

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Truro College

August 1997

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

College grade profiles 1993-96

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

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 99/97

TRURO COLLEGE

SOUTH WEST REGION

Inspected March 1996-April 1997

Summary

Truro College, a tertiary college, was opened in 1993. Growth in student numbers has been rapid. Governors and managers provide strong and effective direction. Staff are committed to the development of the college. The college offers a wide range of subjects at GCE A level and an increasing number of vocational courses. Links with partner schools are strong. Students receive effective initial guidance and induction, careers education and higher education advice. Management information systems are reliable. There is much well-planned and stimulating teaching. Many students achieve high standards and good examination results. The college offers many sporting, cultural and recreational activities for students and the local community. Accommodation and equipment is of a high standard. The college should: improve retention rates on some courses; improve some less effective teaching; ensure greater consistency in tutorial practices; consider further development of foundation vocational programmes; develop NVQ provision to meet the needs of employers; ensure that learning support is provided for all students who need it; and address inconsistencies in the content and presentation of some quality assurance reports.

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		1
Students' recruitment, guidance and support		2
Quality assurance		2
Resources:	staffing	1
	equipment/learning resources	1
	accommodation	1

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science	2	Art and design and media	2
Mathematics and computing	2	Performing arts	1
Business	2	English	1
Health and community care	2	Languages	2
		Other humanities	2
		Basic education	3

INTRODUCTION

1 Truro College was inspected between March 1996 and April 1997. Seventeen inspectors spent 66 days in the college. Science, mathematics and computing, and psychology were inspected in March 1996. The college's enrolment and induction procedures were inspected in September 1996. Other curriculum areas and aspects of cross-college provision were inspected between February and April 1997.

2 Inspectors visited 184 classes, and examined students' work and college documents. They met members of the corporation board, parents, students and staff. Inspectors also had meetings with representatives of employers involved with the college, training providers, the local community and Devon and Cornwall Training and Enterprise Council (TEC).

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

3 Truro College opened in September 1993 as a new tertiary college in purpose-built accommodation on the western outskirts of the city of Truro. The college also uses three premises in the city centre: a rented adult education centre and two other learning centres. There is also a centre, mainly for information technology training, at Newquay.

4 Truro is the county town of Cornwall and a cathedral city. The area surrounding Truro has a population of 55,047 and is one of the more prosperous in Cornwall. Five per cent of the community are 16 to 18 years of age; less than 1 per cent are from minority ethnic groups. Employment is mainly in service industries and public administration. The county is generally rural in character and communities are scattered. It has persistent economic problems. However, recently there has been some growth in manufacturing and engineering industries and local companies have increased their export trade. The unemployment rate for the county is 7.7 per cent; it is 5.2 per cent for the Truro area. These figures compare with a national average of 6.2 per cent.

5 Fifty-five per cent of students come from Truro and neighbouring villages. In 1996, 78 per cent of local school-leavers continued in full-time education and most of these enrolled on courses at the college. The four 11 to 16 schools and one special school in Truro are partner schools of the college. The nearest further education sector colleges are Cornwall College (11 miles), St Austell College (16 miles) and Penwith College (27 miles). There are secondary schools with sixth forms at Newquay and Falmouth.

6 The college opened with 742 full-time students. There has been steady growth in the number of part-time adult students. In February 1997, there were 1,535 full-time and 4,122 part-time students enrolled at the college. Student numbers by age, by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3. The college employs 139 full-time equivalent teachers and a further 63 staff who support learning directly. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

7 The college's mission is 'to meet the further education and training needs of young people, adults and employers from Truro and the surrounding area'.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

8 The college responds well to its students and its community. It has grown rapidly and has extended the scope of its provision. It offers a wide range of general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) courses for full-time and part-time students. In 1996-97, the college offered 37 GCE A level subjects through 42 different syllabuses, of which 12 were modular in structure. There are 16 GCE advanced supplementary (AS) subjects and 15 general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) subjects. The college is steadily extending its range of vocational courses. There are courses leading to advanced and intermediate general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) in six subjects: four Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diploma courses and three BTEC first diploma courses. The college does not offer any GNVQ foundation programmes, although it is working with one of its partner schools to introduce GNVQ foundation units in the school. It is possible for students to follow programmes of study made up of a combination of GCE AS/A level subjects, GCSE subjects and vocational programmes.

9 The range of courses leading to national vocational qualifications (NVQs) is limited. NVQ courses are available in care, hairdressing and business administration. Most of these courses are at NVQ level 2. As yet, few students have achieved a complete NVQ at any level.

10 The college plans and markets its provision well. Publicity and other marketing materials are attractive and informative. College marketing events are effectively publicised and they are well attended. There has been extensive market research by college staff and by external consultants and the findings have informed strategic planning. Local labour market analysis suggests that small to medium-size enterprises need courses for their employees and the college is putting considerable effort into developing such provision.

11 There is a substantial range of courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The college has established productive relations with a range of external agencies. For example, a course for adults with severe learning difficulties, focusing on independent living skills is run in conjunction with the local social services department. There is a similar course for younger students. A popular programme to help rehabilitate people who have head injuries is provided in partnership with the local health care trust, using European Union funding. There are courses for younger students who have not achieved well at school, and for students with moderate learning difficulties. The English used in some promotional leaflets for these courses is difficult for students to understand.

12 The college has strong links with many community organisations. It provides a stimulating cultural centre for the community. A programme of performing arts events is published termly. It includes a wide range of theatre and musical events performed by college students, visiting local and national theatre companies and individual artists.

13 Links with partner schools are well organised and effective. The schools consider that the college offers a good range of opportunities for school-leavers. The college offers places to all school-leavers for whom it has an appropriate course. College staff work closely with staff from partner schools to develop new provision and to discuss appropriate progression routes for individual students. There is a well-publicised programme of 'taster days', open days and visits by college staff which introduce school students to the college and its courses. Parents are encouraged to attend such events. Information about students' achievements and destinations is shared with students' previous schools.

14 Adult education classes are held at approximately 20 sites across the area. Few adults enrol in the daytime classes at the main college. There are, however, approximately 1,500 enrolments on part-time courses for adults at centres which the college runs in Truro and Newquay. Provision at these centres includes courses in basic skills and information technology, and in several GCSE and GCE A level subjects which students may study on their own, receiving help from tutors when necessary, and using learning materials which suit their individual needs. The centre in Newquay provides educational opportunities in an area of high unemployment. The college is a member of the county-wide project to establish telematic video links to promote distance learning; through these links, some elements of courses, and tutorial advice can be transmitted to students.

15 The college has established some productive links with employers. Leisure programmes are provided for the two largest public sector employers in the area. The classes are scheduled at times to suit the employees' patterns of work. Some 1,500 employers were invited to come and see how the college's video-conferencing systems might be able to help their business; over 60 employers accepted the invitations and visited the college. There is a growing range of work placements for students. The college has established itself as a successful provider of courses for employers, for example, courses relating to financial planning. Overall, however, the college earns a small proportion of its income from courses for employers. It has recently begun to work with a large company to provide courses leading to NVQs in residential care homes across Cornwall. This is the only significant example of a work-based NVQ assessment programme. The extent of the range of part-time courses for businesses is growing, but the college has few links with the retail sector. There is some accreditation of students' prior learning to enable students to gain qualifications in a shorter period of time.

16 The college has good relationships with the local TEC. Provision under the training credits scheme, however, is at an early stage of development and, as yet, there is no training for modern apprentices. The college has benefited from a £71,000 grant from the TEC, which it is using to produce training materials to introduce employers to video-conferencing facilities and to develop training courses for NVQs in the tourism industry. The college took a strategic decision to be, primarily, a provider of courses leading to further education qualifications. It therefore has offered little higher education provision. There are 10 students following an NVQ level 4 programme in management. There are access to higher education courses in science, humanities and nursing, validated by the South West Access Federation. These have recruited well.

17 There is a strong European dimension to the college curriculum. There are links with schools and colleges in other European countries which students visit on exchanges. The college has held a European open day for its students. The college offers a good range of modern foreign languages courses for full-time students. They are taught in workshops, where students can work on their own on learning materials which form specific units for some of the courses. A wide range of both accredited and non-accredited language courses is available for adults.

18 The college promotes equality of opportunity for students. GCE A level results are analysed to investigate whether there is any difference in the levels of achievement between males and females. There is a policy which clearly describes the rights of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, the college's responsibility towards these students and how it aims to support them. There are currently no facilities, such as a creche, for the young children of students.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

19 Governors, managers and staff share a sense of pride in their creation of a new college. Since the college opened, full-time and part-time enrolments at the main site have doubled and students have achieved good results.

20 Governors work effectively and enthusiastically on behalf of the college. There is a good relationship between governors and senior managers. They agree on fundamental issues such as the college's strategy and objectives. Governors have expertise in finance, banking, education, public and private sector management and local government. Their expertise is well matched to the needs of the college. The corporation has 15 men and four women members. There is one vacancy. The board is seeking to increase the proportion of female members. Meetings of the corporation and its subcommittees are well attended. Over the last two years, the attendance rate at full board meetings averaged 81 per cent.

21 The corporation and its committees have clear terms of reference and a regular pattern of meetings. The vice-principal and the director of

studies and the director of administration and finance attend meetings of the full board. A clerk appointed from outside the college provides good support and advice for the corporation and its committees. Agendas and supporting papers are clear and well written. Minutes are informative and they are seen as true and accurate records. There is a register of members' interests and the corporation has constructively reviewed its own performance.

22 Governors are very well informed about the work of the college. They pay close attention to students' achievements, retention rates, examination results and students' progression and destinations. Governors keep in touch with college life through a wide range of activities. For example, all full board meetings start with a presentation by a member of staff and students on a curriculum topic. A governor normally attends academic board meetings. Many governors have observed lessons. The governors' annual residential conference starts with meetings between governors and groups of students.

23 Senior managers and governors develop strategic planning priorities at the annual governors' residential conference. There is effective consultation between managers and staff throughout the college. The strategic plan is clear and well structured. It covers appropriate matters, such as the college's progress towards meeting the objectives in the previous plan, key objectives for the next three years, an outline of intended courses and an operating statement for the first year of the plan. Six curriculum area action plans are produced annually; they are clearly linked to the objectives in the strategic plan.

24 The college has an appropriate range of policies which cover health and safety, quality assurance, learning support, and careers education and guidance. Recently, the corporation has approved an arts policy, an environmental policy and an 'inclusion policy' for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most policies specify how they will be implemented and give some details on how their implementation will be monitored. Equal opportunities are given a high priority in the college. There is, however, insufficient monitoring of the extent to which the equal opportunities policy is put into practice. Governors have recently discussed the report which compares the GCE A level examination results of male and female students.

25 The college is well managed. The senior management team comprises the principal, the vice-principal, the director of studies and the director of administration and finance. The team members have complementary skills and they work well together. They are closely involved in the day-to-day operation of the college. Staff and students regard the management team as responsive to their views. There are six curriculum teams and these include the staff in the learning centres and staff responsible for part-time adult recreational education. Each team has a curriculum team leader, responsible to the vice-principal, who has oversight of courses, staffing and resources; a support team leader,

responsible to the director of studies, who has oversight of students and tutors; and a deputy team leader. Deputies' roles vary according to the needs of the team. The team structure is understood by staff and it works well. Support staff teams are managed by the director of administration and finance. The support staff management structure is clear and understood.

26 The four senior managers have meetings with curriculum team leaders every two weeks. All present are given the opportunity to raise any matters which concern them. Operational and day-to-day issues are briskly discussed. Minutes identify who has responsibilities for taking action. The principal and director of studies hold similar meetings with support team leaders every two weeks. A full meeting of senior and middle managers also takes place every two weeks. This framework of meetings ensures that middle managers are well informed and properly consulted. Time is set aside for curriculum and course team meetings, although some course teams find it impractical to meet at the allotted time, and some course teams meet at irregular intervals. Most courses are well managed. However, a few part-time staff who lead course teams find it difficult to carry out all their duties as course leader effectively.

27 Communications within the college are effective. Staff at all levels feel well informed through staff bulletins, team meetings and twice-termly meetings of all the staff. Teaching and support staff consider that they are consulted on matters which concern them. The academic board has 17 members, including support staff and student members. Its terms of reference are clear. The clerk to the corporation is also secretary to the academic board. Discussion at meetings properly focuses on academic issues, such as new course approvals, course review and students' achievements.

28 The college has exceeded its enrolment targets each year since incorporation. Course teams have agreed targets for attendance, retention and achievements. They are aware that their performance against these targets will be scrutinised.

29 The college has a reliable and useful student management information system. Staff use the system because it is easy to use and there are computers in all staff work rooms. These computers give staff access to information about the students such as their personal details; entry qualifications; choice of subjects, options and enrichment studies; weekly timetable; and, for GCE A level students, their predicted grades based on their GCSE results. Staff can notify the system manager by electronic mail of any inaccuracies in the information or any necessary amendments to it. The management information system is used for timetabling. This year, every student was issued with a personal timetable on the first day of term.

30 Capital and staffing budgets are managed efficiently by the senior management team. Consumable budgets are delegated to curriculum team leaders using a simple formula based on student numbers and weightings which reflect the approximate cost of courses in a particular

curriculum area. Staff understand the method of financial allocation. Budget holders receive monthly reports of their actual and committed expenditure. The college has begun to develop unit costing. The college's average level of funding for 1996-97 is £18.34 per unit. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges is £17.97 per unit. The college's estimated income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1997 are shown in figures 5 and 6.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

31 Guidance and support services are clearly organised. Four support team leaders each manage a team of between 15 and 25 tutors. The support team leaders also have cross-college responsibilities for an aspect of student support, such as careers advice or tutorial guidance. Other support is offered by three full-time staff in the learning support workshop, an adult guidance officer, a careers assistant, and the learning centres co-ordinator who manages the provision in the college's sites in the town centre and at Newquay. In addition, there is a confidential counselling service provided under a contract with an external agency.

32 Prospective students are offered full, impartial information about the college and its courses. For prospective adult and part-time students, the college offers a range of open days and 'advice days'. The adult guidance officer is available at these to interview prospective students and give them specialist advice. She also visits all evening classes early in the year to check that individual students are finding their course suitable and to arrange for students to transfer to another course, if necessary. Close links are maintained with the Cornwall Educational Guidance Service.

33 The interview, enrolment and induction process for full-time students is effective. As soon as an initial application is received, an interview is arranged for the applicant. Throughout the enrolment and induction process, effective records are maintained. Full-time students and the majority of part-time students receive a comprehensive induction to the college and to their course. Transfers between courses are easy to arrange in the early weeks. Students understand the transfer process. Tutors are given induction checklists, which they return to the support team leaders when the induction process is completed. There is a useful induction pack for students who enrol late. The induction process is reviewed annually and changes are made to it in response to students' suggestions and views.

34 At interview, students are encouraged to mention any significant learning support or medical needs they may have. Those with substantial learning difficulties are referred promptly to the learning support co-ordinator. Currently, about 80 students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities study successfully with other students on full-time courses. They are provided with effective support, and staff recognise and respect their right to be as independent as possible. The admissions officer keeps computerised details of those students with general medical problems

noted at the interview stage. Support team leaders are informed so that teachers may be kept aware of any relevant requirements.

35 The provision of learning support is still being developed and does not yet meet all students' needs. Full-time students on vocational courses have their literacy and numeracy skills tested during induction. Those students identified as needing support are then offered, through their personal tutor, regular support in the learning support workshop. The support offered is based on a detailed assessment of individual needs, and on an individual learning plan. Participation in workshop sessions is voluntary. Many students who have been identified as needing some kind of help with literacy or numeracy to cope with the demands of their course have not attended the learning support workshop. Students may receive help in the workshop or direct from their course tutor, but records of this are not kept by learning support staff. GCE A level students are not tested, but may attend workshops voluntarily on the advice of their tutors at any point during their course.

36 The college has well-resourced workshops in literacy, numeracy, information technology and general study skills. There are also specialist workshops in science and languages. All have well-qualified staff. The workshops are open for long hours both in term time and during the holidays. They are well used by students, mainly on a 'drop-in' basis. Part-time students are provided with similar workshops at the college's city centre sites. There is some variability in the quality of the support materials at the different sites, but staff work closely together in a workshop development group to improve the service the workshops offer.

37 Most full-time and part-time students benefit from good tutorial support. All full-time students have group tutorial sessions twice a week. Staff are given guidelines on tutorial practice and they are provided with guidance materials to use with their students. Students' attendance is monitored by lecturers and by personal tutors. During their two-year course, full-time students are entitled to a minimum of six meetings with their tutor on an individual basis. At these meetings, students carry out personal action planning to improve their performance, and they discuss with their tutor reports on their progress which are sent to their parents. In practice, many students have more than three personal interviews with their tutor. However, in some areas of the college's work students carry out action planning infrequently, and the time in tutorial sessions is not always well used. Some students do not receive a calendar of tutorial events and activities, or a rota for their individual meetings with their tutor.

38 Many of the college's adult and part-time students are well supported by the college. They have an entitlement to receive tutorial support from their lecturers. There is a welfare manual to inform tutors of the likely needs of adult students. In general, however, support systems for older students are insufficiently developed. The extent to which part-time or

adult students use the learning support workshops is not measured. The induction and tutorial processes mainly reflect the needs of younger students. The college has identified these issues, and has set up a working party to review possible changes.

39 The college provides students with good careers education and guidance. There is a full-time careers assistant and good support from Cornwall and Devon Careers. The college has achieved the Investors in Careers award. Advice about higher education courses is a particularly strong feature of the careers education programme. A higher education conference is held annually. The higher education destinations of previous students are discussed in tutorials and in some lessons. Currently, a few tutors are unsure of their responsibility for careers education. Training sessions for tutors are planned to help them understand how they can make use of the careers service.

40 The college offers a confidential, personal counselling service which is valued and well used by students. The service is provided by an accredited organisation, whose staff are well known to the college. Students can make appointments with counsellors either in college or on premises away from the college. The college makes a clear distinction between the role of the tutor and the role of the personal counsellor. There are good relationships between tutors and the counselling staff. The college has extended the counselling service in response to students' needs.

41 Full-time students are encouraged to play a full part in the life of the college. There is an active students' council which raised £1,000 for charity in 1996-97. Students are offered a wide programme of cultural, artistic, sporting and leisure activities. This includes a variety of team sports and 30 other activities, including concerts, public lectures, drama, arts and crafts, and video-film making. Part-time students may also participate in these activities. A fair is held at the beginning of each term at which students may obtain information about different activities from the staff who organise them. Some activities for students can lead to qualifications which are recorded in the students' records of achievement. For example, students who choose activities involving cookery can obtain the certificate in food hygiene, a qualification which can be useful to them if they have part-time jobs in catering.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

42 Of the 184 lessons inspected, 68 per cent had strengths which outweighed weaknesses. This compares favourably with the figure of 63 per cent for all colleges inspected during the 1995-96 inspection programme, according to the *Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1995-96*. Seven per cent had weaknesses which outweighed strengths. The overall average attendance of students in the lessons observed was 79 per cent. The grades awarded for lessons observed during the inspection are shown in the following table.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade 1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level	30	33	14	1	0	78
GCSE	2	6	2	0	0	10
GNVQ	4	7	10	2	0	23
NVQ	0	2	2	0	0	4
Other*	12	29	18	9	1	69
Total	48	77	46	12	1	184

**other includes BTEC national and first diplomas and English as a foreign language courses.*

43 There is much good, stimulating teaching throughout the college. Teachers have responded with enthusiasm to the challenge which working in a new, purpose-built institution offers. Courses are generally carefully planned. Most schemes of work provide a clear framework for the course and teachers share them with their students. Some schemes, however, do not give sufficient detail about teaching methods.

44 In science, there is much effective teaching and learning. Physics sessions are well structured. Students are set demanding tasks and they are put under pressure to complete them within a given time. Students in a highly successful practical session were asked to investigate the discharge of a capacitor. They were given a detailed handout to help them with this task. They organised their work effectively, understood what they were doing, and made good progress. The teacher gave them useful help and advice, when necessary, using a computer modelling programme with students who were finding the task difficult. In some science sessions, teachers had lower expectations of the students and they did not give them tasks which were sufficiently demanding. There is much effective teaching in chemistry and biology, but some is variable in quality. Although some sessions make rigorous demands upon the students, in other sessions students are insufficiently challenged and their learning goals are unclear.

45 Mathematics and computing courses are well planned. They include appropriate assignments and opportunities for investigative work in mathematics. Teachers have good working relationships both with their full-time students and with adult students in part-time classes. Students are encouraged to question and extend their understanding. Teachers explain and develop topics confidently and effectively. Many teachers draw on their previous industrial or commercial experience to show students possible applications of the work. In a particularly effective GCE A level further mathematics session, students were introduced to sequences and series. The teacher made a skilful, detailed presentation of the topic and then questioned the students effectively about it. The session was brisk and demanding and all students were fully involved in it. In a

minority of instances, sessions had unclear objectives and the work lacked momentum and rigour. As a result, some able students found the work too easy and they were able to coast through it. There is insufficient use of information technology in the teaching and learning of mathematics.

46 In business studies, teachers are enthusiastic. On administration courses, teachers organise sessions well. They provide students with opportunities to work on their own, using materials and software which suit their individual needs. Adult students respond well to this way of working which enables them to fit their studies in with their domestic commitments. On GNVQ business courses and BTEC national and first diploma courses in public services, the teaching of key skills is well integrated with the teaching of vocational units. In one lively session, GNVQ advanced business students were involved in a video-conferencing session with the Cornwall European Liaison Office in Brussels. This live link provided an excellent focus for the European aspects of the business curriculum. Many teachers question students skilfully to encourage them to develop their ideas and to check that they understand what is being taught. In a few instances, however, teachers did not structure their questions well and failed to engage the students' interest. In less well managed sessions, the pace of work is slow and students lose interest in the tasks set. In some sessions, there is too much copying of notes.

47 In health and social care, the general standard of teaching is good, particularly on GNVQ advanced and access to nursing courses. Students are treated as adult learners and are given demanding tasks. Well-managed work experience placements strengthen their learning. Most teachers are aware of the differences in ability between individual students and they give appropriate attention to the weaker students. Teachers deal with sensitive social topics thoughtfully, and effectively help students to understand them. Most students' work is clearly marked. Teachers provide nursery nursing students with helpful written feedback on their assignments and advise them how they can improve their work. In a number of weaker sessions, teachers failed to establish a rapport with the students and sometimes teaching aids, such as video film, were not used to best effect to promote learning.

48 In art, design and media, teachers successfully use a variety of appropriate methods to promote learning. Most teachers have a broad range of expertise. They work well together. Assignments for GNVQ media and photography are thoughtfully conceived, well presented and provide opportunities for students to work in production teams. In one successful GNVQ advanced media session, students who were working in small groups to produce a newspaper had divided the various jobs between them. Each member of a group contributed a number of articles to the editor. The exercise provided the students with the experience of organising a project and of working as a team. GCE A level art assignments encourage students to work on their own, and photography assignments help students to master darkroom techniques. Some GNVQ art and design

students do not undertake, or understand the importance of, research. In some areas, the range of materials available for students to use is too limited and this restricts the scope of students' learning.

49 The teaching of performing arts is consistently good. Teachers demand high standards from their students, but are sensitive to their individual needs. Students carry out an appropriate mix of theoretical and practical work. Sessions are well planned and students are clear about their aims and objectives. Teachers relate their teaching vividly to their own professional experience. They create an environment which is conducive to successful learning. For example, in one session, dance students working on a set dance were of varying levels of ability. The teacher gave all the students in the class advice and encouragement. Students responded by expressing close interest in the dance routine and by achieving high technical standards.

50 Most teachers of English show a high level of professional expertise. Almost all sessions are carefully planned to enable students of differing abilities to learn and to build on their achievements. Students' concentration and interest is sustained. A skilfully-planned GCSE English session began with group work on the subject of peer pressure. This was followed by presentations by students and a video film which helped students to relate their experiences of peer pressure to situations in Shakespeare's play *Macbeth*. The session helped the students to acquire greater insight into the drama of the play, enhanced their understanding of themselves and of human nature in general, and prepared them well for their next assignment. Teachers strike the right balance between challenging the students to think for themselves and helping them to succeed. Teachers mark students' work thoroughly and helpfully and provide students with comments on their performance which are frank but supportive. Full-time GCE A level students take part in some additional and enterprising activities which enrich their experience of their course.

51 In languages, teaching is well planned and the skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking are all covered. Teachers generate a good rapport with their students, and help 16 to 18 year olds to develop an adult attitude to learning. In GCE A level sessions, teachers help students to develop their powers of expression by explaining topics in the language being learnt rather than in English. This approach, however, is not sufficiently used in sessions on RSA Examinations Board (RSA) and GNVQ courses. In most sessions, there is an appropriate balance between explanation by the teacher and activities carried out by students. These activities include work by students on their own, in pairs or in groups and carefully-prepared presentations in the foreign language. Teachers of English as a foreign language are skilled in working with small, diverse groups of students. The foreign language assistants contribute successfully to the development of both students' oral skills and their awareness of different cultures. In some adult classes, although the teachers have

established good relationships with their students, their teaching is insufficiently structured to be consistently effective.

52 Across the range of other humanities subjects, there is much good teaching. Teachers establish positive working relationships with students which encourage them to learn successfully. Teachers are often adept at using careful questioning to promote students' participation and to develop their analytical skills. Students regularly work constructively in small groups. In a psychology session on leadership style, students recorded the group activity on video film which was then used as a basis for a successful discussion of leadership styles. Students of politics are provided with useful handbooks which explain the course aims, the scheme of work and the resources needed by students. Written assignments meet syllabus requirements and they are thoroughly marked. Most teachers present information well. In some sessions, however, extensive note-taking failed to challenge students to think and did not help them to develop the skills they need for further studies.

53 Teachers of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are committed to creating an environment where students' needs can be fully met. They develop good working relationships with students. In the best sessions, teaching is well structured and imaginative and helps students to focus on the tasks set. The level of work takes account of individual students' needs and the tasks set fully exercise their capabilities. These sessions are typified by sound planning and preparation, and clearly-identified objectives which are shared with the students. Teachers have produced effective learning materials. For example, students with moderate learning difficulties were using a specially adapted pack of playing cards in a fascinating game designed to teach and strengthen their basic mathematical skills. However, in some less successful sessions, teachers do not plan or organise learning effectively. They do not carry out sufficient checks to ensure that the students understand what they are learning. In these poorly-planned lessons, students do not complete tasks within the required time, activities run on into each other and there is no time for teachers to reflect on the effectiveness of the session with the students.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

54 Students generally work effectively and achieve good results. They express themselves with confidence. Many gain qualifications in addition to their main courses, for example, in health and safety, sport and physical recreation. The written and practical coursework of most students is good. In mathematics, students' written work is well presented. Science students demonstrate good practical skills. Business students manage their portfolios well. The standard of much work in health and care is good: some second-year GNVQ advanced students produce work of exceptional quality, but in nursery nursing the standard is more variable. Students of photography produce some particularly interesting and technically sound

work, although the work of some first-year students on GNVQ advanced art and design courses is less well presented. In performing arts, students demonstrate their ability to apply theoretical knowledge in practical activities. Students achieve good standards of written work in English. Language students are often confident in their oral work and most produce good written work. In other humanities subjects, students demonstrate commitment to their studies and reach good levels of achievement in well-presented, written assignments.

55 Many students achieve the standards in the key skills of communication, numeracy and information technology which they need to succeed on their courses. Science students demonstrate good skills in information technology. Developing teamworking skills, as well as communication, numeracy and information technology skills, are an integral part of students' work on business and public services courses. Students on secretarial courses acquire good standards of skills in business information technology. Performing arts and media students work well in teams. Students of English pay due attention to correct spelling, punctuation and grammar. Some students of English use information technology to present their work, but this is less evident in other humanities subjects. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who are on general courses, develop key skills as part of their coursework. On courses exclusively for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, students do not develop sufficient information technology skills.

56 In 1996, 390 candidates aged 16 to 18 were entered for GCE A level examinations. They scored, on average, 4.7 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 1996 performance tables published by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE). The pass rate for GCE A level in the 33 subjects taken by full-time students in 1996, was 88 per cent. This compares favourably with the average pass rate for students of all ages for further education and tertiary colleges of 71 per cent. The pass rate at the higher grades of A to C was 43 per cent compared with a national average of 38 per cent. The pass rate for GCE A level subjects entered by 131 part-time adult students in 1996 was 80 per cent. These figures compare favourably with the national average pass rates for all students aged 19 or older in 1996 of 64 per cent.

57 The college subscribes to an external service which provides an analysis of the value added to students' achievements by comparing their actual performance at GCE A level with their predicted grades based on GCSE achievements. In 1996, when the service was first used, analysis indicates that students achieved significantly higher grades than those predicted in music and physics. They performed less well than predicted in theatre studies and in an English language and literature syllabus. Some notable features of students' performance in GCE A level examinations in 1996 were:

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- pass rates at grade C or above for full-time students aged 16 to 18 which were well above the national averages in many subjects, including art and design, communication, design technology, English literature, French, Italian, law, music, photography, physics, psychology, and religious studies
 - 100 per cent pass rates for full-time students in art and design, further mathematics, home economics, Italian, music, photography, politics, religious studies, Spanish and statistics
 - pass rates of 90 per cent or over in a further seven subjects
 - outstanding results in physics which were well above the national averages in terms of pass rate and the proportion of students obtaining grade C or above
 - pass rates below national averages in seven subjects.

58 In 1996, there were 251 entries in 15 subjects at GCSE. The respective proportions of students aged 16 to 18 and of students aged 19 or over who gained grade C or above, were both 54 per cent. This pass rate was well above the national average of 39 per cent for students aged 16 to 18 in general further education and tertiary colleges, but below that of 62 per cent for students aged 19 and over. All students who entered for chemistry and French obtained grade C or above. The majority of entries was in English and mathematics. In English, the proportion of students who gained grade C or above was 51 per cent, compared with national average of 47 per cent for students aged 16 to 18 for general further education and tertiary colleges. In mathematics, the proportion of students who gained grade C or above was 49 per cent which was well above the national average of 30 per cent. All students aged 16 to 18 who entered for design passed, as did all students over 19 who entered for art and design. The proportion of students who gained grade C or above was better than the national averages in 10 of the 15 subjects taken by students in 1996.

59 Students' achievements on vocational courses are mostly good. Eighty-two per cent of the 78 students in their final year of advanced vocational courses included in the DfEE's 1996 performance tables, were successful. Sixty-nine per cent of the 90 students completing intermediate level vocational qualifications were successful. These results place the college in the top third of colleges in the further education sector on both these performance measures. The college has improved its performance since 1995, when it was in the middle third of colleges in the sector for performance in vocational qualifications. In 1996:

- a pass rate of 100 per cent was achieved on the advanced GNVQ leisure and tourism course compared with the national average of 63 per cent
- there was a pass rate of 86 per cent on the advanced GNVQ art and design course compared with the national average of 63 per cent

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- a pass rate of 91 per cent was achieved on the advanced GNVQ health and social care course compared with a national average of 56 per cent, although the pass rate for the nursery nursing diploma was low at 57 per cent
 - 67 per cent of those completing the advanced GNVQ business course passed compared with the national average rate of 60 per cent
 - pass rates on intermediate GNVQ courses ranged from 100 per cent in media to 60 per cent in leisure and tourism
 - all students who completed the BTEC national diploma in computer studies passed, although in engineering the pass rate was comparatively low at 70 per cent
 - there was a pass rate of 82 per cent on the BTEC first diploma course in public services
 - pass rates of 100 per cent were gained on the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) courses in sound engineering and for radio amateurs
 - pass rates of 100 per cent were achieved on eight other vocational courses taken by small groups of adult students.

60 Retention rates were good on some courses. In 1996, retention rates for two-year courses exceeded 80 per cent in 15 GCE A level subjects and on one advanced GNVQ course. There were retention rates of 100 per cent on nine one-year vocational courses, including the intermediate GNVQ courses in business and in leisure and tourism. Three GCSE groups, in physics, mathematics and chemistry, had 100 per cent retention rates. There were poor retention rates in GCE A level computing (60 per cent), electronics (67 per cent), and music (65 per cent), as well as on the advanced GNVQ courses in business (48 per cent) and in art and design (50 per cent). Low retention rates, below 80 per cent, were recorded on six one-year vocational courses and on eight GCSE courses both full time and part time. The college sets and monitors clear targets for retention over one year, but does not yet have targets for retention over the two years of advanced courses.

61 The college collects information on the destinations of full-time students. Details on destinations are reported to course teams and aggregated at curriculum team level. Students who complete their courses often progress to higher education, further education or employment. Of the 493 students who gained awards in 1996, 51 per cent progressed to higher education, 20 per cent continued in further education, 10 per cent went into employment, 10 per cent undertook other activities such as travel, and the destinations of 9 per cent were unknown. The numbers of students at the college who study English and modern languages and who progress to higher education are particularly high. The college intends to improve its analysis, and use, of information on the destinations of all students.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

62 The college is strongly committed to the continuous improvement of its provision. The quality assurance policy is linked to the college's mission statement and strategic plan. The vice-principal is responsible for the development of policy. Responsibility for managing quality assurance is shared between the senior managers and curriculum team leaders, who all have defined roles and responsibilities. The existing quality assurance procedures were drawn together in a published framework in 1995. The framework is in its first full year of implementation. It covers all the college's activities and is well documented. The views of employers are obtained through subject advisory groups. Parents of students under the age of 18 are regularly asked for their views on the quality of the college's provision. There is a well-established annual process of course reviews which is central to the quality assurance system. Students' views are sought through questionnaires, participation in annual course reviews and attendance at some course team meetings.

63 Documentation on quality assurance is mostly clear, concise and informative. Documents follow the headings used in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. There is a single quality assurance system for teachers and support services, and for standards of work throughout the college. The quality assurance documentation identifies the purpose of the system, the action required, performance indicators, the allocation of responsibilities and review procedures. However, the section on performance indicators contains insufficient information on the data against which the quality of provision can be measured. Internal verification systems are well established. For example, the college has established standards for assignment work in health and care. The marking of assignments in health and care is moderated against these standards before the assignments are returned to students. In conjunction with other colleges, the college has undertaken useful work to establish standards for students' work. Quality assurance processes at subject level and at curriculum area level are described in documents in course files. These documents, however, are not set out concisely or in a common format.

64 The course review system is developing well. It has two components. The first consists of a survey of the views of staff and students on the quality of the year's work, including a review of the extent to which the college has met its targets for the quality of provision. The second consists of a review of students' retention and achievement rates. Action plans for improving the quality of provision are drawn up after the course review. This year, for the first time, action plans and reviews were brought together to form curriculum area annual reports. These reports form the agenda of a review meeting between curriculum area leaders and senior managers and they serve as the basis for self-assessment reports. They inform briefings for the academic board and they are taken into account in operational planning for subjects, curriculum areas and the college itself.

There is evidence that course reviews, and feedback from students in particular, have led to improvements in provision. For example, as a result of the reviews, a new one-year part-time secretarial course has been introduced and there have been improvements in methods of teaching and learning in GCE A level modern languages. However, not all course reviews record the achievement and retention rates produced centrally by the college. These are noted in separate documents. Curriculum area annual reports are inconsistent in format, content and focus.

65 The college sets annual targets for retention, achievement and attendance rates. There is some inconsistency in the way course and college reviews are carried out. Curriculum and subject team leaders and senior managers meet in September each year to carry out a detailed analysis of students' achievements. Retention rates are reviewed by the same team in November and March. All curriculum areas have been set a target of a 2 per cent improvement in retention rates. Course reviews and annual reports vary in the extent to which they refer to performance indicators.

66 Staff and students are aware of the college charter. The charter addresses the areas listed in the *Charter for Further Education* published by the DfEE, but it contains few quantitative targets. It is well publicised in the college and it is summarised in handbooks for full-time and part-time students. Its content and use are reviewed, but not systematically monitored, by course teams and senior managers.

67 The college gives a high priority to staff development. All new full-time and part-time staff take part in an effective induction programme which is regularly reviewed and well managed. Annual staff appraisal is well established. All full-time and most part-time teachers and support staff have been appraised during the past year through a process which they valued and found helpful. The appraisal system is well managed. It includes the observation of teachers in the classroom, and the identification of training needs. All part-time staff will be appraised next year. The management of the staff-development programme is sound. Staff development is effectively linked to the college's strategic and corporate objectives, curriculum and subject area priorities, and the training needs identified during staff appraisal. However, the college lacks a strategy for updating the commercial and industrial experience of staff. There is a substantial and effective programme of staff training run within the college, which includes management and assessor training. The programme is highly regarded by staff, and features joint activities involving teachers and support staff. All development activities are subject to evaluation and the findings of this are disseminated at course and college level. There is evidence that the programme is effective in improving the quality of provision across the college. The college was awarded Investor in People status in July 1996.

68 The college's self-assessment report was produced for the inspection. It is set out under the subheadings used in the Council Circular 93/28,

Assessing Achievement. It is clear and concise. In some important aspects the judgements are similar to those reached by inspectors. However, the evidence for judgements is not clear from the report and the identification of weaknesses is insufficiently analytical. The report lacks a clear introduction which could set its assessment in context.

RESOURCES

Staffing

69 Staff are committed to the success of the college. Teachers are well qualified and experienced for the subjects they teach and their other responsibilities. Ninety-three per cent of full-time teachers hold first degrees, 20 per cent possess higher degrees and 87 per cent hold a teaching qualification. The qualification profile of part-time teachers is also strong in terms of degrees and relevant professional or vocational awards. Staff have responded well to the opportunities made available to them to improve their qualifications and skills. The proportion of staff gaining vocational assessor and verifier awards has steadily increased. Forty-three per cent of full-time teachers have assessor qualifications, 18 per cent have gained internal verifier awards and 4 per cent are qualified to advise on the accreditation of students' previous experience and learning. In view of the recent expansion of vocational courses in the college, teachers' expertise in these areas is of great value.

70 The college has a flexible approach to staff deployment. For example, a significant number of suitably-qualified support staff also teach. As far as possible all staff, whatever their functions, have similar conditions of service. Many have appropriate commercial or industrial experience. In a few instances, this experience is dated. Part-time staff make a valuable contribution to many courses and bring important expertise and vocational experience to the college. This is particularly the case in health and social care where a high proportion of the teaching is carried out by part-time staff. However, because these teachers are not present in the college throughout the week and are often not able to attend course team meetings, their work has to be carefully co-ordinated.

71 The numbers and the qualifications of administrative, technical and support staff appropriately meet the needs of the college. The integration of support staff with curriculum teams works effectively and typifies the way all the academic and support functions of the college are successfully integrated.

Equipment/learning resources

72 The provision of equipment is good and most of it is of an exceptionally high standard. The college has high-quality specialist facilities for photography, media, sound engineering, languages, music, sport and recreation, and science. Classrooms are well equipped with teaching aids and there are no apparent shortages of consumables. Overhead projectors,

television monitors and video players are readily available on all sites, though, in a few sessions, teachers did not have full access to overhead projectors. The college has identified priorities for the replacement of equipment and has set aside reserves for this purpose.

73 There are outstanding information technology resources at the main site and in the learning centres in Truro and Newquay. Equipment and software are of advanced specification. There is a clear strategy and policy for information technology. A users group oversees developments. Of a total of 358 computers, 258 are available to students in teaching areas or through open-access workshops which students may use at any time. This provides a ratio of full-time equivalent students to computer terminals of 8:1. Networking of information technology facilities enables students to transfer work on computer disk, irrespective of which computer room they are using. As well as computer-based learning materials, there has been good development of paper-based materials in mathematics, communications and languages which students may study on their own.

74 There is a well-appointed, purpose-built library and learning resources area. It contains 145 study spaces, a quiet study area, and computers for compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases. It provides access to the Internet. The bookstock comprises 13,000 volumes. Most texts are new acquisitions. Other media include 2,000 videos, a collection of music compact disks, and audio tapes. There is also a wide range of journals and periodicals. In specialist areas where the library stock is low, for example, books for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, additional titles are obtained through the county education library service. Library staff systematically classify and catalogue all texts held by curriculum teams in order to build up a comprehensive inventory of the books and texts held by the college.

Accommodation

75 The quality and design of the accommodation contribute significantly to the college's distinctive identity as a high-quality learning environment for students. The college has been built on a greenfield site to the west of the city of Truro in a series of phases over the last four years. Recent developments have more than doubled the capacity of the original accommodation which comprised a modern two-storey structure and supplementary temporary buildings. There is a three-storey teaching block, a sports centre, a terraced eating area, a motor vehicle workshop and a comprehensive range of purpose-built facilities, including the library, information technology areas, a dance studio, a theatre, music and rehearsal rooms, a fitness room, a sports hall and a multi-gym. These facilities, and the accommodation in which they are housed, have a style and character intrinsic to the college. A district council swimming pool is being built next to the college.

76 The college's three premises in the city centre are of good quality. The rented adult education centre has recently been extensively refurbished. The learning centre at Haven House, which is used by part-time students on vocational and open learning courses, is modern and attractive and consists of open-plan computer suites, social areas and classrooms on the four floors of a former office block. Some of the accommodation at Haven House is underused following the transfer of some full-time courses to the main site. Other premises above the city library are comfortable and well adapted to the needs of adult basic education. The centre at Newquay is well appointed and provides facilities for students to work on their own with the aid of computers. However, the accommodation is too small to accommodate all the classes which need to use it.

77 All the college's sites are accessible to students with restricted mobility. All students have access to well-planned social facilities in all parts of the college. In addition to the main refectory and the terrace restaurant, there are many social and private study spaces throughout the college. Accommodation is well maintained and kept clean and tidy by the college's own premises, catering and grounds maintenance staff.

78 There is good use of rooms on the main site during the day. College timetabling is undertaken centrally and room use is closely controlled and monitored. Some of the accommodation has significant potential for lettings to the local community. The college already generates income from this activity and is exploring additional ways of doing so.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

79 The main strengths of the college are:

- a wide range of subjects at GCE A level and developing vocational provision
- staff who are committed to the development of the college
- enthusiastic, well-informed and effective governors
- effective management and a reliable management information system
- strong links with partner schools
- effective initial guidance, enrolment and induction of students
- good-quality careers education and higher education advice
- much well-planned and stimulating teaching
- the good results achieved by many students
- many sporting, cultural and recreational activities for students and the community
- outstanding equipment and accommodation.

80 In order to improve the quality of its provision the college should:

- improve retention rates on some courses
- improve some less effective teaching
- ensure greater consistency in tutorial practices
- develop further vocational foundation programmes
- develop NVQ provision to meet the needs of employers
- ensure that the learning support needs of all students are met
- address inconsistencies in the content and presentation of some quality assurance reports.

FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage student numbers by age (as at February 1997)

 - 2 Percentage student numbers by level of study (as at February 1997)

 - 3 Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at February 1997)

 - 4 Staff profile - staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at February 1997)

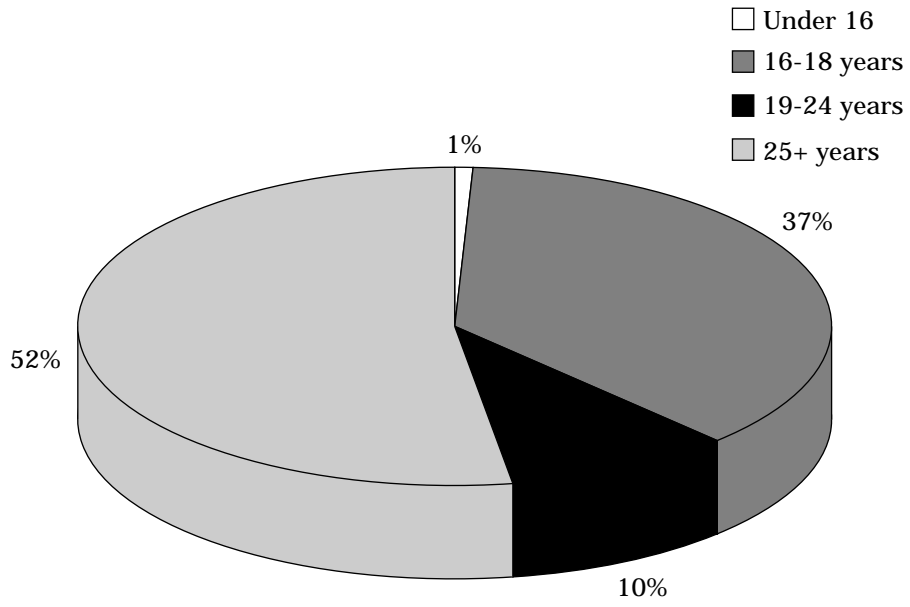
 - 5 Estimated income (for 12 months to July 1997)

 - 6 Estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1997)

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

Figure 1

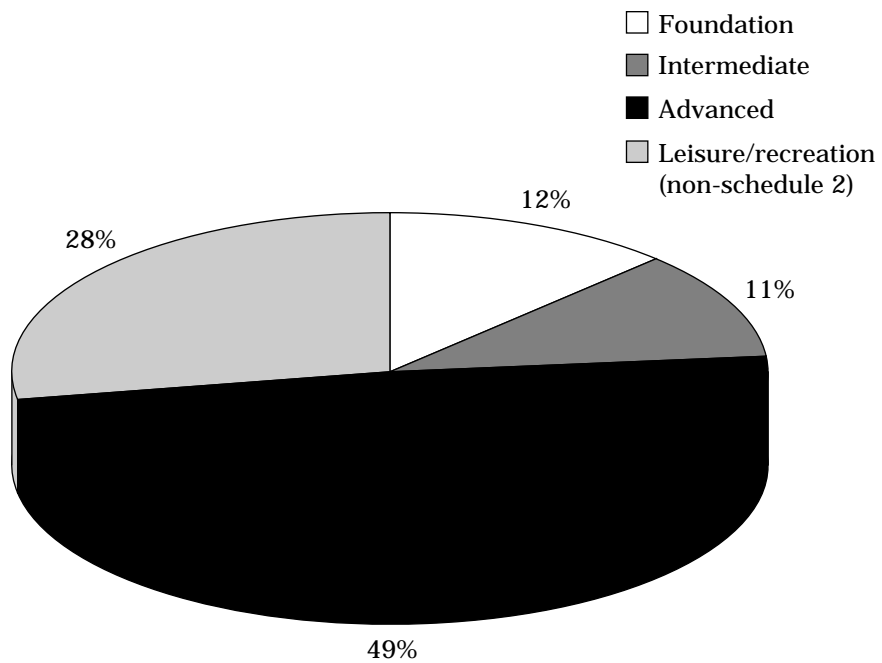
Truro College: percentage student numbers by age (as at February 1997)



Student numbers: 5,657

Figure 2

Truro College: percentage student numbers by level of study (as at February 1997)



Student numbers: 5,657

Figure 3

Truro College: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at February 1997)

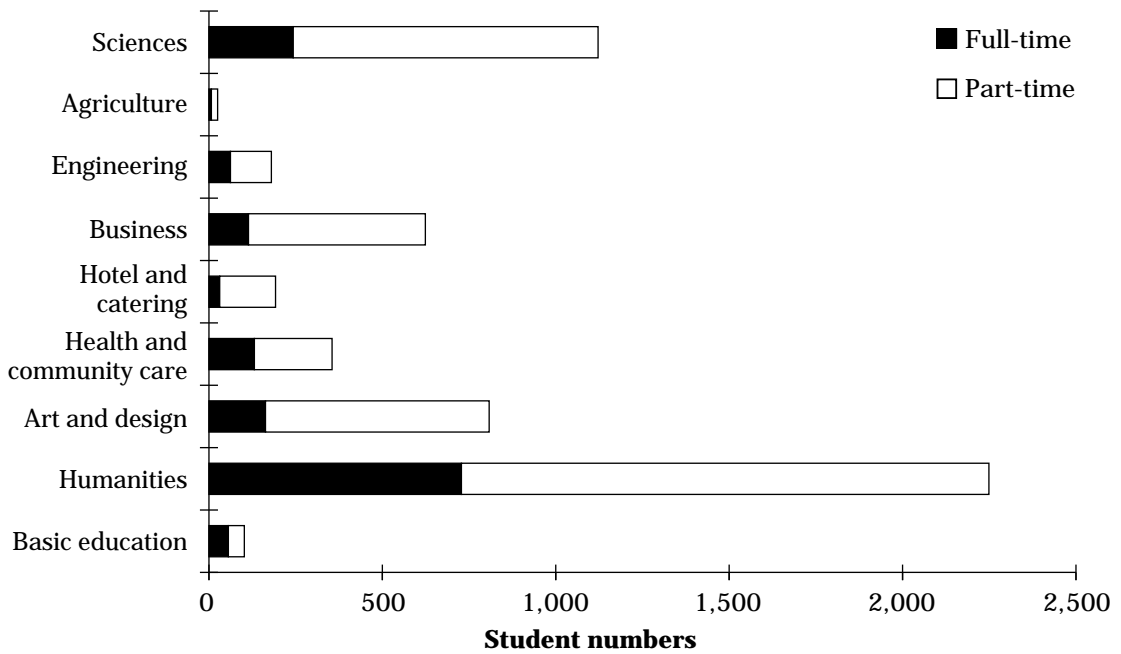


Figure 4

Truro College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at February 1997)

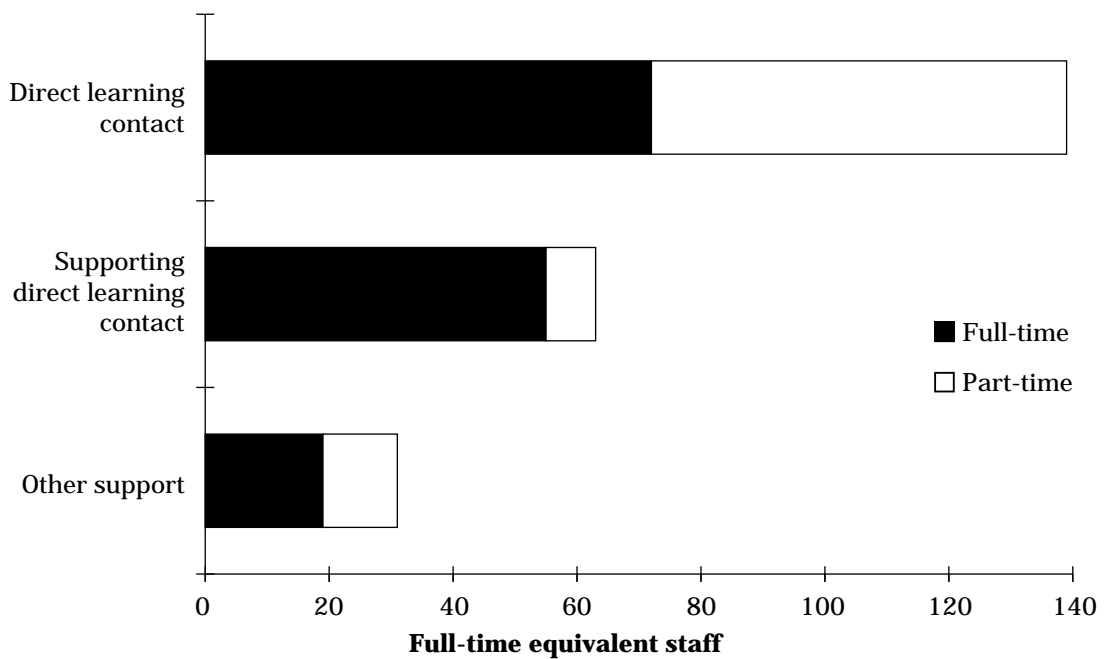
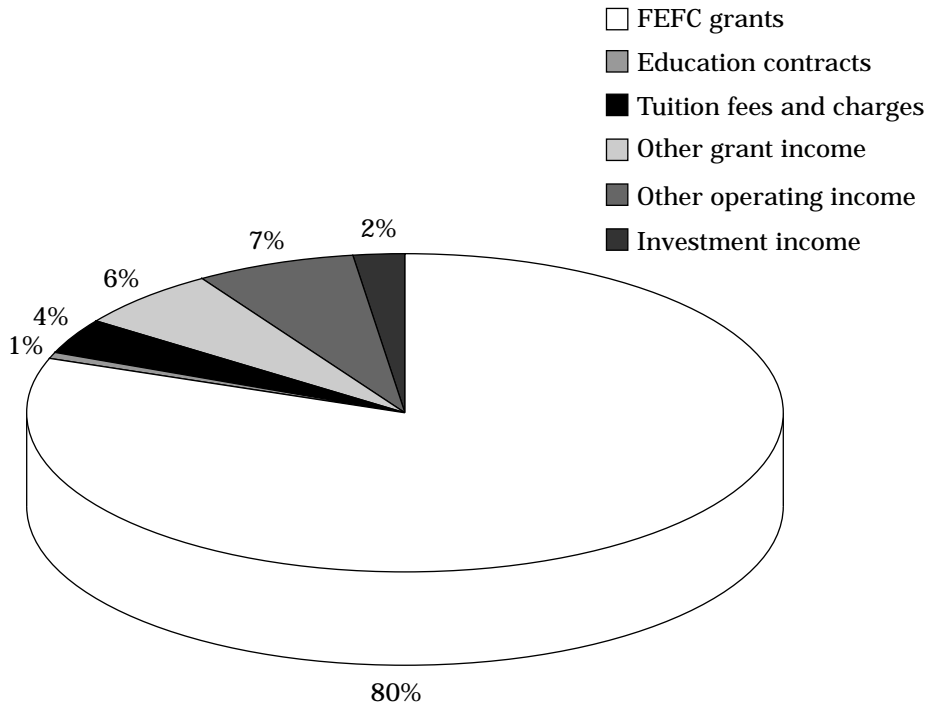


Figure 5

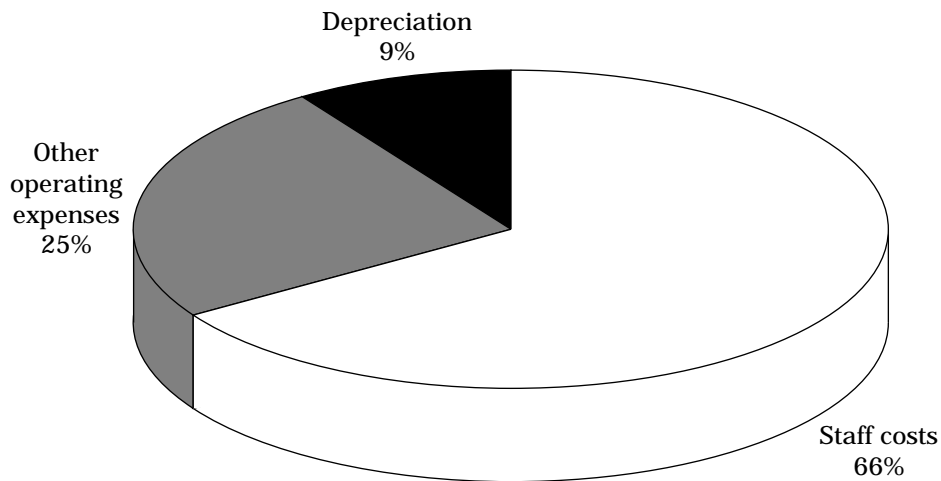
Truro College: estimated income (for 12 months to July 1997)



Estimated income: £6,269,000

Figure 6

Truro College: estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1997)



Estimated expenditure: £6,217,000

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