

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

North Tyneside College

July 1994

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

THE FURTHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL

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

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

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

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

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

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FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 50/94

NORTH TYNESIDE COLLEGE

NORTHERN REGION

Inspected March 1994

Summary

North Tyneside College is the largest provider of post-16 education in the metropolitan borough of North Tyneside. It offers a broad range of vocational and non-vocational courses. This includes provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and courses that lead directly to, or form part of, higher education provision at local universities. Some aspects of management style, and some of the management systems, create tensions within the college. College managers at all levels are assisted in their task by a well-developed computer-based information and administration system. Much of the teaching in the college is of high quality. Students are generally successful at achieving the qualifications for which they aim; success rates overall compare favourably with those of similar institutions. A minority of courses have high rates of student absence and/or students leave before completing their studies. There are inconsistencies in the operation of quality assurance procedures. The college lacks a clear focal point for communication with external bodies. A number of key policy statements require clarification and/or revision.

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		3
Students' recruitment, guidance and support		3
Quality assurance		3
Resources:	staffing	2
	equipment/learning resources	2
	accommodation	2

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science	2	Social care	2
Mathematics	3	Child studies	2
Information technology	2	Beauty & hairdressing	2
Engineering	2	Art & design	1
Business	3	English	2
Leisure & tourism	2	SLDD	2

CONTENTS

	Paragraph
Summary	
Introduction	1
The college and its aims	3
Responsiveness and range of provision	7
Governance and management	17
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	25
Teaching and the promotion of learning	32
Students' achievements	38
Quality assurance	45
Resources	54
Conclusions and issues	62
Figures	

INTRODUCTION

1 North Tyneside College was inspected during the spring term 1994. A team of six inspectors spent 30 inspector days in the college from 21 to 25 March. Specialist aspects of the college provision were inspected earlier in the term using an additional 33 inspector days. Inspectors observed classes and examined samples of students' written and practical work. They held discussions with governors, staff and students. They met local employers, head teachers and others with a strong interest in the community. These included representatives from North Tyneside Local Authority, Tyneside Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), Northumbria and Sunderland Universities and North Tyneside City Challenge.

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

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

3 North Tyneside College was established in 1963 as the major provider of further education in the metropolitan borough of North Tyneside. There are approximately 7,000 students enrolled at the college, of whom some 1,700 attend full-time. About 62 per cent of the students are female and more than 70 per cent are older than 19 years. Enrolments by age are shown in figure 1. Nine schools in the borough and Tynemouth Sixth Form College also provide for students aged 16-18. For several years prior to incorporation, the rate-capped council was obliged to reduce the college's budget and one consequence was a deterioration in equipment and buildings. There are 148 full-time teaching staff, of whom eight are on short-term contract. The equivalent of a further 27 full-time lecturers are employed on a part-time basis. The college has 46 full-time support staff and a further 32 full-time equivalent support staff are employed part-time (figure 2).

4 The college offers a wide range of vocational and general education programmes which students attend full-time or part-time. The majority of students study at intermediate or advanced level. Enrolments by level of study are shown in figure 3; enrolments expressed as full-time equivalents by mode of attendance and curriculum area are given in figure 4. The college is managed through a board of management which consists of the principal, the vice principal and three associate principals with responsibilities for student, staffing and curriculum matters. As a result of a restructuring of the college in January 1993 the courses are delivered through eight directorates, each headed by a director, with two deputies, one responsible for resources and another for the curriculum.

5 In December 1993, unemployment in North Tyneside was 11.7 per cent; just over 40 per cent of unemployed people have been out of work for more than one year while 11 per cent have been out of work for more than 3 years. The catchment area is varied: there are areas of high unemployment and deprivation in the west and relative affluence in Tynemouth and Whitley Bay on the coast to the east. The population of North Tyneside, especially those of working age, is declining. It has fallen by 8.9 per cent over the last 20 years, although the numbers of those of retirement age and of pre-school age have increased slightly. In November 1993, 64 per cent of the 1993-94 school leavers in North Tyneside were in full-time education and 14 per cent were in Youth Training schemes.

6 The college's stated mission is to provide access to a wide range of education and training opportunities for all members of the community. It aims to do this by developing to the full the abilities of its staff to ensure the delivery of a high quality, responsive programme of courses and services to all its students.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

7 North Tyneside College offers a broad range of courses in modes and styles of delivery which are appropriate to the needs of most potential clients and which provide good opportunities for students to progress to other courses. It is involved in a range of partnerships with external agencies although relationships are not always as positive as they could be. Current procedures relating to equal opportunities do not follow the college's current equal opportunities policy.

8 Courses are offered at different levels over a broad range of vocational areas, though the development of independent training organisations and poor recruitment has led to closure of the motor vehicle and construction provision from 1993. College managers consider the major growth areas to be art and design, the service sectors and those relating to social care. General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) at intermediate and advanced level are offered in all the five areas currently available nationally. Courses leading to a wide range of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) are delivered through the college's own realistic work environments or in partnership with local companies. New courses have been developed in response to identified needs; these include a management course for nurses which reflects some of the recent changes in the Health Service. A good choice of General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (GCE A level) and General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) courses is available covering 30 subject areas. Approximately 11 per cent of the college enrolments are in these programmes. In an enterprising initiative, groups of up to 100 children, aged 8 to 12, attend a Saturday morning junior college in which they use a range of the college's resources.

9 The provision is offered in a variety of attendance patterns to meet the differing requirements of the students. Some courses aimed specifically

at adults are timetabled at convenient times during the day and evening. Modularisation of the Nursery Nursing Examination Board (NNEB) course for mature students has led to increased flexibility in patterns of study and attendance. Most GCE A level courses are available over one or two years on a full-time or a part-time basis. Opportunities for open learning are currently limited largely to business studies subjects. The majority of the programmes of study do not enable a student's prior experience or learning to be accredited. Lecturers in the engineering directorate, however, are accrediting skills in the workplace and giving advice on the additional training required to enable employees to achieve NVQs.

10 College policy is that all full-time vocational courses should include periods of work experience. This is particularly effective for students on the pre-nursing course, who have the opportunity to acquire additional qualifications during their work placements. Where it has been difficult to find genuine placements, students have been placed in realistic work environments within the college. Overseas links exist for exchange visits with, and work placements in, Italy, Germany, France and Scandinavia. Work experience is not centrally co-ordinated and the employer database used does not always yield accurate information.

11 The college offers its students good opportunities for progress through levels of study; lecturers have worked productively with the local TEC on a project to identify progression routes for all 16-to-19 year olds in the borough. A separate course for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has helped some of them to progress to mainstream courses. Trainees from industry attending short courses in information technology have been attracted to further courses within the college. Courses which allow women to sample the college's science programmes have resulted in enrolments on the mainstream provision. A range of courses prepares adults for entry to higher education including a foundation year in science which guarantees entry for successful students to a degree programme at Sunderland University.

12 One of the directors has responsibility for industrial and commercial liaison. Needs are identified in partnership with business clients. Subsequently, the development of the provision for the clients becomes the responsibility of the directorate of the relevant curriculum area. This distribution of responsibility for dealing with external clients has contributed to difficulties in working relationships within some of the partnerships. Successful programmes have been developed recently for National Power and British Rail.

13 School liaison activities are the responsibility of another director. The five members of the school liaison team are each linked to particular local schools. Activities and procedures are generally well planned. There are taster weeks for prospective students and school careers staff are invited to open afternoons at the college. Good arrangements exist to keep students in touch with developments in college before they begin their courses. College staff are not welcome in all the schools and links between

lecturers and school teachers at curriculum level are weak. Schools do not receive information from the college on how their former students are progressing.

14 A number of partnerships with local organisations have been fruitful. The Riverside Centre project, funded by the local authority and City Challenge, will provide both child care facilities for the community and on-site practical training for the college's students and work-based trainees. The college is responsible for co-ordinating the training programmes. A management course for voluntary organisations was also funded by City Challenge. The Supported Training Education Programme for students with severe learning difficulties is delivered and funded in partnership with providers, employers, the TEC and the European Community. Representatives of the local community commented that the college lacked a single point of contact for dealing with them.

15 A clear marketing strategy has been devised with the help of external consultants and the marketing budget has been increased. Publicity materials are being co-ordinated to develop a coherent corporate image and raise local awareness of the college. A successful radio campaign has led to the college sponsoring a programme which targets a wider audience.

16 The college has an equal opportunities policy. However, many of the guidelines set out in the policy have not been implemented and the equal opportunities committee has been disbanded. Instead, all equal opportunity matters relating to students and staff are referred to the relevant associate principal, and dealt with through the management structure. There is no regular forum for staff and students to address issues relating to equal opportunities nor is there an independent channel for complaint or appeal.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

17 The governing body is strongly supportive of the college and its management. The college is managed firmly by the senior management team. The administrative systems generally monitor and help control the college's activities effectively. The directorates work well, and staff are highly committed to the college and its students. The morale of the teaching staff is adversely affected by some aspects of the style of management and management processes.

18 The 12 members of the governing body represent a range of backgrounds and interests including personnel, finance, engineering, construction and the health service. The principal is a full member of the board. At the time of the inspection there were no staff or student representatives. Subcommittees hold short meetings in a planned cycle immediately before the main meetings. Independent members find that other demands make it hard to visit the college apart from when attending governing body meetings. Both teaching and support staff would welcome opportunities to have more contact with board members.

19 The strategic plan provides a suitable framework for the college's continuing development. Governors and managers down to deputy director level were involved in its development. It was shared with other staff and used as the basis for developing the college's operational plan. Teaching staff worked in each directorate in a systematic and consultative process to produce an operational statement aligned to the college's overall targets. The college has a range of policy documents but some no longer reflect reality and others are too new to have had any impact.

20 The principal and vice-principal work well together and, with other members of the senior management team, provide firm leadership for the college's continuing development. Senior managers are committed to making the best provision for the students by maximising the use of resources including staff. The organisational structure introduced in January 1993 created a new layer of management and offered increased opportunities for promotion. Line management responsibilities are clear and understood. The structure is generally working well within directorates. Lecturers have a strong sense of identity and there is a good team spirit. In addition to their specific directorate roles, directors also teach and carry cross-college responsibilities. As a consequence, cross-college activities sometimes lack co-ordination and leadership. There is a strong perception amongst all levels of directorate staff that the directors and deputy directors carry a heavy workload.

21 A well-planned cycle of weekly and termly meetings includes all managers at deputy director level and above and a regular newsletter aids communication across the college. However, lecturing staff feel strongly that senior managers are remote. Significant decisions are not always communicated to staff in an appropriate or timely manner. A well-known system of 'pink' papers circulated only among senior staff reinforces concerns about communication and has led to confusion; for example, not all lecturers have been informed of the college's new marketing policy and some have continued to design and produce their own publicity leaflets.

22 Staff at all levels expressed a strong commitment to the college and to its students but lecturers said that they felt undervalued by college managers and that they had little opportunity to contribute to college decision-making processes or to exercise choice. Teaching staff perceive their relationships with senior managers to be tense and occasionally confrontational. Some are intimidated by aspects of the management style. The manner of communicating decisions is sometimes demotivating.

23 The college's computerised management information system is efficient and deals effectively with many of the college's information and administration needs. Applications, enrolments, course and subject statistics, part-time contracts, staff utilisation, examinations procedures and pay roll are among the functions operated centrally by the system. Many of the more mundane decision-making or monitoring activities traditionally handled at middle management levels are now carried out by administrative staff using the system. Some lecturers with course

responsibilities see the computerised management information system as meeting the requirements of senior management and administration rather than their own needs. Senior managers should consider how to enhance appreciation of the system and its potential, and involve course managers in its further development. Important information relating to attendance and retention rates is collated within directorates. It is not sufficiently reliable for use at college level.

24 In 1992-93 the college's unit of funding was £2,502. The median for colleges of general further education and tertiary colleges was £2,444. Summaries of the college's income and expenditure for 1993-94 are shown in figures 5 and 6. The college succeeded in meeting its 1993-94 target for growth. Resource allocations to directorates are made on the basis of target and actual full-time equivalent student enrolments and taught hours. There are effective arrangements for monitoring internal budgets.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

25 The guidance given to prospective students is generally satisfactory and the admission arrangements are well organised. There is a commitment to induction, and to tutorial and counselling support for students but their consistency and effectiveness could be improved.

26 The student information centre maintains packs of information relating to the college's courses and efficiently controls the whole admissions process from initial enquiry, through application and interview, to enrolment. Careful records are kept from the application stage onwards and follow-up work has been possible with applicants who failed to enrol at the college.

27 Students and schools were generally complimentary about the quality of guidance but there were instances when communications or representatives of the college gave conflicting messages. Arrangements for maintaining the interest of applicants are good. Parents are invited to the college, a newsletter is sent to all those who have been interviewed and taster sessions for applicants are run during the school half term. Postal enrolment has helped reduce delays at the beginning of the academic year.

28 One day at the end of the enrolment week in 1993 was spent on a general introduction to the college. This was followed by a week of induction to the relevant directorate and course. The initial day was hampered by the poor quality of the room used. The more specific inductions were organised by the separate directorates. The programmes suffered from repetitiveness, inconsistency and a lack of cohesion. There was an induction checklist to help staff design their induction programmes but it was sometimes ignored. All students were issued with a handbook which gives clear guidelines on the role of the tutor, records of achievement and other relevant matters.

29 Tests intended to identify students in need of additional literacy or numeracy support were carried out at the beginning of the year for all

full-time students but the results have not been followed by effective action. Mathematics and communications workshops opened in 1993 but they have yet to become an established part of the college's provision. The numbers of students using them on a drop-in basis is very small and students in some areas of the college are unaware that these facilities exist. The information technology workshop, opened at the same time, has a higher profile in the college. Many students benefit from using its facilities outside class hours. There is specific help for students with dyslexia and this support is well used.

30 All full-time students have a timetabled tutorial hour each week. The tutorial programme is negotiated with students. Materials are available to support tutors and a tutors' handbook provides guidance. In practice not all tutors use the handbook and the students' experience of tutorials varies widely between courses. The tutorial system lacks co-ordination and there is insufficient opportunity for lecturers to develop and improve this aspect of their work. Practices relating to records of achievement and student action plans also vary. Some courses use and maintain the previous school records of achievement as the basis for drawing up individual action plans for students; others make no use of them in the tutorial process. A computerised record of achievement proforma is available on the college network but not all students use it. A programme of leisure and sporting activities is offered, mainly on a Wednesday afternoon. Participation is voluntary. Students did not perceive it as an integral part of their curriculum.

31 The counselling and guidance service for students generally works well. There are two counsellors, one male and one female; one has a particular and appropriate expertise in advising on grants, the other on financial matters. Additional counselling is provided by a member of the teaching staff working for two hours per week and by the college chaplain on an occasional basis. The main counsellors have little contact with teaching staff and the use made of their services varies widely between students on different courses. College staff are not encouraged to use the counselling service. Careers education and advice is well covered by a specialist member of the teaching staff and by a local careers officer who works at the college for five hours a week. Counselling and careers advice interviews are organised through the student information centre and take place in general purpose rooms within the centre. The centre is some distance from some of the main sources of information which might be required for reference during an interview.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

32 Much of the teaching observed was of high quality. A total of 110 sessions were inspected in classrooms, workshops, laboratories and studios. Sixty per cent of the sessions had strengths which clearly outweighed any weaknesses.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE A/AS level		3	10	2	0	1	16
GCSE		1	4	6	0	0	11
GNVQ		0	3	2	0	0	5
NVQ		0	3	0	0	0	3
Other*		12	30	25	6	2	75
Total		16	50	35	6	3	110

* *Other programmes include non-GNVQ Business and Technician Education Council (BTEC) courses, City and Guilds of London Institute (CGLI) courses, and Royal Society of Arts (RSA) courses.*

33 The great majority of teaching sessions were planned well, within an overall scheme of work. Lecturers began by establishing the aims and objectives of the lesson and concluded with clear summaries of what had been covered. They set targets for students to achieve in their own work before the next class. Many of the sessions benefited from a range of learning materials, prepared beforehand by the individual lecturer or the subject team. Art and design tutors often approached theory through practical work. In one fashion class the chosen route was through pattern cutting and the success of the session derived in part from the detailed examples prepared in advance.

34 Students experienced a range of activities designed to maintain their interest and to increase their opportunities for learning. In social care courses, for example, sessions included group work and discussion, role play, peer appraisal, the use of video and audio-recorded material and lecturing. In most lessons, the work was suitably challenging for students and conducted at an appropriate pace. Lecturers checked individuals' understanding and progress on a regular basis and were encouraging when helping students in difficulty. In an electronics class, the students responded well to the lecturer's lively delivery and direct questioning. The lesson was punctuated by short tasks set to timed deadlines. It was conducted with good humour and the lecturer showed appreciation of students' questions and answers. Lecturers often drew on their commercial or industrial experience to enhance their teaching. The core subjects of information technology, mathematics and communications were generally well taught.

35 Weaknesses observed in the poorer sessions included instances of inadequate planning, a lack of rigour, too much dictation or extended exposition by teachers and a lack of basic teaching aids in classrooms.

36 Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities experienced good teaching. The high expectations of the teaching staff were reflected in the targets set and in the students' work. Students discussed their achievements in a confident and articulate way. In the basic numeracy

session, they were able to describe with some accuracy their individual strengths and weaknesses. The materials used in classes were varied and interesting, and enabled each student's individual needs to be met. Students' files included records of both internal and external accreditation.

37 Appropriate assessment strategies were used in all the curriculum areas inspected. The aims, deadlines, marking schemes and other details of the assignment programmes were generally clear. The standards expected of the students were well-suited to their particular course and level of study. Assignments were often an integral part of the learning process as well as an assessment tool. For example, information technology students had set up their own criminal record databases after their interests had first been stimulated by a visit to the local police computer system: the task was to use their database to solve a crime; the work was supported by a clear scenario including a questionnaire to prompt ideas; and there were clear guidelines on how to evaluate their own work. Tutors' marking of assessed work is accurate and generally constructive. In English, the grades awarded are explained to the students verbally and in writing. Marked work is usually returned promptly. Lecturers keep good records of each student's progress.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

38 Students respond well to their teachers as they develop their personal, academic and professional skills. They achieve good results and most who complete their courses are successful in finding employment or are able to continue their studies. High levels of student withdrawals and absence from classes affect a variety of courses.

39 Students, generally, appear highly motivated and enthusiastic. Those on art and design courses spoke of their increased self-confidence and their raised career aspirations. Adult learners on the courses designed to prepare them for entry to higher education have clear personal goals and ambitions. In practical sessions students work with confidence and good levels of skill. Role play and group work on the social care courses enable the students to gain awareness and understanding of key skills and to value each other as partners in learning. Good teaching helped engineering trainees who had entered the college with a poor academic record to achieve NVQs. Art and design students were using computers in the studio environment with skill and confidence.

40 The majority of students have satisfactory attendance records. Some courses achieve consistently good attendance levels; this is typified by one group of second year students of nursery nursing where the average attendance at all teaching sessions from enrolment in September to mid-March was 89 per cent. A minority of courses suffer poor attendance rates. In the BTEC first award in engineering two groups were amalgamated mid-session because of poor attendance and early drop-outs. The average attendance rate for sessions in the five week period following amalgamation still only reached 64 per cent.

41 Student retention rates are generally satisfactory but a number of courses, particularly those at intermediate level, experience a high number of withdrawals. In the BTEC first diploma in information technology, for example, over 20 per cent of the enrolled students had left by mid-session.

42 Entrants to GCE A level and GCSE examinations do well in comparison with those from many other general further education colleges. In 1993, the college's overall pass rate at GCE A level was 73 per cent. This was lower than the national average for all entrants of 77 per cent but was better than the average for general further education and tertiary colleges, which was 66 per cent. The average points score for those 16 to 18 year-olds taking two or more subjects was 8.9 (where A = 10, E = 2). This was the highest score achieved by any general, non-tertiary, further education college in the region. Nationally, it places the college in the middle third of all institutions within the further education sector. Particularly good results were achieved in some subjects. Geology students achieved a pass rate of 93 per cent with 57 per cent obtaining grades A or B. In art 91 per cent achieved passes, with 36 per cent at grades A or B. Other subjects had poorer results. These included GCE A level economics, which had a pass rate of 27 per cent with no grades A or B and some GCSE subjects in which there was a high proportion of candidates re-sitting their examinations.

43 Results on vocational courses were generally good. In BTEC courses, 89 per cent of those registered for the final assessment in 1993 gained their awards. Some courses achieved exceptional results. For example, all the students who completed the BTEC national diplomas in science (health studies), business and finance, travel and tourism and design were successful in achieving their qualification. Some course results are poor. In the BTEC first award course in engineering only 33 per cent of those completing their studies were successful in their final assessment. The overall success rates were significantly higher than the incorrect figure quoted for the college's vocational courses in the 1993 school and college performance tables.

44 Many of the courses successfully create opportunities for students to continue to develop their potential in further or higher education or in employment. Of 126 students entering the 1993 examinations on the one-year GCE A level programme, 66 per cent progressed to higher education, 13 per cent found employment and only 7 per cent remained unemployed in the autumn. Students on intermediate level courses often went on to a more advanced level; 78 per cent of those who completed BTEC first diplomas continued their studies. In advanced level vocational courses the majority found employment or progressed into higher education. For example, most students (91 per cent) graduating from the BTEC national diploma in travel and tourism entered employment as did those from the NNEB course (87 per cent); ninety-three per cent of those leaving the second year of the BTEC national diploma in design won places on to higher education courses. The great majority of students on the part-time access course also achieved places on higher education courses.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

45 Quality assurance procedures within the directorates are generally satisfactory but there are inconsistencies in practice across the college. Sound processes are being developed to monitor and evaluate the work of each directorate and a start has been made in evaluating systems which support the delivery of the curriculum.

46 General quality issues are understood by most staff within directorates and the majority are actively involved in ensuring the quality of their courses. The monitoring, evaluation and improvement strategies adopted are often based on procedures established by external validating bodies. Well-organised review meetings take place regularly. Recommended actions for improvement at a college level are communicated through line managers. Some course leaders feel that the responses from senior management are inadequate or poorly communicated.

47 The principal monitors all formal minutes of meetings, including course meetings, and receives a monthly written report from each directorate and from the managers of support staff. A potentially powerful peer review system has been instituted recently; the work of one directorate is evaluated by the managers of another on an annual cycle. Directors find these processes informative and influential. However, there are still areas of activity within directorates where good practice needs to be shared.

48 The college lacks a consistent framework for evaluating the effectiveness of the college's programmes. A common set of basic performance indicators has not been identified and therefore no related targets can be set. A performance and review sub-committee of the academic board established in September 1992, has devised a preliminary action plan relating to quality assurance and a start has been made in developing and utilising some whole-college procedures. A range of customer evaluation proforma has been developed. In 1993-94 students were asked to complete questionnaires relating to their experiences on entry and then during their course. Employers who send students to the college have been asked about their perceptions of the college. Comments relating to specific courses are referred to the appropriate course co-ordinators. Action has already been taken over some areas of identified concern.

49 The college has started to address the task of assessing and assuring the quality of its wider services. External consultants have been employed to evaluate the quality of the adult provision, the library service, the student information centre the cleaning provision and its buildings. A survey of user trends carried out by the library staff has been used to determine improvements in provision.

50 The development of a student charter is seen by the college as an indication of its caring attitude towards students. A further education charter co-ordinating group has produced an early draft of the charter intended for publication in July 1994. The national Charter for Further

Education has been well-publicised and distributed to staff and students; the student union has provided versions in several languages. An employers' charter has been developed through a Tyneside TEC initiative and this could usefully be developed further.

51 The college's commitment to the Investors in People initiative has not been translated into progress; staff awareness of this initiative and its accreditation processes is limited. Upon incorporation, the college's financial allocation for staff development was increased from 0.8 per cent to 1.7 per cent of the available budget. The staff-development programme is actively managed by an associate principal who has recently devised a staff-development policy and established a staff-development committee. The priorities for staff-development activities were determined by collating requirements put forward by directors. Teaching staff within the directorates do not perceive that these priorities match their needs.

52 The current programme of staff-development activities focuses on: training for assessors of vocational qualifications; individual and team preparation for the increasing GNVQ programme; and training for middle managers. Managers at deputy director level and above, and line managers in the support staff, have undertaken management development activities. College governors attended some of these events. All support staff have undertaken a training session to consider how to improve the quality of the service they provide. There is no consistent framework for evaluating and disseminating the effectiveness of staff-development programmes.

53 Staff appraisal guidelines have been developed, but systematic appraisal of teaching staff has yet to be introduced. Lecturers on fixed-term contracts have been appraised before being offered new contracts; the process included assessment of classroom performance and reports from the directorate currently employing them. Such positive developments need handling sensitively if staff being appraised are not to feel unduly threatened. External consultants have been appointed to deliver appraisal training now that local negotiations have been concluded.

RESOURCES

Staffing

54 Lecturing staff are generally appropriately qualified and experienced for the courses they teach and they are familiar with curriculum developments. Many have considerable experience outside the world of education and a large majority of staff hold a recognised teaching qualification.

55 In certain subject areas the proportion of part-time teachers is unsatisfactorily high. The college is taking steps to reduce these. Part-time staff are often well integrated into the life of the college through induction procedures and regular involvement in the discussion of course issues. Following incorporation there has been considerable expansion of support staff. They undertake those tasks previously the responsibility of

the local education authority and support some administrative activities in the directorates.

Equipment/learning resources

56 The specialist equipment used to support teaching is generally adequate in both quality and quantity. It is well maintained and some obsolete items have recently been replaced. The college's buildings services manager is responsible overall for the equipment stock. An inventory of the main items exist but it should be completed in more detail if it is to be used as part of an equipment management/replacement policy. Some teaching activities suffered from poor basic classroom facilities, for example lack of an overhead projector or unsatisfactory wallboards; a programme of updating and enhancement is underway. Some classroom furniture needs repair or has reached the end of its useful life.

57 The quality of the library book stock varies between subject areas. Certain courses, for example those in science, benefit from a wide selection of up-to-date books. In some subjects, the stock is outdated. There is good provision of general CD-ROM databases and the facility is well used. The library staff are improving links between the library service and the teaching teams.

58 Although the college is somewhat under-resourced for information technology, and some computers are outdated, efficient use is made of the equipment it possesses. Recent improvements include implementation of open-access facilities through the acquisition of an additional 40 networked general purpose computers and the development of a smaller specialist network for art and design. Much use is made of college computer networks in teaching areas and for administrative purposes. The internal electronic mail is in routine use by administration staff and senior managers. College managers have shown foresight in installing a fibre-optic communications network to enable college-wide facilities to be improved.

Accommodation

59 The main college campus is at Wallsend, with annexes at North Shields and Whitley Bay. The present accommodation varies widely in quality and suitability for purpose; some buildings have significant deficiencies that directly affect the students' experience. The current location of the provision across the college's sites disadvantages some students educationally and socially. College managers recognise these issues and have developed a comprehensive strategic plan to address them. A new centre is currently being built on the Wallsend campus to accommodate all visual and performing arts and to absorb the courses based at the Whitley Bay site, following its planned closure in summer 1994. In summer 1995, all the work currently based at the Spring Terrace site in North Shields will be transferred to the Wallsend campus or to the Riverside Centre. The existing building stock is well utilised. Further major new teaching accommodation is in an advanced stage of planning.

60 The exterior of the main building at Wallsend is visually unattractive; commissioned refurbishment work includes reglazing, new external cladding and roof repairs. The existing reception area provides an attractive focus on first entering the college, and this is shortly to be enhanced by substantial improvements to the main entrance. Access to the college for those with restricted mobility is generally satisfactory and further improvements are planned. Much external work has already been completed in fencing the site, providing footpaths and fully enclosing the walkways between the buildings. Security has been notably improved. There has been a significant reduction in vandalism and both staff and students now feel more secure.

61 Some teaching rooms are unsuitable for their present use; they are narrow and cramped, and many fail to provide a stimulating learning environment. Internal decoration is generally good except at Spring Terrace. The library, refectory, open-access workshops and student information centre are attractive areas, well-furnished and decorated.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

62 The college is working toward the aims set out in its mission statement. More attention needs to be paid to the needs of its staff and some of its clients. The particular strengths of the college include:

- firm direction and control by management assisted by an effective computer management information system
- much sound teaching by staff who show a clear commitment to the college and its students
- a good level of students achievements in both vocational and non-vocational courses
- a broad range of provision, delivered in a variety of modes to suit the needs of different clients.

63 A number of weaknesses need to be addressed. These include:

- aspects of management style and management systems which create tensions that adversely affect staff morale and attitudes
- the variable nature and quality of the tutorial support for students
- a lack of consistency and common practice in quality assurance procedures
- the status of some current policy documents.
- poor retention rates and high levels of student absence on some courses.

FIGURES

-
- 1 Percentage enrolments by age (at March 1994)

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

 - 3 Percentage enrolments by level of study (at March 1994)

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

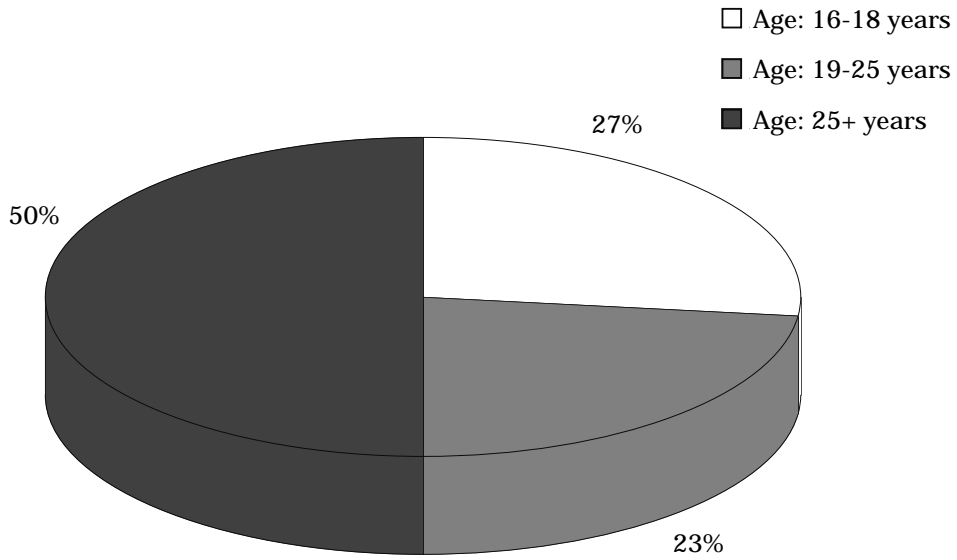
 - 5 Recurrent income (12 months to July 1994)

 - 5 Estimated expenditure (12 months to July 1994)

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

Figure 1

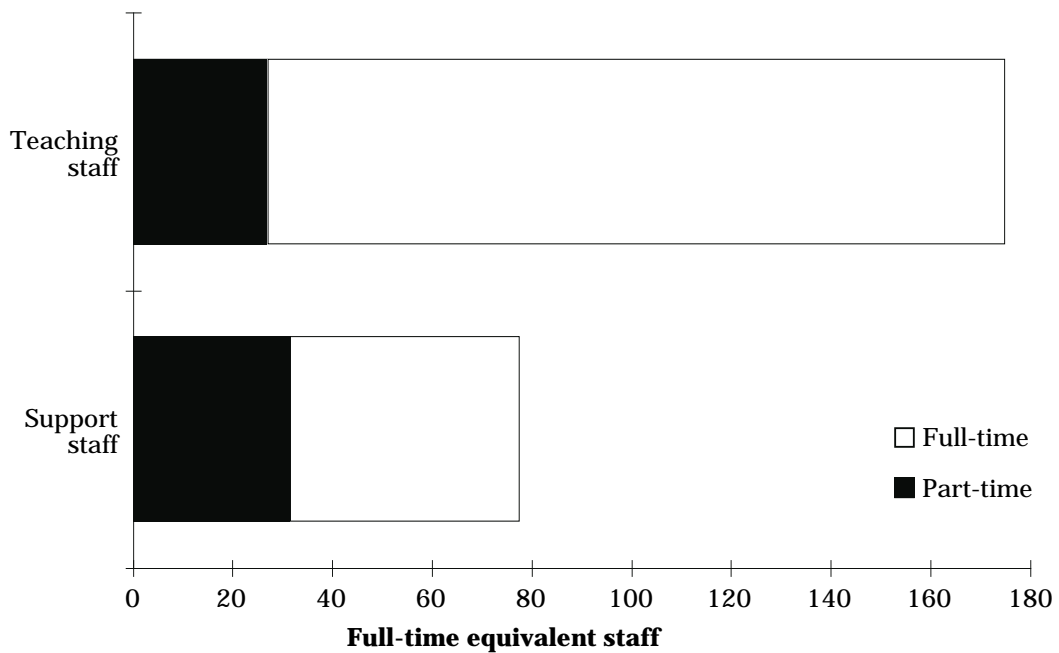
North Tyneside College: percentage enrolments by age (at March 1994)



Enrolments: 6,982

Figure 2

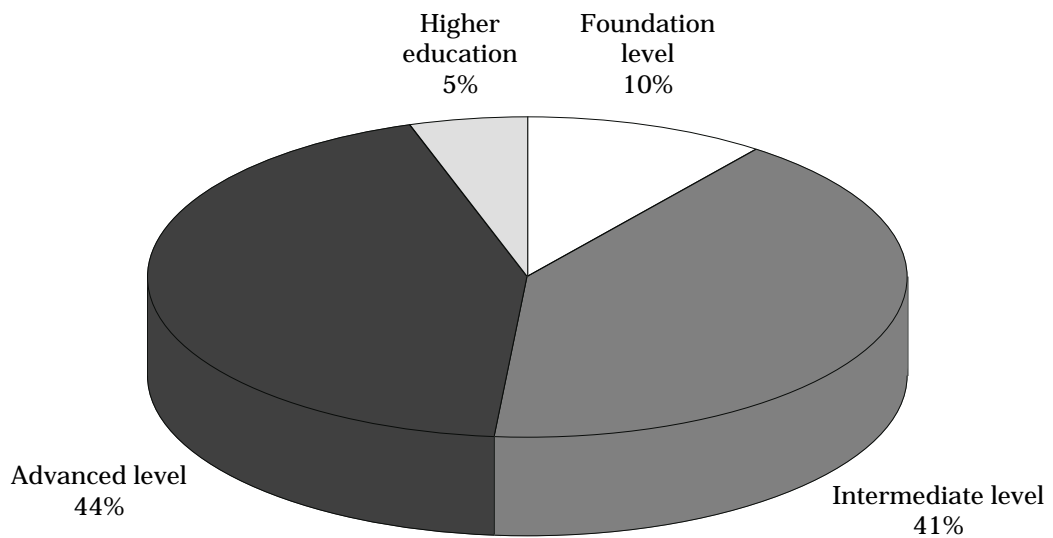
North Tyneside College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1993-94)



Full-time equivalent staff: 253

Figure 3

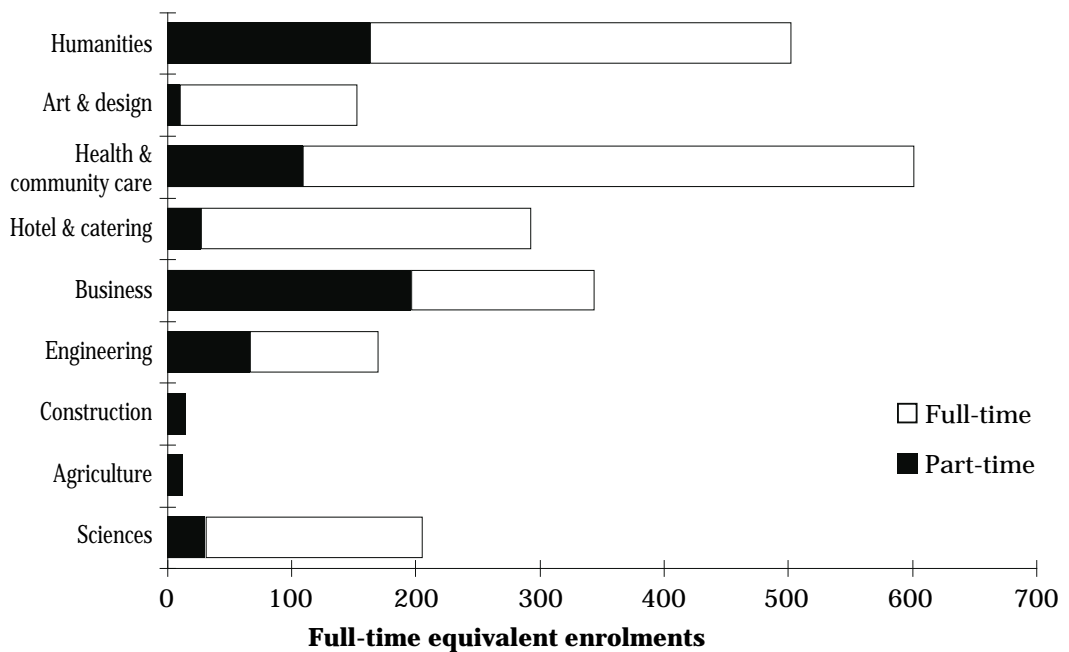
North Tyneside College: percentage enrolments by level of study (at March 1994)



Enrolments: 6,982

Figure 4

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



Full-time equivalent enrolments: 2,299

Figure 5

North Tyneside College: recurrent income (12 months to July 1994)

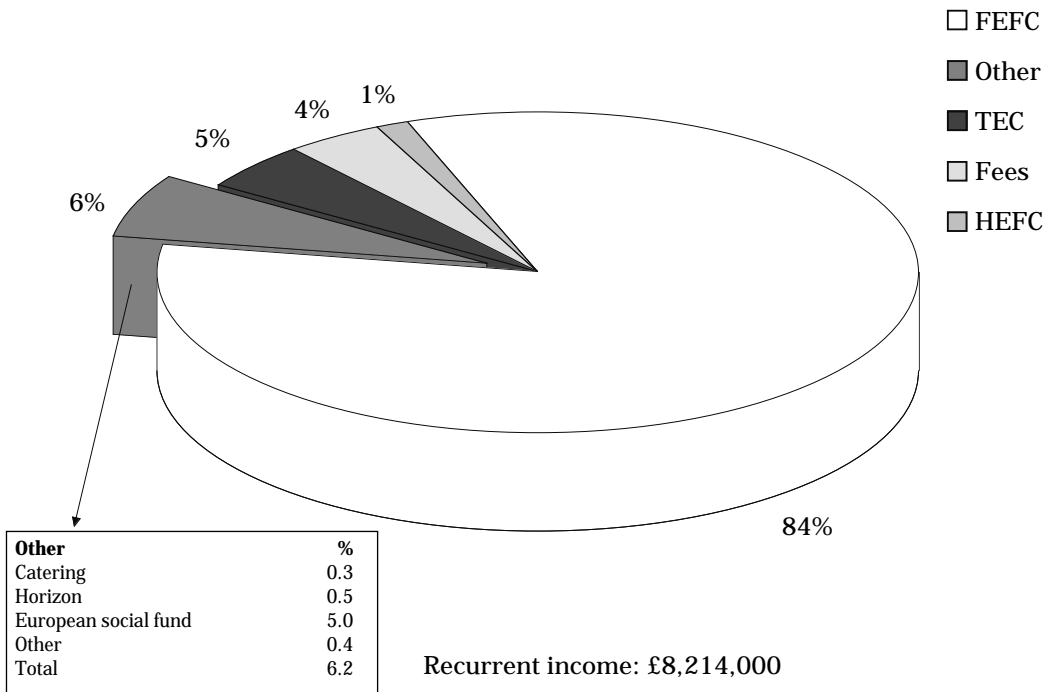
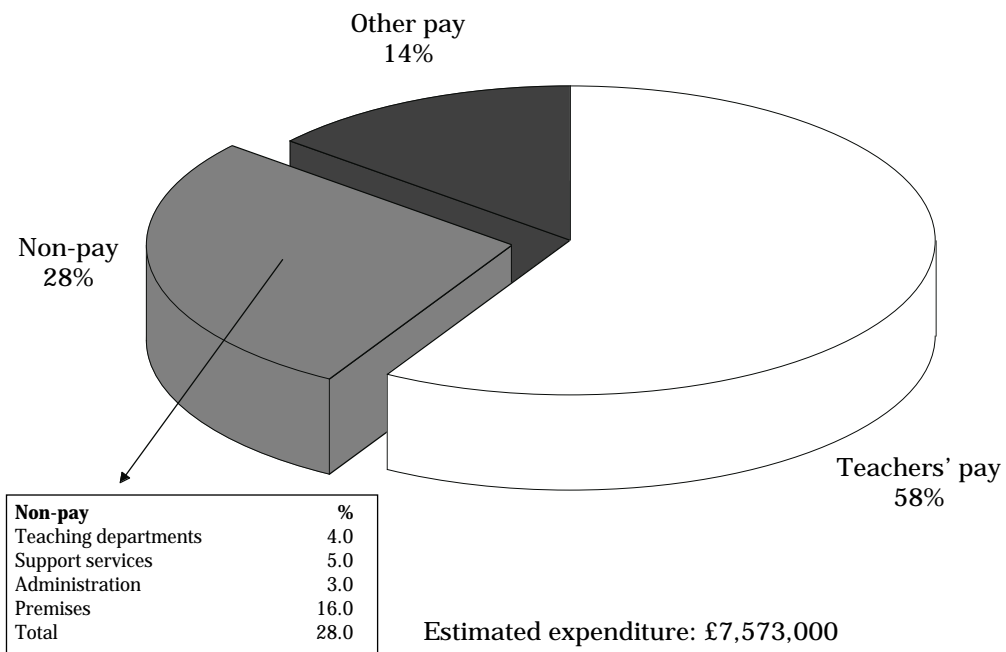


Figure 5

North Tyneside College: estimated expenditure (12 months to July 1994)



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