

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Herefordshire College of Art and Design

July 1995

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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

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

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

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

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

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FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 88/95

HEREFORDSHIRE COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

WEST MIDLANDS REGION

Inspected September 1994 – April 1995

Summary

Herefordshire College of Art and Design is a small, specialist college offering a good range of courses in art, design, crafts and performing arts. It recruits students locally and nationally. The governors are supportive and actively involved in the life of the college. The senior management team provides effective leadership. The college has strong links with schools and offers all potential students good information and guidance. Tutorials are clearly focused and students' progress is monitored carefully. Courses are planned and managed effectively and the quality of teaching is good. Staff are well qualified and experienced. They include practising artists, designers and theatre arts professionals. The college responds well to the needs of students with differing learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Retention rates are high. Students reach high levels of achievement and progress successfully to further study or employment. The college has a commitment to improving quality. There is a wide range of purpose-built facilities. Most are well resourced, many to a professional standard, but in some areas the cramped conditions impose constraints on work. There are inadequate communal areas for students and the quality of accommodation and equipment on the Uplands site is poor. The college should: improve its financial reporting systems; appoint a chairperson of the audit committee; ensure that it has a contingency plan should it fail to meet its target for growth; develop a more clearly-focused marketing strategy; strengthen curricular links between related subject areas; improve its support for basic skills; and improve information technology facilities.

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

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Graphic design and photography	2	Performing arts	1
General art and design	1	Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	2
Three dimensional design crafts	1		

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INTRODUCTION

1 Herefordshire College of Art and Design in the county of Hereford and Worcester was inspected in three stages. Enrolment and induction were inspected in September 1994. The college's specialist programme areas were inspected in November and December 1994 and in February and March 1995. Cross-college aspects were inspected in April 1995. Six full-time and five part-time inspectors spent a total of 50 days in the college. Inspectors visited 66 sessions, examined students' work and held discussions with members of the governing body, senior managers, staff and students.

2 Meetings were held with a number of external groups including parents, representatives from industry and commerce, Hereford and Worcester Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and the community. The inspectors also had access to extensive documentation on the college and its courses.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

3 Herefordshire College of Art and Design was created in the 1850s and has provided education and training for Herefordshire and the surrounding region for over a century. It is now the only further education corporation in the West Midlands region which specialises exclusively in art, craft, design and the performing arts. On completion of their studies some further education students move into employment or self-employment locally but the majority go on to higher education. The college shares an educational campus on the edge of the city of Hereford with Herefordshire College of Technology, the Hereford Sixth Form College and one of the city's high schools. It has close links with the Holme Lacy Agricultural College and the Royal National College for the Blind in Hereford.

4 The city of Hereford has a population of approximately 50,000. The recent population expansion is predicted to level off in the next few years, although the number of students reaching school leaving age is set to rise. The percentage of post-16 year olds continuing in full-time education is among the highest in the country. Employment in the city is dominated by three multi-national manufacturing companies and a service sector based mainly on public bodies and the leisure and tourism industry.

5 The surrounding market towns of Ledbury, Bromyard, Leominster, Ross-on-Wye, Kington and Weobley each have a secondary school. The college collaborates with neighbouring schools and colleges to maximise the educational opportunities for young people. The recently formed Marches Consortium, together with earlier initiatives, have helped to develop close co-operation between local schools and colleges. The college works closely with the Hereford and Worcester TEC in support of local and national objectives.

6 The college occupies purpose-built accommodation on its main site and there are supporting facilities in Uplands House on an adjacent site.

The buildings on the main site date from 1966. Two recent extensions, provide specialist facilities for performing arts and photography, and for design.

7 The college recruits locally and nationally to a wide range of further and higher education courses. These include: specialist Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diplomas in foundation studies, photography, graphic design and performing arts; General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) programmes at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels; and higher national diploma courses in design crafts, blacksmithing, fashion and illustration. There is long-standing provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. New courses in media studies and three dimensional design are in preparation and the college has recently introduced study options in garden design. An expanding range of part-time vocational courses validated by the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) and BTEC reflects the breadth and character of the full-time provision.

8 At the time of the inspection, the college had 278 full-time enrolments and 244 part-time enrolments on further education courses and 166 full-time enrolments on higher education courses. There were also 283 students on non-schedule 2 courses. Full-time further education enrolments have levelled off in the last two years, although the proportion of local 16-plus enrolments has increased at the same time as regional recruitment has been adversely affected by changes in discretionary award support. Enrolments by age and level of study are shown in figures 1 and 2 and enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figure 3. The college employs approximately 120 staff of whom more than two-thirds are part time. Thirty-eight of the 62 full-time equivalent staff hold academic posts. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

9 The recruitment of part-time further education students has expanded by more than 100 per cent in the last two years and is a significant feature of current developments at the college. Planned expansion of higher education provision has been temporarily curtailed by government capping but arrangements are in place with the University of Wales for the conversion of at least one higher national diploma course to a BA honours degree course.

10 The college has a programme of recreational classes and has recently sought to strengthen its links with the local community by establishing liaison and advisory panels and by strengthening its long-standing collaboration with local arts societies. Close professional links have been established with galleries and retail craft outlets throughout the country and these prove helpful to higher national diploma students in particular.

11 Each year, the college mounts a range of exhibitions and public events at which the work of students on all its courses is exhibited. The programme includes a London exhibition of work by higher national

diploma students, exhibitions in local city galleries and the college's end-of-year diploma exhibition of the work of final-year students.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

12 Students, their parents and members of the local community perceive the college to be a friendly, responsive institution. It is responding positively to government policy, the national targets for education and training and the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) requirements, and it takes account of the TEC's local needs survey in its strategic plan. The college has broadened its range of further education provision to include GNVQ courses and a more diverse offer of part-time art and design courses. As a consequence, there has been an increase in the number of part-time and mature students, a trend which the college believes will increase. Because of its specialist provision, Herefordshire College of Art and Design attracts further education students from a wide geographical area. In 1993-94, 50 per cent of its students came from neighbouring local authorities. In 1994-95 the figure has fallen to 27 per cent partly because of the changes in local authorities' policies regarding discretionary awards. The higher education courses recruit nationally. The college met its enrolment targets for September 1994, having fallen short by 9 per cent the previous year.

13 The further education courses include a full range of subjects in art and design. The general art and design courses have options in fine art, fashion and surface pattern, graphics and photography, and three-dimensional design. They are offered at GNVQ intermediate level as an open access programme, at GNVQ advanced level and as a post General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) BTEC diploma in foundation studies in art and design. The specialist national diploma courses in photography, graphic design and performing arts are mainly intended for school leavers seeking to enter higher education. The further education courses benefit from having the equipment base and the staff which are required to support the college's higher education courses.

14 The majority of students on the further education courses are full time, though the college is increasingly opening up part-time routes to provide opportunities for those seeking to return to study. There is a significant range of part-time vocational courses which allow students to enrol at several points during the academic year. These include: a college certificate in fine art; C&G courses in silversmithing, photography and jewellery; and a C&G course in creative studies with options in ceramics, embroidery, knitting, patchwork and quilting. The college plans to increase the number of part-time students on these courses, although some of them are already over subscribed. The programme would be strengthened by improving the links between part-time and full-time courses and by increasing the opportunities for students to gain accreditation for their prior learning. There is a small part-time GCE A level provision in art and design, and art history, which complements the provision for full-time students at the adjacent sixth form college.

15 An unusual feature for a specialist college of this kind is the contact course which has been running for 20 years. This can be a two-year or three-year course aimed to provide the intellectual, creative, social and vocational development of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The curriculum includes communication, numeracy, and social and life skills, which are developed in practical workshops involving most of the design, craft and performance areas of the college. The course has recently been restructured to allow students to enrol at different times during the academic year and to provide accreditation of prior learning. It includes work placements and an annual residential study visit.

16 The college has a good record of responding to students with learning difficulties. In addition to the contact course, students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are offered short periods of part-time study within full-time courses, often as a response to referral from local social services and disability organisations. This is organised by the learning support co-ordinator who also manages the literacy and numeracy support. Currently, the college is seeking to enrol a group of students with learning difficulties at GNVQ foundation level.

17 Links with schools are strong. Prospective students receive comprehensive information on the college and its courses which enables them to make informed applications. Publicity material is widely distributed and visits are made to schools by senior tutors. Advisory interviews and information days are held at the college and groups of interested pupils can also visit the college and meet senior course tutors and students. The local art teachers liaison group runs an annual summer school, organised by the college, and in 1994 some 75 potential students were able to sample practical work there. The college staff also attend school careers evenings in 16 secondary schools and many school pupils are offered work experience placements.

18 There are established links with the local community and a community advisory panel has recently been set up to develop these. The college holds regular parents evenings. Parents of prospective students can also attend the information evenings related to specific courses, organised by the marketing co-ordinator. There are good links with the local careers service. The college organises many exhibitions including those at the city museum and gallery. It holds a fashion show in the city and its own programme of college-based course exhibitions. The college theatre is well used by the community.

19 In the past, the links with employers have been informal, mainly dependent on the efforts of individual course tutors. In 1994, the college established an advisory panel to bring together local employers and representatives of industry. The intention is that the panel will meet twice a year to review the college's provision in relation to local needs. The region lacks a strong industrial base and as a consequence art and design work placements for students are limited. Course tutors seek to overcome this by inviting employers and designers to visit courses to advise on

commercial practice. The graphic design students are involved in design commissions from local firms which gives added reality to their work. The performing arts course organises visits by professional companies to the Folly Arts Theatre. These companies offer workshops to students and involve them in vocationally relevant work experience such as theatre management. They also help with live performances at the college.

20 Liaison between the college and the Hereford and Worcester TEC is excellent. The college is represented on the principals' group; it has been funded by the TEC to research flexible-study routes in GNVQ courses; and it plays an active part in the local education business partnership through which a European link with a French college in Troyes is being developed. A recent innovation is the formation of the Marches Consortium which is a separate company involving local colleges and schools to enable European funding bids to be developed. All of these links offer opportunities for course developments.

21 The college has an extensive marketing plan, although many of the proposals have not been activated because of limited resources. The college has an attractive and well-produced prospectus, 8,000 copies of which are circulated annually. However, not enough publicity is focused on the full-time and part-time further education courses, areas which the college is seeking to develop. The limited market research which the college is undertaking should be more systematically directed if it is to be effective. The marketing business liaison co-ordinator has a teaching commitment and is also responsible for exhibitions. This reduces the time given to marketing.

22 The college's mission and charter contain clear commitments to equal opportunities. The equal opportunities policy is widely advertised in all college publications, including the student handbooks and diary and in displays throughout the building. The curriculum includes equal opportunities issues, particularly the theoretical and complementary lecture programmes where issues of gender, culture and ethnicity are often addressed. The college has worked hard to adjust the balance of gender on some courses. Fifty-four per cent of students are male; 46 per cent are female. The ethnic background of students is not monitored. There has been no analysis of the effectiveness of the equal opportunities policy. The college students and staff have access to a creche run by the Herefordshire College of Technology. Currently, they take up six places. The college, in conjunction with three local colleges, runs a free bus service for those who are not eligible for a county council travel pass.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

23 There are 17 governors, including the principal. They are drawn from an appropriate range of business and community interests and include several with specialist experience of art and design. There is a member from the local TEC, two co-opted members, two staff members

and a student. The corporation considers that its current membership is too large and has resolved to reduce its size by the summer of 1995. Nevertheless, it is currently seeking to replace a governor with specific financial expertise who left in 1994.

24 Governors take an active interest in the college's activities. One governor attends the health and safety committee, one is a course adviser whose firm provides work placements, and others with specialist art and design experience frequently spend time in the college with staff and students. The chairman visits the college weekly, and most governors attend college events. New governors are provided with comprehensive information on the college but there is no formal induction programme and no training for existing governors since incorporation.

25 Meetings of the corporation take place each term, with special meetings as required. Agendas and briefing papers are sent in advance, and meetings are effectively minuted. There are three main committees: finance and general purposes, audit, and remuneration. The audit committee has been without a chairperson since the autumn of 1994. The college is seeking to remedy this.

26 The management structure of the college is clear and understood by staff. The senior management team consists of the principal, the vice-principal with academic responsibility, and the head of finance and administration in charge of business support staff. The team provides open and effective leadership. It meets weekly and its business is minuted. Reporting to the senior managers are four college co-ordinators responsible for continuing education, curriculum, operations and marketing, respectively. Six cross-college committees report directly to the senior management team.

27 The college's strategic plan was drawn up after detailed consultation with a majority of staff, and with the academic board. This has ensured that staff understand and support the plan. Individual governors were involved in specific aspects of the strategic plan, for example the accommodation strategy, at an early stage of its development, but the corporation as a whole were not involved in the plan until it reached a late draft stage. The strategic plan contains an operating statement which is developed and implemented through the college's committee structure, but the processes are not explicitly documented. Operational progress is reviewed by the senior management team. The academic board meets twice each term to advise the principal on the academic work of the college. It has two committees: one for course approvals, another for academic standards.

28 The small size of the college enables staff to approach senior managers directly. A weekly meeting informs staff of college policies and priorities, and a useful diary of college events is also circulated weekly. Staff feel well informed but some expressed the view that they were being overloaded with information.

29 Courses are generally well managed. Each course has a senior course tutor, who has academic and financial responsibility for the course. Course teams hold weekly meetings to review progress and develop future projects. This helps to ensure that practices are consistent. Teachers have a strong commitment to the courses they teach. However, this, together with an emphasis on the organisational autonomy of courses, has fostered a degree of isolation. The college should look at ways of encouraging greater collaboration on curricular matters, methods of teaching and use of resources.

30 The college's average level of funding for 1994-95 is £19.67 per unit. The median for art, design and performing arts colleges is £24.58. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1994 are shown in figures 5 and 6.

31 The college incurred a deficit financial position in 1993-94, which has increased during 1994-95. The full financial implications of incorporation, such as providing for depreciation and planned maintenance had not been fully appreciated. The college had higher than forecasted costs, and was unable to achieve the planned growth in enrolments. A new finance team was appointed in the middle of 1994. Full-management accounts for the autumn term were not produced until February, and regular monthly reports are only just becoming available. There is a strategy for recovering the deficit over the next two years which relies principally on increasing enrolments. The college should prepare a detailed contingency plan to cover the possibility that it fails to achieve its enrolment targets.

32 Senior course tutors have delegated budgets for materials and part-time staff hours. Staff have limited understanding of how funds are allocated. Budgets for 1994-95 were based on historical figures, but for 1995-96 the college is considering basing budgets for materials on enrolments. College budgets for 1994-95 have been divided into 12 equal monthly amounts. This makes accurate monthly analysis of spending against the annual forecast difficult. Information on unit costs is not available. Payroll information has yet to be itemised in relation to courses and services.

33 A new computer system is being introduced and there are weaknesses in the service as information is transferred from the old system. The computerised management information system is at an early stage of development, and managers have to rely on manual systems. Enrolment targets are set for all courses. The college failed to achieve its planned target during 1993-94, but enrolments in 1994-95 were slightly above target, helped by a major increase in part-time enrolments. Enrolments, retention rates and destinations are monitored and action taken where appropriate.

34 The college has clear policy statements on health and safety, equal opportunities and student support services. A strategy for the development

of learning support for students is in draft form only. The policy on health and safety is implemented effectively; there are appropriate systems and checks. There is no one person responsible for equal opportunities.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

35 Application procedures are efficiently administered. There is a central service which co-ordinates admissions, arranges interview dates, records interview decisions, and communicates them to applicants. Enquiries and requests for guidance are directed to the curriculum co-ordinator and interviews are conducted by subject specialists. The college prospectus provides relevant information on courses and admission requirements. It is attractive and vividly demonstrates the high quality of design, art and craftwork produced by students. Prospective students receive comprehensive advice about the aims of courses and they are generally well informed about them before they enter the college.

36 Arrangements for entry to courses are flexible and take account of previous experience. On many courses students' applications are assessed on the basis of their previous experience, portfolio of work and interview performance. Where formal entry qualifications are waived, students are encouraged to gain these qualifications while they are at college. Students can enrol on the C&G craft courses at almost any time of year. The college has not yet introduced procedures for accrediting students' prior learning.

37 During their induction, students receive comprehensive course handbooks which include details of the course structure, assessment procedures, advice on study skills, the record of achievement and information on teaching and learning strategies. Induction is carefully planned and has been organised so that students receive an early introduction to their workshop areas. Most students acquire a good understanding of the nature of their courses but little attention is given to the development of effective inter-personal relationships as a foundation for group work. Induction also provides few organised opportunities for students to start to develop links with those studying different subjects who may have useful complementary or contrasting skills and perspectives.

38 The tutorial system is effective. Each student has a personal tutor and formal tutorials are scheduled at regular intervals to assess students' progress. Tutorials are clearly focused on students' work and include a written assessment which is recorded on a tutorial assessment form. Staff and students work together closely and there are frequent opportunities for one-to-one discussions about coursework and for tutors to offer advice. Full-time students feel well supported. Part-time students on vocational courses also receive effective support.

39 The careers education and advisory service in the college has developed alongside the guidance given by course tutors. Careers education is provided under a contract with the Hereford and Worcester careers service and advice is available one morning each week, usually by

individual appointment. A new careers room provides a base for the service. Students value the service, but it is not sufficient for many students' needs. Specialist careers education forms an integral part of courses in the performing arts, but is inadequate on most other courses. There is also not enough advice on careers for early leavers or for the small but significant proportion of students who do not proceed to art and design careers or to higher education.

40 The counselling service, which is based in the adjacent college of technology, is easily accessible. The service is provided for two and a half hours each day and used by a significant numbers of students. The use of the name 'youth advisory service' is inappropriate given the adults at the college who may wish to seek counselling.

41 The college is strengthening its approach to assessing learning needs. All students are now screened during the first weeks of their courses using the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit test. The results of the tests have revealed a greater level of basic learning needs than was expected. It has also shown that there are substantial numbers of students with literacy and numeracy skills which are only slightly above the basic levels. The college has improved its provision for basic skills support and is currently discussing a learning needs policy and action plan.

42 Students' attendance is closely monitored by the course tutors. Action is taken if students do not attend regularly and there are reviews of student attendance each term at which course tutors report on the individual patterns of attendance. The college does not have a system for providing senior managers with data on course attendance rates or for comparing courses over a reporting period.

43 The contact course for students with severe learning difficulties has 10 students this year, and one or two more attend on a part-time basis. The handbook for these students is exceptionally helpful and their general preparation for, and induction to, the course is thorough. However, the amount of tutorial time allocated to these students is insufficient. The college is redistributing and increasing its resources to provide greater support for contact course students.

44 Social facilities for students are inadequate. There is a small, bare common room which contrasts strongly with many other parts of the college in its lack of visual appeal and comfort. Some students were concerned about the costs of the materials required for courses and transport costs worried many who have considerable distances to travel. Although the college's free bus services help some students, a significant proportion of those travelling long distances receive little financial support.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

45 Of the 66 sessions inspected, 84 per cent had strengths which clearly outweighed weaknesses. There were no sessions in which the weaknesses outweighed the strengths. The following table summarises the grades awarded to the sessions that were inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level		1	1	0	0	0	2
GNVQ		5	10	3	0	0	18
Other vocational		16	19	7	0	0	42
Basic education		0	3	0	0	0	3
Non-schedule 2		1	0	0	0	0	1
Total		23	33	10	0	0	66

46 Teaching in the college follows a pattern that is traditional in schools of art. Students are introduced to the processes of producing original work through studio-based practice. They are supported by tuition in fundamental skills and engaged in a continuing process of critical debate about their work and the underlying principles of art and design practice. Much of the teaching is undertaken on an individual basis and is supported by tutorials, seminars, formal lectures and study visits. The staff employ studio teaching methods expertly. The majority are also practising artists and designers who use their experience of professional practice in their teaching.

47 Students spend many hours practising and studying independently. They develop a committed and professional approach to their studies and are expected to continue their practical work well beyond timetabled sessions. At the start of the courses, teachers quickly and successfully convey to students an understanding of the self-reliance required to sustain their progress.

48 Staff and students enjoy good working relationships in studio assignments which typically involve a one-to-one teaching and learning partnership. Staff have high levels of individual expertise in a range of practices and skills, and command the respect of their students. There are regularly-changing displays of students' work throughout the college and seeing their work alongside that of others helps students to develop a critical awareness of their development. Displays of work by the higher education students provide a stimulating environment and set a standard to which the further education students can aspire.

49 Course programmes follow well-documented syllabuses. A record of achievement included in each course handbook enables students to chart their progress against tutorial and review schedules, and the completion of assignments. Students use these records well. As in many other art schools, new students carry out an assignment during the summer, which is then critically appraised by their peer group. Some students found this a daunting and not necessarily constructive experience.

50 Teaching on the contact course, which is a separate full-time programme for students with severe learning difficulties, has clear

objectives. Students are involved in discussing how they learn. Staff ask students well-constructed questions and provide them with explanations of teaching plans. They also give them summaries of the activities they have undertaken. Students receive positive feedback from their teachers on the ideas they express or on the work they have completed. A residential study visit provides valuable experience. In a few sessions, teachers did too much of the work for students or failed to check the inappropriate behaviour exhibited by some students.

51 Good links exist between the contact course and the performing arts course. The contact course has its own drama production and its students are assisted by performing arts students. Some of the students on the contact course have many incomplete pieces of work and their progress records are at very different stages of development. Part-time students with learning difficulties who join mainstream vocational courses do not have a full assessment of their learning needs. This makes the task of supporting them difficult for teachers.

52 The college has established a post of co-ordinator for continuing education as part of its commitment to adult students. Staff are sensitive to the diverse needs of mature part-time students and maintain an appropriate balance between the development of student confidence and attainment. Adult students from the part-time courses are appreciative of the high standards of teaching they receive. Some students hope to develop the commercial potential of their craft skills, or take higher qualifications. Staff use flexible teaching strategies to cope with the demands presented by these groups. Individual students are allowed to progress at their own pace as teachers work through different stages of the syllabus. It is common to find students within the same group working on three different years of the syllabus.

53 With the exception of some part-time evening work, all the course programmes incorporate an element of academic study which includes art and design history. This area of the teaching programme is traditionally known as complementary studies. The subjects of study are wide ranging and are well taught by a small group of full-time and part-time specialist staff. The programme of complementary studies is effectively linked to the practical course work. Teaching methods include formal lectures, seminars, tutorials and study visits and the staff work hard at stimulating and maintaining interest in these studies.

54 Each of the courses has a lecture programme which is broadly based and which meets the individual needs of the different subject areas. Staff make good use of audio-visual aids. Lectures include extensive visual references in addition to those specifically drawn from art, design or photography. Study visits are an important part of all courses. Students enjoy and benefit from the directed studies required as part of these visits.

55 The one-year foundation course in art and design for students with GCE A levels, helps them identify appropriate routes to higher education.

The diagnostic part of the course is well taught and gives students a better understanding of their aptitudes. The tutorial and advisory support systems are well organised. Students found the programme more challenging than their GCE A level courses. The course as a whole does not sufficiently involve students with the current thinking and practice in fine art. There is a tendency to prescribe some outcomes and this restricts students' creative potential.

56 Staff have responded positively to the development and implementation of GNVQ courses. Good teaching was observed in life drawing classes and in studio assignments. The assessment process in the first year of the advanced GNVQ was thorough and students made good progress. Individual tutorials were conducted with difficulty because of a lack of appropriate space. Staff have established a supportive and professional learning environment which compensates for deficiencies in the physical environment. Students generally enjoyed their studies and took pride in presenting their work.

57 Assignments, performances and practical work in performing arts are all well planned. Rehearsal time is used productively and effectively. The Folly Arts Theatre is a venue for professional touring companies which have included the Royal Shakespeare Company and Hull Truck Theatre, and students take on ancillary roles with the companies as part of their business studies training. Visiting professionals including production, sound lighting, design and stage management experts, contribute to teaching and workshops. The college's own productions include ambitious performance projects which are carried out with flair and creative energy. Teachers are careful to broaden students' experience and use them in support roles such as assistant stage manager and assistant director in rehearsals and productions. Students value the opportunities they are given for self-assessment. Assignments are of a high standard. They are well marked and teachers write helpful comments.

58 Staff in graphic design used an appropriate range of teaching and learning methods including lectures, groupwork, tutorials, workshops, demonstrations, educational visits, critiques and studio projects. Students develop skills through simulated and professional assignments including some sponsored by external agencies. There is a positive working atmosphere in the studios. Staff encourage team-working skills and oral communication skills. Several students employed typographic and layout software with a high degree of proficiency. There were examples of good illustration and of individual solutions to common design tasks.

59 Students on both the specialist course and the general courses are well taught in photography and darkroom skills. They learn to use cameras, lighting, processing and printing to high standards. Good-quality photographic printing was much in evidence in the national diploma programme but there was little experimentation either with subject matter or with presentation. The features of the most successful sessions included

thorough preparation, clear instructions and objectives, and relevant subject content. Clear links are drawn with other aspects of the course and students receive appropriate advice and guidance from staff.

60 The course syllabus for the national diploma in photography also includes an innovative approach to business studies. This comprises a formally taught introductory programme, followed by external/industrial case studies and the preparation of a personal plan. Some of the sessions offered students too modest an intellectual challenge, and there was occasionally a lack of objectivity. Some sessions lacked planning and structure and there was a wasteful amount of note taking. In contrast, a well-structured complementary studies lecture for first-year photography students included material which had been carefully prepared; the content was pertinent; ideas were clearly presented using slides and clips of early films; and the lecturer drew links between the histories of film and photography, and of art and technology. It held students' interest throughout.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

61 Students are well motivated and enjoy their studies. Most appreciate the link between their work and their career aspirations. The commitment of students is reflected in the extent to which many work outside programmed hours on their course projects. Positive attitudes to work are fostered by the working relationships between staff and students, and the emphasis placed on the learning needs of individual students.

62 Generally, the practical work produced by students is of a high standard and there is due regard for safety procedures. The work is varied and includes many examples of lively drawing, experimenting with ideas, attention to detail and highly-developed skills in a wide range of craft materials and techniques. Coursework is consistently well presented, particularly in the portfolios of work which students assemble for taking to interviews for jobs or for places on more advanced courses. On all courses, some students are producing practical work of exceptional quality. Students are appreciative of the fact that their work is regularly shown at public exhibitions and in performances.

63 There are examples of well-written essays on the vocational programmes, particularly the national diploma in photography and the BTEC diploma in art and design foundation studies. The best of these have a clear structure and deal lucidly with complex cultural and historical subject matter. Most are wordprocessed. On the GNVQ and creative studies textiles programmes, the production of large-scale art and craft pieces is limited by the cramped working conditions.

64 On the range of general art and design programmes, students have a clear understanding of the demands being made of them, and some develop valuable self-assessment skills. Records of achievement have been introduced across the college and contain comprehensive information

relating to students' progress. The records are used constructively and valued by students, particularly those on the contact course. While most students on the national diplomas in graphic design and photography are developing an appropriate body of specialist knowledge, more should be done to increase their understanding of the design principles underpinning their practical work.

65 Many students are able to discuss their work confidently, although the development of oral skills is not consistent. On the full-time programmes, students use wordprocessing skills extensively to present their written work. Successful team working is a feature of the national diploma in performing arts, less so on other courses. In many of the studio-based projects inspected, students demonstrated that they had the confidence and skills to work unsupervised.

66 A particular strength of the college's provision is the quality of work produced by students on the range of C&G programmes which have been introduced to offer externally-accredited qualifications for part-time students. Students find these craft courses rigorous and enjoyable. Some are using the experience to redirect their careers or change their way of life. For example, after less than two years of study, a part-time ceramics student has felt able to give up her former job and set up as a self-employed studio potter, selling work on a regular basis. Other part-time students with similar aspirations would benefit from an introduction to small business practices, the expertise for which is already established within the college.

67 Performance tables produced by the Department for Education for 1994 show that 96 per cent of students in their final year of vocational courses were successful. This places the college among the top third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. Students completing the vocational courses accounted for 95 per cent of all college students taking end of course assessments and the high success rate applies equally to 16-18 year old students and to those of 19 and over. There is also a high degree of consistency in the achievements of students on all programmes. For the past three years the pass rate on individual programmes has not been less than 82 per cent and has ranged up to 100 per cent.

68 In 1994, a small number of students, 20 in total, were examined in GCE A level art and design subjects, and GCSE English. The GCE A level candidates were all part-time students and 78 per cent achieved passes at grade E or above, a little below the national average for further education sector colleges, other than sixth form colleges. Passes at grade C or above are well above the national average. In 1993, all GCE A level students achieved a pass grade. Of the 11 students resitting GCSE English, 55 per cent, achieved a pass at grade C or above, which is slightly above the national average for 16-18 year old students in further education sector colleges.

69 The retention rate on vocational programmes is high and most students go on to higher level study or employment. In 1994, 88 per cent of enrolled students completed their full programme of study and 83 per cent were successfully placed on higher level courses or in employment. Of these 14 per cent went on to other courses within the college. Students from the BTEC diploma in art and design foundation studies have been particularly successful, with 88 per cent gaining places on higher education courses in 1993 and 1994 which is well above the national average for such courses. In 1994, only 11 per cent of the college's students proceeded directly to employment. The vast majority continued their studies, which is a normal pattern for art and design education at this level.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

70 The college charter was highly commended by the Department for Education for its comprehensiveness, the quality of its design and for the precision of the targets which it sets. The charter provides good information about the college and its services. Staff are aware of the national charter for further education and the college charter and respond positively to the commitments they contain. The college charter is used at induction to highlight a variety of issues, including details of the assessment requirements for courses. Students are not given individual copies of the charter but they have access to copies in their work areas and at other locations. Students were aware of the charter and its implications for them and their learning, including the formal complaints procedures. In recent times, the college has received few complaints and these have been dealt with by one of the senior managers. The charter contains targets for monitoring teaching and learning, but not for monitoring resources or support services.

71 The college's policy on quality states that quality control is a responsibility shared by every member of the college staff with the aim of providing education and training of the highest quality. A quality assurance framework is being developed which is based on a total quality management system. The college has a commitment to continuous improvement, and has held in-house seminars on quality for staff. Management and committee structures ensure that course monitoring and termly and annual reviews are undertaken effectively. Students are represented on most college committees. Course teams have ownership of the review process and have developed quality standards in consultation with managers. The vice-principal has management responsibility for assuring the quality of the academic programme, and the head of finance and administration has the same responsibility for college administration and support services. Academic quality is monitored through the academic board. The administration and support quality procedures are being developed but they are not as advanced as those in the academic area. A draft report on quality control is currently the subject of consultation within the college.

72 Annual course reviews and termly audits are based on a standard agenda and include detailed statements on teaching and learning strategies, details of students' achievements and progression, moderators' reports, resources and performance indicators. Students' evaluations also form part of the review process. As a result of the reviews, course teams produce action plans which feed into the next round of planning at course and strategic level. The reviews have a wide circulation and this is one method by which good practice is disseminated. The reviews include targets based on performance indicators such as enrolments, retention rates, examination results and progression. There is no comparison of performance year by year to establish trends, partly because the management information system does not provide the requisite data for the course teams. The academic standards committee monitors the results of these reviews for the academic board to ensure that the maintenance and enhancement of provision and services is achieved. This ensures, for example, that internal verification is fair and consistent across the college and to the appropriate standard.

73 An internal quality assessment report was produced for the team inspection. This was based upon the headings found in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. Achievements and planned actions in each area were documented. In some respects the report was perceptive in identifying issues; in others far less so. Some of the achievements presented are still at the development stage and in some cases there was an over-generous analysis of the existing situation. Overall, however, the report produced a fair assessment of the college's position. The college has drawn up a detailed action plan based upon its analysis of the findings of the specialist inspections. In a number of instances the weaknesses identified have been acted upon. For example, the college has improved the project briefs given to students, and room layouts have been altered to improve facilities in graphic design. Course teams have discussed the weaknesses and have plans in operation to try to eliminate them as soon as practicable.

74 The college has conducted various surveys of staff and students' perceptions. As a result of the staff surveys, managers have introduced organisational changes and improved the quality of staff development. Student survey results have led to improvements in the planned induction programme, and to better snack and drink vending facilities.

75 Staff appraisal has been part of the college's practice for three years in the case of teachers, including part-time teachers, and two years in the case of support staff. College staff see the system as a positive and enlightening experience. Job performances have improved as a result of appraisal and of subsequent staff development. In other cases, teachers have been promoted as jobs have been more clearly defined. The scheme has clear aims and procedures which are well documented. It is an open process which emphasises the importance of the parties in the appraisal

process reaching agreement about matters of performance. Timescales for subsequent actions are agreed and there are follow-up review meetings to ensure lasting improvements. The principal retains a copy of all the appraisals to enable him to oversee training and development trends.

76 The staff development is linked to the strategic plan, to staff appraisal and to curriculum areas identified as requiring improved performance. The procedures and criteria for the approval of requests and the granting of funding are clear and understood by staff. In recent times the development programme has included Training and Development Lead Body assessor awards and updating on GNVQs. The number of staff achieving, or in the process of gaining assessed awards is high for the size of the institution. Staff who undertake any training complete an evaluation of that training, and this information is useful to management in assessing its benefits. Support staff who are new to further education have had initial training on educational issues. The budget for staff development in 1993-94 was approximately £9,000 which was 0.4 per cent of total expenditure, and a similar sum will be spent in 1994-95. Although these figures are low in comparison with other colleges, in-house training is a strong feature of the college and many staff, including part-time staff, take advantage of this opportunity. For example, there is a programme of training to introduce support staff to new information technology hardware and software. There is no staff development to support the college's equal opportunities policy. Visits by staff to exhibitions both in this country and abroad are seen as an important part of updating the experience of staff. A staff handbook is being completed which will include improved guidance and support for staff during their induction process, which at present is conducted informally.

77 The college is working towards Investor in People status which is seen as an integral part of achieving the college's mission. Following a successful interim assessment in February, the college is hopeful of achieving this status in June 1995.

RESOURCES

Staffing

78 Academic staff are well qualified. They have a wide range of professional expertise, and there is a good balance between those with teaching qualifications, post-graduate qualifications and industrial or commercial experience. More than half of the part-time lecturers are practising artists or craft/design makers and three of the full-time staff are exhibiting painters or printmakers. The number of permanent staff is small but sufficient to maintain the range of courses. All academic staff teach, other than the principal and vice-principal. There are more part-time staff than permanent staff. This provides flexibility in staffing courses and takes advantage of part-time teachers' professional skills. The staff appointed on fixed-term contracts strengthen the vocational teaching by their relevant expertise in theatre arts, or as practising artists or designers.

79 The majority of teachers work on further education and higher education courses. Staff expertise has been used well to develop course programmes. The teaching time of three of the full-time lecturers and four of the associate lecturers is devoted exclusively to higher education courses. This is not in itself a weakness but there are instances where fuller integration of staff with related skills would be of benefit to courses.

80 The number of support staff has increased significantly since incorporation, in response to identified needs. Six of the present team of eight financial and administrative support staff are new appointments. Two technicians have also been appointed to support information technology within courses. The administrative, technical support staff, and library staff are well qualified. Good technical support is given to individual courses but the number of technicians is small and some specialist areas have no support. There is no central co-ordination of support staff.

81 All academic staff have been employed on flexible contracts since August 1994. The terms of the new contract include a fixed annual allocation of 140 hours for personal development, the use of which is agreed during staff appraisal. This gives an opportunity for staff to keep up to date and to develop in their subject. There are new and updated job descriptions for all senior staff. Drafting of other job descriptions is under way.

Equipment/learning resources

82 The range of specialist equipment reflects the range of course provision and is a strength of the college. A number of students chose the college because of its facilities. Good use is made of specialist equipment in workshops for ceramics, jewellery and silversmithing, wood and metalwork, printmaking and textiles. The equipment is available both to general courses and to specialist courses. Equipment is well maintained and used but increased demand makes availability difficult in some of the workshops. Work in performing arts is restricted by the lack of a suitable dance floor.

83 The provision of equipment and materials to support teaching and learning is generally adequate in quality and quantity. Some is good and relatively new, some is good but old and there are a few clear weaknesses in provision. There is variation between the facilities available at the main site, where the equipment is extensive and of an industrial standard, and those at Uplands where equipment is limited and has to be brought out of store before it can be used. The widest variation is in the photographic facilities. The national diploma course has a range of good professional equipment whereas the general photographic resources available to other courses are deficient in several respects, including studio lighting.

84 With few exceptions, specialist equipment is available equally to higher education students and further education students. For example, both further and higher education graphic design students share access to

a range of relevant studio equipment and a specialist suite of 12 Apple Macintosh computers. All students have open access to information technology in a learning-resource centre equipped with 14 computers. Four studio-based computers are networked to this central resource. However, there is a general shortage of computers in the college. The student to computer ratio is 13.8:1 for full-time students, and 21.5:1 for all students. Some computers have been adapted for use by students with disabilities.

85 There is a college shop which sells good-quality materials at less than normal retail prices. It opens at fixed times in the morning and afternoon and is well used and valued. Students on all courses are provided with basic materials appropriate to their studies. Course budgets are weighted to take account of differentials in equipment and materials costs, and include an element for the purchase of small items of equipment.

86 The college shares its library facilities with the adjacent college of technology. This arrangement provides students with extended hours of access and a wider range of books and learning materials than the art college could offer alone. The art section is separate. It has 20 study places and is well used.

87 A large number of journals are bought for the studios. They are not duplicated in the library and this restricts their circulation. They are not catalogued and there is no policy to bind the back copies. Collections of photographic slides and videos are housed in specialist subject areas and are not accessible on a wider basis. The college should review these arrangements.

Accommodation

88 The college owns a wide range of purpose-built facilities on the main site which comprise specialist workshops, studio accommodation, a theatre, support areas and other teaching accommodation. The Uplands site consists of a large Victorian house and two prefabricated double classroom buildings. The college itself has a small catering area. It shares a good catering facility with the college of technology.

89 The relatively new buildings on the main site are in good condition. They are well maintained, clean and the interiors are well decorated. Students' work is prominently displayed, at the college entrance and throughout the main site building. The displays are changed regularly and are a significant feature of interest to visitors and students. The Uplands accommodation is poor. The rooms in the house are too small for some of the classes which use them. The age of the building limits what can be done to improve the accommodation.

90 The shared main lecture room is of high quality. The main site accommodation for photography is extensive and well planned. In contrast, the accommodation for photography at Uplands is poorly arranged and generally neglected. The single design studio used by both year groups on

the national diploma in graphic design is too small and this leads to overcrowding and the acceptance of inappropriate working practices. For example, workstations are cramped, circulation space is inadequate and students have difficulty in working at a drawing board without disruption. The distinctive Folly Art Theatre is a flexible studio theatre seating 160. Redecorating or the introduction of curtains would improve the design and lighting effect. The various workshops provide good quality accommodation but there are limited storage spaces for specialist equipment, including costume stores.

91 A recent accommodation survey commissioned by the college has drawn attention to inadequacies in the communal and social areas for students, accommodation for GNVQ students, administration offices, staff study and common room areas and the learning centre. It also points to the lack of a specialist room for basic and study skills support.

92 Increased student numbers in GNVQ courses are putting pressure on accommodation. The facilities in the specialist workshops are shared by students from several courses. The growth in student numbers has resulted in changing priorities for space and some areas such as textiles have been reduced in size.

93 The main site offers good access for those with restricted mobility, except for certain parts of the workshops. Access to the house on the Uplands site is poor and there is no lift to the upper floor. Landscaping around the college is pleasant. Space for parking cars is inadequate.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

94 The strengths of the college include:

- a good range of courses and subject options in art and design
- strong links with schools
- good information and guidance for potential students
- a commitment to students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- supportive governors who are actively involved in the life of the college
- effective leadership by senior managers
- well-planned and well-managed courses
- well-qualified, experienced staff including practising professionals
- good teaching
- effective tutorial support and monitoring of students' progress
- a commitment to quality and its continuous improvement
- high levels of success on vocational courses
- high retention rates

-
- a wide range of purpose-built facilities, the majority of which are well resourced
 - good accommodation on the main site, particularly the lecture room and theatre.
- 95 The college should:
- fill the present vacancy for chairperson of the audit committee
 - develop its contingency planning for circumstances in which the targets for growth are not achieved
 - further develop its financial reporting systems
 - devise a more clearly focused marketing strategy
 - develop curricular links between related subjects
 - further develop its provision for basic skills support
 - improve information technology facilities
 - strengthen technical support in some specialist areas
 - address the constraints imposed by cramped working conditions in some areas
 - address the poor standards of accommodation and equipment on the Uplands site and the inadequate social areas for students.

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)

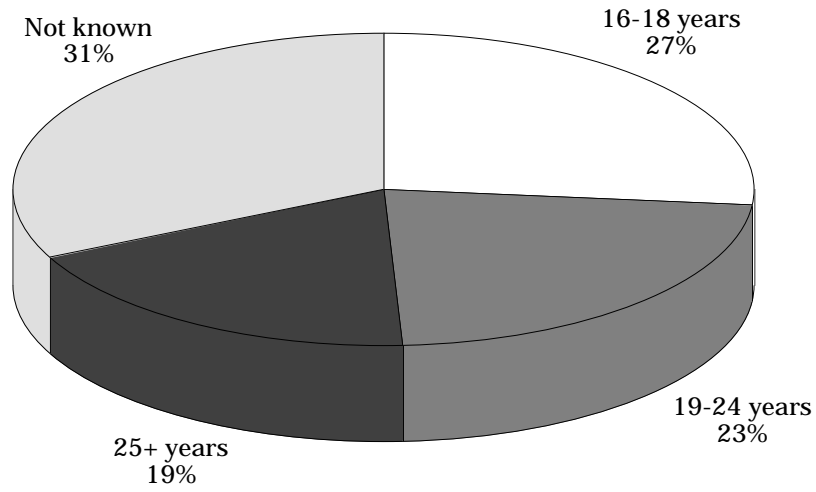
 - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1994)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1994)

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

Figure 1

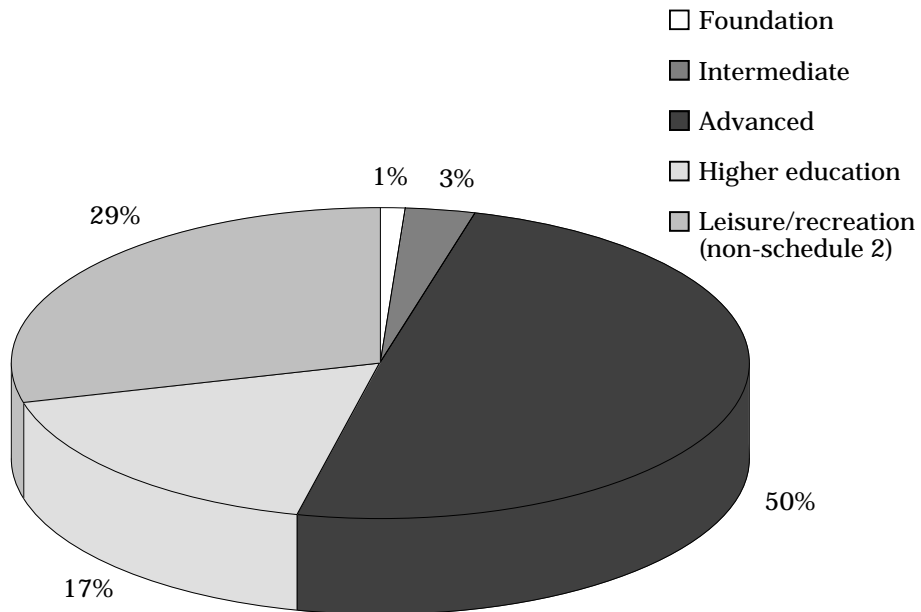
Herefordshire College of Art and Design: percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)



Enrolments: 971

Figure 2

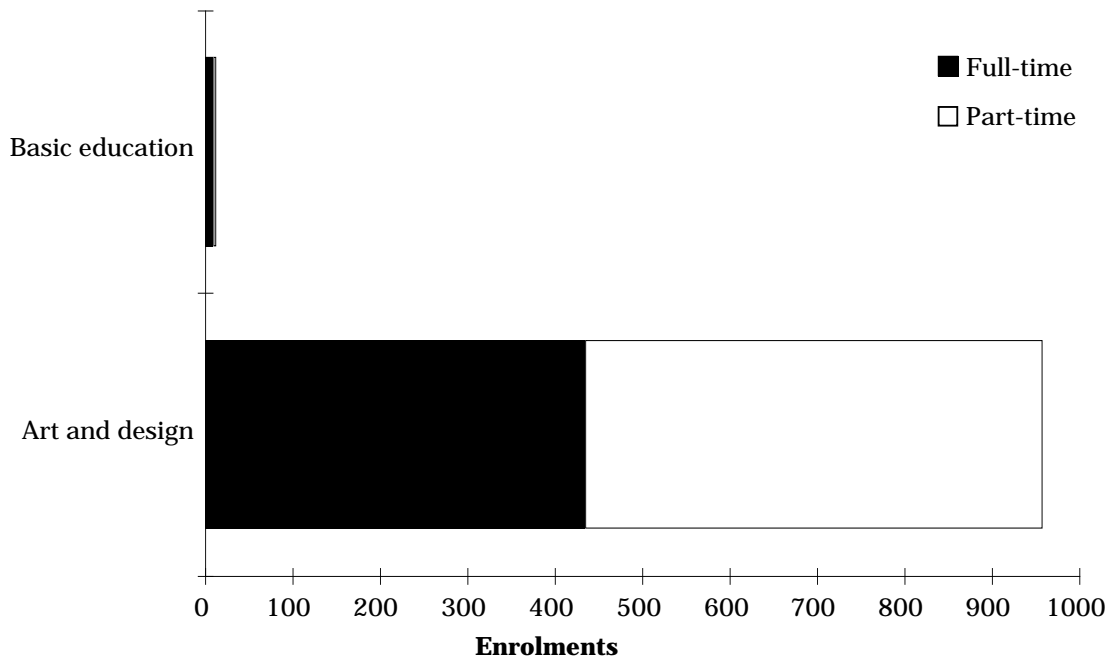
Herefordshire College of Art and Design: percentage enrolments by level of study (1994-95)



Enrolments: 971

Figure 3

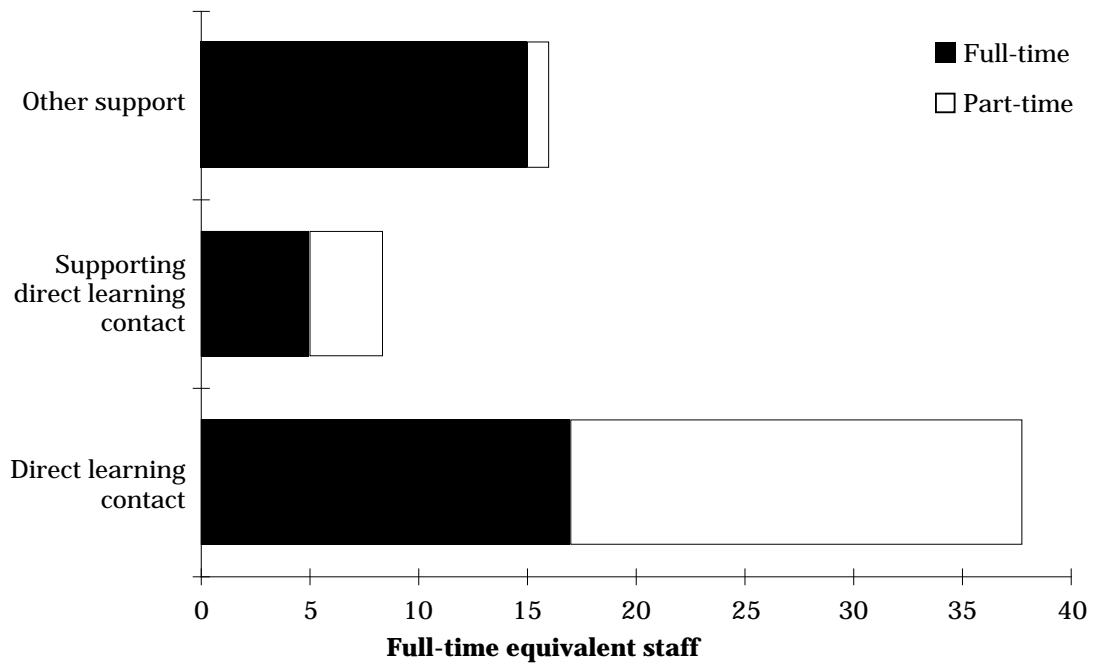
Herefordshire College of Art and Design: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1994-95)



Enrolments: 971

Figure 4

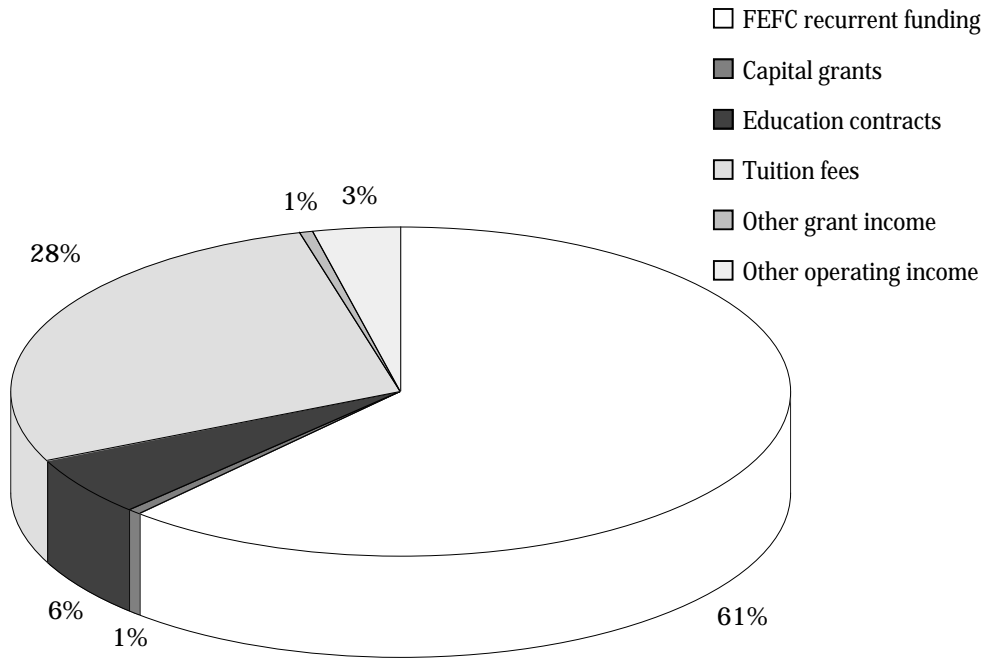
Herefordshire College of Art and Design: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994-95)



Full-time equivalent staff: 62

Figure 5

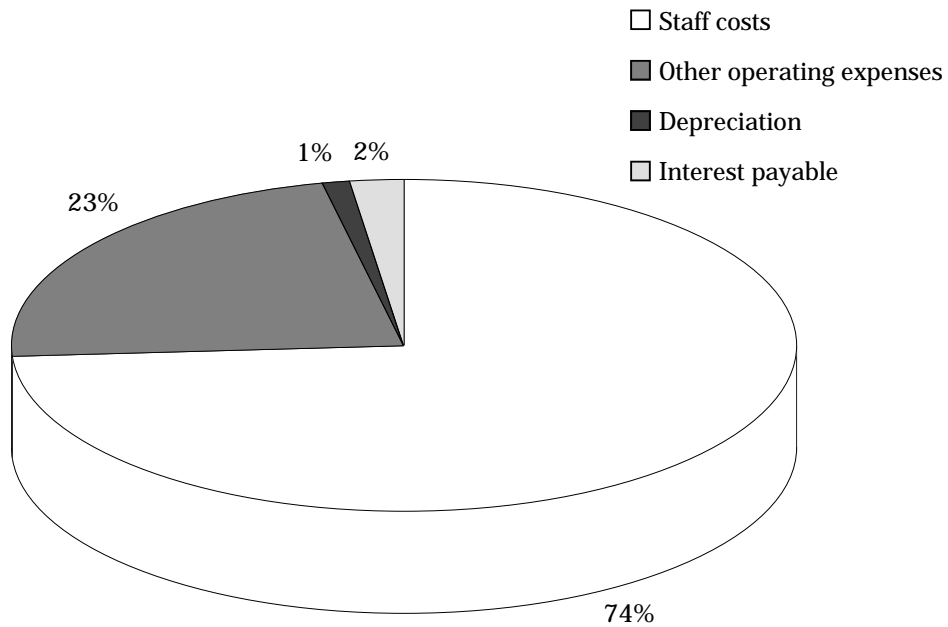
Herefordshire College of Art and Design: income (for 12 months to July 1994)



Income: £1,667,000

Figure 6

Herefordshire College of Art and Design: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1994)



Expenditure: £1,711,000

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