

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Cricklade College

February 1995

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

THE FURTHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL

The Further Education Funding Council has a legal duty to make sure further education in England is properly assessed. The FEFC's inspectorate inspects and reports on each college of further education every four years. The inspectorate also assesses and reports nationally on the curriculum and gives advice to 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.

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.*

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

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 08/95

CRICKLADE COLLEGE

SOUTH EAST REGION

Inspected September – October 1994

Summary

Cricklade College in Hampshire is steadily increasing its provision to meet a changing market. It offers appropriate courses for school leavers and adults, including students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Managers draw effectively on the expertise of the members of the corporation board who play a full part in the college's strategic planning. Communication with parents is strong, and there is good tutorial and personal support for students. There is productive liaison between the college and the local training and enterprise council, and with local employers. This enables the college to promote its cost recovery courses and organise an extensive work experience programme for students on vocational courses. Students receive effective teaching in most areas. With some exceptions, examination results are satisfactory. The college should speed up the development of a comprehensive management information system and analyse examination and retention data more rigorously; ensure steps are taken to improve examination results in some vocational areas; improve its fragmented market research; and enlist the commitment of staff to the new quality assurance system. Other weaknesses are the lack of critical analysis in course reviews; inconsistencies in management and insufficient understanding of strategic issues at divisional level; the need for stronger promotion of the college; and the lack of social areas for students.

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	3
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	2
Quality assurance	4
Resources: staffing	2
equipment/learning resources	3
accommodation	3

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science	2	Health and community care	3
Mathematics and computing	2		
Engineering	4	Art and design	3
Business and administration	3	Humanities	3
Hotel and catering	4	Adult basic education	2
		Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	3

CONTENTS

	Paragraph
Summary	
Introduction	1
The college and its aims	3
Responsiveness and range of provision	9
Governance and management	25
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	35
Teaching and the promotion of learning	47
Students' achievements	63
Quality assurance	81
Resources	90
Conclusions and issues	107
Figures	

INTRODUCTION

1 The inspection of Cricklade College in Andover, Hampshire, took place in three stages. The college's enrolment and induction procedures were inspected by two full-time inspectors in early September 1994. Subject specialisms were inspected between 20 September and 6 October 1994 when four full-time and 10 part-time inspectors took part for a total of 37 inspector days. They observed 190 classes, attended by 1,974 students, and examined samples of students' marked work.

2 Cross-college provision was inspected from 17 to 28 October 1994 when four full-time and three part-time inspectors took part for a total of 25 inspector days. Meetings were held with members of the corporation board, the senior management team, heads of division, staff with cross-college responsibilities, teaching, support and administrative staff, and students. Inspectors talked to a group of employers, a representative of Hampshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), and parents of students attending the college. They looked at documents describing internal systems and controls, policy statements, and minutes of major meetings.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

3 Cricklade College in Andover, Hampshire, opened as a tertiary college in 1974. The main site is close to the town centre, convenient for public transport. It is shared with a community theatre and a public sports centre which has a swimming pool. The college has a large annexe on the nearby St John's site, where there is a day nursery used by the children of college staff and students. The college also rents accommodation locally to deliver some specialist training.

4 In the last five years, enrolments at the college have increased by 67 per cent. At the time of the inspection in October 1994, there were 2,937 students at the college, of whom 1,725 were attending part-time day or evening courses. There were also more than 2,000 adult students studying on community education programmes and short training courses for business. At that time, early in the academic year, enrolments were still occurring. The figures given at the end of the report refer to enrolments and staffing as at 31 July 1994. Enrolments by age and level of study are shown in figures 1 and 2. FEFC-funded enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figure 3. A staff profile for July 1994 is shown in figure 4.

5 The work of the college is organised in 10 curriculum divisions: business and management studies; hospitality and catering; information technology; mathematics; pre-vocational studies; community and social studies; industry studies; language studies; performing and visual arts, and sciences. The college also has a consultancy and training centre which provides cost-recovery short courses for business and organises a substantial community education programme in partnership with four other centres in Andover.

6 Cricklade College is the sole provider of post-16 education for Andover and its surrounding villages. More than 70 per cent of the town's 16-19 age group continue in some form of full-time education. Thirty-eight per cent of the college's full-time students are recruited from the three schools in the Andover secondary-tertiary partnership, and 12 per cent from another four partner schools in north-west Hampshire, two schools for students with learning difficulties and two of the independent schools in the area. Most of the college's part-time students live locally, but outreach arrangements cater for an increasing number from further away.

7 The town of Andover has a population of approximately 35,000. Employment has increased in recent years because several large companies have established light manufacturing and distribution centres in and around the town. The development of industrial estates has been accompanied by increased house building. There are several military bases nearby on Salisbury plain. The planned expansion of the base at Tidworth, approximately 10 miles away, will make the area one of the largest army centres in the country. The unemployment rate in Andover is approximately 7 per cent, significantly below the county and national averages.

8 According to its mission statement, the college aims to: provide for all members of the community equal opportunities for learning which can lead to further study or employment; encourage lifelong learning; promote European awareness; and make teaching programmes as flexible as possible in order to meet individuals' study needs.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

9 The college offers 30 General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) and 18 General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) subjects for school leavers and adult students. Most of these subjects are also offered on a part-time evening programme. A one-year 'connections programme' allows students to study three or four GCSE subjects together with one or two vocational subjects. The college also offers General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) courses in business, health and social care, science, leisure and tourism, and art and design. There are basic education programmes for adults and a preparation course for those adults who are interested in higher education. National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) courses are available in engineering, administration, hospitality and catering. They can be studied full time or part time.

10 Students can take part in the college's support studies programme which covers recreational pursuits and classes in a range of vocational and other skills. Students benefit from the community leisure centre adjacent to the college campus. The college plays in competitive sports against colleges from Hampshire, Wiltshire and Dorset. It has been very successful in county leagues and other competitions, for example in cricket, football, rugby and hockey.

11 The college's relationship with local schools is generally good. College staff are allowed varying degrees of access to pupils and parents, but in most schools, senior tutors have plenty of opportunity to meet both pupils and their parents.

12 Each of three senior tutors liaises with a group of schools and maintains contact with potential students in years 10 and 11 (the last two years of compulsory schooling). This provides effective means of identifying curricular needs. In guiding potential students, senior tutors place a premium on impartiality. Though they draw attention to the college's courses during their visits to schools, there is no undue pressure on students. Local schools and the county guidance and careers officers are invited to the college's launch of its prospectus. In some subject areas, school and college staff visit each other and this practice might with advantage be adopted in other curriculum areas.

13 Regular open days and parents' evenings provide potential students, parents and other local people with information about the college's offering and new curricular developments. The college has produced a charter, but has not brought it to the attention of parents or employers.

14 Student retention rates are low in several areas. The college should re-examine its entry requirements, recruitment policy and initial briefing to make sure that potential students understand fully the nature of the courses offered, how they will be taught, and what is expected of them.

15 A number of colleges recruit students from the Andover area. Under the Andover secondary-tertiary partnership agreement, the college has agreed to defer final applications until January to allow the results of mock examinations and up-to-date information in records of achievement to be taken into account. However, other colleges encourage students to apply earlier than January, and this places the college at a disadvantage in recruiting students. The college is failing to recruit a number of students from the Andover area, particularly intending A level students, who travel to colleges further afield. The college has been slow to react to the new competitive circumstances. However, it is steadily increasing its range of courses, especially vocational courses, and is extending its marketing to additional schools.

16 More market research and better promotion of the college are needed to exploit fully the opportunities for extending the market. The new prospectus for full-time courses not only contains no information about part-time study, but gives no clue that there is a separate prospectus for it. A chance has been missed to engage the interest of the parents of young recruits.

17 Although the college wishes to expand its vocational work, recruitment is below the level planned for and in some subjects the study groups are uneconomically small. The college faces the task of raising parents' understanding of GNVQs and of attracting adult students to vocational courses. Stronger marketing is required of some areas of college

work, particularly science and engineering. There is scope for encouraging more students on vocational courses to study foreign languages as part of their programmes, and for more women full-time students to study computing.

18 A number of staff are involved in research, external liaison, marketing and curriculum development. There is no formal means for bringing together their activities. The college has recently appointed a research manager, part of whose job is to deal with recruitment issues and to enhance the image of the college. Existing responsibility for marketing is shared between a number of college staff, including the schools marketing officer. These responsibilities need to be rationalised if the full potential of this new appointment is to be realised.

19 The college's theatre is an amenity for both the town and the college. The college has good links with local businesses, based on personal contacts. These have been drawn together to provide a comprehensive database of local employers which has enabled the college to organise an extensive work placement programme for students studying on vocational courses. Approximately one-third of GCE A level students spend some time work shadowing. The college is seeking to extend this further.

20 The college has productive relationships with the local TEC. It provides TEC-sponsored training courses for recently-employed 16 year olds, and is involved in TEC-funded project work in basic education. It is exploring opportunities to develop similar links with TECs in neighbouring counties.

21 The enterprise unit at the college offers a wide range of cost-recovery courses. In the 12 months before the inspection, more than 2,000 people attended these courses. Some of the curricular initiatives which began in the unit as tailor-made courses have developed into mainstream courses.

22 The college has expanded its provision for adult basic education and students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It has good relationships with social services and voluntary organisations. Students with learning difficulties are identified at school, and senior tutors, in collaboration with the schools, make sure that appropriate support is arranged for them when they come to college. There is also an equal opportunities policy covering issues of age, ethnicity, gender and religion. This appears in the college prospectus, together with a statement of support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The proportion of the population in Test Valley (Romsey to Andover) from minority ethnic backgrounds is less than 1 per cent, and the number of students at the college from minority ethnic backgrounds is commensurately small.

23 The college is reorganising its open learning provision. Plans to expand the range of this kind of learning opportunity to a wider geographical area are being made. The college is also at an early stage in developing facilities for the accreditation of prior learning for full-time students. Staff are generally aware of the national targets for education and training.

24 The college is in partnership with the health authority and the benefits agency in operating a small day nursery. Each partner has a number of places. The nursery is available both to college staff and students, and demand for places exceeds the number available.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

25 The corporation board comprises 14 members. These include seven independent and three co-opted members from a cross-section of the Andover business community, a headteacher, and a member of the Hampshire TEC. The principal is a member of the board, and there is a staff and a student member. There is a good working partnership between senior managers and board members. The director of finance is the secretary to the corporation.

26 Four subcommittees have been established: finance, employment policy, remuneration and audit. They have clear terms of reference and their activities are well organised. Full corporation board meetings are held at least six times a year and there is an associated schedule of meetings for its committees. Attendance at board meetings exceeds 90 per cent. Productive monthly meetings are held between the principal and vice-principal and the chair and vice-chair of the corporation.

27 The chairs of committees and the college executive present detailed reports to the corporation board. Governors properly concentrate on strategic issues, but several also make valuable contributions from their business experience to some of the college's curriculum advisory committees, and some, together with other local businessmen, have formed a group which occasionally sponsors new equipment for the college. The corporation board has been fully involved in devising the college's mission, setting objectives, and strategic planning. The board's current priorities are the college's legal and financial operations and the strategic plan. Governors have been briefed on the college's quality system but are not yet involved in quality planning. The measurement of performance and the setting of targets is not on the corporation's immediate agenda, but should now be considered.

28 Strategic planning is well managed. The college planning committee, consisting of the executive, heads of division and heads of cross-college centres, is the forum for producing the strategic plan and for monitoring and reviewing performance against it. There is a clear relationship between the college's mission, corporate aims and objectives and its annual operating statement.

29 Internal communication is generally effective. The principal holds two full staff meetings each year. Management roles and responsibilities are generally clear, and are understood by staff at all levels. The college executive consists of the principal; the vice-principal, the directors of curriculum, college enterprises, finance, and resources; and the head of learner services. The director of resources manages 10 heads of division,

who are responsible for the teaching, tutoring and resources in curriculum areas. Heads of division also work closely with the director of curriculum, and for some aspects of their work are in contact with the vice-principal, director of college enterprises and head of learner services.

30 The organisational structure, which is two years old, has been modified recently, and heads of division are still acquiring the confidence and skill to operate within it. Some aspects of their work require closer monitoring. Many areas of divisional managers' work are clearly prescribed, but there are inconsistencies in their approaches. For example, there is considerable variation in the frequency of division, section and course meetings and in subsequent monitoring of agreed outcomes and actions. The opportunity for staff to be involved in divisional planning varies. Some divisions make little or no use of examination results and student retention data when reviewing the quality of the work for which they are responsible.

31 Objectives have been set for each of the college's functions, and these appear in the college's operating statement. Recently individual objectives have been set for managers. There are as many as 21 common objectives for heads of division. Bearing in mind that division heads must combine their management role with about 12 hours of teaching a week, these objectives should be arranged in order of priority, and made more specific. Timescales for their achievement should also be indicated. Some heads of division do not sufficiently understand the need for strategic thinking or appreciate some of the larger issues facing the college. Business planning at divisional and cross-college centre level is at an early stage of development, and needs strengthening.

32 Much of the work of managers is channelled through the academic board and the resources and planning committees, which make recommendations to the college executive. Committee membership gives staff and students across the college the chance to be involved in decision making. Nominated members of the college executive have responsibility for monitoring equal opportunities, health and safety, student support and environmental issues. The learner services committee, which includes students, is responsible for reviewing the implementation of the equal opportunities policy, the environmental policy and the student charter.

33 Central budget planning is effective, and financial allocation procedures are clear and equitable. The strategic plan guides the allocation of budgets, which is managed by the director of resources, working with the resources committee. Non-staffing budgets are devolved to heads of division. All budget-holders receive clear monthly financial reports to assist the monitoring of expenditure. Budget reports for all divisions are available to senior managers, and are presented monthly to the corporation. Cross-college analysis of spending against estimated monthly expenditure is being introduced. The college calculates unit costs, which are aggregated to divisional level. The college's income and expenditure

for the 16 months to July 1994 are shown in figures 5 and 6. In 1994-95, the college's average level of funding per unit is £17.08. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges is £18.17.

34 There is no overall management information system in the college: a number of disparate systems and procedures are used. There is an effective system for monitoring students' destinations, but information on student retention and achievements, particularly for vocational courses, is fragmented and sometimes unreliable. At the time of the inspection, the college could not present comprehensive and reliable information on student retention rates and examination results for many of its courses, though newly-collated data were provided shortly afterwards. At present, the college does not have the means of effectively analysing college-wide data as a basis for making important policy decisions. This is a serious shortcoming, which the college intends to put right with the help of the emerging quality system, the recent appointment of an information technology manager, and investment in new technology.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

35 Most full-time students and their parents praise the support given by the college, the accessibility of staff and the principal, and the speed with which staff respond to their concerns. They appreciate the way that students are treated as young adults and given a share of responsibility for their own learning, in a way that looks forward to study at university.

36 The learner services centre, established in 1992, co-ordinates the college's information, advice and guidance services. It is also responsible for childcare facilities, and support for the students' association, and provides welfare and counselling services. The learner services centre has clearly-stated policies, aims and objectives in line with the college's strategic plan, and well-documented operational guidelines. In the past two years staff have concentrated on the service for full-time students, but increasing attention is now being paid to the needs of part-time students.

37 Application procedures are well documented and efficiently administered. Applicants to full-time courses are interviewed by a subject specialist. A prospective student, uncertain which course to choose, is offered a guidance interview before seeing a specialist tutor. All prospective students are offered a place on a course, subject to minimum entry requirements. Interviews are, therefore, advisory. The small number of students who study through 'open learning' and those on some NVQ and other part-time programmes are interviewed to give guidance on the suitability of their choice.

38 Enrolment procedures are efficient. Full-time students' enrolments are staggered over three days. Students from particular schools are allocated a specific day for interview. This allows time for extended interviews for those who wish to change their original choice, or who do not achieve the entry requirements. Students can enrol on part-time

courses as soon as the course details are published in May or June. An information evening provides a further opportunity for prospective part-time students to talk with subject lecturers before enrolling.

39 Induction is designed to provide information on college services, introduce students to the nature of their courses, assess any support needs and provide information on the qualifications for which they are aiming. Induction programmes for full-time students are largely effective. For example, the programme for the 'get qualified' course addresses the needs of some adults who may be apprehensive about returning to study. Some tutors, however, worked through the induction tasks with students in a mechanistic fashion, relying too much on formal input and lacking the confidence to use ice-breaking exercises to full effect. Induction for part-time students is brief, and varies widely. Some lecturers link induction to an introduction to their subjects. Others conduct a cursory introduction to college services in order to begin their teaching programmes as quickly as possible.

40 Induction now includes an introduction to the college charter and an explanation of the learning agreement. All students received a copy of the charter, but they show little understanding of its implications; they saw the learning agreement as more important to their concerns. The induction programme is evaluated annually.

41 Diagnostic literacy and numeracy assessment of new full-time students was carried out during the first two weeks of the academic year. Two staff-development sessions were held to help subject teachers understand the use of the tests. Students identified as needing extra support to develop literacy and numeracy skills are enrolled into timetabled sessions to make sure they attend.

42 Personal tutors are responsible for student support and guidance. Only those teaching staff with a known commitment to the tutorial role are chosen to be tutors. As a result, some tutors are responsible for more than 20 students. The tutorial programme consists of four reviews for individual students each year, and occasional group meetings for administrative purposes. Tutors of the larger groups may have more than 100 tutorials a year. During student reviews, tutors and individual students discuss progress, identify strengths and weaknesses, and devise action plans. The outcomes are used when tutors complete student reports to be sent to parents. Tutors also contact parents if they have any concerns they need to discuss.

43 The tutorial system is monitored by the senior tutors, each of whom oversees the work of approximately 20 personal tutors. The senior tutors and personal tutors meet regularly. Tutors give generously of their time beyond that which is formally allocated. Senior tutors have additional responsibilities including the monitoring of students' destinations, the procedures for students applying to higher education, and the development of the tutor system, as well as having to teach 12-14 hours per week. This is a heavy workload.

44 The college employs its own part-time careers adviser. It has an agreement with the Hampshire guidance and careers service, and its staff visit the college regularly. There is a good range of careers information in the learning resources centre. However, the advice programme for those wishing to progress to higher education is better developed than that for those seeking jobs.

45 Staff in the learner services centre tend to rely on anecdote and impression about use of the centre, rather than analysing data. More attention should be given to the identification and analysis of trends, through the use of performance indicators and targets.

46 The students' association plays an active role in the life of the college. The association's executive group has concentrated on fund-raising events, to enable it to offer services and help students. For example, the association subsidises educational visits to broaden students' experience of their subject. The association is represented on the college's major committees, and one of its members is on the corporation board.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

47 Of the 190 sessions inspected, 52 per cent had strengths which clearly outweighed weaknesses. A summary of the inspection grades is given below.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level		11	20	24	2	0	57
Basic education		0	9	5	5	0	19
GCSE		2	5	7	1	0	15
GNVQ		2	4	9	0	0	15
NVQ		3	11	10	1	0	25
Other		5	26	22	6	0	59
Total		23	75	77	15	0	190

48 The relationship between teachers and students is good. Most teaching sessions are conducted at a pace which keeps students busy, focused and motivated. Some sessions provide notable rigour and strong intellectual challenge for students, to which they rise with enthusiasm. A feature of the more successful lessons is the emphasis on analysis and debate, rather than on accepting received opinion or copying notes from the board.

49 In most cases, the aims and objectives of lessons are appropriately set out in schemes of work, and communicated clearly to students. It would be more helpful to students if those schemes contained better guidance on further reading or research beyond that specified in the syllabus. Most lessons are well planned and well organised, enabling a variety of teaching

methods and aids to be used effectively. Teachers provide opportunities for students to work on their own, in small groups and as a whole class. They often use a number of these methods during a lesson, varying the activities and pace of delivery to suit the topic being taught, and allowing students to develop their knowledge and understanding. In most cases, earlier learning is consolidated before moving on to new topics.

50 There were examples of good practice in teaching and learning, particularly in music, science and computing. In a well-structured GCE A level music theory session, students undertook a practice examination paper. Their attention was directed by the teacher to related questions. The teacher illustrated the theoretical points in the questions on the piano and by playing extracts of works on a compact disc. Students were asked to write down their answers to the questions. The teacher asked a student for an answer which was then discussed by the class. The teacher's skilful questioning and guiding of discussion helped to stimulate students' critical analysis and enabled them to consider theoretical issues from a range of perspectives. The teacher extended students' understanding by using another, sometimes less obvious, example for further comparison. There was also illuminating reference to the music's country of origin and to contemporary artistic and political movements that might have influenced the musical genre. The lesson was lively and challenging. Students were made to think for themselves and were able to broaden their understanding.

51 First-year GCE A level physics students worked hard at well-planned and challenging experiments on linear motion and energy. Experiments included measuring the time taken for various objects to fall particular distances. Students made good use of information technology to log their measurements and convert the figures to graphs for comparisons to be made. Information technology was also used to compute the theoretical outcome of a simulated experiment in which friction was excluded as a factor, and to compare the findings with those of the actual experiments. This led students to analyse and discuss the part that friction plays in linear motion. They worked purposefully and kept good records of their results. It was clear from their answers to questions that they understood the nature and purpose of the experiments.

52 In a part-time evening session in computer studies, students were introduced to the business context of their course. The subject was the options for measuring and comparing the size of businesses, taking account of the wide differences between them. In the discussion that followed the teacher's careful exposition, students drew on their own work experiences. The teacher moved on to introduce the class to the various external pressures which influenced the operation both of large and small businesses. Students then read and discussed topical press cuttings, which reported how firms of different sizes had reacted to different external political, social and fiscal pressures. By the end of the session, they showed greater understanding of the business environment. Practical computing

lessons were well planned and well organised, and students worked enthusiastically on well-conceived problems.

53 Project work is used to good effect to help adult basic education students to develop some of the skills required for employment. For example, in the adult pre-vocational programme, a group had turned itself into a planning committee to organise a Christmas charity fair. The group made good use of its members' strengths, and everyone contributed to the enterprise. They worked well together, and showed ingenuity in obtaining materials and designing products.

54 Self-study materials and support packages have been developed in catering and business administration. Students made good use of these as supplementary learning aids, and staff were able to check and confirm progress, or suggest additional study. Nevertheless, the progress made by catering students was slow, and this was reflected in some weak examination results.

55 Practical sessions were generally conducted safely and professionally. Catering staff carefully demonstrated various procedures and techniques in clear, sequential steps before inviting students to follow their example. There were, however, instances of students washing their hands in the wrong sinks, or not washing their hands, for example, when returning from a break. Hygiene procedures need to be reinforced as a matter of priority. Health and safety regulations were neglected in some specialist areas. For example, students were allowed to eat and drink in art studios.

56 In practical business administration sessions, written instructions would help students learn how to use computer software. Some students forgot what they had already been told and time was wasted repeating instructions. In some lessons, the attention of students wandered, either because the lesson lacked variety, or because teaching was not attuned to students' different levels of ability. In art and design, for example, some of the longer lessons lacked variety, and the pace of work failed to stimulate students or hold their interest.

57 In some accounts lessons, the computational aspects of the subject were stressed, almost to the exclusion of considering the part accounting plays in management decisions. The pace at which topics were introduced or developed in some business studies and accounts lessons was too slow to keep students' attention. Some teaching materials failed to motivate students, and in some lessons students wasted time copying overhead transparencies which could more efficiently have been reproduced and distributed as handouts. Too much copying of notes was also observed in some sessions in science, health and social care, and engineering.

58 Some sessions lacked rigour, and students spent too much time in discussion based on conjecture rather than fact. In others, there was little opportunity to refer to actual events or to students' own experiences. The extent to which teachers responded to the different needs of students in the same class varied. Where attention was concentrated on the less able,

the more able students were often insufficiently stretched. This was particularly noticeable in some of the classes which included adult students. In other classes, for example in history, some second-year A level students struggled vainly to contribute effectively to discussion at a level at which others were fully at home.

59 In several sessions, too few students took part in discussion, particularly where the teacher relied on volunteers to answer questions. In some English lessons, students were provided with 'model answers' or notes. They showed a low level of analytical response and original thought, and had difficulty in articulating concepts. In a few lessons in office skills, engineering and mathematics, students were not encouraged sufficiently by staff to pursue lines of enquiry. More skilful questioning would help them to gain a deeper understanding of principles and concepts. In engineering, students' achievements were often lower than might have been expected.

60 Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from some well-planned teaching sessions, and from the care of teachers sensitive to their learning needs. Some are integrated well into the mainstream courses of the college. Students also benefit from a work experience programme which introduces them to the world of work. In some classes for students with severe learning difficulties, the teaching methods used were not differentiated to take account of the range of ability, and this placed an unnecessary ceiling on the achievement of some. The content of some lessons did not reflect the aims of the course or the adult status of some of the students. In several sessions, there was an over-emphasis on reading and writing as the media for learning, where other media would have better met students' learning needs. Different approaches to dealing with tasks were rarely discussed with students.

61 Students whose first language is not English do not have their individual learning needs diagnosed before beginning an English language programme. They would benefit from a more formal diagnosis of needs and a better-structured and progressively more demanding course of study.

62 In many areas, students' learning is enriched by effective work experience, residential field trips, and other 'real life' events. For example, there are strong working relationships between the community studies staff and the health and social care agencies, resulting in good opportunities for work experience. Effective liaison with local businesses and agencies has also ensured work experience for students on other vocational courses. A promenade concert dinner for 200 guests was organised at the college and students served guests and acted as hosts. Gourmet evenings for the general public enable hotel and catering students to show their skills. The work of art and design students is displayed in the public areas of the college. Business administration students manage the secretarial section's office supplies to gain experience of controlling

and re-ordering stock. Students of environmental science go on a residential field course. Students of French spend time in France, and residential visits are planned for students of German and Spanish.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

63 Most students enjoy their work and are able to talk about their studies knowledgeably and enthusiastically. Students' work is generally of an appropriate standard: many show suitable levels of knowledge and understanding, and an ability to apply what they have learned. Students are encouraged and supported by staff in their progress towards the qualifications they seek, and their working relationships with teachers are good. They are able to develop appropriate study, numeracy and literacy skills through tutorials and the learning support services in the college. The development of skills in information technology is uneven.

64 In most subject areas, teachers work to schedules for setting, marking and returning work, so that students can benefit from their comments before embarking on their next tasks. Students' work is generally marked carefully. Where there is little written comment, the teacher usually talks to the student to expand on the marking. In some areas, for example, health and social care, more attention should be paid to marking students' grammar, spelling and punctuation. The recording of the assessments of students' work is usually methodical, but not all teachers are equally punctilious.

65 In 1993, the proportion of students who completed their GCSE subjects was generally high. Retention rates fell below 85 per cent in only three subjects: computer studies, environmental studies and biology. In 1994, student retention rates in GCSE subjects were also generally good. They fell below 85 per cent in only four subjects. Student retention in computer studies improved but did not reach 85 per cent, and the lowest retention rate was 77 per cent in travel and tourism.

66 In 1993, 21 of the 28 GCE A level subjects which were offered had retention rates above 85 per cent, but this fell to 14 subjects in 1994. Art, geography and law improved their retention rates, but rates fell in biology, theatre studies, chemistry, physics, environmental studies, economics, German, and government and politics. Student retention rates were consistently low in mathematics, further mathematics and practical music.

67 In 1993, 823 students entered GCSE examinations. The proportion of students achieving grades A-C was 63.5 per cent, which compares well with the national average of 50 per cent for colleges in the further education sector. In 15 of the 21 subjects offered by the college, students achieved pass rates at grades A-C which were above the national averages for those subjects. A rate of over 80 per cent was achieved in travel and tourism, creative arts and German. Pass rates at grades A-C in biology, chemistry, history and physics were all lower than the national averages for these subjects. In computer studies, the pass rate was only 18 per cent.

68 In 1994, 808 students were entered for GCSE examinations. The average success rate for those achieving grades A-C fell to 54 per cent. There is particular cause for concern about pass rates in travel and tourism where the percentage has fallen from 92 per cent in 1993, to 43 per cent in 1994; and in environmental studies where it has fallen from 77 per cent to 25 per cent. The 1992 figure for environmental studies was 84 per cent, so the decline in this subject appears to be a trend. Between 1993 and 1994 pass rates, grades A-C, have also fallen in biology, and human biology. The highest pass rates, grades A-C, were in accounting, creative arts, French, German and sociology, all with over 70 per cent.

69 In 1993, a total of 780 students entered GCE A level examinations, of which 80 per cent achieved grades A-E. This pass rate is the same as the 1993 national average for sixth form colleges, and compares well with the 66 per cent for other further education sector colleges. Students who sat GCE A levels achieved good pass rates of over 80 per cent in biology, physics, environmental studies, geography, government and politics, English literature, textiles, theatre studies, French and economics. Particularly good results were achieved in modular mathematics and music, where all the candidates passed, but pass rates were particularly low in design and technology (31 per cent), art (57 per cent), and accounting (59 per cent).

70 The college makes use of the Advanced Level Information System which measures full-time students' achievements by comparing their GCSE results with their eventual GCE A level grades. According to Advanced Level Information System data for 1992 and 1993, about half of the college's A level results were better than would have been expected from students' GCSE performances, and half were worse.

71 In 1994, a total of 641 entrants entered GCE A level examinations, 18 per cent fewer than the previous year. Seventy-nine per cent of students achieved grades A-E. There were good results in biology, physics, modular mathematics, environmental studies, computing and communication studies. All students in government and politics and music who sat the final examination gained at least an E grade, though retention rates in these subjects are low. Pass rates were poor in theatre studies (50 per cent), economics (55 per cent), and accounting (30 per cent). Substantial improvements on 1993 were shown in the 1994 pass rates for design and technology (up from 31 to 86 per cent), and art (up from 57 to 82 per cent).

72 In the industry studies area, little information about retention rates for vocational courses was provided. In 1993, there was an overall pass rate of 52 per cent in City & Guilds (C&G) engineering and motor vehicle examinations. This fell to 34 per cent in 1994. The pass rates in computer aided engineering were generally good, and there was a very good pass rate of 90 per cent in the NVQ level 2 in manufacturing. However, some results give cause for concern. In 1994, there were 80 entries in C&G repair and servicing examinations, and to date there are 11 passes. In

1993, there were 11 entries in the C&G fabrication and welding examinations, and no record of a pass rate was provided. In 1994, there were 14 entries and five passes. In 1994, two of the three students who sat the examination gained the national diploma in design and manufacturing technology: another 12 students failed to finish the course, making a completion rate of only 20 per cent.

73 In the area of business and management and information technology, student retention figures for single subject studies for 1993 and 1994 were not available. In 1993 and 1994, the pass rates in computer literacy and information technology examinations at stage 1 were above 70 per cent. At stage 2, computer literacy examination results have improved from 36 per cent in 1993, to 76 per cent in 1994. In both years, results were good in book-keeping, typewriting, audio-typewriting and wordprocessing.

74 In 1993, 78 per cent of the students pursuing a Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) first diploma in business and finance passed, which is above the national average as published by BTEC in 1992. In the same year, 89 per cent of the students pursuing the national diploma in business and finance and 91 per cent of those pursuing the national certificate achieved their qualifications. Both sets of results are above the national average. In 1994, the pass rate for the national diploma course fell to 73 per cent, but remained above the national average. In the same year, the pass rate for the national certificate fell to 67 per cent, which is below the national average. In 1994, half of the original number in the GNVQ business intermediate group left the course and only 40 per cent of those who remained achieved the qualification. An even lower pass rate of 13 per cent of the students who pursued the intermediate GNVQ in leisure and tourism achieved the qualification, but student retention was good.

75 The results and retention data for students entered for examinations in personnel principles and practice and management studies were not available for 1994. The results for the certificate in supervisory management were particularly good: all students passed in 1993, and 92 per cent passed in 1994. In 1993, 15 students achieved the certificate in management studies. In 1994, seven students achieved the business administration NVQ level 3 award, 13 achieved level 2 and 14 achieved level 1. The pass rate for NVQ level 3 examinations for accounting technicians in 1994 was above the national average but it was below the national average at level 2, and at level 1.

76 In the area of hospitality and catering, student retention data were not provided. Pass rates for the beverage sales and service examinations in both 1993 and 1994 were over 85 per cent. Results in preliminary cookery were good, but the 1994 pass rates in cookery part 1, and food and beverage part 1, were substantially lower than in 1993. Of concern is the low pass rate in cookery part 2, which fell from an already low figure of 38 per cent in 1993 to 28 per cent in 1994. The examination in environmental health officers basic food hygiene is taken by all catering

students but comprehensive results and retention rates were not provided. By the end of 1994, none of the 10 students in the NVQ level 1 catering and hospitality course had achieved their full qualification. Nine students passed after the inspection had finished.

77 In the area of community and social studies, the pass rates in the family and community care course show a steady decline, falling from 100 per cent in 1992 to 53 per cent in 1994. Retention rates for the course have also been low. The pass rates for the BTEC first diploma in caring course show a steady decline from 86 per cent in 1992 to 55 per cent in 1994. Results for the last two years are below the 1992 national average and student retention rates have fallen to 55 per cent. However, the 1994 pass rate for the BTEC national diploma in social care course was 81 per cent and only one student left the course.

78 In performing and visual arts, student retention data and vocational examination pass rates for single subjects were either unco-ordinated or unavailable. In some single subject examinations, for example, photography and textiles, results were good in both 1993 and 1994. In 1993, the pass rate in the BTEC first diploma in art and design was 86 per cent, which is above the 1992 national average. However, of the 17 students studying for the GNVQ intermediate qualification in art and design, only 47 per cent passed and the retention rate was just 50 per cent. The pass rate for the BTEC national diploma course in performing arts fell from 100 per cent in 1993 to 75 per cent in 1994.

79 In 1993, eight students achieved the BTEC national diploma in computer studies representing a pass rate of 89 per cent, and in 1994 eleven students achieved the qualification, representing a pass rate of 92 per cent, both performances above the national average. In 1993 six students and in 1994, ten students achieved the BTEC national certificate in computer studies, representing 100 per cent and 83 per cent pass rates, respectively. Both were above the national average. The retention rates in the national certificate courses were low at 43 per cent in 1993, and 59 per cent in 1994.

80 The number of full-time students leaving the college has grown from 650 in 1992 to 734 in 1994. The college's statistics on student destinations show that in 1993, 26 per cent of students went on to higher education, 30 per cent to further education and 22 per cent to employment. In 1994, the comparative figures were 22 per cent, 33 per cent and 22 per cent. At the time of the inspection the college was still trying to find out the destinations of 16 per cent of students who left college in 1994.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

81 The college's quality assurance system is at an early stage of development. The philosophy of continuous quality monitoring and improvement is not yet central to the work of the college. There is, however, a policy on quality assurance, which aims to ensure that the quality of service satisfies the specific contractual obligations of the college

to its students. The college has established a quality support unit, which includes the vice-principal and director of curriculum, to implement this policy and to address all aspects of quality assurance. The unit has held seminars to brief staff about the system and the need for quality assurance. However, not all staff accept that there is such a need. There is general complacency about current standards of performance. Some staff have a narrow understanding of the quality system, which they see primarily as a mechanism for bidding for extra resources.

82 The system is documented at three levels: a description of the college quality system; the procedures to be followed, and the documentation to be completed in carrying out the procedures. The description of the system is detailed and clear. Its major weakness is that it does not contain a strategy for devising quality standards against which performance can be measured and improved.

83 The quality support unit has produced a common format for course and subject manuals, which is intended to enable consistent collection of information. Course manuals are produced for every programme, with separate sections for staff and student reviews. The quality of the manuals is very variable across subject areas. Some are incomplete, and others are overloaded with unnecessary detail. Some subject manuals are, however, attractive and easy to read; for example, those for environmental science and for the 'look further' course for adults returning to study.

84 There is a common procedure for the review of courses, which requires course and subject teams to evaluate their work comprehensively each year. This procedure has just been completed for the first time. It included the completion of a set of three questionnaires to obtain students' views, and a team review meeting. The object is to enable course or subject teams to identify strengths and weaknesses, to set targets for improvement, and to devise an action plan.

85 There are significant variations in the rigour and depth of analysis employed in course reviews. Examination data used are often incomplete, and are not always examined for year-on-year trends and analysed critically against retention rates. There is some good practice, for example, in the advanced GNVQ in business. However, some courses, for example, in environmental science and biology, had no action plans. In engineering, and catering and hospitality, examination results were not analysed sufficiently critically, nor were there plans to address persistent under-recruitment. There was no evidence of a thorough review of some mathematics and computing courses. In business studies, the process failed to identify some pressing staff-development issues. There is generally room to improve the analysis and discussion of classroom practice and to take proper account of students' views. The operation of the system is inconsistent. Teams and divisions should be more accountable to senior management for ensuring a full critical analysis, for reporting outcomes of reviews, and for taking timely action for improvement.

86 Students have not been involved in discussions about definitions of quality, or its improvement. They are rarely included in course review teams. The questionnaires to elicit their perceptions had not been used in some subjects. Students have had little involvement in the development of the quality system and are not aware of its implications. The views of employers were not included in the review of some vocational areas, for example, catering and engineering.

87 The college has instigated a staff-appraisal system, and the first cycle of appraisals for all academic staff has just been completed. The policy is clear, and the procedures are systematic. Records are kept of individuals' staff-development activities. Following a policy review in 1993, the college is addressing the need to improve the planning for staff development, and is reviewing posts and responsibilities with this in mind. At present, the college's procedures for identifying priorities for staff development and linking these to its strategic plan are inadequate.

88 The college charter is printed in the full-time student yearbook, and included in the information pack for part-time students. Its introduction was not monitored. Some tutors ensured that students were made aware of the charter and its implications during induction, but practice was not uniform. The charter contains few clear standards which can be measured. There is no reference to either the quality assurance system or the college charter in the staff handbook.

89 The college's self-assessment report has sections under each of the headings in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*, but it does not identify strengths and weaknesses and there is no action plan for improvement.

RESOURCES

Staffing

90 Teachers are appropriately qualified and suitably experienced for the subjects they teach. Over 90 per cent have a recognised teaching qualification. Approximately 70 per cent have achieved the Training and Development Lead Body qualification for assessors and/or verifiers. Women comprise some 50 per cent of the full-time, and 70 per cent of the part-time academic staff, and 80 per cent of support staff. Twenty-six per cent of the college's managers are women. Two of the college senior management team, and eight divisional and cross-college managers, are women.

91 Full-time teachers are deployed effectively. There is a good balance of experienced and new lecturers in post. Some of the former would benefit from opportunities to update their industrial or commercial experience. The college employs over 100 part-time teachers, representing about 15 per cent of the total full-time equivalent teaching staff. In some divisions, the proportion of part-time staff is high, placing too great an administrative

and curriculum development burden on full-time teachers. For example, only two of the 10 teachers employed to teach computing are permanent full-time staff.

92 The college has a personnel plan which was drawn up by the personnel subcommittee of the academic board. The college executive determines personnel policy. Divisional heads and other senior managers bid for additional and replacement staff when vacancies occur. Bids are considered and prioritised at the staffing and resources committees, before being submitted to the corporation for approval.

93 The availability and deployment of administrative and specialist support staff is variable. In curriculum areas such as business, health care, and art and design, the level of support is inadequate. In others, such as science, support is good. The number of full-time equivalent support staff is 45 (including technicians, information technology support staff and learner services staff), compared with the management and teaching staff complement of 116: a ratio of 1:2.5.

Equipment/learning resources

94 The college has adequate equipment for the courses it offers, and there is a replacement policy for ageing or obsolete equipment. In catering and leisure, the quality of some equipment is up to industrial standards. There are very good language laboratory facilities. There has been recent investment in multi-media applications and software for computer-aided graphic design. In the information technology section, however, there are some outdated computers and software, and the software used for adult student classes does not match business standards. Some equipment in engineering needs to be replaced. Information technology facilities for music are inadequate.

95 There are approximately 200 personal computers in the college, but only 40 per cent of these have up-to-date professional software. The personal computers are located in workshops, the learning resources centre and specialist teaching rooms. In theory, students can use the college's computer facilities at any time. This works successfully where facilities are housed in rooms not used for timetabled teaching sessions, but not where specialist computing rooms are used for class teaching.

96 The learning resources centre, formerly the library, has over 20,000 books, national and local newspapers, collections of specialist texts, and self-study materials. A networked compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) database is available in the centre, providing an extensive information service for students. The service includes information about inter-library loans, careers and current affairs. Video cassette players and computers are also available. There is specialist equipment to enable students with disabilities to use learning resources: for example, a magnilink magnifier and interactive personal computers with voicebox for visually-impaired users.

97 The quality and quantity of the bookstock in the centre is generally adequate. For art and design, humanities, social studies and science it is good. The bookstock in business studies, engineering and music requires up-dating. Newspapers, magazines and CD-ROM facilities are not available for all of the foreign languages being studied.

Accommodation

98 The college operates mainly on two sites in Andover, which are 400 metres apart. Six other premises are used, including two in Hursley and Gosport, 30 miles away. The college has a nursery located on the St John's site. There are three blocks on the main site, one comprising mainly teaching rooms, one workshop, and the administration offices and a theatre which operates on a commercial basis. The buildings vary in quality and age and include an adapted workhouse built in the mid-1830s, a converted private dwelling house, and newer purpose-built premises constructed in the mid-1970s. Access for students in wheelchairs is restricted in the old buildings. The converted house, Cricklade House, is used mainly for courses for adult returners and music study. The college monitors the use of its teaching accommodation and successfully matches room capacity with group size.

99 The general quality of accommodation on the main site is good. There is an adequate range of rooms of different sizes, appropriately furnished and equipped. Some of the buildings have been remodelled to improve the use of space, and some areas are open-plan to accommodate students working in large groups. Although the open-plan areas should be adaptable to a variety of uses, there are no solid partitions for dividing the space when teaching small groups. The present use of thick curtains to divide teaching areas is not satisfactory. Both students and staff are distracted by noise from other groups.

100 The premises on the St John's annexe site are in poor condition. Although some improvements have been made, the present state of the accommodation is not helpful to teaching and learning. The shape of some rooms is unsuitable, storage space is inadequate, decoration is unsatisfactory, and there are problems related to health and hygiene requirements. The layout is such that students sometimes have to pass through rooms in which others are working.

101 The standard of the catering teaching facilities, and of most of the workshops, matches that found in industry. A training office has been established to provide a realistic working environment for students studying on business courses, but their lessons are often disrupted by noise from students using the GNVQ base area.

102 There are four, separate, open-access study areas on the two sites as well as the main learning resources centre. Together, these provide about 270 student study spaces. The study areas provide a welcoming and supportive learning environment for students.

103 Most senior managers have their own rooms. Teaching staff share workrooms. The quality of the workrooms is generally good. Most have comfortable furniture and provide adequate space. Some areas used by administrative and support staff are cramped, but improvements are planned. Much equipment is stored in corridors because of inadequate storage space.

104 A refectory serves students from the two main sites. It is open between 08.00 and 21.30 hours, and the price of meals is competitive. At peak times, the refectory is almost full. Meal breaks are staggered to prevent over-crowding.

105 Students have no common room or social area on the main site, though they can use the refectory which is open all day. Students tend to congregate outside college entrances or in uncovered courtyards and expressed dissatisfaction with this arrangement. Parents have expressed concern that they will wander into town, rather than staying on college premises, when they have no classes.

106 There is good access to sporting and leisure facilities because the community sports and leisure centre, open to students and the general public, is on the same site. Signposting around the college sites is poor.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

107 The college is making progress towards achieving its mission. Particular strengths of the provision inspected are:

- good tutorial and personal support for students
- strong relationships with parents
- productive links with the local business community and the local TEC
- effective classroom teaching in most areas
- examination results which are generally satisfactory and sometimes good
- commitment to students of all ages with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- sound financial management
- effective involvement of the corporation board in strategic planning
- the expanding range of provision to meet a wider market.

108 If it is to continue to improve standards, the college should:

- collate all student retention rates and examination results in an appropriate format
- analyse this data at divisional and college levels
- enlist the commitment of all staff to the new quality assurance system
- address the general lack of critical analysis in course reviews
- improve management practice and the understanding of strategic issues at divisional level

-
- co-ordinate market research
 - improve some of its vocational examination results
 - promote itself more strongly both in the community and in schools
 - address the inadequate provision of social areas for students.

FIGURES

-
- 1 Percentage enrolments by age (as at 31 July 1994)

 - 2 Percentage enrolments by level of study (as at 31 July 1994)

 - 3 FEFC – funded enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at 31 July 1994)

 - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at 31 July 1994)

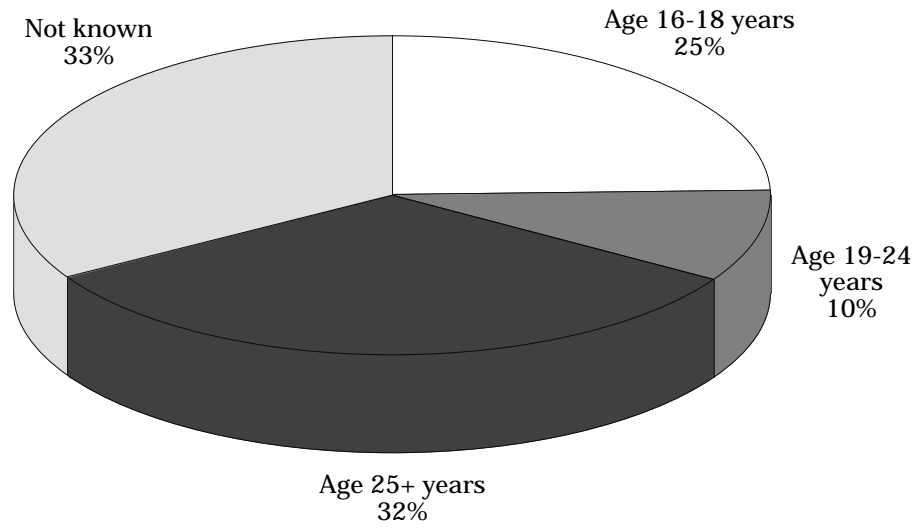
 - 5 Income (for 16 months to July 1994)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)

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

Figure 1

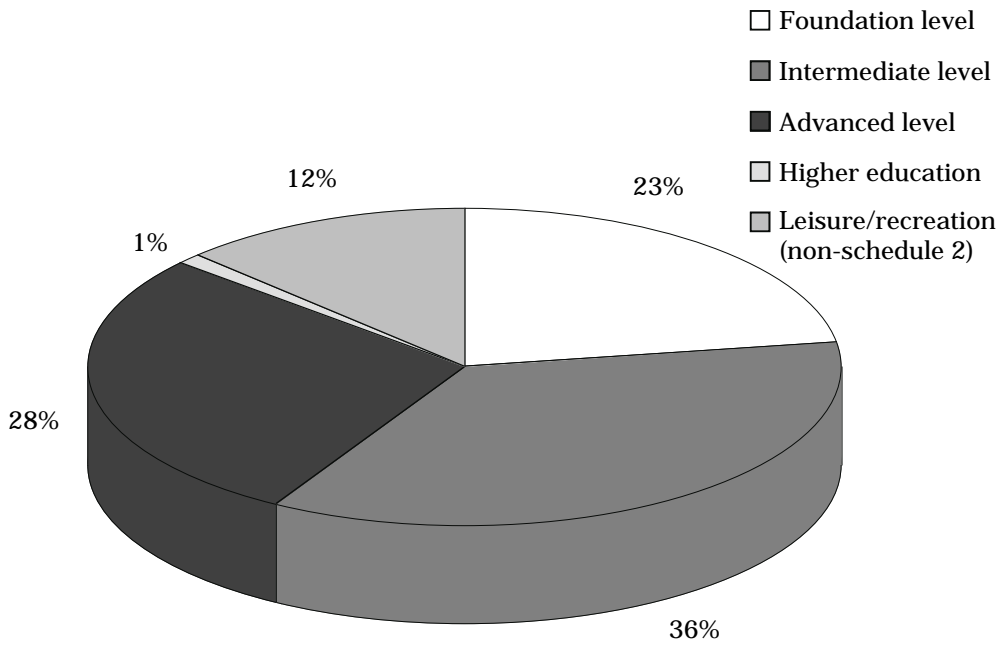
Cricklade College: percentage enrolments by age (as at 31 July 1994)



Enrolments: 4,979

Figure 2

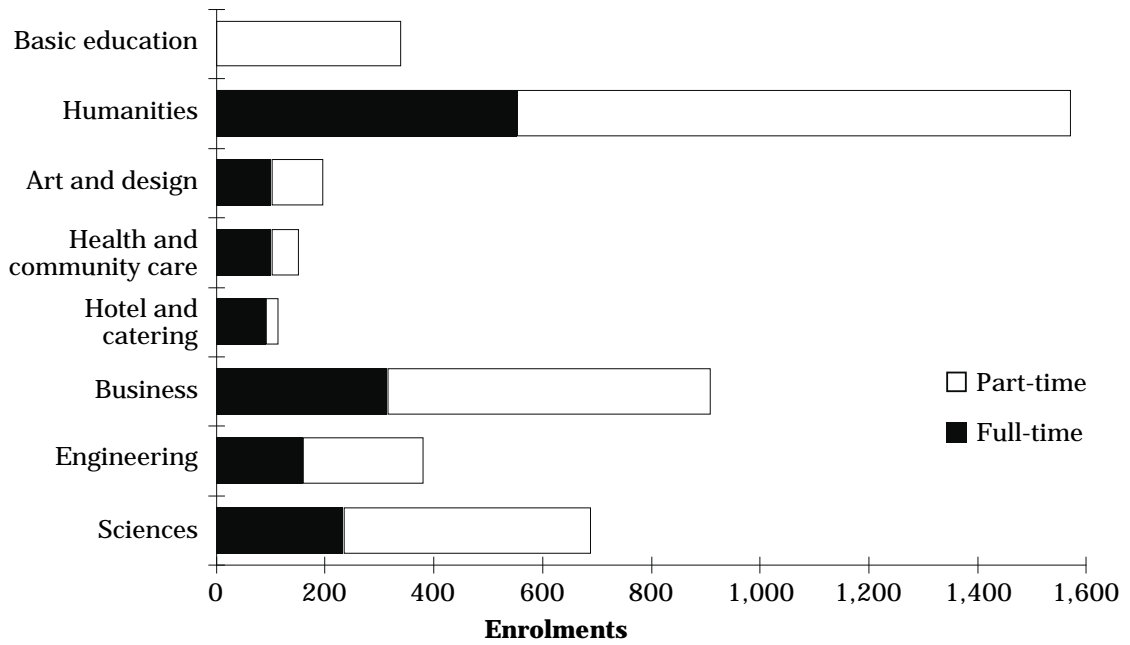
Cricklade College: percentage enrolments by level of study (as at 31 July 1994)



Enrolments: 4,979

Figure 3

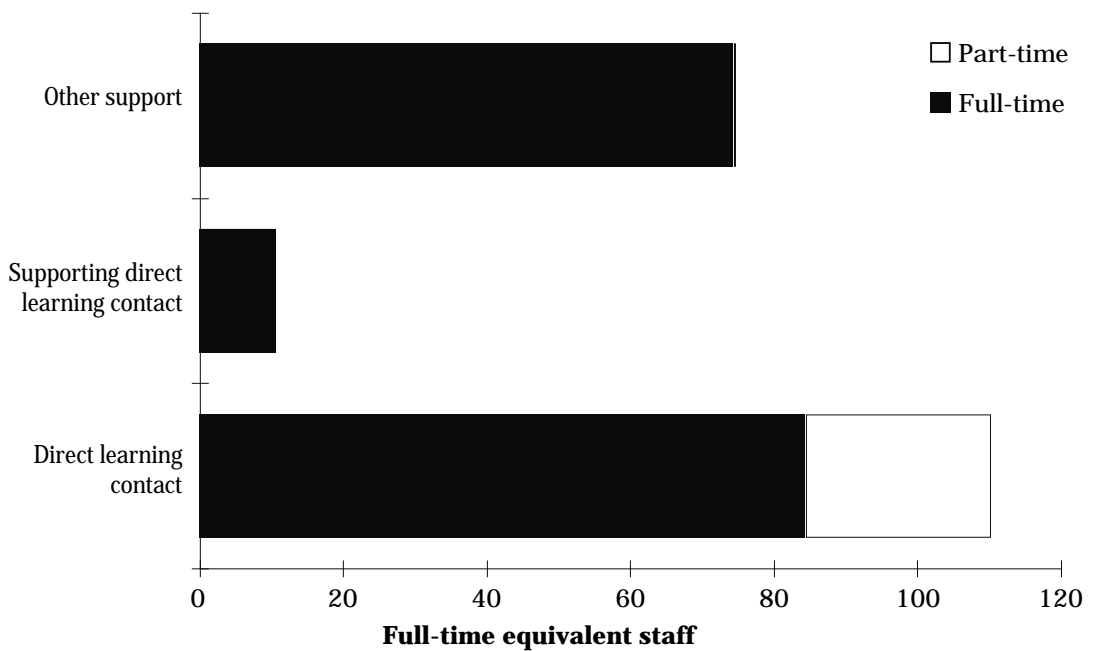
Cricklade College: FEFC - funded enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at 31 July 1994)



Enrolments: 4,360

Figure 4

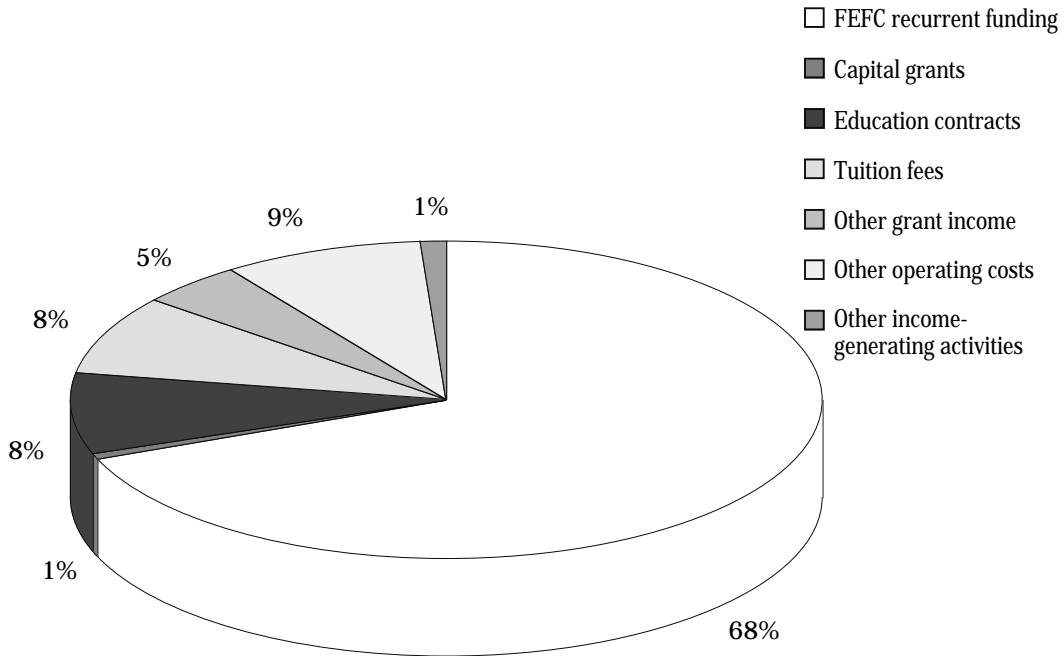
Cricklade College: staff profile - staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at 31 July 1994)



Full-time equivalent staff: 196

Figure 5

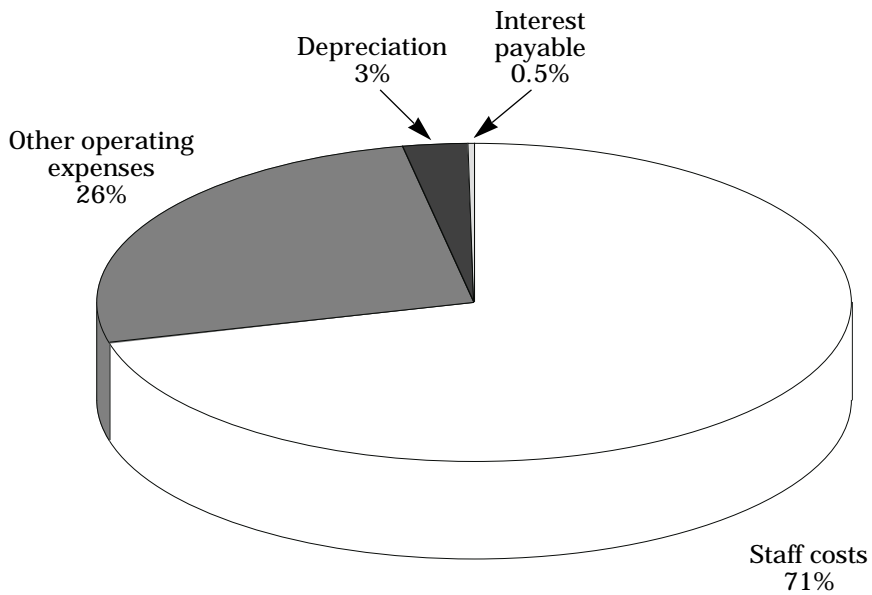
Cricklade College: income (for 16 months to July 1994)



Income: £7,421,000

Figure 6

Cricklade College: expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)



Expenditure: £7,354,000

Published by the
Further Education Funding Council
February 1995