

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Great Yarmouth College of Further Education

June 1996

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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

College inspections are carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines described in Council Circular 93/28. They involve full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have knowledge and experience in the work they inspect. Inspection teams normally include at least one member who does not work in education and a member of staff from the college being inspected.

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

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GRADE DESCRIPTORS

The procedures for assessing quality are set out in the Council Circular 93/28. During their inspection, inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out in the reports. They also use a five-point grading scale to summarise the balance between strengths and weaknesses.

The descriptors for the grades are:

- grade 1 – provision which has many strengths and very few weaknesses*
- grade 2 – provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses*
- grade 3 – provision with a balance of strengths and weaknesses*
- grade 4 – provision in which the weaknesses clearly outweigh the strengths*
- grade 5 – provision which has many weaknesses and very few strengths.*

By June 1995, some 208 college inspections had been completed. The grade profiles for aspects of cross-college provision and programme areas for the 208 colleges are shown in the following table.

College grade profiles 1993-95

Activity	Inspection grades				
	1	2	3	4	5
Programme area	9%	60%	28%	3%	<1%
Cross-college provision	13%	51%	31%	5%	<1%
Overall	11%	56%	29%	4%	<1%

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 85/96

GREAT YARMOUTH COLLEGE OF FURTHER EDUCATION

EASTERN REGION

Inspected September 1995-March 1996

Summary

Great Yarmouth College of Further Education provides a wide range of general and vocational education. There has been significant growth in student numbers over the last three years. Excellent relations are maintained with local schools. Members of the corporation have a broad range of experience and a clear view of their role. The senior managers work well as a team and have open and effective communications with staff. Guidance, tutorial and student welfare systems meet the needs of students. Well-developed procedures are in place for identifying students' additional support needs, but attendance at communications and numeracy workshops is poor. Effective teaching in practical lessons equips students with good practical skills. Some specialist accommodation is well equipped to a high standard. The college should address the following issues: the lack of reliable management information; the limited assessment of the college's performance carried out by the corporation; the need to improve the quality of classroom teaching and the overall level of students' achievements in some curriculum areas; the need to improve provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; the low number of computers and the inadequate bookstock; and the inaccessibility of the library for students with disabilities.

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

Aspects of cross-college provision		Grade
Responsiveness and range of provision		2
Governance and management		3
Students' recruitment, guidance and support		2
Quality assurance		3
Resources:	staffing	2
	equipment/learning resources	3
	accommodation	3

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Mathematics, sciences and computing	2	Health and community care	2
Engineering and construction	3	Hairdressing and beauty therapy	3
Business, management and secretarial studies	2	Visual and performing arts	2
Hospitality and catering, leisure and tourism	3	Humanities	3
		Basic education, including SLDD provision	4

INTRODUCTION

1 Great Yarmouth College of Further Education was inspected between September 1995 and March 1996. Twenty-two inspectors visited the college for 93 inspector days. Enrolment and induction arrangements were observed in September 1995 and an inspector attended a corporation meeting in January 1996. The team observed 214 learning sessions, involving almost 2,000 students. Inspectors examined students' work, college documentation and records. Discussions were held with students, staff, parents, members of the corporation, and representatives from the local authority and community, industry, schools, higher education and the Norfolk and Waveney Training and Enterprise Council (TEC).

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Great Yarmouth College of Further Education traces its origins to 1945, when the Technical Institute was established in a variety of buildings scattered across the town. The Southtown campus was first occupied in 1952 and has developed in phases since then. In 1994 the college was consolidated on a single campus at Southtown, following the acquisition of land adjacent to the site and the disposal of a Victorian annexe in Gorleston.

3 The majority of students live within 10 miles of the college, mainly in Great Yarmouth, Gorleston, Caister and Bradwell, but some have a return journey of more than 20 miles. Approximately two-thirds of the school leavers joining the college are from the six high schools in the Great Yarmouth area. None of these currently has a sixth form. The remaining students come from north Norfolk, Waveney, south Norfolk and Broadlands. The nearest alternative providers of further education are City College Norwich, East Norfolk Sixth Form College and Paston Sixth Form College in Norfolk, and Lowestoft College in Suffolk. There are three providers of post-16 education in the area for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In 1995, the post-16 participation rate in education in the Great Yarmouth area was 68 per cent. This is 6 per cent higher than in 1994 but 2 per cent below the rest of Norfolk.

4 Great Yarmouth was originally a centre for the herring industry. It developed as an important port, a base for continental trade and a holiday destination. More recently, it has been involved in the support industries for oil and gas exploration, as well as food processing and electronics. The vast majority of local companies are small, employing less than 25 people. Road and rail links are generally poor across the region. The seasonal patterns in tourism and agriculture have contributed to higher than average unemployment levels in recent years. Although unemployment in the East Anglian region is generally below the national average, this is not the case in the Norfolk and Waveney area. The unemployment rate in May 1995 was 12.4 per cent. The Great Yarmouth travel-to-work area was designated an assisted area in 1993.

5 At the time of inspection, there were 1,305 full-time and 2,731 part-time students at the college. Student numbers by age, by level of

study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2, and 3 respectively. The college employs 181 full-time equivalent staff, of whom 116 are teachers and 65 are support staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

6 The college's mission is to promote and provide educational, economic and social progression opportunities for its students and the communities it serves.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

7 Senior managers are committed to the national targets for education and training. Student numbers have increased by approximately 30 per cent over the last three years. Courses are offered in all the programme areas of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC), except agriculture. There is a particularly wide range of courses in social care, business studies and performing arts. For example, music students may choose General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) in music or music technology with supplementary studies in music theory; there are also extensive opportunities for instrumental tuition. In other areas the range is more limited. For example, there are no National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 3 courses in secretarial studies or hairdressing and the overall range of provision in catering is narrow.

8 The college offers a wide range of general and vocational programmes for full-time and part-time students. Twenty-six subjects are offered at GCE A level, five at GCE advanced supplementary (GCE AS) and 14 at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). Six of the GCE A levels are provided on a modular basis. There are nine vocational courses at national diploma or General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) advanced level, six at intermediate level and three at foundation level. The range of full-time NVQ courses is limited: there are 10 at level 2 and six at level 3. A good range of language courses includes Greek, designed specifically for members of the local Greek community. A recent success has been the introduction of counselling courses which also run at centres in Sheringham and Diss. The college has been less successful in its attempt to extend its provision by offering part-time evening classes in rural schools. So far courses are running in only one centre.

9 Timetables are generally well planned and enable students to combine the study of GCE A level or GCSE subjects with a vocational course. Many students take advantage of this opportunity. For example, all Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diploma science students take a GCE A level and some students following the BTEC national diploma in performing arts also study GCE A level music. The college does not have a programme of enrichment studies and there are limited opportunities to take part in extra-curricular activities such as sports or college societies.

10 Progress towards the development of individual learning programmes varies between vocational areas. Good practice occurs in secretarial

studies, where programmes are closely matched to individuals' needs. Students may join at any time of the year, gain accreditation for their prior learning, select only the modules they need, and proceed at their own pace with the help of well-designed resource packs. This has enabled the vocational area to increase student numbers against national trends. In other vocational areas, resource-based learning and arrangements for students to study at their own pace are at an early stage of development.

11 Full-time courses specifically for adults comprise an access course, a GCSE programme and a technology course funded by the European Social Fund. There is also a rural access course based at Sheringham. There are access courses in the humanities and social sciences but there is no provision of access courses for students who wish to specialise in other areas such as science or business studies. Some courses provided by the local education authority (LEA) are funded by the FEFC under a sponsoring arrangement with the college, but the college is not involved in any joint planning of adult education provision with the LEA. The principal of the college, together with the principals of other Norfolk colleges, meets with LEA officers to discuss issues of mutual interest such as student transport and discretionary awards.

12 There is a two-year full-time course for students with moderate learning difficulties and a part-time course for adults with learning difficulties. The college does not make any provision for students with severe or multiple learning difficulties. Arrangements for students with learning difficulties to join mainstream programmes are not well developed, and progression from the specialist courses is hampered by the absence of any TEC-funded youth training or NVQ courses at level 1, and the small number of foundation GNVQ courses.

13 The college decided not to enter into new training contracts for 1995-96 with Norfolk and Waveney TEC. Following consultation with employers, TEC-funded provision for youth training has been replaced by a college designed vocational programme. This has enabled the college to continue to meet the needs of over 100 young unemployed adults. College staff offer advice to potential students with particular problems. For example, they are involved in the Great Yarmouth young women's project which assists young mothers to re-enter education.

14 The college is an associate college of Anglia Polytechnic University from which it franchises a higher national certificate in childhood studies. This is the only higher education course currently running. Degree modules in English and sociology validated by Anglia Polytechnic University will be offered in September 1996. A formal progression agreement with City College Norwich recognises the achievements of students on the higher national certificate and counselling courses as equivalent to modules on City College's community studies degree. The college is well regarded by both the City College and the Anglia Polytechnic University.

15 In some vocational areas, for example hairdressing, hotel and catering and health and social care, the college has good links with employers who provide work experience, send students on day-release courses and attend employer network meetings. The college has begun to develop NVQ workplace assessment in business administration and provides assessor training for approximately 150 school teachers. The amount of full-cost work is small and declining. A business plan has not been produced for full-cost or work-based NVQ activity despite the fact that college research and employers' comments indicate a potential demand in this area. There is no central database or co-ordination of industry links.

16 A schools' liaison team of over 20 college staff provides the basis for excellent relationships with local schools. Each team member acts as the focus of all links with a specific school. Staff visit year 11 pupils in the autumn term to give presentations on career opportunities. The college franchises GNVQ foundation courses in art and design, business studies, health and social care and leisure and tourism to three schools and provides guidance and support, documentation and assessor training for school staff delivering the vocational units. Approximately 100 pupils are studying for full or part awards. Another link involves pupils from Stalham high school who attend the college to take for example, City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) cookery, and health and hygiene qualifications.

17 Effective publicity has raised awareness of the college in the community. There are useful factsheets for each course and a brief summary of full-time programmes called *The List*. These are sent to schools, libraries and careers offices. Applications from feeder schools are carefully tracked. A part-time course broadsheet is distributed to over 75,000 homes. A marketing calendar sets out a programme of events and advertising campaigns. The college has sought to evaluate the effectiveness of some of its publicity through the use of questionnaires during open days and enrolment. The information provided by these questionnaires has informed the choice of advertising media. Although the college is aware of labour market information it is not used effectively. Market research is not used constructively to inform curriculum planning.

18 The college is committed to the promotion of equal opportunities. There is a policy statement and action plans relating to recruitment and selection, personal harassment and professional development. The equal opportunities steering group has representatives from teaching and support staff and is an active subcommittee of the academic board. The principal is a member of the group but the two student posts are currently unfilled.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

19 The college has a corporation board of 18 members who have a wide range of expertise. There are 10 independent members, three co-opted members, one TEC nominated member, a community nominated member,

two staff members and the principal. Four of the corporation members are female. Members have expertise in business, health trusts, teaching, the co-ordination of voluntary services, local government, trades unions, and legal, accountancy and architecture practice. At the time of the inspection, there were vacancies for one independent and one student member. There is a register of members' interests. The clerk to the corporation ensures that members are well supported by agendas and papers.

20 Corporation members have a clear view of their role. They pay particular attention to the financial controls and employment arrangements within the college. Some members have informal links with curriculum areas. There are plans for a member to attend the academic board. There is effective delegation of authority to three main committees: employment policy and finance; audit; and remuneration. Whilst there has been a good level of support for committee meetings, the level of attendance at corporation meetings has sometimes been low. A corporation subcommittee has reviewed the conduct of the corporation and implemented changes in practice that make better use of the members' time.

21 The corporation has not yet determined how it will assess the performance of the college and there has been limited critical debate about its academic achievements. The information reported on student achievements in 1994-95 identified student enrolment, retention and examination results and was supported by programme development board reports. The achievements were not compared with the previous year's performance or with those of other colleges. Targets are not set for specific aspects of performance such as retention and examination success. There is no overall collation of data across the college on, for example, BTEC and GCE A level programmes. The college does not routinely analyse student destinations and rates of progression to higher education or employment.

22 The college's strategic plan sets out clearly the proposed developments in the college's provision. The operating statements for 1994-95 have been reviewed but the planning and review processes require further development. In many instances the statements do not define priorities or measurable outcomes. The programme and service areas have operating statements but they are not used effectively to manage the implementation of college policies. Staff currently give a higher priority to the action plans arising from the quality process. However, these action plans are not monitored or reviewed by senior managers. The college is in the process of developing the link between programme and service area plans and the strategic plan.

23 The principal is supported by three directors: one for education services development, another for finance and resources development and the third for programmes and personnel development. The principal takes responsibility for marketing, quality and curriculum initiatives. The

principal and the three directors comprise the strategic management team. At the time of the inspection, the director for education services development was absent through illness. His responsibilities were distributed amongst the remaining members of the strategic management team. Much of their time is spent dealing with day-to-day problems and relatively little on developing policies and strategies for their implementation. There is a lack of accurate management information to aid monitoring, review and evaluation of college performance.

24 Nine programme managers report to the director for programmes and personnel development. There are also a number of service area managers who are responsible for aspects of cross-college services. The programme and service area managers, together with the strategic management team, form the college management group. The principal chairs the group meetings which are held about once a month. They are not minuted. Sufficient time is not always available for programme area managers to discuss curriculum issues.

25 Communication in the college is generally effective and staff believe they are adequately informed. The college management group and other staff with cross-college responsibilities meet weekly. They are briefed by the strategic management team. Programme and service area managers pass on items from these briefings during weekly meetings with their staff. In some programme areas minutes are produced and made available to part-time staff. Many programme areas and courses are well managed; responsibilities are clearly allocated and understood. There is good teamworking both within and between teams. Timetabling is well organised; staff and physical resources are effectively deployed. In a few teaching areas, such as catering and humanities, management roles and responsibilities are not well defined. In humanities there has been a high level of staff absence due to sickness and appropriate arrangements have not always been made to cover classes.

26 The college has computer systems which provide information about student records, finance and personnel administration. The amount of information available from the student record system is limited. The transfer of student records to a new system meeting the individualised student records has resulted in a number of data errors. The significant amount of time taken to resolve them has impeded progress in other areas. There is a backlog of work to develop the reports required within the college. The system has not provided any tangible support to programme areas and they maintain their own records. Currently, there is either limited or no support for registers, attendance monitoring, examination administration and timetabling. The college has invested in the infrastructure to provide managers with on-line access to these systems but there is a need for staff development in their use.

27 Budget allocations to programme areas are based on a formula related to student numbers and subject areas. This includes monies for

teaching materials and small items of equipment. Programme areas bid for capital funds. The college has recently developed a model, based on student numbers and teaching hours, in order to monitor the use of staffing resources more closely in programme areas. The senior management team monitors the utilisation of teaching hours at the FEFC census points in November, February and May. More sophisticated programme area and course costing is being developed but this has had little impact on efficiency as the management information which underpins it is not sufficiently accurate. There has been no attempt to develop college-wide norms for teaching hours or minimum class sizes although in practice such norms are applied by some programme teams.

28 The college has an average level of funding of £17.94 per unit. This compares with the average level of funding for the sector of £17.84 per unit. The college's estimated income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are shown in figures 5 and 6, respectively. In 1993-94 the college eliminated a deficit which it had inherited at incorporation. The employment policy and finance committee receives monthly management accounts.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

29 A client services team co-ordinates information, guidance, advice, admissions, tutorial support and counselling services for students. It is conveniently located in the information centre next to the main reception area. Initial enquiries from potential students are promptly dealt with by well-informed client liaison officers. They provide detailed course information and impartial advice. There have been three recent part-time appointments of staff who will be responsible for the development of external professional counselling and advice services; working with the student guild on developing sports and recreational facilities; and helping meet the pastoral needs of students. In the last case, 50 per cent of the funding was being provided by local churches.

30 The admissions procedure is well planned. Comprehensive literature helps students to identify courses in which they are interested. Pupils from all schools in Norfolk use a common application form. Client liaison officers arrange interviews for applicants for all full-time courses. The interviews are usually held in the evening to enable both applicant and parents or guardians to attend. Tutors are provided with clear guidelines for admissions and a list of standard topics to cover at interview.

31 Enrolment is well organised and includes the direct entry of student details onto a college database. Although creche facilities were available during enrolment, they were not advertised. There are well-documented procedures for the induction of all students. Induction was comprehensive and effective. It was more valued by full-time than part-time students. As part of the induction process, students sign a learning agreement stating what the college will provide and what they, as students, agree to do. The

agreement is easy to understand and details the initial assessment and guidance provided by the college, the learning programme agreed and the various elements of the induction process which have been completed. Despite the existence of the learning agreement and the student charter, some students remained unclear about their rights and responsibilities.

32 The college assesses the numeracy and communication skills of all full-time students who left school without achieving grades A or B in GCSE mathematics and English. For students on GCSE or GCE A level programmes, these assessments are completed as part of the induction programme. For all other courses they are completed during enrolment. Arrangements are made for students needing additional support to receive it either during their normal lessons or by attending learning support workshops. Attendance at workshops is voluntary and many students choose not to attend or withdraw after attending relatively few classes. There is a need to consider measures to encourage a higher proportion of students to accept the additional support that is available.

33 All full-time students have a personal tutor and a timetabled weekly tutorial. Personal tutors are responsible for the academic and pastoral support of students. Issues of common interest are dealt with on a group basis. Individual tutorials are used to record progress and to discuss personal matters. The role and responsibilities of personal tutors have recently been more clearly defined. The introduction of a tutor handbook encourages teachers to adopt a systematic approach to additional support and helps to ensure that all students receive the advice and support to which they are entitled. For example, the tutor checklist indicates when students should spend tutorial time updating their records of achievement and when formal progress reports are due. Most students reported that the tutorial system works well and that tutors give freely of their time in addition to timetabled tutorial periods. Part-time students are not allocated a personal tutor and turn to course tutors for support.

34 Comprehensive careers advice is provided by staff from the Norfolk careers service who attend the college for one morning each week. Course tutors are able to arrange for a careers adviser to speak to their tutor group. In addition, students may request individual appointments with a careers adviser. Careers advisers also attend the college for specific events such as induction or the recent, well-attended meeting held for the parents and guardians of students who are considering progressing to higher education. The college library has a careers section containing both paper-based information and a range of useful computer-based guidance materials.

35 Student attendance is monitored regularly. In signing the college learning agreement students agree to attend classes regularly and punctually. Registers are used to record attendance at each lesson. Personal tutors usually take prompt action to follow up any unexpected absence by their tutees. Registers are analysed on a weekly basis.

Standard letters are sent out by client liaison officers seeking reasons for absence.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

36 Of the 214 teaching sessions inspected, 51 per cent had strengths which outweighed weaknesses. In 13 per cent, the weaknesses outweighed the strengths. The average attendance level in these sessions was 71 per cent, ranging from 83 per cent in health and community care to 59 per cent in hairdressing and beauty therapy. The grades given to the sessions inspected are shown below.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level		8	22	20	7	0	57
GCSE		4	8	8	0	0	20
GNVQ		3	10	9	6	0	28
NVQ		3	8	15	4	3	33
Other*		17	27	24	6	2	76
Total		35	75	76	23	5	214

**includes other vocational, higher education and access to higher education, and basic education programmes.*

37 In mathematics, computing and sciences there were comprehensive schemes of work supported by effective lesson plans. There was a rapport between staff and students which encouraged constructive dialogue. Adult students were well supported on all programmes. Many students were well motivated by enthusiastic teaching which included lectures, practicals, group work and the use of self-study packs. Visual aids were sometimes of poor quality and difficult to read. Practical classes were well organised; analytical and research skills were being developed. On BTEC science courses, there was a successful work-placement programme. Useful and well-designed computer learning guides enabled students to work independently and to learn at their own pace. Work was regularly set and marked but written feedback was not always given. Attendance at some GCSE mathematics classes was below 50 per cent.

38 Engineering and construction workshop sessions were effective. Mechanical engineering students benefited from an industrial training centre and workshop which had an adjacent resource room with a range of learning materials for teaching theory. Electronics simulation equipment and a computer-aided design facility were used effectively to develop vocational knowledge and information technology skills. A few teaching sessions were not well planned and were dull and unimaginative. The more able students were not stretched and did not achieve their full potential. Theory was not always developed in sufficient depth and at times students did not have an adequate level of understanding prior to

workshop practice. In an intermediate electronics science class only one student could explain the underlying principles when assembling a simple electronics component. The planning and recording of NVQ assessments were systematic.

39 On administration and secretarial studies courses, teaching was of a consistently-high standard. Adult returners and school leavers were successfully integrated with mixed ability groups. Extensive use was made of workshop facilities and resource packs of learning materials. Class exercises were regularly marked and constructive feedback was given. Full-time students undertook well-planned, well-organised work placements which were carefully monitored. Part-time and employed students were encouraged to apply their prior knowledge to their studies. Some tasks on NVQ administration did not sufficiently extend the more able students. Teachers did not always provide effective support to individual students.

40 On business and management courses there was good rapport between staff and students. Programmes were well organised. There were appropriate schemes of work and lesson plans. In the better sessions there was a lively atmosphere and students worked on a variety of tasks. There were some dull sessions where students working on examination questions became demotivated and made little progress. Assignments were well presented and criteria for success in the vocational and core units were clearly stated. There was thorough marking of GCE A level coursework but few constructive comments on GNVQ assignments. Planned work experience was included in all GNVQ courses. Documentation to support GNVQ courses was informative and understood by students.

41 The practical catering sessions were carefully planned. Students worked independently and achieved high standards. In the simulated working environments, students applied previously acquired skills and worked towards NVQ accreditation. In some sessions designed to develop kitchen skills, insufficient consideration was given to the ability range of the students. For example, the practice of requiring all students to prepare the same dishes did not stimulate and challenge the more able. In theory sessions, there was comprehensive coverage of underpinning knowledge which related well to the practical work. There were a few ineffective classes where students worked on questions without using their books for research. Some leisure and tourism sessions were poorly planned; students were unsure about the aims of the lesson and what was expected of them. Some handouts were of poor quality. Students' work was generally carefully marked and poor spelling corrected. There were no GNVQ course handbooks or assignment schedules to give students an indication of the workload and some GNVQ work at advanced level paid insufficient attention to critical analysis and evaluation.

42 In health and community care, most students were attentive and took responsibility for their own learning. They had a clear understanding of the aims of sessions and the criteria for success. A range of learning approaches was adopted and there was good use of questioning to confirm learning. A few lessons were conducted at an inappropriate pace, allowing insufficient time for students to assimilate key concepts. Well-designed project work enabled students to develop research and creative skills. Some students gained valuable experience in Romanian orphanages as part of their work placement. Marked work was generally promptly returned with supportive comments. Progress was closely monitored through group and individual tracking sessions. On some courses, assignments were not well planned, leading to an unbalanced schedule of work.

43 In hairdressing and beauty therapy, most classes took place in realistic working environments. Lesson plans were prepared for most sessions but assignment guidelines were not given in some practical classes. Students did not always have clearly-defined practical tasks which kept them fully occupied. There was some innovative teaching in beauty therapy and students worked to a professional standard. In one effective session students presented an exercise routine, devised a diet programme and finished by giving appropriate body treatments to clients. In hairdressing, some classes were poorly organised. In a few cases, best professional practices were not developed. Staff did not always share their ideas on good teaching methods across the two sections. There was a supportive environment for adult students; individual programmes were often arranged which took into account their other commitments.

44 In visual and performing arts, there was some imaginative studio-based teaching. Students displayed high levels of enjoyment and commitment. They were well supported by caring staff. There was some good teaching of the history of art. In a few art and design lessons not all students contributed and some lost interest. Students collaborated effectively in dance and movement sessions; some performed and others were responsible for production. There was good work by students producing a live radio news programme. Music teaching achieved an appropriate balance between theory and practice. Students were given a wide variety of opportunities to improve their performance skills, including participation in ensembles and performances in the local community. Some students travelled to the United States with a jazz orchestra. In some practical sessions there was insufficient planning to identify the intended outcome of the activity. Assignment and project briefs were challenging and encouraged creativity. Students benefited from regular homework and assignments which were rigorously marked. The way in which common skills were assessed on some BTEC programmes was unclear.

45 In humanities, most classes were effectively planned and had clear aims. Relationships between staff and students were warm and supportive. Teachers displayed sound knowledge and understanding of their subject. Classroom activities were often linked to final assessments and the development of examination techniques. Previously acquired knowledge was used to illuminate current topics. Students were challenged and extended by the work set, and complex issues were effectively explained. In some effective English literature sessions, emphasis was placed on developing linguistic skills and critical analysis of the text. In some GCSE lessons, students were reluctant to participate in oral work. Regular homework was set in all the humanities subjects but there was no policy on marking and feedback to students. Some of the teaching material produced by teachers was dull. Some teachers were not skilled at bringing all students into discussions.

46 Visits and discussions were used effectively in sociology and psychology. A GCE A level sociology class visited the local courts to observe and evaluate the influence of social class in the judicial process. On the access to higher education course, the pace of some sessions was slow; too much class time was devoted to individual reading and writing and not enough to oral work. Students' work was carefully marked with a good balance of praise and constructive criticism. In modern foreign languages there was some skilful teaching and good tutor support to deal with the mixed ability range. In some GCE A level classes there were few opportunities for students to practise their language skills. English was used too much in a few modern foreign language lessons.

47 On courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities there were some examples of effective teaching and learning. Some students took responsibility for recording their own progress and achievements. There was an emphasis on work experience but it was not always well matched to individual students' prior achievements and ability. Teachers generally did not have high expectations of their students and work was insufficiently demanding. Students were not effectively integrated with mainstream vocational programmes.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

48 The majority of students displayed a positive attitude to learning and enjoyed their studies. Students demonstrated a high level of commitment in practical classes but were less enthusiastic in some theory sessions. Adult students on courses were able to use their experience to the benefit of the whole group. Staff worked closely with students to agree action plans and to monitor attainments against the targets set. Students' portfolios of work were generally carefully maintained and regularly assessed to ensure appropriate standards had been achieved. Work experience was a prominent feature on a number of vocational programmes. There was little use of information technology on GCE A level and GCSE courses.

49 There were 121 students aged 16 to 18 and 96 students over the age of 19 entered for one or more GCE AS/A levels in 1995. Students aged 16 to 18 entered for these examinations scored on average 3.5 points per entry (where A=10, E=2). This places the college in the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure, based on tables published by the Department for Education and Employment in 1995. Eighty-one per cent of the 101 students aged 16 to 18 in their final year of study on vocational courses included in the Department's 1995 tables were successful. This places the college in the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure.

50 On science, computing and mathematics courses, students were generally well motivated and worked methodically. Examination results in mathematics at GCE A level were similar to the national average for further education colleges and those for GCSE were better. Computer studies students developed a high standard of practical skills but their grasp of theory was less secure. GCSE computer science examination results were very poor with only 8 per cent of students passing at grades A to C. There were mixed examination results in science subjects. The pass rate for the BTEC national diploma in science was over 90 per cent. In laboratories, students worked purposefully and acquired good technical skills. Student projects displayed a good level of knowledge and many showed particularly high levels of research skills.

51 Construction and engineering students spoke enthusiastically about their college work. They worked safely and competently in workshops and achieved high standards in practical activities. Some craft and technician students had a poor understanding of related underpinning knowledge and poor numeracy and literacy skills. There was good development of information technology skills in computer-aided design classes. The level of success of construction and engineering students varied widely. In 1995, all students in their final year on bricklaying and carpentry courses gained a full award. The achievement of students on BTEC national courses in engineering was good with 75 per cent gaining the qualification. There were some poor results on C&G electrical installation programmes.

52 There was a high level of successful completion on most management and professional courses. The pass rate on the certificate in personnel practice in 1995 was 88 per cent. For the chartered institute of marketing examinations, pass rates ranged from 65 to 75 per cent in individual subjects. However, on the national certificate in business and finance the pass rate was only 20 per cent. On NVQ administration and secretarial programmes there were consistently good levels of attainment across the range of subjects. Portfolios were exceptionally well organised and contained examples of work-based assignments for assessment. Students' achievements at intermediate GNVQ in business were good at 89 per cent.

In 1995, 42 per cent of students on the advanced GNVQ programme did not proceed to the second year of the course. Pass rates at GCE A level in economics, accounting and law were at or above the national average for further education colleges. Pass rates on GCSE courses ranged from 59 per cent in law to 75 per cent in business studies.

53 Catering students worked purposefully and acquired good practical competences. They displayed high levels of organisational skill and worked well as a team in the realistic work environments. Students' achievements on NVQ level 2 catering were consistently good. In catering, evidence portfolios of students' work were well presented and of a good standard but students' information technology skills were poor. In 1995, the results on NVQ level 2 in reception were good; 100 per cent of students completing the course achieved an award. There was poor retention on the foundation GNVQ leisure and tourism programme and poor results on GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism. Students' work on the advanced GNVQ was of variable quality.

54 Students on health and community care courses were enthusiastic and worked effectively in groups. Practical work was carried out safely and sensitively. The pass rate on foundation GNVQ health and social care was poor, at 30 per cent. The pass rate on the intermediate course, at 67 per cent, was above the national average. Over the last two years consistently good pass rates of over 78 per cent have been achieved on the national diploma in nursery nursing. There was good development and application of literacy and numeracy skills in the vocational studies. In a few instances, adult students did not develop adequate information technology skills.

55 There have been consistently good results in hairdressing and beauty therapy over the last two years. In 1995, all students who were enrolled on NVQ level 2 hairdressing achieved a full award. Results in beauty therapy ranged from 89 per cent at NVQ level 2 to 100 per cent at NVQ level 3. Beauty therapy students developed high levels of professionalism and skills. Some hairdressing students were slow to acquire commercially acceptable customer care skills. Students have gained high levels of confidence by entering local competitions.

56 Performing arts students displayed good levels of skill and knowledge in the operation of technical equipment. They showed great enthusiasm for practical work and acquired good performance techniques. The standard of written work was more variable. Achievements on GCSE and GCE A level courses in visual and performing arts were good and improved over the last two years. In 1995, over 90 per cent of GCE A level art and design students gained grades A to C. Results on intermediate GNVQ art and design were notable with a 100 per cent pass rate in 1994-95. Music students demonstrated a high level of creativity and proficiency on a wide range of instruments. Achievements in GCE A level music were above the national average for general further education colleges.

57 In humanities, the majority of students spoke positively about their learning programmes. There have been good results in GCSE and GCE A level English over the last three years. However, in GCE A level English, students often had insufficient command of vocabulary to fully appreciate and critically evaluate the text. Students were reluctant to study independently. The GCSE results in psychology and sociology were better than the national average; students had a sound understanding of research methodologies and were able to apply theoretical concepts to practical examples. In 1995, only 25 per cent of students achieved grades A to C in GCE A level psychology and sociology. Social science students did not develop an appropriate level of information technology skills. Good results were achieved on the C&G further and adult education teachers certificate course. The number of students completing the access to higher education course fell from 86 per cent in 1993 to 56 per cent in 1995.

58 Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities had limited opportunities to gain nationally-recognised qualifications. There were poor retention rates on these courses. Assignments were generally of the standard required for accreditation. Many students maintained and updated their records of achievement. Some students were not sufficiently challenged by their programmes of work and significantly underachieved. Students completing programmes all achieved a college certificate or an Award Scheme Development Accreditation Network bronze award. There was an absence of effective progression routes and access to appropriate vocational programmes.

59 Student destinations were carefully recorded at curriculum level. The data show that a good proportion of students have been successful in gaining places in further and higher education or employment. However, these data have not been systematically aggregated and analysed for the whole college. A system has recently been put in place to obtain more accurate information on actual destinations.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

60 A system for surveying students' perceptions of their courses is central to the college's quality assurance framework. All students are given questionnaires at the start, middle and end of their course. Course teams are responsible for the analysis of the survey information. This is time consuming because the information is collated manually. The results are considered by course teams at programme area level and by the academic board, but there is limited feedback to students. The staff value and respond to the information obtained from the surveys although it is more relevant to vocational courses than GCE A level and GCSE programmes. Within science, a student forum has been introduced to provide more detailed, course-specific feedback which is leading to improvements within this programme area. There is a low level of recorded complaints and the college does not undertake an analysis of them.

61 The college is drawing on existing pockets of good practice in quality assurance. For example, the experience derived from the successful achievement of the BS EN ISO 9002 award for TEC-funded programmes is now informing other college processes. Many of the improvements have centred on the tutorial system. Common procedures have been developed and these are supported by comprehensive documentation. There is an effective method of document control to ensure that all tutors have access to current materials. The college has a team who undertake a regular document audit of tutorial files in order to ensure consistency. The staff see this as a supportive process which allows them to clarify uncertainties about their role as tutors. Early results stemming from the improved tutorial system include a higher uptake of interviews with the careers service and improved retention rates on some courses.

62 The system for internal verification of student assessments is at an early stage of development. There are no common college procedures. There is inconsistency in the amount of time allocated to staff for internal verification. There are effective systems for internal verification in NVQ catering and the education and training programmes but not all courses have a qualified internal verifier. Some good practice is shared across GNVQ programmes and with schools who have franchise agreements with the college.

63 Programme development boards have instigated curriculum improvements. Boards meet termly and receive reports from course and subject teams. During the course of the year, the boards focus on issues such as students' achievements, core skills, assessment, resources, and moderator and external verifier reports. There is a standard format for the recording of key issues and action points. Some improvements that have resulted from this review process include the retiming of the initial diagnostic testing of students' literacy and numeracy skills so that results are available to staff and students early in the induction period.

64 The academic board provides a forum for lively and critical debate of curriculum issues. It identifies, investigates and makes recommendations on curriculum issues which have been raised in reports received from the programme development boards. The academic board is seen by staff to be effective and a means of sharing good practice across the college. The lack of targets for students' achievements and retention has limited the ability of the board to provide firm guidance on these matters to programme teams and the corporation.

65 The quality assurance system is evolving steadily but many elements are still at the design stage. The failure to set standards and targets based on performance indicators limits the effectiveness of performance monitoring, review and evaluation at all levels within the college. There are no common procedures or documentation for course reviews. Some are not sufficiently rigorous, do not address the key issues or set realistic action plans. Programme area managers do not have ready access to

management information collected at college level to inform the reviews. Little effective use is made within programme areas of data on students' destinations.

66 The college's self-assessment report is set out under the headings of the Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. The basis of the document is an assessment of strengths and weaknesses produced by programme and service area managers. The report is presented in tabular form identifying strengths, weaknesses and proposed actions. Some sections, such as that on responsiveness and range of provision, provide a fairly superficial analysis whilst quality assurance is covered in some detail. There is no reference to the evidence base from which the judgements are drawn. Some of the findings concur with those of the inspection team.

67 A scheme for the biennial appraisal of teaching staff has been positively received by those involved. A review on completion of the first round led to the implementation of some changes prior to extending the scheme to non teaching staff. The system recognises the diversity of roles and encourages a wide range of evidence to be presented such as classroom observation, peer assessment and student feedback. There are strong links between appraisal and staff development. Not all staff have yet completed their agreed action plans. There is a strong commitment to staff development and in 1994-95 over 75 per cent of teaching and support staff took part in staff-development activities. There is a balanced programme of in-house and externally-run courses. Staff are clear that individual staff development must be linked with college needs. Although there is evaluation of staff development by individual participants, there is little systematic evaluation of the programme at the team or college level.

68 The college charter is presented as a series of leaflets. These enable the college to target the information to students when it is likely to be most needed. For example, a leaflet concerned with getting a place at college is distributed to schools. At induction, students receive the equal opportunities and disciplinary procedures leaflets and tutors direct students to the leaflet on financial help if they perceive this may be useful. A leaflet has also been produced for employers. The charter is clearly written and in a recent student perception survey most students expressed satisfaction with it. However, students are unaware of the significance of the charter in defining their rights.

RESOURCES

Staffing

69 The staff are committed, enthusiastic and generally well qualified for the work they undertake. Fifty-eight per cent of the full-time teaching staff have a first degree. The remainder have a recognised professional qualification. Most lecturers have a teaching qualification. The majority of teaching staff in the vocational programme areas have achieved assessor

and verifier qualifications which are required to support NVQ and GNVQ programmes. There are no qualified internal verifiers in health care and secretarial studies. Teaching staff have a broad range of commercial and industrial experience but in some areas, for example information technology and hairdressing, it is becoming dated. A significant contribution to teaching is made by part-time staff who bring valuable expertise to course teams. There is an appropriate level of technician and support staff in most areas. The centralised administrative service provides a good level of clerical support to course teams.

70 The personnel function is managed by a member of senior management who has a relevant professional qualification. There are clear procedures for staff recruitment. Candidates shortlisted for teaching posts are required to give a presentation which is used to assess both knowledge and teaching skills. Programme area managers have the authority to appoint part-time staff and their recruitment is less rigorous. A comprehensive academic staff handbook is available to all full-time staff. It contains policy statements and procedures related to a wide range of employment issues; for example, equal opportunities, maternity leave, grievance and disciplinary matters, staff development and appraisal. There is a well-designed induction programme for part-time staff who are also encouraged to take part in staff-development activities.

Equipment/learning resources

71 In most areas there is an adequate range and amount of equipment for the current course provision. Media and performing arts are particularly well equipped with a purpose-built recording studio, digital recording facilities and computerised synthesizers. Sponsorships by local companies and donations of electronic instruments and a grand piano have resulted in a high standard of equipment to support music and music technology. Engineering is well endowed with industry-standard computer-aided design facilities. The European television satellite provides a stimulus for language teaching. There is little specialist equipment for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and a lack of specialist software for learning support.

72 The library is sited on the first floor and has no lift access. It comprises three inter-connecting rooms with a change in level between two of them. There are ample study places for individuals and group work, including a quiet area which can accommodate 36 people. The library is open four evenings a week and provides a valuable service to part-time students. The bookstock of 15,500 volumes contains many dated texts in, for example, science, healthcare, psychology and performing arts. There is a good range of journals and periodicals. There is an extensive range of compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases and two Internet connections.

73 Teaching areas are generally well furnished. There is an adequate number of overhead projectors but not all rooms have appropriate viewing screens or whiteboards. The college has an insufficient number of computers for students' use. The ratio of computers to students is 1:19. Arrangements for providing open access to computing facilities are inadequate. Many of the 38 computers available on open access by students do not have up-to-date software. Formal arrangements do not exist for students to gain access to computers in the evening. There are no computers in some specialist areas, such as the mathematics workshop, science laboratories and the basic skills development centre.

Accommodation

74 The college occupies a 4.5 hectare site close to the riverside area of the town. Signposting external to the college is poor but on the campus there are adequate directional signs. The majority of the buildings date from the 1960s and 1970s. The campus includes two converted school buildings dating from the turn of the century. Incorporated in the main teaching block is a four-storey block, the upper floors of which are inaccessible to wheelchair users. There is sufficient car parking for current levels of demand. The reception area is sited next to the client information centre and provides a welcoming central focus to the college. Circulation areas and classrooms are generally clean and well maintained. A significant amount of refurbishment work is carried out successfully by in-house maintenance staff.

75 There is a good range of specialist accommodation and general purpose classrooms. Recently-acquired land and buildings adjacent to the college are being developed to provide good workshop facilities for construction and engineering. The facilities provide realistic work environments for hairdressing, beauty therapy and catering. There are four classrooms in huts which provide a poor learning environment. Two of these are to be redesignated for use by the college chaplaincy and the student guild. The accommodation strategy contains plans to cluster specialist accommodation for art and design, catering and engineering in coherent vocational groupings. There are few recreational and social facilities for students. The refectory is often overcrowded because it is used as a social area. The sports hall is mainly timetabled for taught classes or used for external lettings in the evening. The college has access to an adjacent playing field by arrangement with a local school. There is a 24-place nursery operated by private providers and preference is given to the children of students and staff.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

76 The major strengths of the college are:

- the wide range of general education and vocational programmes
- the effective links with local schools
- the effective communication at all levels within the college
- the substantial growth in student numbers achieved over the last three years
- the effective student guidance, tutorial and welfare systems
- the well-developed procedures for identifying students' additional support needs
- some good teaching in practical sessions
- good examination results in some courses
- caring and enthusiastic staff
- the high standard of specialist equipment in some areas.

77 The college should address the following issues:

- the poor provision of management information to support decision making
- the limited assessment of the college's performance by the corporation
- the low take-up of additional learning support by students
- the standard of teaching in some curriculum areas
- the low level of students' achievements on some courses
- the lack of targets based on performance indicators, and the lack of rigour in some course reviews
- the low level of full-cost provision
- weaknesses in provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- the low number of computers
- the inadequate bookstock and the inaccessibility of the library to students with disabilities.

FIGURES

-
- 1 Percentage student numbers by age (as at November 1995)

 - 2 Percentage student numbers by level of study (as at November 1995)

 - 3 Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1995)

 - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1995-96)

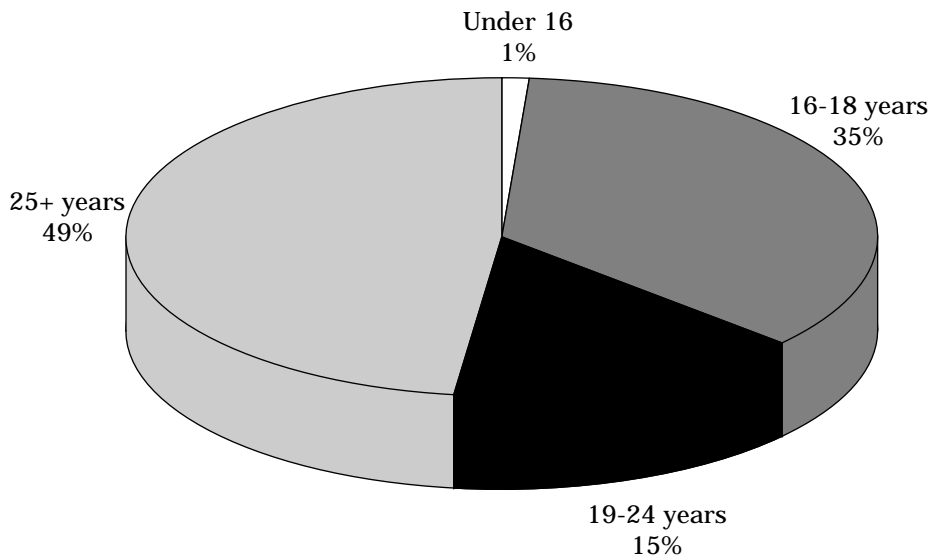
 - 5 Estimated income (for 12 months to July 1996)

 - 6 Estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)

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

Figure 1

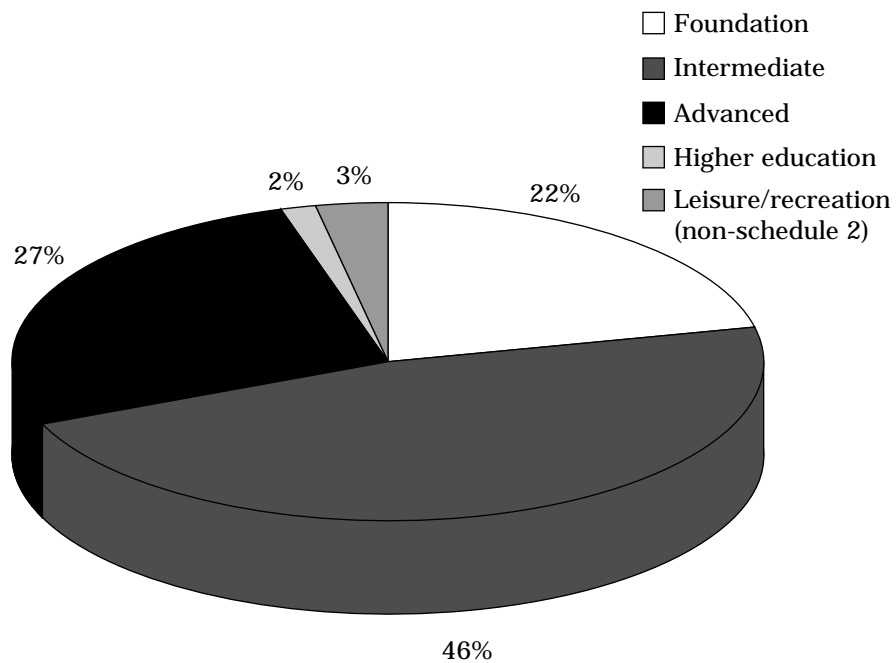
Great Yarmouth College of Further Education: percentage student numbers by age (as at November 1995)



Student numbers: 4,036

Figure 2

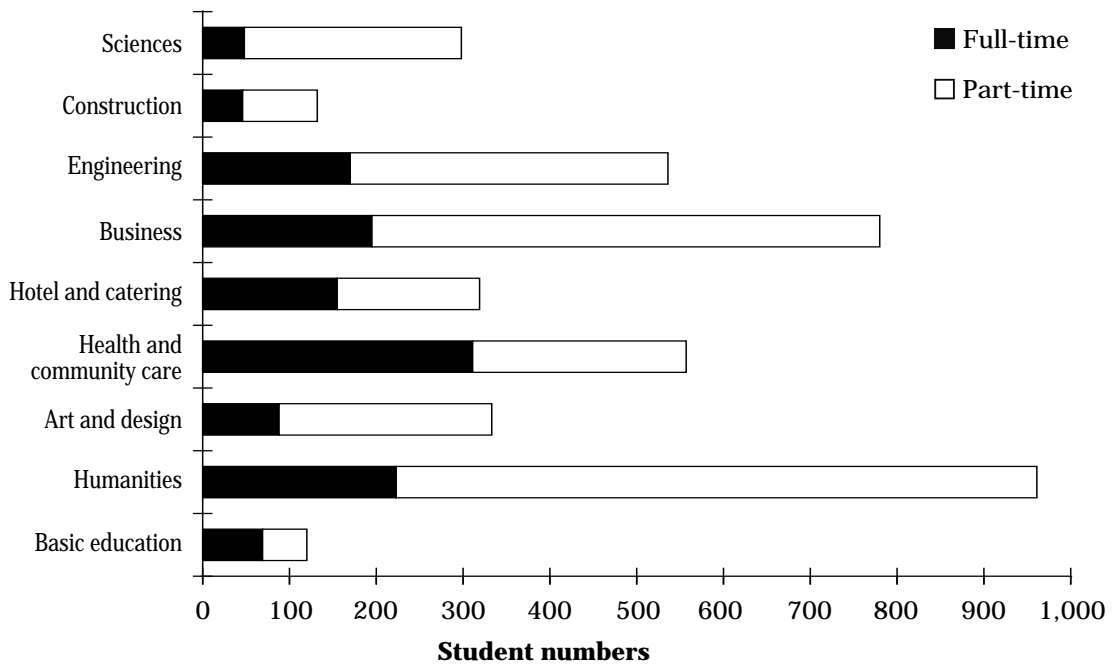
Great Yarmouth College of Further Education: percentage student numbers by level of study (as at November 1995)



Student numbers: 4,036

Figure 3

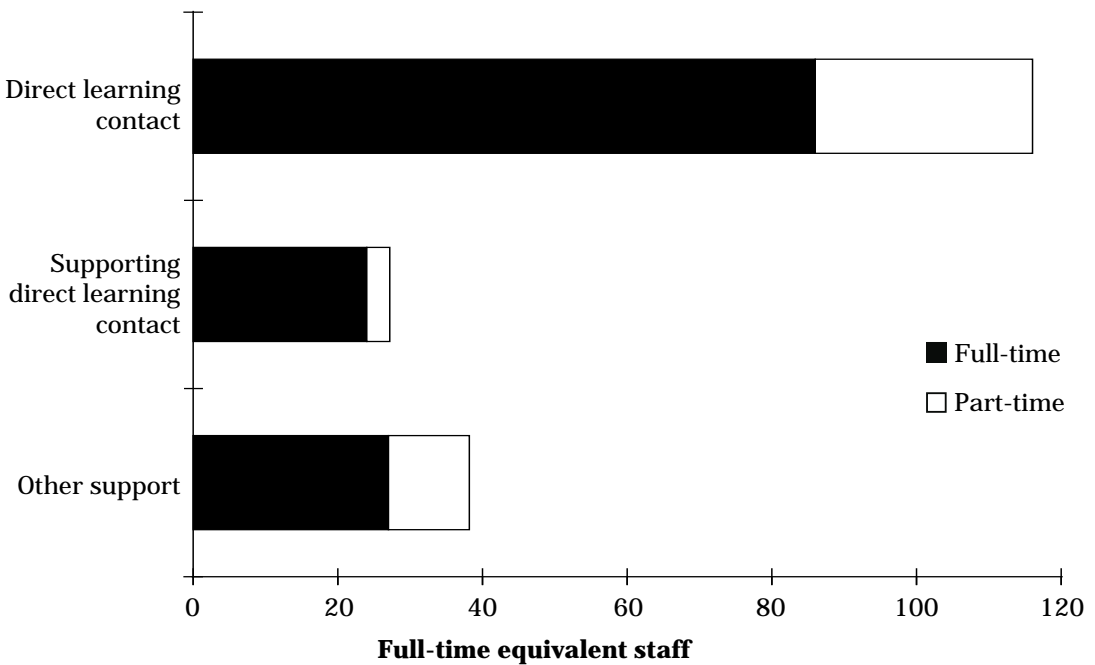
Great Yarmouth College of Further Education: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1995)



Student numbers: 4,036

Figure 4

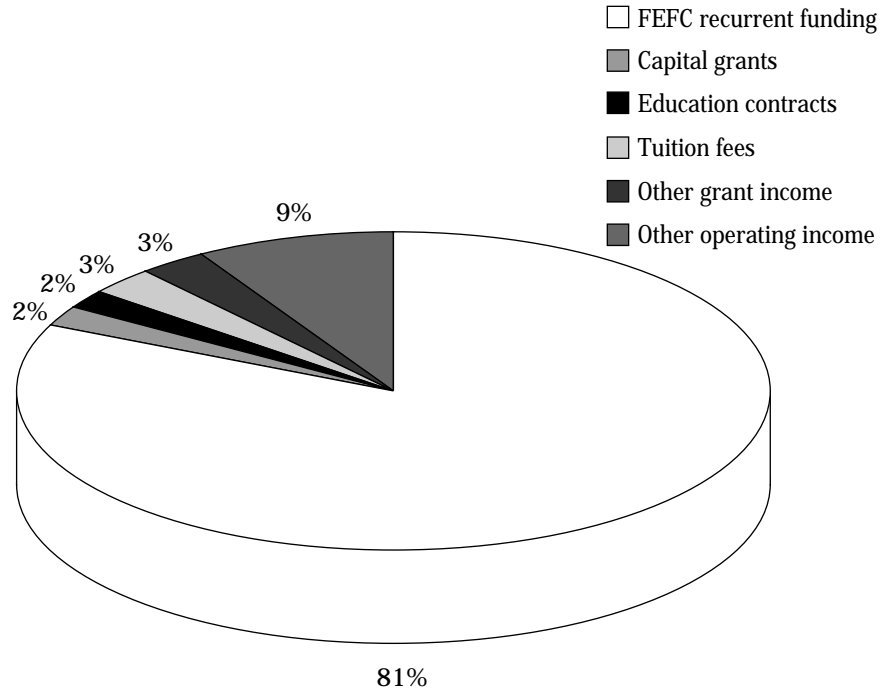
Great Yarmouth College of Further Education: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1995-96)



Full-time equivalent staff: 181

Figure 5

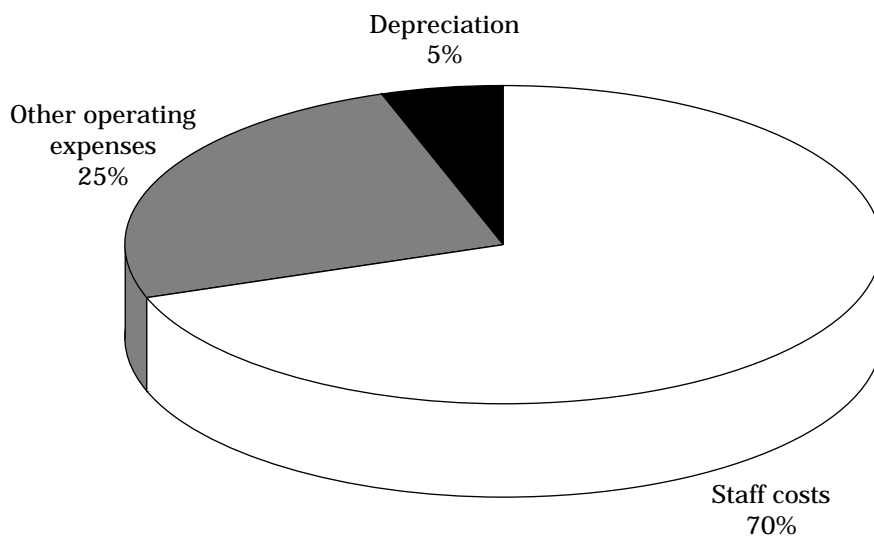
Great Yarmouth College of Further Education: estimated income (for 12 months to July 1996)



Estimated income: £5,168,000 *Excluding release from revaluation reserve of £213,000.*

Figure 6

Great Yarmouth College of Further Education: estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)



Estimated expenditure: £5,740,000

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