Farnborough College of Technology

October 1995

***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 121/95

FARNBOROUGH COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY
SOUTH EAST REGION
Inspected September 1994–May 1995

Summary

Farnborough College of Technology is the main provider of further education in north Hampshire. It offers a significant number of higher education programmes to a much wider national and international market. The range of courses is extensive and the mix of further and higher education enhances opportunities for students' progression. Links with industry are good. Prospective and enrolled students receive impartial guidance. The college is well governed and well managed and has good internal communications. There are well-developed budgeting processes involving delegation of responsibility to departments. Staff are well qualified and in most subjects the quality of teaching is good. Students' examination results are variable. They are generally satisfactory and sometimes good. Retention rates on a minority of courses are poor. A high proportion of students go on to higher education or to relevant employment. The college holds the Investor in People award and there is a commitment to quality at all levels. Staff development is well organised and executed. The college has an extensive range of equipment including good computing facilities. Library facilities are also good. The college should: aim to strengthen co-ordination of the various elements of student support services; pursue its agreed plans for continuous quality improvement; establish a comprehensive and consolidated personnel database; improve retention rates in the department of computing and information technology; and provide access to science laboratories for students with restricted mobility.

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

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Sciences (including computing)	2	Health and community care	3
		Hairdressing and beauty	2
Engineering	2	Art and design (including media)	2
Business	2		
Hotel and catering (including leisure and tourism)	2	Access to higher education	2
		Basic education	2

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

1   The inspection of Farnborough College of Technology, Hampshire, took place in three stages. The college's guidance, enrolment and induction procedures were inspected for one day during September 1994. During the weeks beginning 5 December 1994, 13 February, 6 March and 24 April 1995, a total of two full-time and 11 registered part-time inspectors spent 39 days on specialist subject inspections. They visited 213 classes involving approximately 2,080 students and examined students' work. In the week beginning 15 May 1995, three full-time inspectors and four registered part-time inspectors spent a total of 28 days assessing aspects of cross-college provision.

2   During the period of the inspection, there were meetings with members of the corporation board, the senior management team, lecturers, support staff, students, parents of college students, representatives of local industry and commerce and of the Hampshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). Inspectors also attended college meetings and examined college policy statements, minutes of committees, working papers and documents relating to college organisation.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

3   Farnborough College of Technology was founded in 1957 from the amalgamation of the Royal Aircraft Establishment Technical College and a newly-created local education authority (LEA) college. The main campus is in Farnborough and there are three other sites in Aldershot. The college uses nine additional centres for adult education.

4   At the time of the inspection, there were 10,157 student enrolments, of whom 7,526 were aged 19 or over. Percentage enrolments by age and level of study are given in figures 1 and 2. Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figure 3. The college has 553 full-time equivalent staff, of whom 283 are lecturers, 91 provide direct learning support and 179 provide other support. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

5   The college's curricular provision is managed through six academic departments: engineering; environmental management and science; creative studies; computing and information technology; professional and business management; and general and adult education. A seventh department provides customised training and specialised courses in business and industrial support. A specialist section provides learning support and programmes for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. As well as further education courses, the college offers a large number of higher education programmes. As an associate college of the University of Surrey it provides nine degree programmes and three post-graduate programmes. Thirty-six per cent of the college's students follow higher education courses.

6   The area served by the college contains some 9,800 businesses employing around 150,000 people. The local business trends survey

indicates that over the next 12 months employment prospects will improve marginally. The local economy model forecasts that output in the area will grow by 3 per cent in 1995. The area is particularly strong in business and financial sector companies. Service sector employment related to finance and distribution prospered during the 1980s and many computer software companies are based around Farnborough. Overall, people in the area are highly qualified. Forty-nine per cent of the employed residents hold a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 3 or equivalent qualification.

7   The college is in an area of relatively low and falling unemployment; there was 4.6 per cent unemployment in December 1994. Since the early part of the decade, the number of 16 year old school leavers continuing in further education has exceeded 75 per cent and opportunities for further growth are limited. Farnborough College of Technology is expanding its further education market by providing adult retraining courses. The college has met its 1994-95 target growth in Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) funded numbers of 4.7 per cent.

8   The college aims to provide high-quality, cost-effective education and training relevant to the needs of students and employers. To achieve this mission, it seeks to ensure equality of opportunity, provision which is accessible to the local and wider community and which leads to nationally-recognised qualifications. The college also seeks to identify the needs of its clients, to assure the quality and efficiency of its services and to enable its students to achieve their potential through clearly-defined programmes. The college is committed to working closely with other organisations to provide a coherent portfolio of post-16 education and training opportunities.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

9   The college offers a wide range of courses for school leavers and adults. There are 44 full-time and 200 part-time further education programmes and some 300 adult and community education courses. Each department offers a variety of full-time and part-time courses from craft level to higher national certificates and diplomas. The college provides students with the opportunity to progress from further to higher education often in the same department and with the same teachers.

10   The college is a significant provider of higher education. Over 10 first and second degree courses and 17 higher national diploma courses are offered in a range of subjects, which include business, computing, environmental science and aeronautical engineering. These are validated by either the University of Surrey or Portsmouth University. There is a well-designed access programme for adults who wish to enter higher education. It provides courses in a number of curriculum areas for students from a variety of educational backgrounds. The North Hampshire Business School offers higher education and professional business and management courses.

11   A wide range of courses for school leavers is being developed with care to avoid wasteful competition with neighbouring schools and colleges. Formal links with two neighbouring schools have been established to encourage students to progress to courses at the college. Courses leading to the General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) at intermediate and advanced level or their equivalent, NVQs and nationally-recognised craft, technician and professional qualifications are offered in all curriculum areas. The college does not encourage students to repeat General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) courses and offers only a limited number of subjects, mainly taken to supplement other courses. It offers 27 General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) and 18 GCE advanced supplementary (AS) subjects.

12   Full-time courses for school leavers with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are limited to a narrow range of specially-designed courses. Only one of these offers any opportunity for students to join vocational classes. Opportunities for part-time study, particularly for adults, are imaginative and broad ranging, covering all areas of learning difficulty and disability. A college programme, 'sign, sight, sound', provides learning opportunities for the hearing impaired; courses include Indian cookery and first-aid. This programme has recently won the BT silver award.

13   The college offers a wide range of adult community courses, both vocational and recreational, at the main college sites and in a large number of centres in north Hampshire. Basic education courses in literacy and numeracy are also offered at these centres. The college has the basic skills agency quality award. Open, distance and flexible-learning programmes are being developed on a limited scale for full-time students. They include a number of GCSE and GCE A level subjects and hairdressing. The college has substantial contracts for training, using open learning. Accreditation of students' prior learning is available in curriculum areas where it is appropriate to the course structure; for example in management studies.

14   The college is seeking a bigger market share for further education programmes whilst maintaining its significant higher education programme. It faces substantial competition from local schools, sixth form and other colleges offering comparable programmes. In this respect, the opportunity for students to progress to higher education within the college is a major advantage in recruiting. The college is looking beyond north Hampshire to increase its market. There are a number of imaginative initiatives to develop satellite centres in neighbouring counties. The college has a successful commercial training unit, Farnborough Customised Training. Operating through the college's academic departments it offers responsive, flexible and specialist services in such areas as language, management, customer care and NVQ training for business. Its work includes business with the Ukraine, Latvia and China.

15   Steps have been taken to ensure that staff are aware of the government's aims and policies for further education. Staff generally have a good appreciation of the national targets for education and training,

especially as they affect their own curriculum areas. The college has close links with local industry and commerce. There are advisory and liaison committees in some curriculum areas. The advisory committees for engineering have been particularly useful. Employers in childcare have worked well with the college in providing work experience opportunities for students. In other areas, such as tourism and business, links have been less successful and the college is making efforts to revitalise them. The Hampshire TEC has a high regard for the work-related courses of the college. The TEC monitors the college's strategic plan throughout the year. The TEC has provided funding for a pilot GNVQ for adults and for NVQ developments in information technology and business.

16 Marketing, planning and publicity are well co-ordinated by two members of the senior management team, working with the marketing action group. Some teachers provide enthusiastic support, but there is a growing need to use marketing and publicity specialists. There is a wide range of promotional activities, including visits to schools, college displays and extensive newspaper advertising. Publicity material is of a high standard and most conforms to the college house style. The college's media division, with its local radio station which broadcasts for one month each year, provides a useful student-led marketing resource.

17 The college has an equal opportunities policy statement which is linked to a code of practice for access, curriculum and personnel procedures and for staff development. There is a separate statement and policy covering personal harassment. The implementation strategy for these policies is somewhat limited in scope and lacks detailed targets for action. Responsibility for implementation and monitoring lie with the vice-principal, who is the chair of the equal opportunities committee.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

18 The college is well served by its corporation board of 19 members. Eleven are from business, one is a university professor, one is nominated by the TEC, one is the chief executive of the local borough council and one a senior army officer. There is also a member of the teaching staff, a member of the support staff, the president of the students' union and the principal. Members bring considerable senior managerial and industrial expertise to the corporation. The board, which meets three times a year, has a clear view of the college within the community and a thorough understanding of the external influences affecting it. The college would benefit from still more varied industrial representation, particularly from the newer service industries.

19 A purposeful partnership exists between the board and the principal. Members are aware of their legal responsibilities and correctly observe the distinction between governance and management. The chairman of the corporation meets formally with the principal each month. The board has a committee structure which fulfils its statutory obligations. The committees are: finance and general purposes; audit; special purposes;

and remuneration. There are also two consultative committees, covering workshop and classroom issues, which work with teachers to help formulate standards for teaching. Recent criticism of the remuneration committee, which operated without terms of reference, and the workshop consultative committee, where terms of reference were not fulfilled, has led to a reorganisation of their work and an improved contribution.

20   The college is well led and this has shaped its ethos and culture. There is an effective senior management team, known as the strategic planning group, comprising the principal, vice-principal, assistant principal and college secretary. The related operational management structure consists of six heads of academic department and the head of customised training. They are supported by cross-college managers for staff development, finance, resources, personnel, management information, library and the refectory. There are clear lines of responsibility and roles are well defined and understood. However, some senior managers' job descriptions should be updated to reflect better their current responsibilities.

21   Lines of communication at all levels of the organisation are effective. Staff are confident and supportive of the college and its managers, and they feel well managed. The heads of department meet regularly as a group and with their own heads of division. Regularly programmed staff meetings and the weekly news bulletin are valued. There is an effective committee structure although, in some cases, the minutes of meetings are not disseminated as effectively as they might be.

22   Strategic planning is carried out well. Within the broad targets set by the corporation board, business plans are produced by departments for approval by the strategic planning group. The strategic plan sets priorities, includes operating statements and identifies those responsible for implementation. Monitoring and evaluation are comprehensive and there is good use of performance indicators.

23   An efficient budget planning and allocation process operates for academic departments and cross-college areas. The strategic planning group does not hold large central budgets. Academic departments control their own budgets, which are agreed on the basis of formal plans and are revised in the light of actual student activity. Budgets for central services, such as estate management and the library, are derived from the departmental allocations, based on agreed formulae for the apportionment of costs. A college-designed computer program is used to provide budgetary information to managers, including a monthly report which gives accurate and appropriate data. The college calculates course unit costs, and is able to identify those which are financially marginal. The college's average level of funding for 1994-95 is £18.17 per unit, which coincides with the median for general further education colleges. The college's estimated income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1995 are shown in figures 5 and 6.

24   The college has an efficient management information system which uses the education management information system, Oracle and internally-designed software. The main college site is networked with the administration management information system and there are terminals in each department. Plans to expand this facility to the remaining college sites are in hand.

25   The college has a range of well-written and relevant policies in place, including those for the environment, equal opportunities and safety. The college's environmental policy is particularly innovative and is implemented in a variety of practical ways throughout the college. Some policies are in the early stages of implementation.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

26   Guidance and support services are in transition. The various elements provide appropriate levels of service to students. Some are relatively new and so far have few measurable outcomes. The customer services committee, chaired by the assistant principal, co-ordinates the work. The separate management of learning support and customer services, together with the lack of a central location, sometimes reduces their effectiveness. The college plans a clearer policy statement containing operational objectives, together with the relocation of centralised facilities in a new building. This should strengthen the co-ordination of the service and raise its quality.

27   The customer services unit is often the first point of contact with the college. It is conveniently located in the reception area. The quality of its service is good, the guidance it offers is impartial, and enquiries are directed to other educational establishments where appropriate. Customer services staff have a comprehensive knowledge of college courses and they have identified some gaps in course provision. A computerised database is being developed by some higher education students which will improve the unit's ability to identify trends and patterns.

28   In increasingly competitive circumstances, the college works hard to maintain its links with local schools. It works with careers teachers and year tutors to keep potential customers informed. Access to some schools is limited but good links with county careers services ensure that most students are properly informed to make career choices. Well-attended college open evenings are a focus for information, advice and guidance. Students and parents speak warmly about the welcome they receive and the helpfulness of staff. Opportunities for further guidance are available.

29   All full-time students are interviewed in their chosen department. In most cases, this approach ensures that students receive advice which enables them to choose an appropriate career. They also gain some idea of the commitment they need to make. Enrolment and induction are effective. The first week of the academic year is devoted to induction for all students. The objectives are to advise students of the contents of the

college charter, which is contained in the student diary and handbook, to introduce them to their programmes of study, and to enable them to establish learning goals. Activities include introduction to the library and to study skills, as well as talks by the principal and senior managers. Cross-college co-ordinators inform students of the range of support and leisure activities available to them. The induction programme for access students is particularly successful in building close-knit groups capable of confident discussion.

30   Some departments assess their students for learning support needs but, in others, needs are identified too late for help to be effective. The college plans to assess all 16-19 year old students from September 1995. The head of the adult basic education section manages learning support. The service does a good job, but it is demand-led and lacks criteria to guide its work. Learning support policy is encompassed within the equal opportunities policy and needs more emphasis. Facilities for learning support are shared and there is no space where staff can regularly use information technology or set up displays.

31   Preparing students for their careers is the responsibility of the academic departments. All students have a personal tutor but tutorial practice varies across departments. Some students have a well-structured programme of activities. There are regular meetings with their tutor which include reviews of progress and the drawing up of action plans where they are involved in setting their own learning objectives. In other cases, tutors leave it to students to make contact as they feel appropriate. As a consequence, problems are not always addressed sufficiently early and students are not clear about their achievements. Some departments hold evenings for parents to help them to monitor their children's progress.

32   Reliable information is collected about students' destinations, which is used for evaluating the effectiveness of the tutorial system. Students are well prepared for progression to further and higher education. County careers advisers, who are in the college for three days a week, play an important part in this process. Of particular value is 'FCT Recruit', the college employment agency, which provides a wide range of help to students seeking employment.

33   Other support is available to students, such as the counselling service which provides students with the opportunity to discuss personal and social matters with an independent person in a confidential setting. Those who use it speak well of it, and the numbers seeking help are increasing. Students also value the occupational health and accommodation services, and the help of the wardens at the halls of residence. Customer services staff deal with financial problems and give advice, and staff from the Citizen's Advice Bureau visit for one day a week. Students may also receive advice from two college chaplains.

34   The students' union provides a wide range of sporting and leisure activities. Despite many efforts to get further education students involved

it is mainly the higher education students who take advantage of these facilities.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

35   The strengths outweighed the weaknesses in 59 per cent of the 213 sessions which were inspected. Less than 6 per cent of classes had weaknesses which outweighed strengths. The following table summarises the grades given to each of the teaching sessions inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
Access to higher education	1	10	4	0	0	15
GCE AS/A level	2	7	3	0	0	12
Basic education SLDD	6	8	7	0	1	22
GCSE	0	2	2	2	0	6
GNVQ	1	28	21	7	0	57
NVQ	3	16	14	0	0	33
Other vocational	5	28	13	2	0	48
Higher education	0	5	7	0	0	12
Other	1	2	5	0	0	8
Total	**19**	**106**	**76**	**11**	**1**	**213**

36   Lecturers working together as course teams have devised relevant courses of study. These have clear aims and are well planned. In most study areas, schemes for teaching and learning are used. They are often detailed and, at their best, incorporate assessment profiles. In some areas of work, the schemes were superficial and contained little on objectives and learning outcomes. For example, the scheme of work for access to humanities programmes lacks explicit statements of aims, teaching methods and course content. There are well-documented teaching schemes for the more established information technology courses, but they are underdeveloped for GNVQ courses.

37   Working relationships between students and lecturers are good. In engineering and art and design, for example, students feel at ease with lecturers and this enables them to ask questions and enter into discussion with confidence. Widespread use of practising professionals in art and design helps to motivate students. Students are also helpful to each other. In a number of curriculum areas staff should be more forceful in remedying students' lack of punctuality.

38   Lecturers use a variety of teaching and learning strategies and much teaching is well managed and effective. Teaching methods, include formal lecturing, question and answer sessions, large group discussions, work in

small groups or in pairs, silent individual reading, and annotation of course materials. In a humanities session for access to higher education, students took part in a lively discussion. Stimulated by skilful questioning from the lecturer, they drew on their personal experiences as well as their developing insights into sociological perspectives. They showed a balanced and well-informed understanding of contentious topics and contrasting viewpoints. In a GCE A level science class, the lecturer made very good use of an overhead projector and whiteboard to explain the workings of a cathode ray oscilloscope. There was a good handout to reinforce the major points covered in the lesson.

39   In weaker lessons, there was inadequate variety of activity, students were not sufficiently stretched, questions rarely tested understanding and there were over-lengthy expositions by lecturers. In engineering, although the majority of students found their courses stimulating, some classroom teaching was uninspiring. Lecturers did not motivate students or they took too long to cover topics that students had already grasped. In access courses, there was considerable variation in the quality of teaching. In both of these areas there is good practice and it needs to be shared. Catering sessions were sometimes tedious for the more able students. In hairdressing and beauty, teaching methods were varied but the lack of opportunity for students to work on their own at their own pace meant that lessons frequently failed to address differing learning needs.

40   In access to higher education programmes, good use was made of class handouts. In art and design, staff take considerable care to prepare supporting material for their teaching. Well-prepared overhead projector transparencies were used effectively in most health and caring courses to sharpen students' understanding of key issues, but in business studies and information technology they were used mainly for students to copy notes. The range of learning materials in catering was outstanding.

41   The teaching of practical skills was well organised and managed with an appropriate regard for safety. Staff and students undertook tasks enthusiastically and students acquire not only skills but also the associated technical knowledge. In beauty and in catering, lecturers taught good professional practice and the tasks which were set were appropriately demanding for students. Activities to simulate experience at work were usually well conceived, but in catering more use needs to be made of the restaurant. In mechanical and electronic engineering, practical work and demonstrations were well prepared and effective. Groupwork was a feature of many courses and was particularly effective in business studies. In art and design, the young enterprise scheme provides students with good experience of working in groups and sharing responsibilities.

42   Students' achievements are normally well recorded. Progress is monitored, formally and informally, but there is no consistent approach across the college. In hairdressing and beauty, opportunities for NVQ assessment were sufficiently flexible and a wide range of methods were used. The assignment brief for a motor vehicle national certificate course

was well prepared, using a departmental house style. All the key information on completion dates, common skills, assessment aims and tasks was included. Similar care was to be found in catering, leisure and tourism assignments. In art and design, the project work is appropriate, assessments are well recorded and students receive formal written feedback as well as tutorial advice and guidance. In some areas of work, more detailed marking would help students to improve their work. In health and care, teachers failed to correct spelling and grammatical errors on many pieces of assessed work.

43   The college has a firm commitment to the development of integrated core skills, but has met with mixed success so far. Core skills are particularly well developed in engineering, although the poor mathematical ability of a significant number of students continues to frustrate their progress. Students gain specialist computing experience on all courses. In art and design, students' note-taking skills need to be improved and observational drawing requires a clearer focus.

44   In adult basic education, much teaching was of the highest standard. Individual programmes are negotiated with each student. On courses specifically designed for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, much of the teaching was dull and there was little practical activity. The access programme for adults is supportive, helping students with modest achievements, or picking up on studies which have been interrupted, to lift the students to the required standard for entry to higher education.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

45   Students enjoy their courses and speak highly of them. Many show an effective grasp of their subjects and are pleased with their progress. Standards of oral work vary, but in general are good. There are many articulate contributions and well-informed discussions in classes. Most students are developing appropriate skills and technical expertise, and are learning to apply their knowledge.

46   In 1994, there were only 110 subject entries for GCSE from full-time students. These were taken by students on vocational courses as an integral part of their programmes. Over the last two years, pre-health services students accounted for most entries. The pass rate at grades A-C was almost 43 per cent, which is just above the national average for general further education and tertiary colleges.

47   In 1994, there were 471 student entries for GCE A level. The average pass rate at grades A-E was 75 per cent, which was 7 per cent above the relevant national average. The pass rates in 13 of the 20 subjects offered exceeded the national averages by at least 10 per cent. There were poor results in chemistry (52 per cent) and human biology (40 per cent); both were at least 10 per cent below the national average and were significantly worse than the previous year.

48   Students aged 16-18 taking GCE AS/A level examinations in 1994 scored on average, 3.3 points per entry (where A=10, E=2). This places the college among the middle third of colleges in the further education sector based on data in the 1994 performance tables published by the Department for Education. Sixty-six per cent of students, aged 16-18, in their final year of study on advanced vocational courses included in the Department for Education's 1994 tables were successful. This places the college in the bottom 10 per cent of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure.

49   In the department of creative studies over the last two years, students on six courses in hairdressing, beauty therapy and graphic design achieved particularly good pass rates of over 90 per cent. In 1993, three courses achieved less satisfactory pass rates of below 59 per cent; these were City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) hairdressing by open learning, the international beauty therapy diploma and NVQ level 2 in catering. Student retention rates have been good, exceeding 85 per cent in the last two years.

50   In the department of science, health and social care in 1994, the National Nursery Examinations Board (NNEB) diploma and the dental surgery assistants course had pass rates of over 90 per cent. All other courses had pass rates between 60 and 80 per cent. The trainee veterinary nurses part 2 course had a very low pass rate of 25 per cent. Overall, there has been an improvement over last year's results. Student retention rates have been good, usually exceeding 75 per cent over the last two years.

51   In 1994, in the department of engineering, students on 10 courses achieved pass rates exceeding 80 per cent. All but one of these courses were part time. Students on six courses achieved pass rates of less than 40 per cent. These included the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diploma in electronic engineering and the national certificate in electronic and electrical engineering. In the previous year, results were similar. Student retention rates have been better than those achieved by most colleges for engineering courses.

52   In the department of computing and information technology, the pass rate in the BTEC national diploma in computer studies/GNVQ information technology was 59 per cent and in the national certificate 33 per cent. These results were low because of the particularly poor retention rates. Pass rates on other courses ranged between 60 and 94 per cent.

53   In 1994, in the department of further education, students on seven courses achieved pass rates exceeding 80 per cent, including the full-time GNVQ intermediate business and secretarial courses.   There were particularly poor results for the Institute of Linguists final diploma and the advanced German diploma. In 1993, students on five courses achieved pass rates in excess of 80 per cent. These included the GNVQ intermediate in business and the BTEC national diploma in travel and tourism. Again there were poor results for the Institute of Linguists examinations. Retention rates have been variable, ranging between 56 and 80 per cent.

54   In 1994, in the North Hampshire Business School, students in 11 professional accounting, marketing and management courses achieved particularly good pass rates of over 90 per cent, as did those taking the diploma in fitness and exercise studies. Two part-time courses had poor results: the NVQ level 4 in management and the Chartered Institute of Marketing diploma. Results in the previous year were similar. Student retention rates were usually very good.

55   The college has good records of the destinations of full-time students. Of the 876 students commencing their final year in 1994, 92 per cent took their final examinations, 42 per cent found employment, 24 per cent entered higher education, 17 per cent continued in further education, 3 per cent remained unemployed and the destinations of 14 per cent were unknown.

56   The department of further education offers full-time students the opportunity to compete for the Stirling award. Sponsored by local business, it allows students to demonstrate the personal qualities needed to gain employment. The college's students' union supports a wide range of registered clubs and activities. Teams in football, hockey and rugby are entered in the Southern England Sports Association leagues and regularly perform well.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

57   The college's achievements in the development of quality have been recognised by a number of external accreditation systems, including the Investor in People award in 1994. The college's customised training unit achieved International Standards Organisation (ISO) 9001 in 1991 (formerly BS 5750). The college has a range of separate policies for various aspects of quality assurance but the main focus of these is on the quality of its courses and covers internal validation, annual review and evaluation, and periodic review. A comprehensive quality assurance framework provides a quality strategy which embraces curriculum, business support services, professional development and the college environment. Audit procedures related to standards for business support are being produced to measure and improve performance.

58   Internal validation of new programmes is the responsibility of the academic standards committee of the academic board. Detailed guidance for internal validation was produced in 1993. It is not always adhered to and the committee has been rigorous in rejecting unsuitable submissions. Meetings of validation panels are recorded. The action required to gain approval is identified, although the responsibility for such action is not always attributed. BTEC has awarded centre initiative status to the college, enabling it to validate its own programmes. It is also able to validate most of its professional courses.

59   Programme review and evaluation procedures are well established. The college provides guidance on the compilation of reports and statistical

data, the consultation mechanisms to be used and the procedures to be followed in reporting to college committees. Annual reports from academic departments are scrutinised by the academic standards committee, which presents its findings to the academic board. Reports vary in style, format and rigour and, although they frequently identify the need for action, they sometimes fail to specify targets and allocate responsibilities. There is not always consideration of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. There are no written procedures for recording the actions taken by college managers so that programme teams are aware of them.

60   The college has recognised the shortcomings of an approach which is led by course teams. By the second phase of the inspection, a number of the weaknesses revealed by specialist inspectors had been addressed. Revised procedures have been implemented, and standardised reporting formats will in future provide clear and concise information to managers and board members. A standard set of performance indicators has been agreed, which meet the reporting requirements of the Council. Students' views on the quality of their courses and of the college are collected through a variety of means including standard college questionnaires. Each department has devised procedures for consulting with students and employers which are appropriate to its own needs. In most programme areas, however, employer advisory committees perform this function.

61   Procedures for internal verification for NVQ and GNVQ programmes are well developed in most curriculum areas. Roles and responsibilities are clearly identified. The college plans to fully integrate internal verification with its programme review and evaluation procedures.

62   The staff-development policy is well documented. A range of procedures is set out in the staff handbook. Staff development is regarded as important in the college and all staff are encouraged to participate in college events and training programmes. Needs are identified through the appraisal scheme for teachers and the parallel staff-development review procedure for support staff. The first full cycle of academic staff appraisal has been completed.

63   The staff-development committee and manager ensure that the needs of staff are reconciled with those of the curriculum and the planned development of the college. The staff-development budget of £175,000, is 1.1 per cent of the annual college budget. Priority is given to registration for higher degrees, and technical and professional updating. Academic departments may contribute their own resources to meeting staff-development needs. Staff speak highly of the good communications and efforts made to meet their needs for development.

64   In preparation for the inspection, the college produced a self-assessment report. It describes activities, procedures and facilities and identifies the strengths of the college. The report is descriptive rather than evaluative and does not address some significant areas, such as students' achievements. It identifies a limited range of issues which need to be addressed and there is an implementation plan.

65   The college charter is given to all staff and students in the form of a diary. However, the complex language in which it is written, limits its value for many students. It does not address commitments to employers. There is a complaints procedure, but the mechanism for dealing with complaints is undeveloped. The college has recently sought the views of staff and students in seeking to improve its charter for 1995. It will also include commitments to employers and the community.

RESOURCES

Staffing

66   The college has 497 teachers. Of these, 204 are full time and 293 are part time. Of the full-time staff, 61 per cent are male and 39 per cent female. Fifty-five per cent of the part-time teachers are male and 45 per cent female.

67   All teachers are appropriately qualified for the courses they teach. Seventy per cent have a first or higher degree and the remainder have appropriate technical or vocational qualifications. Almost 90 per cent have a teaching qualification, and new teachers are expected to obtain one. The majority of teachers engaged on vocational courses either have, or are working towards, Training and Development Lead Body awards to enable them to assess GNVQ and NVQ awards. Part-time teachers make an important contribution to the college by bringing to it a range of current industrial experience and commercial practice. Staff are enthusiastic, hard working and care for their students. Many teachers have established strong links with local employers. Others have connections with professional bodies and industry that help to keep them abreast of advances in technology.

68   The college employs 118 full time and 152 full-time equivalent part-time administrative, technical and maintenance staff. Of these 25 per cent are male and 75 per cent female. They make an important contribution to the work and life of the college. A number of technical support and administrative staff are also used as part-time teachers. For example, during the inspection, media studies students who were operating a radio station making local broadcasts, received important technical and moral support from a senior technician who has considerable experience at the BBC.

69   The personnel manager is responsible for personnel and staffing matters. He is assisted by a small team, none of whom are professionally qualified. The college has developed a set of a personnel policies, some of which are printed in the staff handbook and all of which are readily available. The personnel department should assemble its personnel policies in a form which allows easy reference and issue them to all staff. Although the college keeps details of its staff, the information is not held on one database and is not easily accessible. Production of the most basic

staffing information is difficult. It is important that this information be brought together under the direction of the personnel manager.

70   The college has well-established procedures for the appointment of new staff. Requests for new staff are made by heads of department on a standard college form. Procedures are followed to establish the job specification and personal criteria for each post. Records are kept of the reasons why applicants are not short listed. At interview, a record is kept of the questions asked and interviewees' responses. All unsuccessful candidates are advised by the principal of their performance.

71   The college provides an induction programme for new staff twice each year. Teaching, technical and administrative staff are introduced to the college by the principal and other senior staff and they are informed about health and safety and other issues. All are provided with a mentor with whom they have regular contact. The system works with varying degrees of effectiveness. A progress report on each new member of staff is written at the end of the first three months and new staff have the opportunity to discuss this with their mentors.

Equipment/learning resources

72   The college has a good range of teaching aids, including overhead projectors, screens and boards in all teaching rooms. Each department has its own video playback equipment and monitor. Reserve equipment is held centrally. A number of rooms have permanent video equipment. Other equipment, including 35mm film projectors and audio-tape recorders, is available on request. The quality of furniture in classrooms varies, but most is of a good standard.

73   The main library is conveniently situated at the centre of the college, off the central mall and close to the student refectory. It is a large, attractively-presented resource with some 55,000 books, including a significant proportion of modern books and multiple copies of some standard texts. Over 300 specialist journals are taken regularly and these are well organised and displayed. There is a range of almost 1,000 videos and good facilities for viewing them. The library has seating for 170, but this is insufficient for the number of students using it. It does not have a quiet study area and, with the increasing emphasis on project and groupwork, this has become a significant weakness. An extension to the library is being built that will increase its area by almost 70 per cent, providing additional space for study and for books and journals. A second, smaller library at the Aldershot campus provides a more limited resource, with seating for 50 and a further 6,000 books. The library service is staffed by five qualified librarians and nine assistants. All staff work at both sites. The book and journal budget for 1995-96 is £135,000, or £35.50 per full-time equivalent student. There are no subject librarians, but good relations between library staff and teachers ensure that the range of books in most areas is up to date and relevant.

74   The college has an extensive range of equipment to support its courses. In some areas, specialist equipment is of a high standard. In others, old equipment is well maintained to provide students with the opportunity to acquire the necessary practical skills. The equipment provided for higher education courses is also used by further education students. There is a three-year rolling programme for the replacement and updating of equipment. It cannot be funded in its entirety and a bidding system operates. Last year, 12 per cent of requests were met.

75   College computing is under the direction of the head of computing and information technology. Two teams, under the systems support and operations managers, provide a good service. The college has 509 computers for students' use. Of these, 90 are terminals connected to a mini-computer used for specialist computing and engineering courses. The remainder are personal computers, mostly of an up-to-date standard. This provision gives a ratio of one computer to every eight students. An open-access centre at the main site has 78 machines and is heavily used. There are also open-access facilities at Manor Park.

76   There is a good range of equipment to meet the needs of GCE A level science courses. Business studies is well resourced with computers and other equipment. The equipment used in hairdressing and beauty reflects good commercial practice and the college salon is attractive and well used by the public. There is an adequate range of equipment for art and design courses. Hotel and catering students have access to appropriate commercial equipment. There are good production kitchens and a new kitchen is currently being installed. The restaurant has been redecorated recently and, with upgraded equipment, it is a pleasant environment. Modern computerised systems are being introduced that will enable students to manage reception, stock control, menus and customer billing more effectively.

77   Media courses are well equipped. There are two radio broadcast suites, a very well-equipped video-editing room with six edit suites, the latest non-linear computerised editing facility, and other essential equipment. There is also a television studio and control room with sophisticated modern equipment. Students use this to produce high-standard radio and television programmes. Each year the college operates its own radio station, 24 hours a day for a month, broadcasting to the local community. Live television programmes are also relayed to various parts of the college for limited periods during the spring term.

78   Mechanical, aeronautical, motor vehicle, electrical and electronic engineering equipment is extensive. It is generally of a high standard. The department is an authorised AutoCAD centre. Motor vehicle courses have recently moved into a new workshop where there is a wide range of equipment and modern cars. There is a good range of electronic, computing and control engineering equipment, some of which was acquired after the closure of the Defence Research Agency apprentice training school.

Accommodation

79   The college is on four sites in north Hampshire. The main campus is close to the airfield and main runway of the Defence Research Agency, the successor to the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough. The Manor Park, East End and Highfield Road annexes are close to Aldershot town centre, some four miles from the main campus. The college has not reached agreement with Hampshire County Council about the ownership of the Highfield Road annexe and this matter is now being adjudicated.

80   The main campus includes a range of buildings erected at different times from the 1950s to the 1980s. During the 1980s, the college was substantially enlarged when an architecturally innovative steel-framed building with glass canopies was built. It incorporates all but one of the original buildings which are joined by covered walkways. A significant feature is the 480 metre central mall, from which the library, student refectory, book shop and much of the teaching accommodation is reached. Landscaped borders edge all walkways and there are two enclosed gardens. The college is shielded from the road by trees and its entrance is not immediately apparent. The reception area has been attractively arranged. A new building, to be started before the end of the year, will alter access to the campus.

81   Students with restricted mobility do not have access to all parts of the college. In most cases, this problem is overcome by changing the location of a course. However, students with restricted mobility who want to follow a science course are not able to get into the science laboratories.

82   The college has developed its own computerised timetabling, planning and control system, which it also markets commercially. A second system to monitor room use is being introduced. It is linked to the timetabling package and provides room utilisation statistics, based on frequency of use and the number of students occupying the room.

83   The college has an accommodation and strategy document which provides a brief description and an outline of future needs. The college should provide a fuller account of its strategy without delay, despite the uncertainties arising from the disputed ownership of one annexe. There is a planned maintenance schedule for accommodation which details the work to be done weekly and at longer intervals. A facilities manager with four staff provides first-line maintenance and there are a number of external contracts. A computerised management system constantly monitors temperature and energy consumption throughout the building. Four ground staff maintain both the internal and external gardens.

84   The Manor Park site was originally a secondary school which was planned to be demolished some years ago and consequently little money was spent on it. The site is an important part of the college's strategy for delivering further education in Aldershot. In the past two years substantial amounts of money have been spent improving its internal decor. Carpets have been laid in corridors and in most classrooms and lowered ceilings

are being installed in some rooms. The building has been rewired, a new heating system installed, and flat roofs are to be replaced during the summer holiday. Although the building is undistinguished, the refurbished accommodation provides a good learning environment and staff and students like working there. Two temporary wooden huts are in poor condition. The library in the old school hall provides an adequate resource and it is to be improved and extended this year.

85   The Highfield Road annexe is a two-storey building. It provides accommodation of a generally good standard. This building is mainly used for students with learning difficulties and students on access courses. On the same site is a large unused school building which is falling into disrepair. The ownership of this building is in dispute. The East End centre is a Victorian primary school. The rooms are of an acceptable standard. The building is used mainly for adult education classes. The college also leases several buildings close to the main campus from the Ministry of Defence. They provide living accommodation for 210 students. These blocks are used mainly, but not exclusively, by students on higher education courses. The college hopes to buy them to improve its services.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

86   The college has made significant progress towards achieving its mission. Its strengths are:

- a well-qualified and highly-committed staff
- effective governance and management
- well-developed budgeting mechanisms
- good internal communication
- the range of courses and opportunities for students' progression
- the extent and range of equipment
- a well-developed staff-development policy, and good strategies for implementation
- a commitment to quality at all levels
- impartial guidance for students
- the mix of higher and further education provision.

87   If it is to continue to improve its quality of provision, the college should:

- strengthen the co-ordination of student support services
- further develop quality assurance
- establish a common database for personnel information
- improve student retention rates in the department of computing and information technology
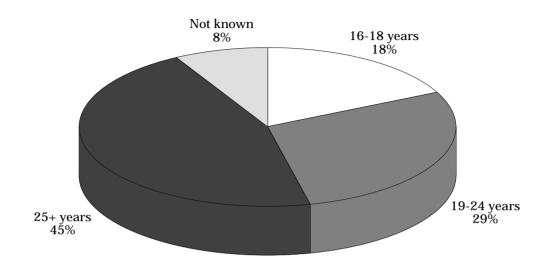- provide access to science laboratories for students with restricted mobility.

FIGURES

Note: the information contained in the figures was provided by the college to the inspection team.
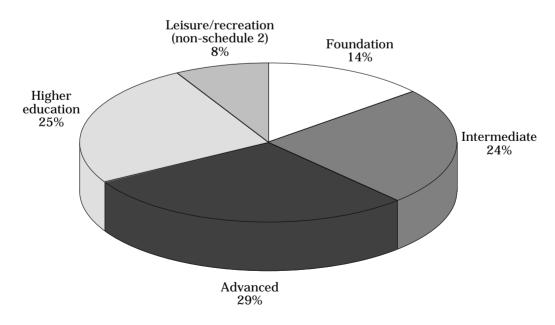
Figure 1

Farnborough College of Technology: percentage enrolments by age (as at May 1995)

Not known
8%

16-18 years
18%

19-24 years
29%

25+ years
45%

Enrolments:10,157   ***Note:*** *this chart excludes eight enrolments under 16.*
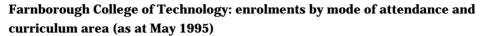
Figure 2
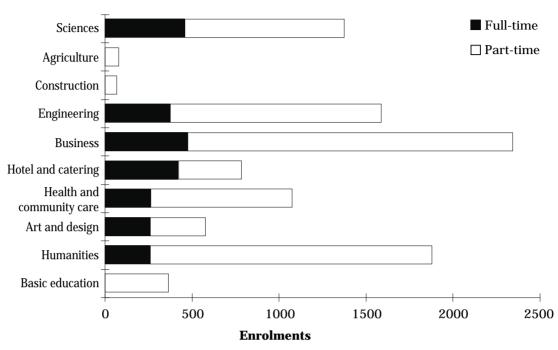
Farnborough College of Technology: percentage enrolments by level of study (as at May 1995)

Leisure/recreation
(non-schedule 2)
8%

Foundation
14%

Higher
education
25%

Intermediate
24%

Advanced
29%

Enrolments:10,157

Figure 3

Farnborough College of Technology: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at May 1995)
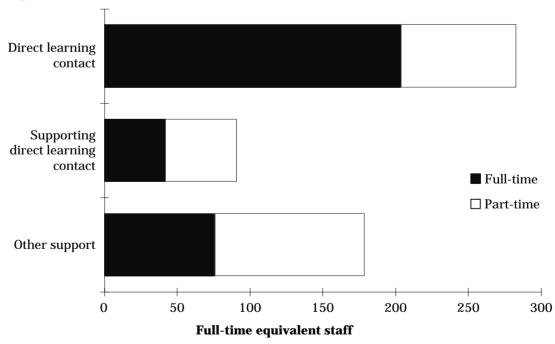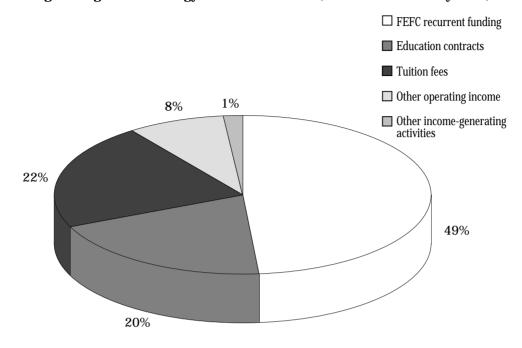

Enrolments: 10,157

Figure 4

Farnborough College of Technology: staff profile - staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994–95)
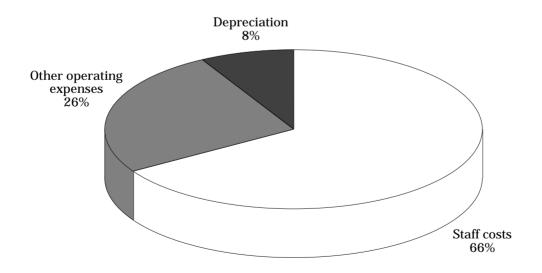

Full-time equivalent staff: 553

Figure 5

Farnborough College of Technology: estimated income (for 12 months to July 1995)

- ☐ FEFC recurrent funding
- ☐ Education contracts
- ■ Tuition fees
- ☐ Other operating income
- ☐ Other income-generating activities

Estimated income: £15,515,000

Note: this chart excludes £46,000 other grant income and £60,000 capital grants.

Figure 6

Farnborough College of Technology: estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)

Estimated expenditure: £15,783,000