

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

**North
Nottinghamshire
College**

July 1997

**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

	Paragraph
Summary	
Introduction	1
The college and its aims	2
Responsiveness and range of provision	8
Governance and management	21
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	30
Teaching and the promotion of learning	40
Students' achievements	55
Quality assurance	65
Resources	77
Conclusions and issues	92
Figures	

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 1996, some 329 college inspections had been completed. The grade profiles for aspects of cross-college provision and programme areas for the 329 colleges are shown in the following table.

College grade profiles 1993-96

Activity	Inspection grades				
	1	2	3	4	5
Programme area	9%	59%	29%	3%	<1%
Cross-college provision	14%	50%	31%	5%	<1%
Overall	12%	54%	30%	4%	<1%

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 89/97

NORTH NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COLLEGE

EAST MIDLANDS REGION

Inspected May 1996-April 1997

Summary

North Nottinghamshire College offers a good range of courses, particularly at intermediate and foundation levels. It has useful links with its local community. Governors have, between them, a wide range of expertise which they use effectively for the benefit of the college. The appointment of a new principal has prompted a renewal of commitment from staff to ensuring the successful development and improvement of the college. Recently, the college has launched a number of successful initiatives. Members of the executive team provide effective leadership and they are keen that staff throughout the college should share in decision making. Prospective students receive helpful information about the college and its courses. Advice and guidance services for students are effective. Students on one-year GCE courses achieve good results. The accommodation on the main college site has recently been improved but other accommodation is poor. The college should: consolidate and strengthen developments resulting from recent changes in management arrangements; ensure that governors are more involved in strategic planning; implement fully the revised system of quality assurance; and ensure greater consistency in tutorial practices. In addition, the college should improve: its marketing; the retention rates and achievements of many of its students; and the teaching in some curriculum areas.

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

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Sciences, mathematics and computing	3	Health and social care, hairdressing and beauty	2
Construction	3	Art, media and performing arts	3
Engineering	3	Humanities	3
Business and management	3	Basic education and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	3
Office technology	2		
Leisure and tourism, public services, catering and hospitality	2		

INTRODUCTION

1 North Nottinghamshire College was inspected between May 1996 and April 1997. Inspectors spent 82 days in the college. They observed 236 classes, inspected students' work and examined college documents. They held meetings with governors, college managers, teachers, support staff, students, and also with representatives of industry, the local training and enterprise council (TEC), and members of the local community.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 North Nottinghamshire College is a general further education college based in the towns of Worksop and Retford. It was founded in 1930 as the Nottinghamshire County Technical Institute to provide vocational education, particularly for people working in the mining and associated engineering industries based on the North Nottinghamshire coalfield. The college's main catchment area is North Nottinghamshire and parts of North East Derbyshire. The college is in the council district of Bassetlaw. *The Social Need in Nottinghamshire Study 1994* found that 19.3 per cent of Bassetlaw's population live in areas of social need, and it described one ward, Worksop Manton, as being in 'extreme social need'. The town of Retford, nine miles to the east of Worksop, is an agricultural market town. The area surrounding the two towns is rural in character and it includes a number of small village communities, many of which are in the agricultural areas of East Bassetlaw. North Nottinghamshire's character and economy have been inextricably linked to deep mine coal extraction, which employed 18 per cent of the total male workforce at the industry's peak in 1961. The decline of coal mining and the rapid pit closure programme have left the coalfield area with structural economic problems.

3 The college has its main campus in Worksop and it has three smaller sites in the town, for art and design, media studies and office technology, respectively. It also occupies four sites in Retford; a specialised fabrication and welding centre on an industrial estate, an information technology facility in the centre of the town and two adult education centres. In addition, the college offers courses for the local community in 50 locations, many of which are in rural areas. The college is a major provider of programmes for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A college company, North Notts Create Ltd, provides business services to industry and operates a specialised fluid power engineering training centre which recruits nationally and internationally.

4 Within the college's catchment area, there are eight schools for pupils aged 11 to 18 and a number of private training providers offering youth training and modern apprenticeship schemes. The nearest general further education college is seven miles to the west of Worksop. Education achievement in Bassetlaw is below the national average. Statistics on the destinations of school-leavers indicate that the proportion of young people who continue to participate in education after the age of 16 is 79 per cent, and that this proportion is slowly increasing.

5 Unemployment rates in the area are well above the average for the United Kingdom and that for males is rising. One-third of the unemployed have been out of work for more than a year. In the wards of Worksop Manton and Harworth East, unemployment is high, at 13.4 per cent. A decline in full-time male employment locally has been partially offset by an increase in female employment. A significant proportion of current vacancies is in low paid jobs. Sixty-eight per cent of the unemployed were previously occupied in craft, skilled manual, or semi-skilled/unskilled occupations.

6 The aim of the college, as set out in its mission statement, is to 'offer education and training to meet a wide range of needs largely within the local community'. In 1996-97, 8,740 students were enrolled at the college. Student numbers by age, by level of study, and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3.

7 A new principal was appointed at the end of September 1996. There are 151 full-time equivalent teachers. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

8 The college provides a wide variety of programmes in all the 10 Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) programme areas. There is a broad range of foundation and intermediate level programmes. It is possible for students in most areas to progress to advanced level courses; students in some areas can progress to higher education courses within the college. The range of business studies, health and care related courses is particularly wide and it extends from foundation level to higher education. Many courses can be studied either full time or part time and students who wish to study on their own can prepare for some examinations making use of the facilities in the open learning centre. Some programmes are studied by employees on company premises. The extent to which the college helps the country to meet the national targets for education and training, is monitored annually.

9 There is extensive provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, much of which is accredited through the Open College Network. Students with learning difficulties are able to progress to courses leading to national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at level 1, and to general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) at foundation level. There is a good range of courses in basic skills and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) in the college and also in the community. Additional help with English is available to students at basic, elementary and intermediate levels. There are 15 adult basic education courses, some of which are offered during the day, and some are offered in the evenings.

10 The college provides a good variety of provision at foundation level, including courses leading to: the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) first diploma in public services; six GNVQs at foundation

level; 14 NVQs at level 1; and the Open College Network accredited units at entry level and at level 1. There are courses leading to 10 GNVQs at intermediate level and courses leading to 22 NVQs at level 2. At advanced level, the college offers BTEC national diploma and certificate courses and GNVQ advanced programmes. In some curriculum areas, such as business studies and leisure and tourism, both BTEC national diploma courses and GNVQ advanced level courses are offered, and both attract small numbers of students. There are 10 GNVQ programmes at advanced level, six BTEC national diploma/certificate courses and 13 NVQs at level 3. A small range of higher education and professional courses is provided in business, management, teaching and health and safety. Recently, a 'Saturday morning college' has been started for the benefit of students who are unable to attend during the week. This is proving very popular and on one college site the provision made is extended to Saturday afternoon as well.

11 The general education provision is wide in its scope. It ranges from basic numeracy and literacy to courses for the general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level). The college offers 24 GCE A level subjects, eight GCE advanced supplementary (AS) and 20 general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) subjects. Many GCE A level and AS subjects can be studied over one year. Substantial numbers of mature students enrol on many of the general education courses. One-year access courses to education, training and higher education, accredited by the Open College Network, provide alternative routes to higher levels of study for students who do not have the normal entry qualifications for these. The access courses have a good range of subject options in art and design and humanities.

12 The college has extended the range and accessibility of its vocational provision by entering into collaborative arrangements with a number of organisations to offer vocational courses on locations away from the main college sites. Most of this provision is made within 30 miles of the college, in line with college policy, and in support of the college's mission to meet 'education and training needs largely within the local community'. The collaborative provision includes courses in hairdressing and beauty, motor vehicle maintenance, information technology, retailing and horse care.

13 The college has strong links with the local community. It is represented on a number of local committees which have an interest in education and a member of staff is chair of the Bassetlaw community education forum. This group meets to share ideas and co-ordinate education and training activities within the community. The college offers a number of leisure pursuits and 'taster' activities to attract those who would not normally enter education. The college is the lead agent for a Nottinghamshire County Council initiative using single regeneration budget funds to encourage adults to return to learning by providing assistance with travel, childcare, fees and equipment. A range of courses is offered in locations in the local community which are intended for specific groups

such as adults, the unemployed, ex-miners and women wishing to return to work. Eighteen community projects have been launched in North Nottinghamshire in the past year. One example is 'Freshstart', a 'return-to-learn' course which is offered in the former mining areas. This is a programme which students can join at any time of the year. Credits can be gained at levels 1 and 2 in communications, numeracy, information technology and personal development. There are opportunities for students to undertake vocational study, to help them to decide which training course would suit them, and to help them to gain entry to a vocational course. The college is working with the local schools, the careers service and the TEC, to set up a centre in Retford offering careers guidance, education and training advice and information on employment opportunities.

14 The college was a major influence in developing 'Destination Bassetlaw', a group of organisations with an interest in education and training who support local economic regeneration. The college is also a member of the 'training opportunities' subgroup of 'Destination Bassetlaw'. As one of its current projects, 'Destination Bassetlaw' is organising a conference for local employers entitled, 'Bassetlaw in the 21st Century'.

15 There are some effective collaborative links between the college and local schools even though the college is competing with them for post-16 students. There is particularly effective liaison between the college and local special schools. Through liaison with mainstream schools and other organisations, students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have good access to appropriate college provision. The schools are supportive of the college's community development programme and some college courses take place on school premises. There are regular meetings between senior staff of the college and local schools, Nottinghamshire Local Education Authority (LEA), the careers service and North Nottingham TEC. As a result of these meetings a strategy has been agreed for dealing with the issues associated with pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Another initiative involving the college is a bid for Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) funding to develop vocational and work-related options at key stage 4. The college has provided assessor training for school staff. It is also co-operating with three schools to run GNVQ courses with them jointly.

16 There is relatively little liaison between the college and higher education institutions. The college is an associate college of Sheffield Hallam University. This association with the university has, however, brought few benefits to the college; the only provision it makes in conjunction with the university is a certificate in education course.

17 In general, the college has good and improving links with a range of key, local industries. Training is provided for some local employers in the manufacturing, service and public sectors. The quality and flexibility of the training meet their requirements. One member of the college staff is

regularly based on an employer's premises to provide NVQ training for up to 50 staff. The college company provides a range of training and consultancy services for a broad range of organisations. The Fluid Power Centre, which is a part of the college company, has links with national and international companies. It provides excellent training services and consultancy in hydraulics and pneumatics. General courses and courses specifically designed to meet employers' needs are run in the centre and on company premises throughout the United Kingdom. The college also provides consultancy services for employers.

18 The college carried out some market research with the help of an external consultant. Responses to the various publicity activities are monitored and analysed. The college's marketing activities are underdeveloped. Marketing objectives are not clear. The range of activities to be covered by the marketing budget has not been fully identified. There are few links between the college's development plans and the college's marketing initiatives.

19 There are good working relationships between the college and the North Nottinghamshire TEC. For a considerable time, the college has been represented on a range of committees and working groups including the education business partnership in Bassetlaw. The college provides training which is funded by the TEC and it has a good record of meeting targets related to the provision of training for small businesses. There is a successful college training agency that provides training to young people and adults. The college's annual income from TEC sources is usually about £0.5 million.

20 There is an equal opportunities policy and a disabilities statement. The equal opportunities policy is in the staff and student handbooks and is referred to during the induction of staff and students. The equal opportunities committee is a subcommittee of the academic board. It has clear terms of reference. It has recently been reconstituted and it has undertaken a limited amount of work to date.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

21 The wide range of expertise on the governing body is used effectively, especially on subcommittees. The corporation has 16 governors including 10 business members, the chairman of the local TEC, one co-opted member, two members of staff, one student and the principal. Business governors come predominantly from Worksop although the college serves the whole of Bassetlaw. The recent appointment of two new female members has improved the balance between male and female governors. Induction is provided for new governors. Formal governor training was introduced in January 1997. The first training event was a day during which governors reviewed the mission of the college, undertook an assessment of their own performance and identified opportunities for improving corporate effectiveness. For example, they recognised that they had not been involved in the quality assurance or strategic planning

processes. There is a register of interests of governors. Subcommittees cover: finance and general purposes, audit, personnel, remuneration, and nominations. All subcommittees have clear remits. There have been delays in the reappointment of some governors this year with the result that the chairs of the audit and personnel subcommittees chaired meetings whilst they were no longer members of the corporation. The clerk to the corporation is a member of a local firm of solicitors who works to the college under contract; the clerk is supported by a minutes secretary. There is a regular schedule of meetings and well-prepared agendas and papers. Financial reports are detailed; members have, however, asked for better presentation of financial information. Governors are regularly informed of enrolments, students' achievements, and retention rates. They receive presentations on curriculum issues given by members of staff.

22 The college's current strategic plan for 1994-97 was produced by college managers. Until this year, the governors and most college staff had not been involved in the strategic planning process. The effectiveness of the plan has been reduced by the lack of an operating statement. Budgets have been prepared, and decisions about spending on equipment and staff development have been taken, without reference to the strategic plan. The new principal has introduced a new strategic planning process which involves managers in far wider consultation with staff, governors and employers. There is a clear timetable for the production of the next strategic plan. Programme area business plans are being prepared in line with corporate objectives. Business planning is being extended to support areas. The college has policies on, and procedures in relation to, a range of matters including child protection, student discipline, equal opportunities and students who have disability statements. Policy documents do not state the date on which they were approved or revised.

23 Good working relationships exist between the governors and the senior management team. The college executive consists of the principal, the vice-principal, the assistant principal for operations, the assistant principal for student services and community development, the director of finance and the manager responsible for the quality of provision. The executive team meets weekly. Standing items on the agenda include regular reports from managers on their areas of responsibility. Action points are dealt with effectively and requisite action is implemented. Members of the executive group work together effectively and they place importance on taking decisions collectively. A college management group has been formed, consisting of the executive group, 16 programme area managers and some other support managers. The group is chaired by an assistant principal. It has over 30 members and meets weekly. The group fulfils its prime purpose of being a channel of communication between managers and staff and of providing a forum for the sharing of good practice. The large size of the group, however, and the diversity of interests represented on it, limit the scope for its members to identify ways of resolving some problems. Some papers are prepared for meetings but

they have no standard format and do not necessarily include recommendations for future action.

24 After significant changes to the senior management team in the last year, the senior managers acknowledge that their responsibilities still require some clarification and modification. For example, the assistant principal for operations is responsible for a disproportionately large number of managers, including 16 programme managers and a number of other support managers. Posts for programme managers were created in 1992. Recently their line management responsibilities have been helpfully clarified. Programme areas vary widely in size and span of responsibility. Management training for programme managers is being introduced.

25 There is a rapidly improving set of arrangements for management. New policies and procedures are being established. Many of these new policies and procedures have led to positive developments which need to prove their effectiveness over the course of a full academic year. Staff are well informed about the issues facing the college. Improved communications are encouraging all staff to offer managers their views on the college's development. A monthly in-house publication 'Update' is sent to all staff. The main channels of communication between managers and teachers are the meetings of the college managers' group and the programme teams. The main cross-college groups are those for GNVQ and for GCE A level courses. There is scope for more cross-college activity in some curriculum areas. The academic board has been restructured in order that it may be more concerned with quality assurance and curriculum development. It has 12 members including one student representative. The board has recently established subcommittees for equal opportunities, academic planning and academic standards. It is too early to judge their effectiveness. A health and safety committee reports to the chief executive.

26 In the current financial year, there are inconsistencies in the way staffing resources are allocated. As a result of these inconsistencies, the growth of provision is restricted in some areas and unnecessary cost burdens are imposed on other areas. Action has been taken to rectify these inconsistencies for the next financial year. Programme managers are budget holders and allocations are based on the number of FEFC funding units earned. All budgets are discussed at meetings of programme area managers. The college allocates 60 per cent of its FEFC income to programme managers. They are not allowed to vire between staffing and equipment budgets but they do have some control over the spending on part-time staffing and consumable items. Programme managers have effective business plans for their areas and they help to draw up the college's business plan. Most staff are aware of the extent of the resources allocated to their programme area. Budgetary control reports are not distributed frequently enough. Programme managers keep their own financial records. Unit costs have been calculated for programme areas. These are taken into account effectively by managers when making

decisions about future staffing levels. The rolling programme for capital replacement involves expenditure far in excess of the resources available.

27 The college's average level of funding for 1996-97 is £17.86 per unit, compared with £18.03 in 1995-96. The median for all general further education colleges in 1995-96 was £18.13 per unit. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are shown in figures 5 and 6. Seventy-eight per cent of funding is from the FEFC. Other sources of current funding are from the TEC and Nottinghamshire County Council for adult education. The college company, North Notts Create Ltd, has a projected turnover for this year of £445,000. Its turnover has grown each year since it was formed and it is about to move into surplus.

28 Improvements to data collection are aiding the college's monitoring of its planning and performance. The management information system has been used mainly to meet external demands for data rather than to provide data for use in the college. Programme managers and course leaders have maintained their own records because they are not confident about the accuracy of the data provided by the management information system. Manual audits of registers carried out three times a year enable the college to improve the accuracy of its data, to identify missing registers and enrolments and to take effective action to ensure these are not lost in the future. External checks confirm that the college's data are more reliable. The different management information systems used in the college are not fully integrated.

29 The college has set performance indicators in accordance with the FEFC publication *Measuring Achievement 1994-95*. Its monitoring of its performance against these indicators shows an improvement in the attainment of funding targets. The college achieved its funding targets in 1995-96. However, the monitoring also identified that the retention of students continues to be a major issue. As a result, the college executive now monitors retention closely and programme managers are being asked to give explanations for poor retention.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

30 The college produces an attractive prospectus and a range of useful information leaflets on courses. These leaflets are readily available from the college and also from such places as job centres and community centres. The college takes part in local promotional events such as careers fairs and the Bassetlaw show. A team of representatives, employed part time by the college, distributes information and liaises with various community groups in the outlying areas. The college participates in a number of fairs and conferences aimed at school-leavers. The college does not receive invitations from all local secondary schools for staff to come and talk to their pupils about the college and its courses. Currently, it is trying to ensure that it receives such invitations from all local schools. 'Advice days' and 'advice evenings' for prospective students are held at the college

every month. The college also organises events at the town hall in Retford in order that people in the town may learn about the college.

31 The system for providing prospective students with guidance, and the enrolment systems operate effectively. The student services team at the main site provides prospective students with good-quality initial advice, guidance and information. There is a clearly defined procedure for applications and interviews. Applications are dealt with centrally. Staff maintain an efficient enquiries system and use a database which shows the current state of applications. Every prospective student is entitled to a pre-entry initial guidance interview, followed by an interview with a member of staff from the specialist area of their choice. A few prospective students, however, do not receive an interview. Initial guidance sessions are thorough and objective and they cover an appropriate range of information. Procedures for those who apply late are not implemented consistently. There is a policy on, and there are procedures for the accreditation of prior learning, but little such accreditation takes place.

32 There is a general induction to the college for new students during the first two days of term. A checklist is issued to staff to try to ensure that they cover all the elements of the induction programme. However, there is some variation in the content and effectiveness of induction for different groups of students. Following the general induction students receive subject area inductions but these vary in thoroughness. The role and scope of student services are covered through a 'freshers fayre'. This event is an efficient way of introducing the range of support services available across the college. It is also attended by part-time students and some of those involved in collaborative provision at centres away from the main college sites. Good efforts have been made to extend induction to part-time students. All full-time students and some part-time students receive a students' handbook. It gives a wide range of useful information but its design and layout are poor. The college charter is referred to during induction, and a summary is provided on the college enrolment form. However, it is not included in the handbook or distributed separately. Students requiring a copy of the charter have to request one from student services. Induction for students enrolled on collaborative provision is variable in content and quality.

33 The effectiveness of tutorial support is variable. There is some good practice in the one-to-one sessions which students have with their tutors. The student services team produces a resource pack for tutors. The team also issues tutors with guidelines on how they may standardise tutorial procedures and share good tutorial practice, but these guidelines are not followed consistently. Information and training sessions are organised for personal tutors on subjects such as drugs awareness, welfare rights and child protection. All students are allocated a personal tutor. Full-time students have an entitlement to an individual tutorial each term; some students receive more than one individual tutorial. On most courses, tutorials are not timetabled and tutorial activities take place during lessons

or outside timetabled hours. Effort has been made to improve tutorial support for full-time students on GCE A level and GCSE courses. One afternoon each week is devoted to the further education awards scheme which is a course intended to develop students' personal and social skills. Students undertake six 'challenges' and acquire specific key skills whilst doing so. Since the introduction of work leading to these awards attendance at tutorials has improved.

34 Records are kept on the progress and achievement of most students. However, a number of methods are used for recording, monitoring and reporting students' progress, attendance and achievement. Variations in the detail and accuracy of the records and documentation lead to problems in monitoring students' progress. The college has recognised this problem and, after completing a pilot scheme in one area, it is introducing a new system for monitoring students' progress. In some areas of work, tutors help students to complete action plans for improving their performance but some of these lack clear targets against which students may measure their progress. Staff are available to assist students in creating and updating national records of achievement on computer disks. Some students do not maintain records of achievement. In four programme areas, however, students make full use of records of achievement and prepare them for national record of achievement accreditation. The monitoring of students' attendance is undertaken by the operations support team which conducts detailed surveys of registers and feeds information to course teams. The follow-up action by tutors on absenteeism is not consistent and it is not always sufficiently rigorous. On some courses, students receive regular, written reports on their progress. It is generally the responsibility of students, aged 16 to 18, to pass the report to parents. Parents of students aged 16 to 18 are invited to 'review evenings' when they can discuss their child's progress with his or her teachers. Reports are sent to the employers of some students who are released or sponsored by their employers to attend college.

35 Students are offered a range of support services, but those who are not based on the main campus are not able to make effective use of all the services. Students on full-time and some on part-time courses are given an initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills. In addition to, or in place of, this initial assessment, students on 17 courses are given course-specific diagnostic assessment tests. Additional support with their learning is offered to those students who are identified, on the basis of these assessments, as needing it. This support is provided, either by learning support tutors in a cross-college workshop, or as part of a particular course. In some cases, there was a lack of detailed records about students receiving support, with the result that some specific funding for students' support continued after the students had changed their course or had left the college. In some cases, support teachers work alongside vocational teachers with individual students, small groups or the whole class. Students are also able to refer themselves to the workshop or be

referred by tutors. There is a lack of co-ordination between the various elements of learning support. At the time of the inspection, only 44 per cent of those identified as needing support had received any. Records are kept of the progress of students who attend the learning support workshops, and students are helped to produce action plans to improve their work. There is a rigorous assessment process to identify students with dyslexia. Speakers of other languages are offered some support in English. The initial assessment of these students, and the development of their individual learning programmes are, however, poor. The learning resource centre provides assistance to students who wish to study on their own.

36 The college provides a comprehensive careers service to individuals and arranges careers advice and education sessions within courses. There is a well-resourced careers library which includes information on computer databases. Careers guidance is available from a member of the student services team and a service level agreement exists with Guideline Careers Services. A useful newsletter on careers is produced twice a year. There is good liaison between staff who provide careers guidance and personal tutors. Appropriate records are kept of the careers guidance which students receive. Staff who give careers advice have established a good relationship with some programme areas.

37 A confidential counselling service is offered to students. It is provided by a professionally qualified counsellor who is a member of the student services team. The counsellor is supported by a group of teachers from across the college who have received training in counselling skills. When necessary, students who are in need of specialist counselling are referred to other agencies. There are posters about the counselling service at other centres. Some members of the support group work at different sites but there are difficulties in operating a comprehensive service across all the college's sites. The work of the counselling service is appropriately recorded and monitored. A personal mentoring service is available to students on request; a trained mentor from outside the college offers support to those students who need it.

38 There is a wide range of different forms of support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These students said they feel well supported at the college. They are helped to devise individual learning programmes and they are provided with additional support and guidance through the tutorial system. A team of 19 full-time and part-time learning support assistants is available to help the students. These assistants provide support for deaf and hearing-impaired students, and those with visual impairments. A special team supports students with emotional and behavioural difficulties. There is much liaison between the staff who are responsible for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and with parents, schools, other teaching staff and external agencies. The college offers a programme for year 11 pupils in schools who would prefer to attend college rather than study at school.

39 The college provides students with free transport from their home to the college, and between the college's various sites. There is a free nursery facility for children of students. The student support manager chairs a students' liaison group. The college is a centre for the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. Recreational and social facilities for students are poor.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

40 Inspectors observed 236 teaching sessions. Of these, 56 per cent had strengths which outweighed weaknesses. This is below the average of 63 per cent for all lessons observed during the 1995-96 inspection programme, according to the *Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1995-96*. The grades awarded to the sessions inspected are shown in the following table.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade 1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level	0	11	12	3	0	26
GCSE	1	8	10	1	0	20
GNVQ	5	11	12	1	0	29
NVQ	5	22	12	3	3	45
Other*	16	54	36	8	2	116
Total	27	106	82	16	5	236

**includes BTEC national diploma, higher national certificates, access to higher education courses, provision for adult basic education, ESOL and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.*

41 Attendance at the sessions observed averaged 72 per cent compared with an average of 73 per cent for all general further education colleges inspected during 1995-96. Levels of attendance ranged from 94 per cent in psychology and sociology to 51 per cent in construction. Other programmes with average attendance levels below 60 per cent were management, hairdressing and mathematics. On average, only eight students were present in the classes inspected compared with a national average of 11 students for the sector as a whole as reported in the *Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1995-96*. The college does not currently produce an overall figure for attendance as one of its performance indicators.

42 In sciences, lesson planning and record keeping were thorough. Lessons included a sufficient variety of appropriate activities to maintain students' interest. Students were not given sufficient encouragement to work on their own, however, and some lessons and learning activities were insufficiently demanding for the more able students. In computing, teaching and learning styles on courses at the college sites differed considerably from those on courses which were part of the collaborative

provision on sites away from the college. Computing courses at the college were taught in a very formal way which the students considered to be ineffective and out of date. The students on courses offered through collaborative provision in Retford and Bolsover were mainly adults. On these courses, the students were provided with individual learning programmes to suit their needs, high-quality coursework materials, a comprehensive system for monitoring their progress, feedback on their performance, and assessment on demand.

43 Many of the construction courses were relevant to occupation crafts in the industry. Courses led to NVQs at various levels. They were suited to students of diverse abilities. Students could study on courses through different modes of attendance. Most of the courses were well planned. Students particularly enjoyed practical sessions. In theory lessons, packages of learning materials were used too much. In many instances, teachers failed to supervise the students' work with these learning packages properly or provide students with feedback on their performance; as a result, the time in lessons was not used effectively. Although the learning packages linked theory to practice, the students did not always finish working through them before commencing the practical lessons to which their theory lessons were related.

44 Some engineering programmes had been organised to ensure that class sizes were economic. Most teaching was well organised and included an appropriate mixture of theoretical and practical activities which the students carried out individually and in groups. There was some good use of teaching aids such as real components and videos. Several lessons were not well planned. In these lessons, students were involved in a narrow range of activities and they became bored. In practical sessions, students carried out their work safely and competently. In general, good records were kept of students' progress but some teaching schemes were insufficiently detailed. Students received termly reports on their progress and, where appropriate, these reports were sent to employers.

45 In business studies, relations between staff and students were excellent. Staff used a variety of appropriate teaching and learning methods. The better lessons were well structured and they had clear aims and objectives. In most lessons, the content was appropriate and the pace of the teaching and learning was well suited to the abilities of the students. Teachers used effective methods to ensure that lessons met the needs of students of differing abilities. In some lessons, however, some students were not fully involved in the learning activities and the teacher did not check sufficiently that all students understood what was being taught. In several instances, lessons had not been carefully prepared. Some teachers failed to control ill-disciplined students and hold their attention. Some teachers also failed to set the lesson in a realistic business context. The standard of most assignment work was good. Programmes of assignments were well planned and students' progress in their assignment work was closely monitored. There was some inconsistency in the extent

to which students used and developed information technology skills on courses. The quality of many handouts and learning materials was poor. On some courses, there was insufficient assessment of key skills and students' progress in these skills was not properly recorded. In addition, teachers had not carried out sufficient planning of how these key skills might be taught across all elements of the courses. The flexible timetabling arrangements for the access to business course, and the pace of work on the course were well suited to the needs of the adult students enrolled on this programme.

46 Staff used a range of appropriate teaching methods on management courses. They chose learning materials carefully. Lessons had relevant content. Students found lessons interesting and they were challenged to think and to explore their ideas. Students understood what was expected of them in their coursework and assessed tasks. Monthly workshop sessions were well structured. Students on courses offered as part of collaborative provision on sites away from the college, had an hour-long individual tutorial with teachers from the college every month. There is, however, no systematic monitoring of the progress of students on courses offered through collaborative provision. The teaching on courses leading to qualifications awarded by the Association of Accounting Technicians was unimaginative and most students found it uninteresting. In lessons, students were given too many dictated notes and they were provided with little learning material beyond these. In both the teaching and the learning, there was too much reliance on a course text book.

47 Lessons on the public services courses were well planned, properly structured and their content was relevant. Teachers motivated students by engaging them in a variety of appropriate activities including role-play, discussion, planning group work, note-taking, listening and writing. Practical activities were managed well. Teachers exercised appropriate control in the gymnasium and in the swimming pool. The teachers provided the students with frequent opportunities to acquire key skills and their attainment in these was recorded. There was an excellent programme of visits and presentations from visiting speakers.

48 In leisure and tourism, teaching was generally effective. Staff worked closely as a team and they shared resources well. They had kept up to date with developments in the leisure and tourism industries. Teachers used a variety of appropriate teaching and learning methods which the students found stimulating and demanding. The travel agency provided opportunities for learning and assessment in a realistic working environment. Assignments were appropriate and clear. Some aspects of the national diploma programmes were dated. In catering and hospitality, most of the work environments within the college were realistic and of high quality. However, in some lessons, the working methods showed that students had little awareness of issues relating to health and the tasks which students carried out in the skills workshops did not reflect current industrial practice. No provision was made for students to develop information technology skills.

49 Health care staff were well qualified and they had good vocational experience. Most lessons on health care courses had clear aims and objectives which were often shared with students. Lessons were well managed and organised and teachers made good use of students' experience. Teachers used well-focused questions to check students' understanding and they ensured that all students were brought into discussions. Effective use was made of audio-visual equipment. In the weaker lessons, objectives were not clearly stated, some students were not drawn into the activities or challenged to think. In a minority of lessons, activity centred on the teacher too much; students were allowed to create distractions which diverted attention away from the focus of the lesson. The range of teaching and learning activities in some lessons was restricted by the small size of the class. Assignment briefs were clear and the teachers' marking of assignment work was of a high standard; in some instances, students marked each other's work. There were some excellent presentations by articulate students.

50 Hairdressing and beauty therapy are offered through collaborative arrangements at the college and also in Mansfield. The courses are taught by an experienced team of staff who have good technical skills. Their teaching was effective and energetic and it had clear aims and objectives. Lessons were carefully planned and met the requirements of the relevant NVQ programmes. Most lessons included an appropriate range of teaching strategies. Students responded well to questions. They worked to professional standards. Some theory classes were uninteresting. There was a lack of audio-visual and handout material.

51 In English, there were good working relationships between staff and students. In most lessons, students were encouraged to express their opinions and they responded well to questioning. In some lessons, however, they were offered too few opportunities to undertake research and to formulate their own arguments. Other lessons were poorly prepared. In some lessons, the pace of learning was too slow and the teachers used visual aids of poor quality. In psychology and sociology, tutors were enthusiastic about their subjects and they gave individual students good tutorial support. In general, teachers marked students' work appropriately. On GCSE and GCE A level courses, students were not given enough work to do on their own. Teachers were reluctant to challenge the students to raise their levels of achievement and to push them to achieve their full potential. On the access to higher education programme, staff responded to the particular needs of adult students. They provided good personal and academic support for individual students. Most students were encouraged to work on their own. The experience of working on their own was valuable to those students who were hoping to progress to higher education, as it prepared them for the styles of learning they would encounter on their higher education courses. Some students undertook research by themselves and they made good presentations on their findings from this at seminars. In some

instances, tutors spent too much time relaying information to students instead of encouraging them to find it out for themselves. In lessons, there were no opportunities for students to assess or evaluate each other's work.

52 Because of low enrolments on art, media and performing arts courses, students on the different courses were all taught together. Teaching was well planned. Teachers had detailed schemes of work and they implemented their lesson plans effectively. Although the teachers used a variety of teaching and learning methods imaginatively, it was difficult for them to identify and use lesson content which, in terms of its level and relevance, would meet the diverse needs of students studying different specialist subjects. Teachers had appropriate expectations of students in most classes. They carried out detailed assessment and recording of their students' progress. In lessons, students were given good worksheets and clear outlines for their projects which, together with helpful comments and advice from their teachers, gave them effective direction for, and guidance on, their work. Teachers made good use of video film, illustrations and other source material. Work in key skills, particularly numeracy, was not fully integral to projects.

53 Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities were provided with individual programmes which were put together from 60 different units of study. All students were involved in the design of their own programmes. Some programmes were devised to meet students' preferences and interests rather than to fulfil specific learning objectives. As a result, the programmes did not necessarily ensure that the students acquired competences which would help them to progress in their studies. Some students were enabled to take some mainstream courses in addition to the programme specifically designed for them. Other students progressed from their own programme to one consisting entirely of mainstream provision. There is scope for more students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to join mainstream courses. The teaching of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities was mostly of good quality. Students received a high level of learning support. In some practical lessons, teachers successfully helped students to acquire manual skills. The students had a wide range of abilities, however, and on occasions, the progress of the more able students was impeded because the pace of learning was set by the students who worked more slowly. Teachers gave insufficient attention to ensuring that the students developed key skills.

54 The teaching of ESOL and of adult basic education was good. In the better lessons, there were good relationships between teachers and students, and teachers helped individual students to strengthen their learning. Work was carefully tailored to meet students' individual needs. Teachers kept good records of students' work and progress. Teachers of vocational subjects and support staff worked well together to provide additional support to students on vocational programmes; there was,

however, scope for improving the planning of the support they gave in some lessons. Teachers offered students encouragement and gave them praise when this was justified. In the less effective lessons, teachers did not always explain the purpose of activities to the students and sometimes students waited too long for help. Some of the assessment and identification of students' learning difficulties or problems with basic skills were not effective. Students were not encouraged to work together or to follow up work at home. In some lessons, teachers did not direct questions at all the students or use them to check that the students understood what was being taught.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

55 Retention levels on some courses are low. In 1995-96, the overall retention rate for full-time FEFC-funded students, calculated by comparing enrolments on 1 November 1995 with enrolments on 1 May 1996 was approximately 70 per cent. In an effort to address the issue of poor retention, all programme areas have been set targets for retention for 1996-97. By February 1997, all areas except catering, engineering, and leisure and tourism were shown to be falling short of reaching the targets set. Retention rates in general and professional education were significantly below target.

56 The majority of students worked well in class. Practical work was carried out safely and competently and students acquired appropriate standards of practical skills. In construction, students carried out simulated practical tasks effectively and they demonstrated that they understood the subject being studied. The work in hairdressing and beauty therapy was of a good standard. In catering, the food presentation and service in the restaurant were of a high standard but the basic skills of some students were insufficiently developed. In art and media, most students were acquiring skills of an appropriate level but those on GNVQ courses had poor technical skills.

57 Key skills were developed and effectively assessed in a range of subjects. Key skills were, however, not developed and assessed to the same degree across all courses in the college. There was some good use of information technology in business and management studies, leisure and tourism and public services. Information technology was, however, only used to a limited extent in engineering, hair and beauty and catering. The students' oral and presentation skills on the GNVQ advanced course in care and on the BTEC national diploma course in public services, were of a good standard. Students spoke well and expressed their ideas clearly on most humanities courses. The numeracy skills of art and design students were not effectively developed through their project work.

58 The 1996 performance tables published by the DfEE recorded that 67 per cent of the college's 82 students aged 16 to 18 years, were successful in their final year of study on courses leading to advanced vocational qualifications and that 36 per cent of the college's 64 students aged 16 to

18 on intermediate vocational courses were successful. These figures place the college in the bottom third and bottom 10 per cent of all colleges in the further education sector on each of these performance measures, respectively.

59 The achievement of students on vocational courses in 1996 varied widely between courses and there were some significant differences in students' results on the same course in different years. For example:

- pass rates on advanced craft engineering courses were 80 per cent but those on courses leading to qualifications awarded by the Engineering Training Authority were only 34 per cent
- results on the BTEC national diploma course in business studies and on the GNVQ advanced business course were above average for the sector
- in 1995 and 1996, the pass rates on the BTEC national diploma course in travel and tourism were over 90 per cent; by contrast, the pass rates on the BTEC national diploma course in leisure studies and on the GNVQ intermediate course in leisure were low, at 45 per cent and 19 per cent, respectively
- in 1995 the pass rate on the BTEC national diploma course in caring services was 100 per cent but in 1996, it was low at 52 per cent
- results on the GNVQ foundation course in care were poor
- results on the NVQ catering courses at levels 2 and 3 were close to the national averages for the sector.

60 In 1996, the 56 students aged 16 to 18 on two-year GCE AS/A level courses scored an average of 2.5 points per examination entry (where grade A=10 points, E=2) according to the tables published by the DfEE. This places the college in the bottom third of colleges in the further education sector on this measure. There were a total of 140 entries from students on two-year GCE A level courses, across 21 subjects. The overall pass rate was 54 per cent. This was below the national average for students in general further education and tertiary colleges. The pass rate for one-year GCE AS/A level programmes was 76 per cent.

61 In 1996 the GCE A level pass rates were above the averages for the further education sector in psychology (86 per cent), German (100 per cent) and business studies (91 per cent). The GCE A level pass rates for chemistry, physics, biology, photography and sociology were significantly below the sector averages.

62 Of 450 GCSE entries in 23 subjects, the proportion of students who gained grade C or above was 56.5 per cent. For the 202 entries for 16 to 18 year olds the proportion of students who gained grade C or above was 31 per cent; the average proportion for the 16 to 18 age group in general further education and tertiary colleges is 41.5 per cent. The proportions of students who gained grade C or above in the single science award (67 per cent), English language (59 per cent), English literature (80 per

cent), psychology (85 per cent), and sociology (94 per cent) were above the sector averages. Results in photography and computer studies were below the sector averages.

63 On adult basic education and ESOL courses, some students made good progress and achieved significant personal goals. Others did not achieve their full potential. Most students worked hard, and they responded to advice and guidance. There were good retention rates on adult basic education and ESOL courses. Most students on ESOL courses who wished to progress to general further education courses were able to do so.

64 The college acknowledges that its records of students' destinations are incomplete. The formal recording of actual students' destinations varies in accuracy and effectiveness between programme areas and between courses across the college. Based on the data available, the destinations of the full-time students were: higher education (14 per cent); further education (29 per cent); employment (50 per cent); and other routes (7 per cent).

QUALITY ASSURANCE

65 A new quality assurance policy identifies the academic board and its standards subcommittee as having the central role in ensuring quality and advising the principal and the executive on matters relating to quality. The policy is to be formally approved at the summer meeting of the corporation. The performance indicators which the college is using to measure the extent of students' learning and achievements are a mixture of the national indicators used by the FEFC and those required by the government for the publication of students' achievements data. The quality assurance system focuses on the curriculum; it does not cover the college support services. The quality assurance system being operated in 1996-97 has been modified to reflect the recent changes in the management structure. The system stresses the programme managers' responsibility for quality assurance. The annual course review reports will be collated by programme managers into a programme review report. A college self-assessment report will be produced from the programme review reports.

66 There are comprehensive course files and these form part of the quality assurance system. In general, they are used effectively by course teams. They sometimes cover a subject area rather than a single course. The manager for quality checks all files against a common index annually, to see that they are complete. Deficiencies in the files are noted and action is taken to address these. The course team handbook on quality assurance contains all the necessary paperwork for the quality assurance system. It includes the course review, the development log, a course review summary sheet, student survey forms, a questionnaire for students about their work placements, a questionnaire for staff, and a course team

'satisfaction review form'. The distribution and analysis of questionnaires has been the responsibility of course teams. The analysis of the students' responses to the questionnaire distributed at the beginning of this academic year was undertaken centrally as a pilot for future operations. The results were collated for each programme area and returned to programme managers. The questionnaires ask questions which relate to the way courses are taught and they also cover some aspects of the support services. The handbook on quality assurance identifies key performance indicators such as the proportion of students reporting satisfaction with the course or programme, and the proportion of students achieving a recognised qualification.

67 Most of the 1995-96 course reviews concluded with a set of clear action points, some of which have led to improvements in the quality of the courses. In some reviews, insufficient use was made of quantitative data and performance indicators. In other reviews, the data presented an incorrect picture of students' achievements. In some areas, such as leisure and art and design, the course review process was relatively new; in other areas, such as access to higher education, mathematics, and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, the implementation of the review process was poor. There are no formal quality assurance arrangements for computing. The GCE/GCSE programme team is beginning to develop its own system of calculating the 'value-added factor' in students' achievements by comparing students' final examination results with those which students held on entry to the course. This system is, as yet, embryonic, and is not used to any extent on courses other than those leading to GCE/GCSE qualifications. The 1995-96 course reviews were sent to the college curriculum committee. The monitoring of the course reviews was largely ineffective and there was no systematic analysis of the reports. A summary of the course reviews was produced. It covered key areas such as staff development and students' completion rates, achievements and destinations. The summary contained little quantitative data. It identified a number of issues such as the unreliability of the college's data on students' achievements. Most sections in the summary contained issues upon which action was necessary. The issues were, however, presented in broad terms and the summary gave no indication of how progress towards addressing these would be monitored and measured.

68 The operation support unit produces statistical data including performance indicators, which are sent to the corporation, the executive and programme managers. Where performance is below target, an explanation is required. The unit co-ordinates checks on registers in order to establish an accurate database of student enrolments. The course team is asked to explain any discrepancy in the information derived from the registers and the data on the college management information system. The work of the unit has been extended to include the collaborative provision. Insufficient use is made of the data available from the operation

support unit. Inspectors found the data on achievements mostly accurate; enrolment and retention data were accurate for one-year courses, but not for two-year courses.

69 The governors receive the college self-assessment report, an annual analysis of students' achievements, and regular information on performance indicators such as attendance, retention and progression. The report presented to the March 1997 meeting provided information on the FEFC performance indicators and it contained an associated commentary which identified examination results that were above and below the national averages. Further information was presented on students' retention rates by programme areas, and these rates were compared with the college's target for retention of 85 per cent. Managers of programme areas with retention rates significantly below the target were required to explain to the college executive why these were low.

70 Support areas are beginning to explore ways of setting standards and using performance indicators to measure the quality of their work. A training day was held for managers of support areas to help them to develop an understanding of quality assurance systems and to begin the process of identifying performance indicators. A survey of the use of the learning resource centre has been carried out. The operations support team has identified a range of suitable indicators for its work. A working party has been set up to review the tutorial system. Student support services has proposed some performance indicators to measure its effectiveness. Systematic procedures have yet to be devised for the monitoring of performance against these indicators.

71 There is a system of internal verification on NVQ and GNVQ programmes. A verification committee meets regularly to oversee and review the verification procedures. Cover sheets are included in students' portfolios, upon which verifiers record that they have seen students' work. There is scope for redesigning these cover sheets in order that they may provide a clearer record of when the verification took place and by whom it was carried out.

72 The monitoring of the collaborative provision is at an early stage of development and its effectiveness cannot yet be judged. A policy on the quality assurance of collaborative provision has been drawn up and a team of quality auditors has been trained. External auditors are being used for areas where college staff have limited subject expertise. The proposed quality assurance system is different from that used in the college; it is based on the principle of inspection rather than self-assessment.

73 In preparation for inspection, curriculum areas produced self-assessment reports using Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. The learning support team produced a sound assessment of their activities. Some curriculum reports did not comment on important issues such as poor examination results. The reports often included too

many statements which were unsupported by evidence and they did not contain enough quantitative data. The reports did not specify targets against which performance might be measured. The self-assessment report for the whole college is more rigorous in its criticism and it indicates that the college is prepared to be objective and thorough in its evaluation of its own performance. The main strengths and some of the weaknesses of the college are clearly presented in the report and, in general, they match those identified by inspectors. However, the language of the report is too descriptive and weaknesses are understated. No grades were used; it was therefore difficult to determine the college's judgement on the balance between its own strengths and weaknesses.

74 There is a college charter. It is a comprehensive document and covers the services provided for students, the community and employers. It does not make any reference to parents. It contains few targets against which the college performance may be measured. There is no indication of how progress towards the achievement of the targets will be monitored. Information is given on the complaints procedures and there is a complaints officer. The charter is currently being reviewed.

75 The college has no process for appraising its staff. In 1994, an appraisal system was introduced for teaching staff; this was based on what the college described as a 'professional development portfolio' which every teacher was asked to complete. The system was not implemented consistently across the college and it fell into disuse. A human resource development strategy and management development plan is being developed. A personnel officer has been appointed recently. There is a staff-development policy and a professional and staff-development unit. Staff-development needs are identified through the completion of a proforma by individuals and/or course teams. Bids for staff-development funding are collated centrally and funds are allocated under a series of broad headings. In many areas, such as engineering and public services, staff have undertaken relevant staff-development activities such as those leading to training and development lead body awards, and they have attended conferences. A management development programme for programme managers is about to commence. Few staff-development activities, however, relate to the college's strategic needs which are identified in the college's strategic plan. There is no systematic staff development in a number of subject areas such as computing. A training and development lead body awards team co-ordinates training within the college for the lead body qualifications. It has contracted a major local company to help with the training of internal verifiers and it provides verifier training for some local schools. In 1995-96, £113,000 was allocated to staff development and this sum represents approximately 1.4 per cent of the college's total expenditure. In 1996-97, £118,000 was allocated to staff development. There is no system for monitoring and reporting on staff-development activity and it is not subject to any cost benefit analysis. Staff new to the college receive a one-day induction

consisting of a general introduction to the college in the morning and an introduction to their specialist area in the afternoon. They are assigned to a mentor.

76 The college aims to achieve Investor in People status in the spring of 1998. The college is a member of the British Quality Foundation. The Fluid Power Centre has achieved the ISO 9001 award. The college company, North Notts Create Ltd, is working towards obtaining the same award.

RESOURCES

Staffing

77 The college has 300 full-time equivalent staff. There are 108 full-time teachers and the full-time equivalent of a further 43 teachers, in part-time staffing. Part-time staff have brought a wealth of recent vocational experience to some curriculum areas and the availability of their services has given managers greater flexibility to deploy staff effectively across the college. In some areas, however, where many part-time staff are employed, there is scope for improving the way they are managed, and for ensuring that they play a full part in course teams. In other areas, where the proportion of part-time staff is low, there is insufficient flexibility in staff deployment and staff costs are high. Provision of cover for staff who are absent through sickness has been inadequate in some teaching and non-teaching areas.

78 Most teaching staff are suitably qualified for the work they undertake. In some vocational areas, however, the industrial experience of staff is dated. Staff specialising in work with students who have specific communication problems, are well qualified. Only half the teaching staff involved in the provision of learning support across the college have specialist qualifications for their work. In some curriculum areas, progress towards ensuring that a sufficient number of staff have relevant training and development lead body qualifications, has been slow.

79 There are 149 full time equivalent support staff, of whom 127 are full time. Of the support staff, 41 are directly engaged in the support of students' learning. These staff include the learning assistants who provide support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The level of support is generous but it is not always deployed appropriately or monitored carefully. The college is undertaking a review of its provision of learning support. There is sufficient technician support for practical subjects such as science and engineering. Members of the small central technician team provide the college with reprographic services, general electrical maintenance and they drive the college's vehicles. Technical support for information technology is insufficient. The college employs its own cleaning, caretaking and security staff. The estates manager is a chartered builder who organises building contracts and carries out medium-size building design work. A small number of minor

refurbishment projects are carried out by college staff. There are separate teams who have an involvement with site services and related activities; there is some overlap in the functions of these teams. Staff planning for business support functions has not been carried out systematically.

80 Programme managers produce business plans which specify the number of staffing hours they require in order to implement their curriculum plans. The number of staff hours for each programme area is agreed by the assistant principal for operations and discussed at executive team meetings. There are effective controls on the numbers of part-time staffing hours.

81 The college's strategic plan has not been supplemented by a human resources development strategy. The college appointed a qualified personnel manager in November 1996. The vice-principal has overall responsibility for personnel issues and together with the staff-development officer and the personnel manager, has set up a working group to develop such a strategy. A preliminary paper outlining objectives for staffing developments over the period 1997 to 2000 was submitted to the corporation personnel committee in February 1997. The paper does not clarify staffing responsibilities sufficiently. Work to create a single database on staffing has not yet been completed. Staff completed questionnaires in July 1996 which form the basis of a skills audit; information drawn from the responses to these questionnaires, however, has not yet been used for planning purposes. Personnel policies and procedures have been agreed for a number of key areas; some of these have not been formally approved by the corporation.

Equipment/learning resources

82 In general, the amount and quality of specialist equipment to support the curriculum are adequate. Hairdressing equipment is of a high standard. The Fluid Power Centre has a wide range of industry-standard equipment which enables it to provide effective training and consultancy. Construction workshops have a satisfactory range of equipment which has been improved recently. Other areas have a balance of strengths and weaknesses in relation to their equipment. Although there is enough engineering equipment, machines in the mechanical workshop are dated. The art and design area has some good equipment for ceramics, painting and drawing but much of the specialist equipment used on GNVQ programmes is inadequate. In catering, some food preparation areas are inadequately equipped.

83 In general, there is sufficient audio-visual equipment for the college's needs. Most learning materials are of satisfactory quality but they are poor in business and humanities. Some classrooms do not have good-quality whiteboards and overhead projectors. The college has six minibuses which are used for transport of goods and students between sites and for the transport of students from rural areas to the college.

A rolling programme for the replacement of equipment has been implemented.

84 The main site in Worksop has a spacious and pleasantly furnished learning resource complex, consisting of a library and a learning resource centre. This area is for use by students studying on their own. The 94 study places are sufficient to meet current levels of demand. On occasions, tutors use the library with groups of students, and when they do so, they distract other students who are trying to study there. Library book provision is adequate but there are gaps in some subject areas and around a third of the stock is dated. The stock includes 160 periodicals and the cost of these takes a disproportionate amount of the library's budget. Opening hours and staffing levels are appropriate and full-time and part-time students have sufficient opportunities to use the library. At some times, the usage of the library is low. The benefits resulting from the considerable investment that the college has made into providing suitable accommodation, have yet to be fully realised. The resource centre has a pleasant well-equipped careers area. Other college sites have no resource areas.

85 The college has around 250 computers, in addition to the administrative network of 55 computers. There is a ratio of eight full-time equivalent students to one computer. The learning resource centre has an area containing 14 computers and information technology support packs, which can be used by students working on their own. It is underused, and the staff based there do not have the requisite technical expertise. Students are required to book use of a computer. The booking sheets provide the only evidence of the extent to which the college's recent investment in computers is proving of benefit to students. Eleven of the computers in the centre are networked to 49 others in two rooms on the main site. The additional networked rooms are used for teaching computer applications. They are not available for students to use outside class hours and they are underused. Another network of some 40 computers is used for teaching office technology in the Newcastle Street annexe in Worksop.

86 The college began a substantial programme of information technology purchases some three years ago. It still has a mixture of types of machines, some of which are too limited in capability. A decision has been made to use a single commercial standard applications package across the college and to centralise all purchasing decisions. Plans to implement Internet connection and electronic mail facilities are behind schedule. An advisory group drawn from staff across the college, has helped the computer services manager to prepare an information technology strategy. This group has appropriate membership and a suitable remit. The strategy has helped to generate thinking about ways of using information technology to best advantage in the college. The strategy is not comprehensive, however, and it does not provide a clear guide to action.

Accommodation

87 At the time of incorporation in 1993, the college's accommodation was in a poor state. The college developed its first accommodation strategy in 1994. This provided the basis for initial improvements to the accommodation. Far reaching ideas on accommodation are currently being discussed by the governors. The new strategy is aimed at developing the college's sites in phases over the next 30 years, to enable the college to meet its mission and strategic objectives. The maintenance of accommodation is expensive.

88 Maintenance projects are well managed. A detailed five-year maintenance programme is being implemented and a programme indicating further requisite maintenance over the next five years has been drawn up. The refurbishment programme which has been carried out at the main site has resulted in improvements in the refectory and the student services area. The maintenance scheme is supplemented by an investment maintenance programme which runs parallel with a programme for the development of the buildings, and which includes the upgrading of the heating systems. A further budget allocation has been made for routine and essential maintenance. There is no procedure for ensuring that there is a rapid response to minor technical problems on the sites. Considerable upgrading of internal decoration has taken place although some areas of the main site are uninviting. Sites are generally clean.

89 The college's main site in Worksop constitutes 78 per cent of its total accommodation and it covers an area of some 12,500 square metres. There are no signs to direct people to the various college sites. Within the building, clear direction signs have been installed. The college's buildings represent a diversity of architectural styles. The early learners' centre and the learning resources complex are housed in good-quality accommodation. Students with restricted mobility have access to most of the main teaching areas but it is not easy for them to get to some rooms. The upper floors of the two nineteenth-century properties are inaccessible to them. The college leases accommodation in Park Street and Newcastle Street and owns the property in Central Avenue and the surrounding mobile classrooms. The accommodation for performing and creative arts in Park Street and Central Avenue is particularly poor. The former school accommodation used by the office technology centre in Newcastle Street is adequate for the purpose for which it is used and its interior is pleasant. The Fluid Power Centre at Langold is housed in an old primary school and is not appropriate for the courses which take place there; new premises are being sought. Sponsored improvements and those carried out by the college have helped to make the interior of buildings more attractive.

90 Where possible, room utilisation is checked by the operational support team and rooms are reallocated if they are not used to best advantage. Managers, however, encounter considerable problems in ensuring that courses are timetabled into accommodation which is suitable

for the work students have to undertake. Total room utilisation is below 80 per cent and seat occupancy is lower still. Pressure on appropriate rooms, however, is high at certain times in the week and some spaces are overcrowded. Some partitioned rooms are not adequately sound-proofed. It is the college's objective to rationalise its accommodation in Worksop and use only one site. This objective cannot be met, however, without making substantial structural alterations to existing buildings on the main site.

91 The college has not yet established a clear identity in Retford. Three small sites are used there. The Bridge Centre is a pleasant but small site used for information technology courses which are part of collaborative provision. The Carolgate Centre houses office technology and 'entry to work' programmes; it is above a shop and the accommodation is unsuitable for the courses which use it. The upper storey is not accessible to students with restricted mobility and they are transported by the college to more suitable accommodation in Worksop. The fabrication and welding centre is housed in adequate accommodation in an industrial unit. The unit is somewhat isolated and students have to be transported to it from the main site. Governors have agreed to the sale of a further small site in Retford which was used primarily for adult education. The college uses accommodation at some 50 additional venues such as schools and church halls throughout North Nottinghamshire.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

92 The particular strengths of the college are:

- its recent successful initiatives and developments
- the breadth of provision, especially at foundation and intermediate levels
- its strong links with the local community
- the wide range of expertise on the governing body
- the effective leadership given by the executive team
- its practice of ensuring that all staff are involved in decision making about the college's development
- the effective system for providing prospective students with information about provision
- the advice and guidance services for students
- the achievements of some students on one-year GCE courses.

93 The college needs to:

- improve retention and achievement rates
- ensure the further involvement of governors in strategic planning
- consolidate and strengthen recent developments resulting from changes in management arrangements

-
- strengthen its marketing
 - identify its business needs more clearly
 - improve teaching in some curriculum areas
 - implement the revised quality framework
 - improve the accommodation.

FIGURES

-
- 1 Percentage student numbers by age (as at November 1996)

 - 2 Percentage student numbers by level of study (as at November 1996)

 - 3 Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area
(as at November 1996)

 - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at February
1997)

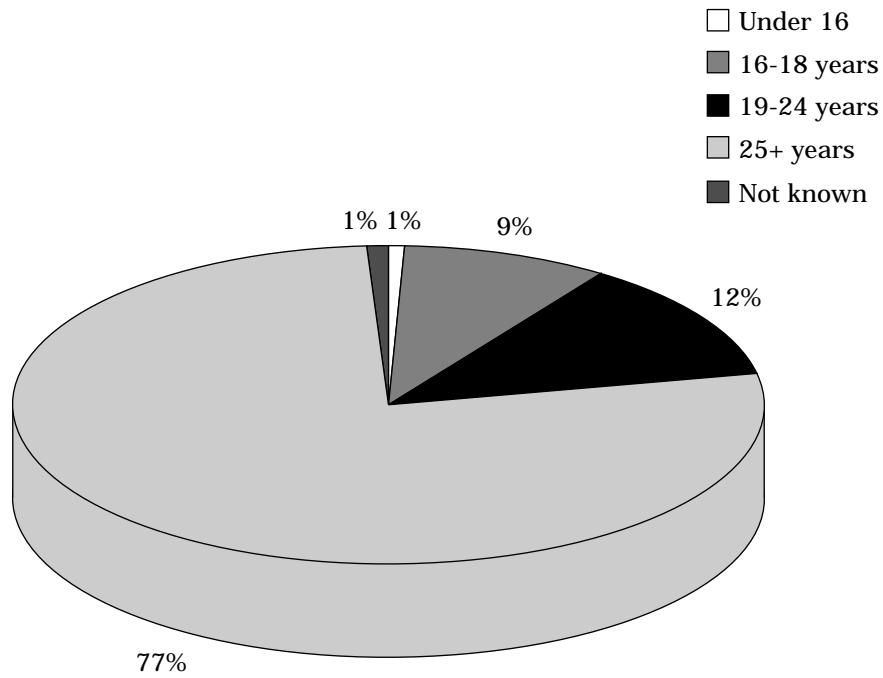
 - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1996)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)

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

Figure 1

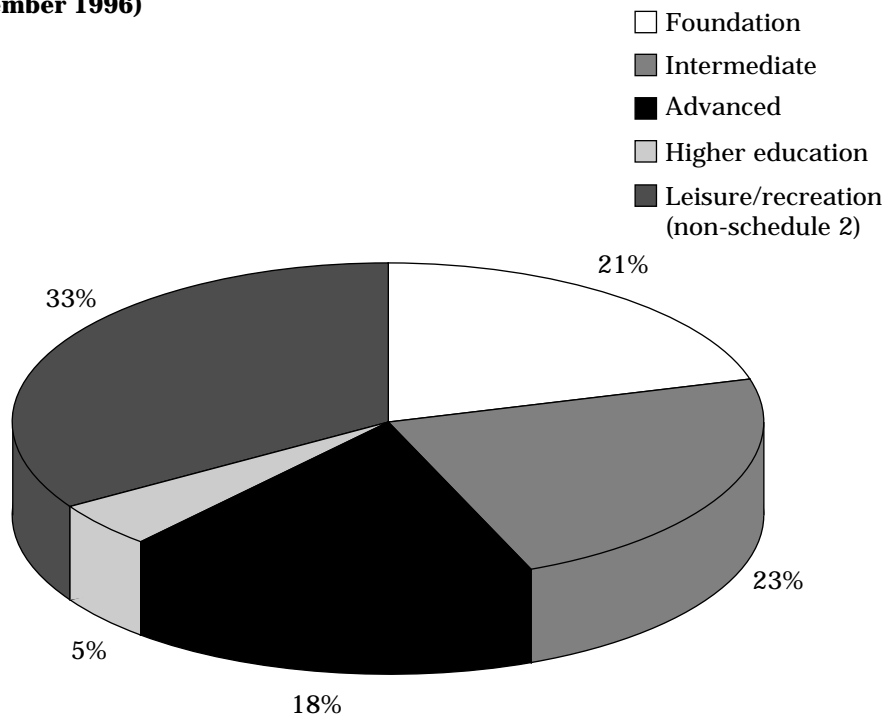
**North Nottinghamshire College: percentage student numbers by age
(as at November 1996)**



Student numbers: 8,740

Figure 2

**North Nottinghamshire College: percentage student numbers by level of study
(as at November 1996)**



Student numbers: 8,740

Figure 3

North Nottinghamshire College: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1996)

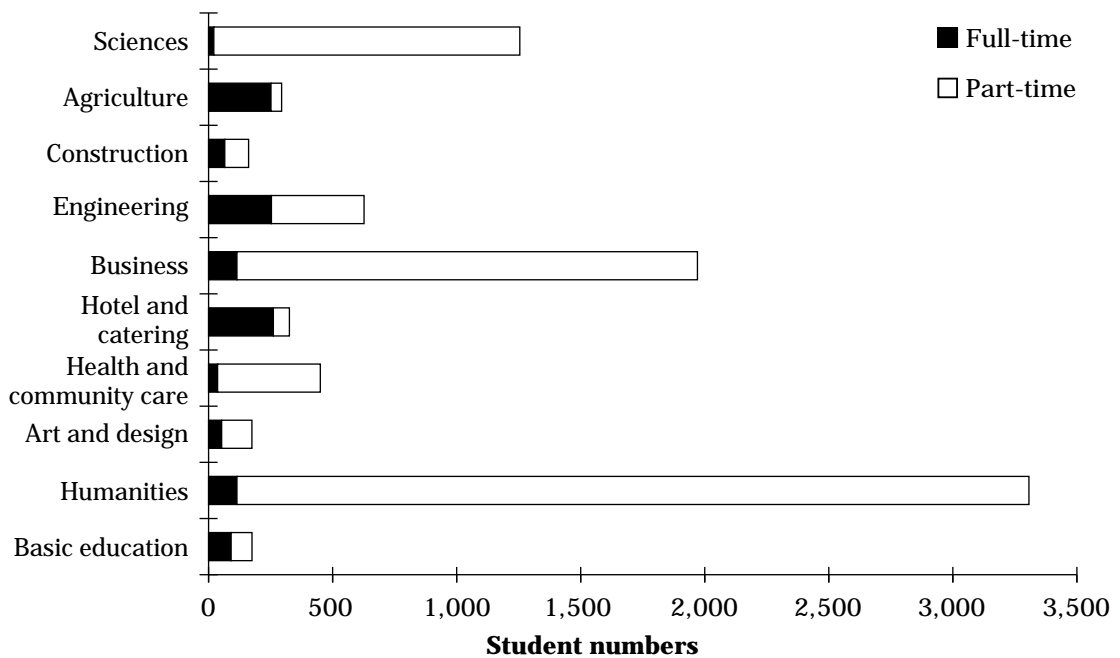


Figure 4

North Nottinghamshire College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at February 1997)

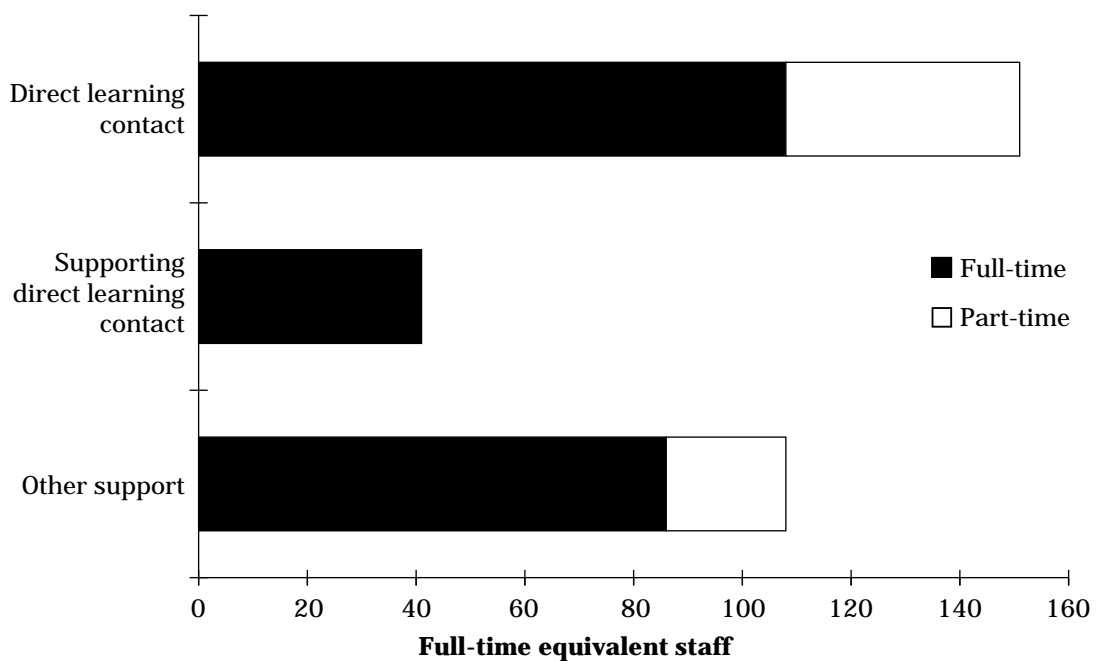
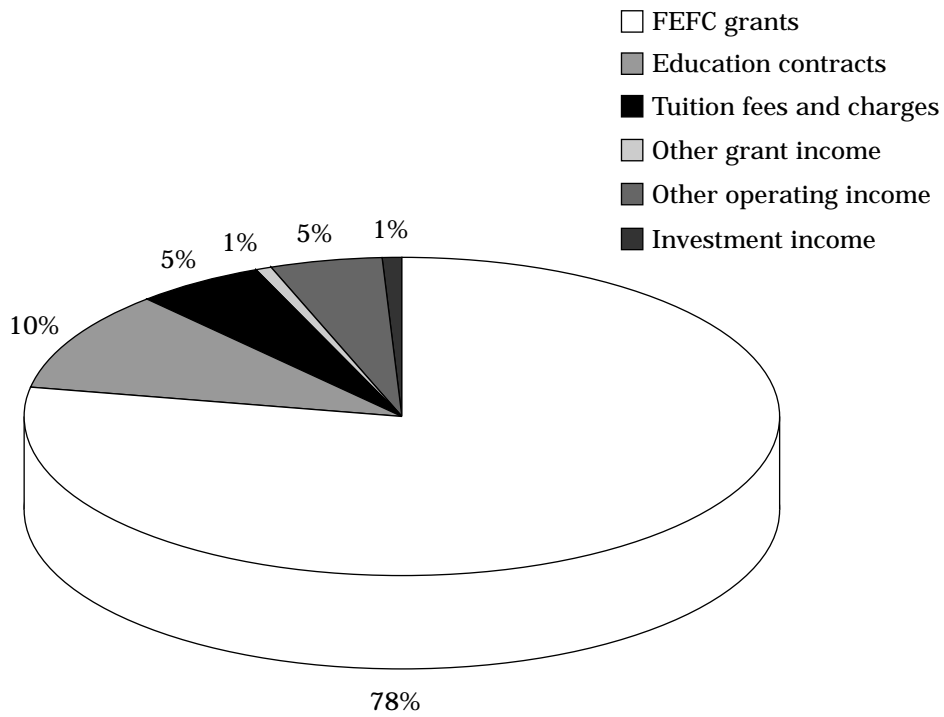


Figure 5

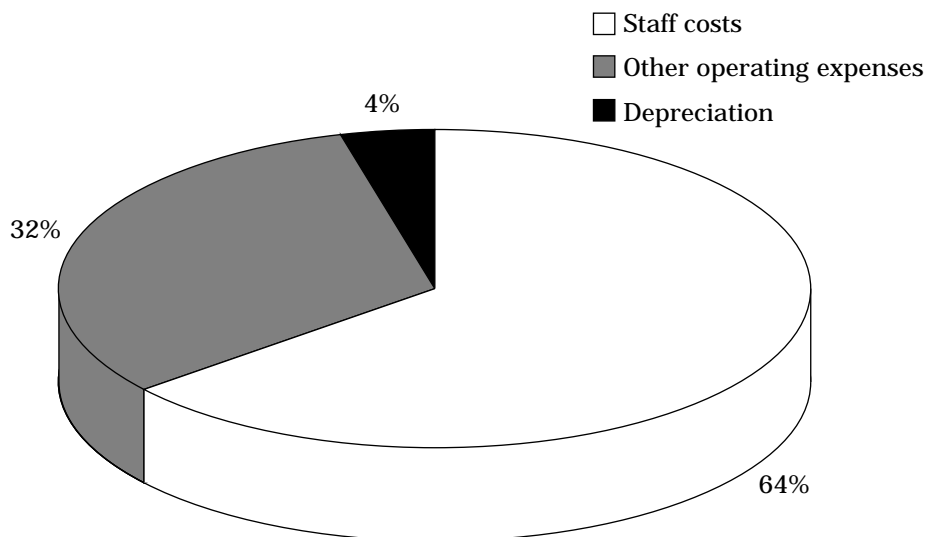
North Nottinghamshire College: income (for 12 months to July 1996)



Income: £8,259,000

Figure 6

North Nottinghamshire College: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)



Expenditure: £9,137,000

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