

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Bracknell College

March 1994

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

THE FURTHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL

The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) has a statutory duty to ensure that there are satisfactory arrangements to assess the quality of provision in the further education sector. It discharges the duty in part through its inspectorate, which inspects and reports on each college in the sector every four years. The Council's inspectorate also assesses and reports on a national basis on specific curriculum areas and advises the Council's quality assessment committee.

College inspections involve both full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have specialist knowledge and experience in the areas they inspect. Inspection teams normally include at least one member from outside the world of education and a nominated member of staff from the college being inspected.

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

The procedures for assessing quality are described in the Council Circular 93/28. In the course of inspecting colleges, inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out in the reports. They also summarise their judgements on the balance between strengths and weaknesses using a five-point scale. The descriptors for the grades on the scale 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.*

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FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 15/94

BRACKNELL COLLEGE

SOUTH EAST REGION

Inspected October - December 1993

Summary

Bracknell College, Berkshire is a general further education college offering a range of vocational GCE/GCSE and extra-mural provision. The extra-mural studies programme is thriving and full-cost language provision is strong. There are satisfactory links with local community agencies and with higher education institutions. Employers have a high regard for the college as a training provider. Teachers are well-qualified although few have recent experience in industry. The quality of teaching is generally satisfactory and sometimes good. Students achieve satisfactory standards in vocational courses but performances in GCE and GCSE examinations are weak. Full-time students receive good careers education. Effective procedures for students' enrolment and induction and their continued support and guidance are sometimes undermined by the unsatisfactory quality of delivery. Bracknell College's administrative procedures are well developed and effective but policies for the future direction of the college are ill defined and the quality of management information is poor. The college failed to reach its target for growth in 1993. Other weaknesses are the standards of work in catering and hospitality studies, the lack of targets for quality improvement, the quality of marketing and market research, the co-ordination of cross-college activities, the lack of a college policy for staff development and a strategy for estates management.

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

Aspects of cross-college provision	Grade
Responsiveness and range of provision	3
Governance and management	4
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	3
Quality assurance	4
Resources	3

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Business computer & secretarial studies	3	Social education & access studies	3
Electronics computing & technology	3	Community studies	3
Extra mural studies	2	Catering & hospitality services	4
Academic studies	3		

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INTRODUCTION

1 The inspection of Bracknell College, Berkshire, took place in three stages during the Autumn Term 1993. The college's enrolment and induction procedures were inspected at the beginning of the college term, specialist subject areas between 1 and 3 November, and aspects of cross-college provision from 6 to 8 December. Thirteen inspectors took part for a total of 68 inspector days. They visited 148 classes, attended by 1,960 students, and examined a representative sample of students' work.

2 Discussions were held with members of the college corporation, all members of the senior management team, heads of programme areas, cross-college co-ordinators, course leaders, teaching staff and student-support staff. Inspectors also consulted students including representatives of the student association. There were meetings with a group of employers, and with representatives of Thames Valley Enterprise, the local training and enterprise council (TEC). Inspectors attended a meeting of the board of the corporation and examined college policy statements and minutes of the major committees.

3 The report is based on inspections carried out according to the framework and guidelines described in Council Circular 93/28. The framework describes a four-year inspection cycle. When this cycle becomes fully established, colleges will have the opportunity to respond to the findings of earlier inspection visits before their quadrennial inspection and the subsequent published report. As the inspection of Bracknell college occurred early in the cycle, the opportunity for such a response was not available.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

4 Bracknell College, Berkshire is a general further education college. It operates on eight sites. Three are in the centre of Bracknell and accommodate most vocational courses. Five centres in Wokingham, Reading and the outskirts of Bracknell are principally the bases for adult and continuing education courses. The college also uses accommodation in up to 20 schools and community centres each year. Crèches are provided for children of staff and students on the Priestwood and Woodley Hill House sites.

5 At the time of the inspection the college had 106 full-time lecturers and 139 full-time support staff (figure 1). The 1,528 full-time equivalent students on FEFC-funded courses were made up of 835 full-time students and 5,111 students attending part-time day or evening vocational courses. Figure 2 shows the number of full-time equivalent students by mode of attendance. Figure 3 gives an age profile of the full-time students. There were also substantial numbers of adults studying on community education programmes and other students following TEC courses and professional and commercial updating (PICKUP) programmes. The college has not met its student recruitment target agreed with the FEFC for 1993-94. Student

enrolments, having remained static for three years, have declined in the current year.

6 The work of the college is organised in eight programme areas: electronics, computing and technology; business, computer and secretarial studies; catering and hospitality services; academic studies; extra mural studies; community studies; social, educational and access studies; and TEC training programmes.

7 The college's main catchment area lies within the boundaries of the Bracknell Forest and Wokingham District Councils in central Berkshire. Until the late 1980s this area had one of the most rapidly expanding populations in the country. The present population is approximately 240,000. The college is near to the offices and factories of many large national and international concerns. There is a concentration in Bracknell of major electronic, engineering and computer-based companies. Recently some of the biggest of these have significantly reduced the number of employees or left the area. Others are becoming centres for administration, with manufacture carried out elsewhere in the country, or abroad. The area has a relatively low unemployment rate of 4.5 per cent.

8 There are 16 secondary schools in the area. Fourteen have sixth forms which are in direct competition with the college for enrolments. Some offer an increasing number of General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) as well as General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) courses. Three other colleges of further education are within convenient travelling distance of Bracknell.

9 The declared mission of Bracknell College is to be a successful centre for education and training which is committed to quality and efficiency and which provides an opportunity for people to develop to the full their skills and talents. The college states that it will strive to challenge discrimination, satisfy the requirements of all its customers, foster innovative and imaginative learning methods, and support the economic and cultural life of the community.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

10 The college advertises a wide range of courses to cater for students with diverse educational needs. It includes courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and access courses which prepare students for entry to higher education. The college is the largest provider of adult and continuing education in central Berkshire. It offers a large programme of GCSE, GCE A level and vocational subjects, mainly at National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) levels two and three, or their equivalent. Access courses for entry to social work and nursing have been developed. The college also provides a diploma in social work funded by the Higher Education Funding Council.

11 Whilst the overall portfolio of courses appears to offer an impressive choice for students, in reality, opportunities are more limited. The college

has only one full-time course for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which currently recruits 12 students. A small number of other students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also attend other courses in the college, but the college's commitment to this field of work has yet to be realised in practice. Provision for access to humanities degree courses is also limited. In 1993, the college failed to recruit sufficient numbers of students for a course franchised from Thames Valley University. Although large numbers of adult students are attracted to the college's extra-mural programmes, the opportunity of progression to other courses remains limited. The introduction of craft courses in engineering has tapped new sources of demand and, against the national trend, student numbers in engineering have remained steady.

12 As competition to attract 16 year old students intensifies, the college finds it more difficult to gain access to many schools in ways which would allow it to promote effectively its full range of courses. The college has developed a good range of literature to publicise its courses. A team of education and training advisers provides advice to prospective students in the 'Ask Bracknell College' centre which is attractively designed and readily accessible to the public. However, the work of those engaged in marketing is not effectively co-ordinated, and there is no overall marketing strategy. As a result of the fall in recruitment, urgent action is required to identify those courses which are not achieving their potential, new clients, and new study areas.

13 An attractive and well-equipped open-access centre at the main Church Road site provides facilities for those who need a flexible approach to education and training. Established mainly as a facility for full-time students, it is also available for part-time students and to the public at full cost. Assistance is always available from technical support staff. The centre is close to the main shopping area but is not sufficiently well advertised to be fully used.

14 The college has created some effective links with higher education providers. A joint development with King Alfred's College, Winchester has produced an access to higher education course which is now validated by the Wessex Access Federation.

15 Links with Thames Valley Enterprise are close. Work funded by Thames Valley Enterprise involves approximately 280 students, about 180 of whom are on programmes leading to NVQs. Adult training for unemployed people is holding steady but youth training is declining. Supported by Thames Valley Enterprise, the college is also involved with two other Berkshire colleges in a scheme to establish a full modular curriculum.

16 There are good relations with the local education authority (LEA) which funds recreational adult education. Liaison with the local careers service is close and a careers officer is based 80 per cent of her time at the college.

17 The college is regarded as a good training provider by local employers and companies are willing to employ students who have been trained there. To date, the college has not fully exploited its links with industry to expand its full-cost provision. It has recently written to over two hundred companies to inform them of the availability of individually designed courses.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

18 The corporation board has 17 members. There is currently one vacancy. Ten members represent industry including a nominee of the Thames Valley Enterprise. There are three co-opted members from Berkshire Council, two members of the college staff, a student, and the principal. The majority of the members have been governors for more than five years. The principal's personal assistant is clerk to the corporation.

19 Members of the board are strongly supportive of the college and its senior managers. Committees for finance and general purposes, marketing, personnel, remuneration and audit are established and working. There is no subcommittee dealing exclusively with estate management issues although these are among the most troublesome to have exercised the minds of senior management in recent years. Members are concerned to ensure that the college's financial position is sound. Governors are clearly informed of their responsibilities under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, although some of those interviewed during the inspection appeared not to appreciate fully the extent of their personal liability following incorporation. Some governors expressed strong reservations about incorporation.

20 The college mission is not translated into operational objectives. The strategic plan gives little sense of the intended direction and character of the college. Few clear priorities have been identified. Targets are expressed as general aspirations and are not quantified. The board has not been actively involved in the development of the current strategic plan and the mechanisms to ensure that staff contribute to the planning process have been largely ineffective. Levels of understanding of planning imperatives and performance indicators vary widely.

21 The senior management team consists of the principal and four vice-principals. The management team comprises the senior managers, the heads of the eight programme areas and the head of learning resources. The four major bodies in which responsibility for policy and action reside are the senior management team, the management team, the academic board, which is identified as 'the apex of the academic process,' and the course board, which is responsible for quality and course approval. These bodies are well administered but they do not provide effective forums for analysis and action. Programme area managers assert that they have a limited voice in the management team meetings. The academic board operates mainly by receiving information. The course board functions

efficiently in approving courses but there is little evidence of robust academic debate.

22 The heads of the eight programme areas report directly to the principal although there are no formal progress and review meetings. Responsibility for their line management will be delegated to the vice principal curriculum and student services from January 1994.

23 The college has sound policies for health and safety and for the college environment, and responsibilities for their implementation are clearly allocated. The college also has a policy for equal opportunities but it is not widely disseminated and the person responsible for its implementation is not indicated with others on the chart depicting the college's organisation. An information technology (IT) policy is in preparation. At the time of the inspection, the work of staff in student services was uncoordinated and a post of student services manager had been advertised in an attempt to address this problem.

24 The college has a comprehensive handbook on financial regulations and procedures. Curriculum budgets are based on the previous LEA weighting system. The weightings applied to respective subjects and the rationale for apportioning funds to programme areas and support functions are not discussed at management meetings and are not known to all programme area managers. Programme area managers have full control over the resources for their own area of work, with the exception of new staff appointments and building work. The college has no co-ordinated purchasing policy.

25 The college's unit of funding for 1992-93, inherited from the LEA, is recorded in the FEFC report *Funding Allocations 1993-94*, as £2,844 per full-time equivalent student within the sector. This puts it in the upper 25 per cent of costs per full-time equivalent student. Unit costs are calculated to course level but their use is not yet sufficiently developed to inform reliably management decisions. The method for pricing full-cost courses is underdeveloped. Broad summaries of the college's estimated income and expenditure for 1993-94 are given in figures 4, 5 and 6.

26 Enrolment data are collected and analysed. The number of full-time students has fallen by 20 per cent in the current year. Part-time day recruitment has declined by 30 per cent, but evening enrolments have remained steady. Over the four years 1990-1993, full-time equivalent student numbers have remained relatively stable at between 1,530 and 1,600. The management team has identified better market research, support for students on application and entry, the development of a modular curriculum and the extension of provision at NVQ level 1 as the means by which recruitment can be strengthened.

27 Information on student retention, progression, attainment and destinations is available within most programme areas. It is not systematically collated and analysed at college level to inform the setting of priorities, planning, marketing, action or target-setting. Students who apply for courses, but do not enrol, are not routinely followed up. The

college plans to bring together the disparate procedures which govern recruitment and to develop a potentially valuable project on the tracking of potential students from the stage at which they make initial enquiries.

28 Efficient administration is evident in many areas of the college's work. Programmes are operating effectively to maintain current provision. However, the college has not yet been successful in developing a sense of direction, based on coherent policies and clear objectives which staff feel able to share and support.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

29 A full range of guidance and support services for students at pre-entry and on-course stages is beginning to develop but procedures are not applied consistently across the college.

30 Policies for guidance and support are underpinned by good operating manuals. Their impact and effectiveness are reduced by some staff, including programme managers, who believe that they have been insufficiently involved in their creation.

31 The information which students receive before commencing courses is generally sound. Printed publicity material is of a high standard. The college takes other steps to inform potential students of the study opportunities available. These include careers conventions, extensive advertising and publicity displays within the community.

32 There is no educational guidance service in Bracknell and the impartial advice available to students is limited. The college has a central admissions process for both full-time and part-time students. All full-time enquiries are dealt with initially at an administrative level by the information co-ordinator before being referred to an appropriate programme manager. This phase of the process is efficient, carefully recorded and monitored by the centre.

33 Subject leaders have received little or no training in interviewing. The usefulness of the interview and the quality of the associated advice and support vary. The impending appointment of a student services manager is likely to improve the effectiveness of these activities.

34 There is a college policy statement on the accreditation of prior learning and staff are being trained to implement accreditation procedures. Although a few programme areas offer this service its availability is not widespread.

35 The enrolment process is efficient and effective, operating to a common model across the college. Induction is well planned and well supported by tutorial materials. However, variations in the quality of delivery of the programme are unacceptably wide.

36 Tutorial support ranges from well-designed programmes to informal, unstructured and unplanned contact with tutors. This lack of consistency in student support contradicts stated college objectives. A programme of staff development is being planned to meet tutors' needs.

37 Personal counselling is delivered as effectively as possible under difficult circumstances. The part-time nature of the post prevents the counsellor making a full contribution to the work of the college. The location of the counselling service does not enable easy and confidential access for those who need it. Nevertheless, a number of students commented positively on the service and its raised profile over the last year.

38 Students have the benefit of careers advice and guidance. The service offers talks on topics such as planning for a year away from study before going to university in addition to individual careers interviews and advice on referrals. There is an up-to-date library of careers literature to enable students to conduct their own research.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

39 The strengths of the work clearly outweighed the weaknesses in 39 per cent of the 148 teaching sessions inspected. Strengths were balanced by weaknesses in a further 50 per cent. The grades awarded to the teaching sessions inspected are shown below.

Number of sessions inspected/grades awarded						
Grades	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Sessions	5	52	74	12	5	148

40 The most consistently good practice was to be found in social education, some access studies, community studies and extra-mural studies, where most students were adults. The full-cost language courses offered to industry, often held on the premises of client companies, were also of high quality. The quality of work in catering and hospitality services had more weaknesses than strengths.

41 Most programmes of study had clearly-stated aims and objectives which were communicated effectively to the students. Course content was appropriate and well structured. Some aspects of art and design and science provision failed to live up to these standards.

42 In an attempt to reverse the decline in student numbers, tutors have adopted an innovative approach to the organisation of NVQ provision in catering and hospitality. Eighty per cent of the course is conducted through industrial placements. As yet, the course team have not found ways of ensuring that the programme includes all the elements of knowledge and understanding which students are expected to acquire.

43 Most teaching sessions were well planned and well structured. Students experienced various methods including whole-group, small-group and individual activities. Teaching styles helped to build students' confidence and encouraged effective learning. Teachers were knowledgeable in their subjects. Well-presented handouts were frequently used to reinforce learning. Their material was up-to date and, where appropriate, it reflected good professional or industrial practice. In the

best lessons, the energy and enthusiasm of lecturers encouraged students to be active; the pace of work was lively and lecturers' high expectations raised students' levels of achievement.

44 In theatre studies workshops, GCE A level students responded to inspirational teaching with confident and creative interpretations. They engaged in critical academic debate with each other and with the tutor. On health and social care and engineering courses, students' own work experiences were used effectively to integrate theory and practice.

45 The range of learning methods used on some of the access courses was limited. Students' interest was not held and they did not contribute as much to lessons as they ought to have done. In a few lessons across the programme areas, teachers allowed a minority of students to dominate proceedings to the detriment of other students. Some teachers also allowed discussion to stray into anecdote which had little direct reference to the learning objectives for the session.

46 The teaching on some GCSE and GCE A level courses was too didactic. Lecturers talked for long periods without pause, and students' attention lapsed. A slow pace of work was often associated with a failure to challenge students sufficiently. Computing, information technology and audio-visual resources were used to support literacy and numeracy work for adults but their potential for accelerating learning was not fully exploited. In some classes, lecturers failed to take account of students' varied learning difficulties; for example, by setting different tasks, establishing differing outcomes for the work, or relating activities to students' individual learning plans. Within the visual and performing arts and design courses, there were insufficient options to cater for the aptitudes of the diverse student intake.

47 Study skills support was being developed in most programme areas. For example, A level history students were taught essay writing skills and techniques for conducting individual research. Core skills were an important component of most vocational courses, but full-time NVQ courses in business administration and catering and hospitality were not developing the full range of skills.

48 Assignments and projects were well organised and clearly presented. They reflected accurately the aims and objectives of courses. Assignments on the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diploma in social care courses were scheduled carefully. Students were provided with the assessment plan and the deadlines for completion in advance. Well-designed assignments were also a feature of the access courses.

49 Lecturers and students generally enjoyed a positive rapport which helped to create a purposeful atmosphere. The support of volunteers and other non-teaching staff for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities was notable for its flexibility in responding to their learning needs.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

50 Most students appeared to enjoy their studies. They applied themselves and worked with enthusiasm. The exceptions were the students in some GCE and GCSE classes.

51 Much of students' written work was of a good standard, especially in extra-mural studies. The marking was fair and supported by helpful comments from tutors. Students on one of the access courses complained about the absence of any mark scheme to indicate how assessment results had been achieved. The college does not have a formal policy on the marking of course work. Tutors were inconsistent in the extent to which they took account of, and corrected, spelling and grammar.

52 In much of their assignment and project work students performed well. Many were able to employ their knowledge effectively and apply it to new situations. In the BTEC first diploma, national diploma and national certificate courses in engineering, students failed to gain full advantage from assignment work because their contributions were not always marked in detail or returned to them.

53 Many of the staff were confident facilitators and students worked well in groups. Activities included team discussion, group research, and written and oral presentations. In subjects such as science and mathematics, students were not given sufficient opportunity to develop their social and communication skills through group work.

54 Practical work was carried out competently and safely. Skills were developed with care and attention to detail. Exceptionally, in some science practicals, students worked mechanically with little understanding of why certain procedures were being carried out.

55 Statistics on students' attainments are not produced in a form which facilitates their use as performance indicators. A similar shortcoming applies to the data on retention rates and student destinations.

56 In 1993, GCE A level pass rates, grades A-E for full-time students fell below the national averages of 79.8 per cent in all subjects. The best results were achieved in English (79 per cent), theatre studies (75 per cent) and law (72 per cent). There were poor pass rates, below 30 per cent, in physics, chemistry, business studies, economics, history, and mathematics. A table, published recently by the Department for Education, shows that the 91 students, age 16-18, entered for two or more A levels, scored an average of 7.1 points (where A=10, E=2). This performance places the college in the lowest third of institutions within the sector.

57 In an attempt to identify and address poor achievement in some subjects, the college has begun to analyse the value added by students' performances at GCE A level when compared with their performance at GCSE. In 1992, students with between five and seven GCSE passes at grades A-C performed badly at A level, gaining an average of 8.5 points. In 1993, this average fell to 6.9 points.

58 Good A level results were achieved by adult students in the extra-

mural studies programme, including 100 per cent pass rates in art and in some English and sociology groups.

59 The level of achievement of full-time students taking four or five GCSE subjects is poor. In 1993, almost all subject results were below the national averages for passes in those subjects, grades A-C. The exceptions were English with a 57 per cent pass rate grades A-C, which was the same as the national rate, and sociology with 66 per cent against a national rate of 40 per cent. The attainments in GCSE English are creditable given the low achievements of students currently admitted to the course. Over the last two years, pass rates, grades A-C, in eight of the main GCSE subjects, including mathematics and physics, have been below 40 per cent compared with national rates for the same subjects of between 47 per cent and 60 per cent. Discussions are currently taking place about widening the choice of courses for students who are clearly achieving little by retaking GCSE courses. Extra-mural studies students achieve good GCSE results in mathematics, sociology, psychology and English, with between 60 or 70 per cent A-C grade passes.

60 The college does not analyse its data on examination performance to show year-on-year trends. Figures presented in the BTEC publication *Staying the Course*, 1993 indicate that students at the college perform well in a number of vocational courses. The pass rate on the higher national certificate in business and finance was 100 per cent compared with a national average of 69 per cent. Students in software engineering achieved a 74 per cent pass rate against the national rate of 55 per cent. Results in the national diplomas, national certificates, and first diplomas were generally similar to or slightly below the BTEC national average rates. Exceptions were the national certificates in engineering with a 69 per cent pass rate compared with the national rate of 60 per cent and the first diploma in engineering with a 60 per cent pass rate compared with the national rate of 49 per cent. The first diploma in care, with an 89 per cent pass rate, was well above the national average of 65 per cent.

61 On other vocational courses, attainments in the college were close to the national average performance in most subjects. Some good results included the 100 per cent pass rate on the City and Guilds (C & G) photography course, and the Institute of Linguists examinations pass rate of 83 per cent at preliminary and intermediate stages, and 68 per cent at advanced level.

62 Language work is generally good. Adult students achieve well in basic skills such as numeracy and wordpower. In 1992 and 1993, all but one student on the access to humanities and social science courses, and access to social work course, progressed to higher education.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

63 The Charter for Further Education is on public display in the college. A first draft of the college's own charter has been completed.

64 The college has a policy for quality assurance. Supporting documentation is informative and thorough and includes a course maintenance manual. However, teachers' and programme area managers' commitment to implementing the policy is less than satisfactory.

65 The stated aim of the quality system is to ensure continuous quality improvement. A number of factors inhibit progress towards this goal. Information on courses is incomplete and varies in the degree to which it meets the requirements of the system. Many of the completed forms required as a result of course reviews are not returned to the quality assurance team and the college is unable to identify which forms are missing. The annual review and evaluation report is thus based on incomplete information.

66 Guidelines to staff for the conduct of the review and evaluation process are too general. Courses, in general, lack improvement targets relating to student retention rates, examination achievements and student destinations.

67 At programme area level, there is some better practice. Review and evaluation take account not only of the internal requirements of the college, but also of the demands of examining and validating bodies. Some vocational course teams invite employers to attend and contribute to review meetings. Overall, more time is spent on monitoring than on evaluation and action planning and this reduces the effectiveness of the review process.

68 The vice-principal's annual report on review and evaluation for the previous year identifies good practice and the actions that are subsequently required at the appropriate level in the organisation including senior management. Progress has been made but the college is some way from producing a quality assurance system capable of generating the continuous improvement in provision which is envisaged in its institutional aims.

69 A policy for staff appraisal has been agreed but full implementation is, as yet, limited to members of the management team. Appraisal for main grade lecturers began in the autumn of 1993. The senior management team intends appraisal to be closely linked to the quality assurance system.

70 The college does not have an overall plan for staff development. However, many of the staff development needs expressed by individuals and by individual programme areas have been met over the last two years. The annual staff development budget of £60,000 has been supplemented by £70,000 from the curriculum development fund. Further funding has come from Thames Valley Enterprise. The staff-development programme includes a well-planned induction programme which new staff have valued.

RESOURCES

71 The college operates a system of delegated budgets. There are some 30 budget holders. Each budget is calculated according to a formula and then discussed by the budget holder and the vice-principals responsible respectively for financial control and administration, and for curriculum and quality assurance. It is subsequently approved by the senior management team. The detailed budget proposal is submitted to the governors' finance and general purposes committee for debate and recommendation to the corporation.

72 Monthly summaries of expenditure against allocations are issued to budget holders and reviewed with the responsible vice principal. A statement is submitted to the senior management team. The budget holders interviewed during the inspection were content with the process and with the level of allocations.

73 Teaching staff are well qualified and sufficient in number to support the programmes offered. Sixteen per cent of the full-time teaching staff are under 40 years of age. Few have recent industrial or commercial experience. In areas such as engineering and business studies, the college should monitor the balance between full-time and part-time teaching staff to ensure that full-time staff are not being required to undertake unrealistic levels of administrative work to compensate for the administrative work to which part-time staff cannot contribute.

74 A thorough and clear staff manual provides an effective framework for the appointment of all full-time staff. There is a computer-based record of staff qualifications and experience.

75 Property transfers under the provision of The Further and Higher Education Act 1992 are not complete. Discussions are continuing with the local education authority. Following the college's concerns about the adequacy of the Hunter survey, it is due to be revisited shortly. Aspects of property management have been contracted out to a specialist company, but no survey reports, maintenance schedules or prioritised investment programme have yet been agreed.

76 There are indications that the work of the college has suffered from a lack of strategic direction in estates management. For example, the separation of art studios from machine shops in recent years has inhibited the potential for developments in design, and the reduction of the backstage area of the theatre to construct an office for the college safety officer has restricted facilities for theatre production. The corporation perceives the rationalisation of the college estate as a major issue for the future. The extent to which the college should retain local teaching centres which serve dispersed residential areas is a particular issue which requires resolution.

77 The accommodation varies in its age and quality. It includes two Grade II listed buildings. Rooms on all sites are furnished, decorated and cleaned to a high standard. More could be done on the larger sites to

enhance the learning environment through the display of information and examples of students' work. At Woodley Hill House many of the teaching rooms are too small for the sizes of the classes which use them. Extra-mural studies classes are often held on school premises where the quality of the accommodation is largely beyond the college's control.

78 A college-wide review of accommodation is currently being undertaken. A central database to record and manage room utilisation is being developed. As yet, data on utilisation and occupancy are not available to the senior management.

79 Ramps and lifts enable students who use wheelchairs to gain access to most parts of the accommodation on the main site. They cannot reach the upper floors of buildings on the Woodley Hill House, Montague House, and Wick Hill sites.

80 The college's operation on eight permanent sites entails considerable replication of some resources. The library, open access centres and English and mathematics workshops provide resources that are sometimes duplicated within the programme areas. There is no system for monitoring resource provision to ensure that the maximum benefit is gained from the available funds.

81 A policy for the replacement of equipment is being developed. Specialist electronic equipment and the training office for secretarial students require upgrading to meet curricular demands. Computing facilities are generally adequate. There is open access to these facilities on the main site

82 The library's annual recurrent budget for bookstock, periodicals and other learning materials is £38,000. It has remained constant for two years. Library resources are generally adequate to meet the needs of students. There are approximately 11 full-time equivalent staff covering the five library sites. The library and open access centres were amalgamated last year under a single head of learning resources who also has responsibilities for reprographics and audio-visual aids.

83 Library resources are notionally allocated between programme areas for the purpose of purchasing. Some staff are actively involved in ensuring up-to-date stock for studies in their area. The notional division of funding by programme areas has the disadvantage of limiting the librarian's opportunity to develop an overall approach to the provision of resources.

84 Book usage is monitored manually. The college is planning the installation of a computer system which should enable staff to evaluate provision more rigorously and encourage more effective use of resources.

CONCLUSION AND ISSUES

85 The college's strategic plan does not give a clear sense of direction and its mission statement should be supported by clearer operational objectives. The particular strengths of the college are:

-
- well-developed administrative systems
 - the generally satisfactory and sometimes good quality of teaching
 - the quality of work in the extra mural studies programme area
 - the high quality of full-cost language courses
 - sound policies for enrolment and induction
 - good careers advice and guidance for full-time students.

86 The college has to address each of the following areas if it is to continue to attract students and improve standards:

- a clearer articulation of the college's mission statement and strategic plan
- the establishing of priorities and the setting of targets by senior and middle managers
- the translation of data into effective management information
- the setting of improvement targets for quality performance
- marketing and market research
- the recruitment of students
- the co-ordination of cross-college activities
- the quality of work in catering and hospitality studies
- GCE and GCSE examination results
- consistent delivery of student support and guidance
- the formulation of a staff-development policy
- development of an estates management strategy.

FIGURES

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- 1 Staff profile (1993-94)

 - 2 Students expressed as full-time equivalents by mode of attendance (1993-94)

 - 3 Full-time students age profile (1993-94)

 - 4 Estimated income (1993-94)

 - 5 Estimated non-pay expenditure (1993-94)

 - 6 Estimated pay expenditure (1993-94)

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

Figure 1

Bracknell College: staff profile (1993-94)

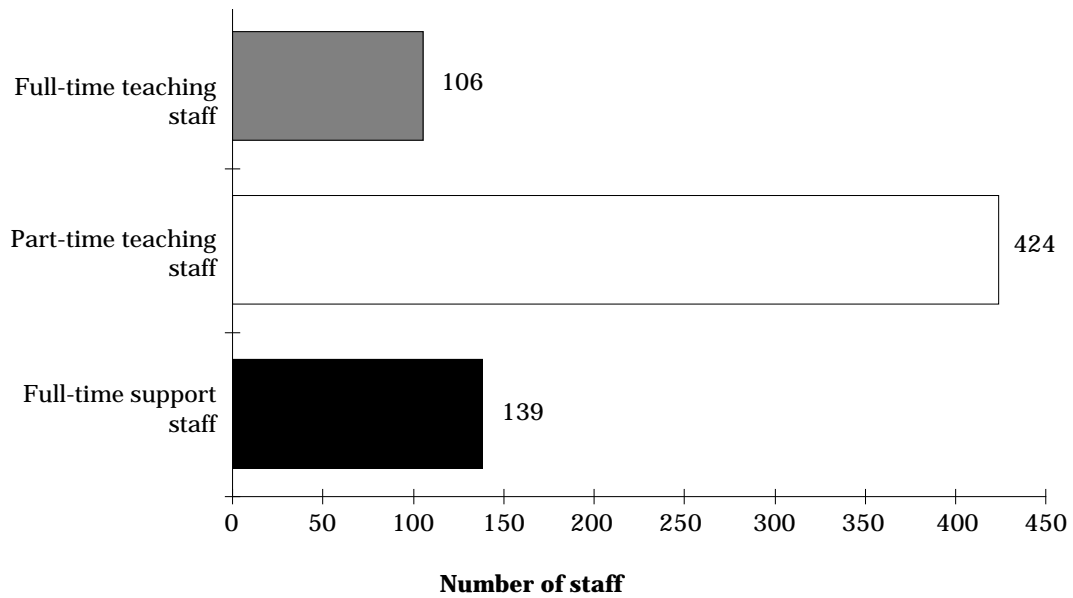
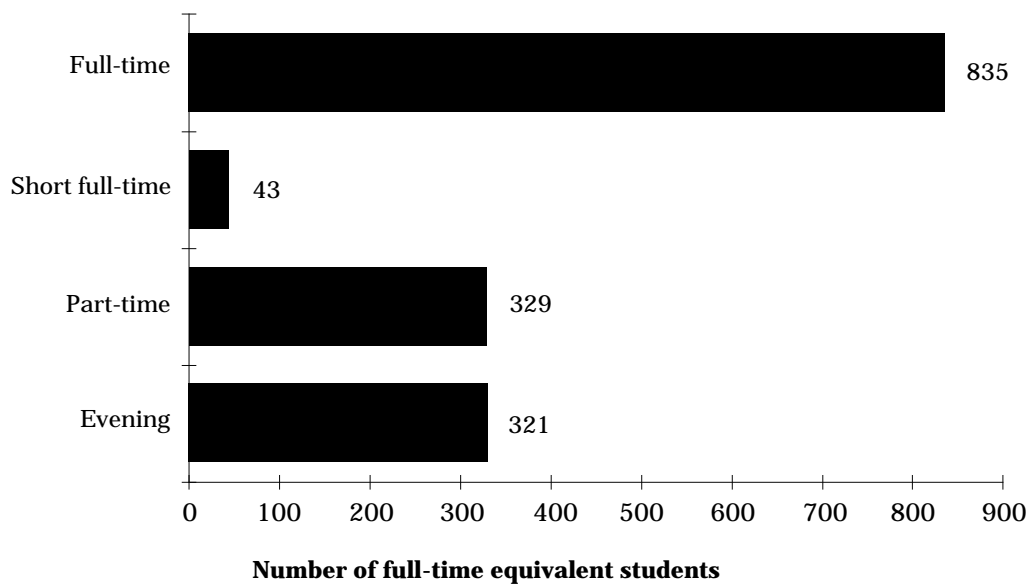


Figure 2

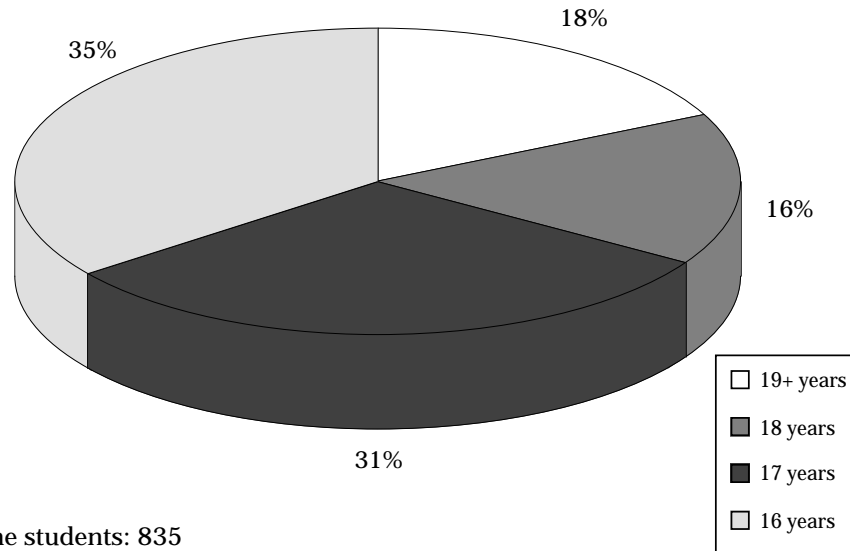
Bracknell College: students expressed as full-time equivalents by mode of attendance (1993-94)



Total full-time equivalent students: 1,528

Figure 3

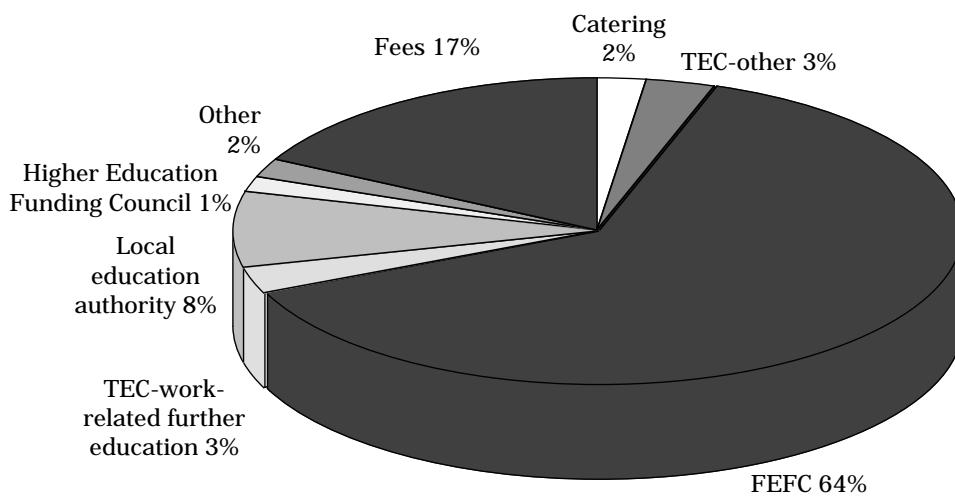
Bracknell College: full-time students – age profile (1993-94)



Total full-time students: 835

Figure 4

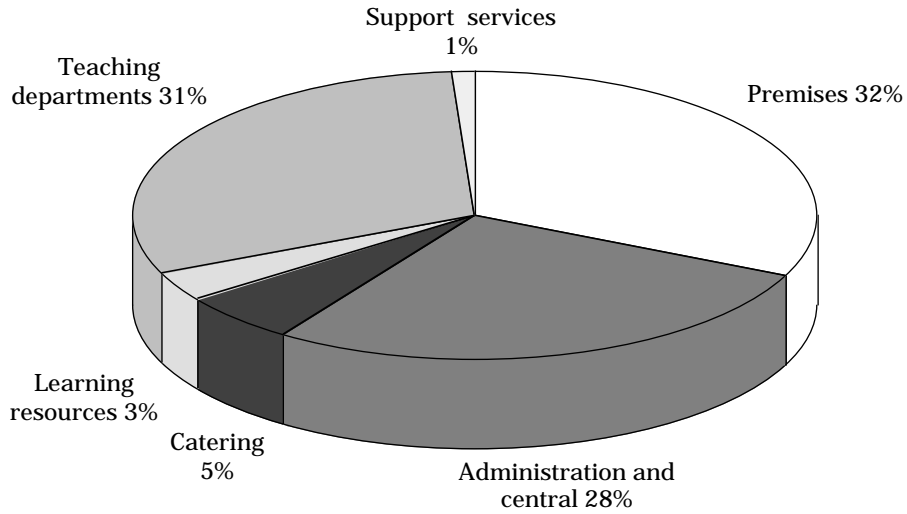
Bracknell College: estimated income (1993-94)



Total income: £7.2 million

Figure 5

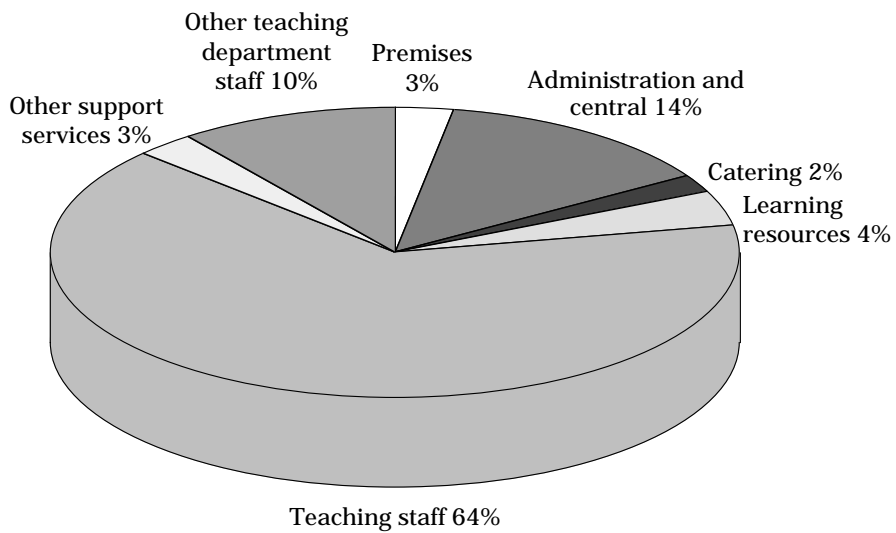
Bracknell College: estimated non-pay expenditure (1993-94)



Total non-pay expenditure: £1.9 million

Figure 6

Bracknell College: estimated pay expenditure (1993-94)



Total pay expenditure: £5.2 million

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