

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

**Norwich City
College of
Further and
Higher Education**

September 1996

**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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GRADE DESCRIPTORS

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

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

College grade profiles 1993-95

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

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 117/96

NORWICH CITY COLLEGE OF FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION EASTERN REGION

Inspected September 1995-May 1996

Summary

Norwich City College of Further and Higher Education offers a wide range of courses which provide many opportunities for students to progress from further to higher education and employment. The college has expanded its courses to provide opportunities for adults and for those from groups which have not usually been involved with further education. It works in partnership with local employers and external agencies and is closely involved in local economic development and regeneration. There are effective links with schools, colleges and universities. The college is well managed and the corporation is committed to its development. Student services provide comprehensive support for students. The procedures for self-assessment are rigorous. Standards of teaching are generally good. Students achieve high standards in their practical work. Most staff are well qualified and effectively deployed. The library and learning support centre is well resourced. The college should address: the limited use of performance indicators; the management of some areas of the curriculum; the monitoring of action plans; the low retention and pass rates on some courses; the poor quality of some accommodation; the limited communal facilities for students and inadequate information technology resources.

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

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Sciences, mathematics and computing	3	Health and social care	2
Construction	2	Hairdressing and beauty therapy	2
Engineering	3	Creative arts	2
Business and management	2	Humanities and continuing education	2
Hotel and catering	2	Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	3
Leisure and tourism	2		

INTRODUCTION

1 Norwich City College of Further and Higher Education was inspected between September 1995 and May 1996. Twenty-two inspectors visited the college using 80 working days. Enrolment and induction arrangements were observed in September 1995 and an inspector attended a corporation meeting in March 1996. A total of 300 classes were observed, involving some 2,969 students. Students' written and practical work was also examined. The Higher Education Funding Council for England was represented in the team of inspectors for the inspection of aspects of cross-college provision. There were discussions with members of the corporation, senior managers, staff and students. Meetings were also held with representatives from external groups including Norfolk and Waveney Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), Anglia Polytechnic University, partner schools, local community groups and employers, Norwich City Council and Norfolk County Council. An extensive range of documentation on the college and its curriculum provision was inspected.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Norwich City College of Further and Higher Education is a large general further education college located close to the city centre. Technical education in Norwich can be traced back to the opening of a new technical school for the city in 1891. The college today provides a range of general and vocational courses for school leavers and adults. In addition to work funded by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC), the college offers several higher national diploma and degree programmes funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England. It also specialises in prison education; college staff teach at prisons located in Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire.

3 The college provided over 800 courses in 1995-96, ranging from craft qualifications to postgraduate degrees. The degree programmes in hospitality management date from 1986 when they were validated by the former Council for National Academic Awards. Since 1992, the majority of the college's full-time higher level courses have been validated by Anglia Polytechnic University. The college is one of four regional colleges of Anglia Polytechnic University. Students are encouraged to transfer from programmes at the college to programmes at the university. There are also links with the University of East Anglia. In November 1995, there were 13,415 students on roll, excluding students on full-cost courses. Over 2,500 of these were on higher education courses, including postgraduate and doctoral research students. About a quarter of the college's students were in the 16 to 18 age range. In many subject areas, there are opportunities for students to enrol on further education courses and subsequently progress to higher national diploma or degree qualifications. The curriculum of the college covers all of the FEFC's programme areas. Student numbers by age, by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3, respectively. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

4 The college draws most of the students on its further education courses from Norfolk, including over half from the city of Norwich alone. Across the county there are 52 secondary schools and 22 of these currently have sixth forms. The post-16 full-time education participation rate in the area has increased significantly from 46 per cent in 1989 to 70 per cent in 1995. For some higher education courses in hotel and catering, business, engineering and humanities, the college recruits students on a national basis. There are five other FEFC sector colleges located in the county: Great Yarmouth College of Further Education, East Norfolk Sixth Form College, Paston Sixth Form College, Easton College and Norfolk College of Arts and Technology. There are two other providers of higher education in Norwich, the University of East Anglia and Norwich School of Art and Design.

5 Norfolk is a predominantly rural county with a population of approximately 750,000. The largest employment sectors are agriculture and food-related industries, hotels and catering, and personal services. Many of the area's largest employers, such as Norwich Union, Nestlé and Anglia Television, are based in Norwich. The local economy has a large proportion of small firms, mainly in the service sector. Road and rail links are generally poor across the region. During the recent economic recession the area served by the college has experienced a rise in unemployment in common with the rest of East Anglia. In March 1996, the unemployment rate in the Norwich travel-to-work area was 6.3 per cent. This was lower than the average rate of unemployment for the county as a whole. The Norfolk and Waveney TEC predict rising employment in construction and tourism, and a continued decline in employment in manufacturing and agriculture.

6 In its mission statement the college describes itself as a dynamic community which is seeking to become the prime access point to lifelong learning and achievement within the community it serves. The mission also stresses the college's aim of contributing to the economic health, wealth and community life of its region. In 1994, the college translated its mission statement into a series of goals for the year 2000. The most significant of these is the goal of doubling the number of individuals achieving nationally recognised qualifications through the college by the beginning of the next century.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

7 Good progress has been made towards reaching the student enrolment targets set for the year 2000. Between 1993-94 and 1995-96 enrolments rose by over 25 per cent. Much of this growth has resulted from successful initiatives to attract adult students. For example, in 1995-96 a new programme called 'Connections' has recruited over 800 adults who wish to return to study. Students can join in September, January or April and choose from over 15 basic skills and vocational options. Another initiative, 'Turning on the Lights' increased adult enrolments on a new range of evening courses by over 1,000.

8 There is a wide range of programmes. The college offers over 30 National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), mainly at levels 2 and 3. The General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) programme includes six foundation, seven intermediate and eight advanced courses. Twenty-nine subjects are offered at General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level), including some which are not usually offered, such as science in the environment. Some subjects can also be taken for the GCE advanced supplementary (AS). Twenty-two General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) subjects are also offered on a full-time basis. In most curriculum areas there are good opportunities for progression from foundation level studies to higher education. Timetabling arrangements make it difficult for some students to take subjects which are additional to their main programme of study or to participate in the enrichment activities which are offered, such as sport and drama.

9 There is a wide range of pre-foundation courses for students with moderate or severe learning difficulties. In some vocational areas, for example, construction, creative arts and business studies, students can progress to foundation GNVQ courses. The college has recognised the need to extend these opportunities. There is effective support across the college for students with physical disabilities. Individual needs are carefully assessed and the college makes every effort to provide an appropriate environment and the equipment necessary to enable each student to undertake a programme of study successfully.

10 Some courses are designed to attract people from groups which have not usually entered further education. There are access courses to further education in social science, natural sciences and business technology. Courses specifically for women include 'Women into Management' and 'New Opportunities for Women'. For the 'Women into Technology' course there are opportunities to work alongside a 'buddy' as a means of trying out the course. Other programmes have been designed to meet the needs of particular students. For example, an evening 'bridging' course enables unqualified construction workers to acquire the knowledge necessary to progress to a higher national certificate course in construction. The college is beginning to develop more flexible forms of study in order to attract students who would otherwise be unable to embark on a course. These include: modular programmes; resources specifically designed to enable students to work on their own; open learning, whereby students work on their own away from college and visit their tutors at times which suit them; and the accreditation of students' prior learning. The college offers the assessment of students' prior learning for higher education courses and plans to extend this to further education courses. Assessment centres are established in health and community care, the hotel school and the management centre.

11 The college has established itself as a key local partner for economic development and regeneration. It works closely with Norwich City Council, the TEC, Norwich Area Development Agency and other agencies on a

range of initiatives to meet the future skill needs of the area. The college contributes training expertise and provides a research facility for the identification of education and training needs. It has also developed collaborative working relationships with other further education colleges. For example, in partnership with three other colleges, it has developed video conferencing facilities with assistance from the government-supported competitiveness fund. Work with organisations in the local community is expanding. For example, the college is about to start a return to study programme with a large insurance company to enable employees to obtain formal qualifications. The college has a large contract to provide education services within several prisons in the region. A wide range of courses is offered to meet the needs of prisoners.

12 The college's marketing strategy is closely linked to its corporate goals. Publicity and promotion campaigns are clearly targeted after thorough research and are monitored and evaluated. For example, the college collaborated with the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) in a national research project on GNVQs which led to a campaign to increase awareness of GNVQs in the local area. The marketing team liaises with student services and publicity materials are attractive and helpful. Since 1991, the college has won annual marketing awards from the Higher Education Information Services Trust. In 1995, it received a trophy for the best stand at the Royal Norfolk Show. The college carefully targets and schedules its public relations and advertising throughout the year. Following the publication of GCSE results in August the college has offered information and guidance by telephone. It also makes arrangements for students wishing to come in to the college for advice over the bank holiday weekend.

13 Productive links have been developed with local employers. The college has established a subsidiary company, City College Enterprises, through which it has successfully tendered for training and consultancy contracts. All larger customers are given an account manager to provide a single point of contact. An innovative project has been developed with a major bank to provide training in finance, marketing and team leadership to small businesses within the county. The scheme has attracted other high street banks and has been replicated in Suffolk. Over 90 organisations are represented on 16 curriculum advisory committees which cover most programme areas. There are no formal employer links in art, science and mathematics.

14 There is some effective liaison with schools. College staff attend parents' evenings, industry days and higher education events at over 20 schools within the county. The college draws on TEC funds to provide expertise and resources to enable Heartsease School to offer a GNVQ in health and social care. A collaborative arrangement to offer a range of GNVQs at Blyth-Jex School is planned to start in September. Not all programme areas have developed strong links with schools. Examples of good practice occur in construction and hotel and catering where, in

collaboration with local schools, initiatives have been developed which promote awareness of employment opportunities within these vocational areas. The college holds open days and week-long 'link' courses to provide students with experience of college life and to facilitate progression from school to college for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The 'Connections' programme is run in two local schools.

15 There is a strong commitment in the college to equality of opportunity. There are many examples of good practice in the provision of support to individual staff and students. There is a comprehensive and fully-documented policy on equal opportunities and appropriate accompanying procedures. Students have their own policy document. Staff-development sessions have been well received. Curriculum areas have developed action plans and have achieved some positive results. For example, in construction an initiative to attract more female students has resulted in an increase in the number of female enrolments.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

16 The college benefits from the enthusiasm, commitment and expertise of its governors. Corporation membership is drawn from public and private sector businesses, secondary and higher education, the local community, staff, and students. One of the members is the nominee of the TEC. The work of the corporation is supported by a comprehensive and effective set of committees. The chairs of the committees have sound knowledge of their areas of responsibility. In the corporation meeting observed there was rigorous consideration of reports from the principal and from college committees. Members carefully considered the impact of management decisions on students.

17 The corporation has sharpened the terms of reference of its committees and established a code of conduct and a register of members' interests. A members' handbook clearly lays out the responsibilities and the processes of governance. The corporation is committed to continuous improvement of its own performance. A recent self-evaluation identified the need for more members to have closer links with staff and students in curriculum areas. The corporation has established a strategic forum to provide advice on strategic issues and agree performance indicators. A summary of the college's achievements is published in an annual review.

18 The college has achieved its targets for growth in the last two years. College planning is informed by new curriculum opportunities identified at school and centre level. The strategic plan provides clear objectives grouped under six themes: excellence, student participation and achievement, individual staff development, financial performance, innovation, and community involvement. Operating statements identify those responsible for their achievement. Schools and centres produce their own development plans. The college has defined a comprehensive set of performance indicators to measure its success but these have not yet been fully implemented.

19 The first phase of a new organisational structure was introduced in January 1996. The senior management executive consists of the principal, two assistant principals, responsible for curriculum delivery and human resource development, respectively, and the director of finance. Three other senior managers have responsibility for quality systems, professional development and marketing. Together with the senior management executive, they form the cross-college management team. Curriculum organisation is based around a number of teaching units referred to as schools or centres. Some large schools are being replaced by a number of smaller centres. At the time of inspection there were six schools and six centres. Each teaching unit has a head who is responsible for the leadership of a number of course teams. Cross-college services are organised into 10 service units. There were a number of minor difficulties during the early days of the new centres. These were associated with the redistribution of rooms and the devolution of the budget.

20 There has been careful management of the changes being made in the college. The restructuring proposals were the subject of an extensive consultation exercise. Staff were provided with opportunities to debate the proposed new structure and its effect on their curriculum area. Staff consider the consultation was genuine and open. They welcome the clear vision and direction provided by the senior management executive. The management style encourages curriculum innovation to which all staff can contribute. To drive forward specific college-wide initiatives, a number of key development project teams have been established. They have been effective in involving a wide cross-section of staff and establishing common practices. Outcomes of their work include the establishment of the 'Connections' programme and the new tutorial policy.

21 The quality of management at unit level is variable. Within many schools and centres the curriculum and student guidance are well managed, team meetings take place regularly, and staff feel well informed about new developments. In a few areas, there is ineffective co-ordination. For example, there was poor monitoring of students' attendance on GCE A level programmes. There was also little sharing of curriculum materials in some subject areas such as mathematics and modern foreign languages.

22 The college has a comprehensive range of committees to devise and monitor developments. Students are well represented on the corporation, academic board and the staff/student liaison council. A variety of communication channels are used effectively to inform managers and their staff of issues and developments across the college and to enable staff to express their opinions and offer suggestions. These include newsletters, early morning briefings, staff meetings, short residential conferences and electronic mail. A series of special meetings to inform staff of the restructuring proposals were particularly well received. Overall, communications within the college are good but there are few opportunities for course team leaders to share issues and good practice.

23 The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1995 are shown in figures 5 and 6. The average level of FEFC funding for 1995-96 is £20.71 per unit. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges in 1995-96 is £17.84 per unit. Effective control and monitoring of resources has enabled the college to eliminate the deficit it inherited at the time of incorporation and build up reserves to improve its provision. For example, there are plans for new accommodation. Comprehensive surveys of room use have been carried out and the college recognises the need to improve room allocation. The distribution of the budget for the purchase of consumables is largely on a historical basis and is not well understood by budget holders. There are plans to address this issue as part of the devolvement of management to unit heads.

24 The central college information systems provide only limited support for course management and administration. The main priorities for the systems, as set by college managers, are to support financial operations and to meet external demands for information. Staff use of information is restricted by the capacity of the information systems, the way information is presented and the lack of understanding amongst staff of the information that is available. The information system provides little support for timetabling, monitoring of attendance, or for recording examination entries and results.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

25 The student services unit provides comprehensive support for students. It deals with initial enquiries through the information centre. The unit also provides personal counselling, advice and guidance to students on accommodation, financial matters and careers. The services are managed effectively to provide support for all students and for those considering a course at the college. There are well-produced documents on counselling, careers education and guidance which inform students and staff of the services. A students' handbook summarises the support available. Evaluation of the work of student services is carried out through questionnaires to students and staff and through detailed analysis of data on enquiries and the use of services.

26 The information centre is open throughout the year and provides students and enquirers with impartial advice and information on learning and training opportunities. The student services unit and the information centre are located in a prominent position, adjacent to reception, in the main college entrance. The centre is attractively designed and well organised. Effective administration systems enable enquiries to be recorded and followed up efficiently. Information centre advisers are kept informed of curriculum changes through liaison with staff in curriculum areas. The centre has supported the development of new courses where needs have been identified as a result of enquiries made by prospective students and liaison with external organisations.

27 Appropriate guidance is given to prospective students by advisers and admissions tutors at initial interviews. For example, students applying for the full-time GCE A level programme attend an interview following their GCSE results. During this interview they can confirm their subject choices and organise their timetable. Interviews associated with GCE A level programmes are well handled by experienced tutors who counsel the students carefully. The support and information given to students from vocational course tutors is more variable, particularly when students are uncertain of their choice or career. Link programmes for students with learning difficulties provide for pre-entry assessment and assist the transition of such students from school to college.

28 An educational liaison officer co-ordinates and supports the arrangements for informing pupils in schools about college courses. A common admissions procedure for students is based on a standard application form and guidelines for staff on the conduct of admissions interviews. An initial guidance interview record provides details of an individual student's choice to student services staff. Efficient enrolment procedures meet the needs of different student groups. For example, there is support for postal and telephone enrolment for some courses and students intending to return for the following year are enrolled before they leave for the summer break. There are clear policies on fee remission. Course tutors refer students to the information centre for further advice and guidance where appropriate, but the centre is not automatically notified when students withdraw in the early weeks of a course.

29 There is a college policy on the accreditation of students' prior learning which provides guidance on the process, together with standard documentation. Initial advice for students on the accreditation of their prior learning is available from the information centre and specialist advisers have been identified in seven curriculum areas. The introduction of a college framework for accreditation towards further education qualifications will be further supported by the appointment of a co-ordinator. The business studies area and the management centre have already developed procedures for the accreditation of students' prior learning. In 1994-95, about 70 further education students gained accreditation of their prior learning compared with over 150 higher education students.

30 A common approach to the induction of full-time and part-time students is based on a well-designed framework. All students are given initial diagnostic screening to determine their literacy and numeracy needs and, where appropriate, are advised to seek additional support. The organisation of the testing and notification of results were well managed with over 4,000 tests marked and returned within 10 days. Induction is the responsibility of individual schools within the college and was generally well planned and carried out. The better managed sessions were supported by informative course handbooks and an introduction to college services and the library. Students participated willingly and there was good rapport

between tutors and students. However, the quality of students' experience on the induction for GCSE and GCE A level courses was less satisfactory.

31 All students attending a course of more than 120 hours have a designated pastoral tutor. Full-time students have a weekly tutorial period as part of their programme and all students have personal interviews with their tutor twice a term. Tutors are provided with a good pack of materials which outlines the tutorial policy, provides guidance on the role of the personal tutor and advises on the detailed planning of tutorial sessions. Some effective group tutorial sessions provided guidance on a wide range of matters from benefits advice, examination techniques and the skills required for entrance to university. However, some students felt that group tutorials were unhelpful and attendance was sometimes low. The role of the personal tutor and the need for individual reviews with students are recognised as important by staff and valued by students. The progress of students is carefully monitored by tutors. For example, on some part-time management courses tutors visit students at work to discuss their progress with both them and their manager. Well-organised individual tutorial files included action plans and a record of the students' interviews with tutors. However, in some areas, insufficient attention is given to helping students to plan their studies and keep records of their achievements.

32 The college's tutorial framework has been carefully planned and tutorial co-ordinators have been nominated in each curriculum area. They help a working group responsible for induction and tutorial monitoring to evaluate the implementation of the framework. A common approach to the recording of students' achievements is being introduced and more systematic arrangements for keeping tutors' records are developing. The management of pastoral support within schools is not consistent. Wide variation occurs in the number of students allocated to tutors. Students' records are not always readily accessible and sometimes details of academic performance are kept separately from tutorial records. The attendance of part-time students is consistently checked and reports are provided to employers. A college-wide approach to monitoring and reporting on absence has been discussed by the academic board but not yet implemented. In some areas, the arrangements for monitoring the attendance of full-time students is insufficiently rigorous.

33 There is a comprehensive range of specialist support available from well-qualified staff, including counsellors, a college nurse, and careers advisers. There are also specialist advisers for international students and for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who help to co-ordinate applications and identify any specific support required. For example, when students with an identified disability or learning difficulty apply to the college, the adviser meets them to identify their support needs, liaises with admissions tutors and makes arrangements to ensure that appropriate support is provided. Staff development has been provided to improve staff understanding of disabilities such as epilepsy and dyslexia.

These activities have ensured that support for students is well planned and effectively delivered. The support from specialist advisers is highly valued by students and staff, and represents a model of good practice. Over 100 students with sensory or physical disabilities attend college courses and receive specialist support.

34 There is a study skills and learning support centre to help students to develop their levels of literacy and numeracy. The centre is well organised and support for students is provided in co-operation with teaching staff from curriculum areas. Students' attendance is closely monitored and good records are kept of the support provided. Course tutors are informed about the attendance of students at the learning support centre. Nearly 1,000 students have attended the study skills centre for additional help with their work. Other students were identified by a basic skills review as needing additional support. The centre is actively pursuing measures to encourage more of these students to take up the support available to them.

35 There is a well-written careers education and guidance policy. Careers education activities include advice for students on applications to higher education, careers newsletters to students and staff, and support for students applying for employment. Students are particularly appreciative of the support provided for applications to higher education. Although there is some close co-operation between tutors and careers advisers, the careers education programme is not always included within tutorials. Further education students have daily access to advisers from the Norfolk Careers Service in addition to the college's careers advisers. Current information on careers and courses in higher education is readily accessible in the library and on computer databases.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

36 Of the 300 teaching sessions inspected, 60 per cent had strengths which outweighed weaknesses. In about 10 per cent the weaknesses outweighed the strengths. The average attendance at the sessions inspected was 69 per cent. Attendance ranged from 58 per cent in leisure and tourism to 80 per cent in health and community care. The following table summarises the grades given to the teaching sessions inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level		4	25	24	5	0	58
GCSE		2	4	6	3	0	15
GNVQ		15	24	12	4	0	55
NVQ		7	25	12	5	0	49
Other vocational		7	32	17	3	0	59
Higher education*		5	11	9	1	0	26
Basic education		3	5	3	0	0	11
Other		5	6	8	7	1	27
Total		48	132	91	28	1	300

* includes access to higher education.

37 Practical teaching in science was carefully planned and students worked conscientiously on experiments in the laboratory. Science homework was set and marked regularly. Some theory lessons lacked variety and students did not always grasp theoretical concepts. Computing students were well motivated and took part in lively group discussions. The unreliability of the computer network resulted in disruption to some lessons. In mathematics, lessons were sound but the work often lacked pace and challenge for the students. There was little opportunity for students to discuss or explore mathematical ideas. The worksheets issued to students in some classes were of variable quality. Students' attendance at some sessions was low.

38 In construction, classroom activities included group work, demonstrations of practical work by staff and workshop activities. Practical lessons were well planned and use was made of an extensive range of teaching materials. Students were enthusiastic and produced work of a high standard. The timber trades and brickwork workshops sometimes held too many students. Other rooms were bases for learning materials which were used effectively to link theoretical aspects of the work with practical applications. Some theory classes were held in inappropriate rooms with few visual aids. In some lessons, students spent too much time copying notes from the board. In the better technician classes communication and oral skills were developed.

39 The standard of motor vehicle teaching was generally high and students benefited from an extensive range of vehicles and testing equipment. There was a good mix of theory and practice. For example, in one lesson vehicle repair students followed the guidance given in an insurance company's video on how to repair a vehicle. Workshop sessions provided relevant practical experiences for students of avionics and manufacturing engineering. Students gained experience of handling

electronic components and using computer-aided design facilities. However, some staff had low expectations of their students and set unchallenging tasks. In many lessons, there was little variety in teaching methods used and a lack of stimulating teaching materials. Assignment schedules were available for all courses but not all staff kept to the agreed dates. This presented students with unbalanced workloads.

40 On management courses, teachers drew effectively upon the work experience of adult students. Students were encouraged to analyse current business issues through the use of case studies, simulations and investigative projects. For example, in a session on the impact of technological change on business organisations, students adopted the roles of managers and union officials with the task of agreeing new working practices in response to the introduction of new machinery. The teaching and assessment of BTEC GNVQ business courses was generally well planned. In a number of lessons the pace of the work did not take account of the different levels of ability within the group. On many of the professional courses, teachers made good use of questioning and there were class exercises to consolidate students' understanding. In a few sessions, teachers did not make any attempt to apply the subject matter to current business practice or to check students' comprehension.

41 The teaching of technical skills in catering was of a high standard. Students were encouraged to enter culinary competitions in Britain and Europe. Practical lessons were well planned and students were able to develop and practice their skills in realistic work environments. GNVQ programmes were organised effectively to enable students to work independently and organise their assignment work schedules. Most assignments were challenging and vocationally relevant. Staff drew on students' work experience and related it to their course studies. In the less successful NVQ classes, few checks were made on students' understanding of the underpinning knowledge. Insufficient consideration was given to the different learning needs of some students in mixed ability groups. In a few classes, there was poor use of visual aids and copious note taking by students.

42 In most lessons in leisure and tourism there was a productive mix of teacher presentations and group discussions. However, some lessons were poorly organised and teachers did not always involve all members of the group in the activities. Work experience was well planned and included in all full-time courses. Travel and tourism students participated in a successful European study trip as part of their studies. Assignments were at an appropriate level and the criteria for success were clearly stated. Team teaching was particularly effective on the foundation GNVQ course where students received additional help to develop their core skills.

43 Students were motivated by some skilful teaching in health and social care, where teachers used an interesting range of first-aid equipment and biological displays. In the better classes, there was a good balance between

teachers' contributions and those of the students. In a nursery nursing class, students researched the cultural aspects of food, compiled recipes and gave lively presentations of their work. Peer-group appraisal was often used to involve all students in the activities. In a few lessons the work lacked interest and was not challenging enough for the more able students.

44 Practical sessions on hairdressing and beauty therapy were well organised and teaching was of a high standard. Students were clear about the level of skills required for success on the course. Good working habits were instilled in students and they were required to wear specially-designed uniforms in salons. In hairdressing, artistic skills were promoted and students were encouraged to make photographic records of their work. Most sessions started with a revision of work previously covered to reinforce learning. In a few theory classes, staff were not well prepared and students were insufficiently challenged. There was little use of audio-visual equipment in lessons.

45 Staff in art and design, media and performing arts were enthusiastic and used a variety of teaching methods, including practical demonstrations, lectures and creative activities which involved all students. The purpose and objectives of some lessons were not always clear. Assignments were generally imaginative and challenging. On a GCE A level art course, students worked on a well-structured project which ranged from life drawing to a three-dimensional sculptured interpretation of stress and tension in the human body. Group discussions on GNVQ advanced courses were effective in establishing agreement about the allocation of work within teams. Teachers did not always pay enough attention to checking students' understanding and confirming that they had learned what they were meant to.

46 Most of the teaching of GCE A level and GCSE humanities subjects was carefully prepared. Relationships between staff and students were good. Handouts and study guides were often used effectively to convey the meaning of more difficult concepts. In some lessons, there was too much emphasis on note taking. Students rarely had the opportunity to work in small groups. Insufficient emphasis was placed upon the use of information technology. In most subjects, students' work was marked and returned promptly. Where students were taking a combination of subjects, there was little attempt to co-ordinate the setting and marking of work. There was poor attendance at some lessons and other lessons were sometimes disrupted by students' late arrival.

47 The development of numeracy, literacy, information technology and study skills were a positive feature of the access to further education courses. The teaching methods adopted on the 'Connections' programme encouraged the development of independence and self-confidence in adult students, many of whom had been away from formal education for several years. On the access to higher education courses, students worked

individually on essay topics which developed their analytical and research skills.

48 On foundation courses and those for students with specific learning difficulties, teaching was generally well structured and students enjoyed their studies. However, lessons did not always take account of, or build on, students' prior skills and knowledge. There was an over-reliance on group work and little emphasis on encouraging independent learning. The study skills centres in the library gave a supportive environment for students requiring additional help with English, mathematics and information technology. Work packs, videos and computers enabled students to develop and progress at their own pace.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

49 Most students spoke positively about the college and their studies. Students were particularly enthusiastic when undertaking practical work. It was generally carried out competently with due regard to health and safety. Most students' written work was of an appropriate standard for the level of course they were following. Well-planned work experience was a prominent feature on many full-time courses. Information technology skills were not systematically developed on GCE A level and GCSE courses. Whilst there were some good examination results for students completing their courses, success overall was adversely affected by poor retention on some courses.

50 There were 305 students aged 16 to 18 and 440 students over the age of 19 entered for one or more GCE A levels in 1995. Students aged 16 to 18 taking GCE A level examinations in 1995 scored, on average, 3.7 points per entry (where grade A=10 points, E=2). This places the college in the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure, based on the data in the 1995 performance tables published by the Department for Education and Employment. Seventy-eight per cent of the 301 students aged 16 to 18 in their final year of study on the vocational courses included in the Department's 1995 performance tables were successful. This places the college in the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure.

51 Mathematics students worked methodically and generally produced work of the required standard. However, in 1995, the GCSE pass rate at grades A to C in mathematics for 16 to 18 year old students was poor, at 17 per cent. Pass rates for evening class students aged over 19 were better at 48 per cent. In most GCE A level science subjects in 1995 the examination results, for all age groups, were above the national average for further education colleges. Computing students had a good understanding of practical work and were able to explain it clearly. The quality of computing students' assignments was variable and many did not submit work for marking. The pass rate on the BTEC higher national

certificate in computing has declined from 95 per cent in 1994 to 69 per cent in 1995. Retention rates were poor on a number of courses. For example, on GCE A level mathematics and GCSE computer studies courses 50 per cent and 23 per cent of students, respectively, failed to complete the course.

52 Construction students worked safely and competently on their own and in groups using a wide range of tools and specialist equipment. Most students' coursework notes and portfolios of work for assessment were of an appropriate standard but would benefit from being better indexed and presented. In 1995, there were good pass rates on the BTEC higher national certificate building (88 per cent) and the BTEC national diploma construction (75 per cent). Overall pass rates on NVQ levels 2 and 3 brickwork programmes were high, with 90 per cent of students achieving their award. There were some poor results on NVQ level 2 carpentry and joinery programmes.

53 The quality of engineering students' practical work was good and there were examples of some high-quality fabrication and machine-shop work. The quality of assignment work was variable and many students did not submit assignments by the agreed dates. In some classes, students had difficulty relating theory to its practical application. Students were often reluctant to take part in class discussion. Examination results for students completing engineering courses in 1995 were mixed. For example, pass rates were good on the BTEC higher national certificate in engineering (95 per cent) and the BTEC national certificate motor vehicle engineering (100 per cent). In 1995, the achievement of students on the BTEC higher national certificate in civil engineering was poor, with 46 per cent gaining the qualification. Pass rates on the BTEC national diploma in engineering have fallen in the last three years from 86 per cent to 47 per cent and on the first diploma in engineering they have fallen from 66 per cent to 57 per cent.

54 There were high levels of successful completion on most management courses. In 1994-95, retention rates of 100 per cent were recorded on some courses such as the certificate in personnel practice and the NVQ in business administration. There was a good pass rate of 68 per cent on the intermediate GNVQ business course. All students on the certificate of supervisory studies and the Association of Medical Secretaries diploma achieved their full award. Of the 17 students on the national general certificate in occupational safety and health in 1995, only four were successful. In 1995, pass rates for GCE A level business studies and accounting were below the national average for further education colleges.

55 Students on hotel and catering courses worked effectively in teams in realistic work environments. There were some examples of excellent practical work. On NVQ programmes, students' diaries of evidence of work to be assessed varied in quality. Students on GNVQ and NVQ hospitality courses had high levels of success in achieving additional

qualifications in health and safety, food hygiene and customer care. In 1995, the pass rate on the advanced GNVQ hospitality and catering course was 100 per cent and on the GNVQ intermediate programme it was above the national average at 56 per cent. In 1995, the pass rate on the NVQ level 2 catering and hospitality course was low at 49 per cent of those students completing the programme. There was poor retention on the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) cooks professional diploma and poor results on the C&G cookery certificate.

56 Most leisure and tourism students were enthusiastic about their studies. Classroom debate was encouraged and students developed good oral skills and team work. Students gained some good results on additional studies such as the community sports leadership awards and the food hygiene certificate. Retention rates on leisure and tourism courses were generally high and in 1994-95 they varied between 77 and 96 per cent for the different groups of intermediate GNVQ students. In 1995, pass rates were good on the BTEC national diplomas in leisure studies and leisure and tourism at 72 per cent and 89 per cent, respectively. On the intermediate GNVQ leisure and tourism course, a good pass rate of 88 per cent was achieved by students following the tourism pathway but it was poor (44 per cent) on the recreation pathway.

57 Health and community care students were articulate and produced written work of a good standard. Students developed their practical skills in well-resourced specialist facilities in the college and during planned work experience. Retention rates were generally good on health and community care courses. Of the 51 students enrolled on the BTEC national diploma in social care in 1993, all 35 who completed the course gained the full award. In 1995, the pass rate was high on the BTEC national diploma in nursery nursing, at 93 per cent, but low, at 55 per cent, on the BTEC national diploma in science (health studies). During the last three years all students taking the Institute of Housing national warden's certificate have been successful. In 1995, successful completion on the intermediate GNVQ health and social care was above the national average at 67 per cent. In 1995, there was a poor pass rate (53 per cent) on the C&G certificate in family and community care.

58 On hairdressing and beauty therapy courses, students' practical skills were developed in salons which reflect the best of commercial practice. Students' portfolios for assessment were of a high standard and often contained evidence collected from their work placements. For students completing NVQ level 2 hairdressing programmes, there were consistently good pass rates from 1993 to 1995. The first cohort of beauty therapy students have achieved good results, with 86 per cent successfully gaining an NVQ level 2 award. Students acquired good interpersonal skills but information technology skills were not being developed.

59 Art and design students produced bold and imaginative work and developed confidence and personal skills by giving presentations about

the briefs for their designs. For students completing the BTEC media national diploma, pass rates have been consistently high at 97 per cent over the last three years. There was a good pass rate on the two-year part-time C&G graphic communications course completing in 1995 when 79 per cent gained their award. Examination results were poor on some art and design courses. For example, of the 61 students aged 16 to 18 enrolled on GCE A level art and design in November 1993, only 23 completed the course and 19 achieved grades A to E. In 1995, pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 on GCSE media and GCE A level theatre studies were below the national average.

60 GCE A level and GCSE examination pass rates were variable in modern foreign languages and humanities. In 1995, students of all ages on GCE A level psychology and sociology courses, achieved average pass rates at grades A to C which were slightly better than the national average. In English, students displayed a high level of competence in critical analysis of text and good communication skills in group discussions. Students of English literature produced a high standard of written work. The results for students aged 19 and over on GCE A level English literature were comparable to national figures but at GCSE they were lower. In 1995, for students aged 19 and over, the results on GCE A level communication studies at grades A to C were above the national average. Pass rates on GCE A level and GCSE French, German and Spanish were above the national average but only about half of the enrolled students completed their course and entered the examination.

61 There were good opportunities for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to gain nationally-recognised qualifications and progress to further study. Skills awards were available through the Award Scheme Development Accreditation Network. Students' marked work was often above the standard required for the level of the award. Students were not always given responsibility for planning and recording their own progress and achievements.

62 In many curriculum areas there were good rates of progression to further and higher education and employment. In 1995, approximately 40 per cent of GCE A level arts and science students progressed to higher education, 25 per cent remained in further education and 20 per cent gained employment. There were high progression rates for adult students on access to higher education; for example, 83 per cent from humanities and social sciences and 77 per cent from the natural sciences proceeded to higher education. On BTEC national diploma courses, progression to higher education varied from 79 per cent in health studies to 25 per cent in construction. Areas where significant percentages of national diploma students entered employment were travel and tourism (67 per cent) and engineering (48 per cent). The information on the destination of students for the 1994-95 session has not been aggregated for the college as a whole.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

63 The college has a strong commitment to the continual improvement of the quality of its provision. The quality assurance systems have been developed over several years to meet the institution's own needs and the requirements of validating bodies such as BTEC and Anglia Polytechnic University. The quality assurance systems include internal validation of new course proposals, course monitoring and review, and self-assessment. The academic quality systems operate through school and centre boards of study. These boards monitor students' achievements on their courses and submit their analysis of results to the academic board where they are carefully considered. Members of the corporation are also provided with details of students' achievements.

64 There is effective monitoring and review of courses. The process is supported by a comprehensive and well-presented academic handbook on quality assurance. Course teams are required to produce an annual report that addresses quality issues such as course curriculum and content, teaching and learning methods and resources. Course reports include an action plan for the next year and a review of the previous year's plan. These reports form the basis for the school/centre action plan which is submitted to the college approvals and review committee. Procedures for monitoring the implementation of action plans at course and school level or at the level of the college approvals and review committee, are not yet fully developed. The system of quality assurance does not yet extend to a formal review of business support units, although some areas such as those concerned with learning support and information technology produce their own annual reports.

65 Common procedures and documentation have been introduced to ensure the consistency of internal assessments and verification on NVQ, GNVQ and some BTEC courses. These include a detailed design checklist for GNVQ assignments and the double marking of samples of students' work to maintain standards. External verifiers are satisfied with the implementation of these procedures.

66 The college has a well-established and effective system of internal validation that covers new course proposals and the review of existing courses on a five-year cycle. The quality assurance handbooks provide clear guidance about objectives and procedures. All new courses are subject to a comprehensive process of internal validation and documentation approval before they are submitted to external validating bodies such as BTEC. There is a long tradition of critical review through internal validation for higher education and BTEC courses. The periodic review of existing courses is seen as a critical appraisal of their effectiveness and as an opportunity to make improvements.

67 Students' views are obtained from questionnaires and students' representation on course teams. There are college-devised questionnaires covering such aspects as accessibility, course operation and teaching

quality which are available to course teams although, in some instances, course teams tailor their own. Examples of changes resulting from students' questionnaires include alterations to teaching schedules. A centrally-administered survey of students' views has resulted in improved refectory services. There is no evidence of the systematic use of questionnaires to obtain employers' views.

68 The college has produced a students' charter that is included in the diary given out to students at induction. The charter, which is very brief, is supplemented by the other sections in the diary and meets the requirements of the charter for further education. However, there are no structured mechanisms for monitoring the fulfilment of the charter's commitments. Not all students are aware of the charter's contents or the significance of its commitments to them. During the next year, the college intends to review and update its students' charter and introduce employers' and parents' charters. There is an effective complaints procedure for both students and staff.

69 In preparation for the inspection, the college introduced classroom observations of all teaching staff into its quality assurance procedures. It is planned to continue this although not as part of staff appraisal. There are well-documented staff appraisal systems. All teaching staff and about 10 per cent of non-teaching staff have been appraised. The appraisal process identifies staff-development needs. Newly-appointed staff are assigned a mentor and are effectively supported. There is a well-organised induction programme and a comprehensive checklist of items to be covered at induction.

70 Staff development seeks to meet the needs of individuals, teams and the institution. Although there has been provision for relevant training programmes, insufficient attention has been paid to providing industrial and commercial updating for staff. At present, college and school staff-development plans are not prioritised. However, with the recent appointment of a professional development manager, it is expected that a more coherent staff-development strategy will emerge. In its strategic plan, the college has expressed its intention to seek Investors in People accreditation by December 1996.

71 A detailed self-assessment report was written under the headings set out in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. The report, which was mainly based on the self-assessment reports of the schools and business support units, is self-critical and includes a comprehensive action plan. It is based on a thorough and systematic review of evidence. Most of the college's judgements on key issues were consistent with the conclusions reached by the inspection team. The self-assessment report followed an earlier version which had influenced the restructuring of the college organisation.

72 Course leaders and managers are aware of enrolment targets, but other performance indicators such as retention, progression and

examination success rates have not been specified. As a consequence, no effective monitoring is taking place against defined standards. Some analysis of students' GCE A level results has taken place which compares them with results predicted from students' achievement at GCSE to ascertain the value that college courses has added to students' achievements. A range of performance indicators to be included in the quality assurance system has been identified using the Council Circular 94/31 *Measuring Achievement* and the college's document *Goals 2000*.

RESOURCES

Staffing

73 There is a full-time equivalent staff of 340 teachers and 326 support staff, excluding those staff working in prison establishments. Staff are generally well qualified for the work they undertake. The majority of teaching staff have a degree or higher professional qualification. Approximately three-quarters of teaching staff have a teaching qualification. Many staff in vocational areas are working towards, or have achieved, assessor/verifier awards to support NVQ and GNVQ programmes. In most curriculum areas there is a good balance of full-time and part-time staff but in hairdressing and beauty therapy the high proportion of part-time staff places a heavy administrative burden on full-time staff. Most teachers have relevant industrial or commercial experience but in some areas, such as science, construction and catering, it is dated.

74 Teachers are deployed effectively and well supported by technician, administrative and support staff. The role of technician and support staff has been reviewed to provide better support for teaching staff and more opportunities for career development. Work placement officers and learning skills advisers make a valuable contribution to the support of students. There is effective use of support staff in realistic work environments such as the travel office and restaurants to improve the students' learning experience. In most specialist curriculum areas there is appropriate technician support, with the exception of art and design, and construction. In modern foreign languages there are no foreign language assistants.

Equipment/learning resources

75 There is appropriate and sufficient equipment in most curriculum areas to support teaching and learning. The travel office is an excellent resource with industrial-standard equipment. In catering, the kitchen and restaurant facilities are particularly good. Accommodation in hairdressing and beauty therapy has recently been upgraded to a good commercial standard. Engineering students benefit from a computer-aided design centre and a selection of vehicles for testing. In some areas students are not so well served. For example, there is a limited range of equipment to

support mathematics teaching and there is a low level of computer equipment for computing courses. There are poorly equipped music practice rooms. Video and sound equipment for media courses is dispersed around a number of locations. The sports hall is a useful resource but it is in need of refurbishment. The multigym equipment is becoming out of date.

76 The library and learning support centre is a bright and attractive facility with an extensive range of learning materials to support all courses. It has a bookstock of 73,000 items and takes approximately 630 periodicals. About 6,800 video recordings and 37 compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases are available to students. A spacious study skills area is well stocked with learning support materials and worksheets for students. There are sufficient study places, including a quiet study room. Computing facilities are poor for the size of the college and the number of students. There are approximately 407 networked computers for students' use. This gives a ratio of about one computer to every 16 full-time equivalent students. There are a few additional computing facilities in specialist areas. Some machines are dated and cannot run appropriate industrial-standard software. There is a programme of replacement to upgrade computing equipment. The computing facilities which students can use as and when they choose are under pressure at peak times.

Accommodation

77 The college is situated in a pleasant residential area of the city. The majority of the accommodation dates from the 1950s. There were some later additions in the 1970s and 1980s, such as the management centre and the business school. A house adjacent to the college was acquired in the mid-1970s and now accommodates City College Enterprises. In addition, there is a small annexe situated approximately one mile from the college which is used for the teaching of some construction and engineering courses. There are 27 huts on the main site and those used for teaching do not provide a conducive learning environment. There is residential accommodation in 274 study bedrooms, including eight rooms specially adapted for students with physical disabilities. Social areas for students are poor. There are no student common rooms and refectory facilities are in need of refurbishment. There is a college nursery and 25 places are allocated for the children of students and staff. The college has partially overcome the problem of limited car parking facilities by introducing a park and ride scheme. Traffic management on college grounds needs to be improved. The accommodation strategy recognises the need to address all of these shortcomings.

78 The main reception area in the college is attractive and has a welcoming atmosphere. The general circulation areas are tidy, clean and well maintained. There is a well-planned maintenance and redecoration schedule. Most of the accommodation is accessible to wheelchair users.

The majority of general purpose classrooms are well furnished and pleasantly decorated. There is an adequate range of teaching aids including whiteboards, overhead projectors and screens. Specialist workshop accommodation is generally good for example, in engineering and construction. The realistic work environments in catering, travel, hairdressing and beauty therapy are particularly good. Some specialist teaching accommodation for art and design is of poor quality; it is not located adjacently and this restricts its use by students. The drama studio is not appropriate; it is also used as an examinations hall and to store furniture. There is no learning centre for modern foreign languages and the language laboratories are poor.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

79 The particular strengths of the college are:

- a wide range of courses from pre-foundation level to higher education
- many opportunities and good support for adults returning to study
- improved opportunities for study for those from groups which have not usually entered further education
- the contribution to local economic development
- an effective corporation committed to the development of the college
- the clear vision and direction provided by senior management
- well-managed and comprehensive student support services
- an effective induction and tutorial system
- a rigorous and critical process of self-assessment
- a well-established system of course validation and review
- successful teaching and learning on most courses
- the high standards of students' practical work
- well-qualified and committed teaching and support staff
- the well-equipped library and learning support centre.

80 If it is to build on its existing strengths the college should:

- make more use of performance indicators
- improve the management of some curriculum areas
- regularly monitor the implementation of action plans
- address the low retention and examination pass rates on some courses
- improve the quality of some accommodation
- provide more communal facilities for students
- improve information technology resources.

FIGURES

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

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

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

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

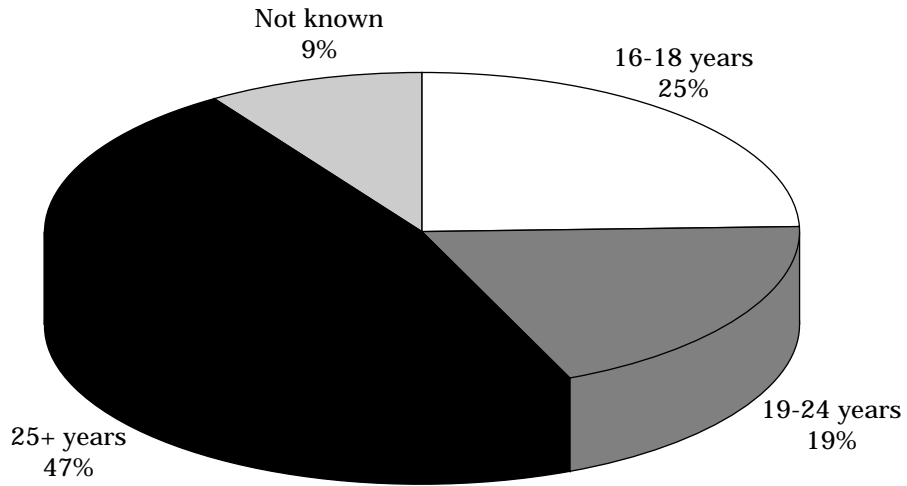
 - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1995)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)

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

Figure 1

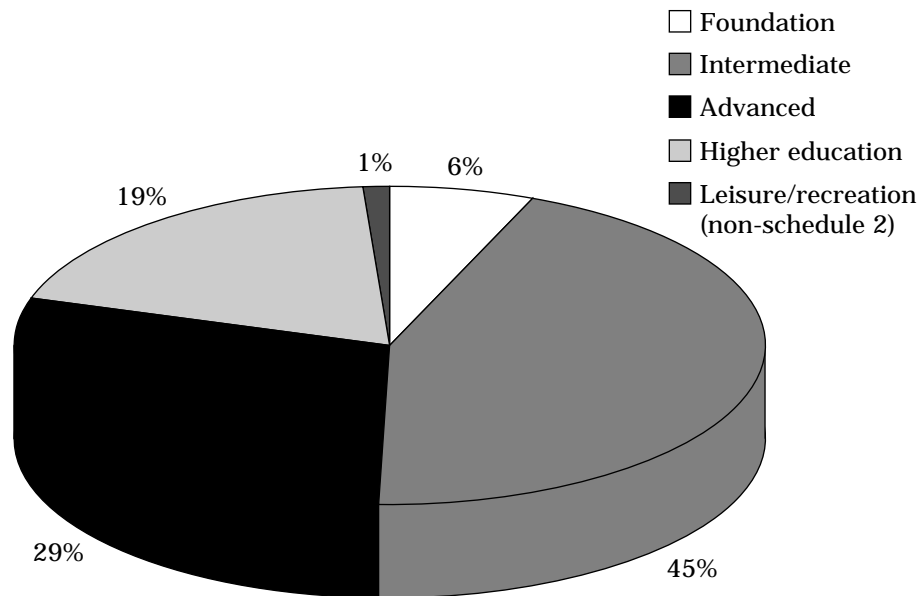
Norwich City College of Further and Higher Education: percentage student numbers by age (as at November 1995)



Student numbers: 13,415

Figure 2

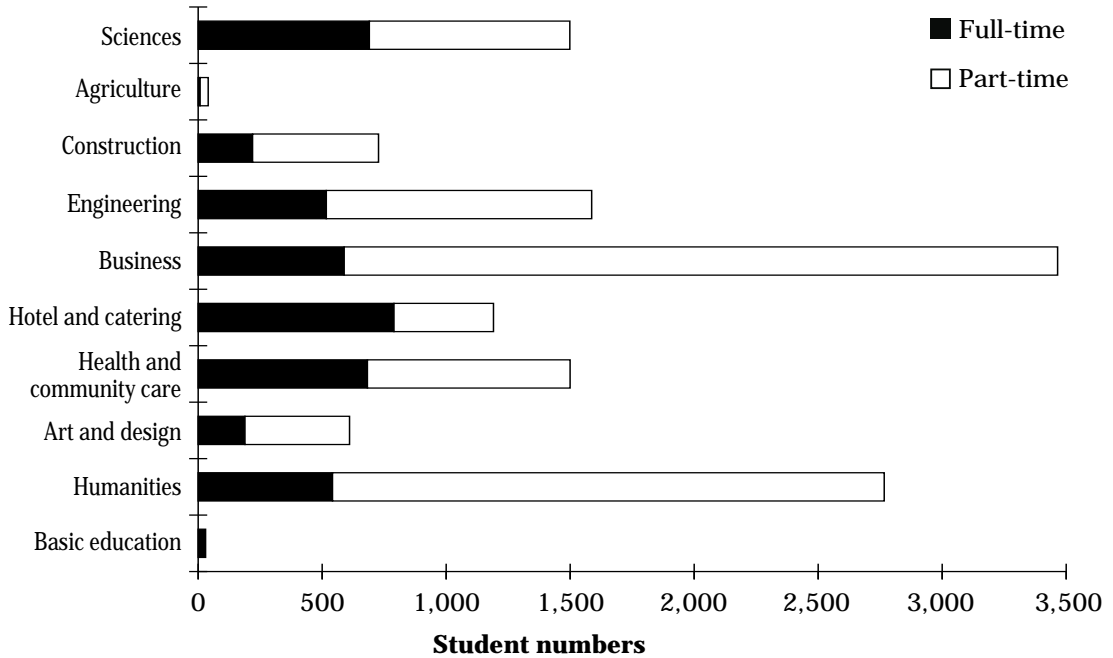
Norwich City College of Further and Higher Education: percentage student numbers by level of study (as at November 1995)



Student numbers: 13,415

Figure 3

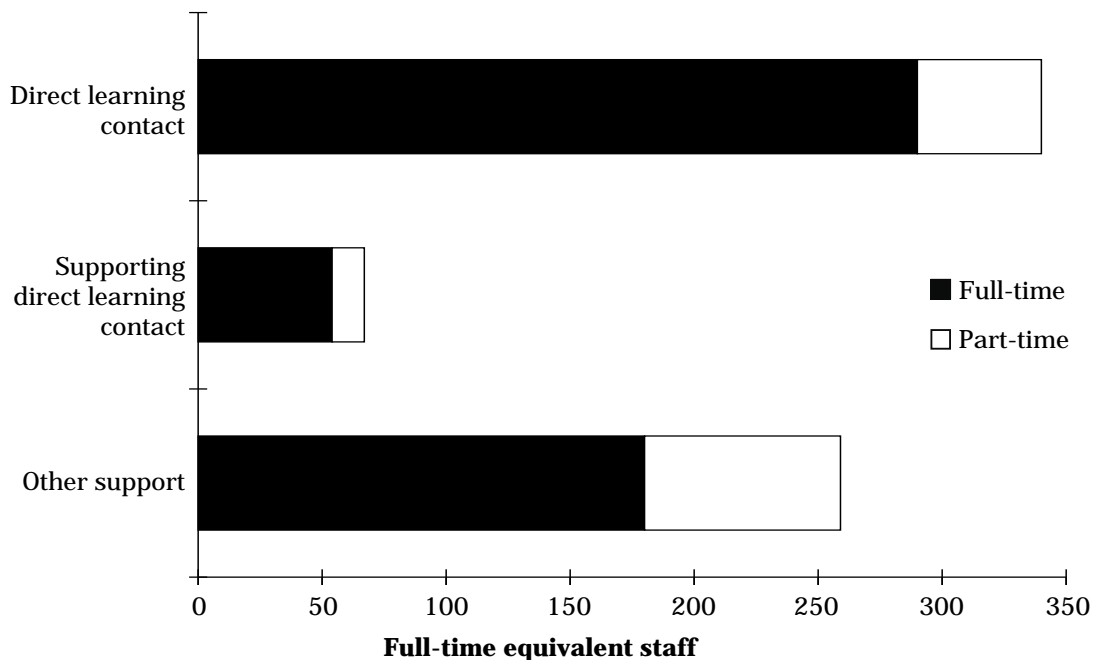
Norwich City College of Further and Higher Education: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1995)



Student numbers: 13,415

Figure 4

Norwich City College of Further and Higher Education: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1995-96)

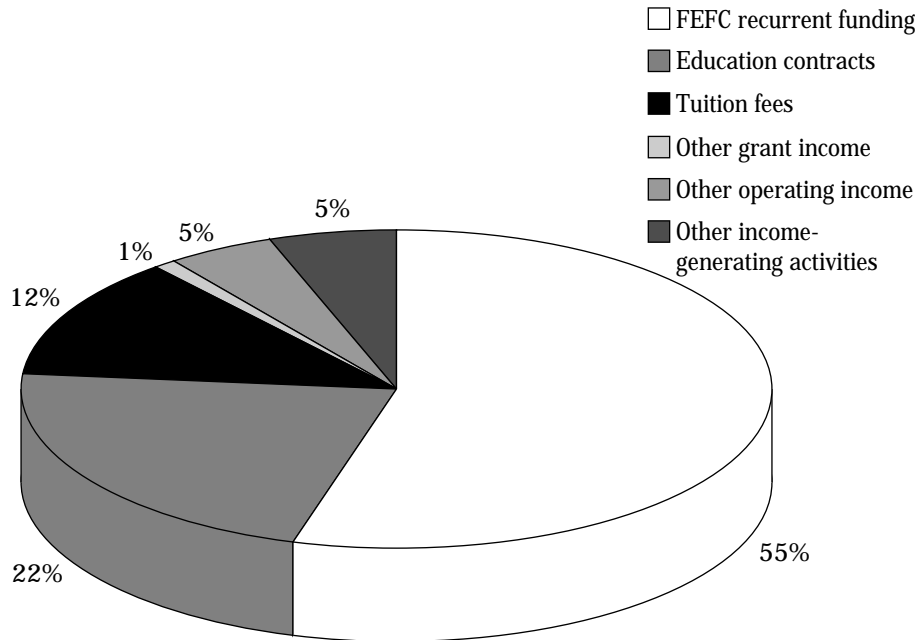


Full-time equivalent staff: 666

Note: this excludes staff employed in prison establishments.

Figure 5

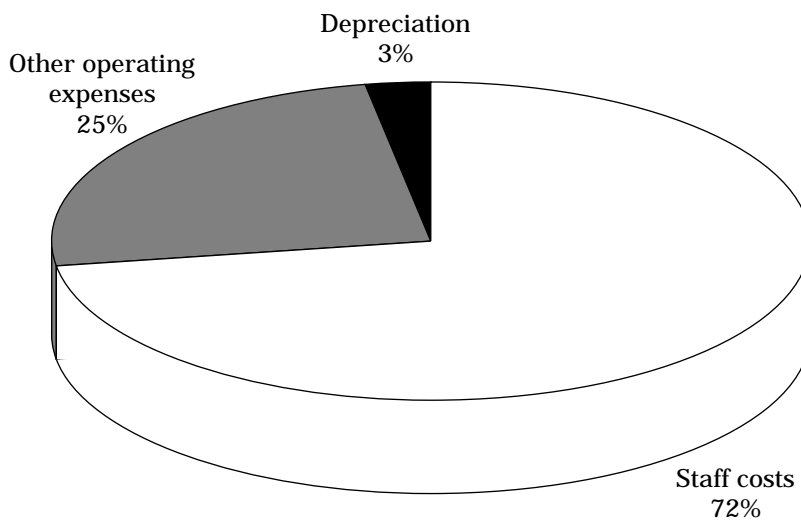
Norwich City College of Further and Higher Education: income (for 12 months to July 1995)



Income: £24,545,000

Figure 6

Norwich City College of Further and Higher Education: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)



Expenditure: £23,709,000

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