REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE

North East Surrey College of Technology

March 1996

THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL

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

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

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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

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

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 21/96

NORTH EAST SURREY COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY
SOUTH EAST REGION
Inspected June-November 1995

Summary

North East Surrey College of Technology is a general further education college with about one-third of its provision in higher education. Over 300 courses give students wide choice and the opportunity to progress from intermediate to postgraduate level in a number of subjects. There is little provision at foundation level and inadequate support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Students benefit from impartial advice when they apply to the college, and from thorough induction. There are good links with TECs and with local businesses. Staff are well qualified, and a substantial number hold postgraduate awards. The funding provided for the college is among the highest in the sector. Standards of teaching and learning are below the average for further education colleges, and students' examination results are poor in a number of subjects. For both GCE A levels and vocational courses, the examination results that students at the college achieve are in the bottom third of further education colleges nationally, according to the tables published by the Department for Education and Employment for 1994-95. Poor student timekeeping and high drop-out rates are serious problems for the college. Governors do not exercise adequate oversight of the curriculum, and the college's elaborate quality assurance procedures are ineffective in practice. Poor management information and weak internal audit have led to significant weaknesses in financial control. There is little flexibility in the deployment of resources.

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

Aspects of cross-college provision		Grade
Responsiveness and range of provision		3
Governance and management		4
Students' recruitment, guidance and support		3
Quality assurance		4
Resources:	staffing	3
	equipment/learning resources	3
	accommodation	3

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science and mathematics	2	Health and care	3
Information technology and computing	3	Art, design, media and the performing arts	3
Construction	3	Humanities	3
Business	3	Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	4
Leisure and tourism	4		

INTRODUCTION

1 The college was inspected in four phases during the period from June to November in 1995. Life sciences and construction crafts were inspected in June; enrolment, examination results, and induction in September; the remaining curriculum inspections took place in October and the cross-college visit was in November. A team of full-time and part-time inspectors spent a total of 65 inspector days in the college, and observed 179 classes. Meetings were held with members of the corporation, senior managers, teachers, support staff, students, local employers, training and enterprise council (TEC) representatives and careers officers. Inspectors examined college policy statements, minutes of committees, working papers and documents relating to college organisation and management.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 North East Surrey College of Technology, founded in 1954, is in the prosperous suburban borough of Epsom and Ewell, south west of London. Its catchment area includes Reigate, Banstead, Guildford and the Mole Valley. The college has a green field site in Ewell, and another building in Epsom. It is well served by direct rail connections with London and the south of England, and by the motorway network. There are six other further education colleges and 64 secondary and grant maintained schools within easy travelling distance.

3 North East Surrey College of Technology is a general further education college, with about a third of its provision in higher education. It has programmes ranging from full-time academic and vocational courses for school leavers, to part-time postgraduate qualifications and professional courses for working people. At the time of inspection, the college had 2,793 full-time and 4,006 part-time students, 46 per cent of whom were over 25 years old. Enrolments by age, by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3, respectively. The work of the college is carried out by 202 full-time equivalent teachers. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4. There are three faculties, divided into 11 teaching schools. Cross-college managers are responsible for estates, finance, personnel, marketing, learning resources, welfare and quality assurance.

4 The college aims to provide an educational framework which allows students to progress from school, through further education, and into higher education. It seeks to offer the changing occupational, educational, technical and professional qualifications needed in the community.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

5 The college offers a wide range of vocational and academic courses, from intermediate to postgraduate level. There are 337 courses funded by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC), the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) or the regional health authority, of

which 66 are professional and 42 graduate or postgraduate. The college offers 35 General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) and three GCE advanced supplementary (AS) subjects, 11 General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) subjects, 35 National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) at levels 2 and 3, and General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) at advanced and intermediate levels in six subject areas. This extensive provision is supplemented by a wide range of short courses for unemployed people and returners to work, funded by the TEC or the local employment service. The college has two prison education contracts; about 240 inmates are students. North East Surrey College of Technology has established a company to provide cost-recovery courses for business and industry, which made a loss on its operations last year.

6 The college uses the Basic Skills Agency tests to screen all full-time further education entrants. At the time of the inspection, about 450 students had been identified as having mathematics or communication skills below foundation level. Despite these findings, and the college's mission to provide lifelong education, there are few foundation level courses or access to further education programmes. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are enrolled on mainstream courses, but there are no programmes to assist those who have yet to reach a level of capability or confidence which would allow them to be integrated successfully. There are policy statements on the accreditation of prior learning but, in practice, accreditation is not available to full-time further education students; it is used only rarely in a few adult courses leading to NVQ. The college uses the 'credit for learning at work' schemes, designed to contribute to higher education awards. There is little resource-based learning and the only distance learning arrangements the college has developed relate to one module of the higher national certificate computing course. Only a few open-learning materials are available, mainly as part of prison education.

7 Relationships with local schools vary in their effectiveness. The college is surrounded by schools with their own sixth forms and college staff are invited to some of them to inform pupils about its courses. There are open days and advice evenings for potential students, and evenings for parents of those already enrolled. Feedback from these events is analysed by the college's marketing unit and used in future planning. Liaison between the college and both the Surrey and Sutton careers services is good. Staff from the Surrey careers service visit the college every week. North East Surrey College of Technology is a member of the Surrey colleges' network, through which principals and governors meet to discuss issues of common interest. The college has strong links with the Open University and the University of Surrey which validate its graduate and postgraduate courses. There are further education student exchange arrangements with colleges in Germany and France, and training is sometimes provided for technicians from the developing world.

8 There are productive links with the chamber of commerce and with three TECs: Surrey TEC, AZTEC and South London TEC. Three members of the college staff are involved with Surrey TEC's north east Surrey forum, which brings colleges and businesses into direct contact with one another. The faculties of the college have strong relationships with employers, health authorities and professional organisations, which help to secure work placements for full-time students. However, there is no central database of co-operating companies. Some employers receive multiple enquiries from the college. There are now plans to co-ordinate contacts. Liaison committees of employers and college staff meet either once or twice a year but few of them have clear terms of reference and their emphasis is on providing information for employers. The photographic advisory committee has 48 members, but more college staff than employers attend some of its meetings. The college has not carried out any systematic survey of employers' satisfaction with its services. None of the employers invited by the college to meet inspectors had seen the part-time course leaflets issued by faculties.

9 The college marketing unit is well staffed. There is a head of marketing, an external liaison manager, a marketing officer and two administrators. Each faculty has marketing staff who link with the unit. There is a marketing strategy, although little is done to follow up students who enquire about courses but fail to enrol. Faculties' responses to enquiries from applicants vary in quality. The marketing unit intends to develop a central information centre, and to establish a computer link with the faculties to make the collection of data more reliable. There are means for measuring the effectiveness of the college's advertising programme, and the marketing unit has made good use of local intelligence from the TEC, and of parents', school leavers' and adults' perceptions of the college. The marketing unit intends to control all published materials so that they are standardised in design and quality; at present some of the leaflets are of poor quality, particularly those directed at groups of potential students who do not normally consider enrolling on further education courses. There is literature with enlarged print for those with impaired sight, but it should be enlarged further to comply with the Royal National Institute for the Blind's recommended font size. Information on audio tape is not available.

10 In line with the college's equal opportunities policy, records are kept of the ethnic origin and gender of students who enrol, and of new staff. Records relating to existing staff are incomplete. The staff and students who were questioned by inspectors displayed limited understanding of issues relating to equal opportunities. Equal opportunities plans drawn up by the faculties mainly describe the facilities available for those with restricted mobility. There is no evidence of action designed to influence classroom practice. Students' examination results and data on withdrawals from courses are not monitored to see whether there are significant correlations with ethnic origin or gender. Responsibility for

implementing the college's equal opportunities policy is elusive; the equal opportunities panel acts only in an advisory capacity.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

11 Governors and managers have been slow to respond to the implications of incorporation and of the FEFC's funding method. The college failed to meet the targets it had agreed with the FEFC for further education enrolments in 1993-94 and 1994-95. Its procedures also failed to identify the substantial number of students withdrawing from courses during this period. These two factors led to the college having to pay a substantial refund to the FEFC. Financial deficits arising from this and other difficulties were recognised very late. The corporation has had to develop a recovery plan to address its financial problems. According to the college, the plan will require the loss of 80 permanent staff posts by the end of 1996, and achievement of still higher targets for student recruitment and retention. The inspection therefore took place in unusual circumstances; failures of control by managers and the corporation were evident, and staff morale was low.

12 The college's average level of funding in 1993-94 was £24.07. This was 27 per cent above the median for general further education colleges of £18.92. As a result of funding convergence, its average level of funding in 1995-96 is £22.70; still 27 per cent per unit above this year's median for general further education colleges of £17.84. The college's estimated income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are shown in figures 5 and 6.

13 The corporation board has 14 members. At the time of the inspection there was a vacancy for an independent governor. There are two staff members but no student members. Governors have a broad range of experience in business and local government, and a particular strength in personnel matters. The board is seeking a new member with financial expertise, but is having some difficulty in finding a suitable person. Attendance at board meetings is good; average attendance over the last 12 months has been 85 per cent. The board met monthly until the summer of 1995 and has now decided to meet bi-monthly. This still makes for a demanding schedule of 18 to 20 meetings annually of the board and its committees. Governors have not received any formal training for their duties.

14 Initially, the corporation board decided not to establish a finance committee but rather to deal with financial matters itself. As a consequence, financial matters were not given sufficiently close attention. When the scale of the college's losses began to emerge, the board decided to bring forward the date for the establishment of a finance and general purposes committee, which was formed in June 1995. There is evidence in the board's minutes of exhaustive consideration of some aspects of its work, notably personnel, and neglect of others such as the monitoring of students' achievements. The corporation still has some way to go in

establishing effective strategic control of the whole range of the college's activities.

15 The clerk to the governors is a senior manager of the college. The role is appropriately structured, in a form similar to that of a company secretary. Clerical support for the board and its committees is generally good and there is comprehensive documentation. However, the organisation of corporation minutes is poor. The corporation should seek to record more clearly the increments by which its policies are developed, adopted and reviewed.

16 Relations between governors and senior managers are cordial. The chair of the board has visited the college weekly. However, governors do not set or monitor specific management targets. There are early indications that the work of the finance and general purposes committee, and the more explicit targets in the college recovery plan, may improve working practices in future. In addition to its equal opportunities policy, the college has policies for personnel, health and safety, and students' support. In some cases, the responsibility for implementing these policies is not clear.

17 The college is undergoing substantial reorganisation as a result of long-standing concerns among managers about the duplication of courses by faculties and the current financial difficulties. Five main operating units, four of which were academic faculties, have been rationalised into three faculties, each of which now offers further and higher education, and some cost-recovery courses. Faculties have a substantial degree of autonomy under the leadership of their deans. Before reorganisation, deans were responsible only for expenditure but, in future, they will be accountable for both expenditure and income. Faculties have delegated budgets, but deans may not incur additional staffing costs without approval from senior managers, nor may they transfer money between pay and non-pay items. The distribution of the budget is based on student numbers and the subject weightings devised by the national funding councils.

18 The new faculty structure is not based on cognate areas of work. Nevertheless, management relationships within faculties are clear and lines of communication are generally good. Whilst the stated policy for making senior appointments is that they should be based on academic excellence rather than management ability, the duties of deans are largely managerial and none of the post holders is in any doubt of this. College services such as quality assurance, marketing, and student support, operate across the faculties. However, the strong hierarchical structure makes it difficult to achieve quick and consistent results.

19 There is no effective central management information service. Deans of faculty have had to integrate student and financial data themselves. A computerised model to attribute income and costs to individual courses is being fully used for the first time this year, to help deans to manage resources. Deans will also receive data from new computer programs

installed in the academic registry in July 1995, to inform them of the number of funding units their courses are earning and the money received. Until recently, the academic registry was unable to fulfil all of its functions effectively. It had inadequate data systems and there was no academic registrar during the whole of 1994. Recording of student withdrawal and monitoring of attendance still varies in its reliability, and there is little evidence that poor retention is being given sufficient attention. Some managers in the college are concerned that the new growth and retention targets will not be met. The recovery plan requires greater efficiency in the deployment of staff and curriculum delivery. It also identifies modularisation of the further education programmes as an important means of achieving these ends. Little work has yet been done and the college's aim to have a modularised curriculum structure by the spring of 1996 is unrealistic.

20 The academic board has three committees: academic development; academic standards; and research and staff development. They are appropriately constituted and their proceedings are well minuted. The academic board has been consulted on a full range of appropriate issues in the past, including finance. During restructuring in the summer of 1995, consultation was not as wide as might reasonably have been expected. The announcement of the new faculty structure and the greater priority to be given to modularising the further education curriculum followed the last regular meeting of the academic board in 1994-95. No opportunity was given for the board to discuss these important academic matters or to propose alternative forms of organisation. Until June 1995, the senior management group was the forum in which both line managers and cross-college managers met the principal and deputy principal. A new structure has subsequently been decided without consulting all those concerned; it omits most cross-college managers from the executive group chaired by the principal, even though they report directly to him. The way in which both the academic and management changes were made has caused resentment at a time when the college needs accord among its staff.

21 The academic board plays a substantial part in developing the college's strategic plan. Opportunities for staff to contribute to the draft plan have varied both within and between faculties. The corporation has formally approved the strategic plan in all its versions. The college's mission statement has been developed carefully and it has widespread support. It identifies as its main aims lifelong learning and 'all-through' provision to postgraduate study. However, it is a premise of the recovery plan that the college's financial difficulties stem from national policies for further education and that reductions in staff should be centred primarily on subject areas and courses funded by the FEFC. This approach does not reflect the current financial and curricular interdependence of further and higher education in the college or the spirit of the college's mission

statement. The college should ensure consistency between its mission statement, the pronouncements of its managers, and its policies.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

22 There are comprehensive policies and procedures for students' recruitment, guidance and support, which set out principles for all phases of these processes. However, services are dispersed across the college and lack coherent management and objectives.

23 Prospective students receive information through college open days, taster programmes and weekly advice evenings held throughout the year. Additional interviews with guidance staff are available to applicants who are still unsure about their studies. Guidance to students is impartial; alternative institutions are recommended in some cases. Interviewers work to clear guidelines. Where students have disabilities which are already identified, a specialist member of staff is available for them to consult. Recruitment procedures continue throughout the year and students appear satisfied with these.

24 Induction for full-time students provides an effective introduction to college life. An induction policy clearly sets out the procedures to be followed. Course handbooks are generally thorough, although their presentation and content vary widely. There are broad variations in induction practice between faculties and between full-time and part-time programmes.

25 The welfare and student services unit gives advice on accommodation, finance, health, counselling, learning support and careers. Some 30 per cent of students, mostly full-time students, used the whole range of advice services on offer in 1994-95. A part-time chaplain is available. Sports are provided, although the large sports hall is underused. The college does not have child-minding facilities. The importance of learning support is acknowledged; a learning development unit is in its first full year of operation. It is intended that all students with literacy and numeracy difficulties should be offered help either on an individual basis, or through learning workshops. Resources in the learning development unit are stretched and the testing of students is not yet complete. It is clear, however, that a large number of students require considerable help with core skills and that the unit is not able to supply this support quickly enough for students on one-year programmes. In order to meet the same learning support tutor on a regular basis, some students have to leave their classes. This means that they interrupt classes and necessarily draw attention to themselves in the process.

26 Students are entitled to regular tutorials. The majority of full-time students have a personal tutor. Their perceptions of tutorials are mixed, but most value them. The arrangements for part-time students are inconsistent across the faculties. Overall the recording of tutorial recommendations is patchy. Tutors have received some staff development, but the sharing of good practice is limited.

27 Careers advice is available to students from the time of their initial enquiry. The college's careers officer is available by appointment or during drop-in sessions. Careers information is available in the library. The college's service is supplemented by Surrey Careers Services and there is good liaison with other agencies.

28 The students' union is re-emerging this year as an active body. Its executive is assisted by a committed member of staff funded by the union, who acts as administrator. The union organises social activities for students. It also raises funds for charitable causes.

29 Students' attendance is recorded manually. Procedures relating to absence lack consistency and rigour. On some courses, staff do not follow up absences until a student has been away for three weeks. No college policy exists to regulate practice. Action planning, which involves students in setting their own learning objectives, is underdeveloped. Records of achievement are held within faculties but are not available centrally. Students' level of familiarity with the college charter is low.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

30 The standard of teaching in the classes inspected varied widely. Forty-two per cent of classes had strengths that outweighed weaknesses. In 16 per cent of classes weaknesses clearly outweighed the strengths. The proportion of classes receiving grades 1 and 2 is nearly 20 per cent below the average for general further education colleges in the sector, based on the table published in the *Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1994-95*.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level	1	11	23	3	0	38
GCSE	0	0	3	0	0	3
GNVQ	0	8	23	3	0	34
NVQ	2	9	5	4	0	20
Other vocational	5	20	13	3	0	41
Higher education	0	3	6	0	0	9
Other	4	12	3	9	6	34
Total	**12**	**63**	**76**	**22**	**6**	**179**

31 The average level of attendance in the 179 teaching sessions inspected was 75 per cent. The highest level was 90 per cent, in health and social care. In construction crafts, and leisure and tourism, levels of 41 per cent and 51 per cent, respectively were recorded. Construction students were permitted to sign their presence as registers were not yet in use. Rates of absence of up to 60 per cent were noted on some courses in business and

humanities. The college was inspected early in the academic year and these figures were already far below reasonable expectations. In addition to poor attendance, students were frequently late for classes. In science and mathematics, 60 per cent of the sessions inspected had latecomers. Punctuality was also poor in information technology, construction, and art and design. During one art and design session, only three of the 15 registered students were on time, seven were present 30 minutes later, and others arrived over the next 20 minutes. The session was a lecture on theoretical aspects of the curriculum, and it was heavily disrupted by the stream of latecomers. Classes in most subjects were also disrupted by changes in timetables or to rooms.

32 Courses in information technology, science, mathematics, construction crafts and humanities were well planned. Staff in these areas recognised the importance of schemes of work and logical plans for projects and assessment. The planning of individual classes was much less consistent. Some health and social care classes had vague objectives and there was too little work to fill the session productively. In art and design, leisure and tourism, business, and in some humanities subjects, the pace of work was often too slow; students were consequently bored or inattentive. In construction, staff had failed to devise assignments which drew the various elements of the curriculum together to help students develop the capacity to research on their own.

33 Teachers have a good command of their subjects. In modern languages, the language being studied was used extensively, correct pronunciation was emphasised, and role-play was used to encourage students to practise their speaking skills. Dance teachers demonstrated appropriate movements for students, setting high standards for them to emulate. Information technology teachers helped students to build their skills steadily by carefully reinforcing their knowledge at each stage of development. Science students were taught the subject matter in logical sequences to help develop their understanding and confidence. In all the more successful sessions, staff provided appropriate levels of information and teaching methods were varied and interesting.

34 In the less successful sessions, teaching methods were dull or inappropriate, there was minimal use of visual aids, or classes took place in unsuitable environments. In several construction craft classes, teachers failed to make best use of the time available; students took notes by dictation or from the board, throughout the whole session. Some language teachers used over-formal methods; they spoke for too long, allowing inadequate opportunity for students to practise the language by raising or responding to questions or by engaging in discussion with each other. Early in the first year of a two-year programme, some humanities classes were inappropriately tackling in detail past GCE A level examination questions. In life sciences, staff teaching both theory and practical classes failed to recognise students' lack of laboratory practice, and acquaintance with technical terms; some students were confused, unable to participate effectively in the practical activity or to explain what they had learned.

35 Links with employers are good in information technology, life sciences, photography and health and social care. Employers are involved in course review and help staff to maintain the relevance of the curriculum and of assessment standards. Some employers come into the college to give valuable information to students about their work. In construction, some of the work experience logs completed by students were very thorough and of evident benefit to them.

36 Inspectors saw a number of very large student groups. In humanities, up to 40 students, and in leisure and tourism up to 56 were being taught as single classes. Staff teaching these sessions had not given sufficient consideration to the types of activity, the materials or the teaching methods which would make these classes successful. Humanities staff were trying to coax students to debate issues as they might in smaller groups, but they were too inhibited in classes of this size. Leisure and tourism staff were unable to hold the attention of the whole group, and some students spent their time chatting or doodling.

37 In information technology, leisure and tourism, and business classes, some GNVQ intermediate students were struggling to keep up with the work. Many of these groups were of mixed ability, and the lack of differentiated teaching materials often resulted in a pace of work pitched at the middle ground, leaving both the more and the less able students unsatisfied. The college's policy is to integrate all students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities within mainstream courses. However, some teaching staff have not been trained to work with students with learning difficulties, and they do not have the range of teaching strategies, assessment techniques and equipment which are required.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

38 The majority of students at the college are enrolled on vocational courses and undertake a considerable amount of practical work. In all areas except construction crafts, students worked in laboratories and workshops with due regard to health and safety. In construction crafts the appropriate notices and warnings were displayed but were habitually disregarded, resulting in some dangerous activity.

39 Students' essays and project work are generally well presented. Many students use a wordprocessor confidently and produce all their written work in typescript. The quality of teachers' written comments on students' work varies. Some students receive few comments that would help them to improve their work; teachers merely place ticks or crosses against parts of the text and fail to correct spelling or grammatical errors. In a number of subjects, staff have not worked out assessment and marking criteria, so that there is inconsistent practice.

40 Results on some vocational courses in science, life sciences, and health and social care have been consistently good over a number of years. For example, students on the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) further education teachers' certificate, the certificate in counselling skills,

the C&G certificate in gardening, the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) first diploma in animal care, and the BTEC national certificates in science and applied biology, all achieved pass rates of 85 per cent or higher in 1995.

41 Students' performance in their final year of study on the vocational courses included in the Department for Education's (now the Department for Education and Employment) table for 1994 placed the college in the middle third of colleges in the sector. The equivalent table for 1995 for post-16 students shows a pass rate of 65 per cent, which places the college in the bottom third of colleges. This poor overall performance reflected very mixed results across the college. In business, there were some notably good examination pass grades. The C&G certificate and the BTEC national diploma in information technology applications have both had pass rates of over 90 per cent for the last two years. In 1995, the BTEC higher national certificates in environmental health and in civil engineering had 94 and 100 per cent pass rates, respectively. Students on BTEC performing arts and the C&G creative studies courses performed well in 1995, but for other vocational courses the results were poor. Only 28 per cent of the full-time students on the C&G photography course passed. The BTEC national certificates in building studies, civil engineering and building services engineering had low pass rates of between 25 and 38 per cent. The BTEC higher national certificates in business information technology and computer studies returned passes of 50 per cent or less.

42 The college entered 280 candidates for 10 GCSE subjects in 1995. Of these, only four subjects, media studies, communication studies, sociology and Spanish achieved A to C pass rates above the national averages for general further education colleges. Six subjects recorded A to C pass rates of 40 per cent or below, including mathematics, biology, history and English language, all of which were below 25 per cent. Only 35 per cent of all those students who entered achieved grades A to C. Pass rates in 1994 were also low, although most subjects had pass rates higher than in 1995.

43 Thirty GCE A level subjects were examined in 1995, and 465 students entered. The pass rate improved from 64 per cent in the previous year to 71 per cent. The average points score for students taking at least one GCE AS/A level was 3.0, which placed the college in the bottom third of all further education sector colleges on the basis of the Department for Education and Employment tables for 16 to 18 year old students. Some subjects had pass rates well above national averages; for example computing, performing arts and sociology. Classical civilization, German, and government and politics also had high pass rates, but the number of candidates was too low to be statistically significant. Subjects with pass rates below the national averages were: accounting, arts and crafts, business studies, economics, English language and English literature, geography, law, photography, physical education, psychology, physics, Spanish and statistics. Particularly poor results were recorded in biology (39 per cent), human biology (13 per cent), history (33 per cent), pure and

applied mathematics (33 per cent), pure mathematics and statistics (50 per cent), and statistics (55 per cent). The college does not use any value-added measures to determine the contribution it is making to students' achievements.

44 Retention and pass rates for all the GNVQ programmes are very low. For example, only 30 per cent of the advanced, and 20 per cent of the intermediate students in business achieved the award within the normal time for each level. Twelve per cent of the intermediate level students in leisure and tourism, and 24 per cent of the intermediate level science students successfully completed the award. Only 69 students (30 per cent) of the 229 who began GNVQ programmes achieved the full awards.

45 Poor retention is an issue for the college in a number of areas. In 1994, the college reported that the overall retention rate for its GCE and GCSE provision was 64 per cent. A target of 90 per cent has been set for the college in 1995-96. Retention figures are collected for each course and school. Some schools have very low retention figures; for example the schools of computing and office technology, and construction crafts, had retention rates of 49 and 44 per cent, respectively. Only two schools have retention figures above 85 per cent, applied physiology and health, and social care and education. Some courses had persistently low retention rates between 1993 and 1995. Those retaining less than 30 per cent of their students include the BTEC national certificates in building studies, and electronics and computer engineering, NVQ level 2 brickwork, and C&G advanced plumbing.

46 In a number of programmes, not all the students who are recorded by the college as completing the course are entered for the qualification. However, this does not show up in the statistics used by the college to analyse its performance. For example, on the BTEC higher national certificate in business and finance, 13 students enrolled, nine completed, and five were entered for the qualification, all of whom passed. The college presents its statistics to show this as a 100 per cent pass rate, and a 69 per cent retention rate. The pass rate for the course, when measured from original enrolment to examination pass rate is, in reality, only 39 per cent. This form of presentation also occurs in GCSE courses. In sociology, 37 students completed the course but only 24 were entered for the examination and 18 passed. The college presents this as a 75 per cent pass rate, but if passes are compared with enrolments, the pass rate is only 47 per cent. In order to succeed with its recovery plan, North East Surrey College of Technology should ensure that its student statistics fully reveal whether or not courses retain their students, and whether those students achieve the goals that they set themselves when they enter the college.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

47 The main bodies concerned with assuring the quality of the college's work are the faculty boards, the college academic standards committee,

the quality council and the academic board. A variety of procedures has been used since 1985. The quality council was set up in 1992 and a head of quality assurance was appointed at that time. There are now eight quality process groups dealing with support services and other non-teaching aspects of the college's work. Although there is a great deal of quality assurance activity, as a whole the process lacks rigour and accountability.

48 Annual course review is long established. Course teams for over 300 programmes are required to evaluate their work, and to use a common format to report their findings and intended actions. All review documents are commented on by the appropriate heads of school and drawn together in school reports. They are then considered by a scrutineer from another faculty and passed on, with comments, to the faculty board. The board prepares a summary of school reports for consideration by the academic standards committee, which in its turn is responsible for bringing the issues raised in the process to the academic board. The academic board has delegated authority from the corporation over matters of quality.

49 The effectiveness of this complex pyramid of review depends largely on how well course teams carry out their initial analysis. The course reports are so variable in the quality of the information they use, that the extent to which they can be verified by heads of school and deans is open to doubt. Many reports are not sufficiently careful in their use of data, for example, disguising low retention rates on two-year courses by failing to compare the final student numbers on roll with those registered at the beginning of the course. As the course reports pass through the school, faculty and college structures, the amount of statistical information passed upwards decreases and the issues become more generalised. Numerical targets for improvement are not set, and there is little comparison made with findings from previous years. Very limited analysis of trends takes place at any point in the process. There is a disproportionate emphasis on higher education as opposed to further education.

50 The academic standards committee has been slow to respond to persistently poor achievement in a number of areas. It started to review performance in six GCE A level subjects in the term 1995-96; staff have been appointed to oversee GCE A level and GNVQ programmes across the faculties. Since the appointment of the head of quality assurance three years ago, there is evidence that inconsistent quality is beginning to be addressed, but there has been no measurable improvement in retention and results.

51 In addition to the regular quality assurance process, individual members of staff may report issues to the head of quality assurance and form quality circles to debate them. Teams set up to investigate specific issues have achieved improvements in the induction process and secured the adoption of a college tutorial policy. A planned extension of the staff mentor scheme, originally suggested by one of the teams, was designed to

support all teachers but has come to apply only to new staff. It is now intended that school mentors will be available to help teachers who have been identified by the quality assurance process, or by self-referral, to improve their teaching skills. Mentoring will include classroom observation. The scheme requires that school mentors receive five hours remission from teaching a week to do the job. One faculty has so far refused to grant this; instead it is giving 28 hours remission a week to enable staff to acquire postgraduate qualifications. The future of this well-meaning attempt to improve teaching must be in doubt, unless the instruction to implement the modified scheme is carried through in each faculty.

52 The allocation of the majority of the staff-development budget is delegated to faculties, who are guided by priorities decided by the research and staff-development committee. The highest priority is given to improving the academic qualifications of existing staff; 39 per cent of last year's budget of £94,000 was devoted to this purpose, whereas bursaries for teacher training received only 3 per cent of the budget. This order of priority appears incongruous given the large number of staff who already hold higher degrees, the proportion of further education in the college, and the fact that less than 60 per cent of staff hold advanced teaching qualifications. All new teachers are required to take stage 1 of the C&G 730 qualification to assist their pedagogic skills, but there are no plans to systematically assess the teaching skills of established staff.

53 The jobs of staff are reviewed annually in interviews between staff and their line managers. The process does not include observation of classroom teaching or other tasks and the personnel manager is not informed of the outcomes of review except when a job description needs to be modified. Unless their roles are substantially changed, staff development that results from these reviews is proposed mostly by staff themselves. These suggestions are then passed on to the faculty management team or unit management for approval. The links between the research and staff-development committee and the process of job review are weak.

54 The college's self-assessment report is set out under the headings of Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. The report is more descriptive than evaluative and judgements are not backed up by evidence. There is no action plan and the document is not used by the college for its own purposes. Some of the claims made in the report do not bear scrutiny. For example, it is stated that high priority is given to training staff to achieve the certificates of the training and development lead body, but the college has achieved only 35 per cent of its own target in this area. The college has a student charter which lists staff to whom any complaints may be addressed. It contains a number of measurable targets and the head of quality assurance monitors areas of concern.

RESOURCES

Staffing

55 The college has 202 full-time equivalent teaching staff; 186 are full-time and 16 are full-time fractional appointments. Over 90 per cent of teaching is delivered by permanent staff; there is little input from part-time lecturers, who might be expected to bring with them current experience of industry and commerce. The costs of staffing are high. They accounted for nearly 80 per cent of the college's income in 1994-95, more than 10 per cent above the average for all sector colleges in the south east region. The heavy dependence on permanent staff makes it difficult for the college to adjust quickly to changes in the level and pattern of student recruitment. With few exceptions, teaching staff are well qualified in their subjects, both academically and by experience. Eighty per cent of the full-time academic staff have a degree or equivalent qualification and 47 per cent also hold postgraduate awards. Some staff, particularly in health and social education, need to update their commercial experience by industrial secondment or job shadowing.

56 Teachers are well supported by technicians and laboratory assistants on an average ratio of 4:1 across the college. The number of technicians in each faculty varies widely; there are 37 full-time equivalents in the faculty of science, design and construction and only two and four full-time equivalents, respectively, in the other two faculties. There are insufficient technicians to support the teaching in some areas, while in science there is a technician for every 2.5 full-time equivalent teachers.

57 Human resources are managed by the head of personnel services, who is directly responsible to the principal. The head of personnel services, assisted by two personnel officers, also co-ordinates the work of the college's safety officer. The essential personnel policies and procedures are in place, including those for recruitment, discipline, induction, staff development, job review and evaluation, safety, health and welfare. Staff have sight of these policies but they have yet to appear in a staff handbook. The college has a system for monitoring equal opportunities considerations when new staff are appointed but existing staff declined to make returns so that there is little data that can be used for comparison. Fifty-four per cent of staff are male, 46 per cent female. All staff have job descriptions.

Equipment/learning resources

58 The college is well equipped to teach the further education curriculum in most areas. Equipment is appropriate in the science laboratories; in agriculture and horticulture; in construction; in photography; and in the language laboratories. In construction, there is a specialist laboratory to serve building, engineering, hydraulics, controls, lighting and electrical installation, acoustics and surveying. The language laboratories are excellent; they are equipped with satellite television, video, audio and information technology facilities. A few curriculum areas need improved

equipment. For example, at the Epsom site, the art and design courses have some essential facilities missing. The quality of the equipment for the use of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities varies greatly; for example, there are appropriate radio aids and adjustable benches for them in science but the shuttle bus service between sites has no tail lift for wheelchair users. Most classrooms have whiteboards, overhead projectors and other standard teaching equipment, but their condition varies considerably, from poor and inadequate in some of the huts, to good in the management rooms at the Epsom site.

59 The faculty of business is well equipped to deliver its information technology courses. It has 252 computers; some are free standing and others are networked. There is a wide range of business and industrial software, including expert systems. The computer to user ratio in business is almost 1:1. Many courses from other faculties, such as construction crafts and leisure, provide their information technology curriculum in the faculty of business. Some mismatch between faculty timetables reduces the efficiency of computer use.

60 Budgets for the purchase of equipment are held by faculties. There is no replacement policy for equipment. There are approximately 375 computers for teaching purposes in the college as a whole.

61 The main library is located at the Ewell site, with a satellite at Epsom. In all, there are 50,000 books and subscriptions to 530 periodicals. There are 16 compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) database terminals at the Ewell site. At Ewell, there is seating for 180 students and 40 personal study areas. At the Epsom site there are 56 seats. Approximately 1,500 students use the libraries during a typical working day. All books are security tagged and there is a computer catalogue. There are 4.5 full-time equivalent professional library staff, supported by four assistants. The libraries have a generous annual budget of £148,000. Faculties have devolved budgets for the purchase of books and periodicals covering their own subjects. For example, construction had a budget of approximately £24,000 in 1994-95 and its resources meet its further education students' needs well. In health and social care, approximately 80 per cent of its library budget for 1994-95 was spent on journals, many of which were of interest principally to staff and higher education students. Too little money was left to replace many of the outdated texts on the shelves. New arrangements for monitoring and control of faculty budgets are being developed to prevent such problems from recurring. The learning workshops at the Ewell site are developing. They are heavily used by students, many of whom are working to improve their basic skills. The learning development unit provides a number of short courses for 'in service' staff training. There are seven full-time equivalent permanent staff in the unit, including three full-time equivalent staff assigned to learning workshops.

Accommodation

62 The college's two major sites are 1.5 miles apart. The main Ewell campus comprising 32 hectares on the Reigate Road, is near the centre of Ewell Village, some 15 miles from central London. The site is well served by public road and rail transport. A considerable part of the site is designated as green belt and laid out in sports pitches. There are nearly 1,000 car parking spaces, of which about 600 are available for students. Buildings on this site range from the original brick structure dating from the early 1950s, to the steel sports hall built in 1990, and the more recent system buildings.

63 The standard of accommodation ranges from good to poor. The sports hall provides an excellent facility, although parts of it have remained incomplete since it was erected through the North East Surrey College of Technology students' welfare trust funds. The learning resource centre and some of the construction workshops are good. Soundproofing in the new system buildings is poor; extraneous noise frequently interrupts classes. The huts at the centre of the Ewell campus are in disrepair; they provide a poor teaching environment. Students on a number of courses spend most of their week in these huts, and the staff involved believe this implies a low priority for these courses.

64 The Epsom site is just over two hectares and provides 20 per cent of the college's accommodation. The building was formerly a county secondary school, and it is of typical 1960s' design. Although visually uninspiring, the building provides spacious facilities, and the many large rooms offer a degree of flexibility. The building may be sold and because of this, some staff and students treat the accommodation as temporary. The college has completed essential external repairs and internal alterations to provide access for students with restricted mobility. The management studies suite is excellent. Accommodation for the expanding art and design courses is of an unsatisfactory standard; conversion work for studios, workshops, and to provide changing facilities for performing arts students, is still outstanding. Students in art and design have to commute between the two campuses in order to use all the resources they need for their courses. The Epsom refectory is not open during the early and later parts of the college day, and some students complain of its inadequacy.

65 The college has two small hostels, which house 22 students. The accommodation in these is adequate.

66 Management of the estate is the responsibility of the clerk to the governors. He is assisted by an estates manager and his duties include development, building maintenance, security, services, and space planning. Central records are kept of space utilisation. The total floor area at the Epsom and Ewell sites is 30,500 square metres, or about 7.7 square metres per full-time equivalent student. The college has some scope for growth without additional accommodation.

67 The faculties allocate teaching space, and have to justify their use of this on an annual basis. The arrangement results in a loss of flexibility, where some allocated classrooms are unsuitable for the purpose to which they are being put, and inefficiencies in the use of some specialist facilities. Very few teaching spaces have displays of students' work or visual teaching aids. Most specialist rooms are closed outside timetabled hours. Students would benefit from greater access.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

68 The main strengths of the college are:

- the wide range of courses which offers progression to higher education in many areas
- good links with industry and the TECs
- its carefully-developed mission statement
- impartial admissions advice for students
- effective student induction and good student handbooks
- well-qualified staff.

69 If it is to improve the quality of its provision, the college should address the following:

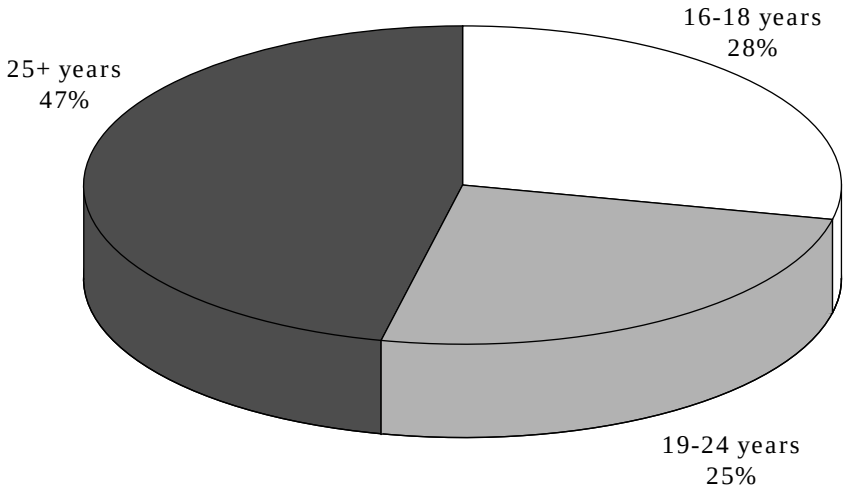
- limited foundation level courses and poor support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- poor teaching and learning in several areas
- poor levels of student achievement in a number of areas
- low retention rates
- low levels of attendance on some courses and poor standards of punctuality
- inadequate oversight by governors of the quality of curriculum delivery
- ineffective quality assurance
- inadequate management information
- poor financial control, especially as it affects the links between income and expenditure
- slow and inconsistent development of cross-college functions
- weak implementation of policies, especially the policy on equal opportunities
- inappropriate priorities for staff development.

FIGURES

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

Figure 1

North East Surrey College of Technology: percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)

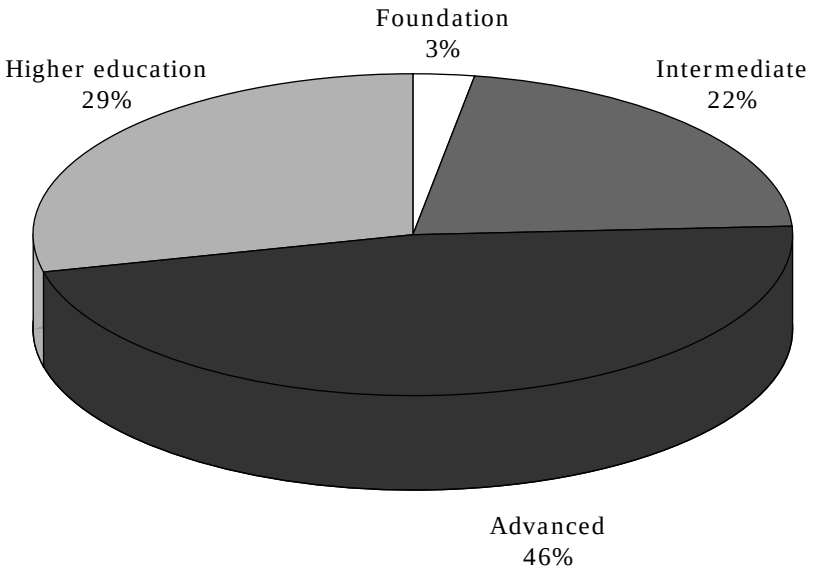


Enrolments: 6,799

Note: *this chart excludes 10 enrolments under 16 and seven enrolments where the age is not known.*

Figure 2

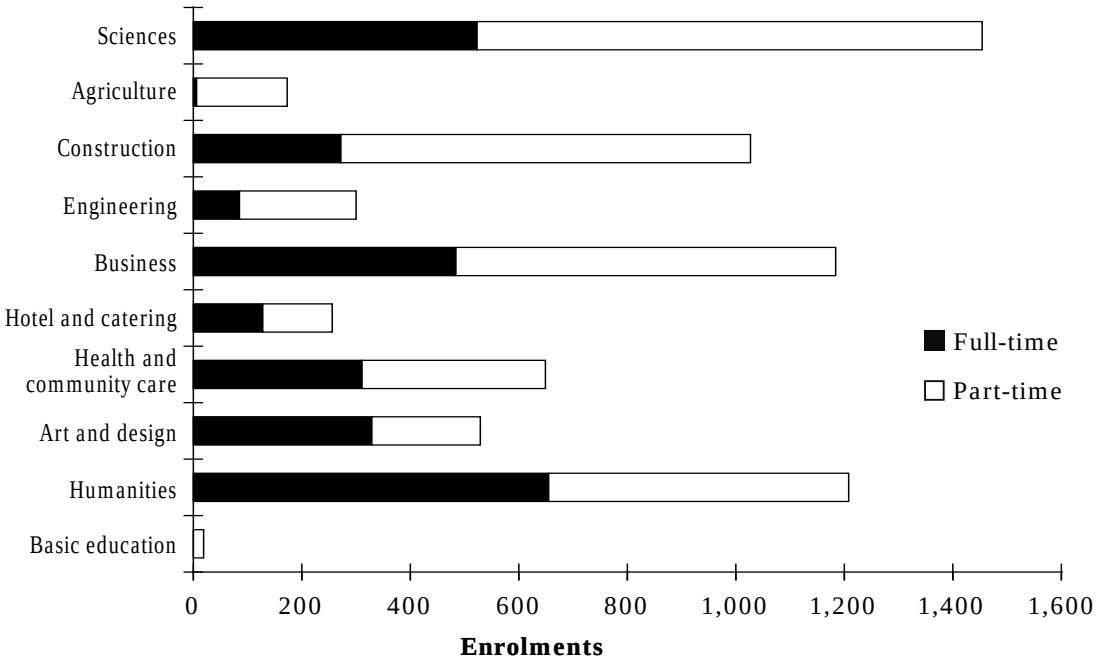
North East Surrey College of Technology: percentage enrolments by level of study (1994-95)



Enrolments: 6,799

Figure 3

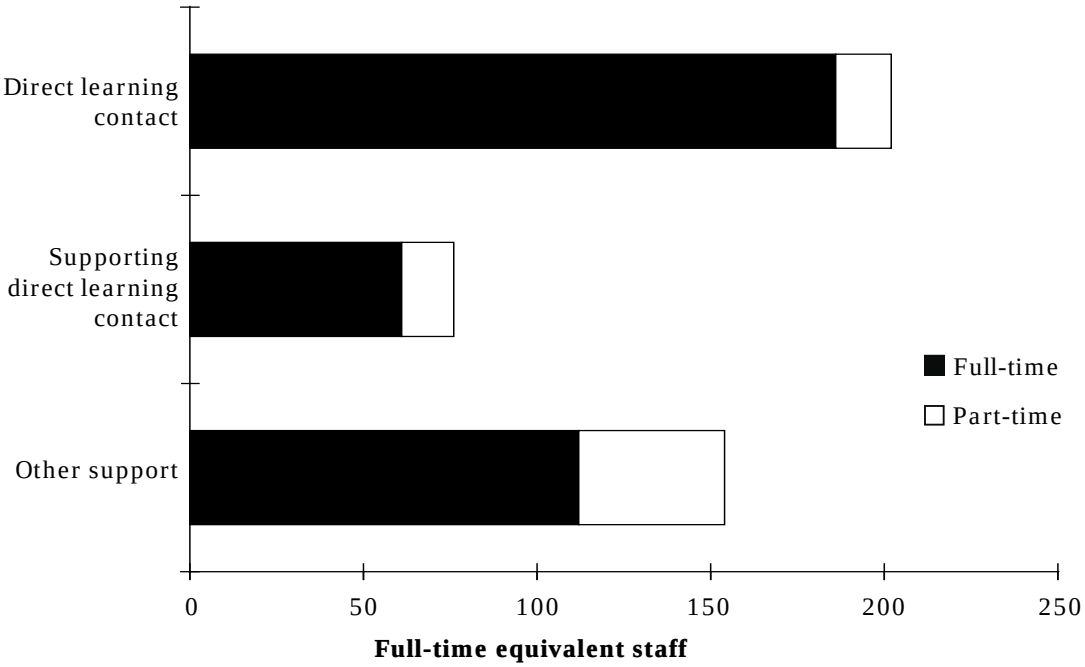
North East Surrey College of Technology: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1994-95)



Enrolments: 6,799

Figure 4

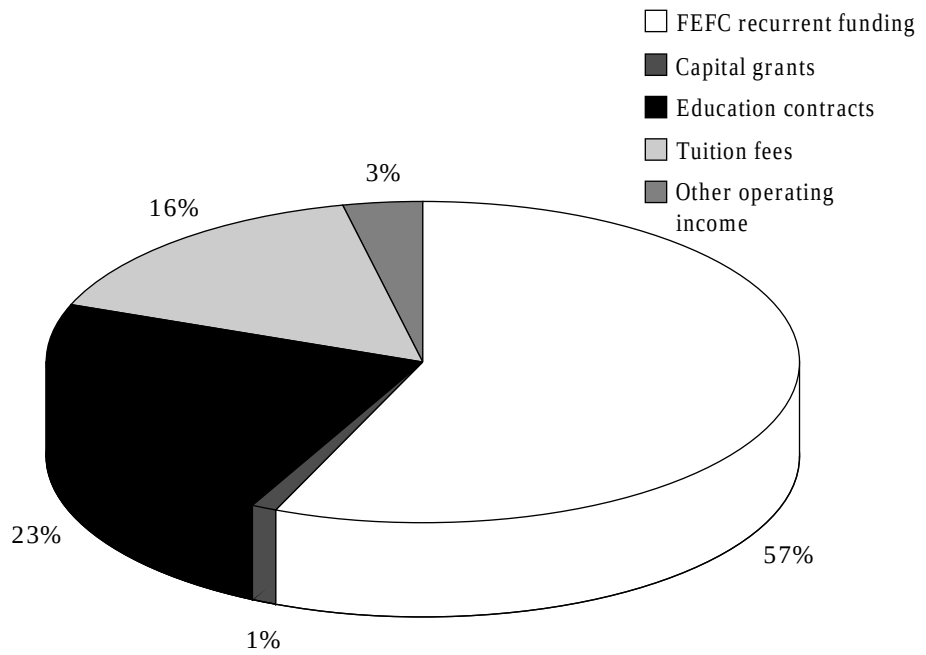
North East Surrey College of Technology: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994-95)



Full-time equivalent staff: 432

Figure 5

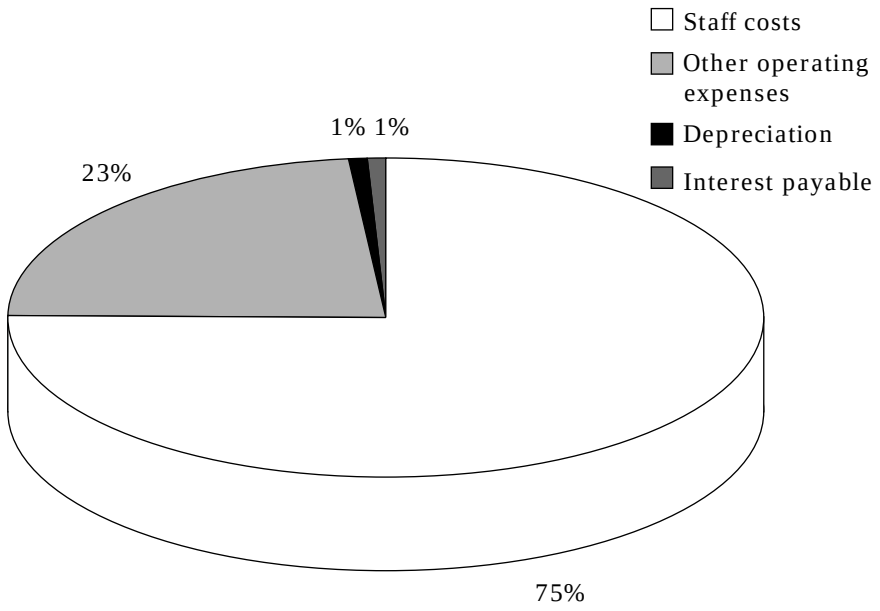
North East Surrey College of Technology: estimated income (for 12 months to July 1996)



Estimated income: £15,492,000 ***Note:*** *this chart excludes £73,000 other grant income.*

Figure 6

North East Surrey College of Technology: estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)



Estimated expenditure: £16,040,000

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