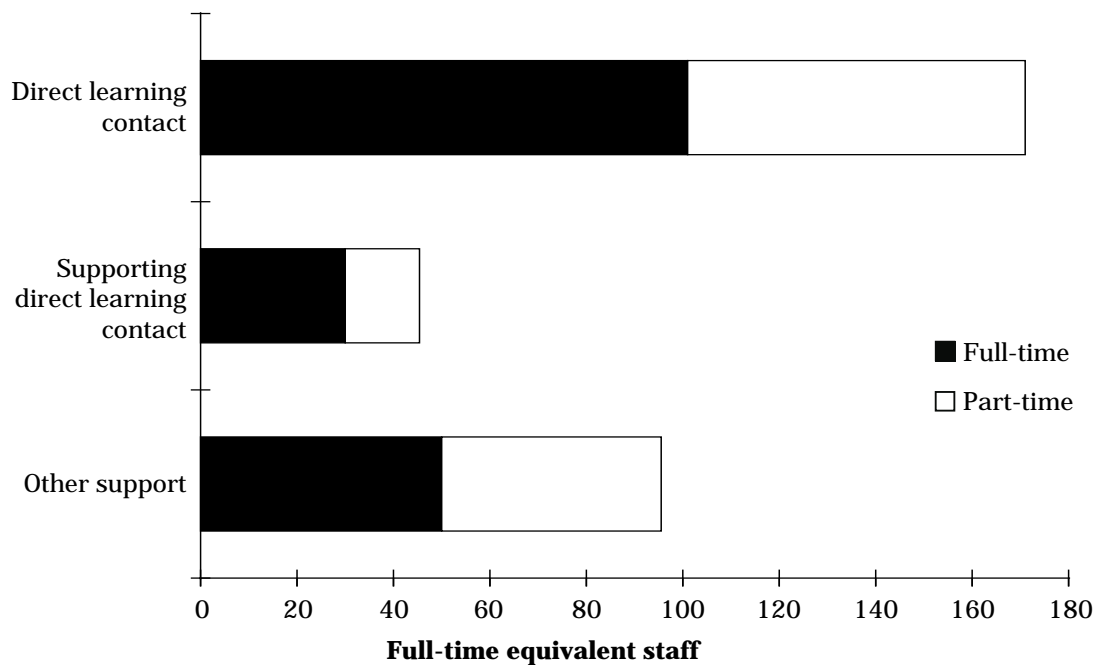


Student numbers: 5,555

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**Figure 4**

**Nelson and Colne College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1995-96)**

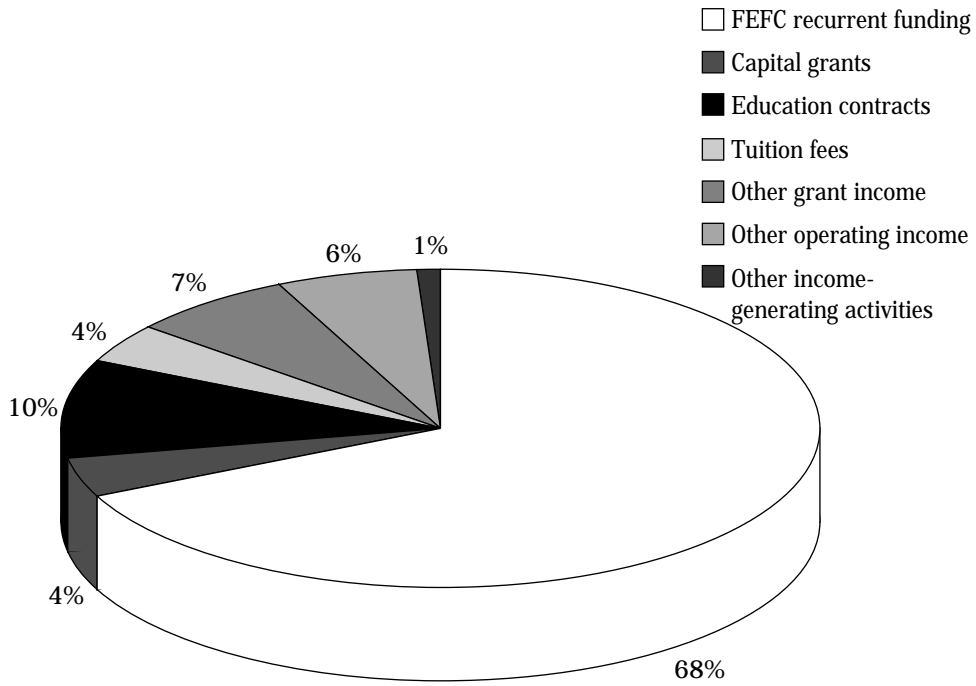


Full-time equivalent staff: 312

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**Figure 5**

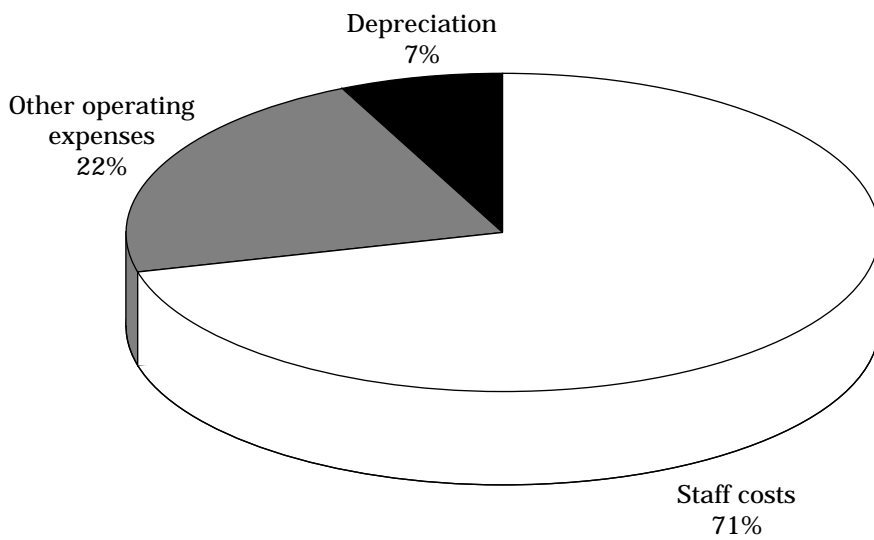
**Nelson and Colne College: estimated income (for 12 months to July 1996)**



Estimated income: £7,958,000

**Figure 6**

**Nelson and Colne College: estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)**



Estimated expenditure: £8,147,000

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