Hastings College of Arts and Technology

THE FURTHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL

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

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

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

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

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 60/94

HASTINGS COLLEGE OF ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY
SOUTH EAST REGION
Inspected March – April 1994

Summary

Hastings college of Arts and Technology in East Sussex is a well-managed and well-governed college of further education offering an extensive range of academic and vocational courses for school leavers and adults, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Fifty-nine per cent of enrolments are adults over the age of 25 years. It is responsive to the community, seeking to meet the needs of students, employers and community groups within an area which has been granted assisted status in recognition of its economic and social difficulties. Teaching is generally of good quality. The guidance and support for students is effective although some inconsistency exists between departments. Many students benefit from work experience provided within the college and through local industry. The assessment and accreditation of prior learning is raising students' levels of achievement. Most examination results reflect a satisfactory level of success for a diverse student population. Given the nature of its intake the college should continue to develop added value measures as a means of analysing its performance. The college has good modern computing facilities and students are increasingly encouraged to work on their own using resources provided for them. The developing quality assurance policy is well defined but it requires more consistent implementation. The college should continue to refine its management information system and encourage departments to adopt common procedures in using the system. A major programme of refurbishment is improving the learning environment and allowing the college to use space more efficiently. The library has insufficient space for private study.

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	3
Resources: staffing	2
equipment/learning resources	2
accommodation	2

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Sciences and mathematics	2	Hairdressing & beauty therapy	2
		Health & social care	3
Construction	2	Art & design	2
Engineering and computing	3	Humanities	2
Business studies and office technology	2		
Hotel and catering, tourism	3	Adult & community education	2
		Students with learning difficulties	3

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INTRODUCTION

1   Hastings College of Arts and Technology, East Sussex, was inspected during the spring and summer terms of the academic year 1993-94. The college's enrolment and induction procedures were inspected at the beginning of the autumn term. During the week beginning 14th March 1994, four full-time and eight registered part-time inspectors spent a total of 36 days on specialist subject inspections. Inspectors visited 176 classes, involving approximately 1,700 students and inspected a broad range of their work. The inspectors also had access to extensive documentation relating to the college and its courses. In the week beginning 18th April 1994, four full-time and three registered part-time inspectors spent a total of 20 days inspecting aspects of cross-college provision. During the period of the inspection there were meetings with members of the corporation, representatives of local industry and the community, students, parents, college managers and staff.

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

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

3   Hastings College of Arts and Technology was established under its current name in 1982, although its history can be traced through a variety of institutions, some of which date back to the last century. The main campus is situated on a hillside overlooking the sea, in a conservation area of St Leonards-on -Sea. The college also has property on seven other sites in Hastings, Rye, Battle, Bexhill and St Leonards. The estate includes two listed buildings.

4   The local population has increased by almost 10 per cent in the past 10 years and now stands at 80,800. The unemployment rate is 15.4 per cent; over 21 per cent for men and 7 per cent for women. Local industry is predominantly small-scale, and 90 per cent of companies employ fewer than 10 staff. The service sector, particularly tourism and hospitality is large and accounts for some 60 per cent of employment though most of it is seasonal employment. The number of people who do not have permanent accommodation has increased five fold over the period between the two most recent censuses, and the number of lone parents has more than doubled. Sixty-five per cent of residents are in socio-economic groups 111,1V and V. The area has recently been granted assisted area status in recognition of its particular economic and social problems.

5   The college's primary catchment area extends across the eastern part of East Sussex into Kent, and 87 per cent of students live within the Hastings travel-to-work area. However, the college also recruits students

from across the country as well as from overseas, including a substantial number from the Middle East. The surrounding rural catchment is designated as a rural development area qualifying for additional government support to assist with problems of high unemployment, poor transport links, social isolation and a declining agricultural economy. The area is well served by post-16 educational establishments, including four 11-18 schools and one sixth form college, all within six miles. In 1993, 31.6 per cent of pupils in their final year of compulsory schooling opted to continue their education in further education. About two thirds of these attended the college, with the other third attending a local sixth form college.

6   There are 217 full-time equivalent teaching staff and 140 full-time equivalent support staff employed by the corporation. The overall ratio of full-time to part-time teaching staff is 6:4. Over the last three years the full-time equivalent teaching establishment has increased by 7 per cent. During the same period the college staff:student ratio has increased from 10.6:1 to 12.6:1. A profile of staff expressed as full-time equivalents is shown in figure 1.

7   Over the past three years, enrolments have steadily increased, and the college has met its 8 per cent growth target for work funded by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). The college recruits students throughout the year. At 1 November 1993, student enrolments were 8,081 (2,347 full-time equivalent). This figure comprised 26 per cent aged 16-18 years and 59 per cent aged 25 years and over. The majority of students (77 per cent) attend on a part-time basis. The college offers a range of modes of attendance, including open learning and short courses. Percentage enrolments by age and full-time equivalent enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 2 and 3, respectively. The gender balance in the student population is 61 per cent female and 39 per cent male. However, there are significant variations between departments; construction studies, engineering and science have a high proportion of male students. There are few students from ethnic minorities and this broadly reflects the pattern of the local population.

8   The college's mission statement was drawn up in consultation with staff and approved by the governing body in 1992. The college aims:

•   to provide a quality education and training service which is responsive and accessible

•   to increase learning opportunities to help people progress in their careers and to enrich their lives

•   to meet the training needs of employers and to invest in excellence.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

9   The college offers a broad range of courses which cater for a wide spread of students' abilities. There are vocational courses leading to National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), levels 1 to 4, Business and

Technology Education Council (BTEC) qualifications at first, national and higher national levels and General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) at intermediate and advanced levels. GNVQs are currently offered in three curriculum areas: business, health and social care, and art and design. Further GNVQs are planned for September 1994 including foundation level courses. Nineteen General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and 18 General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) subjects are offered together with 14 advanced supplementary (AS) subjects. In addition, there are specifically designed courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities which recruit both school leavers and adults. There is no GNVQ advanced course in art and design. Such a course would extend the range of progression routes for students from the BTEC first diploma and the GNVQ intermediate course and provide an additional study route for part-time students. In engineering, there is no foundation course other than the BTEC first diploma. Percentage enrolments by level of study are shown in figure 4.

10   Access courses, which enable adult students to prepare for entry to higher education, form an important part of the college's work. There are higher education courses in three curriculum areas, franchised from Brighton University. Plans to extend this range are well advanced. The college successfully franchises some vocational courses to local schools. A growing number of courses, specifically designed for the needs of the industrial and commercial customer, have been successfully delivered, especially in business studies. The college is a registered centre for assessor training for NVQ and GNVQ awards, and it has a contract with the Sussex Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) for the operation of the Jobskills programme for the unemployed. There are over 200 students following open learning courses, especially for GCSE and GCE A level, as an alternative to more traditional study.

11   In an increasingly competitive environment between colleges and schools, the college works hard to maintain and develop its range of linked course activity with the schools. It has been an active member of the two local Technical Vocational Extension consortia which has greatly improved opportunities for local students. 'Masterclasses' are offered annually to around 500 school students in order to introduce them to some 33 different subjects offered by the college. In addition, there are more extensive programmes for school pupils which are held at the college, and these are very popular.

12   The college's responsiveness is enhanced by the distinctive contributions of the adult and community education department and the international department. The adult and community education department operates from 12 centres in Hastings and the surrounding areas. Through its wide ranging programme of adult education, offered over a large geographical area, it considerably extends the college's service and the experience and expertise of its staff benefits teachers in other parts of the college. In a few cases, the duplication of a course by this department and one of the vocational departments leads to confusion for the customer.

13   The international department deals largely with contracted courses for overseas students. Large contracts have recently been agreed with the United Arab Emirates in which training is delivered both at Hastings and on a franchised basis through other further education colleges. Many other courses enrol students from continental, and increasingly from eastern European countries. The department has a number of pioneering joint ventures with the private sector to improve training opportunities. Access courses specifically for overseas students are to be introduced and will involve the Universities of Sussex, Brighton and Portsmouth.

14   There is effective marketing of the college and its services.   The college has established extensive communications networks with the local and wider community which ensure that provision is shaped by the needs of the customer. The college's strategic plan includes a sound market analysis and there are many examples of focused market research. Its business luncheon club and links with the local chambers of commerce are valuable sources of market intelligence. Printed publicity materials are generally of high quality but there is a need to ensure that all are produced to a common format and standard. Marketing materials are regularly reviewed and students' views are taken into account. Good publicity videos, for both the home and overseas markets, are used and the college has recently commissioned its first television advertising campaign. Marketing materials aimed at students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities should be improved. A more attractive presentation, including illustrations would help understanding.

15   The college is well known in the area. College open days and a range of departmental events are organised including the annual fashion show and the hair and beauty show. There has been imaginative use of other forms of publicity, such as the siting of a good college display at a local sports centre and college activities based in the local branch of McDonalds during adult learners week

16   The strategic plan prioritises assessment and consultancy services to industry and the provision of flexible management training. Employers, the TEC and the East Sussex Local Education Authority (LEA) praise the college's work. All levels of staff are involved in developing links with industry and commerce. There has been joint staff development with local companies, some of which has attracted special funding. The college has been actively involved in piloting the NVQ in customer service.   In partnership with the TEC and the customer services lead body, the college ran a conference entitled 'NVQ-Raising the Standard'. The appointment of a services to business manager is designed to develop this area further. The college is a member of the further education services to business consortium which involves all Sussex colleges and the Sussex TEC. Students benefit from the contribution of visiting speakers and from work experience with local companies.

17   The college is particularly strong in responding to the needs of adults and disadvantaged learners. The work of all departments, especially that

of the department of adult and community education is significant in this respect. The strategic plan targets the further development of education and training for the unemployed and disadvantaged groups. Rural outreach work for adults has been developed as part of a government scheme. There are flourishing adult basic education and return-to-work schemes and the students involved are positive about the service they receive. The college policy for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is comprehensive. Provision is responsive to a wide range of requests from a large number of outside agencies.

18   Equal opportunities for both staff and students is clearly addressed in college policy. Issues are taken seriously and the college is constantly seeking to improve its practice.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

19   The corporation currently consists of 14 members including the principal. Eight of its members are from industry, one represents local community interests, two are staff of the college and one a student. There is also a representative of the TEC.

20   The corporation has a clear committee structure with appropriate terms of reference. Governors are well supplied with committee papers and other information so that they are able to play an active part in meetings. Their knowledge and experience is used positively in advising senior managers and shaping the development of policy. Attendance at meetings is good, reflecting the high level of commitment of board members.

21   Governors take an interest in the college that goes well beyond the demands of board meetings. As well as attending college events such as prize-givings and fashion shows, governors have taken part with senior managers in staff development sessions to develop their knowledge of the college and its effectiveness. Governors understand their strategic role and stay well clear of interference in day-to-day operational matters which are the province of the principal and senior managers.

22   There is a well-organised and efficient strategic planning process. This is understood and actively supported by the directors of departments. The college's aims, objectives, targets and priorities are widely shared, but not all directors succeed in communicating them effectively within their departments.

23   The college has established its major policies for equal opportunities, health and safety, and student entitlement. Responsibility for their implementation has been allocated to those with authority to ensure their effectiveness in practice. These lines of responsibility are generally well understood, although there is still some confusion about where responsibility for equal opportunities lies.

24   Job descriptions, organisational charts, committee structures and minutes of meetings demonstrate that in most respects the college has a

clear management structure and that staff are aware of the allocation of responsibilities. The senior management team work closely together and decision making processes work well. At departmental level the lack of agreed systems for meetings, and record keeping in some departments makes for confusion. The role and remit of the academic board has undergone substantial changes in order to make the board more effective. A task-based approach has been adopted as a management strategy but it is at too early a stage of development for its effectiveness to be judged.

25   There is a sound strategy for the allocation of funds across the college. Departments are allocated budgets for part-time staffing, equipment and materials which are linked to student numbers in a way which, though not always understood by staff, is considered fair. Practice within departments varies enormously. Some departments do not have clear criteria for the allocation of resources and the format for financial record keeping is determined by the department, not centrally. The college's estimated income and expenditure are shown in figures 5 and 6. In 1992-93, the college's unit of funding was £3,078. The median for further education and tertiary colleges was £2,444.

26   The college has devoted much time and energy to an analysis of its financial position and considerations of efficiency figure highly. However, steps requiring all levels of the college organisation to adopt college-level performance indicators have been taken slowly. Whilst student-staff ratio targets are set for individual departments and rigorously monitored, overall unit costs are calculated centrally and there is no requirement placed on departments to meet these targets.

27   The college has started to reconcile the information needs of central administrative procedures and those of departmental managers and staff but the process is at an early stage of development. A positive feature of the planned information system is that lecturers' needs are to the fore. Until the process is complete, however, the college will not have an integrated management information system and not all of its members will have access to the wide range of data they require to be fully effective in their roles.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

28   The college is strongly committed to students' pastoral care. A statement of student entitlement covering the progress of enquiries, applications, interviews and admissions has been in place for two years. A good example of its effective implementation is to be found in the department of hotel, catering and beauty studies. Information evenings are held fortnightly to which potential applicants and, where appropriate, their parents are invited. When this results in a decision to apply, an interview is arranged within a week. After interview, applicants are shown the department and complete a questionnaire which assists tutors in making a preliminary appraisal of their literacy and numeracy skills. When places have been offered and accepted, contact is maintained with

the incoming student until enrolment. At the time of enrolment an Adult Literacy Basic Skills Unit (ALBSU) test is administered to all students to determine more precisely the level of support required in developing basic skills. An action plan is formally agreed with every student drawing on all these sources of information plus references from schools or employers. However, not all departments have such thorough application and interview procedures and routine ALBSU testing exists only in two departments. The college should standardise its practice so that all applicants receive the high quality initial experience currently available to some of them.

29   Enrolment and admission are conducted efficiently. All full-time students receive an introduction to the college from the principal and other senior staff, which is welcomed by students. The enrolment of part-time students is less well organised. Postal enrolment worked well in the current session. Where enrolment to courses in different departments took place on successive evenings, this reduced congestion but required repeated visits to the college by individuals or families seeking a variety of programmes. Admissions records are entered and stored centrally, and there are paper as well as computer files on every student. Students who accept places, but do not enrol, are not routinely followed up.

30   With assistance from the local TEC an educational guidance co-ordinator was appointed in September 1993, together with a supporting team including an outreach worker. This has facilitated transfers within the college and has helped to ensure that students follow programmes which match their aims and abilities. The guidance co-ordinator has also introduced a scheme for assessing students' prior learning. Seventy-two applicants have been assessed in the session, of whom 27 are now appropriately enrolled. A further 36 are proceeding to entry next session and 9 are preparing action plans. This is a creditable achievement.

31   Student induction is regulated by the college's statement of student entitlement. It is supported by a good student handbook and course information which is generally of high quality. Good pamphlets introducing central student support services are also provided. These include an individual record book for careers education and guidance which will be incorporated in a revised student handbook next year. The induction process is generally effective and well spoken of by students. Students receive a common programme of induction which varies in its detail between departments. Typically, part or all of the first week of the session is taken up with induction, which includes introduction to issues such as health and safety policy and fire drill, as well as study skills and initial course work. The induction to the franchised BTEC first diploma in art and design involved students from various centres carrying out a drawing project in the Hastings Museum. There was an evident sense of high expectation among the students who were keen to begin their course.

32   Tutorial support is also defined in the statement of entitlement. All students are allocated to a tutor and the college undertakes to provide

full-time students with an individual tutorial at least once a term and part-time students with access to tutorials as required. The outcomes of tutorials are not formally recorded. The system is not operating consistently across all departments and in some, for example engineering and science, tutorial support sometimes falls below the standard required by the college. Most students, however, speak highly of the tutorial support they receive and are clearly gaining valuable guidance from departmental staff and from central staff where they have requested it. The college is addressing the inconsistencies in delivery of tutorial support through the work of a tutorial development group which will report to the academic board and the senior management team before the end of the current session. Important issues emerging are the need which many lecturers have for staff development to assist them to work effectively as tutors across a range of educational and personal matters, and for a stronger central college service to which students can be referred.

33   Central student support services include a welfare office which deals with a wide range of matters including finance, accommodation, first aid and referrals to specialist counselling services in the town; a careers advisory centre which is part of the East Sussex county service; the educational guidance team; and some tutors dealing with basic education. With the exception of the careers advisers and the chaplain, all these staff report to the director of marketing and client liaison. The resources to be allocated between departments and central support services is still to be decided. Similarly, the best means of managing the interaction between departments and central support services remains unresolved. There is a widespread perception among staff that more comprehensive central support services are required now, and that further development will be required; for example, to cater for the increased numbers of unemployed people likely to attend the college when it begins to remit all their tuition fees next session. A useful start could be made by more clearly defining the roles of existing central student support services staff, and by providing opportunities for them to meet formally to co-ordinate their tasks and eliminate some of the wasteful duplication.

34   The college has launched a valuable initiative to monitor the standard of student support: a questionnaire is administered to all students once a year and responses are considered as part of a core agenda at sector and departmental boards of study. In principle, the questionnaire was well received by students and staff although students had some criticism to make of its form. It remains to be seen whether the process ensures that improvements are made in departments where student support is unsatisfactory. There is some evidence that long-standing student dissatisfactions, for example with the medical service, continue unresolved.

35   There is a widespread belief among staff that a large proportion of students, perhaps a quarter or even more, have difficulties with literacy and numeracy which reduce their capacity for study. The use of routine

testing on a pilot basis is a prudent approach for identifying the scale of the problem but even the current resources for learning development are inadequate. A tutor who is supposedly available for 10 hours each week for 'drop in' workshops is, in reality, fully occupied serving, on an appointment basis, 17 students who have a range of moderate learning difficulties, including dyslexia, and visual and hearing difficulties. This gap between aspiration and reality emphasises the need for a comprehensive college policy which draws together all aspects of student support, including its resourcing and management.

36   Student attendance in three out of the five departments is monitored through the use of class registers which are issued by and returned to the college admissions office. In engineering and science, registers have been re-formatted so that data can be entered directly into the Further Education Management Information System. This is a helpful development which could be adopted more widely. In art and design, a signing-in system is used. Whilst this is attractive in that it symbolises the adult ethos of the college and the responsibility this places upon students, the system does not produce reliable results. Its inadequacies have been appreciated for some time and should now be resolved.

37   There is a college student association whose president is a member of the academic board. The association has suitable premises and support staff. Its budget is largely dedicated to salary payments and registration with the National Union of Students. Students appeared apathetic in their attitudes towards the association, even though it has sponsored successful social events and contributed to the resolution of a number of academic concerns. Overall, the social and cultural life of the college is weak. For example, there is a lack of sports teams and student clubs. Development of the richness of college life beyond the academic and vocational curriculum should be addressed, not only as having a value in its own right, but as a means of bringing students together.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

38   The majority of classes inspected had more strengths than weaknesses: 61 per cent of the sessions were graded 1 or 2; a further 26 per cent were graded 3. The following table shows the grades awarded to the sessions inspected:

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE A/AS level	4	7	3	3	0	17
GCSE	2	4	4	2	0	12
GNVQ	3	12	7	2	0	24
NVQ	9	14	15	4	2	44
Other	12	41	16	9	1	79
Total	30	78	45	20	3	176

In addition to these sessions, inspectors visited three work placements for health and social care students, a community project undertaken by construction students building a weather station sited at a local primary school and a franchised art and design course in a local school.

39   Most courses are carefully planned and staff share aims and objectives with their students. Schemes of work ensure coverage of the syllabus, though in art and design the critical studies programme is only planned a term at a time and there is no clear organising principle for the whole programme. All departments have responded positively to the changes demanded by the introduction of NVQ and GNVQ programmes.

40   Teachers have a sound knowledge and understanding of their subjects. In some practical classes in catering, care, hairdressing, construction and engineering they showed a high level of expertise in current industrial practice and this was appreciated by the students. In almost all classes good relationships, based on mutual trust and respect, led to effective learning in a friendly and supportive atmosphere. The use of learning support officers to complement the work of lecturers is a positive development. Many part-time tutors appeared to be teaching well in excess of their contracted hours and were making a strong contribution to the work of the college. Support staff are committed and hard working and contribute much to students' education.

41   Students are often encouraged to take some responsibility for planning and organising their own learning. They showed high levels of motivation in many of the groups. Teachers employ a variety of activities including students' presentations, individual and small group tasks and the video recording of role play. In an information technology class in the open-plan computer centre the part-time lecturer made excellent use of the flexibility provided by the facilities: while some students were at varying stages of a spreadsheet exercise, others were using spreadsheet skills in their coursework. Some less satisfactory classes were observed which lacked stimulus and imagination and failed to challenge students sufficiently.

42   Health and safety legislation is vigorously enforced in most practical areas. Students demonstrated an awareness and understanding of safety requirements and of their responsibilities. Workshop sessions are well organised; the standards of cleanliness, provision of materials and storage of equipment is effective and efficient. The laboratories are well maintained and despite the re-furbishment being undertaken, they were clean and tidy. The construction department has undertaken several projects around the campus and in the community, offering students realistic work experience. Business studies students benefit from the simulated real working environment created by the training office. Classes which relied on members of the public as clients, however, were often ineffective, because of the low numbers of customers. Some classes started late; teachers allowed idle chatter to continue and the work failed to extend the students.

43   Lecturers record the attendance of students at classes but action is not always taken in cases of absenteeism. Some students receive a lower level of tutorial support than others. There is no common time slot for tutorials so that the time given to it by tutors varies. Humanities staff do not meet students for group tutorials and consequently opportunities to focus on common issues are lost. The alternative studies programme had a mixed response from students. Several expressed a preference to have more study time related to their course.

44   Teachers made little use of visual aids although the equipment is readily available. Greater use of display material would help to enliven students' learning. Classes which take place in rooms remote from the main centre lack access to information technology.

45   A number of students with significant learning difficulties are well integrated into main stream programmes and receive support from specialist staff. There were examples of good practice in the hairdressing salon, where four students were working under supervision washing clients' hair and in the training office where students gained experience of real working conditions. Such lively activities were not seen in all classes and teachers' knowledge about students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities varied. On the separate specialist courses for such students, the documentation was not always of a satisfactory standard and most lessons failed to motivate the students. Record keeping is minimal. Some students had literacy difficulties which had been identified late in the course and which had received little planned attention.

46   On some courses there was a lack of consistency in teachers' approach to setting and marking of work. Elsewhere, written work was generally well marked and included correction of spelling, grammar and style. Assignments were generally well devised and often based on realistic work situations. Project briefs were clear and allowed for group and individual tasks to be undertaken. Good practice was observed in a science session where, after completing an assignment, students were encouraged to be critical of their own achievements by analysing strengths and weaknesses. Records of achievement were not used consistently.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

47   Most students clearly enjoy their studies and are willing to participate in a wide range of course activities. Students in the art and design department are particularly enthusiastic. In the majority of cases students are developing appropriate levels of knowledge and understanding of their subjects.   This is particularly apparent where course teams have well-developed   verification and monitoring systems.   Students demonstrated their ability to apply knowledge and understanding through project work or in simulated work environments, such as the training restaurant and hairdressing salons. There is high-quality work in the national diplomas in fashion and graphic design and in the national diploma for foundation studies in art and design.

48   Students are able to work effectively as members of a group. For example, there was some excellent group work in GCE A level communication studies: in work based around the production of a video, students showed themselves well able to cope, whether in whole-class situations, working in pairs, working in groups or working alone. Across the courses, the development of study skills and core skills was variable. A study skills programme is available in the adult and community education department and a 'surgery' is also provided. Study skills are also a component of access courses throughout the college. The assessment and provision of core skills is being reviewed.

49   The college is developing targets for examination success against which its achievements can be judged. The collection and presentation of success rates is being formalised. The information currently available is insufficient for effective monitoring and action at either operational or strategic levels. The work being conducted on entry skills should include assessment of the value added by students' progress and achievement at college.

50   Retention of students is a problem in most curriculum areas. This is particularly apparent in first diploma courses where, on average, only 45 per cent of those originally enrolled finish their course. The college operates a student withdrawal procedure which incorporates an early leavers' questionnaire. However, there is no evidence that such data informs planning. The information available indicates that social factors, such as lack of finance, have a significant influence on early withdrawal.

51   Examination results in the adult and community education areas are particularly good. In 1993, 94 per cent of students sitting the GCSE examination in English language achieved grades A-C, and the retention rate was 95 per cent. The art and design students had a 100 per cent success in the BTEC diploma in foundation studies and in all the BTEC national diploma courses. In design, 88 per cent of all national diploma students gained entry to higher education and all of the national diploma graphic design students obtained their first choice of degree places in 1993.

52   In the business studies and office technology area, 49 per cent of final year full-time students entered employment and 22 per cent gained higher education places. Pass rates and retention rates were satisfactory. In construction 48 per cent of the final year full-time students progressed to higher education. The student retention rate on the 1992 intake for the national diploma in building studies was low at 59 per cent. Action is being taken to remedy this, including strengthening the induction process. National vocational qualifications in construction crafts achieved a 98 per cent success rate.

53   Retention and success rates in engineering vary and some are poor. BTEC first diploma engineering students achieved a pass rate of only 37 per cent of those enrolled. The students who succeeded in the national

diplomas in computing and in engineering progressed satisfactorily to higher education.

54   In 1993, all students on hairdressing and beauty therapy courses passed and 82 per cent went on to relevant employment. In the BTEC first diploma in caring there was an unsatisfactory examination pass rate of 27 per cent. Action is being taken at the recruitment and guidance phase with the intention of improving this performance. In hotel and catering, and tourism, 79 per cent of the final year students progressed to related employment in 1993.

55   Overall pass rates for GCE A level and for GCSE, grades A-C, are below national averages for the sector although account should be taken of the wide ability range of the students recruited to these courses. Value added analysis of the type provided by the A level information service system (ALIS) would provide the college with a more effective means of analysing how well it is performing.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

56   College statements of student entitlement embrace most aspects of the Charter for Further Education. The college is in a strong position to produce its own charter for the next intake of students. A student agreement which identifies the rights and responsibilities of students is signed by both college and students at the beginning of their studies. Students are generally more aware of their responsibilities than of their rights.

57   The college has produced a clear policy statement on quality assurance. A range of quality initiatives is being pursued which includes programme review and monitoring, student entitlement, action towards achieving the Investors in People award, a customer service project and staff appraisal. More recently a staff entitlement policy and a system for the induction of new staff have been introduced. A strategy for the implementation of the quality assurance policy is well managed and disseminated by the director of curriculum and staff development. Clear links have been established between the quality initiatives and their contribution towards a system that will review all aspects of the college and its effect on student achievement and client satisfaction. The emphasis to date has been on programme review and monitoring. This is based firmly on the statement of student entitlement and the standards arising from this.   Organisational responsibilities of programme teams, programme co-ordinators, sector managers and directors of departments are well understood. The quality assurance system is based on a three-stage process which focuses on specific aspects of college provision. The theme for the autumn term is recruitment and induction, for the spring term student support and in the summer term quality learning programmes. Analysis of the autumn term reviews identified several areas for attention.   The contributions students have made through their representation on programme and sector boards is beginning to have an impact.

58   The quality assurance system is still in its early stages of development and the extent of its implementation varies both within and across departments. Good progress has been made in art and design, hotel and catering, business and general studies and in the adult and community education departments. However, many programme reports remain descriptive rather than analytical. Proposed actions lack prioritisation and target dates for completion. The criteria by which improvements will be measured are inexact and the use of performance indicators is not fully understood. Programme teams too often attribute responsibility to others and do not recognise actions which they themselves can take to improve quality. An important part of the review process is the completion of questionnaires by students at each stage. Their continued co-operation can only be assured if responses to their views are forthcoming and are reported to them. More work is needed on the review of part-time provision and many departments could benefit from the experience of the adult and community education department in this respect. The quality assurance system should be extended to the non-teaching areas of the college.

59   The staff-development policy is well documented. Priorities for staff development are firmly linked to the college's strategic plan and are drawn up using information from staff appraisal, evaluation of previous staff-development activities, input from senior and sector managers, the deliberations of the staff-development committee and the quality assurance process. Key issues of cross-college significance are addressed during three development days a year in which all staff are involved. Other in-house activities tackle important issues across the college which are then disseminated within departments and sectors. Funds for events identified by sectors and departments as of particular significance for them are provided from a central budget. Priority for support for individual staff is currently given to teacher training. All staff development activities are monitored by the use of staff evaluation questionnaires and this has led to a steady improvement in the quality of events.

60   The staff development needs of support staff have not been so carefully identified and the range of activities has been more limited. Increasing attention is being paid to this. The recent customer services project was particularly successful. Its continued development is fostering recognition of the contribution of support staff in achieving quality.

61   The staff appraisal system has been acclaimed as a positive experience. All full-time staff who have been at the college for a year or more have participated, as have many part-time staff.   Further improvements could be made through amendments to the evaluation form so as to encourage comment, and through action plans which identify short and longer-term objectives.

62   The staff entitlement policy includes access to an induction programme for all new staff. A good system has been established which works more effectively for those who start in September than for those who start at other times. The use of mentoring for full-time staff needs some further clarification and reinforcement.

RESOURCES

Staffing

63   Most lecturers are well qualified and suitably experienced for the subjects they teach. Seventy-eight per cent of full-time lecturers have teaching qualifications. Women comprise 32 per cent of the full-time academic staff and 70 per cent of the full-time support staff. Six of the 14 college senior management team members, including the principal, are women. The proportion of staff from ethnic minority backgrounds is less than 1 per cent which reflects the balance within the local community. There is a good distribution of experienced and new lecturers in post.

64   The college has published its personnel and equal opportunities policies. A personnel and finance sub-committee of the corporation has been established with responsibility for personnel policy. The principal takes overall responsibility for planning, recruiting, managing and, where necessary, dismissing staff. Directors of departments and other senior managers bid for additional and replacement staffing when vacancies occur.

Equipment

65   The college has prepared a schedule of its equipment. It is detailed and provides data for planned replacement of obsolete equipment. The range, quantity and quality of equipment and learning resources are adequate and sometimes good. Specialist equipment in all vocational departments is sufficient to enable students and staff to achieve course aims and objectives. Enterprise income is used to improve educational equipment. For example, in the engineering department, a new multi-skills workshop has been equipped with a good range of machine and hand tools.

66   Information technology provision is a notable strength. Students have access to about 350 workstations located in the computer centre, in departments, in the library and in resource learning centres. There is a good range of software. The general purpose programs are accessible in the computer centre and specialist material is available in departments. Specialist facilities for students in some departments should be regularly reviewed and, where necessary, upgraded because of their comparatively short lifespan.

67   The learning resources and media facilities are co-ordinated through a task group of the academic board. A development plan, in accord with the college's strategic objectives, is published and includes the development of a variety of resources for learning. The library has over 40,000 volumes. Some 400 periodicals are regularly available. The level of support provided to students is adequate but lack of space reduces displays of the range of learning resources available. Computerised library systems are not used. A media centre, located in the library, is well equipped. It provides a good service to students and staff.

Accommodation

68   The college operates on seven sites. Five are used by students on FEFC-funded courses and the remainder by students on full-cost courses. Most of the further education work is carried out on the college main site at Archery Road. The accommodation used by the college is at least fit for its purpose and most is of good quality. Buildings range from very old, fifteenth century, grade II listed buildings to some that are comparatively new. All the sites inspected had suitable student refectory facilities.

69   Extensive upgrading, refurbishment and repair work is being undertaken in the tower block on the main site. As a result of the careful planning, teaching and learning activities have been able to proceed whilst the work is progressing, supported by the goodwill and co-operation of contractors, students and staff. Opportunities have been taken during the refurbishment to adapt under-utilised space to provide a multi-gym, an extra classroom and the clustering of engineering and science laboratories. The college has commissioned a condition survey of its estate. A comprehensive plan is now available which identifies areas that are in need of refurbishment, upgrading, modification or development.

70   Most of the buildings provide an inviting, comfortable and welcoming environment and the rooms and corridors are clean. The residential accommodation is well managed. Access for people with restricted mobility has been improved, but the steeply-sloping site makes it difficult to secure this in all areas. Whilst some child-minding facilities are available, there is no creche on the main site. The use of teaching space is monitored through the Further Education Management Information System. This has enabled the college to identify space capacity, which has resulted in improvements in efficiency. For example, an unsuitable student recreation room has been converted into a large lecture theatre which enables combined classes to be taught. Another example is the division of an infrequently-used examination room to form two classrooms, each with a capacity for 30 students.

71   The college has one library which serves all students. Premises which are located at more than walking distance from the main site have available small bookstocks to satisfy students' immediate needs. There is insufficient space to provide quiet study facilities and other resources required by students. There are learning resource centres in most departments, which contain material specific to vocational areas and which complement the library stock. The college is committed to increasing open learning and more flexible methods of study which require enhanced library facilities.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

72   Hastings College of Arts and Technology is making good progress towards achieving its mission. The particular strengths of the college are:

•   its responsiveness to industry and commerce and to the local community

- its success in meeting the needs of adults

- its effective governance and management

- the quality and clarity of policy documents

- its strong commitment to the pastoral care of students

- the assessment and accreditation of students' prior learning

- the high standards of teaching in most areas

- the good information technology facilities.

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

- a common format and quality standard for publicity material

- continuing refinement of the management information system and related procedures

- the consistent implementation of its quality assurance system and the extension of the system to the non-teaching areas of the college

- further development of resources for learning support

- the continued development of added value measures for analysing the achievements of its students

- insufficient private study spaces in the library

- expansion of child care facilities.

FIGURES

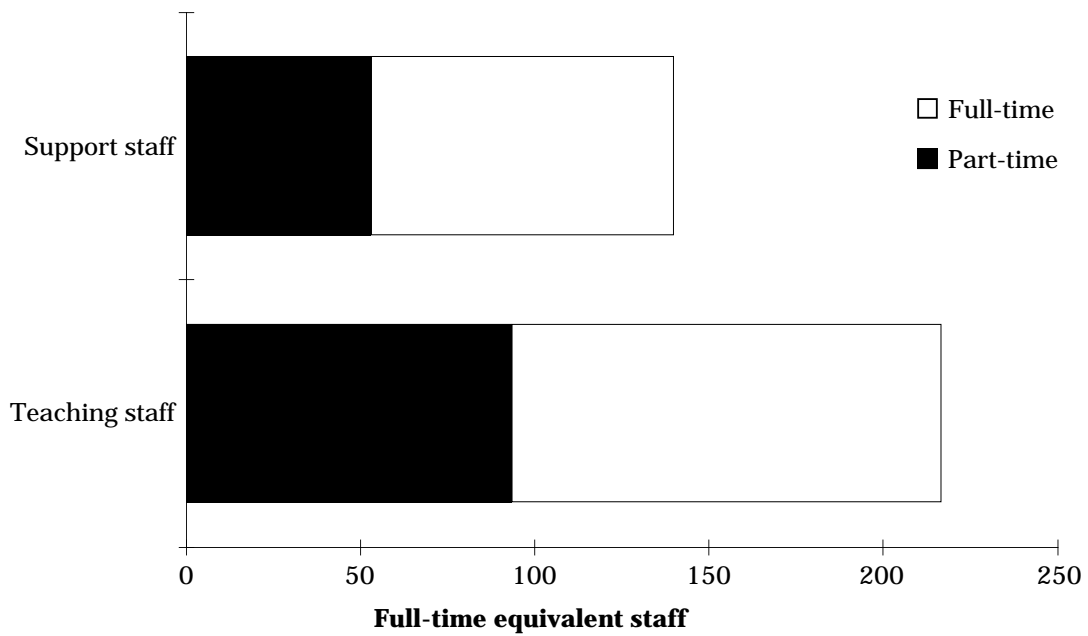**Note:** the information contained in the figures was provided by the college to the inspection team.

Figure 1

Hastings College of Arts and Technology: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1993-94)
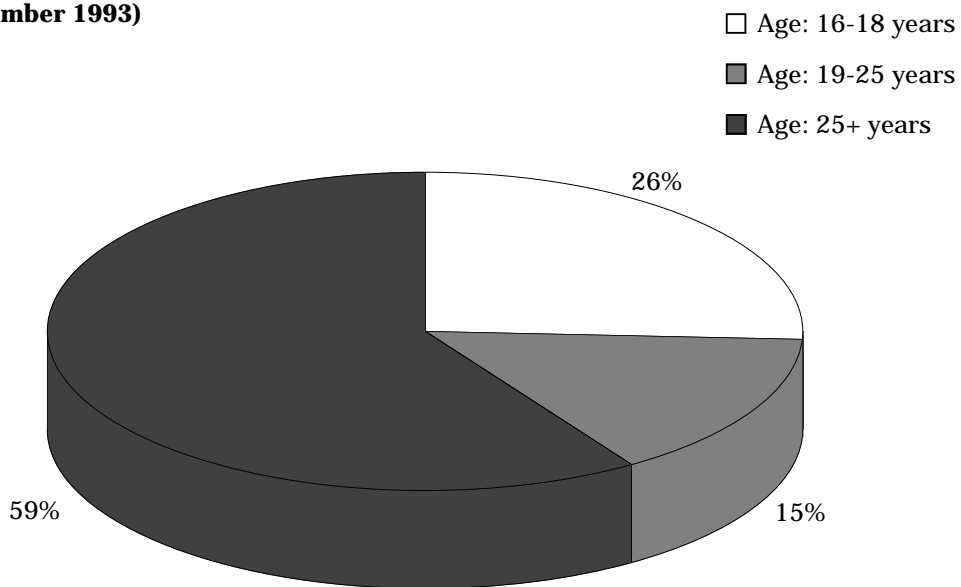

Full-time equivalents: 357

Figure 2

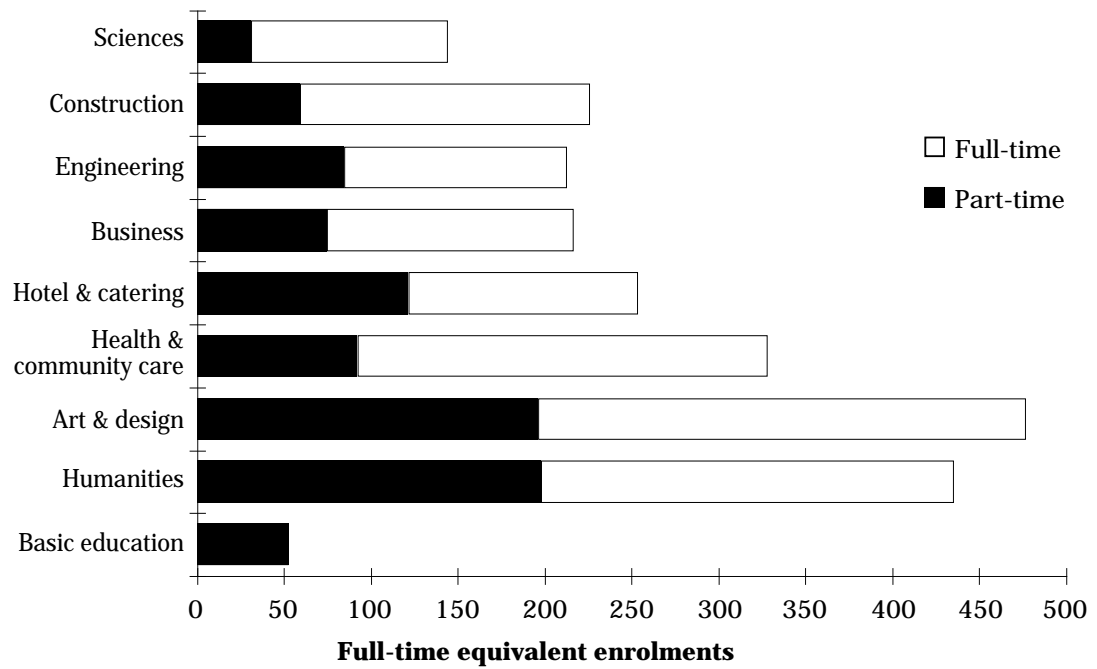**Hastings College of Arts and Technology: percentage enrolments by age (at November 1993)**

Enrolments: 8,081

Figure 3

Hastings College of Arts and Technology: enrolments expressed as full-time equivalents by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1993-94)
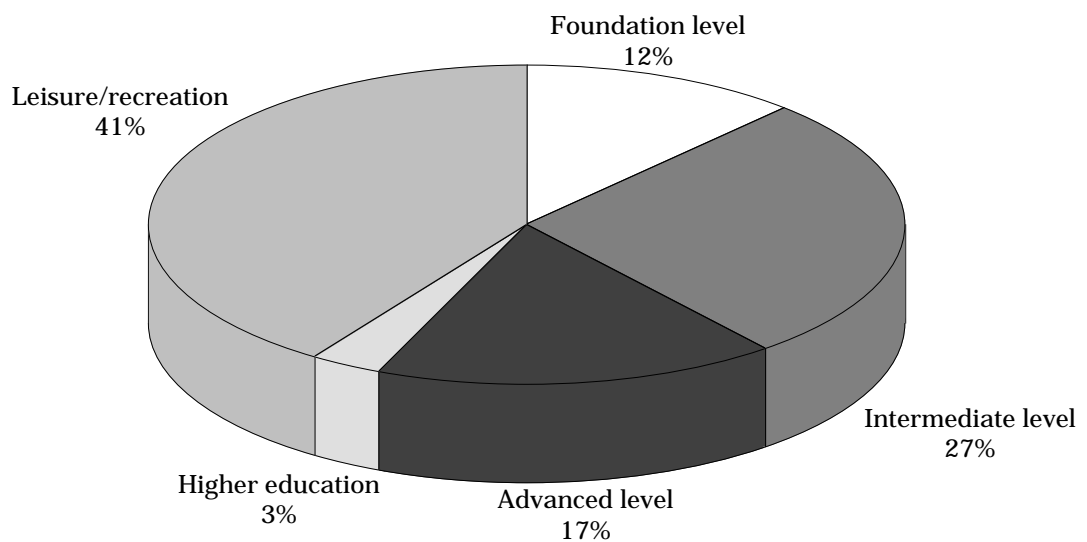

Full-time equivalent enrolments: 2,347

Figure 4

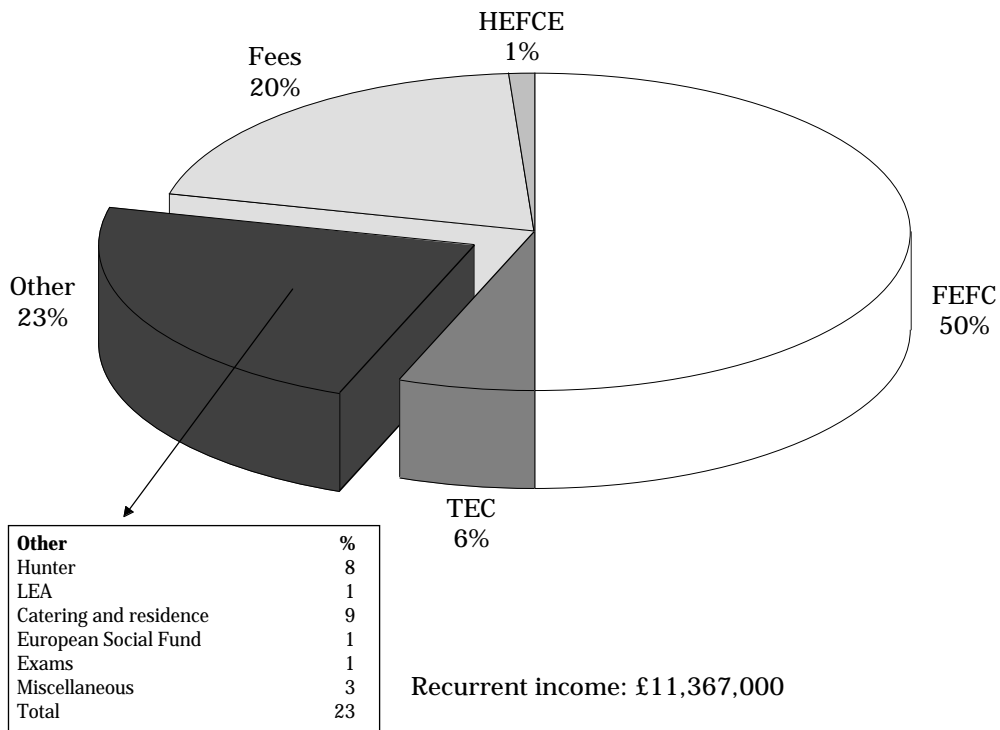**Hastings College of Arts and Technology: percentage enrolments by level of study (at November 1993)**
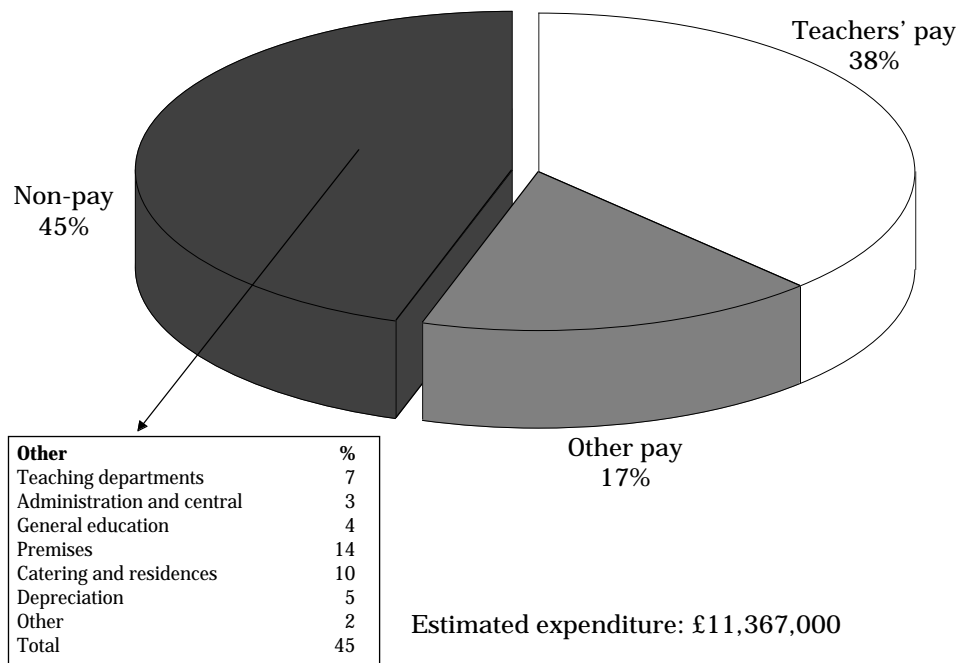

Enrolments: 8,081

Figure 5

Hastings College of Arts and Technology: recurrent income (1993-94)

Other	%
Hunter	8
LEA	1
Catering and residence	9
European Social Fund	1
Exams	1
Miscellaneous	3
Total	23

Recurrent income: £11,367,000

Figure 6

Hastings College of Arts and Technology: estimated expenditure (1993-94)

Other	%
Teaching departments	7
Administration and central	3
General education	4
Premises	14
Catering and residences	10
Depreciation	5
Other	2
Total	45

Estimated expenditure: £11,367,000