

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Basingstoke College of Technology

July 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.

*Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
Telephone 01203 863000
Fax 01203 863100*

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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 87/97

BASINGSTOKE COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY SOUTH EAST REGION

Inspected March 1996-April 1997

Summary

Basingstoke College of Technology is a general further education college in Hampshire. It offers a very wide range of courses and responds well to the needs of the local community, schools, employers and the TEC. Governors are well informed and effective, and they take an active part in shaping the college's strategic plan and monitoring the quality of its courses. Managers provide strong leadership in an open supportive style that has fostered good communications and high morale among staff. A recent reorganisation has been carried out smoothly. The college provides excellent support and guidance services to students. There is a strong central learning development unit and effective tutorials to help students with pastoral and academic matters. A powerful academic board ensures that standards are maintained. Formal quality assurance is a part of every aspect of college life. Teaching is good and most students on vocational courses achieve satisfactory results. Teachers and support staff are appropriately experienced and well qualified. Most of the college's accommodation is very good and most of its courses are suitably equipped. The college should address the following issues: poor examination results and retention rates on some courses; some variability in the quality of curriculum reviews; the need to improve data processing for financial and quality management; the need for further improvement in information technology equipment; and the inadequate facilities for recreation.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Computing and mathematics	2	Care and early childhood education	2
Built environment	3	Art, design and media	2
Engineering and motor vehicle engineering	2	Humanities, languages and education	2
Business, administration and management	2	Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and basic education	2
Hospitality, catering, leisure and tourism	2		
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	2		

INTRODUCTION

1 Basingstoke College of Technology was inspected in four stages. In March 1996, three inspectors spent six days inspecting two curriculum areas. Enrolment and induction procedures were inspected at the beginning of the autumn term of 1996. In February 1997, 12 inspectors spent 43 days inspecting the remaining curriculum areas and in March 1997 an inspector spent two days assessing franchised provision. Inspectors observed 209 classes and inspected students' work. In April 1997, seven inspectors spent a total of 28 days assessing aspects of cross-college provision. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, the central and senior management teams, teachers, staff with cross-college responsibilities, support and administrative staff, and students. Inspectors consulted employers, a representative of the Hampshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), members of community groups, head teachers and parents of students at the college. They also attended college meetings and examined policy statements, minutes of committees and working papers.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Basingstoke College of Technology is a general further education college in north Hampshire. It has a catchment area stretching from Winchester in the south to the villages on the border between Hampshire and Berkshire in the north, and from Alton and Farnborough in the east to Whitchurch in the west. Basingstoke has a population of approximately 86,000 and is in a largely rural area. Approximately 80 per cent of young people in the area remain in education after the age of 16 and unemployment is low at under 3 per cent. Office and computing work is relatively easy to obtain, either in the town or by commuting to London which is 45 minutes away by train. In the 1980s the town attracted many large businesses as a location for their head offices. In the 1990s some companies moved out, leaving Basingstoke with several empty office blocks. Commercial property lettings to international companies have increased recently.

3 The secondary education system throughout Hampshire is organised to provide comprehensive, co-educational schools for pupils aged 11 to 16 and sixth form, tertiary and general further education colleges for more advanced studies. The number of school-leavers in the area is expected to decrease by about 8 per cent between 1995-96 and 1997-98, before rising by 5 per cent in 1999-2000. There is a large sixth form college in Basingstoke, and other colleges for post-16 students in the nearby towns of Alton, Farnborough, Andover and Winchester. Road and rail communications in the area are quick and easy.

4 Basingstoke College of Technology offers courses in all the Further Education Funding Council's (FEFC's) programme areas except agriculture, and at all levels from foundation to higher education.

By 1 November in the 1996-97 academic year, the college had enrolled 7,290 FEFC-funded students, of whom 1,814 were full time and 5,476 part time. In addition, there are 1,977 students on courses which are not funded by the FEFC. Since incorporation in 1993, full-time student numbers have grown by approximately 6 per cent and part-time student numbers by 24 per cent. Student numbers by age, by level of study, and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3.

5 The college employs 277 full-time equivalent permanent staff of whom 156 are teachers and 121 are support staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4. During 1995-96 the college was restructured. The curriculum is organised into a school of learning development which operates as part of student support services, and 16 schools of study, arranged in three clusters:

Corporate cluster

- architecture, mathematics and science
- computing
- construction and building services
- engineering
- motor vehicle, fabrication and welding.

Schools cluster

- art and craft
- design and communication
- business studies
- humanities and languages
- leisure, tourism and sport.

Community cluster

- administration and office technology
- education and management
- care and early years
- hairdressing and beauty therapy
- hospitality and catering studies
- multi-skills.

The college's mission is simply stated as providing 'access to excellence in education and training'.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

6 The college offers a very wide range of courses. It responds well to the needs of the community and is committed to improving the rate of participation in further education. There are 69 full-time and over 350 part-time and evening courses. Vocational programmes are available at a

variety of levels from foundation to higher education. Student enrolments have risen in health and social care, hairdressing, beauty therapy, leisure and tourism and motor vehicle engineering. Construction courses are expanding against the national trend. The college offers a wide range of 12 national diplomas validated by the Edexcel Foundation as well as general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) at intermediate and advanced levels. National vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 1, 2 and 3 are available in most occupational areas and there is provision at level 4 in accounting, administration, management, and training and development. This year, the number of general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) subjects offered for full-time students aged 16 to 19 has been reduced from 22 to 16 due to increased competition from sixth form and tertiary colleges. Twelve general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) subjects are offered. The college discourages repeat GCSE courses because of the poor results that many students in the further education sector achieve on them and promotes GNVQ foundation or intermediate courses as more appropriate alternatives.

7 Liaison with schools is extensive and effective, particularly with 12 partner schools associated with the college. A schools liaison officer co-ordinates activities. The college is a member of the Basingstoke Consortium, a forum for co-operation between schools and the two local colleges. The consortium enables students to transfer freely from one college to the other to ensure that they have access to the most suitable course.

8 There is a wide range of full-time and part-time programmes for adults. Since 1993, the college has been a member of the Basingstoke Adult Education Partnership which offers over 200 courses at nine centres in the area. Access to higher education courses are offered in humanities, science, and art and design. There are four full-time higher national diploma programmes in computing, textiles for fashion, graphics and communication and business. There is also a one-year programme to allow those who hold a higher national diploma to progress to the 'textiles for fashion' option on a degree in art, design and media. These programmes are validated by the University of Portsmouth. The 15 part-time higher education programmes include studies in purchasing, management, mechanical and manufacturing engineering, and education. Special initiatives have been made to attract under-represented minority ethnic groups on to courses and to encourage women to study science, engineering and computing. The college is an associate college of the University of Portsmouth and a member of a compact which provides special access for students to the University of Surrey.

9 The college offers considerable flexibility to students in the ways that they may attend many of its courses. In motor vehicle engineering, health and care, hairdressing and business information technology, studies are available up to 21.00 hours in the evenings and at weekends. NVQ students who are occasionally unable to attend on their usual days can negotiate alternatives.

10 Advisory committees, which are chaired by industrialists or other professional people, have been established in all 17 schools. The main function of these committees is to advise the teaching teams on the content of the curriculum. Links with companies have been strengthened through regular visits by college staff which are recorded systematically. There is a college newsletter to keep staff informed about contacts with firms. Another newsletter, called 'In Business' is distributed regularly to companies.

11 A successful bid to the European Competitiveness Fund secured £250,000, which enabled the college to establish centres equipped with computers on the premises of four major local concerns: the Automobile Association, North Hampshire National Health Service Trust, J Sainsbury and Oxoid. The centres provide video-conferencing and computer-based training programmes in management, administration, office technology and foreign languages. The companies praise the high quality of service which the college provides. The college works with Lansing Linde, an international fork-lift truck company, to improve the qualifications of its workforce. Ten employees are studying for national certificates or NVQs at levels 3 and 4. Accreditation of prior learning is also available in the workplace. The college is regarded as a good source of training by Hampshire TEC and is developing links with Thames Valley TEC. The college has recently established its own managing agency. Its earnings are expected to reach £175,000 in the first year of operation. Over 150 trainees who are already in jobs have been enrolled in a range of curriculum areas, notably catering, engineering and hairdressing. To encourage enquiries, the agency has been located in a bright, modern office on a prominent site away from the main college building. The college is conducting research and undertaking consultation in order to increase its services to industry.

12 The college has established a number of European links over the past few years. This year, hospitality and catering students have exchanged with students from a college in northern Portugal for three weeks. Health and care, business studies, engineering and foreign languages students all have the opportunity to take part in projects in Alençon in northern France, which is one of Basingstoke's twin towns. The international programme includes work experience for students and it is assisted by funding from the European Union. Twenty construction students take part in an annual exchange with the Lycée Professionnelle in Coutances.

13 The college offers an extensive programme of adult basic education, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and courses specially for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Individual tuition is provided to help students with learning difficulties who are on mainstream courses. College staff meet colleagues from local schools and the welfare agencies at a learning disabilities advisory committee. Many more students with learning difficulties are now able to benefit from the widening range of vocational opportunities at the college. Evening classes are offered at five neighbourhood centres.

14 The college has recently reorganised the way that it manages its marketing effort with the aim of involving as many staff as possible. The new marketing framework works well. It deals separately with market segments such as school-leavers, the community and corporate clients. A marketing committee chaired by a senior manager deals with each market sector at regular scheduled meetings. Four senior staff manage schools liaison, industrial and community liaison, and publicity functions. Promotional materials and activities include a wide range of course guides, open days and regular weekly guidance sessions which continue throughout the holiday periods. The effectiveness of promotional activity is evaluated regularly. The college's publicity material is consistently well designed, in a distinctive modern house style.

15 Policies to promote equal opportunities were reviewed and rewritten in 1995. An equal opportunities committee, which is chaired by a vice-principal, meets five times a year. Its minutes are submitted to the college management committee for action. The college is sensitive to equality of opportunity. Each year different aspects of the college policy, for example gender issues in recruitment, the language used in student assignment briefs, and ethnicity issues are highlighted for particular attention. This is a sensible and effective approach which achieves results.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

16 The corporation board has 18 members. There are 10 business members, a TEC nominee, representatives from higher education, a secondary school and local government, two members of staff, a student and the principal. Four of the board's members are women. Members have a wide range of skills and experience which match the college's needs, including senior management in industry, finance, personnel and health care. At the time of the inspection, there were two vacancies for independent members for which new governors with legal and financial expertise were being sought. There are clear, effective policies and procedures for recruitment, induction and training of new governors. A nominations committee keeps a profile of members' expertise which is used to identify the skills which are available or needed. Recently, the chairman designate and the vice-chairman of governors underwent training to prepare them for their developing tasks.

17 The college is well governed. Governors understand their responsibilities and they complement the work of senior managers. They monitor and evaluate the work of the college, including its academic performance, and they receive information about students' achievements in examinations. Governors are central to a procedure called an 'audit of relevance' which assesses the overall college curriculum against local needs. Members of the board attend a wide range of events such as presentations and open evenings, and they chair support departments' advisory committees. Two governors are assigned to each of the three clusters of schools.

18 There are six main committees of the board: audit, finance, general purposes, nominations, personnel and remuneration. A buildings committee was established temporarily to oversee a recent building project and there is an adult education policy committee and a committee for student affairs. Committees have clear terms of reference which are reviewed annually. The vice-principal (corporate services) is clerk to the board. All meetings have clear agendas and appropriate minutes. Business is conducted effectively with the help of good reports and papers. The vice-principal (academic services) and the business support services manager attend board meetings. Other college managers present papers to inform debate when necessary. Attendance at board meetings and most committees is good, with the sole exception of the personnel committee where attendance is running at only 50 per cent this year. There is a register of members' interests and the board has adopted a code of conduct. The board does not yet assess its own performance but has recently discussed the arrangements through which it will do so.

19 The strategic planning process is an integral part of the college's operations. Governors and senior managers have a day each year when new objectives are set. External speakers sometimes contribute. Well-organised consultation with staff on the draft strategic objectives is followed through in school, support department and cross-college operational plans. In some operational plans, goals are insufficiently precise. The vice-principal (corporate services) co-ordinates development of the strategic plan and assembles the final version. Once it has been adopted by the corporation board, staff are informed. Staff understand the key objectives and how they relate to the college mission. There are policies to guide action on a wide range of college activities including health and safety and equal opportunities. Responsibility for their management is clearly defined. The college policy monitoring and evaluation committee plays an important part in assuring the relevance of these policies, and governors receive detailed reports on implementation.

20 The senior managers provide effective leadership. The college reorganised its curriculum management structure in August 1996. The changes were well planned and skilfully implemented. The new arrangements are working well. Seventeen heads of school manage the curriculum and resources. The school heads meet together in three clusters for management purposes; each cluster has the assistance and advice of a school support manager. Each school support manager also leads one of the college's marketing segments. Three other support managers are responsible for business services, staffing and student support, respectively. The college management committee consists of the six support managers, the two vice-principals and the principal. Roles and responsibilities are clearly allocated and are understood by staff. A logical committee structure and a carefully planned calendar of meetings help the college to reach decisions and to communicate them to staff. All meetings are clearly minuted. The academic board and its subcommittees are

effective in developing college policies and reviewing the quality of its provision.

21 The college has increased its student numbers substantially in the last four years. The college exceeded the target it had agreed with the FEFC by 7 per cent in 1993-94, but it fell short by 7.5 per cent and 8.1 per cent, respectively, in the last two years. The college expects to reach its target in the current year. The college's average level of funding for 1996-97 is £18.02 per unit. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges is £17.97 per unit. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are shown in figures 5 and 6. College finances are prudently managed. Arrangements for allocating budgets are clear and there are effective central controls. Staffing and educational supplies budgets are devolved to heads of school. Staffing is allocated according to enrolments and educational supplies are allocated according to a formula which is based upon the FEFC's programme area weightings. Although many heads of school are inexperienced in financial management, they have received thorough training and the understanding support of finance staff. Budget holders receive timely and accurate financial reports.

22 The management information system produces reliable monthly financial data and management accounts. It also provides regular summaries of information about students such as enrolment and retention data, to aid management decisions. The system has not been able to convert enrolments into accurate estimates of funded units of student activity. The college has introduced new software and management arrangements to address this problem. The college uses a number of performance indicators, including enrolment and retention targets. Wider access to management information through the college's computer network is being introduced.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

23 The college has a strong commitment to providing good support services for its students. It recognises the importance of support in achieving both examination successes and good student retention. There are appropriate policies and procedures which are reviewed regularly. Student services are efficiently managed by a member of the college management committee.

24 Recruitment and entry guidance are organised separately for adult students and for young people under 19 years old. Adults are offered a range of information and guidance on returning to study and help with constructing an appropriate programme of learning. A 'lifetime learning' campaign has recently been developed to help students achieve personal goals through part-time courses. For example, a woman in her late forties with some experience of bar work wanted to run a small hotel. She was guided to take NVQs in catering, wordprocessing, desktop publishing,

accounting and basic hygiene, which together gave her the necessary range of skills. Links with schools help younger students to progress to appropriate courses. Schools liaison activities include regular open days at the college, 'roadshows' for pupils at each of the local schools, curriculum and course links, and initial interviews at school. School staff feel that the college offers them a good service and provides their pupils with accurate information.

25 The prospectus is clearly worded, accurate and well presented. Applications are acknowledged promptly according to a precise service standard and anyone who wants advice may book a counselling interview before being considered formally for entry. All full-time and most part-time students receive a personal interview after they apply. The parents of younger applicants are invited to accompany them and they value this opportunity to understand fully the course content and the way it will be taught. Enrolment procedures are effective. Students are able to enrol throughout the year by personal attendance, by post or by telephone. Enrolment and guidance carry on throughout July and August on weekdays and on some Saturdays. Enrolment procedures are evaluated and modified each year to respond to changing enrolment patterns.

26 The induction of students is well organised. Student services staff issue a menu of induction activities, including introductions to all the college's services. Tutors are encouraged to choose sessions from the list and to add more specific activities which provide students with a full view of the life of the college and the requirements of its courses. The quality and scope of induction is evaluated each year by students and the manager of student services.

27 Students on all full-time courses, and on most part-time courses, are tested on entry to the college in order to assess their basic skills in mathematics and communications. The tests have been developed by the college over a number of years and they are administered by the school of learning development. Tests are adapted for each course and they make use of relevant words, situations and calculations. The tests identify students' problems in detail. For example, results may show that a student has trouble with spelling or punctuation, or that they have difficulty with mathematical fractions but can cope satisfactorily with other aspects of communication or numeracy. This level of sophistication is unusual and resolving such problems at an early stage helps students to get off to a good start with their new courses. Test results are returned to personal tutors by the beginning of October, giving them plenty of time to arrange additional support. Tutors may decide that a member of the course team is best placed to help, or may call upon learning development staff. Arrangements for learning support are flexible and well managed in most schools. The school of learning development had been in operation for only two terms at the time of inspection, and it had yet to form sufficiently close working relationships with a minority of schools to ensure that their students were receiving appropriate help. When learning support is

provided by the school of learning development, managers have the information with which to evaluate the improvement in students' work. There are no mechanisms for them to assess the outcome if support is given by course staff.

28 All full-time students and most part-time students have a personal tutor. Tutors work to a clear outline of their duties and responsibilities which are specified in a tutors' handbook and explained further through staff training sessions. A tutor is seen by students and their parents as the first person to whom questions or problems should be addressed. Parents who were interviewed by inspectors were familiar with the names of their son's or daughter's tutors and felt able to telephone them at any time to seek information or advice. Many of the services for students operate on the principle that the personal tutor commissions work from the school of learning development and others. Tutors are the hub of student support work to an unusual extent, placing pressure on them to devise appropriate activities and to monitor their success. Tutors are also responsible for general pastoral care, following up absences and reporting to students or their parents once or twice a year on academic progress. The number of students for whom each tutor is responsible varies across the schools, with many having over 25. The level of consistency in their work is high, but careful monitoring of individual tutor's workload is essential if the quality of tutorial work is to be maintained.

29 Careers guidance is provided by staff employed by Vosper Thorneycroft Southern Careers. Their contract emphasises contact with students as the trigger for payment. This device does not encourage them to spend time with tutors or to be members of college committees. Communications between some schools and the careers staff are poor as a consequence. This lack of effective communication makes it difficult for either the careers staff or the student services manager to assess the quality or coverage of the careers advice given to students.

30 Attendance is monitored rigorously. A new system was introduced at the beginning of the academic year 1996-97. Staff are required to telephone any student who is absent without explanation within 24 hours of a missed class. Parents confirm that this takes place. They are pleased to be able to help college staff in preventing the onset of a pattern of absenteeism. When tutors are unable to contact students or their parents, the welfare officer takes on the responsibility. The college's student retention rate has improved markedly since the new system was introduced. Contact with parents is close and some of those who spoke to inspectors gave examples of exceptional support given to their children.

31 The college has an excellent counselling service whose staff have a realistic view of college life and the student experience. They are also teachers and this gives them insight into students' academic problems. There are well-advertised counselling sessions available without booking and these can be followed up with longer discussions by appointment. Staff, students and parents all attest to the value of this work.

The counsellors produce an annual report which identifies the number of clients they have seen from each school, and shows any general trends in the problems with which they have dealt. Welfare is well managed and students receive guidance on housing, finance, health, grants, benefits and travel passes. The college subsidises travel costs for all its students and has a hardship fund. A new creche has opened this academic year, offering 24 places of which eight are free for the children of students and eight more are subsidised.

32 The range of social, cultural and sporting activities available to students is poor. Most events are organised by the student union but it has not been able to encourage many students to participate.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

33 Of the 209 sessions inspected, 66 per cent had strengths which outweighed weaknesses. Only 3 per cent had weaknesses which outweighed strengths. This profile is better than the average for all sessions observed during the 1995-96 programme of inspections, as reported in the *Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1995-96*. There were low student numbers, sometimes as a result of poor attendance, in some classes in construction, humanities and business studies. The following table summarises the grades given to the teaching sessions inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade 1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level	2	7	2	0	0	11
GCSE	2	3	3	0	0	8
GNVQ	6	13	13	2	0	34
NVQ	10	26	26	0	0	62
Access to higher education	0	5	3	1	0	9
Basic education	3	13	3	0	0	19
Other vocational	14	33	15	3	1	66
Total	37	100	65	6	1	209

34 Most courses are well planned and have satisfactory schemes of work. The best schemes of work are found in computing, art and design, business studies and the majority of care courses. They include syllabus coverage, course and learning objectives, assessment schedules and a range of suitable learning activities with their associated resource requirements. Poorer planning is evident in a few care courses and particularly in engineering, where many schemes of work are rudimentary and do not identify learning outcomes or teaching and learning methods adequately.

35 Individual lessons are well prepared. Usually, the objectives of the lesson are clearly stated at the outset and links are made to previous work.

Topics are developed logically through a number of different activities chosen to maintain students' interest and to exemplify specific aspects of the work. A good GCE A level geography lesson on regional development included a brainstorming session on how development could be measured. The teacher encouraged students to test their theories by plotting graphs. Group work and role-play were used to investigate, and to place in order, the indicators of development used by the World Health Organisation. Students gave short presentations to the whole group to justify their conclusions.

36 Classroom management is informal and effective. Good relationships between staff and students and the personal enthusiasm of many staff contribute significantly to successful lessons. In a good mathematics lesson for engineering students, the teacher's approach was lively and humorous. The topic, quadratic equations, was developed through carefully structured questions, sometimes addressed to the whole class and sometimes to individuals. Clear visual images were used to emphasise key points. The lesson was punctuated with short practical activities to highlight detail.

37 Lessons are normally illustrated through effective use of a variety of teaching aids. Most teachers use well-produced learning materials including manuals, handouts, case studies, videos, textbooks, models and artifacts. When combined with competent demonstration, these often provide an unusual perspective on a topic. In a graphics lesson, students were working on their individual projects in the computer suite. The teacher gave them individual help and periodically drew them together to share problems and solutions. To illustrate the deficiencies of some computer-generated typefaces, she showed how type was printed by letterpress.

38 In a number of areas of the college, considerable efforts are made to provide teaching materials that can be used by students on their own, either to supplement their lessons or to help them to extend their studies. In hairdressing and beauty therapy and business administration, this practice provides sufficient flexibility to suit students' differing needs and levels of ability. A group of NVQ administration students, which included both adults and school-leavers, was working towards NVQ levels 2, 3 and 4 in the same computer workshop. They were working independently and learning at their own pace. The teacher ensured that things ran smoothly and gave individual or group tuition as required. In construction, independent learning materials are of poor quality. The learning packs and assignments are based on commercially available materials which have not been adapted to the circumstances of the college's own students. Some are out of date. Standard lessons were followed slavishly without originality or application to students' own backgrounds and prior knowledge. The quality of some of the teaching materials used in engineering, particularly handouts and assignment briefs, is also very poor.

39 Work is set and marked regularly in almost all curriculum areas. The criteria for assessment are normally clear. Vocational relevance is secured in engineering and business studies by involving practising professionals in assessing projects. Feedback on completed assignments is good, particularly in computing and in art and design. In humanities, students' written work is marked carefully and teachers provide appropriate evaluative comments. Grammatical and spelling errors in English are almost always corrected and the written guidance which is given on how to improve is generally helpful. Careful records of students' progress are maintained in most areas. In hairdressing and beauty therapy, individual learning targets for students are reviewed at monthly intervals. In engineering, this discipline is not applied so methodically and a number of students were failing to keep up with their assignment schedules.

40 Practical work is carried out competently and with due regard for health and safety. Good standards of craftsmanship are evident in construction, catering, and hairdressing and beauty therapy. In computing, there is a particularly firm linkage between practical work and the associated theory. There is only limited use of information technology in mathematics. Many students are given good opportunities to develop supervisory skills within realistic simulated working environments for example, by managing the salons in hairdressing and by supervising the practical work of juniors in catering. Most full-time students on vocational courses, including art and design, have an opportunity for relevant work experience. This is generally well organised, although a few employers in engineering and care provide unsatisfactory work placements. Part-time students on management and care courses are encouraged to use their experience of work as a basis for the more theoretical aspects of their courses. There is a broad range of tours and study visits designed to provide experience in leisure and tourism.

41 In sessions for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, teachers develop strong, friendly relationships with the students. Lessons are generally well prepared and the better sessions include identification of learning goals for individual students which lead them into activities suited to their needs and abilities. There is continuity between lessons, and tasks are divided into small steps which help students to be aware of their own progress. Effective use is made of classroom assistants and of volunteer tutors, although in several basic education classes the absence of additional support placed too great a demand on the teacher and some students did not receive the level of support they needed.

42 The college is responsible for franchised work in a small training centre away from the main site. Programmes include administration, electronic assembly and computer literacy. The courses are well organised. Trainers have established a good relationship with students. Throughout all the sessions observed, students were well motivated and they worked

consistently. There is an appropriate mix of practical work and theory, and lessons are generally well taught. On the NVQ administration programmes the range of teaching techniques used is narrow. There is too heavy a reliance on detailed handbooks which contain the required theoretical knowledge, so that students are not encouraged to think for themselves.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

43 In 1996, 249 students completed advanced vocational programmes, of whom 86 per cent achieved the full qualification, according to data published by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE). This places the college in the top third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. In the same year, 104 students completed intermediate vocational programmes, of whom 63 per cent achieved the full qualification. This places the college in the middle third of all colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. Students' achievement data presented by the college indicate that retention rates have been poor in some areas. Frequently, high pass rates, based on the number of students who complete their courses, have been accompanied by more modest success rates when the number who passed are compared with the number who started the course. Courses causing particular concern have regularly been identified by the academic board and, in the majority of cases, the resulting action has produced significant improvement. Examples are illustrated in the table below.

Examples showing increased retention and pass rates resulting from specific improvements to courses

Course	1994-95	1995-96
	% Retention	
NVQ levels 1 to 3 administration (evening)	50	84
GCSE accounts	50	80
GNVQ intermediate health and social care	65	90
C&G 236 part 2 'C' programming	47	100
Aromatherapy	64	73
	% Pass rate	
Certificate in management accounting stage 2	13	80
GCSE psychology (over 19)	66	100
C&G 2300 programmable logic control	75	100
Certificate in management	0	83
EFL first certificate	47	77

44 In business studies, students who complete their courses usually gain their intended qualification. The results from the advanced GNVQ programme are higher than national averages, and the success rates for the intermediate GNVQ are generally good. Pass rates for the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national certificate and higher national certificate were high in 1996. Results for the examinations of the Association of Accounting Technicians are above national comparators at all levels, but there have been some poor results in the certificate of insurance practice. Students on administration and office technology courses are able to develop their skills at their own pace through NVQ levels 1 to 4 and, when ready, they achieve good results.

45 Catering and hospitality pass rates and retention rates for full-time NVQ level 3 courses have been very good. There are high pass rates at NVQ level 2 and in the BTEC national diploma in hotel and catering operations, but retention is less good. Most part-time courses in catering have good pass rates, but retention is poor. Students' results on the advanced GNVQ in leisure and tourism are about the national average.

46 Most examination results in health and care are better than the national average. The best results in 1996 were those from the BTEC national diploma in nursery nursing and the advanced diploma in childcare and education. Retention is good on GNVQ foundation and intermediate level courses, but poor in the advanced GNVQ in health and social care. Students on the BTEC national diploma in nursery nursing achieve good results.

47 In hairdressing and beauty therapy, the achievements of students on full-time courses have improved consistently for the past three years. Retention rates have also improved, with the consequence that success rates in hairdressing NVQ level 2, beauty therapy NVQ level 2 and the international beauty therapy diploma were all high in 1996.

48 In art and design, students' work is particularly good on the foundation course, in three-dimensional design and sculpture, in fashion and in media studies. Consistently good results have been achieved for the past three years by full-time students on the art and design foundation course and the BTEC national diplomas in fashion, media and video. Students on part-time foundation and access courses achieved high success rates in 1996, when these courses were run for the first time. Most students have progressed from these courses to higher education. All the part-time fashion courses have poor results and both the BTEC national diploma in graphics and the GNVQ intermediate course in art and design have poor retention rates.

49 In computing courses, most full-time and part-time students who complete their studies achieve their intended qualification, often with high proportions of merit and distinction grades. Many full-time and part-time students who have left these courses without completing them still gained employment in computing.

50 In engineering, students on all the BTEC national diploma, higher national and national certificate courses achieved good pass rates. The achievement rates among students on all these programmes were around or above those quoted in the FEFC's Curriculum Area Survey Report *Engineering*, in 1996. Students on full-time motor vehicle engineering programmes achieve average results at NVQ level 2 and good results at NVQ level 3. Most part-time engineering courses have high pass and success rates.

51 In 1996, plumbing students had a 75 per cent success rate on the part-time NVQ level 2 programme, and a 64 per cent pass rate in the full-time foundation course. Electrical installation results were generally poor. Students on Construction Industry Training Board block-release courses in brickwork, carpentry and joinery, and painting and decorating achieved good results, but the equivalent NVQ level 2 part-time courses produced very poor results, with success rates below 20 per cent. NVQ level 3 results in carpentry and joinery were much better, with an 80 per cent success rate.

52 There are consistently high retention and pass rates in all education and counselling courses. Good retention was achieved on the full-time humanities access course, with 71 per cent of those who completed the programme gaining the qualification. Two-thirds of these students progressed immediately to higher education.

53 Students with learning difficulties enjoy their studies and speak enthusiastically about their work. Most develop appropriate skills in literacy, numeracy and information technology. The work of students following practical modules as part of the 'Pathways to New Horizons' course is closely supervised and is completed safely and competently. A significant proportion of students who start on special courses progress to mainstream programmes or find employment. Achievement among adults with learning difficulties is low compared with 16 to 19 year olds following similar courses because fewer adults enter qualifying examinations. Examination results for adult students following part-time basic education and ESOL courses are high, but only a small minority of those students who enrol opt to sit examinations.

54 Students aged 16 to 18 who entered for GCE AS/A level examinations in 1995, scored, on average, 3.3 points per entry (where grade A=10 points, E=2), according to data published by the DfEE. This placed the college in the middle third of further education colleges on this performance measure. In 1996, there was a decline of 19 per cent in the pass rate at grades A to E. In 1996, students aged 16 to 18 scored, on average, 2.4 points per entry according to the DfEE tables. This places the college in the bottom third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. The decline is illustrated in the following table.

GCE A level examination results for students aged 16 to 18 (two-year course)

Year	1993-95	1994-96
Number of students entered	110	60
Number of subjects for which students were entered	14	15
Average pass rate at grades A to E (%)	74	55
National average pass rate at grades A to E for general further education colleges (%)	72	74

55 For students aged 16 to 18 completing a two-year course of GCE A levels in 1996, the average retention rate was 47 per cent. By contrast, for students aged 16 to 18 completing the one-year course in 1996, the average retention rate was 88 per cent and for students over 19 the retention rate was 84 per cent. When compared with national averages, the results achieved by older students taking GCE A levels are better than those for students aged 16 to 18. Pass rates at grades A to E were above average for general further education colleges in 1995 and 1996, as illustrated in the following table, and were about average at the higher grades A to C.

GCE A level examination results for students aged 19 and over (one-year course)

Year	1994-95	1995-96
Number of students entered	235	179
Number of subjects for which students were entered	13	16
Average pass rate grades at A to E (%)	68	69
National average pass rate at grades A to E for general further education colleges (%)	63	64

56 The majority of students taking GCSE examinations at the college are over 19. Retention rates on GCSE courses are poor. Although in some subjects including psychology, chemistry and French pass rates have been good, the overall pass rate at the college is below average for general further education colleges, as illustrated in the following table.

GCSE examination results 1994 to 1996 for students aged 19 and over

	1994	1995	1996
Number of entries	678	501	448
Number of subjects	15	15	16
Percentage achieving grade C or above	47	54	50
Average percentage achieving grade C or above in general further education colleges	60	60	62

57 The college has a clearly defined set of procedures for tracking the destinations of all full-time and most part-time students. Much effort is put into improving the accuracy of this information and the number of students whose destinations are unknown is decreasing. The destinations of full-time students leaving the college in 1995 and 1996 are summarised in the following table.

Students' destinations, 1995 and 1996

	1995	1996
Total number of full-time students completing their courses	1,029	999
Progressing to higher education (%)	23	16
Progressing to other further education courses (%)	26	34
In employment or training (%)	31	22
Other (%)	7	16
Unknown (%)	13	12

58 Many students have gained regional or national recognition for their achievement. In the past year, two engineering students were the only candidates in Britain and Ireland to be awarded silver medals by the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) for their results in computer-aided engineering design. Two adult students received awards from the Institute of Management. The Institute of Safety and Public Protection awarded the Laura Preech trophy to another adult student for an outstanding examination paper. A computer studies student was the Edexcel Foundation 'student of the year', and a bronze medal was awarded by the RSA Examinations Board (RSA) for achievement in administration at NVQ level 2. In sport, the college soccer team was runner-up in the under-19 Hampshire Colleges Cup in 1996.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

59 The college has an established quality assurance policy and procedures which have been refined over a number of years. All curriculum areas and support services are subject to rigorous quality control. The curriculum is monitored through course review and evaluation. Each course team produces an annual report which deals with teaching and learning, and resources. The views of students, staff and, where appropriate, parents and employers are sought through questionnaires. Areas of concern are identified and plans to remedy them are set out as actions with measurable outcomes. There is some variability in the quality of the annual course reports, but the outcomes have included improvements in course documentation and better timing of assignments. Heads of school produce summaries of their course teams' annual reports. The three clusters of schools bring their findings together and present them to one of three subcommittees of the academic board. These

committees require responses from either the school or from senior managers, which are then considered by the academic board.

60 There is a parallel procedure for analysing examination results and retention rates. Statistics for each course are produced centrally and then considered by course teams. Their analysis, and any causes for concern they identify, are submitted to the appropriate committee of the academic board, which also evaluates reports from external assessors and verifiers. The academic board has the power to require action from schools. Courses where the pass rate or the retention rate is unsatisfactory are listed in a document which records changes in performance over time. The list is reviewed annually and action to bring about improvement is required. The board initiates an intensive peer-review process if results do not improve after two years. This procedure includes an option to close the course. Three-quarters of the courses which were identified as giving cause for concern in 1995, had achieved an improvement of 10 per cent or more a year later. Most courses show steadily improving results over the past three years.

61 Each support department has a quality statement which defines the level of service to be provided. Performance against this statement is reviewed annually through questionnaires completed by users of the service. Action plans to improve performance have to be approved by the academic board.

62 The academic board and its committees include representatives of teaching and support staff and students. They are powerful and effective committees with executive authority. Academic board minutes are considered by the corporation board each term and the vice-principal (academic services) presents a comprehensive quality report to governors every year. A team of governors plays an active part in assessing whether or not there is a need for each course through chairing 'audits of relevance' on a four-year cycle. They review course content, enrolment, retention and achievement statistics, and the views of students, staff and employers. The audits now include observation of teaching, and specialist staff join the audit teams for this purpose. Their findings are presented to the academic board. On a similar cycle, the college carries out internal inspections of the aspects of its cross-college provision based on the criteria in the Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. These procedures, and the results that they achieve, paint a compelling portrait of a college where staff at all levels are committed to continuous improvement.

63 A biennial appraisal scheme for teaching staff was launched in the summer of 1993, and a separate one for support staff in January 1994. Since then, almost all staff have been appraised. Some staff who were appraised for the first time during 1993-94 or 1994-95 received an additional informal appraisal in the following year. Both schemes were operated until 1995-96, when the management structure was reorganised and appraisal temporarily suspended. Following a review, the two schemes were amalgamated in September 1996, and staff will now be

appraised annually. The system does not require classroom observation, although teachers may elect to be observed if they wish.

64 The college has a staff-development officer and the procedures for staff development are well established. The staff-development budget for 1996-97 is 1.5 per cent of gross expenditure. College initiatives which are needed in order to achieve the strategic plan, such as health and safety training and curriculum and management development are included. Teaching and support staff have experienced no difficulty in obtaining appropriate training. Training events are evaluated by participants, and heads of school encourage them to share their experiences with colleagues. Records of staff-development activity are good. There are clear procedures for induction and mentoring for new staff. The college achieved the Investor in People standard in 1995.

65 The college consulted widely when its charter was being drawn up and the charter is reviewed annually. Most students are aware of its existence but do not feel the need to use it. They prefer to take any problems directly to course staff or to their tutors. A self-assessment report was produced for the inspection, following the outline of Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. The findings were drawn from the routine working of the college's own internal inspections and its other quality assurance mechanisms. The report is comprehensive and it provides a context against which judgements are set. Strengths and weaknesses are stated clearly and action points are realistic. The inspectors' findings largely agree with those of the college's own report.

RESOURCES

Staffing

66 The college employs 191 teachers (156 full-time equivalents) on permanent contracts and an additional 227 (48 full-time equivalents) teachers on part-time or temporary contracts. All teachers are appropriately qualified for the courses they deliver. Of the permanent teaching staff, 93 per cent have teaching qualifications; 63 per cent have degrees or advanced vocational awards; and 14 per cent have higher degrees. Sixty-seven per cent have professional qualifications which relate to the courses they teach. Sixty-four per cent have appropriate training and development lead body qualifications and another 31 per cent are working towards them. Fifty-three per cent of the part-time teaching staff have teaching qualifications; 56 per cent have degrees or higher vocational awards; and 12 per cent have higher degrees. Over half the permanent staff have recent industrial experience. Many part-time staff bring up-to-date industrial experience to the programmes they teach, particularly in art and design. There are 164 permanent support staff (121 full-time equivalents). They make a valuable contribution to the efficient running of the college and are active members of college committees. They are all appropriately qualified for the roles they fulfil.

Technician support is particularly strong in hairdressing and beauty therapy, catering, business and construction. In engineering, there is insufficient technical support to meet the needs of the courses.

67 The college has a well-qualified personnel team. All the necessary personnel policies and procedures are in place and they are updated regularly. Staff records are held on a central database which covers all aspects of administration, including payroll and staff development. The college provides a free annual health check for all its staff. The high quality of these services epitomises the college's concern for the welfare of its staff. Staff are deployed efficiently, with 97 per cent on new flexible contracts and staffing costs absorbing 65 per cent of total expenditure.

Equipment/learning resources

68 Specialist equipment is adequate or good in most areas. The hairdressing and beauty therapy salons were recently refitted with the help of a large national hairdressing company. They are generously provided with equipment of professional standard. The catering kitchens are well equipped and there is an attractive training restaurant which serves meals to the public. Most classrooms are well equipped with standard teaching aids such as whiteboards and overhead projector facilities. There is convenient access to other audio-visual equipment. In the management centre, a specialised whiteboard can print paper copies of whatever is written on it. In the multi-skills school, there is good equipment for students with specific disabilities. For example, a closed-circuit television system is used by a student with impaired vision to magnify the text in a book and to project it onto a monitor. Telephone earpiece amplifiers are available for use by students with impaired hearing. Special screens are fitted to computers that are being used by students who suffer from epilepsy.

69 The learning resource centre has a relatively small stock of 24,000 books. Their content is largely appropriate to the present curriculum of the college, although there are some shortages, for example, in humanities and in art and design. There is an exceptional collection of books on dyslexia, which was bought to support the courses in specific learning difficulties. There is a substantial collection of video cassettes, compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases and periodicals. There is a computerised catalogue system which includes those collections which are held in curriculum areas. There is close collaboration between the learning resource centre manager and heads of schools, which ensures effective use of the limited funds. This year's budget is low at £30,000, which represents only £10.20 per full-time equivalent student. Staff and students have access to the Internet, but through only one terminal. The learning resource centre is well managed and it provides a welcoming and stimulating place to study. There are no library facilities in either of the two annexes. There are 87 study spaces in the learning resource centre and a further 75 spaces in the learning development centre in the new building.

70 There are 497 computers available for students' use, 276 of which are of modern specification. This represents a good ratio of one machine to every 5.4 full-time equivalent students. Fifty of the modern machines are located in the learning development centre and 10 are in the learning resource centre. Despite the good ratio of computers to students, there are times when students have difficulty gaining access to a machine. There is a drop-in centre with eight computers in the John Hunt centre. The college has only recently developed an information technology policy. Its priorities are to address the lack of standardisation of computers and software, and to extend the networking of machines to provide better access. There are good specialist facilities for computing in office technology, media studies, fashion and engineering.

Accommodation

71 The college's main campus is on either side of a road close to the town centre. The buildings on the south site date from the 1950s and early 1970s and they are in good condition. The main block has an attractive entrance and a foyer which includes a well-appointed drop-in information and enrolment centre. Teaching accommodation on the south site is, with a few exceptions, good. Accommodation for hairdressing and beauty therapy, catering, and office technology is very good. Accommodation for computing is not satisfactory but the facilities are shortly to be relocated in a new building on the north site. Some teaching rooms in health and social care and in the multi-skills unit are small for the size of the groups which use them. Internal decoration is good and there are no graffiti. The college's refectory provides a pleasant environment for students and staff. There is a maintenance programme which includes plans to improve the buildings gradually, especially the large areas of flat roof.

72 On the north site, a substantial new building was completed in September 1996. This provides excellent accommodation. There is ample car parking for students. The building has a spacious foyer leading to a large multi-purpose area which can be used for exhibitions and events. Classrooms are well designed, light and well equipped. The new learning development centre provides open access facilities for communication, numeracy, information technology and foreign languages. To the rear of the new building there is some older accommodation which is occupied by the school of construction. This has been enhanced by imaginative use of the space.

73 The college has two annexes. Brookvale is a former primary school which is within a few minutes walking distance of the main campus. It houses the school of art and craft in very cramped conditions. The John Hunt centre is a small, two-storey block leased from a secondary school. It is about four miles from the college. It provides attractive and well-maintained accommodation for the school of education and management. The 'Hands On' training centre used for franchised provision

provides good accommodation which is appropriate for adult students on computing, electronics and administration programmes.

74 Throughout the college, social areas for students are inadequate and accommodation for teaching staff in some parts of the buildings needs improvement. The college has no sports or leisure accommodation, and for curriculum purposes it has to hire facilities in the town. The college intends to bring all its courses onto the main campus within the next two years. Plans are already well advanced for the disposal of the Brookvale annexe which provides substandard accommodation. The lease on the John Hunt centre expires in 1998 and it is to be reviewed by the college. The college has achieved significant progress in making its buildings accessible to wheelchair users. In addition to the normal lifts, there are also stair lifts which provide access to over 80 per cent of the accommodation. The college commissioned a comprehensive survey of its buildings by a wheelchair user in October 1996, and further improvements will be made as funds permit. The college makes efficient use of its space.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

75 The particular strengths of the college are:

- a wide range of courses, which allow a variety of modes of attendance
- strong links with schools, employers and the local community
- well-informed, active governors and sound strategic planning
- strong leadership and good communications
- good student guidance and support
- good teaching by well-qualified and committed staff
- good results on most vocational courses
- an effective quality assurance system which involves both an influential academic board and the governors
- good accommodation and equipment in most areas
- the high quality of service provided by the learning resource centre staff.

76 If it is to further improve the quality of its provision, the college should address the following issues:

- the computerisation of data to support curriculum review
- poor examination results and retention rates on some courses
- the small group sizes on some courses
- the need for further improvements to information technology facilities and equipment
- the limited social and recreational opportunities for students.

FIGURES

-
- 1 Percentage student numbers by age (as at November 1996)

 - 2 Percentage student numbers by level of study (as at November 1996)

 - 3 Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area
(as at November 1996)

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

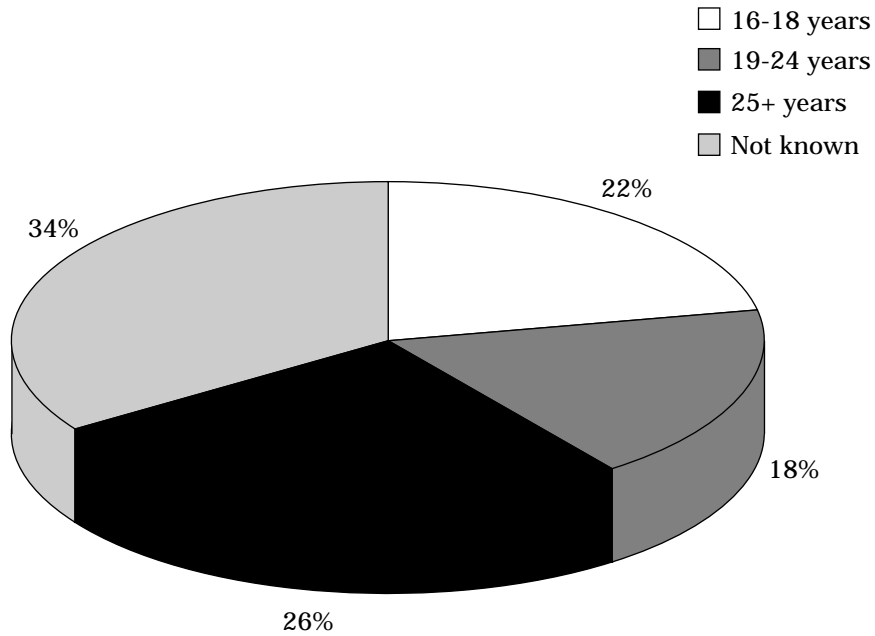
 - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1996)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)

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

Figure 1

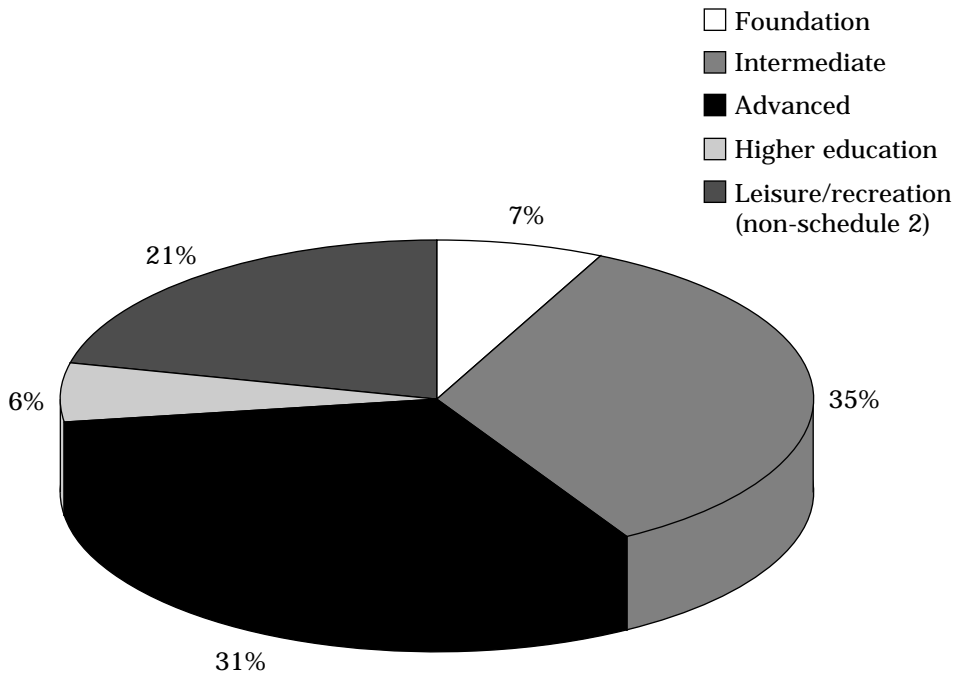
**Basingstoke College of Technology: percentage student numbers by age
(as at November 1996)**



Student numbers: 9,267

Figure 2

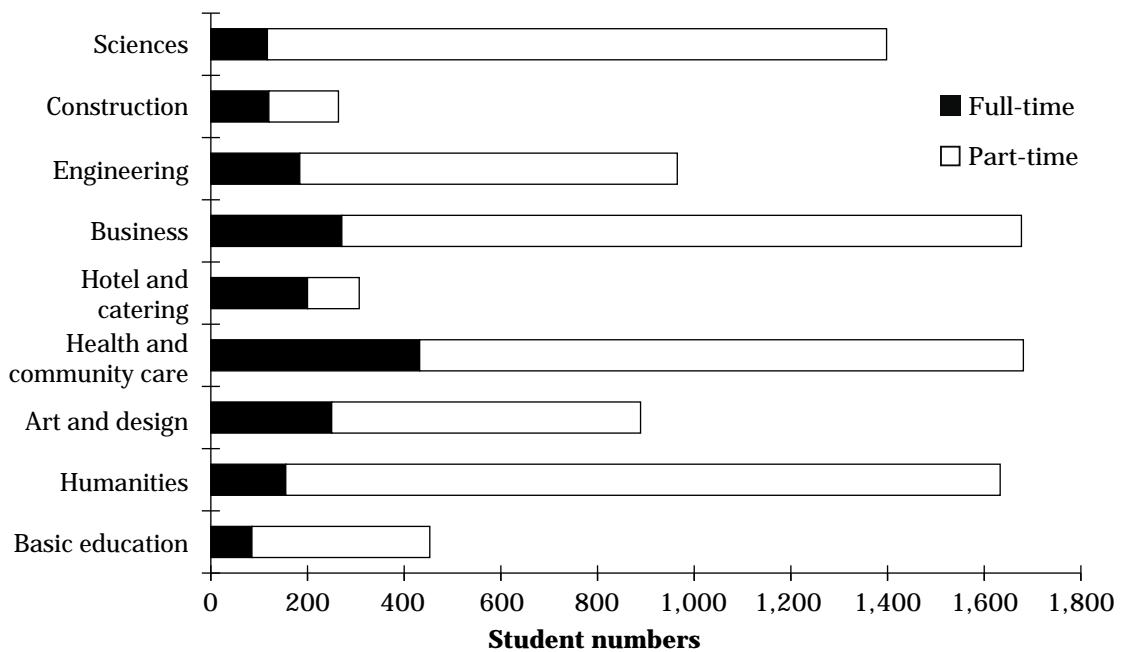
**Basingstoke College of Technology: percentage student numbers by level of study
(as at November 1996)**



Student numbers: 9,267

Figure 3

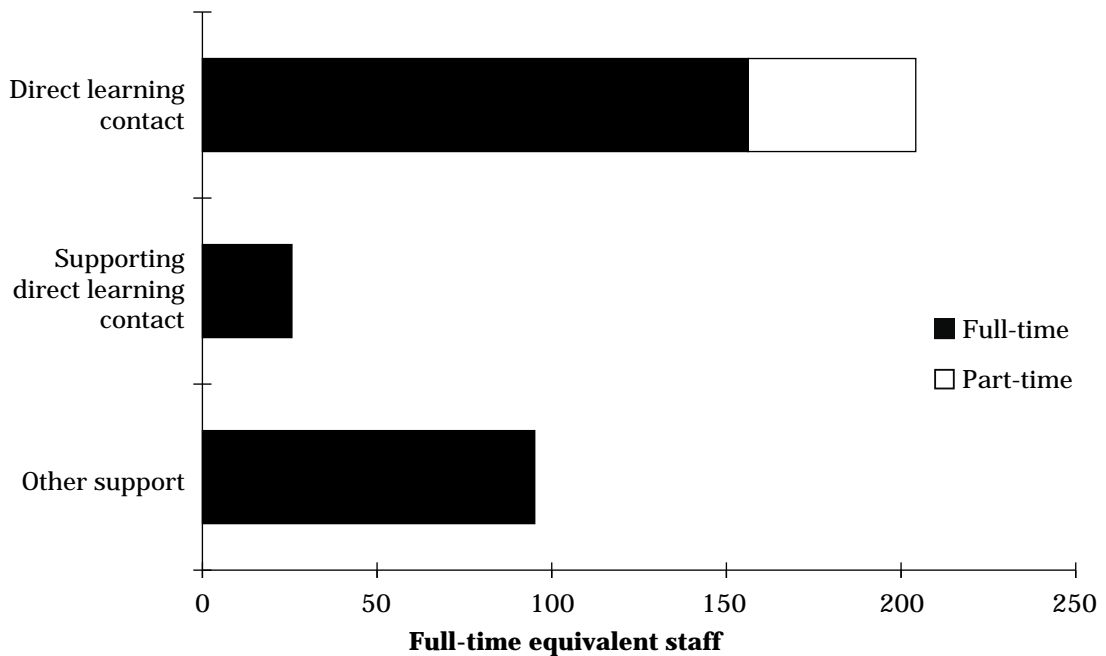
Basingstoke College of Technology: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1996)



Student numbers: 9,267

Figure 4

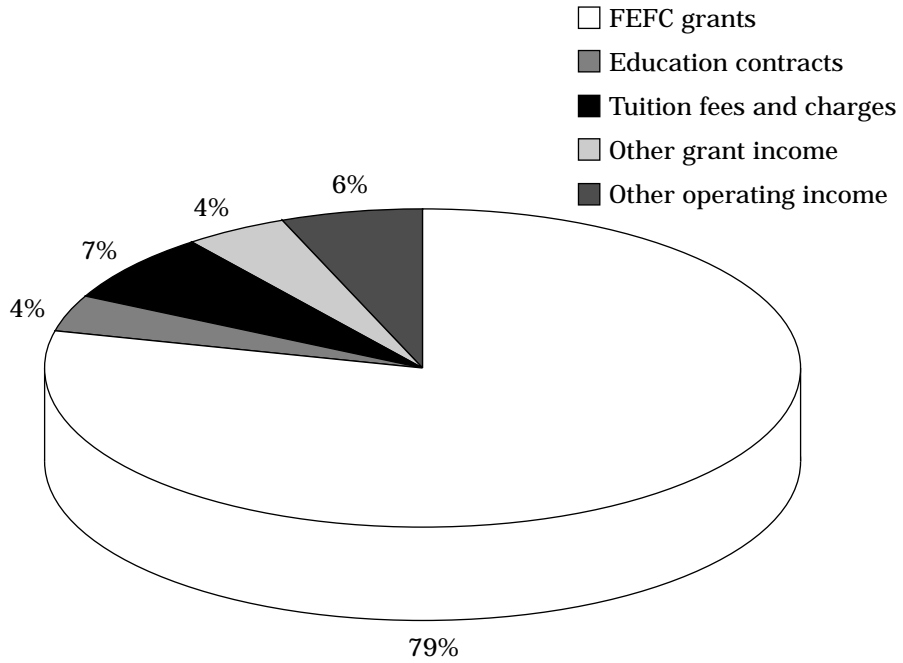
Basingstoke College of Technology: staff profile - staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at January 1997)



Full-time equivalent staff: 325

Figure 5

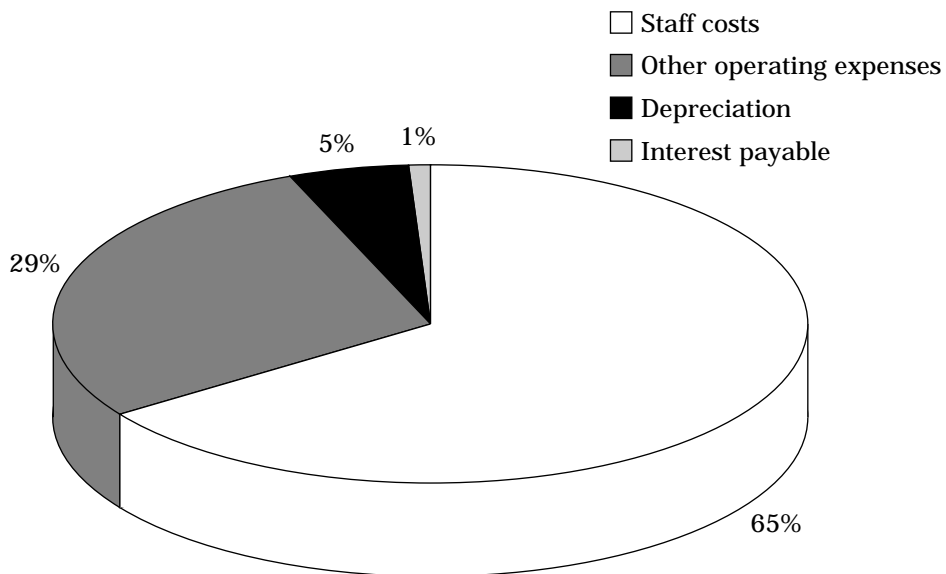
Basingstoke College of Technology: income (for 12 months to July 1996)



Income: £10,852,000

Figure 6

Basingstoke College of Technology: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)



Expenditure: £11,950,000

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