

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Hackney Community College

February 1996

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL**

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

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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 28/96

HACKNEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
GREATER LONDON REGION
Inspected April-November 1995

Summary

Hackney Community College was formed in 1992 to provide most of the post-16 education services for the London Borough of Hackney. Commitment to the community is central to the ethos of the college and it attracts many students from groups which have not usually entered further education. Equality of opportunity is vigorously promoted. Enrolment and induction are effective; the college exceeds recruitment targets. The many community-based classes provide pathways to the vocational provision and students benefit from good advice and guidance. Staff are well qualified but some need professional and commercial updating. The governing body reflects a full range of community, professional and commercial expertise, and gives strong backing to an effective senior management team. The quality of management at course team level is variable and the management information system needs improvement. The strategic planning cycle is tied to resource allocation and the college expects to become much more cost effective within the timescale of its current plan. Much of the teaching is of good quality; this serves to highlight examples of poorer work where they occur. Students' achievements are generally satisfactory; there is some unpunctuality and poor attendance. At the time of the inspection, there were some deficiencies in equipment and the overall standard of accommodation was unsatisfactory. These should be substantially improved by the current building and refurbishment programme.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Mathematics and science	2	Art and design (including media and performing arts)	3
Computing	3	English and languages	2
Construction	3	English for speakers of other languages and adult basic education	2
Engineering	3	Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	4
Business	3		
Leisure and tourism	2		
Health and social care	3		

INTRODUCTION

1 Hackney Community College was inspected between April and November 1995. Forty-two inspector days were spent on subject inspections and 32 days on the college's enrolment and induction procedures, and cross-college provision. Inspectors visited 208 classes and examined a broad range of students' work, together with documentation relating to the college and its courses. Meetings were held with students, teachers, support staff, senior managers, governors, employers, and members of local development initiatives, and with representatives of schools, higher education, the careers service, the local community and the City and Inner London Training and Enterprise Council (TEC).

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Hackney Community College was formed in September 1992 by the merger of the London Borough of Hackney's sixth form centre, further education college and adult education service. It lies in the area covered by the City and Inner London TEC. At the time of the inspection the college had 10 main sites, as well as over 80 outreach and community centres within Hackney. There are no other general further education or sixth form colleges in Hackney but there are four general further education and three sixth form colleges in the adjacent London boroughs. Three voluntary-aided schools and one special school, all catering for young people in the 16-18 years age range, are situated in the borough.

3 The population of the London Borough of Hackney was recorded as 181,284 by the 1991 census. The borough has some of the highest rates of poverty and poor housing in Britain and the highest unemployment of any London borough. Total unemployment, according to the London Research Centre, was 24 per cent in October 1995, with male unemployment at 31.7 per cent. For comparison, official government unemployment statistics for the same month were 9.6 per cent for Greater London and 7.8 per cent for Great Britain. The unemployment rates amongst certain groups in Hackney are more than twice the local average rate. The proportions of children, lone parents, and people with a disability or long-term illness affecting their ability to work are also well above the regional average. The borough is relatively poorly served by public transport and has a much lower level of car ownership than the London average.

4 Hackney is a place of great ethnic, cultural and social diversity. The proportion of residents who are from minority ethnic groups is 33.6 per cent, which is 13 per cent higher than the London average. There are many refugees and migrants, and a significant proportion of people who speak languages other than English as their first language.

5 Employment in manufacturing in Hackney has declined continuously for the last five years. Though the manufacturing sector remains larger than in other inner London boroughs, services now account for over

75 per cent of employment. Hackney residents are under represented in the employment sectors that are growing, such as professional/managerial and service jobs. Most work in occupations and sectors that are declining, such as semi-skilled or unskilled work and manufacturing jobs. The borough adjoins the concentration of wealth and service jobs in the City of London and there is an established and growing arts and leisure industries sector.

6 The Hackney Community College provides most of the adult education in Hackney and for the majority of students aged 16-19 educated within the borough. The staying-on rate at 16 in Hackney has risen steadily over the last five years. In 1994-95 it was 68 per cent, which is closer to the national average than it has been in the past.

7 There were 14,817 students enrolled in the college in 1994-95. Of these, 95 per cent of evening students and 65 per cent of day students came from within the borough, although some specialist courses drew people from further afield. Enrolments by age, by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3, respectively. Sixty-six per cent of all students were over 24 years of age. There were almost equal numbers of male and female students. About half came from minority ethnic groups, including 31 per cent Black African and Caribbean, 7 per cent Asian and 10 per cent of Middle Eastern origin. An unusually high proportion of students, some 42 per cent, is funded by agencies other than the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). Contracts have been made with the London Borough of Hackney, City Challenge, with the City and Inner London TEC and with local employers.

8 The college is the third largest employer in the borough having over 1,300 full-time and part-time staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4. The college is organised into three directorates: finance and resources; curriculum management; and strategy and services. The curriculum directorate has three faculties: one covering business studies, computing, languages, special needs and learning support; one covering physical education, arts, leisure, access, care, humanities and science; and a third which includes building, engineering and learning resources.

9 In its strategic plan, the college has identified as its mission: 'to provide excellence in education, promoting equality of opportunity and maximising the achievement of our students, in partnership with the communities and employers we serve'. In line with its mission statement and the national targets for increasing the numbers achieving educational and training qualifications, the college is set to achieve 8 per cent growth in enrolments in 1995-96 and secure its growth target of 25 per cent over four years.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

10 The college is responsive to the diverse needs of the local multicultural community. It offers many community-based courses which provide clear

pathways to vocational and academic studies for students returning to formal education. Courses for older learners are provided for people aged 50 and over. Two students from the college were entered last year for the national awards of adult learner of the year. There is an extensive programme of access courses which enables students to prepare for entry to higher education, supported by a pre-access course to develop confidence and study skills. The majority of those who completed the access courses last year progressed to higher education. A comprehensive outreach initiative has been developed, focusing on five housing estates in the south of the borough. This initiative is designed to increase the skills of unemployed people and further their work prospects. The college collaborates with the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders and the probation service in the North London Education Project to provide education and training advice to ex-offenders. General programmes include education, National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs), General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), and General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) and higher national diploma courses.

11 College staff work closely with community organisations to identify and provide courses to meet their needs. There is an extensive range of courses in English for speakers of other languages, some of which are provided at community centres for Jewish, Turkish, Asian, Chinese, Bengali and Muslim women. More than 40 other classes in English are offered to day and evening students at all levels of achievement. The college also receives funding from the Department for Education and Employment to provide educational guidance to refugees living in the borough. Most join the courses in English for speakers of other languages and some also take the computing courses in the college to improve their vocational skills. The language programmes reflect the composition of the local community. Courses are offered in languages which are rarely found in college curricula, such as Swahili, Hausa and other African languages. There is also a distinctive Irish language workshop which attracts people from the whole of the London area. The college has developed an enterprising computer programme which includes a teacher's resource pack to promote school pupils' understanding of the multicultural nature of their local community.

12 The college's wide range of vocational courses amounts to 41 per cent of its provision financed by the FEFC. NVQs are offered at various levels in construction, administration, childcare, health and social care, and waste management. GNVQs are available in business studies, health and social care, leisure and tourism, engineering, media studies, art and design, and hotel and catering. The NVQ plumbing course has a flexible programme which allows students to join at any stage, depending on their capabilities, and to progress to subsequent stages at their own pace, repeating stages if necessary. The college requires that all new NVQ

programmes should offer such flexibility. Among the distinctive features of the vocational provision are courses in railtrack maintenance, satellite dish installation and maintenance, and housing premises management developed in response to employers' training needs. The college has contributed to an innovative project to facilitate the granting of certificates of achievement to people with suitable experience at work.

13 Twenty subjects are offered at GCE A level, nine at GCE AS and 17 at GCSE. A combined course which results in two separate GCSE awards, in English and English literature, provides a valuable opportunity for some students to widen their achievement.

14 There is extensive full-time and part-time provision for adults and young people with learning difficulties. Special schools would welcome even closer liaison between the college and themselves in relation to curriculum planning.

15 There are good relations with the City and Inner London TEC, which considers that the college has become increasingly responsive to the needs of the labour market during the last three years. City and Inner London TEC provides substantial funding for the provision of youth training and training for work and is helping the college to establish a multi-media centre with London Guildhall University. The college has successfully established some strong links with local employers, particularly in construction and engineering and in those industries which employ significant numbers of speakers of other languages. For example, the college has recently received a request from one employer to provide industrial language and health and safety training for its Tamil workers. There are also useful contacts at national level. The business development manager is a member of the local chamber of commerce.

16 The college maintains good relationships with local schools. The college holds open days and offers samples of its courses to older pupils in the summer term. The headteacher of one of the borough's large secondary schools is the present vice-chair of the corporation board and several staff are governors of local schools.

17 The college plays an active role in the Hackney higher education compact agreement with Queen Mary and Westfield College of the University of London and with City University. Students participate in a structured programme of preparation for higher education which includes visits to the universities, course investigation and mock interviews. The college also has informal links with the University of Sussex through its Inner London agreement and with the University of Oxford through access schemes. However, one drawback to successful progression, reported by the college, is that some students cannot afford to move away from home to study. In conjunction with local authorities and government services, the college runs the Hackney higher education convention each year. This is well supported by higher education institutions across the country and is well attended by students.

18 Some firm links with European colleges have been established. Construction students participate in an exchange visit with students from Germany each year. Motor vehicle students exchange with students in Spain. Business studies students undertake regular work experience visits abroad. The college is also working on a quality curriculum project with a Lisbon college to produce learning materials. Bids have been made for European funding to enable the college to collaborate with colleges in Spain and Dublin to develop flexible and open-learning programmes for prisoners. Potential links with the Gambia, Eastern Europe, Japan and Malaysia are being investigated.

19 After extensive consultation with staff and an audit of existing marketing practices, a well-defined marketing plan has been developed by the marketing unit and adopted by the corporation. Promotional literature is prepared in various languages spoken in the local community and, in busy recruitment periods, a telephone advice line is available in different languages. Important college literature such as the charter has been produced in Braille and audio-tape for students with disabilities. The college advertises and promotes itself through numerous outlets, including the local and community press, posters in shopping centres and national radio. A specially-adapted bus is used to offer information and advice about courses in various parts of the borough and has been particularly successful in recruiting students. Promotional activities are based on thorough market research. A recent survey showed that many of the public do not understand educational jargon. As a consequence, changes are being made to advertising literature.

20 The college has a clear and effective policy on equal opportunities. It aims to provide an education service which encourages the participation of all sections of the community in pursuit of the goal of lifetime learning. The policy has an operational plan tied into the college's planning cycle, which is reviewed annually. The policy is promoted vigorously throughout the college and clear guidelines for recruitment of staff are designed to ensure non-discrimination. A college equality group meets regularly. Reports, with recommendations from staff support groups such as the black and minority ethnic group, the women's groups and the mental health group, are considered and, where appropriate, implemented by the college operational management team.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

21 The college is well governed. The board of 20 governors provides strong support and effective strategic direction. Most members have been appointed since incorporation and have benefited from training and induction by the college. They understand the difference between their role and that of the senior management and actively involve themselves in college life. Governors contribute to the development of the college's strategic plan and receive regular reports on the implementation of operational plans. There is a code of practice and register of members'

interests and an audit of skills has been completed. There are three women members and four from minority ethnic groups. The board intends to increase the proportion of these in accordance with the college's commitment to equality of opportunity. Governors bring a range of skills, knowledge and expertise to the college. There are representatives from banking, accounting, law, business, and the community, in addition to the director of education and leisure for the borough, the principal, two staff governors and the president of the students' union. The board demonstrates exceptional dedication to the aims and interests of the college. The full board meets formally three times a year. Meetings are businesslike and well attended. Four committees have been established: finance, policy and resources; audit; remuneration; and employment. Two groups, with college staff and governor representation, have been instituted for marketing to promote the college and for information technology to improve the quality of management information. Members of the board have good working relationships with the principal and the clerk to the corporation, who is also a senior manager. They are kept well informed about the college, further education and procedural matters.

22 On incorporation, the college had higher unit costs than most other colleges in the new FEFC sector. The governors adopted a strategy to reduce costs in response to the FEFC's policy of convergence in the average level of funding per unit of activity. Since incorporation, there have been two management reorganisations, each reducing the number of senior managers. The present structure has not yet achieved its full potential but already it shows strong evidence of being responsive and effective. The college's average level of FEFC funding for 1995-96 is £27.27 per unit. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges is £17.84 per unit. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1995 were £20,216,000 and £21,730,000, respectively. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1995 are shown in figures 5 and 6.

23 The directors' strategy team of four is chaired by the principal herself and also comprises the directors of finance and resources, curriculum, management, and strategy and services. They meet weekly and work as an effective team. The operational management team, comprising 11 heads of faculties and services, is also chaired by the principal and meets fortnightly. It makes recommendations to the directors' strategy team and considers how to implement strategic decisions. Heads of service take responsibility for areas such as marketing, quality assurance, information technology, and management information systems. Curriculum and service managers meet regularly.

24 The director of curriculum management is responsible for leading and co-ordinating the delivery of the curriculum through the three faculties. Heads of faculty and programme managers, who are responsible for detailed course organisation, were appointed to these posts as recently as

September 1995 but they have quickly established a clear pattern of structured meetings and management targets. There is much good management at programme and course team level but some is of variable quality. Following the reorganisation, senior lecturers have been given responsibility for courses and staff deployment. Job descriptions are being developed. The number of staff for whom each senior lecturer is responsible varies, as does the amount of teaching each is required to undertake. This leads to uneven workloads. The responsibilities of some have changed little as a result of restructuring in the college and they are fully familiar with their roles. For the majority there has been great change. Senior lecturers have been briefed on their responsibilities and most are adapting well to their new situation although a few do not sufficiently understand what is required of them. A review of the roles of senior lecturers, to be undertaken in early 1996, will attempt to clarify any remaining uncertainties.

25 The strategic plan for 1994-97 was introduced at a conference for all staff in January 1994. The college's aims and ethos are well understood by staff who are especially committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity. Strategic and operational objectives clearly derive from the college mission. They are reviewed and revised annually at a conference of governors and managers. There is a clear cycle for the planning of courses which includes the identification of necessary resources and agreement on target student numbers. All curriculum programme areas and college services are required to produce operational plans which relate to the college's strategic plan and are produced to the same format. A few of these operational plans lack detailed objectives and provision for review of progress but most are detailed and make effective use of labour market intelligence and performance indicators. The college's overall operational plan is produced from the plans derived by the programme areas and services. This planning cycle has been in existence for two years and has been improved in the light of experience.

26 The principal and the director of finance and resources have developed a new budgeting system which attaches funding to the activities of cost centres. The targets set in the strategic and operational plans guide the allocation of finance. This system is already in place for cross-college support managers who manage the largest budgets and whose staff have received training in planning, monitoring and control. It will be extended to heads of faculty during 1995-96. Not all programme managers, to whom budgets for consumables are delegated, understand how budgets are allocated or the implications of the new funding methodology. Staffing costs are centrally managed and there is an effective process by which managers can bid for major items of equipment against established priorities.

27 Staff have been thoroughly consulted about restructuring the college and the plans for new accommodation on three sites. Estates and curriculum staff have been fully involved in planning details of their

forthcoming relocation. The staff newsletter, which is published fortnightly, is an effective means of sharing information in spite of the difficulties in communicating effectively across all the 10 existing sites. However, some teachers still do not feel well informed about how strategic and financial decisions are made. Communication will be easier when the college sites are reduced to three. The academic board has not been well attended or viewed as an effective advisory body, since there is no formal report back from representatives nor are agenda items well publicised beforehand. Proposals to revitalise the academic board have been notified to the governing body.

28 The computerised management information system is not being consistently updated to enable it to produce reliable and readily accessible statistics on students' withdrawals, destinations and achievements. Consultants have been appointed to propose improvements and some of their recommendations have been put into practice. Better access to the system and training for all staff are needed.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

29 Enquiries and applications for full-time courses are handled by the central admissions unit which also provides pre-enrolment advice and guidance. Prospective students are referred to programme areas for interview. There is systematic training, supported by good reference materials, to prepare administrative and registration staff for enrolment. Teachers also receive briefings prior to enrolment. The enrolment processes inspected were effective. Most students spoken to by inspectors were pleased with their choice of course. There were some delays during enrolment for students waiting for assessment and registration for popular courses because of insufficient staff to meet the demand. Signposting was inadequate in some of the eight enrolment centres. The college produces attractive prospectuses for full-time and part-time courses. The part-time prospectus includes information on enrolment, fees and equal opportunities in nine community languages, including Turkish, Vietnamese and Somali. There is also a young person's guide which includes information on academic and vocational routes to higher education and employment.

30 Students who need in-depth advice and guidance, or wish to have their previous experience assessed and accredited, can apply to the college's accreditation of prior learning and guidance unit which was initially set up with funds from City and Inner London TEC, but is now partly funded by British Petroleum plc. During 1994-95, 207 clients received advice and guidance. Many of these were refugees and asylum seekers needing advice on the equivalence of qualifications achieved in their home countries. Forty-four clients were enabled to achieve full or partial NVQs through accreditation of prior learning. Currently, an audit of the availability of accreditation of prior learning across all faculties of the college is being carried out. Accreditation of prior learning forms part

of the innovative NVQ provision in plumbing, but it is underdeveloped in other areas, such as leisure and tourism and health and community care.

31 An induction programme is provided for all students on full-time and substantial part-time courses. During induction, students are provided with an informative handbook and diary which gives details of available support, students' rights and their responsibilities. Guidance and useful supporting materials are provided to tutors on the content of induction programmes. Students valued the induction sessions. Some effective examples of induction were observed during the inspection. In leisure and tourism, GNVQ students on foundation, intermediate and advanced level programmes gathered together in a well-planned reception which included refreshments and an exhibition. Teachers, library and support staff and the college principal mingled with the new students, who were hosted by second-year students. There was also a visit to a major tourist centre which formed part of the students' first assignment. This led to the award of an accreditation certificate. The whole activity was planned to give students a sense of achievement early in their course.

32 Students on full-time courses have two hours' tutorial time per week. Good resources have been developed for the tutorial curriculum and these are being used. On most courses, tutorial schemes include individual tutorials, whole group work and course evaluation procedures as part of the college's quality assurance process. Whole group work may include visits from careers and welfare advisers and advice on entry to higher education. A tutorial entitlement policy is under development to ensure consistent practice. Individual action plans form part of the initial student record kept by tutors, although these are not always used effectively. Students are generally well supported by their tutors, but there is scope for improvement in the quality of tutorials in some areas. There is good practice at the sixth form centre where students were appreciative of the pastoral support received. Students on substantial part-time courses receive a reduced tutorial programme. Tutorial support for students on part-time evening and community-based courses is provided by their teachers, many of whom are also part time. A programme of training for part-time teachers has been initiated to improve support for students.

33 The main focus of learning support in the college is on the needs of students whose mother tongue is not English. Over 100 languages are spoken by the college's students and about 30 per cent of students need language support. Some language support groups are run in parallel with core skills groups so that additional support can be provided when required. Students receiving English language support on vocational courses can achieve accreditation certificates for their English which may be taken into consideration for university entrance. This has improved students' motivation. Valuable and innovative work has been carried out to identify the English technical vocabulary needed on some vocational courses in health and social care and in motor vehicle studies. It is being extended to other areas. Many students are given pre-enrolment tests so

that they can be advised on which vocational course will suit them best. All students on full-time and substantial part-time courses take the Basic Skills Agency tests in literacy and numeracy to identify learning support needs. Learning support sessions in literacy and numeracy, to which students may be referred, are available on five of the college's sites but, on other sites, or in the evenings, this support is more limited. There are no learning support workshops with materials which can be used for private study and learning support teaching often takes place in rooms where no specialist materials or equipment are available. Plans for the college's new site include facilities to address this issue. The college is aware of the need to draw together the whole range of learning support services and clarify the role of each. This process has now started following the creation of a new faculty which covers these services.

34 Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are referred by their tutors for individual assessment of their support needs. In 1994-95, over 700 students declared themselves to have a disability or learning difficulty. Good support in English is provided for students with visual impairments who are speakers of other languages. Some staff teaching students with disabilities on mainstream courses have not been informed of the students' needs and have sometimes used inappropriate teaching methods. The results of initial assessments of literacy and numeracy have not always been used by teachers in deciding the appropriate level of teaching for students with learning difficulties. The communication of students' needs to teaching staff should be improved, together with the provision of training in how to support students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who are integrated into mainstream courses.

35 The college employs an appropriate number of student advisers at the college's main sites to provide a personal counselling service and welfare advice. Most students who contact the service seek advice on financial matters. The college's access funds for 1995-96 amount to over £47,000. During 1994-95, a total of 321 students received awards ranging from £50 to £500. Other funds are made available to students from charities. There are several bursaries sponsored by prominent external organisations which provide funds for books, travel, materials and field trips. Staff believe that these bursaries enable students who would otherwise have to leave the college to continue their studies. Careers advice and education is provided by a team of four careers officers and two assistants from the careers service of the London Borough of Hackney. Group sessions such as advice on applications to higher education, practice interviews and job search skills are also provided. Over 1,000 vocational guidance interviews were given during 1994-95.

36 The college provides 11 creches, catering for over 250 children whose parents are students. There is an evening creche, an important innovation in a borough with a high proportion of single parents. The childcare service is well regarded by students as it enables them to study and they believe it provides high-quality learning and play for their children.

Demand for childcare far exceeds what the college can provide. Additional support for students is provided by the college's students' union, which receives £25,000 from the college, in addition to the salaries of the sabbatical president and a part-time administrative worker. The students' union provides recreational facilities and provides assistance for students involved in disciplinary proceedings.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

37 During the inspection period, inspectors observed a total of 208 teaching and learning sessions involving 1,878 students. In 52 per cent of sessions, strengths clearly outweighed weaknesses, and in 9 per cent there were weaknesses which clearly outweighed strengths. The following table shows the grades awarded for the teaching sessions inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level		7	6	3	0	0	16
GCSE		2	8	3	0	0	13
GNVQ		5	9	17	3	0	34
NVQ		0	10	7	1	0	18
Access to further and higher education		8	4	10	2	0	24
Other vocational		7	17	26	4	1	55
Higher education		0	1	1	0	0	2
Other		8	17	13	6	2	46
Total		37	72	80	16	3	208

38 Courses are generally well planned throughout the college. Most programmes of study are thoughtfully devised, clear, coherent and appropriate for the achievement of course objectives. There is widespread evidence of forward planning by curriculum teams and the sharing of ideas and resources. Courses are particularly well organised in leisure and tourism with assignment programmes planned for the year ahead and provided for students at the beginning of their course. Good schemes of work, often following a pattern provided by the college, and lesson plans, are in use in the majority of programme areas. The best examples, as in English, science and in adult basic education, are the result of co-operation between experienced course team members to develop schemes of work, suggested teaching methods and supporting materials. Individual teachers decide what students need within the agreed framework. Rigour is provided by the assessment requirements of the target qualifications. GCE A level courses in the arts are notably well planned with a sound use of modular structures. Objectives are emphasised and shared with students but, as in the case of mathematics,

sometimes the extent of the work to be achieved is not always fully understood. In construction, the work in a minority of classes is poorly planned and, although some programmes are designed to take account of students' prior knowledge, there is not always a good match between the programme selected and students' abilities. In courses in English for speakers of other languages and adult basic education it is rare for course aims to be communicated to students.

39 Lecturers generally show a sound knowledge of their subjects. In English, the academic knowledge of the staff is matched by considerable experience of working in an inner-city multicultural environment. This enables them to draw successfully on the cultural diversity of their students when teaching. For example, there are good materials in use in English which draw upon individuals' language experience. Literature texts include works by black and minority ethnic writers. Students on access to higher education courses are taught by dedicated teams who not only cover the curriculum well but know how to meet the needs of mature adults. Teachers make use of their students' wide experience of life to promote independent learning and develop self-confidence. In practical classes, for example in construction, work reflects the relevant industrial environment, although there are examples of poor workshop practice. There is a need for the latest vocational standards in practical design to be fully included in the advanced GNVQ course in art and design.

40 Lessons are often well prepared and well taught. In the better examples, capable and enthusiastic teachers provide well-organised and effective learning experiences that take account of the wide range of ages and abilities to be found in many groups. Many lessons have clear aims and teachers employ a variety of teaching methods appropriate to the topic being studied. Teachers ensure that students' previous learning is reinforced and check students' understanding before they move on to new work. The teacher of an intermediate GNVQ class studying business letters engaged students' interest from the outset with a well-structured lesson which began with a quiz covering previous work which students completed competitively and effectively. In a GNVQ leisure and tourism class, the teacher showed a video on customer service at fast food outlets which was close to the students' personal experience. Students were well briefed on what aspects to note and were able to discuss their findings and show their understanding during suitable breaks in the video.

41 In the better classes, teaching is designed to stretch students and to build up their confidence to develop new skills and concepts in ways which challenge them and extend their existing knowledge. There is usually a variety of activities in these lessons and both teachers and students are able to assess the achievement of learning goals. In GNVQ courses students' core skills in communications, application of number, information technology and language support are developed by subject teachers and are often well integrated into weekly timetables. Students value the core skills support given by their teachers. Although, at present,

there is no systematic approach to core skills developed across the curriculum there are some individual initiatives. For example, the wider core skills development for some GCE A level students includes critical thinking and research skills. A course in mathematics for science is provided for science students. Classes for interpreters of British Sign Language are highly effective. Students on an adult foundation course learning the perfect tense were using newspapers to find examples of its use. Students said, in addition to the work on tenses, they valued the opportunity to explore different types of writing. Overall, there is good assessment of students' existing abilities on entry and careful monitoring of their progress.

42 The weaker classes were managed less effectively. While most staff are aware of the need for appropriate variety in lessons, some are less confident in arranging group work. In a business studies class, opportunities to correct misunderstandings were missed. In nursery nursing, there were examples of poor group work where the class was not suitably arranged for face to face discussion or given enough time to complete the tasks set. In engineering, there were examples of poor preparation and lacklustre lessons centred on the copying of notes from the board, or dictation at the pace of the slowest students in the class. In some classes in English for speakers of other languages there was insufficient preparation for working in pairs. In computing, although the standard of teaching was generally good, there was a need for more variety in the teaching styles and in the use of learning aids. In one session on input, output and storage computer devices, there was a lot of oral description when the use of demonstration equipment would have been more effective. Some classes did not challenge the students sufficiently. In business, for example, there were lessons where able students were insufficiently stretched, as the pace and level of the work was geared to the needs of the slowest students. Students less familiar with written English have particular difficulty when lessons consist mainly of dictated notes or note-taking from the board. Since some workshops and lessons are programmed for three hours, where the structure is unsound and the pace of the work too slow students' attention often lapses.

43 On some courses where the retention of students is already a problem, the excessive reliance on copying notes is counter productive and alienates students more. Punctuality and attendance on some courses are poor and need to be improved. In engineering, for example, where some of the less-satisfactory lessons were seen, punctuality and attendance are a concern. In mathematics about two-thirds of the sessions started five or more minutes late. Several got under way 15 minutes after the set time and some finished five or 10 minutes early. When, in addition, unscheduled breaks are included, there can be a substantial reduction in learning time. Overall attendance recorded during the inspection was 76 per cent, which is below the college's own target of 80 per cent.

44 Working relationships between staff and students are, almost without exception, good. Classes are informal but well disciplined, reflecting the dedication of staff and their wish to meet the varied needs of students who are generally mature, well behaved and well motivated. A group of mature part-time students for the second year of the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national certificate in nursery nursing who were meeting their new tutor for the first time, spent the early part of the session reviewing what had been achieved in the previous year and creating ground rules for the course ahead. Dissatisfaction was expressed with aspects of the previous year's course. The tutor handled the discussion wisely and with a sure touch; a sense of partnership was created. In most classes the positive relationships produce an environment where students are enthusiastic to learn even when covering the less stimulating topics in a course.

45 Learning materials are generally appropriate to the subjects, meet the particular needs of students, and reflect the cultural environment of the college. Well-produced and well-structured assignments with good-quality supporting handouts are common but not universal. Good use is regularly made of video equipment and overhead projectors. In subjects as diverse as science, English, business, construction, art and design, technology and adult basic education, imaginative examples of the use of learning materials, including models and visual aids are to be found. GCE A level art is taught in studios that replicate work situations. Typing workshops benefit from a range of materials and facilities which enable students to study independently at their own pace with little supervision. In NVQ business, course materials use examples drawn from the public sector and charities rather than business, which reinforces the stereotype that business careers in the wider commercial sector might not be available for Hackney students. There are office areas that simulate the work environment, but there is no travel office for leisure and tourism. In some access to higher education classes, teaching and learning aids are of poor quality.

46 Overall, there is a good range of computer facilities. Leisure and tourism students benefit from a well-equipped computer room provided with software and support manuals which are used in the travel business. Specialist students of computing have insufficient access to computers and students in general do not have enough open access information technology facilities.

47 Much good practical work takes place and most facilities are well used. Practical work is a strong feature of science, engineering and construction courses. In general, students enjoy practical work, particularly when they can see they are making progress towards achieving a qualification they want. For example, in construction craft classes, students engage in relevant tasks to develop their skill in the use of tools. They are required to plan their work as well as read and interpret drawings.

They work at a good pace, only seeking guidance from teachers when they have specific technical problems. In contrast, there are some craft sessions where students work at too slow a pace, waiting for the teachers' attention because the practical tasks have been set without sufficient preliminary guidance to allow students to proceed without frequent advice from the teachers. As a result, motivation is low and poor workshop habits, such as unpunctuality, develop. Similarly, in a performing arts class, routines and exercises in dance and drama were taught without sufficient explanation and students were not confident or sure what was expected of them.

48 Assessments and marking are usually at an appropriate level and geared to the requirements of the particular qualifications. In most subjects inspected, marking is consistent and rigorous but there are some examples of inaccuracy. Progress is recorded systematically. Work set is usually promptly returned. Most comments written on students' work are constructive but there are some examples where lengthy pieces were marked with a few ticks and a cryptic comment. In leisure and tourism, teachers mark students' work conscientiously and make helpful comments and spelling corrections. In some work in business studies, spelling mistakes, punctuation errors and poor sentence construction are left uncorrected. There is also evidence of some overgrading. This had been noted by the GNVQ verifier and indicates that attainment targets are being set too low. Similar examples of insufficient rigour are found in some health and social care programmes. In contrast, there is good practice in marking among the English teachers at the sixth form centre who have an agreed, rigorous policy which has been fully explained to students and which is implemented systematically. More consistent practice in assessment across the college is needed.

49 The college has substantial provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Its policy is to help such students to study on mainstream courses where possible. There are also specialist courses for students with learning difficulties, some of whom progress to mainstream provision. Supported students are enrolled on courses in business, engineering, and leisure and tourism. There is also a wide range of separate specialist part-time and full-time provision for adults and young people. College prospectuses are welcoming to these students and give positive images of people with disabilities. There were some good examples of adult provision. Teachers and volunteer supporters in a drama class ensured total participation of students in the group without being intrusive. The result was an imaginative learning experience for all the students concerned. In contrast, most provision for young people showed weaknesses. There was little evidence that the results of assessments were used to devise and implement individual programmes. Students were involved in activities rather than in structured, purposeful learning. They were also asked to tackle work which required levels of literacy they did not have. Teachers were caring and committed but their

expectations of young people with severe learning difficulties were low and the work in classes lacked pace and rigour. An audit of provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities commissioned by the corporation board has made recommendations and a plan for improvements is being implemented.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

50 In most sessions seen, students were well motivated and enjoyed their studies. Students were making sound progress, were co-operating effectively when required and were also able to work independently to achieve the qualifications they wanted. In subjects such as engineering, construction and art and design, most students applied their theoretical knowledge correctly to the practical aspects of their work. Students participate readily in visits related to their courses of study. There are some useful study links with industrial and commercial institutions which are helpful to students and should be further developed to improve their employment prospects. Students aiming at higher education are aware from an early stage of the requirements for admission and relate most of their activities to this goal.

51 As well as producing substantial portfolios for assessment, students on GNVQ programmes are developing a useful range of core skills to improve personal effectiveness, problem solving and the ability to work in a team. Students are developing core skills in numeracy and communications effectively in most programme areas. Students' acquisition of core skills in information technology is variable across courses. It is good in construction. In some other courses, for example, the access to higher education course, information technology is not well integrated with the course and students' skills are less well developed. Among computing students, mathematical core skills are well developed although their communication skills are less good. The inclusion of GNVQ core skills units in NVQ programmes is being considered. The pilot development for accrediting additional core skills for GCE A level students is helpful in preparing them for higher education.

52 At the time of the inspection the college was in the process of compiling its full-achievement data for the previous academic year. The overall completion rate calculated for 1994-95 is 71.8 per cent. Approximately 45 per cent of the students were following vocational programmes, including GNVQs and NVQs, across nine of the 10 FEFC programme areas. Students entered for a wide range of external assessments validated by BTEC, the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G), the RSA Examinations Board (RSA) and other professional examining bodies. The college's internal quality assessment report estimates that 48 per cent of students originally enrolled achieved full accreditation in 1994-95, and a further 10 per cent gained partial accreditation. Sixty-seven per cent of students in their final year of study

on the vocational courses included in the Department for Education and Employment's 1995 performance tables for post-16 vocational qualifications were successful. This places the college among the bottom third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure.

53 About 5 per cent of the college's students are entered for GCE AS/A level and GCSE examinations. Results have been variable over the last three years but usually above the national average for sixth form and general further education colleges. Students aged 16-18 entered for GCE AS/A examinations in 1993-94 averaged 4.8 points per entry, which placed the college in the top third of colleges in the further education sector based on the data in the 1994 performance tables published by the former Department for Education. The figures for 1995 published by the Department for Education and Employment give an average of 4.2 points per entry placing the college in the middle third of the sector colleges.

54 GCSE results have been at or above the national average for similar colleges in recent years. In mathematics and science, GCSE results for full-time students for 1995 have been particularly good with, for example, 100 per cent of entries gaining grades A-C in chemistry and 65 per cent in mathematics, compared with provisional national figures of 84 per cent and 45 per cent, respectively. All students who completed the access to higher education science course gained places in higher education, although a significant proportion of students did not complete. In the BTEC national diploma courses in science all students progressed to higher education and all first diploma students who completed went on to national diploma courses. Science students show confidence and competence in laboratory skills and in working in groups. The development of their information technology skills is less successful since there is relatively little use of information technology in science other than for data retrieval. Retention of students on science courses is good except for access to higher education and BTEC first diploma programmes. Present GCE A level mathematics students show a range of knowledge and understanding which indicates they are likely to achieve good results. Results on vocational courses in computing are good in the BTEC national diploma where 89 per cent of students achieved full accreditation in 1995, but poor in the C&G 7261 information technology course where only 44 per cent of students passed.

55 The students on construction courses reach appropriate standards of achievement. The high quality of their drawings and assignments is especially noteworthy but there is a wide range of achievement in written work among craft students. The best written work is produced by technician students. Craft practical work is of an appropriate standard. Retention rates are over 80 per cent on some courses but below 67 per cent on others. Examination pass rates range from over 80 per cent on nearly half the programmes to less than 64 per cent on some. Progression rates are poor for one-third of the programmes offered, with over 50 per cent of students not going on to further or higher education or employment.

56 During practical sessions in engineering students handled equipment, computers and instrumentation confidently and competently. The artefacts produced in horology are of a high standard and, in 1995, four students were awarded national prizes by the British Horological Institute. Students speak with enthusiasm about their courses and are active in class but, while pass rates for full-time students are generally satisfactory, there were some poor results in 1994-95 in C&G electronic servicing, both for full-time and part-time students, and in part-time courses generally.

57 In the business programme area, students have achieved good results on the BTEC national diplomas and certificates. In 1995, 74 per cent of the students on the national diploma progressed to higher education. The proportion of final year students achieving qualification is higher on foundation and advanced level GNVQ courses than on intermediate ones. Some students' work is over graded; external verifiers report difficulties with assessment on advanced GNVQ programmes. Retention and pass rates are poor on the Institute of Legal Executives course.

58 Students of leisure and tourism present in class are keen and attentive, although punctuality and attendance are sometimes poor. Many students' files are well organised; some portfolios prepared in 1994-95 showed high levels of achievement. Many students have an understanding of ideas and concepts which is ahead of their development in language, literacy and numeracy. Retention and pass rates in travel services and access to physical education are satisfactory, but poor in intermediate and advanced GNVQ programmes.

59 Retention rates are poor in most courses in health and social care. All students who completed their BTEC national diploma and National Nursery Examinations Board (NNEB) courses in nursery nursing in 1995, passed. The pass rate on the intermediate GNVQ programme in health and social care was 53 per cent, which exceeded the national average of 46 per cent. Students' work in advanced GNVQ courses shows analytical rigour, but some NNEB coursework lacks depth. Students' language and literacy skills are generally satisfactory, but their numeracy and information technology skills are insufficiently developed. Students present in class show interest in their studies and work willingly, but attendance is poor in some classes.

60 In art and design, pass rates are variable. They are very good in GCE A level, with 90 per cent gaining grades A-C, and in GCSE, where pass rates are well above the national average with 80 per cent gaining A-C grades. However, there are poor levels of achievement in GNVQ programmes. Pass rates are also poor in GCSE drama and in BTEC first diploma in performing arts. Progression into further and higher education from the access to film and video courses is generally good. Acceptance is usually based on the student's portfolio of work and the course lays great emphasis on the careful preparation of portfolios. Some students attend successive courses, so extending the duration of their education

unnecessarily. In design, students have no opportunity to undertake work experience or to use simulated professional environments, which is a disadvantage. Levels of attendance, retention and punctuality are unsatisfactory across the programme area.

61 In English, responses to class and homework tasks were imaginative and of a good standard. The percentage of students achieving grades A-C at GCE A level exceeds the national averages. In 1995, 71 per cent of full-time students who sat English literature gained grades A-C compared with a national figure of 45 per cent for 16-18 year olds in further education and 58 per cent in sixth form colleges. The overall pass rate has been 100 per cent for four of the past five years. Full-time students on the GCSE course achieved a pass rate of 69 per cent at grades A-C which compares well with a provisional national average of 57 per cent. Retention and achievement rates are weaker for part-time students of English.

62 There were some good results in modern foreign languages and community languages but groups were very often small as a result of poor attendance and retention rates. In 1995, GCSE results in Turkish not only exceeded the averages for sixth form and further education colleges, but 68 per cent of the group achieved starred A grades. GCSE achievement and GCE AS/A level results in other languages were variable, but there were high pass rates of between 91 and 100 per cent, in Bengali, French and Spanish. Good results are regularly achieved in the British Sign Language interpreters' course which provides a national benchmark for this specialist language training.

63 In adult basic education classes and those for English for speakers of other languages, students are well motivated and develop appropriate levels of skill. They speak highly of their courses and their teachers. Retention on full-time courses for adults is good. The college is introducing and evaluating a range of relevant and recognised accreditation to meet students' aspirations to progress to employment or further and higher education. Good results are being achieved in wordpower and London Open College Federation awards. They are lower than average in University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate examinations, but not significantly so, considering the threshold language abilities of many students.

64 The college has established some programmes of study for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities which can be externally accredited. Twelve per cent of students entered for accreditation in 1994-95 achieved full accreditation and the majority gained partial accreditation. At present, accreditation is not generally available. In some provision for young people, there is little distinction in aims, curriculum, content and delivery between the first and second years' work, so students are not able to progress within their course.

65 In 1993-94, 21 per cent of the 616 full-time students whose intended destinations are known to the college entered higher education; 63 per

cent continued in further education. In this area of high unemployment only 10 per cent entered paid work. Six per cent went to other destinations. Information on the intended destinations collected by the college for 47 per cent of students leaving full-time courses in 1994-95 shows that 12 per cent were aiming for higher education, 66 per cent for further education and 17 per cent were seeking employment.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

66 The college's quality assurance strategy is well established. There is a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation process which focuses on the needs of the learner and involves staff at all levels. The internal quality report, produced annually, sets targets for all sections of the college and is subsumed in the college's operating statement. Each year the strategic plan and priorities are reviewed and, with governors' approval, are used to set a framework for the production of local operational plans for each curriculum and cross-college area. An operational plan for the whole college is then produced. Its progress is monitored termly. The college acknowledges the need to link these strategic planning processes more formally and explicitly with the quality assurance processes and to communicate the procedures to staff at all levels.

67 Equal opportunities data on the gender, ethnicity, age, disabilities and learning difficulties of students are routinely collected as part of the quality assurance process. Recently, the equalities action group commissioned an enquiry into the college's staffing profile in terms of disabilities, gender, ethnicity, age and length of service. Equal opportunities information is well recorded and provides a sound basis for implementing equal opportunities policies.

68 Systems and procedures for quality assurance are documented in the quality assurance handbook which is issued to all full-time and most part-time teachers. Student evaluations feed into twice-yearly course or subject reviews. Programme area managers produce summaries of this information. These summaries are collated into a college-wide report by the head of quality, equality and policy. Many staff see the systems of course review and evaluation as helpful and supportive.

69 There is clear evidence of improvements in teaching and learning as a result of the quality assurance process. In adult basic education, for example, it has led to developments in accreditation. In courses where there is concern about retention appropriate remedies have been developed. However, in some areas there is incomplete implementation of remedial action or a lack of feedback to students and staff on the data produced.

70 Each cross-college area has a service level agreement including performance indicators and targets which were monitored during 1994-95 and led to new targets for 1995-96. The intention is that the reviews will occur termly once the service level agreements become integrated with the activity-based budgeting process.

71 Policy and procedures are in place for internal verification of vocational courses and the college is an approved assessment centre accredited by awarding bodies. There is a college co-ordinator to manage internal verification and co-ordinate assessor and verifier training for internal and external clients. Course co-ordinators receive remission from their teaching commitment of one hour per week for internal verification work. Overall, there is slow progress on assessor training but many staff are in the process of completing accreditation and NVQ developments are not being inhibited. Only one member of staff has an award associated with the accreditation of prior learning, but 10 are currently in training.

72 Appropriate resources are devoted to staff development. The college is committed to gaining Investors in People status with a target assessment date of February 1997. Staff development and training are implemented by the staff-development and training co-ordinator and the college internal verifier, working to the head of quality, equality and policy. The funds for 1995-96 earmarked for staff development, excluding related staff salaries, amount to £150,000. Time is regularly devoted to staff development and training for full-time and part-time staff. A programme for administrative staff to achieve NVQ level 2 accreditation in business administration has been initiated. This has been linked to the work of the unit concerned with the accreditation of prior learning. A staff-appraisal scheme has been agreed and is being implemented, starting with senior and middle managers. It will be progressively extended to the teaching staff. Recently, the efficiency of staff development has been improved by more rigorous monitoring of staff-development expenditure.

73 The college has a well-developed charter and a formal complaints procedure. The charter has been extensively revised for 1995-96 with the help of staff and students from English for speakers of other languages and adult basic education courses. A monitoring grid has been prepared to review and evaluate the college's performance against the charter standards. The charter document is well designed, brief, written in language which is easily understood and translated into the four most used community languages. It is also available in Braille, in large print and on audio tape. The charter is introduced to students at induction and is summarised in the students' handbook and diary. The charter sets out clearly the college's commitment to students, the local communities, parents and employers. The handling of complaints is monitored termly by the customer services officer to establish patterns and to address areas which give rise to frequent complaints.

74 The institutional self-assessment report, prepared in September 1995, analyses provision against the headings in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. It contains an appendix with specific operational objectives. The report provides a useful summary of the main initiatives planned by the college to improve quality and identifies important areas for development as well as existing strengths. Many of the assessments made were subsequently confirmed by inspectors.

RESOURCES

Staffing

75 The college employs 465 full-time equivalent staff of whom 263 are salaried teachers. There are, overall, 1,300 individuals who work for the college. Approximately half the teachers are women. Of the 15 members of the college's senior staff, eight, including the chief executive, are women and five are from minority ethnic groups. Twenty-one members of staff identify themselves as being disabled. Of the 47 appointments to the college in the 12 months to 1 November 1995, 21 were from minority ethnic groups. Many staff speak the first language of students, especially Bengali, Urdu and Turkish. Recruitment policy is in accordance with the college's strategic plan and based upon curriculum needs. The college operates a rigorous and fair policy on recruitment, and carefully monitors all appointments against its equal opportunities standards. Following incorporation, there has been a continuous re-appraisal of staffing needs based upon the college's curriculum plan. There has been a reduction in the number of staff and a continuing restructuring programme to make more effective and efficient use of staff. In the most recent exercise, director posts have been reduced by 25 per cent, support staffing by 14 per cent and teaching posts by 11 per cent.

76 Teachers are generally well qualified in their subjects. Eighty-one per cent hold a degree and a further 13 per cent have a relevant vocational qualification. In leisure and tourism, English, languages, some areas of the performing arts, media studies, care, and the sciences, teachers are particularly well qualified. Many teachers have appropriate commercial or industrial experience although some in design, engineering and business would benefit from updating. Part-time teachers make an important contribution to the work in all faculties, broadening the range of subjects that can be taught and bringing current business and industrial practice to the curriculum. However, in areas such as courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, adult basic education, art and design, languages, and health and social care, there is too high a reliance on part-time staff. This causes problems because these teachers are not closely involved in the planning and management of courses. In consequence, some full-time teachers have to carry an excessive administrative load and it is more difficult to ensure common practice throughout course teams.

77 Technical, administrative and clerical staff are appropriately qualified. Technicians comprise approximately 6 per cent of the college's staff. They are unevenly deployed across the college and there is insufficient technician support for the range of courses in art and design and in business studies. The college is reviewing the deployment of technician support across the college.

Equipment/learning resources

78 Teaching and support staff are involved in a planned programme to review and bid for the equipment requirements for present and future curriculum needs. They visit industry, manufacturers and other colleges to evaluate the effectiveness of a variety of equipment and its use. The level of specialist equipment is generally satisfactory.

79 Equipment for craft courses in construction has been improved with recent purchases of updated theodolites and levels. In engineering, the computer-assisted design facility is well equipped with modern computers. In the motor vehicle section there is a shortage of modern vehicles and of the associated electronic engine efficiency controls needed if the college is to continue offering NVQ courses. The business studies programme would benefit from the provision of, or access to, an office area equipped to a commercial standard.

80 There are 424 computers to support some 4,086 full-time equivalent students. However, many of the student groups are too large for the number of computers in the rooms timetabled. Dedicated computer rooms are available to students at some sites but open access to the computing facilities is inadequate. More extensive open access is planned. In construction, the quality and quantity of the information technology equipment is inadequate, and in science some computing equipment is outdated. The college is addressing this problem and has spent more than £500,000 since incorporation on computer facilities for students' use.

81 The college has libraries on all main sites, open all day for five days a week. They provide 280 study places. Overcrowding is a widespread problem. There is evening opening at all centres where evening classes take place. Providing a library service on all the college sites gives the widest possible student access. As the college is aware, relatively limited resources are, in consequence, available at each individual site. The library stock includes 42,665 books, 339 journals and about 200 audio-visual items. The annual budget for books, allocated on the basis of student numbers, is currently £58,672. Some of the bookstock is outdated. Library staff work closely with teaching staff to support learning. They have developed a London Open College Federation learning unit on research skills and are involved in its delivery and assessment. There are some open access learning resources for students' use and computers in all libraries. At one site, there are learning resources for staff development. Plans for the college's new site include facilities for resource-based learning.

82 The standard and level of equipment and furniture in classrooms is generally satisfactory. However, in a small number of classrooms the whiteboards are in very poor condition and, in others, the boards have not been fixed to the wall. In one classroom used by an engineering group, the board was mounted at a right angle to the desks. In a few cases teachers do not have access to appropriate resources. For example, in adult basic

education there was no evidence of technology to support learning on courses specially designed for adults. In health and social care, some classrooms do not have basic equipment such as overhead projectors or whiteboards that are in good condition.

Accommodation

83 Despite some good features, the present accommodation is overwhelmingly unsuitable for the purposes of a modern, efficient further education college. Buildings are widely dispersed over 10 sites, dilapidated, expensive to maintain, insecure, and disparate in amenities. The poor state of the fabric inhibits students' learning. At the time of the inspection, a major building and refurbishment programme was being carried out which is planned to concentrate much of the college's provision on three main sites by the end of 1997. One of these, at Shoreditch, is the largest current project in the FEFC's capital budget. In addition to the three main sites, the college will continue to use community focal points such as schools and religious, cultural and youth centres, for some courses.

84 Teaching space is generally effectively used. However, in some centres there are examples of inefficient use. In computing, one large room had two groups timetabled in it and the noise generated prevented students learning effectively. In art and design some students were drawing and printing in the same room, while other rooms nearby were underused. Some rooms were not large enough for the size of classes in travel and leisure.

85 Full access for wheelchair users is available only at one site, with limited access at five. Full wheelchair access will be available at all three main sites as a result of the new estates plan.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

86 Hackney Community College has made significant progress towards achieving its mission. The particular strengths of the college are:

- a strong commitment and responsiveness to the diverse needs of the multicultural communities it serves
- participation by many groups which have not usually entered further education
- able, committed and enthusiastic governors working in partnership with the chief executive
- strong and effective strategic management
- a strategic planning cycle tied to resource allocation and quality assurance
- good pre-enrolment information and advice
- good induction programmes and students' handbooks

-
- some innovative practice in core skills and within tutorial programmes
 - a well-established and fully-documented quality assurance strategy
 - an effective, well-implemented equal opportunities policy
 - supportive and productive relationships with students.

87 If it is to continue to improve the quality of provision and standards of achievement the college should address the following:

- the need to spread the best standards of teaching more widely
- poor punctuality, attendance and retention on some courses
- the variable quality of some management at programme and course team level
- some teachers' lack of up-to-date industrial and commercial experience
- the need for more reliable and better disseminated management information
- the slow progress towards assessor and verifier awards
- the limited open access learning facilities
- the shortage of modern motor vehicles and the associated test equipment for engineering.

FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)

 - 2 Percentage enrolments by level of study (1994-95)

 - 3 Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1994-95)

 - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994-95)

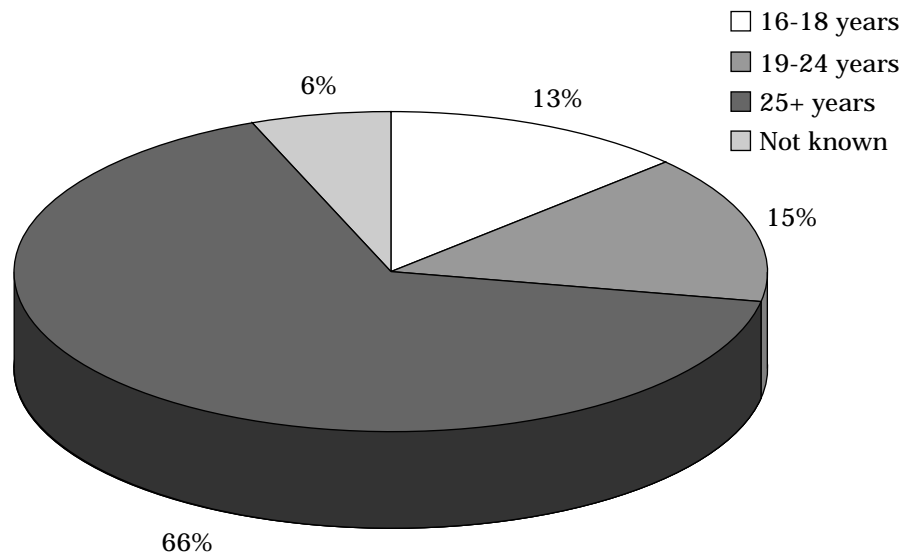
 - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1995)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)

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

Figure 1

Hackney Community College: percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)

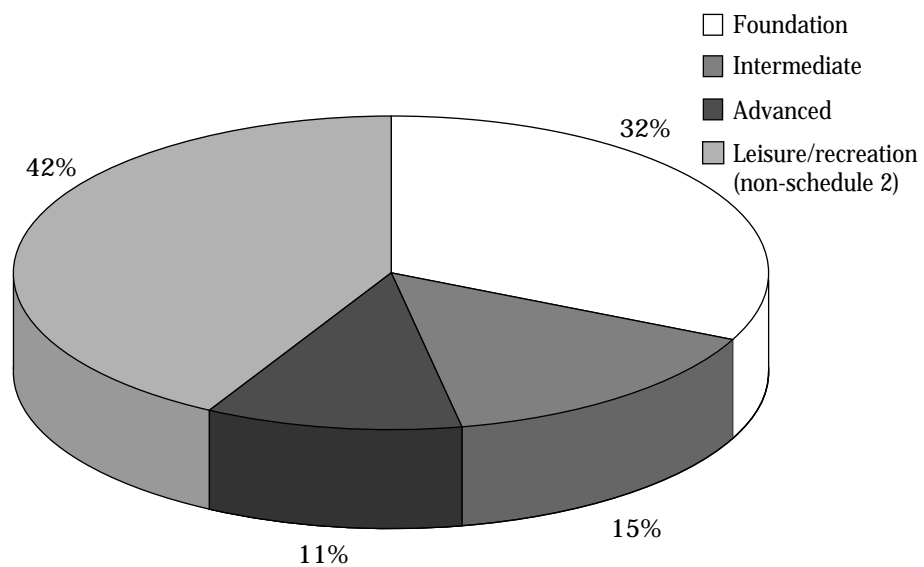


Enrolments: 14,817

Note: this chart excludes four enrolments under the age of 16.

Figure 2

Hackney Community College: percentage enrolments by level of study (1994-95)

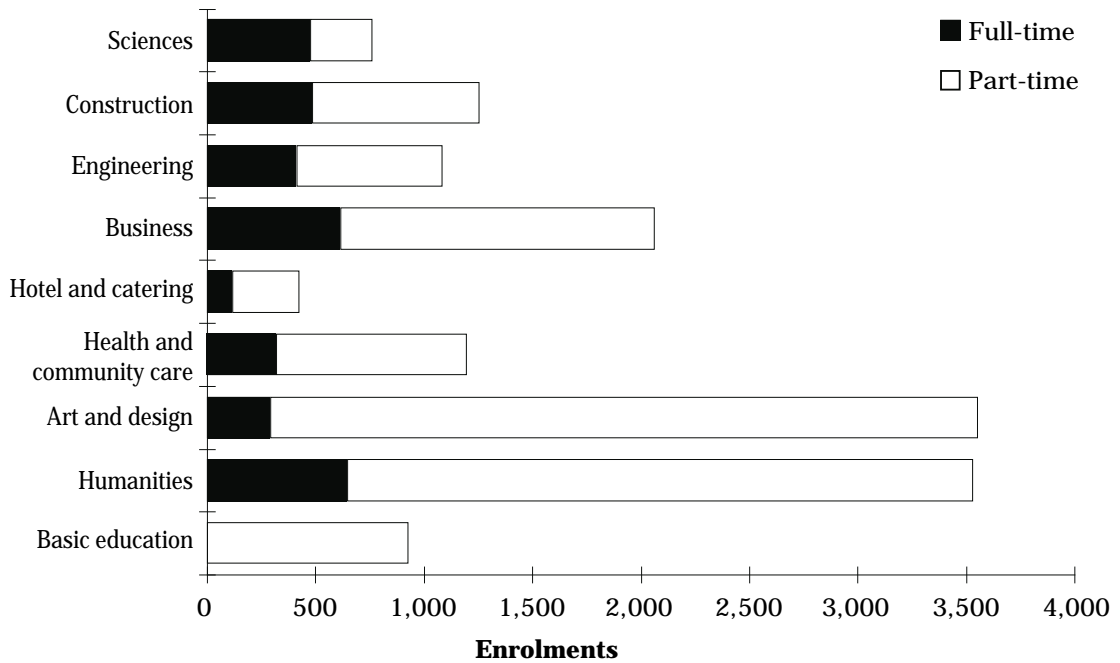


Enrolments: 14,817

Note: this chart excludes 59 higher education enrolments.

Figure 3

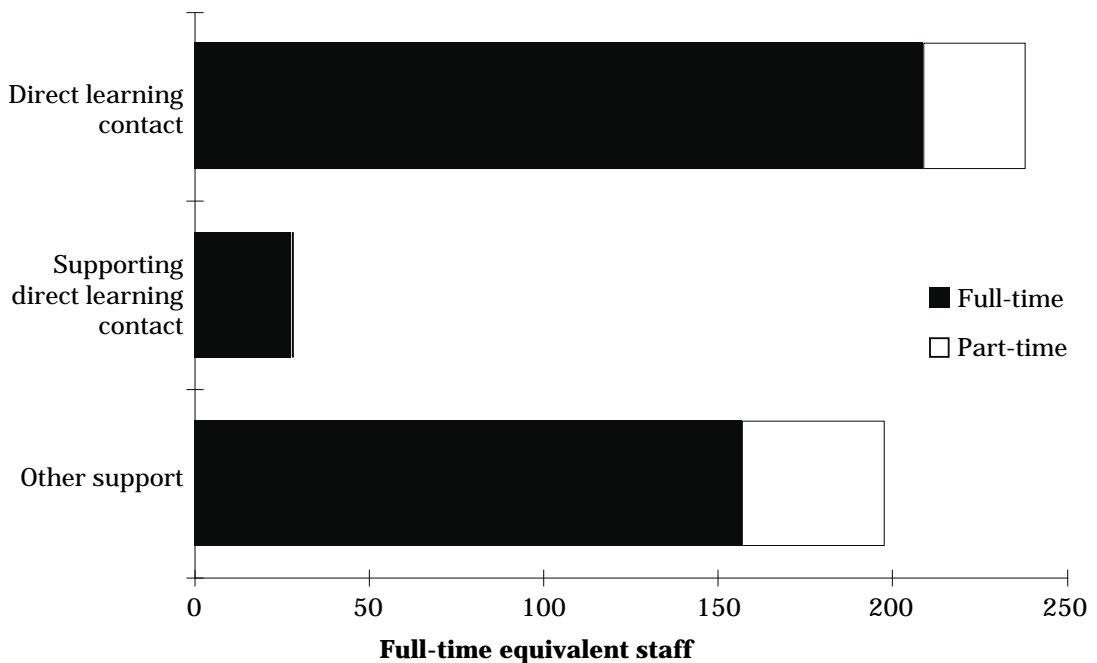
Hackney Community College: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1994-95)



Enrolments: 14,817

Figure 4

Hackney Community College: staff profile - staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994-95)

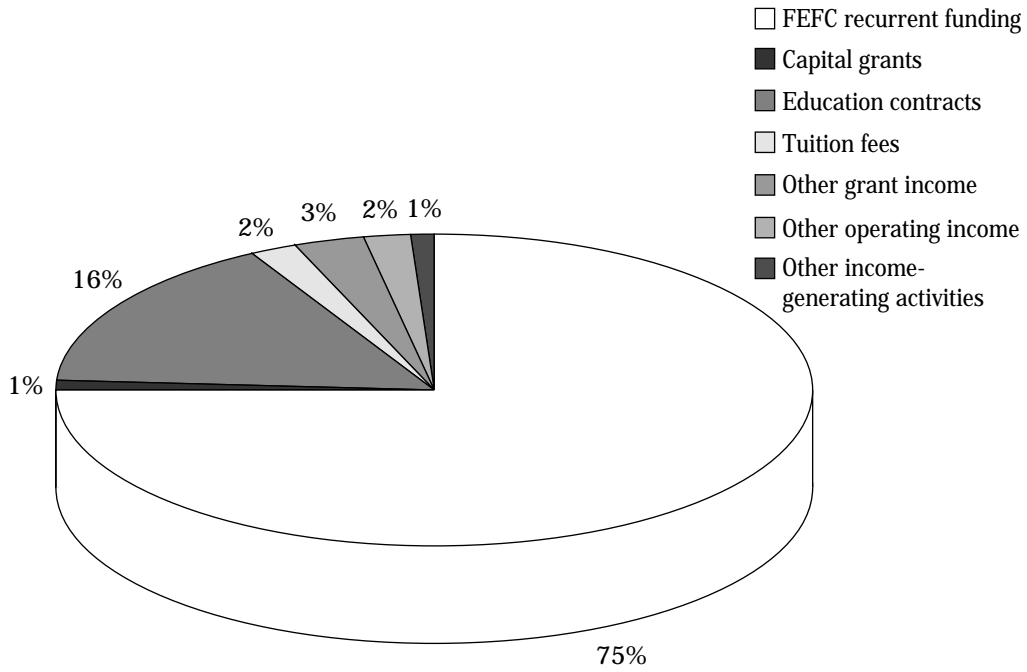


Full-time equivalent staff: 465

Note: this excludes 92 full-time equivalent visiting teachers.

Figure 5

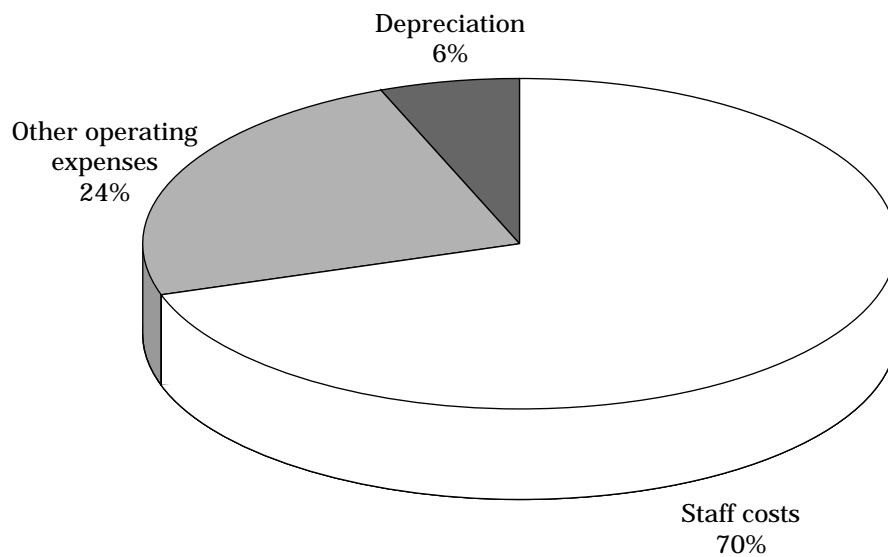
Hackney Community College: income (for the 12 months to July 1995)



Income: £20,216,000

Figure 6

Hackney Community College: expenditure (for the 12 months to July 1995)



Expenditure: £21,730,000

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