Tresham Institute

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

	Inspection grades				
Activity	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 02/97

TRESHAM INSTITUTE
EAST MIDLANDS REGION
Inspected May-October 1996

Summary

Tresham Institute has a clearly-stated mission that is supported by governors and staff. The mission drives the institute's strategic and operational planning. The corporation is aware of its responsibilities and is committed to continuing to serve the local communities. An extensive range of courses is offered which effectively meets the distinctive needs of industry, adults and school leavers. The good relations between teachers and students encourage purposeful learning, particularly in the case of adult learners. Standards of teaching are good and examination results are generally satisfactory. Relationships with local industries, external agencies and economic development departments have resulted in a number of successful training initiatives. Student services provide good careers advice and tutorial and personal support for students. There are opportunities for students to comment on their experiences. Many of the issues raised are responded to promptly. Most staff are well qualified and effectively deployed. A comprehensive appraisal scheme for all staff links to the professional development programme. The well-implemented estates strategy has improved the quality of the accommodation. The institute should address: the quality of management information; the low retention and attendance on a range of courses; the development of learning support; the rationalisation of quality assurance processes and the management and maintenance of the information technology and audio-visual resources.

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

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Mathematics and science	2	Care, hairdressing and beauty	2
Computing and information technology	3	Art, design, and performance studies	2
Construction	2		
Engineering	2	English, humanities and social science	2
Business and administration	3		
Catering, leisure and tourism	2	Basic education	3

INTRODUCTION

1   Tresham Institute was inspected between May and October 1996. Inspections of subject areas were carried out in May, the institute's enrolment, guidance and induction procedures were inspected in August and September and six inspectors spent a week inspecting aspects of cross-college provision from 6 to 10 October 1996. Inspectors visited 259 classes and examined students' work. They held meetings with governors, staff, students, and representatives of the local community, employers, schools, higher education and the local training and enterprise council (TEC).

THE INSTITUTE AND ITS AIMS

2   Tresham Institute was formed in April 1992 from the merger of Tresham College, itself the result of an earlier merger, and The Wellingborough College. The institute serves the towns of Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough and the surrounding rural area. There are major sites in Corby and Wellingborough, two large campuses in Kettering at St Mary's Road and Windmill Avenue and a small centre in Market Harborough. Corby is a post-war new town that has responded to the closure of its steelworks by attracting internationally-recognised industries. Kettering is a market town which is now actively encouraging new industry as its traditional industries of shoemaking and clothing manufacture decline. Wellingborough has few major employers but significant distribution and warehousing facilities. The area around the town relies heavily on the shoe trade for employment.

3   The institute has substantial provision in all the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) programme areas except agriculture. There are 22 secondary schools with sixth forms in the area that also provide educational opportunities for 16 to 19 year old students.

4   In each of the last three years between 13,000 and 14,000 students enrolled at the institute. In the 1995-96 academic year 13,585 students were enrolled. Full-time students accounted for 14.4 per cent of the enrolments. Some 60 per cent of the student body was aged 25 or over. The institute has a contract with the local education authority (LEA) to provide non-vocational courses for adults. There were 7,000 enrolments on such courses in 1995. Courses are also provided for overseas students, either as individuals following English as a foreign language (EFL) and general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) programmes or as contracted groups under the aegis of the British Council or national governments and agencies. The LEA contract and international work are managed by specialist units and staff. The institute is an associate college of De Montfort University and provided full-time and part-time higher education courses for 249 students in 1995-96. 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.

5   Recent years have seen the development of work with the Northamptonshire Chamber of Commerce, Training and Enterprise (NCCTE). The institute and NCCTE have collaborated on projects funded through the government's development and competitiveness funds, and on the training of young people on the youth credits scheme.

6   The institute has 373 full-time equivalent staff, of whom 213 are teachers, 53 directly support learning and 107 have other support roles. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4. The institute is organised into eight schools of study managed by heads of school and supported by assistant heads. An international team is managed by the principal, and cross-college teams for educational and administrative services are managed by the vice-principal and the director of finance, respectively. A head of campus is responsible for managing each of the main sites.

7   The institute, in its mission statement, sets out to serve the needs of its local, national, and international communities by offering the widest possible range of relevant education and training opportunities. In order to do this the institute aims to continue to seek partnership opportunities with other agencies, institutions and sectors and to review regularly the extent, location, and quality of its provision.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

8   The institute provides an extensive curriculum which effectively serves the needs of industry, adults and school leavers in each of the local communities of Corby, Kettering, Wellingborough and in the surrounding area. In rationalising its courses the institute has shown sensitivity to the communities and industry. For example, the corporation has continued to support footwear and engineering training despite uncertainty about recruitment to these courses.

9   Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities offers appropriate opportunities for key skill development but only a limited range of vocational skills training. There are six full-time vocational courses at foundation level, 20 at intermediate level and 21 at advanced level. These include two general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) at foundation level and seven at both intermediate and advanced levels. In addition, there are 16 general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) and 24 GCE A level subjects offered. There are three access to higher education courses.   Students can study at undergraduate level in engineering, computing, business and leisure. Although the range of full-time provision at foundation level is limited, the institute has explored this apparent deficiency and shown that the need is being met elsewhere within the area.

10   For part-time students there is a wide range of 202 vocational courses, including national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in 26 different skills. An extensive range of non-vocational provision is available in three main

and 19 small centres. Sixteen GCSE and eight GCE A level courses are available during the evening. There is growing provision in adult basic education.

11   A number of curriculum initiatives have been taken in order to increase local participation in education. Ten-week 'gateway' courses for women returning to study; flexible attendance patterns on access courses; and an effective open learning partnership with Oxford Open Learning have each contributed to the success of this aspect of the institute's mission. An English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) initiative, supported in part by NCCTE, has been successful in attracting students. Partnerships with Nene Valley and Uplands adult education colleges aid students' progression to the institute courses. A pre-school playgroup on the Kettering St Mary's Road campus provides care for children of three years of age and above.

12   There are productive relationships with NCCTE and the economic development departments of the three local councils. The NCCTE has funded a number of successful collaborative projects. An innovative GNVQ in engineering and manufacturing support, provides students with industrial experience and job-specific assignments written in collaboration with local industrialists. The long-standing co-operation between the institute, NCCTE and local industry has resulted in a mechatronics centre providing technical training that bridges the disciplines of mechanical and electronic engineering. Partnerships with local training organisations have provided a significant amount of youth credit training. Co-operative arrangements exist with the LEA for student travel, the payment of maintenance awards and the development of courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A separate contract meets the needs of adults with severe learning difficulties and complements other institute provision for adults with learning difficulties.

13   The institute is particularly responsive to the needs of local industries. The industrial and commercial advisory committee, a committee of the governing body, includes membership from local industry. Several useful initiatives, including a business visitor scheme to assess local training needs, have developed from this committee. The industrial and commercial advisory committee also informs the activities of Tresham Training Services which markets courses on quality standards, health and safety, and multi-skills training. It also responds to individual company requests for training. Each vocational area has an effective advisory panel consisting of local industrialists. These meet regularly, are well attended and report directly to the industrial and commercial advisory committee. Links with industry are least well developed in science.

14   The institute has a good knowledge of its local and wider markets and uses an appropriate range of marketing activities that are set out in the annual marketing plan. Marketing is effectively co-ordinated by a marketing unit which is responsible for co-ordinating the production of all

publicity materials, implementing advertising campaigns, carrying out market research and providing market intelligence. Promotional material is designed for specific market sectors and its publication is timed accordingly. Until this year, the effectiveness of the various advertising campaigns in attracting students had not been analysed. Market sector surveys and new methods of analysing existing data are increasingly used to improve the local market information. This information is not used by all the schools and a revised system of evaluating new course proposals has been introduced to address this.

15   Tresham Institute is an associate college of De Montfort University and provides a range of higher education programmes. This relationship also guarantees students who are successful on the access to higher education programmes a university place. The international dimension of the institute's mission statement is implemented by an energetic international students unit. Strong links have been built over a period of years with overseas governments and agencies within the European Union and beyond.

16   There are some successful school links, although relationships with secondary schools are influenced by the competition that exists for post-16 students. In a number of schools, pupils are not made aware of the full range of courses that is available in the area. A project to provide access to the Internet has involved the institute and three local schools. The Northampton curriculum industry partnership provides opportunities for pupils aged 14 to 16 to sample a number of vocational training courses within the institute. There are productive relationships with special schools. A local secondary school head sits on the institute's governing body.

17   Equal opportunities are central to the institute's mission. A committee of the academic board is responsible for reviewing policy and monitoring implementation. Promotional literature is written in community languages where appropriate. The students' handbook emphasises equal opportunities and related issues and these are addressed in the induction programme for full-time students. Although monitoring equal opportunities is one element of annual course reviews, no actions have been taken to address the under representation of minority ethnic students and the gender imbalance on some courses.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

18   Governors are knowledgeable and are committed to the institute and its mission. They are aware of their responsibilities. The level of attendance at meetings and other college events is high. Governors receive induction on appointment and some collective and individual training. They have a wide range of expertise and effective links with the communities and industries in all three towns served by the institute. There are 20 corporation members: the principal, two staff, one student,

11 business members, four co-opted members and a community member drawn from the Afro-Caribbean community in Wellingborough. Only one of the 15 appointed governors is a woman. Currently there is one vacancy for an independent member and the student member has yet to take up the appointment. The clerk to the governors is the institute's director of finance. There is a clear understanding of the need to separate his executive function from his role as clerk and there are procedural arrangements and written accountabilities for the separate functions.

19   The governors have adopted procedures to ensure that their business is open. All board members receive the most recent copy of the monthly management accounts. Much of the work of the board is done through effective committees: finance and general purposes; audit; education; land, building and safety; remuneration; and the disciplinary and appeals committee. The search committee, through its membership, is able to provide a wide range of nominations for new board members. Information about local industrial needs is presented to the main board through the industrial and commercial advisory committee. Each committee prepares an annual summary of its activities. There is an increasingly rigorous annual assessment report of corporation activities prepared by the chair.

20   The objectives of the institute's three-year development plan and the policies that are generated through the academic board are clearly aligned to the aims in the mission. Detailed debate on sections of the institute's plan takes place in the corporation's committees before final approval by the board. The planning process involves consultation at all levels of the organisation. School plans all share a similar format which includes a review of progress towards the preceding year's objectives. Plans are of variable quality; generally target setting lacks sharpness and does not include intermediate stages, end dates and identified responsibilities. Their strength lies in the breadth of consultation involved in the process of planning and their use in the reviewing process.

21   The executive management team comprises the principal, vice-principal and director of finance who define operational strategy and provide strong and supportive leadership. These three, together with the eight heads of school, form the senior management group. Their meetings principally consider resource and planning issues. Curriculum issues are dealt with through the academic board.

22   The academic board provides an effective forum for consultation across the college and plays a key role in the institute. It has 29 members drawn from teaching and non-teaching staff. A recent review has clarified the roles of the 14 committees of the academic board and their relationship to the board. All policies are subject to triennial review and approval by the governors. In many cases, the academic board is charged with monitoring the implementation of policy. Schools and other teams are required to set objectives in their annual plans that lead to the implementation of the policies. This generally works well. However, there

have been occasions when schools have not included objectives relating to key policies.

23   Precise communication targets are set for all managers, including the principal, and other staff. These are monitored by an academic board committee. There is an extensive communications network which includes scheduled meetings, college, campus and school newsletters, formal meetings with individuals, training events and informal contacts. Written material is distributed to all staff, including some leaflets designed specifically for part-time staff. Overall communications within the institute are effective. Through clear line management, an effective academic board and sound quality assurance systems the institute has achieved its objective of being a single coherent institution delivering courses in three distinct locations.

24   The institute's average level of funding for 1995-96 was £18.94 per unit compared with an average for general further education and tertiary colleges of £17.84. The institute's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are shown in figures 5 and 6. There is tight control over the staffing establishment. A system of allocating funds to schools based on units of activity rather than historic allocations is being developed. Budget holders are given clear, detailed monthly financial statements of funds committed. Plans to devolve greater responsibility for managing all resources to schools and to develop unit costings are at an early stage. The institute is developing a way of assessing the costs and benefits of other income generating work. At the moment only income targets are set.

25   The quality of the institute's management information for the period 1993 to 1995 is poor. Little reliance can be placed on data which relate to students' achievements and retention. The institute has made slow progress towards achieving its current position of being able to record accurately student numbers and relate them to funded units. The previous semi-automated system for collecting information on attendance and withdrawal patterns from registers failed and has been abandoned. Achievement data are still held in a separate database.

26   Schools hold and make some use of management information in their own planning processes. Nevertheless, the use of quantitative information as a management tool is relatively underdeveloped. Until recently, the inability to provide accurate and appropriately aggregated data resulted in senior managers not being aware of the magnitude of problems, not being able to effectively prioritise and not being able to monitor the impact of action taken. The institute acknowledges the need for urgent attention to these matters and some progress in addressing them was evident at the time of the inspection.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

27   There are well-developed central admissions and initial guidance systems for full-time students. These services are maintained on all three sites throughout the summer. Attractive and clearly-laid-out general prospectuses and course-specific materials are available. A comprehensive booklet listing all courses is delivered to households in Kettering, Corby and Wellingborough. A consistent approach to pre-enrolment guidance is adopted by a knowledgeable team of advisers. An interview with a member of the specialist teaching staff is arranged, if required. In a few areas, notably business studies, information technology, and humanities, there is scope for more guidance about the nature, level and demands of courses. Registration and enrolment sessions are generally well organised. Recruitment and guidance procedures for part-time students are less effective.

28   The accreditation of students' prior learning is at an early stage of development. There is now a policy and implementation plan that is being monitored. An adviser's handbook has been produced and a single point of contact created for advice and information on the accreditation of prior learning. A students' handbook on the accreditation of prior learning is in draft.

29   Induction for full-time students is generally of a high standard. There is a mandatory list of common induction information for all students. This is augmented by activities relevant to specific courses. Some programme areas run successful additional early summer induction programmes. The institute's charter is contained in the students' handbook and clearly defines students' rights, responsibilities and the grievance procedures. Students are aware of the systems available to them for raising concerns. Transfer between courses, particularly within the induction period and during the first half term, is easily achieved. An induction handbook for teachers of part-time students was introduced in 1995 and updated in 1996 to improve the consistency of induction information.

30   All students have an entitlement to tutorial support. This support is generally good and addresses both individual and group needs. Each school has an operating statement on tutorials. These vary in quality and do not lead to a consistently high standard of tutorial work across the institute. Action planning is incorporated with the majority of full-time students' tutorial programmes, but different record systems are used within and across schools. There is inconsistency in the extent to which students are encouraged to update their national records of achievement. Students' progress and performance is monitored and summarised at four points during the year. The summary provides an opportunity to review achievement across the whole of a student's programme and is particularly useful in monitoring students' GCE and GCSE programmes. An audit of the initial year of operation of the tutorial system identified the need for standard letters and forms and for a guide to good practice. There is currently no common set of learning materials to support tutorial activities.

31   The guidance and counselling provided by student services on each campus are effective. Short-term counselling for students with critical or immediate problems is available in the institute. Longer-term counselling is provided by relevant external agencies with whom student services have close links.

32   Students have good access to careers advice and guidance through an external agency, Career Path Northamptonshire Ltd. The careers advisers are part of the student services team and there is a careers adviser for each campus. Careers booklets, computer software and other careers information are readily available. Individual advice sessions can be booked directly with the adviser or through tutors. Advisers also provide resources for use in tutorials. Group sessions are offered on such topics as self-awareness, options within vocational areas, evaluation of progression routes and interview skills.

33   Learning support for students across the institute is still developing. There are study centres on each site. These centres offer support to individual learners in developing study skills and numeracy and literacy skills. The integration of learning support with the work undertaken in the vocational areas is variable. All full-time and a substantial number of part-time students are screened to identify whether they need support in literacy and numeracy. During the first year of operation of the learning support system not all staff were aware of the facilities available and there was low student attendance at support sessions. Action has been taken and numbers receiving additional support have increased significantly. There is a limited range of materials available in the learning centres to support basic numeracy and to link it to vocational areas. The system of providing feedback to tutors on students' progress does not always work.

34   Attendance figures are given to heads of school each month and action is taken if numbers become low. Poor retention and some unacceptable levels of student absenteeism were identified by the institute as a cause for concern during 1994-95. They are again cited as a concern in the self-assessment report for 1995-96. Action was taken to improve student tracking and this has been further refined and extended to include part-time students for September 1996.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

35   Inspectors observed 259 teaching sessions. Of these, over 64 per cent had strengths which outweighed the weaknesses. In 3 per cent of sessions the weaknesses outweighed the strengths. The average attendance of students enrolled on registers at the sessions inspected in May was 68 per cent. There were wide variations in attendance ranging from 83 per cent in catering to 44 per cent in the social sciences. Low attendance created problems for teachers in setting and marking work, ensuring that students covered work they had missed and returning marked assignments to students within the target timescale set. A further

sample of attendance over four weeks in October revealed a substantial improvement in attendance to 91 per cent. On average, nine students were present in each class inspected during May. The following table summarises the grades awarded to the teaching sessions inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level	5	23	14	1	0	43
GCSE	6	13	7	1	0	27
Basic education	5	9	10	1	0	25
GNVQ	5	16	12	1	2	36
NVQ	10	26	18	0	0	54
Other advanced	13	19	14	2	0	48
Other*	8	9	8	1	0	26
Total	**52**	**115**	**83**	**7**	**2**	**259**

includes access to higher education programmes.

36   In the better lessons, good relations between teachers and students brought about purposeful and productive learning. The variety and style of teaching generally encouraged students to participate in discussion and developed their self-confidence. There was careful attention to the needs of adults in most lessons. The balance of practical activities and theory, the setting of assignments in a vocational context and appropriate use of work experience were significant motivating factors. In some less successful sessions, lesson plans were not well structured, objectives vague and the time allocated for tasks was inappropriate. The questioning technique adopted in some sessions failed to involve all students.

37   In science, lessons were generally well planned and the aims were clearly explained to students. Teachers made effective use of handouts, videos and models. The pace of learning was generally appropriate. Practical activities effectively supported the theoretical work but there was insufficient emphasis on safety. In some classes not all students were fully involved in question and answer sessions and, in others, students' concentration wandered.

38   The teaching was at least satisfactory and often good in computing courses. Most sessions were well prepared and met the learning requirements of the students. Practical work developed skills to the required professional standards. On some assignments teachers provided helpful comments for students indicating how the quality of work could be improved. Late submission of assignments and poor attendance slowed the rate of progress made by students on some courses. On other courses, the long-term absences of some staff have adversely affected the learning experience of students. The recording of work covered by students should be more systematic.

39   Staff teaching mathematics had developed professional teaching relationships with their students. Homework was set regularly and returned promptly. Students' progress was accurately recorded. GCE A level students were given appropriately challenging tasks. On GCSE courses adult students valued the opportunity to work at their own pace from prepared learning booklets and receive a high level of individual support. However, some younger GCSE students were not motivated by this teaching style and would have benefited from more direct teaching and greater teacher intervention in their learning.

40   Construction programmes contained an appropriate balance of practical work and job-related theory. Students were regularly informed of their progress and maintained their own records of achievement. Most lessons were well planned and included a variety of activities that maintained students' interest. A few lessons failed to challenge the students and progressed at an inappropriately slow pace. In some practical sessions, some students did not wear protective clothing and appropriate footwear.

41   In engineering, there were coherent programmes which generally met the needs of individual students and supported their progression to employment. The practical work was particularly well organised and allowed students to progress at their own pace and to take responsibility for their learning. Occasionally during practical sessions, opportunities were missed to reinforce theoretical work. Effective use was made of work experience.

42   Standards of teaching and learning varied in business and administration. Some sessions provided stimulation and challenge and encouraged students to analyse and develop their ideas. These sessions used thoroughly researched materials that matched the level of the course and the needs of the students. Other sessions moved too slowly and the tasks set failed to challenge students or maintain their attention. In a number of sessions the material used was dated. Teachers also failed to use the considerable work experience which some management students had. In some GNVQ units, teachers did not put the subject into a business context and failed to make connections with related topics in other units in the course.

43   In catering, good schemes of work and lesson plans ensured that students were involved in a suitable range of tasks that led to appropriate outcomes. In practical classes students were given opportunities to acquire appropriate skills in realistic work conditions. Effective use was made of the experiences gained in work placements to highlight the differing practices students could encounter in the industry.

44   In leisure and recreation courses the standards of teaching and learning were generally good. There was a major emphasis on practical activities that involved the students working together in small groups and taking some responsibility for their learning. Most of the classes were set

within a vocational context and were relevant to the interests and experiences of the students. The learning materials used were professionally presented and supportive. In a few of the question and answer sessions some students were not fully involved.

45   Challenging and interesting assignments were set in health and care courses. Both GNVQ core skills and other assignments were placed in an appropriate vocational context. In the most effective classes, the objectives had been particularly well defined and then linked to appropriate learning activities. The marking of written work was detailed and helpful to students. In some sessions, the room layout did not match the learning activities.

46   In hairdressing and beauty therapy, relationships between students and staff were good. A variety of teaching and learning strategies were used which sustained the students' interest. Topics were covered thoroughly and question and answer techniques were used effectively to check students' understanding. In hairdressing some practical lessons lacked commercial rigour. In a small number of instances, students were set work which was not well matched to their needs and abilities.

47   In art and design, lessons were generally well prepared and much of the teaching was excellent. High standards were set and students were enthusiastic, attentive and systematically recorded notes and developed sketch books. Many staff practice professionally and made good use of their experience in their teaching. However, not all students were encouraged to contribute to group and seminar discussions. Attendance was irregular or poor on some courses.

48   In English, humanities and social sciences, the teaching was generally effective. In the better classes, there was a purposeful atmosphere, questions were used to confirm learning and students were fully engaged by the tasks set. In some classes, teachers skilfully involved all students in group discussion. In GCSE language lessons the teaching was of a high standard. In history, geography and politics, students worked conscientiously, audio-visual materials were used effectively and students' work was accurately and supportively marked. In social science lessons the methods of revision and use of questions and handouts were effective and students responded with considerable effort and concentration. In English, geography and politics, too few lessons involved students in debating ideas, making observations and researching materials. Where lessons were less effective, it was because they were poorly planned and did not specify objectives for students' learning.

49   Teaching on basic education courses and to students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities was generally well planned. Clear aims were set in most sessions. Students' progress was carefully monitored. There were some imaginative sessions and some effective behaviour management. In a few sessions, students were given responsibility for their own learning and for helping one another. However, some schemes

of work lacked a clear rationale, some learning materials were inappropriate and some individual learning programmes were not sufficiently detailed. There was a lack of differentiated teaching in several basic skills lessons and examples of inappropriate activities in others.

50   The hearing impaired service provides high-quality intensive communication and study support to deaf students on mainstream courses. The staff review all handouts and assignment sheets for such students in consultation with the vocational teachers. Out of class tutorial support is provided for all deaf students and examination preparation is carefully planned.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

51   Most of the students interviewed during the inspection spoke positively about their studies. Many developed a range of key skills during their courses which they will need for future success in life. Hair and beauty students developed their communication and organisational skills through participation in competitions and shows. English students were developing the skills necessary to engage in informed debate. Engineering students were able to manage their own work in addition to working well with others. Business and catering students demonstrated their abilities to work effectively in groups. Leisure and tourism and business students developed organisational and presentational skills in preparing their portfolios. Engineering, science, health and social care, hairdressing, some humanities students, and some students with learning difficulties were able to use information technology competently. Assignments in beauty therapy were well researched and presented. Many art, humanities and mature nursery nursing students had developed good analytical skills. Evaluation skills were underdeveloped in business students. Some art and design students on intermediate level courses had poor communication skills.

52   The 161 students aged 16 to 18 entered for GCE A level examinations in 1995 scored, on average, 3.4 points per entry (where grade A=10 points, E=2). This places the institute in the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure, based on the data in the 1995 tables published by the Department for Education and Employment. Overall results from the 1996 examinations which were available only on a provisional basis compared favourably with the previous year. The proportion of students completing programmes who achieve two or more subject passes has varied between 63 and 71 per cent over the last three years. Between 13 and 15 per cent of students who completed GCE A level programmes over the period 1994 to 1996 left the institute without gaining any passes. Poor retention is a serious issue for the institute as it acknowledged in its self-assessment report. Many subjects studied over a two-year period have poor retention between the first and second year of the course. The average withdrawal rate was generally in excess of 25 per

cent. The institute has addressed this issue but it is too early to judge the effectiveness of the measures taken.

53   In 1995, 49 per cent of entries in GCSE subjects achieved grades A to C. This is significantly above the average of 37 per cent for students aged 16 to 18 in further education colleges. Entries were highest in English and mathematics. Pass rates at grades A to C in these subjects of 63 per cent and 49 per cent, respectively, compare favourably with national figures. However, in these subjects and others a large proportion of students did not sit the examination for which they had been entered. In mathematics only 40 per cent of full-time students improved on their past performance. There are no records available in other subjects to make similar comparisons. Success rates in science GCSE courses are low with only 18 per cent of those who entered the examination gaining A to C grades in 1995 and 39 per cent, provisionally, in 1996. The institute's distance learning provision is small but expanding. In 1996, 65 per cent of such GCSE candidates obtained grades A to C and 75 per cent of the GCE A level students passed the examination after one year.

54   Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities can gain accreditation for their work through the bronze and silver youth awards. Students take pride in their achievements. However, some students, particularly on the preparation for independence programme, are not sufficiently stretched by their experience at the institute. Achievements of deaf students are commendable. Students in basic education classes are gaining self-confidence. The number of adult students achieving formal qualifications in basic education is growing steadily, although numbers are still small. Achievement in both wordpower and numberpower was 100 per cent in 1994-95. New programmes accredited by the Open College Network were introduced in 1995 and there was an 86 per cent pass rate.

55   Seventy-nine per cent of the 248 students, aged 16 to 18, in their final year of study on the vocational courses recorded in the Department for Education and Employment's 1995 performance tables were successful. This places the institute in the middle third of all colleges in 1995 on this measure of performance. Results in 1996 were broadly comparable with those for 1995. The figures for full-time students on advanced courses in 1996, with 1995 rates in brackets, were as follows: pass rate for those students completing their studies, 79 per cent (80); retention rate, 66 per cent (65); pass rate for those students enrolled, 50 per cent (50). On one-year full-time vocational courses at intermediate level there has been a decline in the number of enrolments and in the completion rates over three years from 1993-95 to 1995-96.

Outcomes from one-year full-time intermediate vocational programmes

Academic Year	Number of enrolments	Average retention as a percentage of enrolments	Average of final awards as percentage of enrolments	Average of final awards gained as percentage of students completing their course
1993-94	213	84%	59%	70%
1994-95	190	78%	41%	53%
1995-96	157	75%	34%	45%

56   Overall completion rates conceal considerable variation in achievement between different curriculum areas and modes of study. In 1995, only 25 per cent of students studying by evening attendance for a national certificate over two years in business and finance completed their studies. Some 80 per cent of mechanical and electronic engineering students studying by day release completed their courses. Pass rates for those completing were 70 per cent or below in engineering compared with 75 per cent in business and finance.

57   Students studying NVQs were generally less successful at the higher levels than they were at levels 1 and 2 in 1995 where 75 and 74 per cent, respectively, successfully completed the courses. This reflects national trends. Part-time engineering craft students achieved good standards in NVQ programmes. In construction, many students failed to complete their NVQ awards in the time expected. Some students studying for the NVQ in computing had not completed portfolios at the time of the inspection, although most subsequently completed. There were low levels of achievement in some business NVQs but standards were high on supervisory and management courses. Performance in some office skills subjects, particularly text processing, was high.

58   The institute has collected data on students' actual destinations for full-time students and began to collect information for part-time students from 1995, although this is far from complete.

Destinations of full-time students in 1995

Age of students	Number of full-time students gaining awards	Higher education*	Further education*	Employment*	Other*	Unknown*
Aged 18 or under	430	24%	21%	25%	2%	28%
Aged 19 or over	262	49%	7%	20%	1%	23%

* Destinations of full-time students as a percentage of those gaining an award.

59   In 1995, 385 students went on to higher education. This was a record number for the institute. There was also an increase in the number of students entering higher education who had followed less traditional routes such as general vocational and access courses. Sixty-two per cent of the students who enrolled on one-year full-time access courses were successful in 1995 and 67 per cent of these went on to higher education in that year. Progression to more advanced further education courses is high in some areas for students following both full-time and part-time modes of study. For example, in construction, 59 per cent of full-time and 62 per cent of part-time students continued their studies by taking more advanced courses at the institute. Few students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress to vocational programmes.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

60   The institute's mission highlights the importance it places on the quality of its education and training provision. There is a clear policy for quality and a detailed quality improvement programme involving monitoring, review, evaluation and action planning. The governors have established an education committee and one of its functions is to monitor aspects of quality. The committee regularly reviews students' achievements and has also met with students in order to hear at first hand the views of customers. Students' overall opinion on the institute is also reviewed annually using three questionnaires. These questionnaires cover all campuses and the results are analysed by campus, but this analysis does not identify issues that are specific to particular courses.

61   The academic board fulfils the requirement in the strategic plan to review vigilantly all aspects of the institute's provision. A range of review processes has been developed that provides a comprehensive approach to quality assurance and quality improvement. The procedures involve a quality committee and four subcommittees, course study groups, boards of study and, more recently, quality development circles. All staff are involved in quality procedures at some time during the year. An annual guide is produced for these various groups and their work is effectively monitored centrally through the minutes of their meetings. The systems for quality assurance have developed over time to meet different needs. This has resulted in some overlap of functions. The institute recognises the need to rationalise this aspect of quality assurance.

62   All course study groups are required to produce annually a set of standards on enrolment, retention, achievement, destination, student feedback and class size. Some of the standards set are unrealistic. The standards are monitored against achievement and listed in the annual course review. All course reviews result in action plans. The action plans for a minority of courses lack quantifiable targets making the achievement of these targets difficult to monitor. The course review gathers students' views on quality from questionnaires, from student representatives on the study groups, through the student council and through tutors. Many of the

issues raised were responded to promptly. There is considerable overlap between the different questionnaires used across the institute for sampling students' opinions. The raw data gathered by the study groups are not used outside of these groups, compared with other survey information or used to produce performance targets. The boards of study monitor the quality assurance aspects of the work of all study groups and provide summary reports for the quality committee and the academic board. There is no single formal annual report on quality which draws together and evaluates the outcomes of the various review and monitoring instruments and the performance indicators.

63   The quality development circles use a procedure similar to the curriculum-based study groups for managing improvements in quality for the institute's support staff. The quality development circles have raised and solved issues and improved operational performance.

64   The quality committee is responsible to the academic board for quality in the classroom. One of its four subcommittees carried out a major programme of classroom observation to identify strengths and weaknesses in classroom practice in all schools. Each head of school received useful feedback on classroom quality. The programme also identified issues to be addressed through the institute's professional development programme. Classroom observation is now an integral part of the institute's quality improvement programme.

65   The institute has an effective system for completing in-depth curriculum reviews of nominated courses. A detailed report on the nominated course is reviewed by staff from a different school using criteria set by the quality committee. The resulting report and action plan is presented to the quality of curriculum committee, a subcommittee of the quality committee. The institute's intention was to review the whole of its provision on a four-year cycle but this will not be achieved at the current rate of progress.

66   The institute uses the most appropriate quality system for each area of its work. Tresham training services which operates as a commercial organisation has achieved International Standards Organisation (ISO) 9002 standard. The institute as a whole is working towards the Investors in People standard and will seek assessment in December 1996.

67   The institute's self-assessment report was presented under the headings set out in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. It was generally clear but tended to be descriptive, presenting strengths and weaknesses in a narrative way. As a consequence, the balance between the strengths and weaknesses was difficult to identify. The institute chose not to allocate numerical grades and this made it difficult to interpret its own judgements of the quality of its provision. The issues identified in the narrative matched many of those of the inspectors but the assessment of these was insufficiently evaluative.

68   The first cycle of appraisal under a new system involving all staff has just been completed. It includes an opportunity for classroom observation for teaching staff and uses an easily understood set of appraisal documents. The process, regarded positively by most staff, leads to individual training plans and also contributes to the formulation of the institute's professional development plan. Other contributions to the plan come from the study groups and quality development circles. The budget for the institute's professional development is based on the priorities identified within the institute's overall development plan and contributes to the achievement of these objectives. A wide range of training activities within the institute is provided, and external training and development opportunities are offered to meet the training needs of staff.

69   There is an effective induction programme for all new staff across all campuses. It comprises four staff induction days, a staff portfolio and access to a mentor. The programme is well resourced and includes funding to release teaching staff. It is a supportive programme which gives staff an overview of the whole institute and helps them to see their contribution to the institute's development.

70   Professional development activity is monitored through the staff-development management system. The software used is no longer compatible with the institute's main personnel database. The institute is planning to rectify this. All external and internal provision is evaluated, but there is no well-developed system for evaluating the effectiveness of the professional development activities in improving the quality of students' experience.

RESOURCES

Staffing

71   The majority of teaching staff are committed and conscientious. They are appropriately qualified and experienced for the specialisms they teach. Part-time staff are generally less well qualified academically than full-time staff but bring a wealth of practical experience to the teaching teams. Most staff have some relevant commercial experience but, in many cases, it is not recent. Relatively few full-time staff teaching childcare have significant nursery experience. Curriculum development and updating is generally good. In the main, staff are effectively deployed and supported by a professional development programme. However, there are some exceptions. At the time of the inspection, not all of the staff working in the study centres had received systematic training in the teaching of basic skills. A shortage of people with appropriate expertise to cover long-term absences of computing teachers had had an adverse affect on the quality of this provision. These issues have since been addressed.

72   Support staff are competent, experienced and valued by the institute. Technicians assist effectively in a number of areas and work closely with academic staff. The level of technician support for information technology

is insufficient and the introduction of new facilities is not always matched by adequate training. Staffing in the learning resource centres has been increased to cope with increased demand, but it does not yet match the service envisaged in the development plan. Volunteers, who are all trained to a professional level, work on the adult basic education courses. Administration staff provide an effective service in supporting the work of the institute. The site maintenance team provides a valuable range of skills.

73   The institute has made efficiency gains in staffing since 1993. The number of staff at the institute has been reduced from 447 to 373. More flexible contracts of employment have been introduced for 99 per cent of teaching staff. A high proportion of staff have more than 15 years' service and 52 per cent are over 45 years of age. There is a reasonable gender balance amongst the teaching staff but not on the senior management team. The institute has been successful in recruiting teaching staff from minority ethnic groups.

74   Governors, managers and staff at all levels are well supported by the personnel and professional development functions. A qualified personnel manager provides support to the personnel committee and manages the personnel function. A counselling service is provided for staff.

Equipment/learning resources

75   The standard of specialist equipment available in most curriculum areas meets the needs of the courses offered. Students studying computing, construction, catering and hairdressing and beauty therapy have access to facilities of a similar standard to those found commercially. In engineering, high-quality facilities support most courses. The equipment provided to support the recently-introduced mechatronics provision is particularly good. In the machine and welding shops the equipment is dated but remains suitable for teaching engineering principles. Art, design and media studios have a good range of tools and audio and video equipment and graphics software. The quality of some photographic equipment could be improved. There is a well-equipped language centre at Kettering that contains audio, video and satellite receiving equipment. Equipment for science is good at Kettering and satisfactory elsewhere. A centre for the hearing impaired has appropriate equipment. Some equipment in the learning difficulties and disabilities workshop is of good quality. The teaching of GCE A level statistics is inhibited by a lack of readily accessible computers.

76   Each site has a learning resource centre which provides a pleasant learning environment. The recently-refurbished centre at St Mary's Road is particularly good. The range of books, periodicals and other materials and facilities is generally adequate for the students on each site. Individual schools also provide smaller resource centres which complement the main centres but are managed by the schools. Each main learning resource centre provides quiet study areas as well as general reading and study

spaces, computer facilities and small group and learning support study areas. Project packs on a variety of subjects are available in all centres. A suitable range of audio-visual facilities is available. Compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) database materials are also available but the range of specialist materials is small at present. The number of computers available in the learning centre on the St Mary's Road campus does not always match student demand.

77   There is generally a good level of basic classroom equipment across the institute. The provision of certain audio-visual resources is co-ordinated through the learning resource centres and an audio-visual co-ordinator is responsible for booking, maintenance and broadcast recording. There is currently no single policy regarding the purchase, deployment and maintenance of such equipment and schools continue to purchase and maintain their own audio-visual equipment. This creates additional costs. Each campus has its own reprographics service which provides professionally-produced material, including handouts, worksheets and flexible learning packages of a good standard. Schools are also free to provide their own photocopying service from their consumable budget and this improves the service for students.

78   There is an appropriate committee structure for the development and implementation of the institute's information technology strategy and for identifying users' requirements. The provision of information technology equipment across all sites is given a high priority. In recent years, adequate funds have been made available for the planned replacement of existing equipment and for the purchase of software and other consumables. However, information gathered on the demand for, and utilisation of, information technology facilities across all sites is limited. The availability of computer workstations does not always satisfy demand.

79   The allocation of funds for the purchase of capital items is made against bids from the schools and units. An annual equipment survey checks all equipment against the assets register and a priority replacement list is drawn up. In this way there is an element of planned replacement. An institute decision to use most of the capital equipment funds to develop the information technology infrastructure across the institute over the next three years severely limits the ability to replace other equipment.

Accommodation

80   Since incorporation, the institute has continuously improved the quality of its accommodation and rationalised its sites and buildings by means of a well-implemented estates strategy. There are clear working procedures contained in a comprehensive estates manual. There is a 10-year plan for preventative maintenance supported by an annual budget. Sites are maintained well, with a continuous programme of painting, decorating and general maintenance. Day-to-day site issues are the responsibility of campus heads supported by campus staff. Each campus

head has a budget for routine maintenance and running costs. The general standard of cleanliness is high, although at certain times of the day in some locations cleanliness falls below this high standard.

81   The quality of specialist teaching accommodation is generally good across the institute. Some of the institute's accommodation has been sponsored by local companies and is of high quality. Most curriculum areas have some designated teaching rooms where there is some display which promotes the subjects. There were particularly stimulating displays in the leisure and tourism and health and social care areas. Where necessary, simulated working environments have been created. The facilities in the plumbing and painting and decorating workshops are less well developed. Leisure students have access to a range of indoor and outdoor sports facilities on and off the site. The gymnasium at the Windmill Avenue site is poor. The hairdressing and beauty therapy section provides a good-quality learning environment which is well decorated and exceptionally clean. The McKinlay Theatre at St Mary's Road has a large auditorium which is under utilised for much of the time but provides a valuable community facility. One building at Wellingborough is earmarked for demolition but is still used for a number of classes. It is a poor learning environment and access is difficult.

82   The institute is committed to improving all its buildings for use by students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, some rooms at Wellingborough used by such students are unsuitable. They provide the only access to other rooms and the consequent disruption makes it difficult for students who may have concentration and learning difficulties to study. Access for wheelchair users to some teaching areas is poor, particularly at Wellingborough.

83   The public areas of the institute are generally of good quality. The refurbished reception areas at St Mary's Road and Wellingborough provide a modern, welcoming focal point for visitors to these sites. The reception areas are less well sited at Corby and Windmill Avenue. A great deal of effort has been put into signposting all campuses and signs are generally helpful and clear. Refectories and other catering outlets are provided on each site. These are generally adequate for the current needs of students although the refectory area at Wellingborough is not conveniently situated and at times is crowded. Each campus also has a fitness suite, with modern equipment for the use of students and staff.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

84   The strengths of the institute are:

•   its strategic planning processes which clearly support the institute's mission

•   productive relationships with local industry

•   the extensive and appropriate range of provision

- good relationships between teachers and students

- the careers advice and the tutorial and personal support for students

- the many opportunities for students to comment on their experience and the prompt response of management

- the comprehensive appraisal scheme for staff which links to the professional development programme

- the estates strategy that is effectively implemented.

85 In order to build on these strengths, the institute should:

- improve the quality of management information

- improve retention and student attendance

- further develop learning support for students

- rationalise the quality assurances processes

- improve the management and maintenance of the information technology and audio-visual resources.

FIGURES

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

Figure 1

Tresham Institute: percentage student numbers by age (as at July 1996)

Legend:
- ☐ Under 16
- ◼ 16-18 years
- ◼ 19-24 years
- ☐ 25+ years
- ◼ Not known

7% 2% 17%

14%

60%
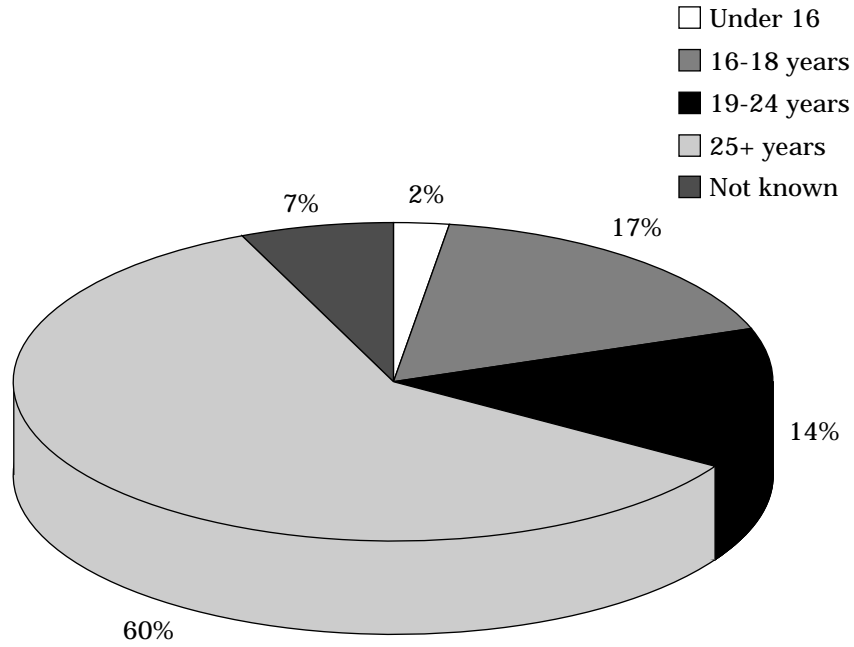
Student numbers: 13,585

Figure 2

Tresham Institute: percentage student numbers by level of study (as at July 1996)

Legend:
- ☐ Foundation
- ◼ Intermediate
- ◼ Advanced
- ☐ Higher education
- ◼ Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)
- ◼ Not externally accredited

10% 15%

29%

21%

2%

23%
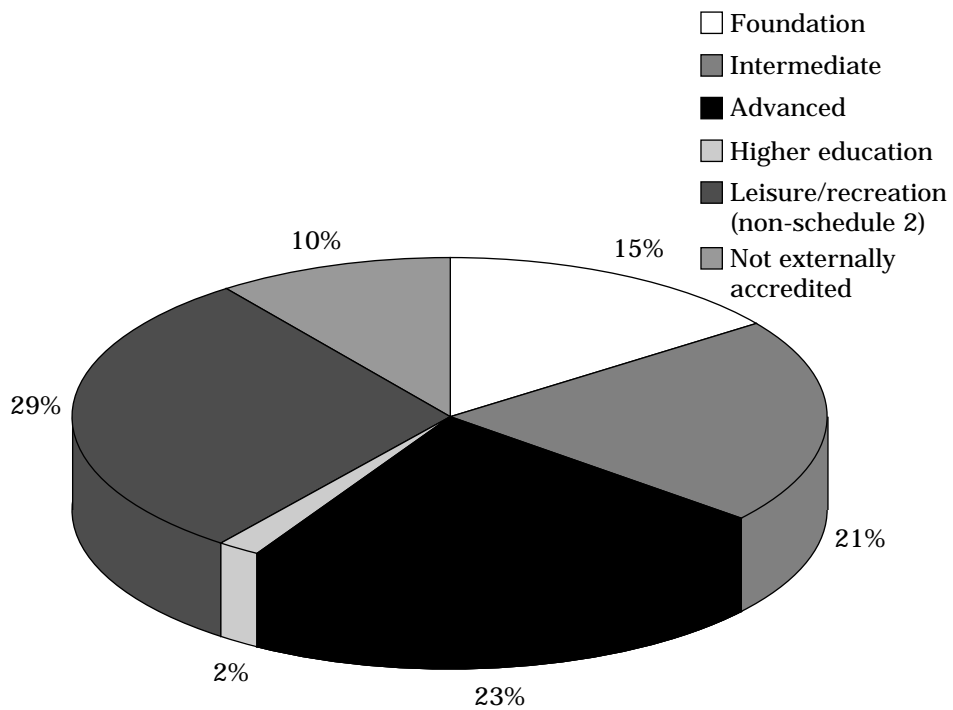
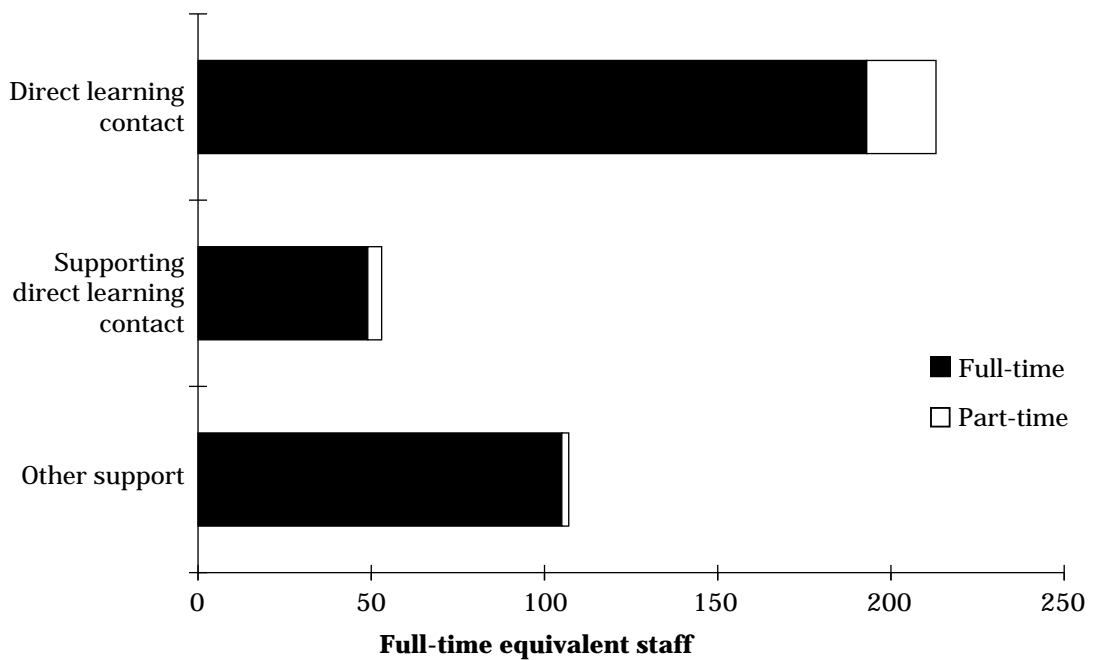Student numbers: 13,585

Figure 3

Tresham Institute: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at July 1996)
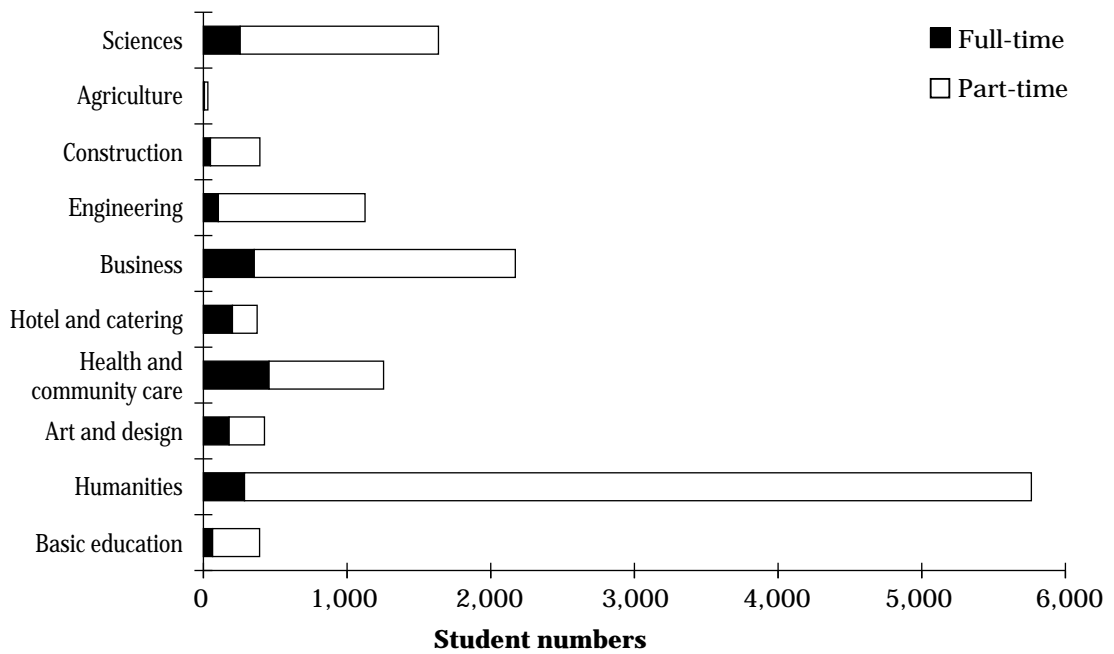
Student numbers: 13,585
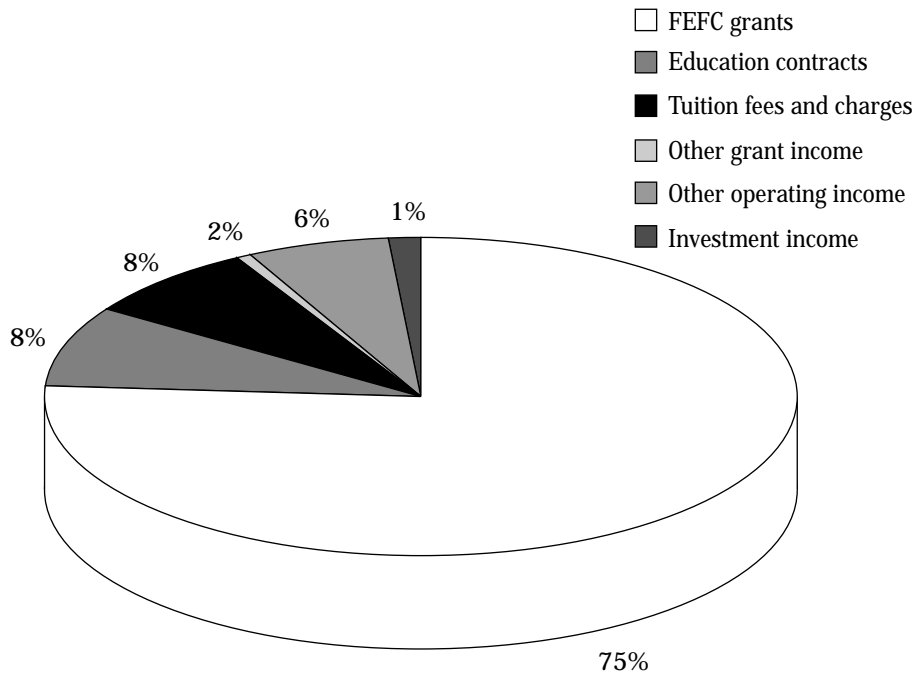
Figure 4

Tresham Institute: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at July 1996)
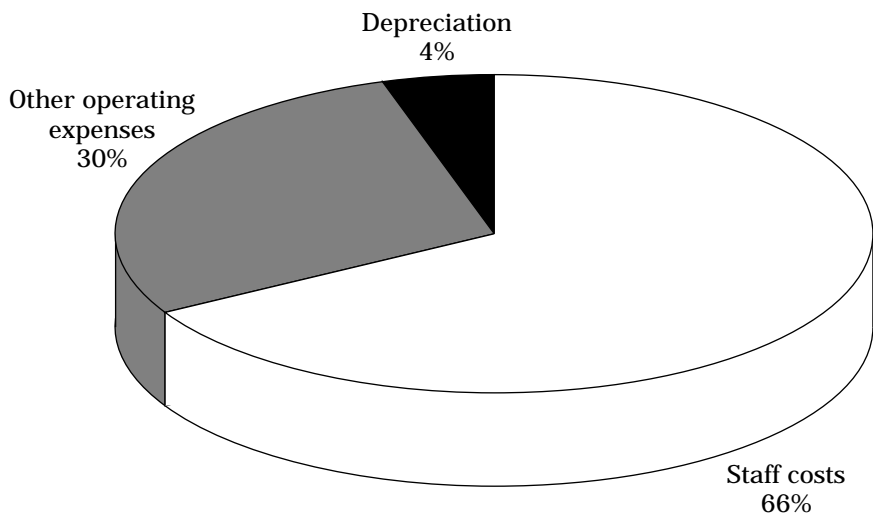

Full-time equivalent staff: 373

Figure 5

Tresham Institute: income (for 12 months to July 1996)

Legend:
- ☐ FEFC grants
- ▨ Education contracts
- ■ Tuition fees and charges
- ☐ Other grant income
- ▨ Other operating income
- ▨ Investment income

8% 8% 2% 6% 1%

75%

Income: £12,383,000

Figure 6

Tresham Institute: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)

Depreciation
4%

Other operating
expenses
30%

Staff costs
66%

Expenditure: £12,219,000