

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Joseph Priestley College

June 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 69/95

JOSEPH PRIESTLEY COLLEGE
YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE REGION
Inspected January - February 1995

Summary

Joseph Priestley College provides education and training mainly in business studies, general education, languages, computing, health and social care, and art and design. Most of its students live close by in the towns of Morley, Rothwell and South Leeds and attend the college part time. A substantial proportion are adults in the community who are returning to education. The college stays open on Saturday and Sunday. Students are given comprehensive advice, support and guidance. Governors are knowledgeable about further education and provide strategic guidance to the management team. The college is well managed. There is good rapport between teachers and students. The staff are well qualified and enthusiastic about their work. Matters which the college should address include: the development and implementation of a marketing strategy; increasing recruitment from the 16-19 age group; improving liaison with employers; strengthening communication between centres; further developing the management information system; strengthening links between learning support and vocational programmes; improving quality assurance systems; improving access to information technology facilities; and improving accommodation and the childcare facilities.

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

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Mathematics, science and computing	3	Humanities	2
		Languages	2
Business studies	3	Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	1
		Adult basic education	3
Health and social care	2		

CONTENTS

	Paragraph
Summary	
Introduction	1
The college and its aims	2
Responsiveness and range of provision	8
Governance and management	18
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	26
Teaching and the promotion of learning	36
Students' achievements	47
Quality assurance	61
Resources	72
Conclusions and issues	80
Figures	

INTRODUCTION

1 Joseph Priestley College in South Leeds was inspected during January and February 1995. The college's enrolment and induction procedures were inspected at the beginning of the autumn term. Subsequently two full-time inspectors and eight part-time registered inspectors devoted a total of 29 inspector days to specialist subject inspections. Inspectors visited 106 classes, held meetings with college staff, and inspected a broad range of students' work. The inspectors also had access to a wide variety of documentation relating to the college and its courses. In the week beginning 27 February 1995, five full-time and four part-time registered inspectors spent a further 45 inspector days examining aspects of cross-college provision. During the period of the inspection, there were meetings with governors, representatives from the Leeds Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), head teachers, local employers, parents, students, community representatives, cross-college managers, and teaching and support staff.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Joseph Priestley College is a further education college which provides education and training for the areas of Morley, Rothwell and South Leeds. Courses are provided mainly in the fields of office and business studies, computing, health and social care, general education, languages and art and design. There are also foundation courses, including those for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

3 Leeds is a major centre for financial services in the north of England and service industries in the area served by the college employ 73 per cent of the workforce. Small firms make up 87 per cent of local employers and employ 29 per cent of the workforce. Although the overall rate of unemployment in Leeds is less than the regional and national average it is much higher in the inner city areas. Several of these are in the catchment area served by the college. The staying-on rate for post-compulsory education is 59 per cent, which is below the national average. Many of the students in the college's catchment area have poor educational achievements. For example, half of the population of the inner South Leeds areas have no formal qualifications and the proportions of school pupils awarded GCSE grades A-C are well below the national and Leeds averages.

4 There are nine further education providers and one Catholic sixth form college in the Leeds area. Several of these colleges are specialist providers of vocational education. Colleges in Wakefield, Dewsbury and Bradford lie within a 10-mile radius. They provide significant competition in recruiting students. All the secondary schools in Leeds have sixth forms, apart from two 11-16 Catholic schools.

5 The Joseph Priestley College was established as an evening institute in 1955 to provide adult and further education. It gained full college status in 1988 and has since increased its enrolments significantly from 573

full-time equivalent students in 1988-89 to 986 in 1992-93. At the time of the inspection, there were 4,541 students, of whom 226 were full time. In addition, 1,478 students were following non-vocational courses. Enrolments by age and level of study are shown in figures 1 and 2. Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figure 3. The college employs 75 full-time equivalent teaching staff, and 54 full-time equivalent support staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

6 The college has centres at Morley, Rothwell and South Leeds and a number of smaller sites. The administrative headquarters are at Morley. Responsibility for the curriculum is divided between three faculties: office skills and computing; general education, basic skills and foundation studies; and business and professional studies and languages.

7 In its mission statement, the college aims to meet the needs of the individual, the community and the employer by providing accessible opportunities for education and training within a framework of quality. Among the primary goals listed in the strategic plan are those of doubling the number of students within five years and making further education enjoyable, fun and a civilised experience for all students.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

8 The college has a long tradition of providing adult education for the community of Morley, Rothwell and South Leeds. Non-vocational courses remain a significant feature of provision. Staff are aware of issues in further education and of the need to increase the college's contribution to national targets for education and training. The college has a growing commitment to develop its range of provision and to attract more customers by introducing more vocational courses.

9 Courses are provided in general education, business studies, computing, languages, office skills, adult education and for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The number of courses that lead to qualifications is increasing but currently the basic education courses have few target qualifications. Programmes are provided at National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) levels 1 to 4 or equivalent with most enrolments in business studies and humanities. Sensibly the college does not compete with other colleges for some of the more expensive vocational areas, for example engineering and hotel and catering, which are well provided for in the surrounding colleges. The college provides General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) in business studies, health and social care, and art and design, including some part-time provision. The college exceeded its enrolment target in 1993-94.

10 Approximately 90 per cent of the students are aged 19 and over and, of these, more than 10 per cent are over 55 years of age. The college is welcoming to, and supportive of, its students. It offers well-planned programmes for students with moderate and severe learning difficulties. The college is responsive to the needs of disadvantaged groups, including

unemployed people and those from minority ethnic backgrounds. There are full-time and part-time access to higher education courses which offer opportunities for adults returning to study to progress to other courses.

11 Teaching and learning are provided in a variety of settings and modes. The college operates a network of centres which provide programmes for the local communities. Some learning takes place at the workplace and some tutoring in students' homes. More than 500 students are enrolled on courses run at weekends. A modular framework is being developed for GNVQ provision. Open-learning facilities are limited. The absence of childcare facilities prevents some students from enrolling on courses they would like to study.

12 There is a positive relationship with Leeds TEC. The college is the main contract holder for a TEC-funded project, involving six schools and several colleges, to develop GNVQ course materials and to promote progression between pre-16 and post-16 education. There are effective collaborative links with schools and other further education colleges. There is no school liaison team but consortia arrangements are being developed with some Leeds schools. The college's weekend programme is used by some young people to supplement their school studies. However, the number of school leavers attracted to full-time college courses is low.

13 There is a college policy for promoting international awareness. European studies modules, accredited by the Open College, are being developed. The supporting studies programme includes European-funded work placements and language options. There are visits and exchanges for mature students and all full-time students can make overseas visits. However, few students take up these options. Every year, the college holds an international evening which is well attended by students and the community.

14 The college has a small but effective commercial training and consultancy arm, operating as JP Training. It failed to meet its targets last year but is on course to achieve the £93,000 turnover target set for this year. Training was provided for 33 organisations last year in management and business skills, customer care, health and safety, and information technology. However, the knowledge and experience accumulated by JP Training does not always have an impact on mainstream curriculum planning. College-wide co-ordination of liaison with employers is not well established. Advisory groups are inactive and no individual has been assigned responsibility for industrial links under the new college structure. Employers' perceptions of the college are not systematically surveyed.

15 An attractive range of publicity materials is produced, using information on students' destinations to give interest and relevance. An advertising newspaper known as 'First Choice' is produced by the college and distributed annually to 150,000 households in Morley, Rothwell and South Leeds. The college also collaborates with other colleges of further education in Leeds to publicise provision and further education services in

a magazine 'Futures and Options', which is distributed to over 300,000 homes in the Leeds area. However, the college's marketing strategy is unclear and its marketing function is under review. There are no college-wide arrangements for identifying needs through market research or for gathering information in a structured way.

16 The use of market research data for course development is inadequate. There is no comprehensive guidance for staff about new course development or about revisions and replacement of existing courses. Curriculum development at the course team level is poorly co-ordinated and its links to strategic objectives are tenuous. Some existing programmes, for example, adult and basic education are overdue for review.

17 The college has an equal opportunities policy and a supporting committee which reports to the senior management team. Four sub-groups are developing action plans and their activity is beginning to influence staff. Equal opportunities issues are included in students' induction.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

18 The corporation board has a membership of 16 including the principal. There are seven independent members with business and commercial expertise, including company directors, an accountant and an architect. There is currently a vacancy in the business membership and the corporation is seeking an appointee with marketing expertise. There are two community representatives on the board. A number of training events have been organised for governors, including briefings on aspects of the curriculum and inspections.

19 The corporation has established four committees: finance, audit, employment and remuneration. The committees all have appropriate membership and clear terms of reference. They meet regularly, although the finance committee meets only every three months. Currently the corporation has not adopted a code of conduct nor a register of interests. Although policies on health and safety and equal opportunities had been approved no reports on these aspects had been provided to governors. A detailed report covering the last academic year had been prepared for governors by the principal. However, a report from the principal is not a regular item at each corporation meeting.

20 The strategic plan is comprehensive with clearly-defined aims, objectives and measurable targets which are embodied in the current operating statement. Staff share common perceptions of the ethos of the college and particularly of its mission to provide an 'outstanding' experience for its students. However, the strategic planning process is not fully consultative and the principal plays a dominant steering role.

21 At the time of the inspection, the management structure of the college was undergoing significant change to strengthen the line management

and development of new cross-college roles and to co-ordinate more effectively course organisation and management. Under the new structure, the senior management team comprises the principal, the director of finance and administration, and the director of administration and academic affairs respectively. There is a lack of clarity about some of the responsibilities of middle management, and some cross-college roles assigned to those who manage college centres are vague. Fortnightly meetings between the senior management team and faculty managers are improving the control and co-ordination of developments in the curriculum.

22 The director of finance, working closely with the finance group, keeps strict central control of the college budget. There is minimum delegation of the budget. Unit costs are not calculated by programme area or college centre. In 1994-95, the average level of funding is £16.81 per unit. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges is £18.17 per unit. The college's estimated income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1995 are shown in figures 5 and 6.

23 Although the college operates a Further Education Computerised Accounting management information system, networked into the four main centres, it has been under-resourced and whilst the financial information produced has been reliable, information in respect of student records has been much less reliable. Consequently, the college has not been able to produce reports which meet the needs of managers and teachers. The director of finance has now taken over responsibility for the management information systems and is beginning to form a comprehensive strategy for their development. Advances are being made in the generation of registers and the analysis of postcodes from enrolment data and the monitoring of applications data is now more systematic. A house magazine is being piloted to popularise management information systems with staff.

24 Communications within the college are effective at a personal level. One good practice has been adopted in modern languages, where regular information sheets are circulated to the 35 part-time staff. Team meetings are held at frequent intervals for full-time teachers and for all staff twice a year. Governor and staff newsletters keep staff informed about college developments, although recently, while the post of college journalist was vacant, these have only appeared at irregular intervals. Inter-site communications are difficult and this causes particular problems during enrolment periods. Systems for communicating with part-time teachers are inconsistent between centres. There are delays in the inter-site postal system and telecommunications systems need updating.

25 The college exceeded its 1993-94 enrolment targets but at the time of the inspection it was not certain that the college would achieve its 1994-95 target of 21 per cent growth. Senior and middle managers are involved in the setting of overall college enrolment targets but the process lacks uniform procedures. There are no targets for student retention rates

although retention rates are monitored at faculty level and for each centre. Figures are not available for the college as a whole. Targets are set for students' achievements. A destinations survey is compiled for full-time and substantive part-time students. This information is updated manually by faculty managers and college careers officers and reported to the director for academic affairs.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

26 Students are appreciative of the friendly approach of staff and their willingness to respond quickly to requests for help. Under recent restructuring, student services have been established as a cross-college function. Many of the systems required to support students are in place but are not well co-ordinated. At the time of the inspection a manager of the service had been appointed but was not yet in post.

27 The college has developed various ways of giving prospective students a sample of courses before they make an application. Of particular note is the provision in the spring term of taster sessions for pupils about to leave local schools. Most students spoke highly of the warm welcome extended to them and the willingness of staff to spend time ensuring that they received impartial advice about the various programmes. However, some students on General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level), General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and open/distance learning programmes expressed dissatisfaction with the information and guidance given to them before enrolment.

28 The development of a centralised admissions process has led to an improvement in the efficiency of enrolment procedures. Training has been provided for staff involved in admissions and useful guidelines have been produced by the careers and guidance staff for staff who interview students. The college maintains contact with students in the period between the offer of a place at the college and the start of their studies. In some programme areas, students are invited to attend pre-enrolment sessions which help them to prepare for the start of the course. This opportunity is particularly appreciated by students on the access programme. Arrangements for accrediting students' prior learning are at an early stage of development; currently, such accreditation is available only within business studies.

29 The college's induction programme is well planned and thorough. It helps students to familiarise themselves with the college, to understand the programme for which they have enrolled and to develop positive working relationships with other students. Training has been provided for staff involved in the induction programme and there is a checklist to guide tutors. The induction booklets for students with learning difficulties are of particular note. They are illustrated with pictures and photographs and are helpful for students with poor literacy skills. Students are generally positive towards the induction programme, although some were

dissatisfied with some elements, such as, the team-building exercises and the literacy and numeracy tests.

30 All students who attend the college for eight or more hours a week are allocated a personal tutor. Tutorials are not timetabled but tutors are expected to see each student at least twice each term. These sessions are used mainly to review the student's progress and to maintain the student's personal record of achievement. There are no group tutorials and no structured tutorial programme. The student's course tutor and personal tutor work together closely to monitor the student's progress and to provide support in overcoming any difficulties.

31 Further support is provided to students by the college's careers and counselling staff. The service is well advertised within the college and students are informed about it during the induction programme. The three staff work together well as a team and are developing positive links with course teams throughout the college. Links have also been established with a range of external agencies.

32 During induction, there are screening procedures which identify students who need help with basic skills. Free language tuition is available for students whose first language is not English. Support for students who need help with basic literacy and/or numeracy is provided through the college's learning support workshops. Students are encouraged to attend the workshops by their course and personal tutors. However, the link between the support they are given and their vocational programme is not well developed. Alternative forms of support for those students who are reluctant to attend workshops are at an early stage of development. This is a particular issue in view of the increasing number of 16-18 year old students who enter the college with low levels of achievement. The need to provide specific support for students who have dyslexia has been recognised and is currently being addressed.

33 The college requires all full-time students to attend a 'supporting studies' programme for one two-hour session per week. A wide range of studies is provided including languages, wordprocessing, drama, sport and opportunities for students to study to upgrade their GCSE results or to have extra help with their assignment work.

34 Students are informed of their rights and responsibilities as part of the induction process and in the information given in the action planners provided for all full-time students. Suggestion boxes are available for students who wish to raise issues for consideration by the college's managers. Students say that they have always received replies to their suggestions.

35 Students' attendance is carefully monitored. Those who fail to attend a course on two consecutive occasions are contacted by telephone or letter. The contact is friendly and supportive and students appreciate the concern shown by staff. The college has set a target attendance of 85 per cent for all full-time programmes. This is not always achieved. During the week of

the inspection, the highest levels of attendance were found in vocational craft, access, office skills, first aid and sign language classes. In these classes, attendance was between 90 and 95 per cent. The lowest levels of attendance were found in languages, basic education and some GCSE classes. In these classes, the average attendance was 61 per cent.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

36 Of the 106 sessions inspected, 60 per cent had strengths which clearly outweighed weaknesses. Weaknesses clearly outweighed the strengths in only 3 per cent of the sessions. The following table shows the grades awarded as a result of the sessions inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level		0	9	6	1	0	16
GNVQ		2	5	10	0	0	17
Access to further and higher education		2	7	3	0	0	12
Other vocational		4	13	13	0	0	30
Other		9	13	7	2	0	31
Total		17	47	39	3	0	106

37 Most lessons were well organised. Teachers employed a suitable range of teaching methods. Working relationships between teachers and students were good. Students readily participated in discussions.

38 The teaching of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities was based on a carefully-staged programme which enabled students to progress to basic education or to life in the wider community. It was sensitive to individual students' needs and abilities. Teachers related and reinforced learning from one teaching session to another. At the end of each class they recorded the achievements of individual students and set them targets for future progress. Teaching was supported by the use of learning materials, many produced by the teachers, which were well matched to the students' needs. For example, handouts had been produced which used words, symbols and pictures in combination to communicate meaning effectively, both to poor readers and to non-readers. Innovative teaching materials have been developed by the teachers to teach numeracy.

39 The teaching of health and social care was well managed. For example, the teaching schemes and assignments were closely matched to the course specifications and built upon work previously covered. The teachers used a wide variety of teaching methods, including lectures, role-play and group work. Students were well motivated and contributed eagerly to class discussion. In a few classes, teachers failed to make best use of students' previous experiences.

40 Students on the adult access to higher education course benefited from skilled teachers who made good use of the students' accumulated knowledge and experience. Students reported that their confidence and study skills had developed considerably during the course. In a psychology class on the topic of the early bonding between parent and child, students contributed well to discussion and their individual experiences were skilfully used to develop understanding. The teacher adroitly summarised the points raised and clarified the major issues. The session concluded with a video which analysed the topic in more detail.

41 Humanities teachers encouraged a high level of student participation. In a GCE A level history class on Nazi Germany, students' awareness of the underlying cultural issues was raised by group discussion on the nature of leadership. The students contributed their ideas freely and the teacher encouraged them to think critically. The knowledge and experience of adult students was drawn upon skilfully to develop their confidence and to assist their learning. In some classes, however, some of the younger students were insufficiently engaged. Little homework was set.

42 In languages classes, the teaching was well prepared. Authentic source materials were used, the work was challenging and there were good levels of student participation. Teachers displayed a sound understanding of their students' abilities. In most classes, good use was made of the language being studied: for example, in a GCE A level French class the teacher introduced materials taken from the French media and engaged students in a lively discussion.

43 Science classes were well planned and had clearly-defined aims and objectives. Teachers adapted their teaching to match the needs of students whose prior achievements differed widely. They used a range of teaching aids and a variety of learning activities, including practical and group work, worksheets and question and answer sessions. Homework was set regularly and returned with constructive comments. Students showed good discipline and participated readily in the sessions.

44 The teaching of information technology, specialist computing and mathematics was well supported by schemes of work, clear objectives and professionally-produced teaching materials. In computing, assignments were well organised and designed to integrate with the content of the various subjects. The co-ordination of mathematics teaching across the college was effective. A bank of learning materials, cross-referenced to attainment targets, is used in most courses which have a mathematical element. The use of this scheme promotes the sharing of good practice amongst the staff.

45 In adult basic education, a range of good-quality learning materials enabled students to progress at a pace suited to their individual abilities and achievements. However, students' progress was not always properly recorded.

46 Teachers of business studies displayed an up-to-date knowledge of the subject. Students' work was marked accurately and returned promptly. In a number of classes, students were not sufficiently challenged and insufficient account was taken of the different abilities and achievements of the students. This was particularly the case where students on foundation and intermediate levels were combined into one group.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

47 Students were well motivated and generally enjoyed their studies when given the opportunity to do so. They readily participated in class. For example, foreign language students were enthusiastic learners and in business studies courses students made lively and enthusiastic contributions to group discussions. However, in some sessions, for example in English language, the 16-19 year old students were inclined to be passive and unresponsive to the teachers' prompting. Some students in business studies lacked the commitment necessary to complete assignments.

48 Students of foreign languages showed competence in most lessons. Advanced level students were able to give opinions and express complex ideas in the foreign language. For example, in one class they discussed drug-related issues in German. In science, students demonstrated good levels of understanding of underlying theory and concepts. In the Chartered Institute of Marketing courses, students had gained a thorough knowledge of the subject and were able to apply this to practical issues. In some classes, however, students lacked a grasp of fundamentals. For example, in information technology, they had an inadequate understanding of the value of computers to society.

49 Most students were competent in the use of basic information technology but the further development of their skills was often inhibited by difficulties in gaining access to computers outside timetabled hours. In some subjects, such as mathematics, little use was made of computer applications. A significant number of students on the foundation and intermediate courses had poor levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy and this hindered their vocational studies.

50 Although most students acquired appropriate study skills, in some areas these were poorly developed. For example, in foreign language teaching students relied heavily on the support of teachers and took insufficient responsibility for organising their own learning.

51 Seventy-eight per cent of the 27 full-time students aged 18 or less in their final year of study on the advanced vocational courses included in the Department for Education's 1994 performance tables were successful. This places the college among the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure, and represents an improvement of 26 per cent on the previous year. When students of all ages are included, the overall pass rate for full-time students on courses at

this level was 75 per cent, and for part-time students 80 per cent. There were high pass rates on some courses. For example, all of the students who completed the national diploma in health studies achieved the award. Results on other courses were not so good; for example, the pass rate on the national diploma in business studies was 55 per cent.

52 Fifty-five per cent of the 50 full-time students who completed foundation or intermediate level courses were successful. Achievements varied from 30 per cent in computing to 71 per cent in office studies.

53 Of the 331 GCSE subject entries in 1994, 70 per cent achieved grades A-C compared with a national average of 64 per cent for general further education colleges. There were some particularly good results. For example, in law and community studies, which are studied by open learning methods, all students were awarded grades A-C and the moderator commended the high standard of the course work in community studies. Of students in English language and mathematics, 79 per cent and 59 per cent, respectively were awarded grades A-C.

54 There were only eight full-time students aged 16-18 years who entered for GCE A level or advanced supplementary (AS) subjects in 1994, and only one of them entered for more than one subject. The average points score per entry was 0.8 which places the college in the bottom 10 per cent of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. However, 88 per cent of the entries for these examinations were by students over 18 years of age and the average points score for all students was 4.1 for GCE A levels and 3.3 for AS subjects.

55 When both full-time and part-time students of all ages are considered, the GCE A level examination achievements vary with the subject. Of the 61 individual subject entries in 1994, 38 per cent gained grades A-C and 72 per cent grades A-E. These results are just above the provisional rates of 36 per cent and 68 per cent, respectively, for further education colleges excluding sixth form colleges. In English language, 83 per cent of the students who sat the examinations in 1993 and 1994 achieved pass grades A-E. These results are well above the national average for mature students in further education colleges. However, results in science were poor; only 30 per cent of entrants in human biology were awarded pass grades.

56 On the adult access to higher education full-time course, 31 of the 35 students enrolled gained access to higher education and, of these, 19 students gained a pass with merit or distinction.

57 There were some good achievements in professional courses. There were pass rates of 80 per cent on the advanced accounting technician course, 98 per cent in the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry examinations, and 75 per cent on the National Examining Board of Supervisory Management certificate.

58 Students with special learning difficulties and/or disabilities were able to achieve accreditation through the Northern Partnership record of achievement units and, where appropriate, through City and Guilds of

London Institute (C&G) wordpower and numberpower qualifications. They responded positively to the high expectations of teachers and classroom assistants. They worked competently and safely, showing a good awareness of safety issues in practical work in workshops, kitchens, the community, and the gardens.

59 Students on some adult education courses achieved good results. For example, all the students on a course leading to the St John's Ambulance certificate were successful. However, pass rates on other courses were low. Most of the adult and basic education courses have no target qualification and many students are not given the opportunity to gain external certification.

60 Of those students enrolled on one-year courses on 1 November 1993, 76 per cent of full-time students and 88 per cent of part-time students completed their course. Of those enrolled on two-year courses on 1 November 1992, 62 per cent of full-time students and 67 per cent of part-time students completed the course in 1994. Within programme areas, annual retention rates vary from 95 per cent on the adult access to higher education and part-time professional office studies courses to 46 per cent on the full-time one-year business studies courses. There were low completion rates on some GCE A level and GCSE courses: for example, the completion rate in sociology was 25 per cent and in humanities 45 per cent. Many of the students who leave their course do so for financial or personal reasons.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

61 The college's charter is a clear statement of its commitment to its students and a declaration of the college's ethos. There is a declared intention to make the students' time with the college both productive and enjoyable. All students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, receive a copy of the charter, and its contents are discussed during their induction. The college monitors performance against the service standards specified, responds rapidly to complaints by students and keeps them well informed of any resulting actions. A monitoring and review mechanism for the charter itself has yet to be established.

62 The college's mission, strategic and operating plans incorporate the theme of quality assurance. The 1994 operating statement commits the college to set minimum standards for the approval of all new courses and to strengthen the critical evaluation of all college provision at course, faculty and college levels.

63 The quality control draft policy document produced last July, has yet to be formally adopted. Many of the features of the quality control system have yet to be activated. The job descriptions of the new directors make no reference to the management of quality and responsibility for quality assurance has not been specifically assigned in the new management structures.

64 The quality of the courses is controlled through internal validation, the maintenance of course files, course team meetings and reports. The internal-validation process seeks to ensure that existing courses meet a range of minimum standards in addition to those specified by external validating bodies, covering schemes of work, the recording of students' progress and equal opportunities. Although these internal-validation procedures have been established for some time, they have not been applied to all courses.

65 Course teams meet regularly and meetings are supported by agenda and minutes. Teams maintain files on courses which include schemes of work, assignments and records of students' progress. Course teams are required to report formally, to a common format, halfway through the course and at the end of it. Reports include lists of actions required and these are collated at faculty level. However, the reports do not evaluate effectively the quality of the provision, even though the college surveys students' opinions, reports rarely include the views of students on courses, and there is insufficient evaluation of performance against targets. Some reports fail to address adequately such factors as low recruitment or poor student achievement. Reports to the governing body and academic board on course performance are also insufficiently critical.

66 A system for the observation of classroom teaching was piloted last summer, with performance graded on a five-point scale. When fully established this system should be a valuable component of quality assurance processes.

67 Quality circles have been established as forums for the discussion of quality by the librarians, the technicians and the caretakers. They are of particular value since some of these staff are part time, operate on different sites and may have little other occasion to meet together. The circles have been given good support by the senior managers and are a significant factor in team building. Outcomes have included enhanced communications, better systems for the notification of equipment faults and the improved cleaning of rooms.

68 However, the systematic assurance of the quality of cross-college functions such as the libraries and staff development is underdeveloped. Performance indicators, standards and targets have yet to be developed to the stage where achievement can be assessed and reported in relation to them.

69 All full-time staff and part-time staff undertake an induction process which is supported by a comprehensive and informative staff handbook and a mentor system. A system for the annual appraisal of staff by their line managers is in its first year of operation.

70 There is a good range of staff-development activity. For example, there has been training support for new systems for class observation and staff appraisal, and to support curriculum developments. Many of the

staff-development events are run by college staff. This contributes to the cost-efficient use of a budget equivalent to 2.2 per cent of the college's staffing budget. Staff-development needs may be identified in several ways, including through staff appraisal, course review and individual request. However, these processes lack co-ordination, do not identify needs with sufficient precision and make it difficult to develop a coherent prioritised programme. Not all of the present activity is systematically evaluated.

71 The college's self-assessment report used five of the headings of Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*: it did not evaluate the quality of teaching and learning or student achievement. It was the product of a thorough process of consultation with middle managers, whose reports identified strengths and weaknesses. However, the final report was more descriptive than evaluative, and did not grade provision numerically. Strengths and weaknesses could be identified from the text and there was a conclusions and issues section similar to that in Council inspection reports.

RESOURCES

Staffing

72 Teaching and support staff are enthusiastic, industrious and highly committed to maintaining the ethos of the college. Teaching staff are experienced and well qualified. All full-time teachers have a teaching qualification and 92 per cent have a degree or other appropriate qualification. Eighty per cent of the part-time staff with a substantial teaching commitment have teaching qualifications. Part-time teachers make an effective contribution to course delivery and curriculum development. The librarians are well qualified. There is a good ratio of support staff to teachers.

Equipment/learning resources

73 Teaching aids, such as overhead projectors, are in good condition and readily available in most parts of the college. There are well-equipped facilities for language and science. A flat has been designed to enable students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to develop the skills they need to live independently. Equipment is well maintained and there is a rapid repair service. There is no planned replacement strategy and some equipment, though still functional, is outdated.

74 The college has made a substantial investment in information technology and there is a ratio of one computer to seven full-time students. A sensible software standard has been adopted across the college. There is an information technology group which co-ordinates the college information technology policy and strategy for replacement.

75 The library and learning-resource centre provision is generally satisfactory at three out of the four main sites; the provision at Rothwell is limited. The range of facilities includes computers, compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases, periodicals, journals and self-study materials. Two libraries are open in the evenings and at weekends as well as during the day. The Alec Beevers library is closed in the evenings. All sites lack a sufficient number of quiet study areas.

Accommodation

76 The college occupies five sites in Morley and South Leeds. Three of the sites, the Peel Street, Elmfield and Alec Beevers centres, were former Victorian primary schools which have been extensively restored and refurbished. The Rothwell centre consists of two temporary buildings. The college's main administrative offices are at Morley. Other accommodation for community-based education is on lease.

77 The refurbishment programme during the last four years has produced a high standard of accommodation. The buildings at the Peel Street, Elmfield and Alec Beevers centres are architecturally attractive and their historic characteristics have been sensitively maintained to blend with the local environment.

78 The welcoming and attractive reception areas, pleasant eating facilities, and comfortable social areas form a central focus to each centre and a meeting place for staff and students.

79 However, the classrooms at the Alec Beevers and Rothwell centres are in a poor state of repair and decoration and there is no planned maintenance programme. Some staff workrooms are overcrowded and storage space is limited on all sites. Caretaking activities are well organised, resulting in a high standard of cleanliness in all buildings. Students with restricted mobility have good access to most areas, and car parking facilities are adequate.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

80 The strengths of the college are:

- provision that is accessible to a wide range of people
- effective external liaison with education and training organisations
- well-prepared teaching schemes and sound teaching
- the strategic guidance and overall support provided by governors
- the effective organisational structure
- good support and guidance systems
- a welcoming and supportive learning environment
- enthusiastic, industrious and well-qualified staff
- the excellent provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

-
- library facilities on the three main sites
 - extensive refurbishment which has improved the quality of accommodation.
- 81 The college should:
- strengthen its marketing strategy
 - increase the number of 16-19 year old students
 - strengthen links with employers
 - develop a unit-cost system
 - develop its management information systems
 - improve communication between learning support staff and teachers of vocational programmes
 - further develop its quality assurance system
 - improve access to information technology facilities
 - improve unsatisfactory accommodation.

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)

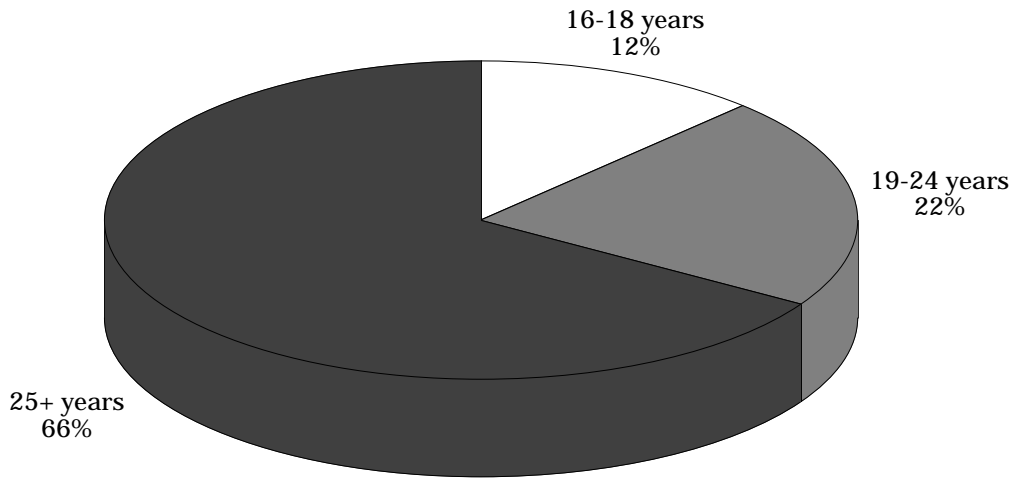
 - 5 Estimated income (for 12 months to July 1995)

 - 6 Estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)

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

Figure 1

Joseph Priestley College: percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)

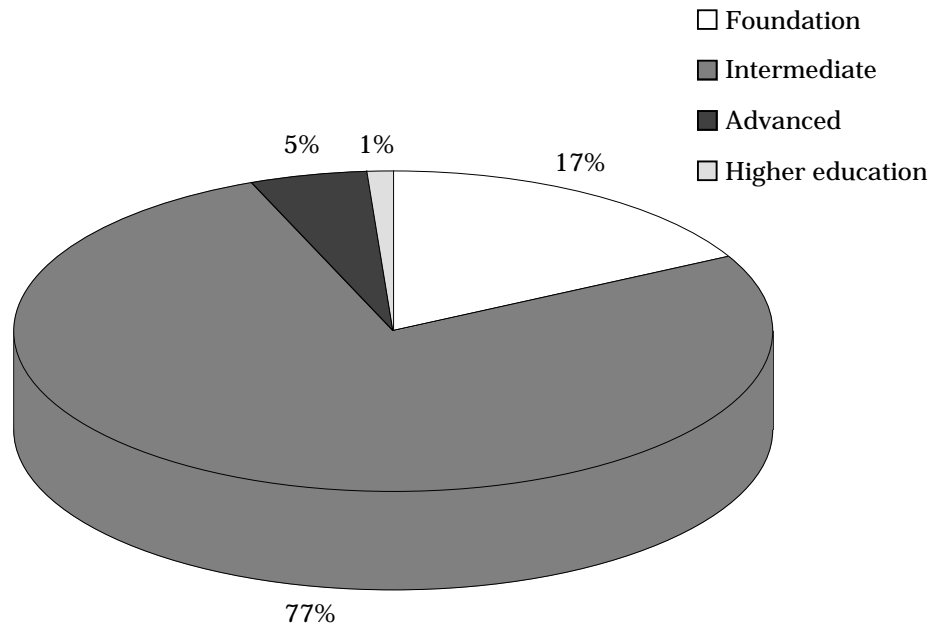


Enrolments: 4,541

Note: this chart excludes 1,478 non-vocational enrolments.

Figure 2

Joseph Priestley College: percentage enrolments by level of study (1994-95)

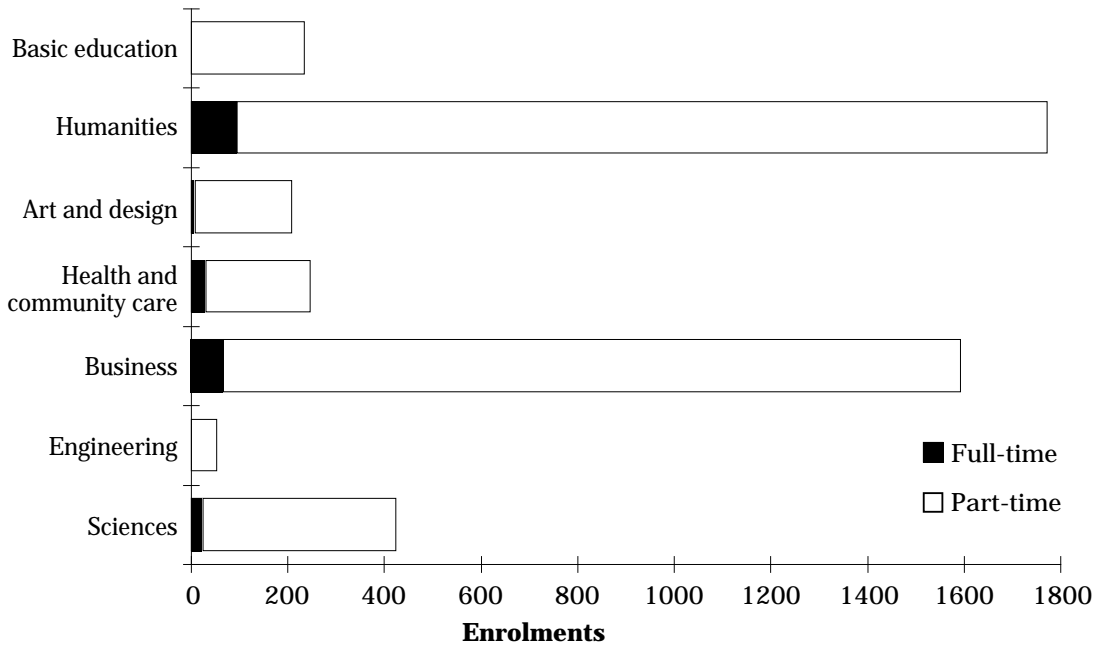


Enrolments: 4,541

Note: this chart excludes 1,478 non-vocational enrolments.

Figure 3

Joseph Priestley College: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1994-95)

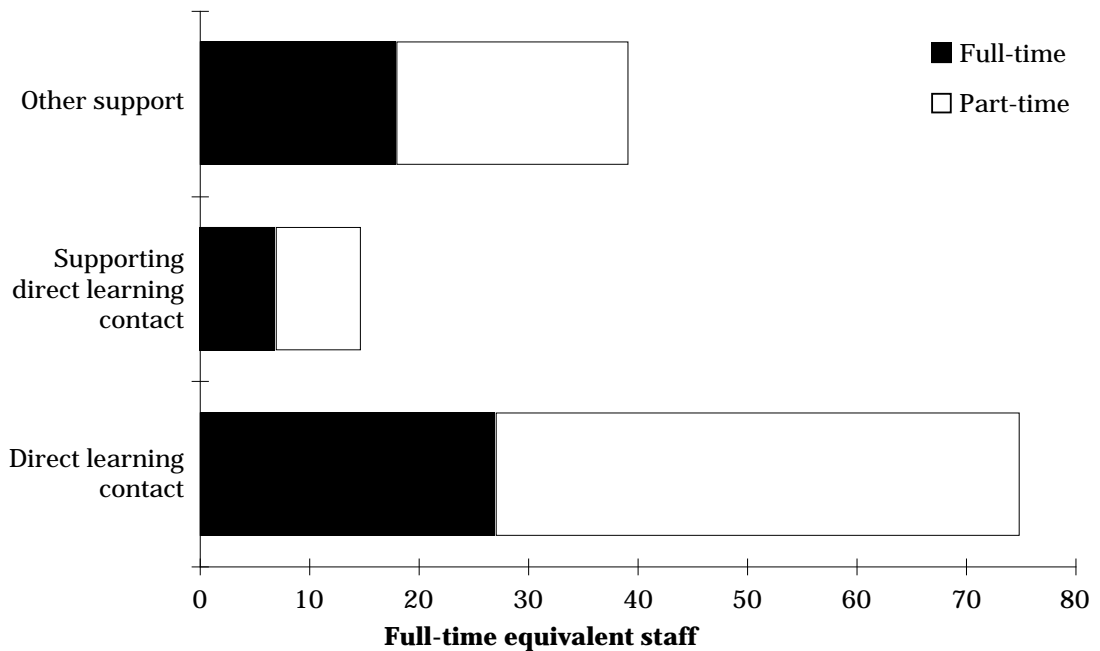


Enrolments: 4,541

Note: this chart excludes 1,478 non-vocational enrolments.

Figure 4

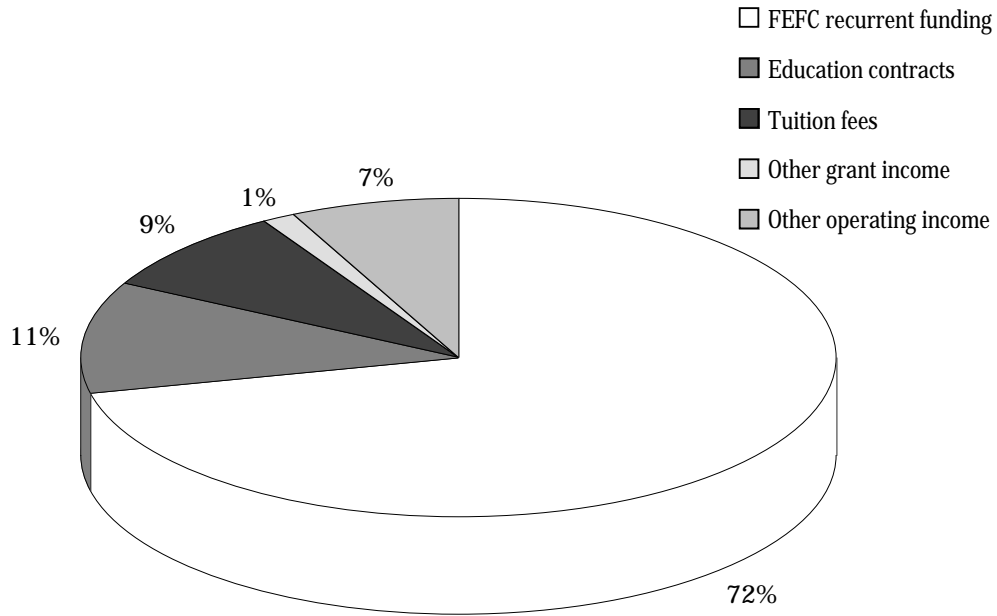
Joseph Priestley College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994-95)



Full-time equivalent staff: 129

Figure 5

Joseph Priestley College: estimated income (for 12 months to July 1995)

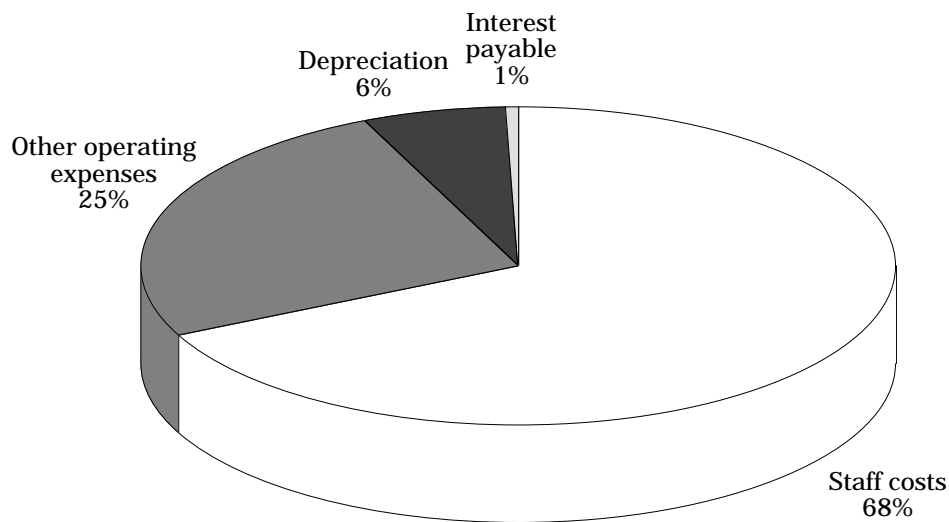


Estimated income: £3,260,000

Note: this chart excludes £5,000 investment income.

Figure 6

Joseph Priestley College: estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)



Estimated expenditure: £3,416,000

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