The Rutland College

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

College grade profiles 1993-96

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

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 43/97

THE RUTLAND COLLEGE
EAST MIDLANDS REGION
Inspected September 1996-January 1997

Summary

The Rutland College is a sixth form college in Oakham. It has excellent relationships with its partner community colleges. Governors are drawn from the local community and they are well informed about issues facing the college. The senior management team provides strong leadership. Much of the teaching, especially in GCE A level and AS subjects and in basic education, is good. Students' GCE A level results have improved. Students' services are well managed. Students' attendance and achievements are rigorously monitored. There is a well-established process of curriculum review. A range of performance indicators is used for assuring the quality of the curriculum. The college should: extend its quality assurance system to cover areas other than the curriculum; improve students' GCSE results; monitor the effectiveness of recent changes in its governance and management; review the responsibilities of middle managers; and carry out systematic market analysis. To achieve its mission, the college needs to identify clearly the needs of adult students in order to meet these effectively.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Mathematics and computing	2	English	2
Sciences	2	Humanities	2
Business	3	Basic education	2
Art and design	2		

INTRODUCTION

1   The Rutland College was inspected between September 1996 and January 1997. Induction and enrolment procedures were inspected in September 1996. Specialist inspections took place in November 1996. Inspectors visited 114 classes. They inspected students' work and examined college documents. In January 1997, aspects of cross-college provision were inspected. Inspectors held meetings with governors, college managers, teaching and support staff, students, and representatives from industry, the local training and enterprise council (TEC) and the community.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2   Rutland, a former county and currently a district within Leicestershire, is soon to achieve unitary status. The Rutland College is a sixth form college in Oakham, the administrative centre for Rutland. In the academic year 1996-97, the college enrolled 827 students. Of these, 439 had enrolled as full-time students and 388 as part-time students. 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. Most students live within Rutland. Although the three local community colleges do not have sixth forms, there are a number of independent schools nearby of which Oakham School is the closest. There are further education colleges in Grantham, Stamford, Peterborough, Corby, Melton and Loughborough. In Leicester there are three further education colleges and three sixth form colleges.

3   Rutland is a predominantly rural area with a population of 33,000. The largest employers are the armed forces and the hotel and catering industries. Levels of employment in agriculture and the armed services are declining. There is some light industry in the market towns of Oakham and Uppingham. Most firms based in Rutland are small and are located within the service sector. Leicestershire TEC predicts that employment opportunities will increase in financial and personal services and that there will be an increase in the proportion of women seeking and securing part-time employment. Many local residents commute to Leicester, Nottingham, Peterborough and other East Midlands towns; a small number commute to London. In December 1996 the rate of those in Rutland who were unemployed and seeking benefit was 2.8 per cent compared with a rate of 4.6 per cent in Leicestershire as a whole.

4   The college was formed from a girls' grammar school in 1972. It occupies one site and the main building dates from 1965. Lonsdale House and the cottage annexe, situated on the college campus, provide co-educational boarding spaces for 45 students. The boarding students come from as near as Nottingham and from as far away as Hong Kong, Belize and the Middle East. The accommodation is well maintained and it is decorated and furnished to a high standard. The house is staffed by the

boarding manager who is assisted by support staff, general assistants and cleaners. Meals are taken in the main college refectory which is adjacent to Lonsdale House. The boarding facility is a self-financing business.

5   The academic structure of the college comprises four curriculum sectors with managers reporting to the deputy principal. Thirty-three full-time equivalent academic staff are supported by three full-time equivalent direct learning support staff and 27 other full-time equivalent support staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4. The college's mission statement states that the college aims 'to serve the whole community by striving for the highest standards in our teaching, support and guidance for learners of all ages and abilities. Through a broad range of courses we seek to respond flexibly to the changing needs of individuals and society'.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

6   Prior to 1994, the college concentrated on providing general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) courses for students aged 16 to 19. Since 1994, it has broadened its range of courses. The college has not yet, however, fulfilled its mission because the current provision still falls considerably short of catering for the needs of the whole community. The college offers 27 GCE A level subjects, nine GCE advanced supplementary (AS) subjects and 13 general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) subjects. The programme of subjects offered is adapted in the light of enrolment trends. For example, GCE A level theatre studies has been dropped and GCE A level media studies has been introduced. The college also offers three advanced, two intermediate and one foundation general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) courses and a small range of vocational courses which includes, for example, a diploma course in nursery nursing. Students can choose from an additional studies programme which includes computer literacy and information technology and GCE A level general studies. There is an enrichment programme for full-time students which includes sport, music, painting, theatre visits, the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme and an engineering club. Participation in the enrichment programme is low. Students are encouraged to take part either in community work or to gain work experience. This year, the college introduced a small amount of provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

7   Strong links exist with the three partner community colleges in the district through the Rutland colleges' consortium. All the principals of the colleges in the consortium meet regularly. Appropriate staff from the colleges hold discussions on curricular matters. The college implements a cycle of well-organised activities in order to promote liaison with, and the recruitment of students from, the community colleges. These activities include 'taster days' for year 10 pupils and interviews, conducted by college staff, for year 11 pupils. In addition, pupils receive a personal invitation to visit the college. Those who do not subsequently enrol at the college are

asked to give their reasons for not doing so. The college feeds back to the community colleges information on the progress and achievements of their former pupils. The college has found it difficult to liaise with other schools in the area who have their own sixth forms. There is good liaison between co-ordinators in partner community colleges and the college co-ordinator about the support required for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

8   The attractive college prospectus explains application procedures and the admission process and gives outline information on courses. Leaflets produced in a house style provide more details about courses. A students' handbook, also in house style, includes details of the students' code of conduct and sets out the range of students' support and guidance services.

9   The college is attempting to broaden its appeal to adult students but has little information on their requirements. A shop in the local high street was used by the college last summer to promote adult provision and to provide adults with guidance and advice on educational opportunities. Next summer, the college intends to tour rural communities with a bus in order to provide them with information about courses. Day and evening classes, which are specifically for adults, are advertised. The college also offers adults the opportunity to join classes on mainstream courses but few choose to do so. New courses, aimed at adults, which have been introduced recently include photography, jewellery making, French, German and lace making. The provision for adults in the community consists mainly of basic education programmes at the ten local centres. The college offers a limited programme, accredited by the Leicestershire Open College Network, for students who do not have the qualifications normally required for entry to higher education. Many of the students on the programme state that they do not intend to progress to higher education.

10   The sports hall is used by the local badminton club and the town's rugby club, whose ground adjoins the college. The college is currently in discussion with the Rutland Volunteer Bureau over the feasibility of providing courses in horticulture, flower arranging, pottery and information technology. In general, however, there are relatively few contacts with the local community. Contact with the Rutland District Council is good. The council becomes a unitary authority in April 1997 when it takes over responsibility for education. The principal is involved in a range of discussions including those about the future of adult education in the new county.

11   College staff are in contact with employers who provide work experience opportunities for students. Rutland Education Business Partnership provides the college with useful information for the college about such opportunities for GCE A level students. The college has provided language training for a mail order company in Oakham. The local district council has sent its employees to the college for information

technology training. Relations with the Leicestershire TEC are underdeveloped. The college has, however, obtained TEC funding to help it prepare for Investors in People validation and to finance middle management training for its staff. In addition, TEC funding was granted for the equipping of the college's business centre on condition that this facility was used for the training of people working in local industries. The condition was not fulfilled and the college was required to repay a proportion of the grant to the TEC.

12   Currently no systematic market research is undertaken. The college does not have details of companies and organisations in its area. A business and marketing manager has recently been appointed and a marketing overview document for 1996-97 has been produced. It highlights five areas for consideration: published material, local marketing, boarding facilities, adult programmes and business programmes. Some attention is now being given to each of these areas.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

13   In 1996, significant changes affecting the governance and management of the college took place. It is too early to judge their effectiveness fully. Arrangements for governance and management are, however, generally effective. In 1996, the chairman of the corporation, the chairman of the finance committee and the director of finance, who was also clerk to the corporation, all resigned. A search committee identified the skills which would be required of new members. Two accountants, a solicitor and the former marketing director of the British Sugar Corporation were appointed as new governors from October 1996. Two governors resigned at the last corporation meeting.

14   The corporation has 13 members including a parent governor and a staff governor. The governors are mainly drawn from the local community. They are well informed about the issues facing the college. There are five committees: finance and general purposes, personnel, remuneration, audit, and strategic planning. The strategic planning committee, composed of the chairs of committees and the vice-chairman of the corporation, has just had its first meeting. Its main purpose is to monitor the college's current operating statement and draft its next strategic plan.

15   The corporation believes its committees should work more effectively. It has recently agreed written terms of reference for these committees. Criteria, based on professional expertise, have been agreed for the effective chairing of committees. New chairs of the finance and audit committees were appointed in October 1996. A new clerk was appointed from December 1996. A review of the effectiveness of this appointment will take place in six months. The servicing of the corporation and its committees is efficiently carried out. The prioritising of agenda items has been introduced to ensure that time is used more efficiently during meetings. Action has been taken to ensure compliance with the instrument and articles of government. A register of governors' interests was approved

in July 1996. Policies on payments to governors, attendance of non-governors at meetings, the format of management accounts and other information were decided at meetings in October and November 1996. A code of conduct was also approved. Targets for attendance by governors have been set. A review of the effectiveness of the corporation will be conducted in June 1997. Induction for new governors and training for all governors are thought by members to be relevant and helpful.

16   The relationship between the corporation and the principal and senior managers has been reviewed. A revised and more detailed job description for the principal gives a clear delineation of the relative responsibilities of governors, the principal and senior managers. The senior management team exercises strong leadership and this is clearly acknowledged by governors. A comprehensive range of policies has been approved by the corporation. These policies will be reviewed over a three-year cycle. All policies are monitored and reports on their implementation are prepared for governors. For example, a recent report was prepared on equal opportunities.

17   As a result of changes made to it in 1995, the management team is smaller and more efficient. It now consists of the principal, deputy principal, director of finance and assistant principal. The deputy principal and director of finance are relatively new in post. The deputy principal is responsible for the curriculum, quality assurance and provision for adults. The assistant principal is responsible for support services. The director of finance has responsibility for estates, management information systems, finance and general administration. Support staff are divided into sections. Each section is managed by a section head who reports to the director of finance. There are job descriptions for all posts and these are reviewed annually.

18   The organisation of courses and the management of individual subjects are effective. Four sector managers with responsibility for the curriculum report to the deputy principal. Curriculum sector managers have responsibility, within their respective sectors, for the management of teaching staff, implementation of the college's operating plan, co-ordination of annual resource bids, quality assurance and annual staff reviews. One curriculum sector manager has responsibility across the college for tutorial services. Curriculum sector managers have a considerable teaching commitment and, in some cases, additional roles within the college. The amount of time allocated to them for their administrative duties is small. GCE A level and GCSE subjects are spread across the sectors and their co-ordination is the responsibility of the deputy principal. Student programme managers within each sector are responsible for the organisation of tutorials and student support. They also collect data about attendance and retention from registers. There is some confusion over the relative roles and responsibilities of the student programme managers and the sector manager for student services who reports to the assistant principal. The management of provision for adults

is less effective than that of provision for 16 to 19 year olds. The college has recognised that links, in terms of planning and curriculum development, between subject areas and between the provision for adults and the programmes for 16 to 19 year olds are limited.

19   The academic board comprises the senior management team, the sector managers and the boarding manager. It deals with new course provision, quality reviews, curriculum issues, reports from the library users' group and from the information technology users' group. The college board, comprising members of the academic board and section heads is responsible for strategic planning, conditions of service and college policies. Neither board has elected members of staff.

20   All staff are given opportunities to contribute to the development of the strategic plan. The action plans, drawn up by subject areas and those resulting from course reviews are brought together in sector plans. These vary in their format and quality. Some sector action plans are weak in terms of specific targets, timescales and identification of who has responsibility for action. The sector plans form part of the draft strategic plan and operating statements which are presented to the college board and the corporation. Communication from the corporation and principal to the college staff is effective. Briefings for all staff take place on three mornings each week and there are regular timetabled, minuted meetings of the senior management team, college board, academic board, curriculum sector managers, section heads, sector staff and tutor groups. Some teachers feel that communication between them and senior managers is less effective than it might be.

21   Students are not represented on any of the college's formal bodies or on course teams. The students' council has access to the principal and senior managers but some students feel that its views have little impact. The student services sector manager has a liaison role with the student council.

22   The revenue allocations to curriculum sectors are based on a formula which has an appropriate weighting for science and art subjects. Bids are required for capital items. Section heads and curriculum sector managers have devolved budgets for consumable items. All budget holders receive monthly reports and review their budgets with the deputy principal or their sector manager. Staff at sector level and below do not have a clear idea of how budget allocations are determined. The college's average level of funding for 1996-97 is £22.58 per unit, compared with £23.31 in 1995-96. In 1996-97, the median for sixth form colleges is £19.36 and for all sector colleges it is £18.66 per unit. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are shown in figures 5 and 6.

23   Management information is efficiently collected and disseminated. The computers used for administration are networked and they have suitable software. Information about students can be accessed by any member of staff through a computer in the staff workroom. Enrolment targets were achieved in 1995-96 and the college expects them to be

achieved again in 1996-97. Other targets are set. These range from targets for improved examination results at GCE A level to financial targets for the catering operation. Performance target sheets are completed for each course. These include, for example, the number of pieces of work set, marked and returned within 10 days. The rigour with which these target sheets are completed varies between sectors. Retention rates and absences are monitored and reported upon and vigorous action is taken to address them. Data on student destinations are collected and analysed.

24   The college does not comply with the requirements of the *Further and Higher Education Act 1992* in that it does not provide a weekly act of worship for students. It does offer religious studies at GCE AS/A level. Students can opt to take single modules from this course but the publicity material for the subject does not inform them they may do so. Informal chaplaincy arrangements are made for boarding students.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

25   The college has a good reputation, particularly in its partner community colleges, for the strong support and effective guidance it gives to students. A four-year analysis shows that the three partner colleges contributed 45 per cent, 25 per cent and 10 per cent, respectively, of the first-year intake of students. The remaining 20 per cent was made up of students from other schools and boarding students. The college pays £40,000 each year on transport for students from the rural areas. The provision of this transport is a key factor in attracting students, and sustaining high levels of recruitment, from these areas. Links with overseas parents and students about boarding are well organised and sensitively handled. Staff are available in the college throughout the summer for consultation with prospective students. Careers guidance and support are available on the days when examination results for GCE A level and GCSE are announced.

26   The friendly and supportive relationships between college staff and prospective students which begin at the stages of pre-course counselling and interview continue during a well-structured enrolment day. Enrolment takes place over three days. Students are invited alphabetically to enrol on one of the days. They are seen in groups of 12 by three members of staff who give pre-course counselling. Afterwards students have interviews with appropriate subject teachers who give them guidance and advice. Students felt that the advice which they received enabled them to make their own informed choice about which course to join. Students with particular learning needs are able to obtain advice in private. Once students decide upon a course, a learning agreement is negotiated with them and they are allocated to tutor groups. Students aged 16 to 19 return home with a written offer of a place on a course. Their parents have to sign this offer to indicate their approval of their child's chosen course of study. There is no comparable enrolment counselling scheme for adults.

27   At induction, all full-time students are given a tour of the college and they are made aware of the various student services available to them. They receive helpful course induction handbooks as well as a students' handbook. They are given copies of the college's charter by their tutors who go through it with them in an early tutorial session. A further day is available for induction should students need more help and guidance about their course. Induction for adult students is less well organised. They are not given copies of the college's charter although much of its content is covered by subject teachers during induction sessions. A useful contribution to pre-course counselling, initial induction and continuing support for adults is made by the administrative assistant who has responsibility for adult programmes. The induction process is evaluated by staff and students and findings and recommendations are passed on to the senior management team. In theory, problems identified during induction are supposed to be followed up by student programme managers, but their task, in this respect, has not been clearly defined. In practice, the quality of the subsequent tracking of problems is variable.

28   Students ended their induction day by writing an account of their induction experience. This piece of writing served as a non-threatening way of testing the students' literacy skills. Two weeks into term all students were given a numeracy test during a tutorial period. Of the 430 full-time students who joined the college in 1996, 30 were identified as needing help with their literacy skills and 12 were identified as needing help with their numeracy skills. The additional support which students receive for their learning is good and they see it as a valuable service. All users of the learning centre are asked to make simple action plans and to make a self-assessment of their skills. Adults do not take part in this screening process but may be referred to the learning centre by teachers. Some students on the course designed to prepare adults for higher education felt that their skills had not been adequately assessed before they joined the course.

29   Students are allocated to tutorial groups according to whether they are in the first year of their course, the second year of their course, or are on a one-year course. Such homogeneity in the tutorial groups enables tutors to provide tutorial activities which are relevant to their students' specific needs. Students on one-year courses are particularly appreciative of being in separate tutorial groups. There is an allocation of 55 minutes each week for tutorial activity. The level of attendance at tutorials is good.

30   The college employs a professional counsellor for three hours a week. The counsellor works closely with the sector manager of student services. The counselling and guidance of the boarding students are a vital part of the *in loco parentis* support provided by the manager of the boarding house. The college has good creche facilities. An evaluation carried out in June 1996 indicated that over 75 per cent of users of the creche strongly approved of the service it provided. Some adult students would like the college to provide them with a room of their own where they can develop a self-help and mutual support group.

31   The assistant sector manager in student services has responsibility for careers guidance and works closely with the Leicestershire Careers Guidance Service. The careers service is involved in pre-course counselling at induction and contributes to the tutorial programme, parents evenings and the higher education evening. The careers module of the tutor programme is accredited by the Leicestershire Open College Network. All students are given a careers interview and an action plan is produced for them by the careers adviser.

32   The majority of students from the community colleges have well-prepared records of achievement up to age 16. Although students are invited to bring their record of achievement to their interview, the college makes no commitment to continue developing this record during the students' time at the college.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

33   Of the 114 teaching sessions inspected, 68 per cent had strengths which outweighed the weaknesses. Four per cent of the sessions had weaknesses which outweighed the strengths. The grades awarded to the teaching sessions inspected are shown in the following table. The grades are significantly better for GCE AS/A level and basic education classes than for other classes.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programmes of study

Programmes	Grade 1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level	20	26	14	1	0	61
GCSE	3	6	8	1	0	18
GNVQ	1	4	5	1	0	11
Basic education	2	4	0	0	0	6
Other	2	10	5	1	0	18
Total	**28**	**50**	**32**	**4**	**0**	**114**

34   The average level of attendance in the lessons observed was 82 per cent of those registered. Attendance ranged from 73 per cent in business studies to 89 per cent in environmental science and geography. The average number of students present in the lessons inspected was 10.6. The college produces an annual report on attendance which shows attendance on a bi-monthly basis for each class. The report for 1995-96 indicates that overall attendance varied from 64 per cent in GCE A level general studies to 95 per cent in GCE A level technology. The average attendance rate for the year is recorded as 83.5 per cent, which is similar to the national average attendance rate for sixth form colleges of 84 per cent as given in the *Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1995-96*.

35   GCE A level teaching programmes in science are well managed by experienced and well-qualified staff. Practical work is clearly integrated

with theory. Learning takes place within a purposeful atmosphere. Students' progress is regularly monitored. At the start of GCE A level science programmes, teachers place appropriate emphasis on developing students' basic skills such as the handling of practical apparatus, communication, problem solving and the ability to use number in scientific contexts. In a minority of classes, the learning objectives are not clear to students. The use of questioning to build on previous learning and to challenge students' thinking, is underdeveloped in the majority of lessons. Teachers make little reference to the world of work in their classroom teaching or assignment work. In GCSE classes, teachers give insufficient attention to the different abilities of students.

36   Lesson plans for computing and mathematics are detailed. Records are kept of the work of individual students who study on their own in computing and information technology. Lessons are carefully prepared. Overhead transparencies are effective and handouts are of good quality. The students' assignments are well designed. Students are given work of an appropriate level from which they can progress systematically to further attainment. Learning activities are relevant and varied and include group work, presentations, problem solving, and practical activities. Key skills are effectively taught as an integrated part of GCE A level programmes. There is productive interaction between staff and students during question and answer sessions in class. In some cases, however, teachers fail to ensure that all students are involved in providing responses to the questions. In a few instances, teachers give students too much information and fail to check that they understand it.

37   In geography and environmental science, the teachers have a good rapport with their students. In most lessons, there is a generally purposeful atmosphere. Students are fully engaged in their tasks. Teachers employed questions well to test the students' understanding. Good use is made of a range of visual aids and of video in particular. In geography, there is a limited programme of non-residential fieldwork which is relevant to course objectives. Some good use is made of the local area and the campus in environmental science. Generally, however, geography and environmental science students do not have enough opportunity for research and debate and there are no activities specifically designed to challenge the most able students. Little use is made of information technology by teachers or students. In environmental science, too little instruction is given in basic laboratory procedure.

38   The teaching in business studies is generally satisfactory. Students are encouraged to work alone and in groups and generally do so effectively. Assessments are set at an appropriate level and fairly marked. There is an effective appeals process for students who are dissatisfied with the assessment they receive. Teachers do not always make the aims and objectives of lessons clear to students or set the learning in context. There are good schemes of work but these are not translated into effective lesson plans. The poor quality of overhead transparencies and of some handouts

does not reflect well on the image of the business studies section. These aids are not up to the standards of similar materials found in the best professional practice in business.

39   In art, the one-to-one studio based teaching is particularly good. Students are given detailed and constructive criticism and assessment is fair and accurate. Peer and self-evaluation are used effectively. GCE A level students have the opportunity to experiment with a range of materials and processes in two and three dimensions and they are encouraged to develop their own style and creative ideas. The traditional skills of understanding elements of visual language and drawing are well taught. Written and verbal communication are developed effectively. Information technology is used creatively on design courses but not on the GCE A level art course. The teaching of large groups is less effective than the teaching of small groups and individuals.

40   The teaching of GCE A level English is very good. Teachers make use of a range of appropriate classroom activities including practical exercises, and discussed problem solving. Students work in groups, pairs, and as a whole class. The tasks which they are set take account of their different levels of knowledge and achievement. The carefully thought out problems and assignments challenge the students. Displays of students' work in the classrooms designated for the teaching of English gives the accommodation a sense of identity. They serve as an aid to memory for other students, helping them with their learning. GCE A level students confidently explore issues with tutors and other students. There is insufficient monitoring and co-ordination of GCSE provision.

41   The teaching of languages is carried out by a small and competent team of teachers and foreign language assistants who work together effectively to provide what is mainly a range of GCE A level programmes. Lessons are delivered in the language being studied and this encourages the development of practical communication skills and meets the needs of the examination syllabus. The small size of classes, however, limits the opportunities for interaction between students. Lesson plans are clear. They show that activities are well sequenced, that content is appropriate and that teachers exercise good judgement in time management. They lack, however, clearly-specified learning objectives. The development of key skills is not explicitly recorded or assessed. Students are encouraged to make use of information technology in their language study. Effective use is made of the college library, text books and good-quality handouts.

42   Most of the teaching of history, economics and politics is effective. Students often work on tasks in small groups and then feed back their conclusions to the group as a whole. In this way, and through debates and question-and-answer sessions, oral skills are effectively developed. In some cases, teachers fail to ensure that all students take part in the discussion. Most teachers do not make good use of the chalkboard or of other visual aids.

43   In psychology and sociology there is good course documentation, including clear schemes of work, sound lesson plans and well-produced handouts. Good use is made of video and information technology. Questions directed at individual students are used effectively but sometimes lengthy discussions are allowed to develop which have no clear objectives. Good use is made of group work and case studies. Teachers take insufficient account of group size when planning their lessons.

44   The teachers engaged in the provision of learning support and basic education make a valuable contribution to college life. They make initial assessments of students on entry to the college and support dyslexic people in the college and the community. They address the learning needs of individual students. Their assessments of students' work generally include positive feedback and encouraging comments. Teachers provide insufficient opportunities for their students to work together co-operatively.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

45   Students aged 16 to 18 who were entered for GCE AS/A level examinations in 1995-96 scored, on average, 4.8 points per entry (where grade A=10 points, E=2). This placed the college among the top third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure, based on the data in the 1996 performance tables published by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE). The college was in the middle third of the 1995 performance tables with 3.9 points per examination entry. In 1996, there were 215 examination entries for GCSE courses with 57 per cent obtaining grade C or above. The equivalent figures in 1995 and 1994 were 48 per cent and 63 per cent, respectively. Only a few students are entered each year for vocational examinations. The percentage of successful students has varied over the last three years from 46 per cent to 92 per cent but the figures are too small to have any statistical significance.

46   For a number of years, the college has subscribed to an independent, external service for analysing students' performance. The service provides an analysis of the value added to students' achievements by comparing their actual performance at GCE A level with their predicted performance based on GCSE achievements. The data have been used to identify subjects where the examination results have been lower than those expected, and to set targets for improvement. Staff also make use of the data at enrolment when giving advice to students on their choice of subjects and when setting targets for individual students. Subject co-ordinators compare predicted grades with grades achieved in mock examinations. Results are reported to parents of students aged 16 to 19 and appropriate action is taken where individuals are performing below expectations. In September, the college undertakes its own detailed analysis of examination results. Comprehensive critical analysis of students' achievements is presented to the corporation and the academic board.

47   Examination results at GCE A level have improved over recent years in mathematics and the sciences. They are around the national average for sixth form colleges and are slightly better than those predicted for students on the basis of their GCSE achievements. Students who take GCSE examinations at the college rarely perform well; results in chemistry have been particularly poor.

48   In 1994-95, the first college students to take the GNVQ intermediate course achieved a poor result which was about 19 per cent below the national average. The success rate improved in 1996 and was about 20 per cent above the national average. GCE A level business results are in line with predictions based on students' GCSE results at entry. Most students work effectively in groups. They participate in young enterprise schemes which are supported by local businesses. Students acquire information technology skills as part of their course but they do not make sufficient use of these skills in the presentation of their work.

49   Art and design examination results are good. Most students have learned to be self-critical. Their levels of technical skill are generally satisfactory although some students on the GCSE photography course have an inadequate grasp of elementary technical facts. The majority of students have adequate oral and written communication skills but many art students have poor numeracy skills.

50   In very recent years, geography and environmental science GCE A level examination results have been above the national average, in terms of pass rates and achievement of the higher grades A to C. Many students have achieved higher grades than would be predicted on the basis of their performance at GCSE.   Students have a sound knowledge and understanding of their subjects. They write well and their oral skills are generally adequate.   Their analytical and presentational skills are, however, often weak.

51   Students achieve excellent results in GCE A level English. In 1996, English literature results were well above the national average for sixth form colleges. Ninety-five per cent of the students who sat the examination gained grade C or above and all of them passed. Since 1994, however, there has been a general decline in the number of students who obtain grade C or above in GCSE English. In 1995, the grades achieved by students in psychology and sociology at GCE A level were lower than the average for sixth form colleges. In GCSE, students achieved better results in psychology and poorer results in sociology than the average in sixth forms colleges. In modern languages students perform well in class but their examination results are often poor.

52   The formal assessment of students on learning support and basic skills courses is based on their individual work records. Their performance is accredited by a variety of organisations. The 1995-96 success rates of basic skills students were generally well above the national averages. However, there are some weaknesses in the record keeping of students' achievements.

53   In 1996, 70 per cent of the 119 students, aged 16 to 18, who took two or more GCE A levels progressed to higher education. Of students taking a full-time GCSE course, 63 per cent continued in further education as did 85 per cent of those students taking an intermediate level GNVQ qualification.

54   Many students participate in a range of voluntary creative, cultural and sporting activities. GNVQ business students have designed products for a local manufacturing company which are now retailing in a national chain of department stores. In the last two years, students from the college were the main contributors to, and award winners in, two anthologies of poems from young people in Leicestershire. Art students have been successful in local competitions. Two students gained gold medals in the Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme last year. Students have represented Leicestershire in a range of sports. In 1995-96, one student was Midland Counties shot-put champion. Another student was bronze medallist in the English tae kwon do championships and represented Great Britain in the European championships.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

55   The academic board has overall responsibility for quality assurance. It receives and discusses internal review documents resulting from sector reports and the course review cycle, and agrees action for ensuring improvement of the college's provision. The academic board also receives and debates reports on students' achievements in external examinations. A three-year cycle of audit and review of the quality of the college's provision was started in 1994-95 and so far this has covered two-thirds of the college's work.   Reviews are conducted by sector managers. Observation of teaching and learning is undertaken as part of the process. Course reviews follow the headings in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement* and strengths and weaknesses are highlighted. An action plan to address the weaknesses is produced and progress is monitored by sector managers. The reviews and the follow-up action are generally thorough.

56   This three-year cycle of audit and review is underpinned by an annual cycle of course monitoring at subject and at sector level. Individual courses are managed by course co-ordinators who have a monitoring function for each of the subjects for which they have responsibility. These monitoring arrangements are logged in course files. The quality of each course is judged against specified standards and performance criteria. These include ensuring that assessment practice is in line with college assessment policy and that routine assignments, such as those set for homework, are returned within 10 days if handed in by the due date. All course co-ordinators are obliged to complete a proforma showing how actual performance measures up against the agreed performance indicators for issues such as attendance and retention. In addition, sector managers continuously monitor performance against these performance indicators.

Data are collected centrally on students' attendance and retention rates and an overview of performance against indicators for these is produced monthly. Sector managers are responsible for monitoring this information on performance and for taking action when aspects of the college's performance give cause for concern.

57   Information from the course files, including an analysis of students' achievements in external examinations, is included in course reports which are compiled in the autumn term. A report is compiled by each course co-ordinator for each subject. In a few instances, the files lack sufficient detail and the analysis and resulting action plans are insufficiently rigorous. Issues identified in the reports have to be addressed in an action plan. Targets for improvement are set in consultation with sector managers who monitor progress towards the targets. There is scope to improve the consistency with which this process is implemented across all sectors. Information from subject reports is included in sector reports which are produced by sector managers during the autumn term. Sector reports are received by the senior management team and by the academic board. Issues raised in sector reports have to be addressed in a sector action plan. Implementation of action in these plans is monitored by the deputy principal and the academic board. Sector reports and plans, in turn, are taken into account in the strategic planning process.

58   Procedures have not yet been developed for the quality assurance of student services or the support provided by the college. More work is required to extend quality assurance and develop standards for areas other than the curriculum. Student services is organised as a sector under the direction of a sector manager. Various reviews are undertaken throughout the year to record and monitor the activity in this area. Termly reports are compiled and these are taken into account in the framing of an annual action plan which is presented to the senior management team. No annual report on student services is presented to the academic board or to the corporation. Adult basic education provided through the learning resource centre received the Basic Skills Agency Q mark for quality in 1993 and this has just been reaffirmed.

59   The college self-assessment report is derived from the sector reports. As such it is an integral part of the college's framework for quality assurance. It is presented to the academic board and to governors for consideration. It is set out under the headings in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. Background information for each section is descriptive. Strengths and weaknesses are identified for each section but no grades are awarded. The 1995-96 report is the second one which has been produced and it is laid out more clearly than the previous one. The action plan in response to the 1995-96 report was compiled in January 1997. It incorporates actions to address issues raised by specialist Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) inspectors in November 1996.

60   The college's charter clearly outlines what students should expect of the college. It is written in appropriate language and has been compiled after due consultation with a wide range of users. The charter is laid out in logical sections and it makes some specific and measurable commitments. There is an annual review of the extent to which the college complies with these commitments. The charter itself is reviewed as part of a regular cycle of review of all college policies.

61   The college does not carry out any survey to elicit students' perceptions about the college in general, but students' views on specific matters are canvassed in various ways. There are annual surveys of the level of students' satisfaction with aspects of the college's provision such as the advice and guidance they receive on careers and higher education, the college's library, arrangements for their work experience and their induction process. Students also complete questionnaires which seek their views on the quality of their teaching and learning. These questionnaires, which are distributed annually by tutors, have been refined but they are in need of further improvement. The college participates in a national attitude survey to elicit the confidential views of students on their experience at college. The survey also seeks the students' views on aspects of the college's provision, such as the opportunities for students to further their personal development, and the quality of resources. Parents of students aged 16 to 19 are asked for their evaluation of the usefulness of the 'report evenings' when they come to college to be informed about their child's progress. Their opinions are not canvassed on other aspects of the college's work. The views of employers on the quality of the college's provision are not sought.

62   Staff express satisfaction with the level of support and staff development available to them. The staff-development budget represents 1 per cent of the salaries budget. Institutional and sector needs are identified through the sector review and action planning process. In addition, staff can apply to take part in staff-development activities related to their specialist subject or their personal development. They are required to show how the activity is relevant to institutional objectives and priorities. Revision of the present system of staff induction is planned for next year. Many newly-qualified teachers are given responsibility for courses or subject areas. They are not always provided with sufficient support to help them discharge such responsibility, nor has the college identified the amount of support they need. There is a system for staff appraisal linked to staff development. It covers all staff to sector head level. Training of the next group of staff, who are scheduled to be appraised before the end of the academic year, will be undertaken during the spring term to prepare them for the process. The college is working towards the achievement of the Investor in People award.

RESOURCES

Staffing

63   The ratio of students to teachers has increased from 9.8:1 in 1993-94 to 15:1 in 1996-97. The total of 52 teachers, of whom 31 are female, is equivalent to 33 full-time teaching staff. Staff who directly support learning include three technicians; two in science and one in computing. The science technicians are appropriately experienced. One provides support for the college marketing activities; the other provides support for art and design. The other support staff are sufficient for the needs of the college. The premises officer oversees the cleaning staff and carries out routine maintenance where possible. Local contractors are used, as required, for work such as plumbing, painting and electrical maintenance. Staff costs as a percentage of total expenditure were 64 per cent in the 12 months to July 1996. The principal has responsibility, in relation to personnel management for teaching staff, and the director of finance has a similar responsibility for support staff. The administration of the college's payroll is contracted out to a bureau by the finance officer. A comprehensive staff handbook covers college policies and procedures. Performance-related pay operates for all staff to sector managers level.

64   The teachers have appropriate academic qualifications. In general, there is scope for staff to further the development of their skills in teaching of adults and to update their industrial and commercial experience. There is little contact between those who teach, respectively, on access and mainstream courses, and courses for adults.

Equipment/learning resources

65   The college's strategic plan for 1996-97 identified the need to extend the management information network to the staff room, and the need to resource the new media studies course. Both needs had been met at the time of the inspection. An information technology users' group has been set up recently to review the funding of resources for computing, with the intention of establishing a four-year rolling programme for purchasing hardware and software.   There is no rolling programme for the replacement of equipment.

66   Equipment to support students with their learning is generally suitable for its purpose. Science equipment is adequate and there is appropriate access to audio-visual and computing equipment in most science rooms. In environmental science and geography, the range of basic resources is adequate and there are some good learning materials, including atlases, videos and laboratory and fieldwork equipment. In the humanities, there is an ample supply of reference material, tape recorders and video-cassette recorders. In art and design, there is a computer suite where students may use a specialist computer-aided drawing package but there is a lack of suitable image manipulation software for GCE A level students. Off-air recording of satellite programmes is available for modern languages.

67   The learning support centre has a comprehensive collection of resources and equipment including computers. Materials are available to support the teaching of numeracy, literacy and other key skills at all levels including foundation, GCSE, GNVQ and GCE A level. A recent development has been the purchase of subject-based materials from a national supplier and this is being extended so that these materials cover the full range of college courses. The quality of resources at basic skills 'outreach' centres is variable. At the three local community colleges there are adequate resources, including wordprocessors, but in some other centres, the part-time staff have to carry a considerable amount of resource material with them to their classes.

68   The range of computers and software across the college as a whole is adequate. The learning support centre has a suite of computers and these are available to students for general use throughout the college day. There are two further computer rooms which are available to all students on a 'drop-in' basis. These rooms provide a professional environment for computing and they are a valuable resource for general computing courses, which cater for a wide range of students. There is a networked computer laboratory which is used mainly by computing students. General purpose software, of the type used in good industrial practice, is available on all machines. There is some shortage of specialist software for desktop publishing and graphics work. The library has seven computers which are used exclusively with compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases for information searching. One machine provides access to the Internet. The computing resources are used by a broad range of students including those on leisure and tourism, business studies, modern languages, and psychology courses. In general, students can gain access to a computer when they wish to do so but, on occasions, they have to queue to use a printer.

69   Students are provided with textbooks which are purchased out of the funds allocated to each curriculum area. The new library area is spacious and provides a modern and stimulating environment. It has 73 study places and soft chair reading areas. Additional study spaces are made available in classrooms during the day. There is a limited number of periodicals in computing but the bookstock is adequate. Periodicals are reviewed regularly and each year one or two new periodicals replace those which it is considered are no longer worth ordering. Adequate stocks of other learning materials such as video and audio tapes, and CD-ROMs are available. There is a rolling programme of displays within the reception area. Project files have been developed for specific subjects. The library is open late on two nights each week for the benefit of adult students on evening courses and boarding students. There are enough staff to cover the library's current opening hours. An induction programme introduces all full-time students to the use of the library catalogue and the computers. A library users' group has been established. It comprises representatives from each curriculum sector, and other interested users such as adult

students and staff involved with the provision of careers evaluation and guidance.

Accommodation

70   The main building contains the majority of the teaching and administrative facilities. The art and design block was added in 1970. It contains a cafeteria, a general seminar room, the art and design and language facilities, and a room which serves as a base for GNVQ business students. The original boarding house was converted into additional classrooms to form the annexe. The annexe contains some poor accommodation but its use is being reviewed and reduced. The teaching accommodation is generally suitable for its purpose. Rooms have been assigned to specific subjects. As a result, specialist areas have been established which are identified with particular subjects through appropriate use of posters and, in some cases, displays of students' work. At present, maintenance plans are formulated on an annual basis. Long-term maintenance requirements will be established during the proposed accommodation review.

71   The dining room and the library are both bright modern areas. There is no student communal area other than the dining room. Overall, the accommodation does not present an attractive image to potential adult students. A toilet for people with disabilities has been built in the main block. It is not signposted and it has no internal alarm. Most parts of the college with the exception of the physics and chemistry laboratories, the geography base room and the one mobile classroom, are accessible to wheelchair users.

72   The college is located within its own large grounds. The maintenance of the grounds is contracted out. Located within the grounds is a hard-surface area which serves alternatively as three tennis courts or a netball court. The eight-acre sports field, sited across a main road from the college, is used for football and hockey. It does not have its own changing facilities and is underused. In the main building there is a large sports hall with good-quality changing facilities. The hall is used for classes during the day and for informal activities during the lunch break. The hall is available to members of the local community in the evenings, mainly for badminton, and they also make use of its climbing wall on one evening each week.

73   In the learning services centre, the accommodation is spacious and of a high standard and most of the groups who work there are able to do so in comfortable and relaxing surroundings. The outreach bases in the community colleges have been converted for use by small groups of adult students. The bases provide adequate accommodation but there is some concern that they are cold in winter. The accommodation at the Grange in Wing is not particularly welcoming or conducive to learning. Lighting is inadequate and the furniture and facilities are of poor quality.

74   The college is open from 08.00 hours on weekdays. It closes at 18.00 hours on Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays and stays open until 21.00 hours on Tuesdays and Wednesdays to accommodate adult classes. There has been little systematic monitoring of the use of teaching accommodation.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

75   Particular strengths of the college are:

• governors who are well informed about the issues facing the college

• the quality of leadership provided by the senior management team

• its well-established process of subject and course review

• the range of performance indicators and targets used in assuring the quality of the curriculum

• the careful monitoring of students' attendance

• the improvements in students' achievements at GCE A level

• the extensive use and robust analysis of value-added data to monitor students' progress

• its well-managed student services

• its good links with partner community colleges.

76   In order to build on its strengths and to improve further its provision, the college should:

• monitor the effectiveness of the recent significant changes in governance and senior management

• review the responsibilities, and clarify the respective roles of sector managers and the student programme manager

• extend quality assurance

• develop standards for areas other than the curriculum

• improve GCSE examination results

• develop plans for replacing equipment and for the long-term maintenance of the accommodation

• identify and meet the needs of adult students

• improve market research and develop a systematic marketing plan.

FIGURES

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

Figure 1

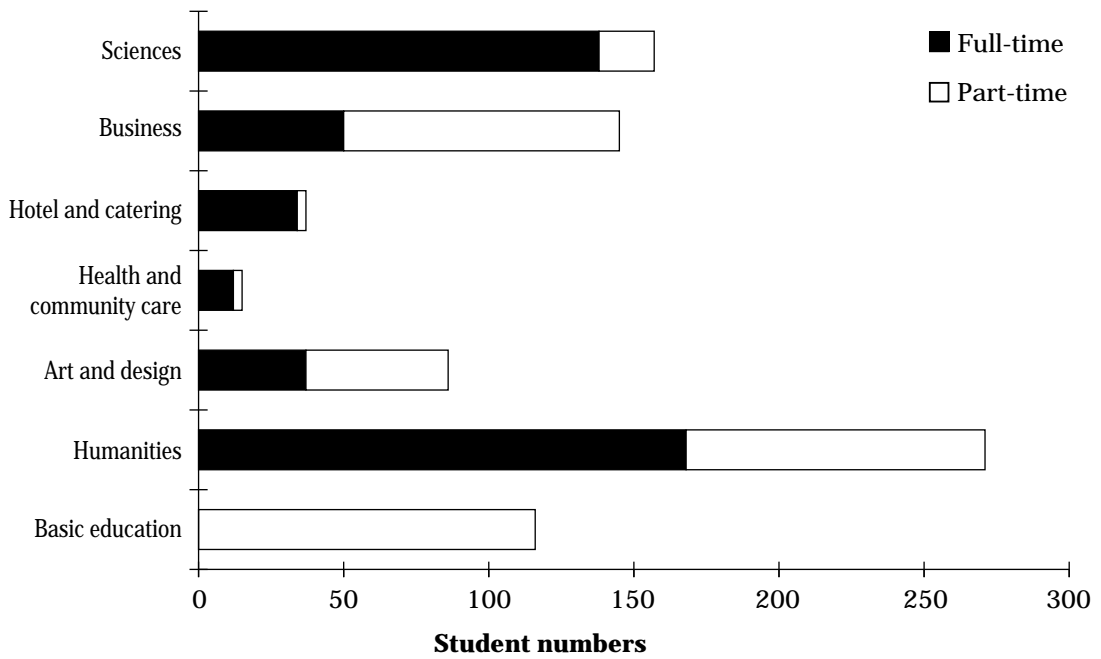**The Rutland College: percentage student numbers by age (as at November 1996)**

25+ years
41%

16-18 years
54%

19-24 years
5%
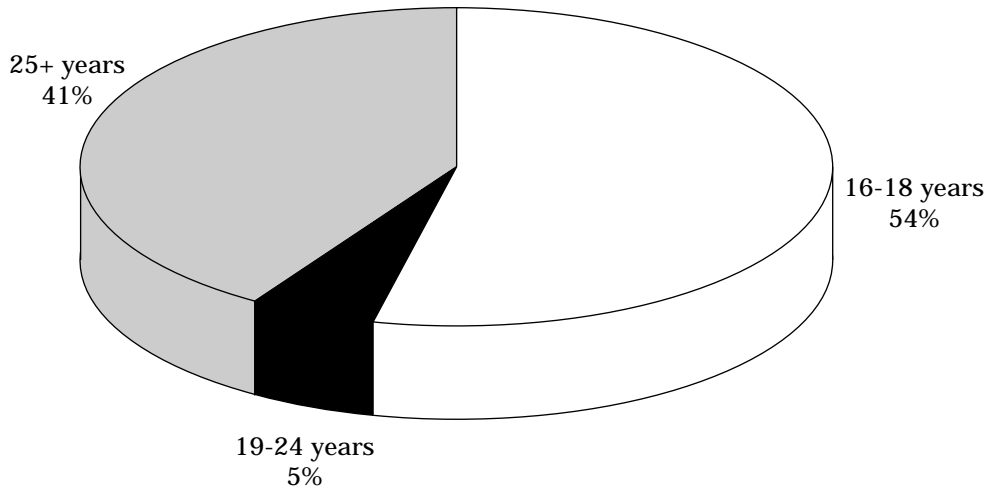
Student numbers: 827

Figure 2

The Rutland College: percentage student numbers by level of study (as at November 1996)

Leisure/recreation
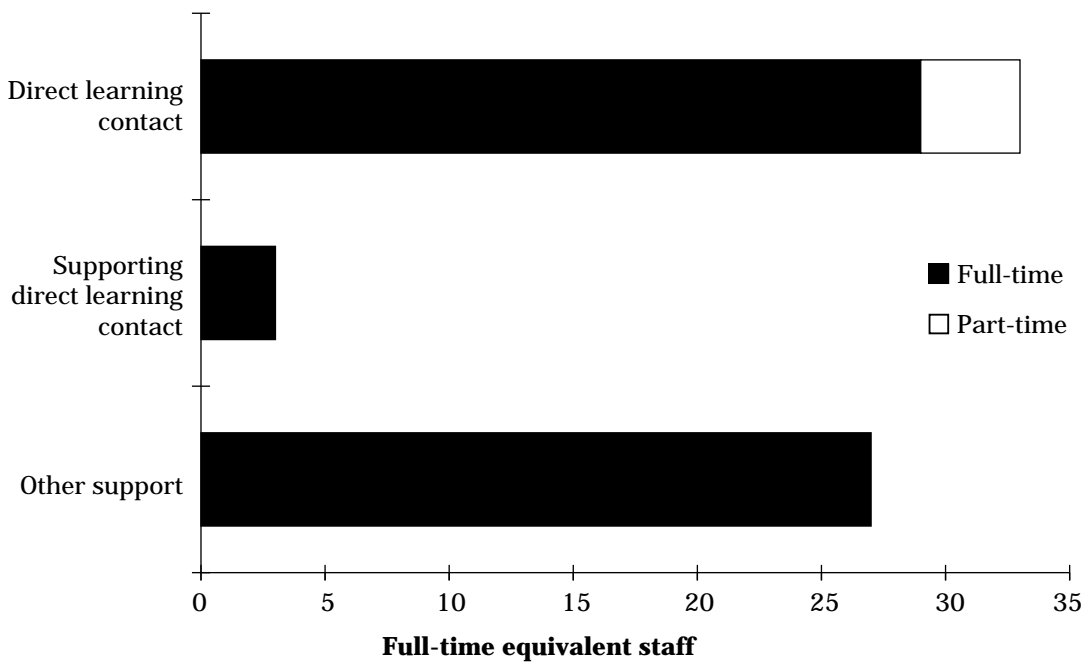(non-schedule 2)
4%

Foundation
18%

Intermediate
22%

Advanced
56%

Student numbers: 827

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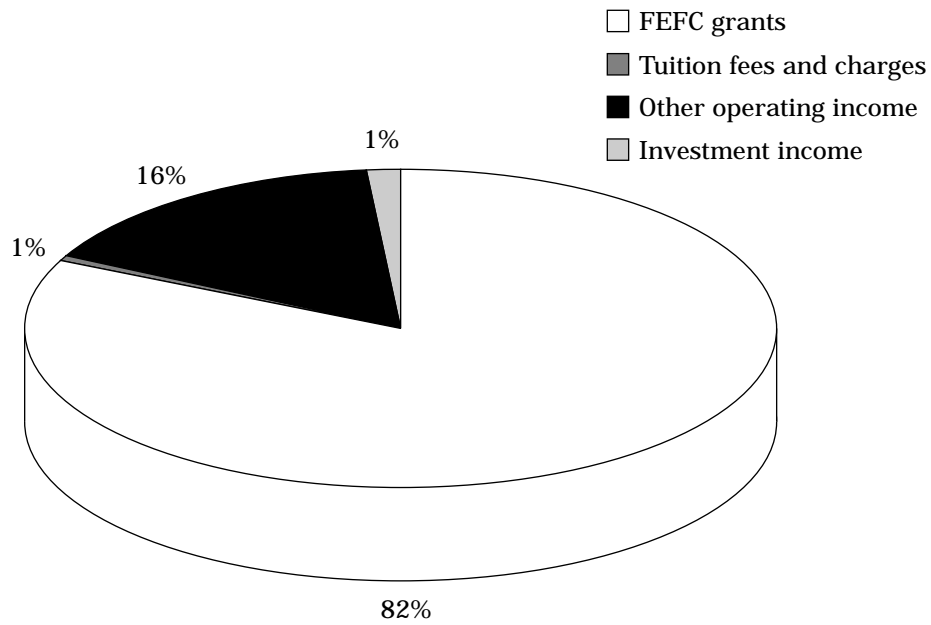

Student numbers: 827

The Rutland College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at November 1996)
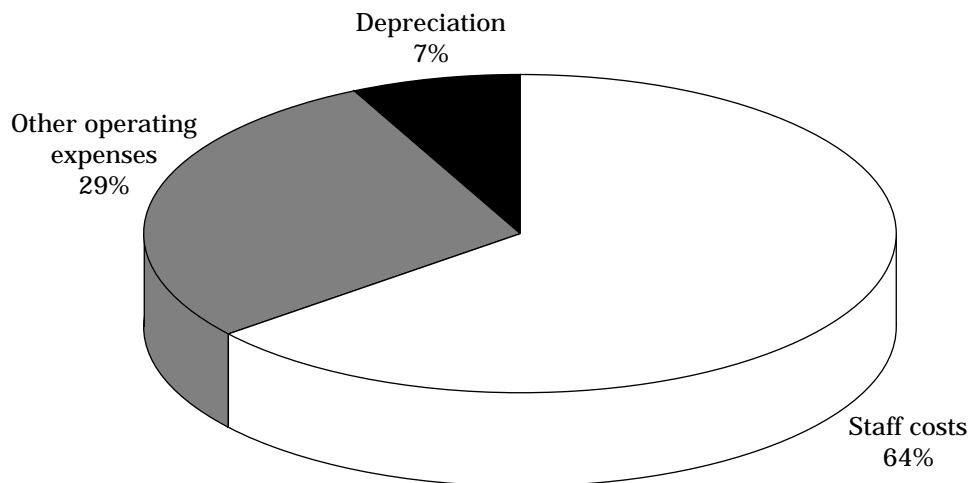

Full-time equivalent staff: 63

Figure 5

The Rutland College: income (for 12 months to July 1996)

☐ FEFC grants
▨ Tuition fees and charges
■ Other operating income
▨ Investment income

1%

16%

1%

82%

Income: £2,070,000

Figure 6

The Rutland College: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)

Depreciation
7%

Other operating
expenses
29%

Staff costs
64%

Expenditure: £2,156,000