

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

St Austell College

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

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

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 119/96

ST AUSTELL COLLEGE

SOUTH WEST REGION

Inspected March 1995-May 1996

Summary

St Austell College is a general further education college serving mid and east Cornwall. It was formed three years ago from two existing institutions in St Austell and has made significant progress in establishing itself as a single college at the St Austell centre. The college is involved in initiatives for the regeneration of the local economy. It offers a wide range of courses through a variety of modes of study. There is an extensive programme of education for adults. The college's middle management system has been successfully restructured and the management of operational units is generally effective. Most of the teaching is good. Examination results are generally above national averages. The college's recruitment systems are effective. Careful guidance is available to all students, including adults. The college should: improve links between its centres at St Austell and Saltash; ensure staff share good practice; address inconsistencies in tutorial practices; improve the retention rate of students on some courses; identify its unit costs more thoroughly and ensure they inform the college's financial management; further develop the management information system; and improve its quality assurance systems generally, and those relating to franchised provision, in particular.

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

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

| Curriculum area | Grade | Curriculum area | Grade |
|--|--------------|---|--------------|
| Science, mathematics and computing | 2 | Health and community care and hair and beauty | 2 |
| Engineering | 3 | Art and design | 2 |
| Business administration and management | 2 | Social science and languages | 2 |
| Business studies | 3 | English and communications | 3 |
| Catering and leisure | 2 | Franchised provision | 3 |
| | | Adult education and SLDD | 2 |

INTRODUCTION

1 St Austell College was inspected between March 1995 and May 1996. A team of 18 inspectors spent a total of 94 days in the college. Engineering provision was inspected during March 1995 and adult provision in October and November 1995. The college's enrolment and induction procedures were inspected in September 1995. Other curriculum areas and aspects of cross-college provision were inspected in April and May 1996.

2 Inspectors visited 328 classes, examined students' written work and a wide range of documentation. Meetings were held with governors, parents, college managers and staff, students, and representatives from local schools, employers, the community, the Devon and Cornwall Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and other education and training providers. Franchised provision arranged by the college was inspected in various parts of the country. Twenty-one of the 38 franchised centres operating at the time of the inspection were visited.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

3 St Austell College was formed in April 1993 as a result of a merger of the Mid-Cornwall College of Further Education and St Austell Sixth Form College. The St Austell centre is located on four sites: Trevarthian which includes the management centre, Sedgemoor, West Hill and Polkyth. The Trevarthian site, which now acts as the main administrative centre for the whole college, was originally shared by the two former institutions. The other main centre, known as Saltash College, is located 33 miles away near the Cornwall/Devon border.

4 In November 1995, there were 8,780 students at the college, of whom 2,394 were full time. 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. Of the 6,386 part-time students enrolled at 1 November 1995, 529 were on franchised programmes. The college employs 345 full-time equivalent staff, 224 of whom are teachers. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

5 The college serves approximately 900 square miles of mid and east Cornwall which has a population of 250,000. In 1995, 76 per cent of 16 year olds in mid and east Cornwall continued in full-time education. Over two-thirds of these went into further education. The unemployment rate for Cornwall is 9.6 per cent. The St Austell centre serves as the post-16 partner institution for five 11 to 16 schools and one special school in the St Austell area. The nearest school with a sixth form is at Bodmin, 12 miles to the north. Further afield there are secondary schools with sixth forms at Saltash, Camelford, Newquay, Launceston, Bude, Callington and Liskeard. The nearest further education colleges are Cornwall College at Redruth (26 miles), Truro College (16 miles) and Plymouth College of Further Education (three miles from Saltash).

6 The college's mission statement is 'to be Cornwall's centre of excellence for continuing education and training, thereby enhancing the quality of life in the county and contributing to its economic prosperity'. The college's strategic plan sets out a series of key objectives. These include a reaffirmation of the college's purpose to provide programmes for 16 to 19 year olds; increasing the number of adults on schedule 2 courses; extending learning opportunities to enable students with outside commitments to study at times which suit them; further developing systems of guidance and support; expanding provision made by the management centre; strengthening links with higher education; further developing courses leading to vocational qualifications; improving its accommodation; and developing the range of provision at the Saltash Centre.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

7 The college is responsive to the needs of the communities of mid and east Cornwall. It offers a wide range of courses and programmes of study and has extensive links with employers and community organisations. At the St Austell centre, 34 General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) and 17 GCE advanced supplementary (AS) subjects are offered. The college has successfully introduced modular syllabuses for some subjects, such as mathematics. Vocational courses include General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) programmes at intermediate and advanced level in six vocational areas and in health and social care at foundation level, the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national qualifications in nine vocational areas and an appropriate range of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) at levels 2 and 3, but few programmes at level 4. The centre at Saltash primarily provides vocational courses, including those leading to GNVQs. At Saltash, the scope of GCE A level provision is limited to one subject during the day and four in the evening. Nine General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) subjects are offered at the St Austell centre and 18 GCSE subjects are included in the St Austell adult education programme. The Saltash centre offers 11 GCSE subjects.

8 The college provides separate specialist courses for students with severe and moderate learning difficulties. It also helps students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to study on mainstream college programmes. However, the college's publicity material uses language which some students with learning difficulties may not understand.

9 Access to higher education programmes with several subject options are provided at both St Austell and Saltash. Through electronic communication links using computer images which enable groups at different venues to see each other, the college also provides programmes at Liskeard, Bude and Newquay. The college maintains good liaison with Plymouth University on access provision and other higher education matters.

10 The college's timetabling arrangements are flexible and offer a range of study programmes to meet a diversity of needs. For example, students at St Austell can combine study for GCE A level subjects with GNVQ courses. The college offers one-year GCE A level courses for older students or for those who wish to improve their grade in a particular subject. Students, and particularly adults, who have commitments outside college may study through open learning, using the college learning centres. These provide students with a range of learning materials, tailored to their individual needs, which they may study at their own pace and at times which suit them. The college has four learning centres and plans to extend them. Adult education programmes are provided at approximately 50 venues in mid and east Cornwall.

11 Students at St Austell are offered a programme of activities which aims to complement and enrich their main studies. This includes sporting and cultural activities and the opportunity to participate in the Further Education Award Scheme, validated by the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network, and compete for the Duke of Edinburgh Award. The programme of activities for students at Saltash is comparatively limited. The college arranges visits to, and student exchanges with, other European countries such as Spain, France and Germany. Learning packs are available to enable students to learn modern languages by themselves.

12 The college has no established procedure for identifying and accrediting the knowledge and skills which students may have acquired before coming to college. In some instances, however, the prior experience and learning of students are taken into account and they are enabled to complete their courses more quickly than usual. The number of staff who have received training in the accreditation of prior learning is low.

13 The college is involved with various local regeneration developments. These include projects involving the china clay industry, funded by the European Union, a Single Regeneration Fund initiative for mid and east Cornwall and the Restormel Local Enterprise Trust. It is also collaborating with the other three further education colleges in Cornwall in an open learning scheme which provides learning opportunities at 12 local centres through electronic communication links. The college makes a valuable contribution to the cultural life of the community. For example, through its work with Restormel Arts the college gives valuable support to performing arts in the area.

14 Representatives of the Devon and Cornwall TEC commented on the good relations they enjoy with the college and on its positive approach to training credits and modern apprenticeships. At the time of the inspection, 133 students, 32 of whom were on modern apprenticeships, were on courses funded through training credits with which the local chamber of commerce was formally involved. The college also provides the training for a further 129 students on programmes managed by other training providers. The effectiveness of links with employers varies considerably

in different parts of the college. Employers commend the college's management centre for being responsive to their needs. Employers in some subject and vocational areas set and monitor projects for students. In other parts of the college, however, contacts with employers only arise when staff liaise with them over the provision of work experience for students. For example, in catering, links with employers are limited.

15 At the St Austell centre there are strong links with five secondary schools. There is a compact agreement with them which includes clear aims and objectives. The college provides link courses for school pupils. These give pupils the opportunity to sample work in different vocational areas and an introduction to college life. There is not the same tradition of partnership with schools in the Saltash area. Relationships between the college and schools in the Saltash catchment area which are developing their own GNVQ programmes are more difficult.

16 The college's marketing practices vary in their effectiveness and lack consistency. In some areas of work, staff are insufficiently involved in the marketing of courses. In others, course teams receive limited support from the college's central marketing unit. At Saltash there is insufficient support for marketing. There is scope for making staff more aware of the nature and extent of provision offered by other post-16 providers with which the college is in competition.

17 The equal opportunities policy is overseen by a committee and a co-ordinator. There is a code of conduct and a policy dealing with harassment. Staff-development events have been held to raise awareness of equal opportunity issues; further corporate events are planned for governors.

18 During the last year, the college has rapidly developed a range of franchised programmes. By May 1996, the college had franchised a total of 105 programmes, involving 3,190 enrolments, to 38 different centres. The college estimates that by the end of the 1995-96 academic year, there will be a total of 7,583 enrolments on franchised provision, representing 31 per cent of the funding units the college expects to achieve. Approximately 70 per cent of the projected franchised provision will be sub-aqua diving training at centres all round the country. Other franchised provision is mainly in Devon and Cornwall and covers a range of programmes in business administration, engineering and sailing. The college should monitor its franchised provision more closely to ensure that it accords fully with its mission and strategic objectives and that it brings education and training to a wider range of students.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

19 Members of the corporation share a common view of the purpose of the college. Between them they bring extensive local knowledge and experience of private and public organisations. There are currently 19 governors. They include the principal, 10 independent members, one

TEC representative, five co-opted members and two members of staff. Six of the governors are women. The board has chosen not to have a student member. It meets regularly with the students' guild at St Austell but has no arrangements to meet with students at Saltash. There is an appropriate range of committees. At least two senior managers are involved with the work of each committee. The board has established a register of members' interests and a code of conduct. It has reviewed its own performance this year against descriptors of good practice taken from inspection reports. Governors' meetings have appropriate agenda items. These include the principal's report which is supported by detailed papers. A summary of discussion is recorded. All members receive monthly financial reports. They are fully aware of their responsibilities for finance and have worked hard to understand the college's budgetary procedures.

20 The most senior group in the college's management structure is the principal's committee. This comprises the principal, vice-principal and the head of the Saltash centre. Members of the principal's committee join with eight other managers, including the head of finance, to form the senior management team. The head of finance attends meetings of the principal's committee when it discusses financial matters. In 1995, the college carried out a restructuring of its management system. At St Austell, 10 curriculum groups were replaced by five faculties. At Saltash, operational management is carried out by three curriculum groups. Heads of these, together with the head of centre, the administration and finance manager, and the head of community education for adults, form a separate senior management team for Saltash.

21 The process of successfully amalgamating two colleges, with different traditions and practices three years ago, posed significant challenges for governors and management. The senior management team has made considerable progress in creating a single college, with its own corporate identity on the St Austell site, from the two institutions formerly located there. The governors decided to establish a head of the Saltash centre who would be a member of the principal's committee but who would have considerable autonomy to operate independently of the main college at St Austell. There is some uneven operation between the two sites resulting in duplication of effort, variable practice and insufficient opportunities for sharing good practice. Although there is informal communication between centres, there are few systematic links between staff at the two sites. There is, for example, no formal liaison between the two college libraries at St Austell and Saltash, respectively. Curriculum initiatives in many subjects are developed separately on each site. Staff have not worked together to agree standards for vocational courses offered at both centres.

22 Staff on the Saltash site have limited systematic contact with the principal and vice-principal and other members of the college's senior management team. Their views are represented at senior management team meetings by the head of the Saltash College centre. Staff and students

identify closely with the Saltash centre there rather than with St Austell College. Staff commented that most of the information in the staff circular relates to the St Austell centre. The college's strategic plan identifies development of the Saltash centre as a key priority.

23 The principal's committee and the senior management team each have terms of reference. They meet regularly and their proceedings are clearly minuted. The new faculty structure introduced at St Austell is working well. At both St Austell and Saltash, senior and middle managers work well together. They are assisted in their decision making by a wide variety of working groups. Operational areas covering various aspects of the college are generally managed effectively. All staff are members of an operational group, to which they generally have a strong affinity. Adult and community education is well managed. However, it is organised separately from the rest of the college and some staff teaching the same subject do not have regular contact with each other.

24 The strategic planning process for the whole college is managed by the head of the Saltash centre. The strategic plan was developed after consultation with governors and staff. Papers drafted by senior managers were linked with plans prepared by operational units and formed a basis for determining the college's strategic objectives. Plans devised by faculties vary in their format and effectiveness. Some are well developed and specify who has responsibilities for action and the deadlines to be met. Others are not clearly linked to the strategic plan and do not set targets against which progress can be easily tracked.

25 Health and safety is the operational responsibility of the head of premises who works with a health and safety committee. The health and safety policy has been in place for three years but a handbook setting out the college's responsibilities for health and safety has only been produced recently. Two governors have recently been designated to liaise with the health and safety committee.

26 The college has recently developed a comprehensive computerised management information system that meets its data collection needs. It replaced earlier systems last year with one which provides accurate information on a range of student activities. Senior and most middle managers make good use of management information on enrolments, students' retention rates and destinations. Management information links with the Saltash and Sedgemoor sites are not yet satisfactory. There have been difficulties over recording information on short-course provision and these have adversely affected the collation of data to support the franchised programme. A manual system is used to monitor students' attendance and the personnel system is not yet fully operational. The student database is not linked with the college's finance system which results in some duplication of effort.

27 Delegated responsibilities for budgets for consumable items are clear and understood by most managers. Consumable budgets are determined through a formula related to enrolments, thereby ensuring that budgetary allocations reflect changes in demand. Adjustments to budgets are made at least once a year, to reflect retention of students on courses and new enrolments. A system of bidding operates for capital budgets. Final allocations reflect the strategic priorities of the college. Managers consider the budgetary systems to be fair. Many managers are, however, reluctant to rely on information provided centrally from the financial database and keep their own records. There is less delegation of other budgets. Staffing budgets are largely historically derived and this has sometimes caused difficulties. In 1995, the part-time staffing budget was set too low and was overspent.

28 The college has overspent for the last two years. It has a significant capital loan and an overdraft. It has only limited financial reserves. The college is aware of its financial position and is planning to devolve more of the college's income to operating units in order to involve more staff in exercising effective control over expenditure. Currently, the system of financial management does not create incentives for managers to operate more efficiently. The timetable for delegating more financial responsibility has not yet been determined. The college knows some of the unit costs of its provision and has used this information to make decisions about its programme. However, unit costing does not inform planning by staff below senior management level. The college's average level of funding for 1995-96 is £17.66 per unit. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges is £17.84 per unit. The college's estimated income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are given in figures 5 and 6.

29 The setting of enrolment targets is part of the strategic planning process. In 1994-95, the college exceeded its units target by 1 per cent. This year, the college estimates that, mainly as a result of the growth in franchised provision, its target will be exceeded by 50 per cent. Performance against targets is monitored by senior management. Similarly, students' retention rates are calculated and monitored throughout the year. The destinations of full-time students are also carefully monitored. All full-time students are required, at the end of the course, to complete a leavers form and return it to student services before they can reclaim the £20 deposit paid at enrolment. This process has resulted in the collection of valuable information which is used to inform the college's marketing and admissions processes. The information is also shared with partner schools.

30 The rapid growth of franchised provision has raised important management issues for the college. Senior managers do not currently have sufficient information about the franchise operation to manage it effectively. Before and during the inspection, the college had considerable difficulty in providing the inspectors with up-to-date information on franchised activity in relation to enrolments, students' activities,

achievements and destinations. In order to safeguard against inadvertently making claims for unit funding in respect of students who were present in theory, but not in practice, the college has only recorded information about those students who have successfully completed the franchised programme. In consequence, it is difficult for the college to track and monitor the progress of students during their franchised programmes. Problems over the lack of information about students on franchised programmes have been compounded by difficulties the college has experienced with its management information system. Inspectors who visited the college's franchised activity in various parts of the country noted certain unsatisfactory features which were unknown to college managers. These included some inappropriateness of provision, incomplete documentation and some uncertainty, on the part of providers, about funding arrangements. The college is now aware of these weaknesses and is taking action to remedy them.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

31 Students are generally well supported by the college. There are student services units at St Austell and Saltash which provide students with advice, guidance and support. At St Austell, the head of student services works with senior tutors from each faculty, an adult guidance worker, a careers assistant, a student information/transport assistant and administrative staff. Student services is located in a well-appointed suite of rooms which provide a welcoming environment for students. At Saltash, overall responsibility for the provision of guidance and support to students rests with the head of curriculum and student services, who works with a team of four teachers and administrative staff. There is scope for the college to improve its monitoring of its student services provision across the two main centres in order that good practice may be identified and disseminated.

32 At St Austell and Saltash recruitment and initial guidance arrangements are well developed and effective. Open evenings and open days are held at the college. Press releases and advertisements are used to inform prospective students of college activities. Staff attend county careers conventions, visit schools to give presentations about the college and attend school parents' evenings. Publicity literature is well presented and informative. Students and parents commented that their course enquiries and applications are dealt with sympathetically and efficiently and that the interviews applicants receive are fair and helpful.

33 Students criticised the enrolment procedures at St Austell for being poorly organised and too time consuming. Enrolment queues were lengthy and it took some students nearly two hours to complete the enrolment process. An admissions working party is devising improvements to the enrolment process and has developed a revised schedule for enrolment for the 1996-97 academic year. By comparison, enrolment at Saltash proceeded smoothly. Enrolment for adult learners takes place at a variety

of places, including libraries and supermarkets. 'Taster' sessions are held at both sites. Students are given a useful guidance booklet. Significant progress has been made towards providing full-time students with a common and effective induction process. They valued the opportunity, during induction week, to sample a number of subjects before they made their final choice. The quality and scope of induction activities varied between different courses. Many students said they found the induction process too long.

34 The provision of additional support for students' learning is at an early stage of development. In September 1995, the college tested for the first time the literacy and numeracy skills of all new full-time students. Students on GNVQ intermediate and BTEC first diploma courses were identified as having the greatest need for additional support and this was timetabled into their programme for two hours each week. At St Austell, a team of learning support staff works alongside course teachers. Adult students who need, or are referred for, additional support can obtain this in one of the learning centres. At Saltash, two staff work with the county basic skills service or alongside teachers to provide learning support for individuals and groups. Learning support staff at both centres promote awareness among teachers of the importance of additional support for students who need it. They also encourage students to accept support when this is offered to them. At St Austell, staff are developing learning packs on basic skills which students may study on their own. The college is a member of the new 'learning support organisers' group, which has been established by the four further education sector colleges in Cornwall.

35 Although students generally feel well supported by their tutors, the quality and quantity of tutorial support vary. All full-time students have a personal tutor and a tutorial period of one hour. Tutorial activities include a termly review of each student's progress. Students keep a file of their log sheets on completed work, action plans and tutorial reviews. The content and presentation of these files vary. Students receive written reports twice a year and, in the case of those under 18, these reports are also sent to their parents or guardians. At both St Austell and Saltash, tutors receive fortnightly bulletins from student services which provide guidance on issues such as progress reviews and action planning, the recording of students' progress and achievements, and procedures to be followed when students leave. The college is aware that there is some unevenness in the quality of tutorial support. It is devising clearer guidelines for tutors and introducing further training for tutors. The structured tutorial system does not apply to part-time students. When necessary, they receive informal tutorial guidance. Arrangements for providing guidance to adult students are highly effective. At St Austell, guidance for adults is provided by a guidance worker who also works for the Cornwall Educational Guidance Service. The students benefit from his experience and valuable contacts. At Saltash, guidance workers employed by the local authority are available to adult students at regular times during the week.

36 The monitoring of students' attendance is the joint responsibility of subject teachers and personal tutors. Attendance rates were unsatisfactory on several programmes. Recently there has been closer monitoring of attendance rates and they have shown some improvement.

37 Students receive effective careers advice and guidance. They have the opportunity to undertake a number of modules on careers education as part of their studies. The college has good links with the Cornwall and Devon Careers Service, with which it has a service level agreement. The college was invited to pilot the new Investors in Careers award and, in March 1996, it became the first college in the country to achieve it. Careers guidance staff are available at both sites each week. Detailed information on higher education opportunities is provided and this is also conveyed to parents and students in special briefing sessions. Individual curriculum areas arrange careers events. The annual Devon and Cornwall TEC road show is held at St Austell. For the past two years, the Cornwall Higher Education Fair has also been held at the college.

38 The college does not have its own professional counsellors. External counsellors are called upon when required. Students and staff suggested that there was a need for the college to have its own personal counsellor who would be accessible and known to students. The college should make a clearer distinction between personal counselling and tutorial support. At both sites there are elected student guilds. They arrange social activities and raise funds for charity. The guild at St Austell is the more active and has regular minuted meetings with senior management. It meets with governors once a month. Childcare at St Austell is available in a nearby nursery attached to a local school. At Saltash, it is provided by a playgroup located close to the centre. Financial assistance for childcare is available for some students.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

39 In 63 per cent of the teaching sessions inspected strengths clearly outweighed weaknesses. In 7 per cent of sessions, weaknesses clearly outweighed strengths. In all subjects, there was some effective teaching. Attendance at the sessions inspected varied from over 93 per cent in management and hairdressing and beauty therapy, to below 75 per cent in science, business studies, art and design, and adult and community education. The average rate of attendance was 81 per cent. The following table summarises the grades awarded to the sessions inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

| Programmes | Grade | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Totals |
|----------------------------|--------------|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|----------|---------------|
| GCE AS/A level | | 16 | 46 | 28 | 4 | 1 | 95 |
| GCSE | | 5 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 0 | 16 |
| GNVQ | | 5 | 28 | 18 | 2 | 0 | 53 |
| NVQ | | 7 | 14 | 16 | 3 | 0 | 40 |
| Access to higher education | | 0 | 3 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 8 |
| Franchised provision | | 7 | 9 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 21 |
| Other* | | 23 | 41 | 24 | 7 | 0 | 95 |
| Total | | 63 | 144 | 99 | 21 | 1 | 328 |

**includes BTEC first and national diplomas.*

40 In science, mathematics and computing, schemes of work were thorough. Teaching was effective and students usually understood the objectives of lessons. Much of the teaching in science and mathematics was well structured and teachers used a variety of appropriate teaching methods that sustained the students' interest. Workshops providing support for learning were clearly publicised and well used by students. Assignments were carefully marked and returned punctually; teachers provided students with helpful comments on their performance. Mathematics courses were well managed. In computing, students carried out practical work of a high standard. Some science lessons lacked structure and little homework was set. In some mathematics and computing lessons teachers did not provide students with a sufficiently varied range of appropriate learning activities.

41 Engineering teachers provided students with good individual support for laboratory and workshop activities. Relationships between teachers and students were productive. However, in some lessons, the teaching lacked planning and teachers spent too much time on activities which did not challenge the students sufficiently such as dictation and note giving. Some teachers made ineffective use of overhead projectors. In two mechanical engineering subjects, the progress of students was restricted because they were given insufficient opportunities for laboratory work.

42 Teaching in business studies was generally sound and in business administration, public services and management it was particularly well prepared and effective. Lesson content was appropriate and at the right level. In some lessons, however, teachers took insufficient account of the different level of students' abilities. Although most lessons were well prepared, some lesson plans were little more than a list of topics. Many handouts in business studies were of poor quality. In business administration lessons, students participated enthusiastically in practical tasks. In lessons across the programme area, teachers answered students'

questions helpfully and, in the better lessons, students' learning was strengthened by good handouts and regularly checked to see that students understood what was being taught. Work was carefully marked and returned with constructive comments. In some of the less effective lessons, the teaching lacked variety and students spent too much time working through past examination questions.

43 In general, the teaching in hospitality and catering was well structured. Teachers assessed work carefully and kept their students informed about their progress. Learning programmes were enriched and students' perspectives broadened by visits and an exchange scheme with a college in Brest. There was a well-organised programme of work experience for students. In lessons, teachers provided students with a variety of appropriate learning activities which engaged their participation and interest. In some instances, opportunities for students to practise their skills in a work-related setting were restricted because of the low numbers of customers in the college's training restaurant. The college is opening a new training restaurant in September 1996. Students on GNVQ courses were provided with insufficient practical experience.

44 Most teaching in leisure and tourism was well planned and effective. Teachers used a wide range of appropriate learning aids and took account of the different levels of ability of students. In one lesson on the GNVQ intermediate course, however, students had difficulties in understanding what was being taught. In general, students completed their work on time. It was carefully marked and students found the teachers' comments on their work helpful. Documentation supporting the GNVQ programme was particularly good.

45 Some teaching on health and social care programmes was of a high standard. It was carefully planned and made imaginative use of teaching aids. In a lesson on a GNVQ foundation course at St Austell, the teacher elicited key points from the students by skilful use of questions and answers. These were initially recorded on a whiteboard and then transferred to a flip chart which contained a page for each topic covered so far in the year. The flip chart formed an effective record of work which could be referred to at any time by students and teachers. At Saltash, a range of activities, including visits and work placements, are a positive feature of the provision. A group of mothers bring their new babies into college one afternoon a month. Nursery nursing students then work with a mother and her child and observe the child's development throughout their two-year course. Some teaching on care programmes was less stimulating, failed to maintain the interest of students and did not provide them with sufficient opportunities to work together in groups.

46 On hairdressing and beauty therapy programmes teachers demonstrated technical skills effectively. Some teaching was good but, in many cases, it was not carefully planned. In some practical lessons, the teaching lacked momentum and activities were insufficiently challenging

to students. The teachers at Saltash use different methods and approaches from those at St Austell. At present, there is no formal means whereby teachers at both centres can discuss and share good practice. In some lessons, opportunities for students to practise their skills in a realistic context were restricted by a shortage of clients, and they had to spend too much time working on plastic heads or on one another.

47 In art and design, a variety of well-organised projects helped students to develop sound research and technical skills. In the better lessons, teachers used a variety of appropriate teaching methods and students worked on their own or in groups. When appropriate, projects had an industrial context. In the best practice, the teaching and learning nurtured the students' individualism and creativity. In a minority of poorer lessons, teaching was not sufficiently rigorous and the work lacked pace. In some instances, teachers did not clearly explain what was expected of students in assignments or give them deadlines for their completion. Assessments of students' work were sometimes too generous and teachers were insufficiently rigorous in their critical comments. Teachers of performing arts demonstrate a high level of specialist skills and expertise to their students. In lessons, teachers provided the students with challenging and demanding activities and skilfully intervened to offer them encouragement and support when necessary. Students were given many opportunities to work on their own and become self-reliant in their study. In practical lessons, the students' practical work was distinctive and creative. Most lessons were well managed but in a few instances, they lacked a clear focus. However, some students' files were not well organised and they were insufficiently monitored by teachers. Some staff underestimate the amount of guidance students need in organising and presenting their work.

48 In English and communications, there was some effective teaching. Some English sessions were inspirational but generally the teaching would benefit from improved team work and co-ordination. Teachers provided students with good guidance on revision techniques and marked students' work constructively. In some communications lessons, students were given tasks which were insufficiently challenging. Some students taking GCSE English, did not use their time responsibly and productively when working on their own in the flexible learning centre. In general, course documentation for English and communications was weak.

49 In social science and humanities, documentation and learning materials were of a high standard. Lessons were generally well prepared. Effective use was made of handouts and past examination papers. Teachers' marking of students' work was detailed and provided students with critical and supportive comment on their performance. In some lessons teachers failed to question the students to encourage active participation and check that they understood what was being taught. In modern languages teachers have developed learning materials of high

quality, lessons were generally well structured and mainly conducted effectively in the language being learnt. In a few lessons, exposition by the teacher was too protracted and students were given insufficient opportunity to ask questions or engage in discussions. Documentation was poor for Spanish courses.

50 Teaching on the college's franchised provision is carried out by the franchised training providers. Trainers were generally appropriately qualified. There are detailed course manuals for the sub-aqua diving programmes but not all students received copies. Students generally understood the assessment process which was carefully carried out by staff. Trainers used teaching aids effectively. In some lessons, trainers did not use questioning to good effect and in other lessons they failed to keep to lesson plans.

51 There was some good teaching for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In some practical lessons, teachers encouraged students to express their ideas and then used these as a basis for creative practical work. In some instances, teachers demonstrated considerable skill in managing potentially difficult situations in the classroom calmly and effectively. Students with moderate learning difficulties were enabled to join some GNVQ and NVQ courses in some vocational areas such as hospitality and catering. Most students benefit from the opportunity to go on a work experience placement. In some lessons at Saltash, there was imaginative teaching of basic skills. In some lessons at St Austell, teachers failed to ensure that work matched the individual needs and aptitudes of students.

52 On adult and community education programmes, lessons were well planned and teachers took into account the particular learning needs and interests of adult students. Most teaching was sound. Teachers ensured that students participated fully in classroom activities. In some instances, teaching was not effective and lessons were poorly planned. In terms of curriculum planning and development, there are few links between teachers of adult and community programmes and other areas of the college's work. On the access to higher education programme the arrangements to support students who were unable to attend college on the day set aside each week to provide study support were unsatisfactory. The college is taking appropriate corrective action.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

53 Most students have a good understanding of the purpose and the structure of their courses. Students' motivation is generally good. Their overall levels of achievement are sound. Some examination results, particularly in GCE A level programmes are good. There is scope for some students to develop more confidence and skills in group discussion.

54 Many students carry out good project and written work. In science, students' notes were generally well ordered and thorough; in leisure and

tourism, course portfolios were well presented. Some written work on care programmes, and particularly on BTEC national diploma courses in health studies and childhood studies, was of a high standard. In performing arts and art and design, students' practical and project work was creative and imaginative.

55 Students develop core skills in number, communication, and information technology on several courses. In hospitality and catering, the students' development of core skills is monitored by their teachers. Students use information technology creatively in order to enhance the presentation of their assignment work. On care programmes, students' development of core skills is effectively integrated with their main course work. Although on the GNVQ health and social care course students use a learning pack on information technology, some students do not use this pack early enough in the course for them to develop information technology skills to a level which they can employ to enhance the presentation of their assignments. In social science, few students use information technology in their studies.

56 In 1994-95, there were 1,022 entries for GCE A level in 31 subjects. The overall pass rate (grades A to E) was 83 per cent, significantly above the average pass rate of 72 per cent for 16 to 18 year olds in further education sector colleges. In 1995, 424 students aged 16 to 18 entered for GCE A level examinations scored on average, 4.6 points per entry (where grade A=10 points, E=2). This places the college in the top 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. Pass rates were at or above the national average in 25 subjects ranging from 67 per cent in dressmaking and fabrics to 100 per cent in French, music and art. Pass rates of 90 per cent or above were also achieved in nine other subjects; biology, chemistry, design, mathematics, physics, English literature, history, physical education and politics. Pass rates were below the national average in computing, geology, accounting, ceramics, theatre studies and law. The number of entrants varied from fewer than 10 in electronics, accounting, dressmaking and fabrics, dance and economics to 135 in English language and literature and 145 in mathematics.

57 The college has carried out a significant amount of work on calculating a value-added score of the students' achievements in their GCE A level examinations. This score is arrived at by comparing the level and grades of the students' qualifications upon joining the college with the results they obtain upon leaving, and measuring the difference between them by means of a formula. The extent of the students' achievement represents the value which has been added to their experience at the college. The college has set targets for its GCE A level results in 1996-97 which are based on the average of the value added scores in each GCE A level subject.

58 The college records examination results for its adult and community education programme separately. In 1994-95, there were 176 entries for GCE A level in 17 subjects. The overall pass rate was 66 per cent, slightly above the average rate of 63 per cent for students aged 19 years and over in further education sector colleges. Results for access to higher education programmes were variable. The percentage of those who achieved their access course qualification varied between 46 per cent on the access course in social science and 74 per cent on the access course in environmental science.

59 There were 284 entries for GCSE in 1994-95 in 18 subjects. The overall pass rate, at grades A to C, of students aged 16 to 18 was 45 per cent, compared with a national average of 37 per cent. Pass rates at grades A to C were well above the national average in 12 subjects and below in chemistry, communications, science, music, English literature and French. On the adult and community education programme there were 112 GCSE entries in 14 subjects and an overall pass rate at grades A to C of 72 per cent, above the national average of 60 per cent for students aged 19 or over.

60 The results of students taking vocational qualifications were variable. In 1994-95, 82 per cent of 16 to 18 year olds, in their final year of study, on the vocational courses included in the Department for Education and Employment's 1995 tables were successful. This places the college in the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. On one-year, full-time vocational courses, there were pass rates of 100 per cent in health service reception, City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) advanced hairdressing, and beauty therapy and a 95 per cent pass rate in GNVQ intermediate art and design. Pass rates of 75 per cent or over were achieved in NVQ level 2 engineering (86 per cent), the BTEC first diploma in engineering (78 per cent), NVQ level 2 administration at St Austell (78 per cent) and the BTEC first diploma in public services (75 per cent). Pass rates were below 40 per cent in the BTEC first diploma in information technology (27 per cent), NVQ level 3 travel services (33 per cent), GNVQ (intermediate) leisure and tourism (36 per cent) and NVQ level 2 administration at Saltash (39 per cent). On two-year vocational courses, pass rates of 100 per cent were achieved in the BTEC national diploma in land administration, the BTEC national diploma in business and finance at Saltash, NVQ level 1 food preparation, medical secretaries examinations, National Nursery Examinations Board (NNEB) qualifications and the BTEC national diploma in performing arts. Only 40 per cent of students on the GNVQ advanced business studies course obtained their intended qualification. Students on franchised programmes were entered for a range of vocational qualifications including diving awards validated by the Professional Association of Diving Instructors and the British Sub Aqua Council and awards in basic food hygiene, computer literacy and information technology, fork-lift truck operation and sports leadership. As information is only recorded by the college after the students have

completed their course, it is difficult to assess the overall standards of achievement of students enrolling on franchised programmes.

61 There was low retention of full-time students on some courses. On second-year GCE A level programmes the overall retention rate was 79 per cent in 1994-95. There were low retention rates in accounting (25 per cent), computing (54 per cent) and electronics (56 per cent). At the time of the inspection, the retention rate of second-year GCE A level students had improved to 86 per cent. However, retention rates remain low in electronics (40 per cent) and French (48 per cent). On GCSE programmes, the overall retention rate was 73 per cent in 1994-95 and, at the time of the inspection, 89 per cent. However, these figures include rates in 1994-95 of 40 per cent or less in biology, business studies, photography and communications. On one-year vocational programmes, the overall retention rate for 1995 leavers was 81 per cent. At the time of the inspection, the retention rate on these programmes was 95 per cent. On the two-year vocational programmes, the retention rate for 1995 leavers was 75 per cent. The retention rate for students on the second year of these programmes was 77 per cent at the time of the inspection. On access to higher education programmes, the overall retention rate for 1994-95 was 61 per cent. This included a rate of 53 per cent for the access course in social science. The college has taken action to address the underlying causes of low retention on this course through a restructuring of the course and improvement to the tutorial arrangements.

62 In 1994-95, of 353 students aged 16 to 18 achieving GCE A levels, 212 progressed to higher education and 60 continued in further education. On level 1 vocational courses, of 18 students completing NVQ and GNVQ foundation programmes, 17 continued in further education and one found employment. At level 2, of 290 students completing GNVQ intermediate, BTEC first diploma, and NVQ programmes, 128 continued in further education and 81 found employment. At level 3, of 274 students completing GNVQ advanced, BTEC national diploma and NVQ programmes, 93 progressed to higher education, five continued in further education and 133 found employment.

63 There have been some significant sporting achievements by students. Teams from the college have competed with considerable success in a number of sports at regional and national level.

64 The quality of the documentation on students' achievements is high. However, it does not include information on the achievements of students on the adult and community education programmes.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

65 The college has invested considerable time and effort in developing procedures for quality assurance. There is a quality assurance policy and this is included in the staff handbook. At present, quality assurance procedures do not cover areas of the college's provision outside teaching

and learning. There are also some inconsistencies in assurance procedures across the college. For example, the procedures relating to the management centre and to adult and continuing education differ, in some respects, from those implemented in the rest of the college. The vice-principal has responsibility for quality assurance in relation to the curriculum. She chairs a working group on issues related to quality such as the improvement to the process of course review. The academic board receives reports on various aspects of quality assurance.

66 The process of course review entails the scrutiny and analysis of students' achievements and the preparation of action plans for improving provision. Reviews have resulted in improvements. For example, following review a specialist room has been provided for students of leisure and tourism. The thoroughness with which course reviews are carried out varies considerably across the college. Records indicate that some reviews in 1994-95 were incomplete or superficial. The college intends to implement staff training on action planning before the next round of reviews. The main issues arising from reviews are collated in a summary which informs planning by operational heads and the vice-principal.

67 In addition to annual course reviews, each year four curriculum areas are subject to a detailed audit by members of the quality assurance working group. The audit includes recommendations for improvement. For example, as a result of a recommendation from an audit, a computing course with declining enrolments has been replaced by a GNVQ course in information technology which has recruited well. Audit reports are not consistent in their format. They do not specify who has responsibility for carrying out recommendations and do not give deadlines for their implementation.

68 The college sets targets for GCE A level results and these are determined through an analysis of students' value-added scores. This has enabled the college to develop a clearer view of students' performance. Apart from these and the service standards specified in the college's charter, the college has not yet set any other targets or standards. Targets for students' achievements and retention rates are planned for next year.

69 Students are invited to give their views on the quality of the college's provision in responses to questionnaires. Their responses are carefully collated and considered by the quality review subcommittee. Employers express their views on the quality of the college's work through their membership of consultative committees. Librarians at the St Austell centre seek the views of users of the library on the quality of the service it provides, and they review the effectiveness of their operations every two years. There is, however, no requirement for those who provide services across the college to review and report on their operations.

70 New course proposals, with appropriate documentation, have to be submitted for approval to senior managers. There is no process for co-ordinating the internal verification of course programmes.

71 Quality assurance arrangements for the franchised programmes of sub-aqua training are largely subcontracted to a private training organisation and they are overseen by the college's management centre. Although these arrangements are generally effective, the college will need to review them to meet the requirements of guidance on franchising issued by the Council.

72 Staff value the staff-appraisal system and regard it as a means of enhancing their professional development. All full-time staff and those on proportional contracts receive an appraisal interview every two years. Part-time staff may ask for an appraisal interview and they are invited to answer a questionnaire about their work. At their appraisal interview, staff agree with their appraiser an action plan for their further professional development. Staff may choose to be appraised by someone other than their line manager. Should they do so, their action plan must be further approved by their line manager. This sometimes complicates the development of action plans. Not all action plans are useful. There is a sizeable budget for staff development. Staff value the support the college gives them to further their professional training and development. Applications from staff for professional development have to show that the training requested is justified in the light of an individual's action plan and the college's strategic plan. This is not always done.

73 For some time, the college has been preparing for the Investors in People award and hopes to achieve this by the autumn of 1996. Staff have found the process of working towards this award beneficial. It has led to changes in the staff-appraisal process and was partly instrumental in causing the college to establish a faculty structure.

74 The first edition of the college's student charter was highly commended by the then Department for Education (now the Department for Education and Employment) following thorough consultation which included external agencies. It contains much useful information as well as statements of entitlements for students. The charter is presented to students during their induction and is on display at various places in the college. Supplementary charters are under development for particular groups such as employers, adult students and students on franchised provision. Students on franchised programmes knew little of their rights under the college charter.

75 Staff valued the self-assessment process the college carried out prior to its inspection. Each operational area produced papers evaluating its work. The self-assessment report is a summary of findings based on these papers. Some findings, such as those relating to the college's responsiveness and range of provision, generally accord with those of the inspection. In others, strengths were over stated and some significant weaknesses, subsequently identified by the inspectors, were not recorded.

RESOURCES

Staffing

76 Teaching staff are generally well qualified and experienced. Sixty-seven per cent of full-time teachers have degrees or equivalent qualifications. Approximately 80 per cent of all full-time and part-time teachers hold a professional teaching qualification. A substantial number of teachers have relevant industrial and commercial experience, although in many cases this is not recent. Part-time teachers who have specialist knowledge and are current practitioners in their particular fields are used effectively in hospitality and catering, art and design and music technology. There are no systematic arrangements whereby staff may update their industrial experience. However, a few staff have undertaken a short period of work experience with local organisations and firms.

77 Most staff who teach on vocational courses are working towards assessor awards. In total, 207 of the full-time and part-time teachers have registered for assessor awards. Only about half of these had successfully achieved their award by the time of the inspection. A few staff are qualified to assess the accreditation of students' prior learning.

78 Technician and secretarial support staff are well qualified and have relevant experience to undertake their current roles. Staff who provide professional services are generally appropriately qualified. Finance staff are working towards accountancy technician awards. The college's personnel services have recently been strengthened by the appointment of a part-time personnel officer to support the work of an existing co-ordinator and the head of personnel. Updating and further development of relevant policies on personnel have recently been undertaken. Priorities for 1996-97 include the computerisation of personnel records and the introduction of job evaluation.

79 There are satisfactory levels of technician support in many areas, including hospitality and catering, photography, hairdressing, science and engineering. In a few areas of the college's work, such as performing arts, there is insufficient technician support. The college has identified a need for more technicians to support its management information systems and for new developments in information technology.

Equipment/learning resources

80 The college has libraries at Saltash and St Austell. The Saltash library operates independently from that at St Austell. Books and materials are sufficient to meet the needs of students based there. At both libraries, students are provided with study spaces and have access to compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases. At St Austell, there is a large library on the Trevarthian site providing a wide range of services including books and materials for loan and reference, and off-air recordings. Facilities are well used by students. There are good links between library staff and faculty staff. Stock is reviewed regularly. For courses based at

the Trevarthian site the range and quality of books and materials are good. Students from other sites in St Austell are also expected to use this library. Although on all sites in St Austell there are adequate materials to support students in their work, they are not of the same standard as the materials for the Trevarthian-based courses.

81 Learning centres have been established at Trevarthian, Sedgemoor, Saltash and West Hill. The four centres offer access to computers, learning materials which students can study on their own and support materials for mathematics, English, foreign languages, GCSE subjects and a range of GCE A level subjects. The centres are well used and staff are available to provide advice and support. There is a wide range of learning materials for mathematics and foreign languages. For example, staff have developed modern language units for GNVQ courses and to meet the needs of students on leisure and tourism and hospitality and catering courses.

82 A central resources support unit controls the purchasing of information technology and audio-visual equipment. Across the college, there are over 350 computers for use by students. Most of these computers are in the four learning centres. However, the computers are disproportionately deployed between sites. For example, 120 machines are located at the Saltash site, where approximately only 20 per cent of teaching takes place. Some of the machines at Saltash are incompatible with the software students need to use. At the Trevarthian site in St Austell there are relatively few machines for the number of students based there. The learning centre on the Trevarthian site is the only one open in the evenings. There is insufficient use of information technology in some specialist curriculum areas, for example, to prepare accounts in catering, to support reception work in hairdressing, and to support practical work in science and testing in engineering.

83 There are shortages of up-to-date specialist equipment for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and in a number of curriculum areas including science, art and design, performing arts, hospitality and catering, and engineering. In business administration, typewriters rather than computers are often used for keyboard training. The quality of handouts used in teaching varies considerably. Specialist equipment is of an appropriate standard for care and nursery work and for computer-aided design and manufacturing, and of a high standard in hairdressing and beauty therapy. The college is seeking to address equipment shortages. A total of £250,000 has been identified to purchase equipment to support art and design, catering, and work with students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in new buildings planned to be opened in September 1996. The college has been successful in its bid for £140,000, made in conjunction with Cornwall College, to the Devon and Cornwall TEC's competitiveness fund; it is intended that funds obtained through this bid will be used to address some of the shortages in engineering equipment. The college plans to carry out an equipment audit in June 1996. Most franchised centres are well equipped and equipment is

maintained to good standards. Many centres have programmes for the regular renewal and replacement of equipment.

Accommodation

84 The quality of accommodation is variable. Most accommodation is adequate. Some is good. There are, however, a few unsatisfactory buildings, mainly on sites due to be replaced. The college commissioned consultants to produce a long-term strategy for the rationalisation and upgrading of its estate. Two major building projects are near completion.

85 About half of the college's provision, including GCE A level and GCSE work, engineering and construction, art and design, care and management, is based at the Trevarthian site in St Austell. Most of the central facilities of the college are based there. The quality of most teaching areas is adequate. However, some science laboratories are in need of refurbishment; accommodation for language teaching is too small for the number of students taking languages; and the refectory is poorly positioned upstairs in one of the teaching blocks. Recent improvements have been made to engineering facilities and a new art and design centre will be opened in September 1996. The Sedgemoor site, in the centre of St Austell, houses about 25 per cent of the college's provision, including business, leisure and tourism, hairdressing and catering. The college's main hall and a learning centre are also based there. The quality of teaching accommodation is generally adequate and is good in hairdressing and tourism. A large extension to be opened in September 1996 will be used for catering and by students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are two other much smaller sites at St Austell. West Hill, a former secondary school is in very bad condition despite brave attempts by staff to make accommodation there as attractive as possible. The college intends to vacate this site as soon as possible and much of the provision there will be relocated in the new extension at Sedgemoor. Polkyth is a small building next to the leisure centre. The accommodation there is in reasonable condition but it is too small. Teaching accommodation used for physical education is cluttered and cramped and restricts teaching and learning.

86 At the Saltash site there are three main buildings and a small number of temporary buildings. The accommodation is generally satisfactory. There are some good specialist facilities for hairdressing and beauty therapy, including an attractive and recently refurbished reception area.

87 Most franchised programmes take place in satisfactory, and in some instances, very good accommodation. In a minority of instances, teaching takes place in inadequate classrooms.

88 It is the policy of the college that all courses should be accessible to wheelchair users. Some areas, however, continue to be inaccessible, for example, parts of the accommodation for care and performing arts. There is no access for students with restricted mobility to the refectory on the Trevarthian site, although there are plans to install a lift in summer 1996.

The central building at Saltash is fully accessible to wheelchair users but unaided access is impossible in some other parts of the site. The whole of the West Hill site presents considerable difficulties for wheelchair users who do not have assistance.

89 There are effective arrangements for the management of premises. A premises supervisor has been appointed recently. Routine maintenance is effective and emergency repairs are promptly carried out. A premises usage group has been established to provide guidelines to operational heads for the allocation of accommodation. There is no system for monitoring the extent and effectiveness of room usage. Some buildings lack display material to make them more attractive, and signs giving directions to the various rooms and facilities.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

90 The main strengths of the college are:

- a wide range of courses which meets the needs of the communities the college serves
- teaching that is generally good
- some good examination results, particularly in GCE A level
- flexible timetabling which permits choice of modes of study
- significant progress in creating a single college at the St Austell centre
- successful restructuring of middle management and generally effective management of operational units
- an effective system of recruitment and initial guidance
- the contribution made to local regeneration and other community initiatives
- an extensive adult and community education programme, including effective guidance for adult students
- the high standard of data relating to students' achievements
- the work on value-added analysis of GCE A level results.

91 In order to improve further the quality of its provision, the college should:

- improve the links between the centres of St Austell and Saltash
- ensure staff across the whole college have opportunities to share and disseminate good practice
- establish a more systematic approach to planning at all levels
- continue to improve the management information system
- address inconsistencies in tutorial practices
- develop further its provision of additional support for learning

-
- identify unit costs more systematically and ensure these inform financial management
 - address the problem of low retention and poor attendance on some courses
 - make quality assurance procedures more systematic and ensure they cover all college services
 - improve the management and quality assurance arrangements for franchised provision
 - help staff to understand the distinction between personal counselling and tutorial support.

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)

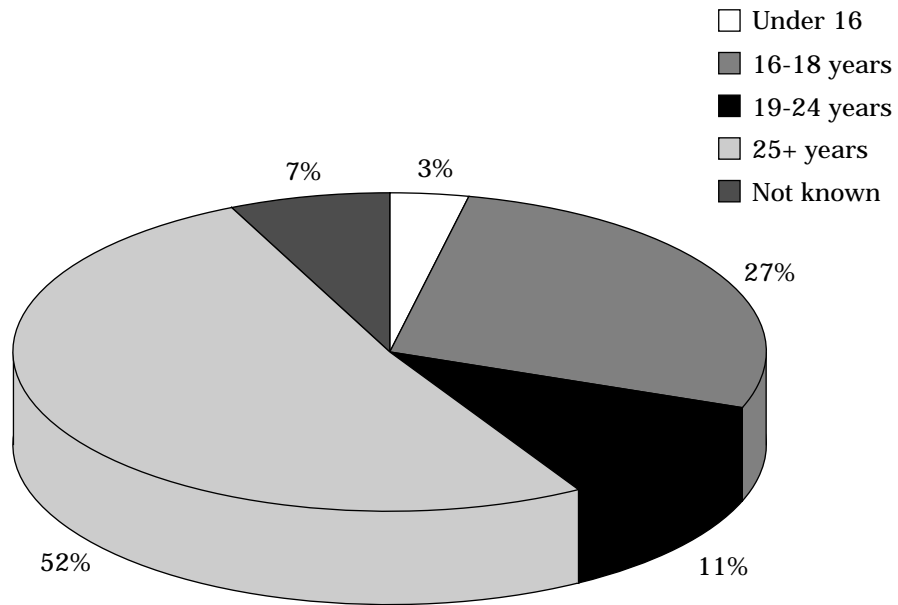
 - 5 Estimated income (for 12 months to July 1996)

 - 6 Estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)

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

Figure 1

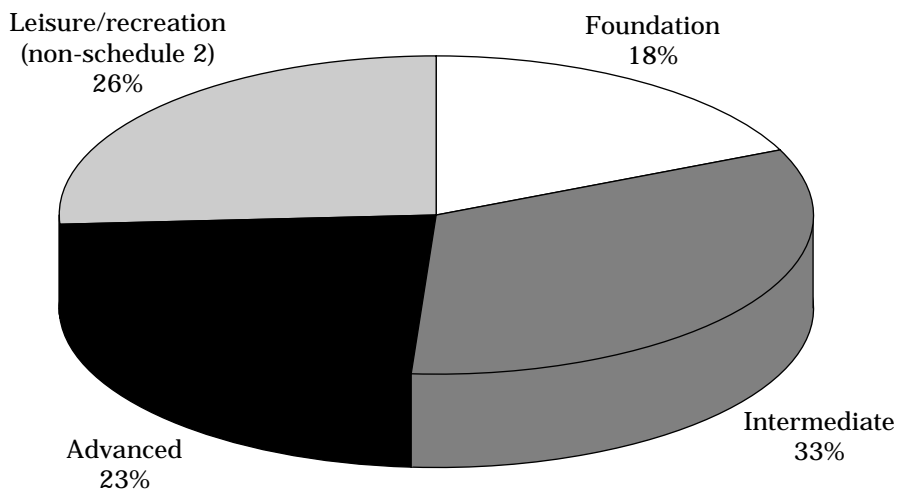
St Austell College: percentage student numbers by age (as at November 1995)



Student numbers: 8,780

Figure 2

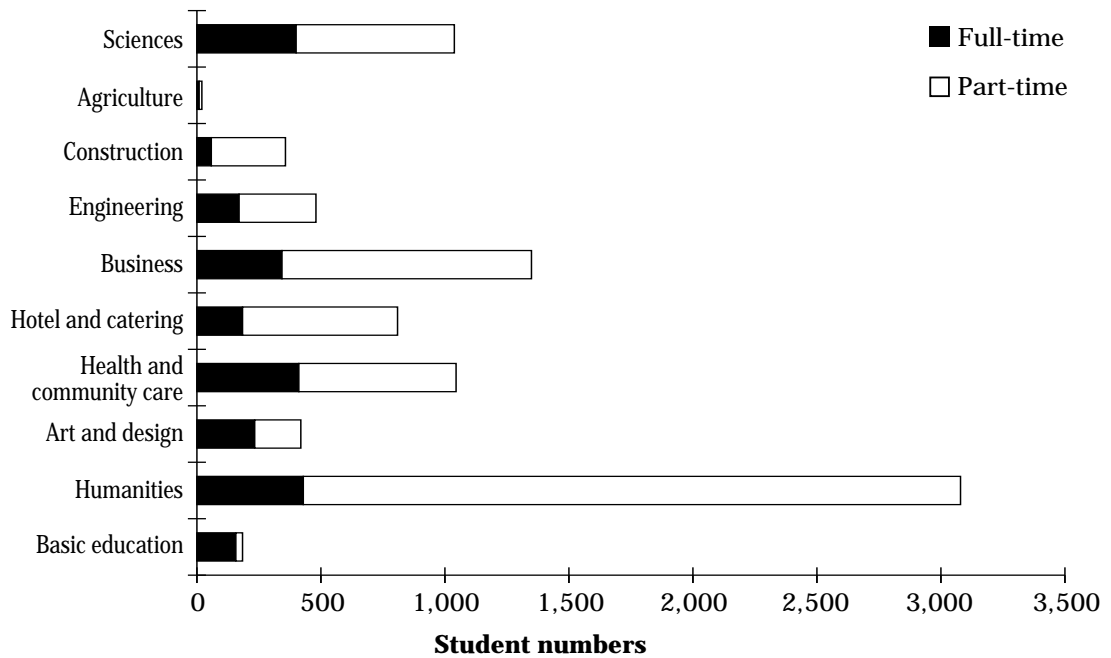
St Austell College: percentage student numbers by level of study (as at November 1995)



Student numbers: 8,780

Figure 3

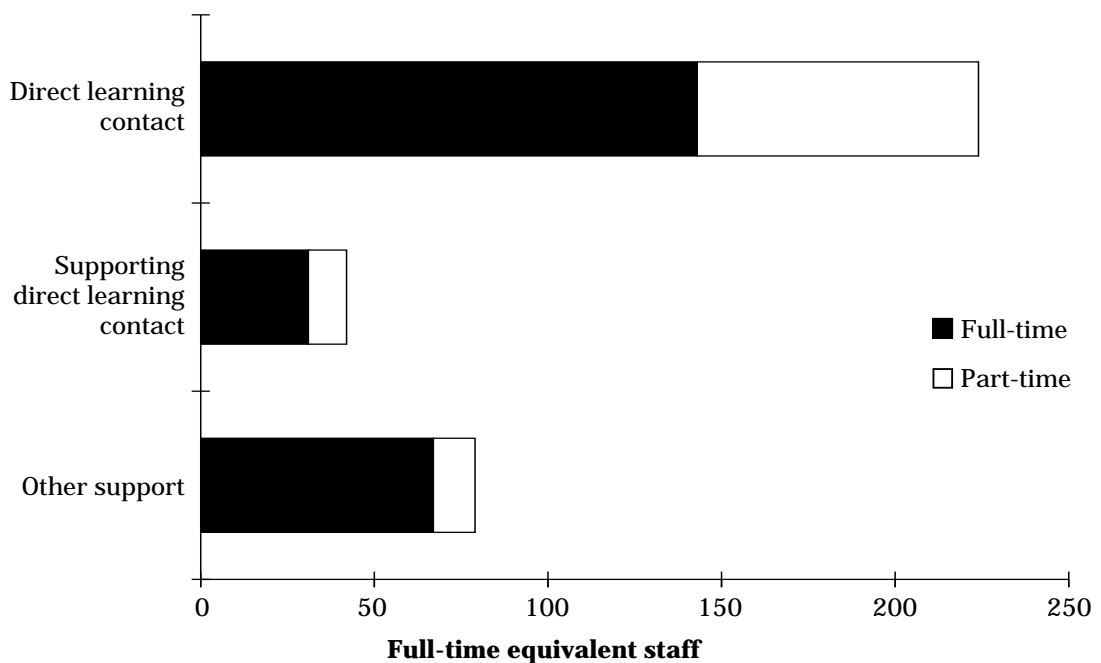
St Austell College: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1995)



Student numbers: 8,780

Figure 4

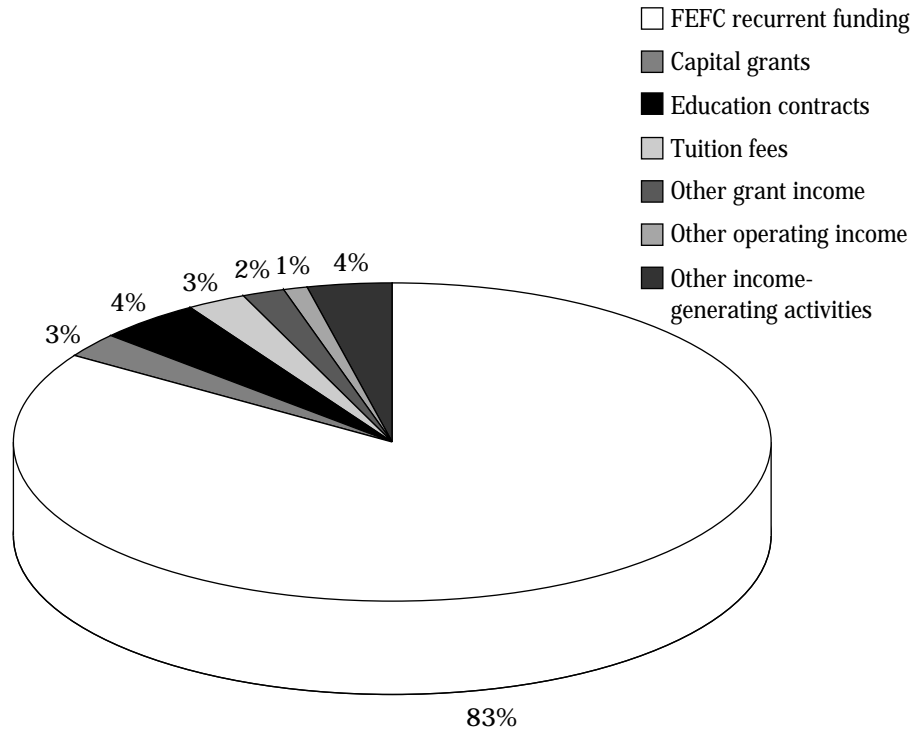
St Austell College: staff profile - staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1995-96)



Full-time equivalent staff: 345

Figure 5

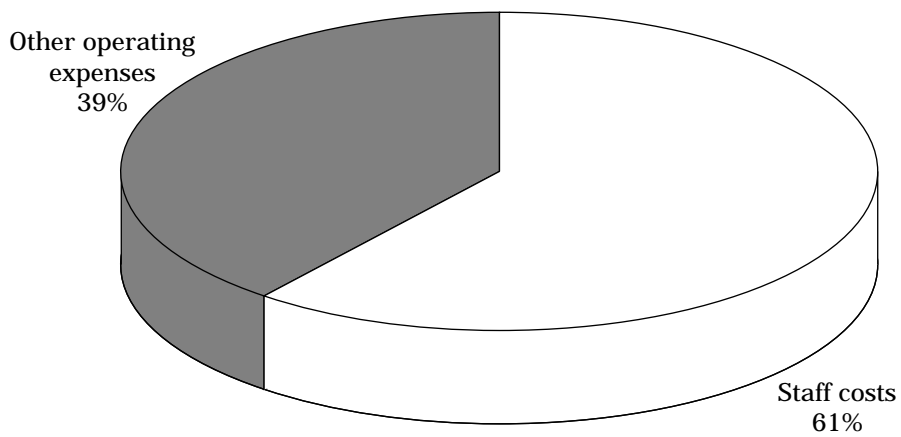
St Austell College: estimated income (for 12 months to July 1996)



Estimated income: £11,489,000

Figure 6

St Austell College: estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)



Estimated expenditure: £11,302,000

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