

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Kendal College

February 1996

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL**

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

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

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GRADE DESCRIPTORS

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

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

College grade profiles 1993-95

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

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 12/96

KENDAL COLLEGE

NORTH WEST REGION

Inspected February-November 1995

Summary

Kendal College is a general further education college catering for students in South Lakeland, Cumbria. Considering its size it offers a wide range of courses. The college has worked hard to improve its performance during a period of rapid growth. This change is due to the will and commitment of members of the corporation and senior managers coupled with a co-ordinated marketing strategy and developing links with industry. A cycle of internal inspections enables good practice to be identified and shared across the college. The majority of students are highly motivated and committed to their studies. Staff are appropriately qualified and most are working hard to implement new policies and practices. Induction for new staff is well organised and effective. Accommodation is well maintained and in good decorative order. Computer workstations in the learning resources centre are of high quality and easily accessible to students. The quantity and quality of books and other subject-based materials need to be improved. The college should ensure that the tutorial system works as planned, strengthen careers guidance, raise levels of achievement and retention rates on some courses, and improve the quality of its provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In striving to meet its ambitious targets for growth it should: ensure that suitable resources are available to keep pace with expansion; continue to support managers and staff; emphasise the need to check whether policies and procedures have been implemented; and inject more rigour and consistency into course reviews and other aspects of the quality assurance system.

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		4
Quality assurance		3
Resources:	staffing	3
	equipment/learning resources	3
	accommodation	2

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Business	3	Art and design	2
Hotel and catering including leisure and tourism	2	Humanities	3
Health and care	2		
Hairdressing and beauty	2		

INTRODUCTION

1 Kendal College was inspected between February and November 1995. Art and design were inspected during February, and other specialist subject areas in September and October 1995. The college's enrolment and induction procedures were inspected at the start of the autumn term, and aspects of cross-college provision in the week beginning 13 November 1995.

2 A total of 15 inspectors spent 60 inspector days in the college. They visited 97 classes and scrutinised students' written and practical work. Meetings were held with members of the corporation, senior managers, staff and students, the chief executive from Cumbria Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), local employers, head teachers of local schools, a senior education officer from Cumbria County Council, and representatives from the University of Central Lancashire and the local careers service. Inspectors examined policy statements, minutes of committees, working papers and documents relating to aspects of college organisation.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

3 Kendal College is a general further education college catering primarily for students in South Lakeland, Cumbria. It has a main site to the south of Kendal and two annexes in the town centre. One of these houses some general teaching rooms and specialist facilities for art and design, the other is used by students taking courses in construction. Newton Rigg College, on the outskirts of Penrith, Lancaster and Morecambe College, Furness College and Barrow-in-Furness Sixth Form College are all within a 30-mile radius. Six of the eight schools within the catchment area cater for students aged 11-18. Five of these six, and one of the others, have grant-maintained status. In 1995, about 76 per cent of school leavers in South Lakeland continued in full-time education: about 51 per cent stayed in schools, 20 per cent went to Kendal College and the rest to other further education colleges.

4 The population of South Lakeland has been steadily increasing over the last 20 years and currently stands at around 101,200. The main areas of employment are light engineering, leisure and tourism, shoe making, paper making, retailing and insurance. Unemployment in South Lakeland is less than 4 per cent but for Cumbria as a whole it is approaching 8 per cent.

5 The college has almost doubled its enrolments over the last two years. In November 1995 there were 5,620 enrolments; about 30 per cent were students aged 16-18 years. Enrolments by age and by level of study are shown in figures 1 and 2.

6 There are five curriculum units: leisure and business, creative studies, extending education, social care and technology. Together they provide a wide range of vocational and general education courses. Enrolments by

mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figure 3. An enterprise unit manages full-cost courses to industry. Support for students is provided by two units: student support, which organises guidance and counselling, and learning support, which manages the learning resources. Two further units, administration and finance, provide the remaining support services. The college has 108 full-time equivalent staff of whom 53 are teachers and 55 are support staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

7 The college's stated purpose is to enable individuals to enhance and enrich their knowledge and skills for their own benefit and that of their community. The aims of Kendal College are that it will:

- be an outstanding college, pre-eminent in the field of post-16 education
- grow steadily and ensure sufficient financial resources are available to fund this growth
- integrate well with its local community and all the partners in education and enterprise which make up the locality
- offer broadly-based further education recognising the needs of South Lakeland and developing excellence where appropriate
- respond to future demands in an appropriate, dynamic and imaginative manner.

8 The college's continued existence has depended on the speed with which change could be effected. During the last two years, members of the corporation and senior managers have made rapid strides in directing the college out of a period of indifferent performance and financial instability into one of growth and modernisation. Considerable progress has been made in the tasks of establishing the role of the college in the local community, improving the management structure and processes, and establishing key policies and procedures which now need to bed down. The result is a high level of motivation among staff who are excited by the new developments, and a marked growth of confidence in the college's prospects for the future.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

9 The curriculum areas inspected were business studies, catering and tourism, health and care, hairdressing and beauty therapy, art and design, and humanities. There is a wide range of courses for the size of the college. In addition, there is provision in construction, engineering, computing, mathematics, and for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are six advanced and five intermediate courses leading to General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs), courses leading to over 20 National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), 17 General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) subjects and four General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) subjects. Mature students preparing for entry to higher education through open college and access

courses can choose from 34 intermediate and 25 advanced study units. There is a particularly wide choice of units in the humanities. Higher education courses in business and finance, sociology, teacher education and social work are offered in conjunction with the University of Central Lancashire, of which Kendal is an associate college. A course in foundation studies in art and design is franchised from Cumbria College of Art and Design. The enterprise unit, which has recently been re-established, has a rapidly expanding programme of courses for industry in various vocational areas and in the use of information technology. The catering unit enables those in employment to gain NVQs while at work.

10 The college serves the needs of its community well. It is attracting an increasing number of students of all ages because of the growth in the range and number of courses offered on college sites and at other venues through a variety of modes of attendance. Flexible timetabling and the structures of courses allow many students to study for different qualifications at the same time. For example, some GNVQ students are also working towards NVQs. Opportunities for students to progress to higher level courses within the college are increasing. There has been considerable expansion in health and social care provision and in the options available in advanced and professional level courses in business.

11 Despite the growth in the number of courses there are still some gaps in the provision. In health and social care there is no provision at foundation level and, as a result, some students are following courses at intermediate level which are too difficult for them. An intermediate GNVQ and a part-time general business course failed to recruit enough students to form viable groups. There are few alternatives for students aged 16-19 who want to continue their general education and are not yet ready to begin GCE A level courses. Daytime provision of GCSE subjects is limited to English and mathematics.

12 There is a well co-ordinated marketing strategy which is supported by a clear marketing plan. The college has worked hard to improve its image within the community, with a good level of success. It makes sure that its corporate identity is used consistently in all its communications. Consultants have been employed to redesign course information literature and to manage advertising campaigns. Students' achievements are well publicised in the local press. There is careful analysis of the effectiveness of publicity in recruiting students. The information gathered through marketing could be better used to support curriculum planning throughout the college.

13 There are improving links with industry. Many of these links were made recently, but some students are already benefiting from them. Art and design courses have good links with employers and with a local arts centre, and visiting speakers broaden the experience of students. A travel shop has been set up at the college through a link with a local travel agency and the redevelopment of the hairdressing salon was sponsored by

industry. Advisory groups for vocational areas have recently been reconstituted. They have clear terms of reference and enable local employers to advise on the appropriateness of courses and resources. In the majority of cases these groups have a good level of representation from local employers. Because most groups met for the first time in October 1995 it is too early to judge their effectiveness but those in construction and catering, which are of longer standing, have led to some successful collaboration between the college and the industries they serve.

14 Work experience is organised efficiently and effectively. Although opportunities to participate in work experience are given to all students, they are taken up mainly by those on vocational and teacher education courses. Last year 738 students took up placements. A centralised system ensures students and employers are well briefed about the objectives of the exercise. Work experience co-ordinators visit placements and undertake health and safety checks. Students' achievements during placements are recorded and reported to them and their tutors. Placements are evaluated by students and employers. The college makes good use of relationships built up with employers through work experience. For example, the college informs employers of appropriate short courses which it can provide, and employers volunteer to participate in mock interviews for students in the college.

15 Links with the local TEC are productive. The principal is a member of the TEC's strategic forum and the general manager of the TEC is a member of the college's corporation. Constructive use is made of TEC funding. For example, all further education colleges in Cumbria made a joint application to secure money from the competitiveness fund administered by the TEC. Kendal College is active in the management of the resultant project, which focuses on the use of information and multi-media technology. The college provides training for approximately 40 students through job-link programmes.

16 Despite the competitive nature of post-16 education in the area, the college maintains working relationships with other providers. Links with schools are maintained through the college's membership of the consortium which was set up initially by the local education authority to support the technical and vocational education initiative. College staff participate in events organised by the consortium and contribute to its subgroups. These activities benefit students transferring from school to college. A small number of students who want particular combinations of GCE A level subjects study two subjects at school and one subject at the college. Work experience for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities from two special schools and a specialist college is organised effectively by the college. Since incorporation, links with members and officers of the county council have continued. The principals of the further education colleges in Cumbria also meet regularly.

17 The equal opportunities policy appears in the staff and student handbooks, but it has had little impact on the life of the college. There is no system for monitoring the effectiveness of the policy. Only one room, which is rarely used for teaching, has facilities to support students with hearing impairments. Not all college buildings are accessible to students who use wheelchairs. Steps and doors are not always clearly marked for those who are visually impaired and some signs are difficult to read. College literature is printed in a pale colour and has not been checked to make sure it can be read easily; the college plans to produce versions of course information in larger print. The academic board has recently formed a subcommittee focusing on equal opportunities issues. It has clear terms of reference and a plan of action.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

18 The corporation's 13 members have a good spread of experience and expertise which are well matched to the college's interests. There are 10 independent members (including the chairman), the principal and two co-opted members who are the manager of the careers office in Kendal and the administrative director of the University of Central Lancashire. All but three members have joined the corporation within the last four years. Terms of office have been agreed which give a maximum tenure of three years before re-election. The chairman, who is one of the business representatives, was elected at the beginning of 1995. He and the principal are making efforts to involve all governors in strategic planning for the college.

19 There are no staff or student members of the board. The involvement of members in college affairs is largely informal, although some are generous with their time and specialist expertise. The only formal links between the corporation and the rest of the college are through the places for board members on the academic board and the college council, a group which advises the principal on facilities and on the effects of policies on the morale of staff and students. These places are filled by nomination rather than election. Minutes of the academic board and the college council, and reports stemming from other consultative groups, are not submitted to the corporation.

20 Members of the corporation and college staff have discussed thoroughly the college's mission statement, aims and objectives. A new mission statement is now under consideration. There have been special meetings and day conferences to help corporation members and staff to understand how the college operates and to provide opportunities for them to discuss proposed changes. The original strategic plan, which was submitted in February 1993, was revised in 1994 to take account of changing circumstances and updated in July 1995. Although the strategic planning processes and associated consultations are clear, and the results are available to all interested staff, some staff have yet to embrace fully the college's objectives and will need additional support to help them do so.

21 Policy statements are being prepared in key areas. They are gradually being implemented as staff gain the relevant experience, or as related appointments are made. For example, the person with responsibility for health and safety has been specially trained and is implementing effective new procedures in line with the health and safety policy. Change has been rapid and continuous, and during the period of the inspection, significant progress was made on the development of new policies and the appointment of staff. Some staff will need further guidance and support if they are to be fully committed to the implementation of new policies. Monitoring of the implementation of policies and procedures should be strengthened to ensure effectiveness and consistency.

22 Ambitious targets have been set for the expansion on which the college's survival depends. These include:

- annual growth targets of at least 30 per cent which would double the number of funded units between 1994 and 1998
- a conversion rate of applications to enrolments of at least 75 per cent rising to 85 per cent in 1997-98
- staffing costs reduced to 65 per cent of budget
- student: staff ratio of 18:1 in 1996-97 compared with 16:1 in 1995-96, 14:1 in 1994-95 and 11:1 in 1993-94
- retention rates of at least 85 per cent
- success rates for students who complete their courses and achieve their intended qualifications of at least 85 per cent.

The college is on course to achieve its targets for growth and staffing costs. Personal targets, including performance-related pay for senior managers, are linked to the college-wide targets, all of which are intended to make the college more effective, efficient and financially robust.

23 In 1993-94 the college's average level of funding was £23.18. Prudent financial management has enabled the college to reduce its average level of funding to £20.75 in 1994-95 and £18.66 in 1995-96. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges is £17.84. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1995 are shown in figures 5 and 6 and show that the college ended the year with a surplus.

24 There are good arrangements for day-to-day management; groups of staff at different levels are involved in decision making. The existing management structure was introduced in June 1994 when the principal had been in post for six months. The principal, his deputy, and three assistant principals with responsibilities for curriculum, client services and resources, make up the senior management team. They meet weekly and demonstrate a commitment to effect and manage change. Managers of the 10 organisational units and the college's quality manager join this senior management group to form the college management team which meets fortnightly. The large size of the group reflects the demanding nature of the tasks which the college faces to meet its targets. Meetings

are businesslike, and their minutes adequately record actions which have been agreed.

25 There are several other consultative and management groups with members who are generally nominated or invited. These include the academic board and the college council. The strategic planning group, which consists of six people with varied responsibilities and degrees of experience, is chaired by the principal. The curriculum development forum, which comprises the five curriculum unit managers, is chaired by one of the assistant principals and meets weekly.

26 Positive features of management at course and unit level include effective leadership of some courses and regular meetings of unit staff to formulate development plans, monitor their implementation and evaluate their effectiveness. Weaknesses include poorly-drafted operational plans which lack clear objectives and timescales, and do not say who is responsible for the activities to be undertaken. There are no strategic and operational plans for the development of provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

27 New courses are sometimes introduced without sufficient planning and preparation. This makes it difficult for staff to provide students with the promised services. Low enrolments or uncertain staffing arrangements have led to some classes being combined and no longer meeting fully students' needs. In cross-college teaching areas, such as resource-based learning, staff require support to help them understand their role and respond to the variety of students' needs. In some parts of the college there are staff who do not yet realise the extent to which their practices have to change.

28 Timetables are used to monitor staff deployment but this is not done systematically. In most other respects, the management information systems are adequate for administrative purposes, and for supplying information to the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). Since the establishment of the new senior management team, financial systems have been well managed by professional staff, but there is little historical information to aid the systematic monitoring of performance over a longer period.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

29 Prior to September 1994 there were few systems to ensure that students received sufficient guidance and support to choose appropriate courses and to complete them successfully. As with other aspects of cross-college provision, new policies and procedures were put in place quickly. The college is aware that weaknesses exist in the implementation of these procedures and is working to improve matters.

30 Staff manuals set out clear and comprehensive arrangements for the admissions and enrolment processes. All students applying for programmes of study of at least 12 hours per week are invited to guidance

sessions with college staff and have access to a careers officer at any stage in the process. In practice, most applicants are guided only by the lecturers associated with the particular courses for which they have applied. The central admissions team is not able to provide impartial guidance to students on their whole programme. Staff in the student support unit lack professional qualifications in careers education and guidance and have had insufficient training; most are only able to provide students with basic information about courses. During the enrolment process there were times when staff were not sufficiently knowledgeable about aspects of customer care, availability of places on particular courses, entry requirements and tuition fees.

31 A well-presented college handbook provides students with a wide range of information, including extracts from the college charter. During induction, staff go over much of this information and explain the commitments made in the charter. Induction activities for most first-year vocational students follow a logical sequence and build on previous knowledge and experience. Some activities, notably in business and in leisure and tourism, provide opportunities for students to get to know each other and develop a sense of identity with their courses. However, other induction sessions are unimaginative and students do not benefit from their early contacts with the college. Some students, particularly those in the second year of their courses, feel that the induction period of two weeks is not well organised and lasts too long. Students on access courses feel they were misled about their induction arrangements; some activities were inappropriate for them.

32 The decision to use the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit test to identify full-time and part-time students in need of additional support in literacy and numeracy was implemented without sufficient training for staff. As well as administering and marking tests, they were expected to provide feedback to students and to refer those in need of additional support to the learning support co-ordinator. In practice, insufficient use was made of the results, some students did not receive feedback and less than 10 per cent of students who took the tests were referred. Of these, only three-quarters accepted the offer of additional support.

33 There is no college-wide system for the accreditation of students' prior learning though procedures for accreditation have been developed by individual sections, notably hairdressing and catering. Pilot schemes in other vocational areas are in operation this year and a small working party has been formed to develop written procedures which can operate consistently across the college from 1996.

34 There are inadequacies in the tutorial arrangements. The college's tutorial system aims to provide every full-time and part-time student with a personal tutor. Every full-time student is expected to meet their personal tutor individually twice each term. Records show that some students have benefited from these meetings but that in other cases the arrangements

are unsatisfactory. Examples of poor practice include the late allocation of personal tutors so that the first tutorials took place late in the term, vague records of meetings and failure to make proper use of action plans.

35 Personal tutors have the responsibility for writing references to support applications to higher education but not all are clear about their role. The accuracy, consistency and quality of references are not monitored systematically. Completion of records of achievement is in the early stages of development. A pilot project began with 14 full-time students in health and social care and is being extended to some courses in motor vehicle technology, leisure and tourism, and art and design.

36 There is no college-wide system of group tutorials to ensure that key experiences such as careers education are provided for all students. Some course leaders invite staff from the local careers service to talk to their groups, others organise seminars on particular topics such as applying to higher education. The college does not plan that such activities should be common features of courses or form part of a coherent, progressive programme for particular groups. Students have access to interviews with local careers officers but the college does not know how many students take advantage of this opportunity. An agreement with a local hospital enables students who are in need of personal counselling to arrange interviews with professional counsellors.

37 Attendance at classes is monitored rigorously. Five part-time tutorial support assistants scrutinise registers and after three consecutive absences contact students by telephone and subsequently, if necessary, by letter. Tutors value the work of these assistants.

38 The students' union is active and well supported by an enthusiastic student officer who is a full-time member of staff. Each of the 10 members of the executive committee, all of whom are volunteers, has a clear role and job description. The inclusion of mature students on the executive committee ensures that activities meet the needs of all age groups. Communications between the executive committee and the senior management team of the college are excellent.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

39 Sixty-three per cent of the teaching sessions inspected clearly demonstrated strengths which outweighed the weaknesses, and a further 29 per cent had a balance of strengths and weaknesses. In 8 per cent of sessions the weaknesses clearly outweighed the strengths. The following table summarises the grades given to the teaching sessions inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level		2	3	2	1	0	8
GCSE		2	0	0	0	0	2
GNVQ		7	13	13	3	0	36
NVQ		3	11	2	1	0	17
Other vocational		8	6	5	2	0	21
Access to higher education		0	3	5	1	0	9
Access to further education		1	2	1	0	0	4
Total		23	38	28	8	0	97

40 The average attendance level in the teaching sessions inspected in September and October 1995 was 80 per cent. Attendance rates of 85 per cent and over were recorded in business, catering, leisure and tourism and health and social care, but were around 70 per cent in hairdressing and beauty and in humanities.

41 Most of the lessons in catering, hairdressing and beauty, and health and social care were well planned. Aims and objectives were shared with students at the beginning of sessions and links to other parts of the course were emphasised. For example, in hairdressing and beauty, appropriate knowledge of anatomy and physiology was reinforced during a class on body massage. In catering, references during practical activities succeeded in emphasising to students that hygiene was an integral part of their work and not just a theoretical component on which they would be examined.

42 In health and social care, teachers had regard for the needs of individual students and established a trusting learning environment. In one session which focused on the concept of equality of opportunity, students played a game which enabled them to identify their personal prejudices. In the subsequent discussion, the teacher gave students time to express their own opinions before she clarified key points and established the consensus of the group. The activity not only strengthened relationships between students but also developed their oral communication skills.

43 In the more effective business studies classes, students participated in a variety of learning activities which were set in a realistic context. Students following courses leading to NVQs in business administration were able to undertake specific tasks such as writing minutes of meetings and carrying out reception duties in the college. In management courses, and in classes for part-time students on accounting, lecturers drew effectively upon students' experiences at work and linked them to classroom activities.

44 The quality of teaching in English classes was good. In one class, mature students were asked to work in small groups and to note the words which they used to describe the appearance, expression and posture of people in a selection of pictures. In the subsequent discussion, students were encouraged to extend the language with which they expressed their judgements. Students responded well to this activity. They generated a wide range of adjectives and learnt the importance of accuracy and variety in descriptive writing.

45 There was a small number of poorly-managed sessions which were insufficiently challenging to students. In an art and design class, insufficient planning meant that only a quarter of the group could perform the set task whilst the other three-quarters were left unattended with not enough to do. A session for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities was adversely affected by a change of room, equipment which did not work and unclear instructions from the teacher on how students should complete their worksheets.

46 On occasion, insufficient account was taken of the spread of ability and experience amongst students. Teaching did not build on students' prior knowledge and information was sometimes repeated unnecessarily. In humanities, some discussions were dominated by a small number of students and the more timid ones were unable to contribute. Weaker sessions in catering and leisure and tourism did not provide opportunities for students to participate. Teachers posed questions or used examples which were outside the students' experience.

47 Most teachers showed a sound knowledge and understanding of their subject. In business and health and social care, some staff were able to relate their own commercial and professional experience directly to their teaching, thereby enhancing its vocational relevance. In a few sessions, notably in leisure and tourism and humanities, staff were not sufficiently familiar with the assignments and materials which they were using.

48 Teaching and learning schemes varied in quality. Courses in hairdressing and beauty, and health and social care had detailed schemes of work which were matched to the objectives of syllabuses. Programmes leading to NVQs in catering had a well-organised set of activities which were planned to take place in realistic working environments. Each job undertaken by students had a written specification. The schemes of work in art and design provided students with a variety of experiences but placed too much emphasis on historical and contemporary studies and the use of information technology, at the expense of the development of practical skills. In humanities and the discrete courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, schemes of work usually contained only lists of topics to be covered week by week.

49 Although core skills are integrated within assignments and class work there are also separate sessions in communication, application of number and information technology, which are taught by staff from the

learning support unit. This is a new arrangement which began in September 1995. At the beginning of the year, schemes of work for core skills were not in place and there was insufficient collaboration between the learning support unit and the vocational areas to ensure students' programmes of study were coherent. The college is addressing these issues.

50 In all areas, the range and balance of assessments reflected the aims and objectives of the courses. Assignments were usually at an appropriate level. In art and design, assignments were designed to provide a balance between educational needs and the skills required for employment. Students in health and social care were provided with assessment criteria for all assignments and knew the requirements for each grade which could be awarded. In contrast, students in leisure and tourism did not understand the criteria for grading.

51 There was wide variation in the quality of marking of students' work. In art and design, written comments on assignments stated clearly how students could improve their work. Some students' work in humanities was carefully corrected by teachers who indicated grammatical as well as subject-related errors. However, students following GNVQ courses in business received insufficient written feedback on their assignments. In hairdressing and beauty, there was no system of internal verification to ensure that standards were maintained from teacher to teacher. Arrangements for giving feedback to students were not systematic.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

52 The majority of students were highly motivated and committed to their studies. They gained confidence and improved their presentational skills through appropriate group work. Some students, particularly those on intermediate GNVQ courses, lacked the skills to work successfully in groups and in some instances this restricted their learning. In leisure and tourism, students in the second year of their advanced GNVQ course reported that they had had insufficient feedback on their progress during the first year of their course.

53 In most areas, students gained appropriate levels of knowledge and understanding from their programmes of study. In business administration and hairdressing, students were encouraged to manage their own learning. Hairdressing students were able to monitor their own performance against assessment criteria and produce action plans to remedy weaknesses. Students in health and social care presented assignment work clearly and logically and demonstrated a depth of understanding and an ability to research topics. Written work in GCE A level and access courses in humanities was often of a high standard. Students used appropriate terminology and applied their research and statistical skills well. There were examples of students not developing appropriate note-taking skills, and of their making insufficient use of information technology as a learning tool. Some students with learning

difficulties and/or disabilities spent too much time completing worksheets without being able to explain what they were doing or why they were doing it.

54 Students performed well in practical work and were aware of the relevant health and safety aspects. In catering, students produced food of high quality and have had notable successes in several national competitions. Work in art and design showed that students had an understanding of the basic principles and could express ideas and concepts. On the pre-degree foundation course, students were innovative and prepared to experiment. However, on GNVQ art and design courses, students' drawing, graphic design and sculpting skills were not of the required standard.

55 The extent to which students developed the core skills of numeracy and information technology varied from course to course. For example, students in psychology made good use of charts and graphs to illustrate data. Whilst these skills were addressed on most business courses they did not always build sufficiently on students' prior experience. As a result, students were not able to make as much progress as they should. In health and social care there was little evidence of numeracy skills being developed through class work. There were few opportunities for students to develop information technology skills in hairdressing classes.

56 The Department for Education and Employment's 1995 performance tables record that 72 per cent of the 67 students aged 16-18 years in their final year of study on vocational courses were successful. This represents a decrease from 1994 and 1993 when the pass rates were 84 and 81 per cent respectively. This performance measure places the college among the middle third of colleges in the further education sector.

57 Pass rates on vocational courses range from very good to poor. In 1995, all students completing the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diploma courses in business and finance, and health and social care were successful. The proportions of students achieving NVQs in catering, hairdressing, business administration and information technology were good. In engineering, travel and tourism, hotel and catering and leisure studies, pass rates in national diploma courses ranged from 44 per cent to 71 per cent and in each case were lower than in the previous year. In transport services and motor vehicle engineering results were very poor.

58 Students' achievements on intermediate GNVQ courses were disappointing. In 1995, results were particularly poor in hospitality and catering, leisure and tourism and information technology. Although all students in catering had completed their end-of-unit tests successfully, none had completed all their assignments and so did not gain an award at the end of the course. More than half are expected to gain the qualification later this year. None of the leisure and tourism students qualified but over half have returned to the college to complete outstanding units. Only two

of the 13 students taking the course in information technology achieved the qualification. The college has now ceased to offer this course. In art and design and health and social care, only 40 per cent of students who enrolled were awarded the qualification at the end of the year, but this is broadly in line with national average results.

59 In September 1994, the college broadened its provision of GCE A level subjects. Last year there were 44 entries for GCE A level examinations at the end of the year. Of these, about three-quarters of the students achieved pass grades: half achieved grades A to C and a quarter grades D and E. Results in English language and English literature were notably good. Pass rates on intermediate and advanced modules of open college courses were poor in relation to the numbers who enrolled. The college states that a substantial proportion of students who enrol on these courses do not seek formal qualifications. It should ensure that their achievements are recorded in some other way. Some students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve nationally-recognised qualifications but there is no formal assessment of the progress they have made during their time at college. Completion and pass rates on teacher training, supervisory management and personnel courses were good.

60 In 1994-95, most part-time courses recorded retention rates of at least 85 per cent, which is the college's target. The average retention rate for one-year full-time courses was approaching 90 per cent. For the final year of most two-year full-time courses the target was also met, but comparisons of numbers of students enrolling on the first year in 1993 with numbers completing the second year in 1995 show that the average retention rate over two years was below 80 per cent. Courses leading to BTEC national diplomas in business studies, engineering, social care, and leisure studies, and the general catering course lost at least one-third of their students between year one and year two. This is also a recurrent feature of the college's GNVQ advanced courses: there are poor retention rates from the first year to the second year in business and finance and leisure and tourism.

61 Before 1994 the college did not collect information on the destinations of its students. It then collected information only for a small sample, but is collecting information on destinations for all students who completed courses in 1995. The statistics which the college is preparing for the Publication of Information about Students' Achievements show that out of 308 full-time students who achieved qualifications in their final year of study, about 11 per cent proceeded to higher education, 10 per cent continued in further education, 42 per cent went into employment and 12 per cent were classed as other destinations. At the time of the inspection, the college knew the destinations of 75 per cent of its full-time students.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

62 In the last year, considerable progress has been made to develop the college's charter, a quality assurance framework, systems of course review and evaluation and a cycle of internal inspections. The extent to which each is fully implemented varies. If the college were to strengthen the links between these separate initiatives it would be more likely to assure the quality of its work.

63 The quality framework was developed in consultation with staff and is comprehensive. It covers not only the educational functions of the college but also those of its support services such as finance and administration. The framework lists statements of intent which are referred to as performance indicators, and indicates how the effectiveness of their implementation will be measured and by whom. Too many of the performance indicators are descriptive and lack qualitative standards and quantitative measures.

64 Few courses are reviewed rigorously and thoroughly. The quality framework requires files for each course to be developed in a common format. In practice, many have key sections missing or incomplete. Although data on enrolments, retention, achievements and students' destinations are recorded there is insufficient emphasis on their analysis. Plans of action stemming from course reviews are not universal, and those that exist are not monitored systematically. Links between the outcomes of course review and curriculum planning are tenuous.

65 Efforts are made to obtain feedback from students. There is a standard questionnaire which invites students to indicate their levels of satisfaction with their programmes of study as a whole and with individual components. Improvements to induction arrangements this year were based on the findings of last year's questionnaire. Not all courses use the standard questionnaire to find out what students' perceptions are, and the quality and effectiveness of the non-standard questionnaires are variable. Responses are not always well analysed. Students need to be better informed of the actions the college intends to take as a result of their completed questionnaires.

66 The college's own internal inspection made a valuable contribution to the process of quality assessment. Last year, internal inspections were carried out in 14 areas including learning support, student support, administration and finance. Teams, led by the deputy principal and quality manager, included staff from different parts of the college. The process involved observation of classes, interviews with staff and students and a review of documentation. Staff reported that they welcomed the critical but supportive approach adopted by colleagues and benefited from identifying and sharing good practice across the college. A collation of the action points arising from all internal inspections was presented to the senior management team in September. The college intends to build upon the findings of external inspection in 1995-96 and resume its yearly cycle of internal inspections in 1996-97.

67 Grades awarded to curriculum areas as a result of internal inspections were broadly in line with the findings of the inspection team. The college's self-assessment report refers to some of the findings from internal inspections but does not include grades for aspects of cross-college provision. The report is largely descriptive and places insufficient emphasis on the effectiveness of policies and procedures which have been put in place during the last academic year.

68 Induction for newly-appointed teaching and support staff is well organised and effective. A carefully-planned programme introduces staff to the college as a whole and includes sessions on the aims and objectives of the college, strategic planning, financial and curricular matters. Each new member of staff has a mentor who provides additional support. New staff found the induction sessions useful and appreciated the level of support from their mentors.

69 Staff development is not keeping pace with curriculum development in some areas. Some staff are insufficiently prepared for new approaches such as resource-based learning and for the introduction of new courses. Last year all staff on new contracts received training prior to being appraised. The appraisal process identifies key performance indicators and staff-development needs for each individual. A college-wide plan for staff development, which links the college's priorities with needs identified during appraisal, internal inspections and course reviews, is shortly to be considered by the senior management team. The college is working towards the achievement of Investor in People status in 1996 having decided to revise its original target of July 1995.

RESOURCES

Staffing

70 Many college staff are appropriately qualified for the roles and responsibilities they are asked to undertake. As well as 39 full-time and about 90 part-time teachers, the college employs one full-time and three part-time instructors who work mainly in the areas of information technology and mathematics. Including senior managers, about half of the full-time staff have first degrees and four-fifths have a teaching qualification. Part-time staff, particularly in health and social care, hairdressing and beauty and leisure and tourism, have relevant and up-to-date professional experience. Although many new appointments have been made in the last year, gaps in expertise remain. For example, there is an over dependency on instructors and part-time teachers to develop courses in mathematics; the range of specialisms which art and design staff can offer is not sufficiently broad; and few staff have specialist qualifications or appropriate training to teach students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In areas such as business the growth in the range of courses is running ahead of the availability of staff with appropriate expertise. Only a third of staff who are working for assessor awards have completed their training.

71 There is a wide range of support staff. Most work in the administration and finance units but an increasing number are employed to support directly the work of teaching staff. For example, one full-time and nine part-time staff develop materials to support resource-based learning which is a feature of most access and national diploma courses, and one full-time and five part-time staff organise work experience placements for students. Distinctions between the roles and responsibilities of part-time teachers, instructors and some support staff are unclear. There are too few technicians in hairdressing and beauty, and art and design. A low level of technician support in computing was rectified during the period of the inspection.

Equipment/learning resources

72 In most areas, specialist resources are of at least satisfactory quality. For example, in catering there is a good range of well-maintained specialist equipment but much of it is old and will need to be replaced shortly. Photographic equipment is good but in most studios and workshops there is only basic equipment to support art and design courses. A few teaching rooms lack basic equipment such as blackboards or whiteboards, or screens for use with overhead projectors. Items such as televisions and video players are not close enough to some teaching rooms to be easily accessible.

73 By remodelling engineering workshops and removing some inter-connecting walls the college has created a learning resources centre which houses most of its computer workstations, the library, private study spaces and teaching areas. At the time of the inspection the college had 102 computer workstations: 84 were located in the learning resources centre. These workstations are of good quality, capable of running industry-standard software and easily accessible to students. Facilities within specialist areas are not of such a high standard. For example, there is not enough specialist computing equipment in the hairdressing and beauty area to integrate the use of information technology sufficiently with teaching and learning. The annexe which houses art and design courses does not have enough computers for the numbers of students who need to use them.

74 The range of books and periodicals in the library is improving. At the beginning of the autumn term there were only about 7,000 books and 20 journals and periodicals. By spending £25,000, the number of books has been increased by about 12 per cent, and the number of periodicals by over 300 per cent. A further £25,000 will be spent during the current year. At the moment, there are not enough books in health and social care and the range of books and journals in the humanities is too narrow to enable students to do effective research. More subject-based learning materials are needed for students to use in the learning resources centre.

Accommodation

75 The accommodation is well maintained and in good decorative order. Students respect their environment and all communal areas are clean and tidy. The reception desk and information and guidance centre are easy to find. Childcare facilities have been established on the main site. Most teaching rooms are fit for their purpose and of an appropriate size for the groups that use them. There are plenty of large studios and workshops which are well lit and comfortable for art and design students to work in. A suite of specialist rooms creates a realistic working environment for catering students, although the layout of the production kitchen needs modification to reproduce industrial conditions accurately. Hairdressing and beauty salons are not able to accommodate comfortably the growing numbers of students. The laboratory used by health and social care and some catering students is unsuitable. Access to parts of the annexe which houses art and design courses is impossible for wheelchair users.

76 More could be done to create a stimulating learning environment for students. Most teaching rooms lack displays of students' work or other subject-related materials and do not provide a sense of identity for individual subjects and courses. Although the learning resources centre is a pleasant environment in which to work, the activities which take place within it are distracting to students who want to engage in private study.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

77 The strengths of Kendal College are:

- the improving links with employers
- a co-ordinated marketing strategy supported by a clear marketing plan
- the experience and expertise of members of the corporation
- the senior managers' commitment to change
- the highly-motivated students
- a cycle of internal inspection which enables good practice to be identified and shared across the college
- appropriately-qualified staff, most of whom are working hard to implement new policies and practices
- the effective and well-organised induction for new staff
- a sufficient number of computer workstations which are able to support the latest versions of software and are easily accessible to students in the learning resources centre
- accommodation which is well maintained and in good decorative order.

78 In order to make further progress the college should:

- rectify inadequacies in its tutorial provision
- strengthen careers guidance
- raise levels of achievement in intermediate GNVQ and in motor vehicle engineering courses
- improve retention rates for two-year full-time courses
- improve the quality of provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- continue to support managers and staff as they respond to changing circumstances and new responsibilities
- place greater emphasis on monitoring the implementation of policies and procedures
- ensure that the sufficiency and state of readiness of staff and the availability of resources keep pace with the expansion of provision
- further develop quality assurance systems to include more qualitative standards and quantitative measures against which to judge performance
- eliminate inconsistencies and inject more rigour into course reviews
- continue to improve the quantity and quality of books and other subject-based learning resources.

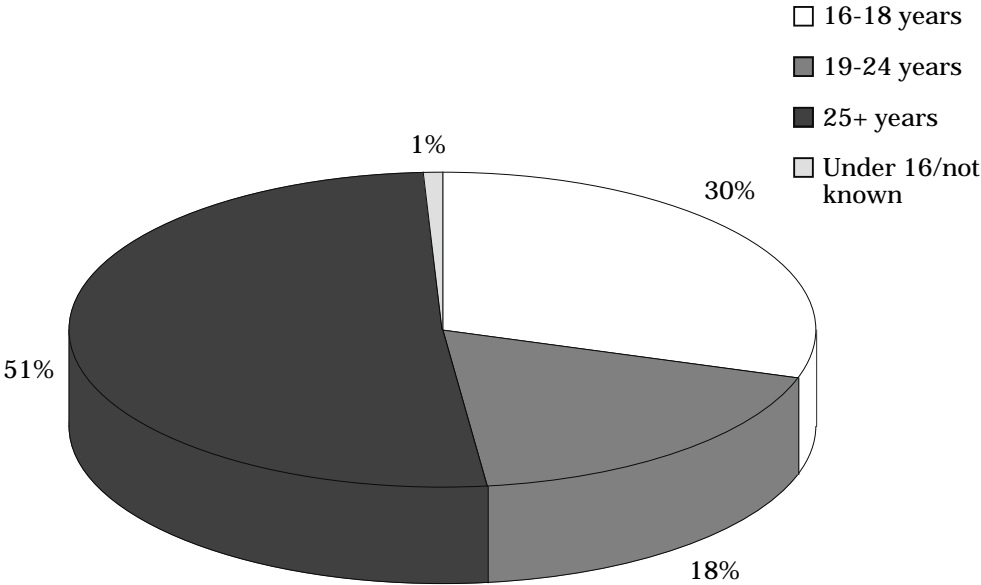
FIGURES

1	Percentage enrolments by age (as at November 1995)
2	Percentage enrolments by level of study (as at November 1995)
3	Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1995)
4	Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at November 1995)
5	Income (for 12 months to July 1995)
6	Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)

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

Figure 1

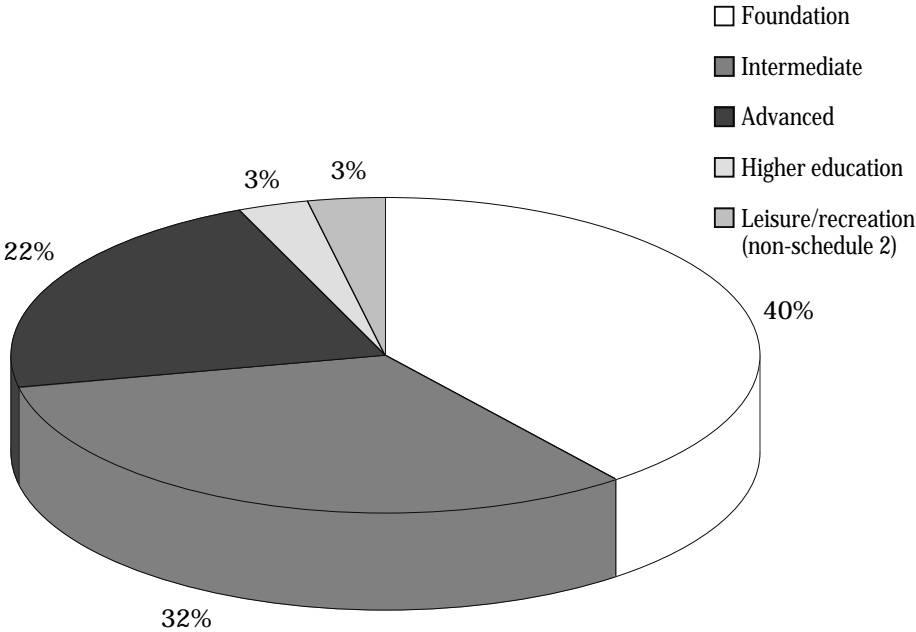
Kendal College: percentage enrolments by age (as at November 1995)



Enrolments: 5,620

Figure 2

Kendal College: percentage enrolments by level of study (as at November 1995)



Enrolments: 5,620

Figure 3

Kendal College: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1995)

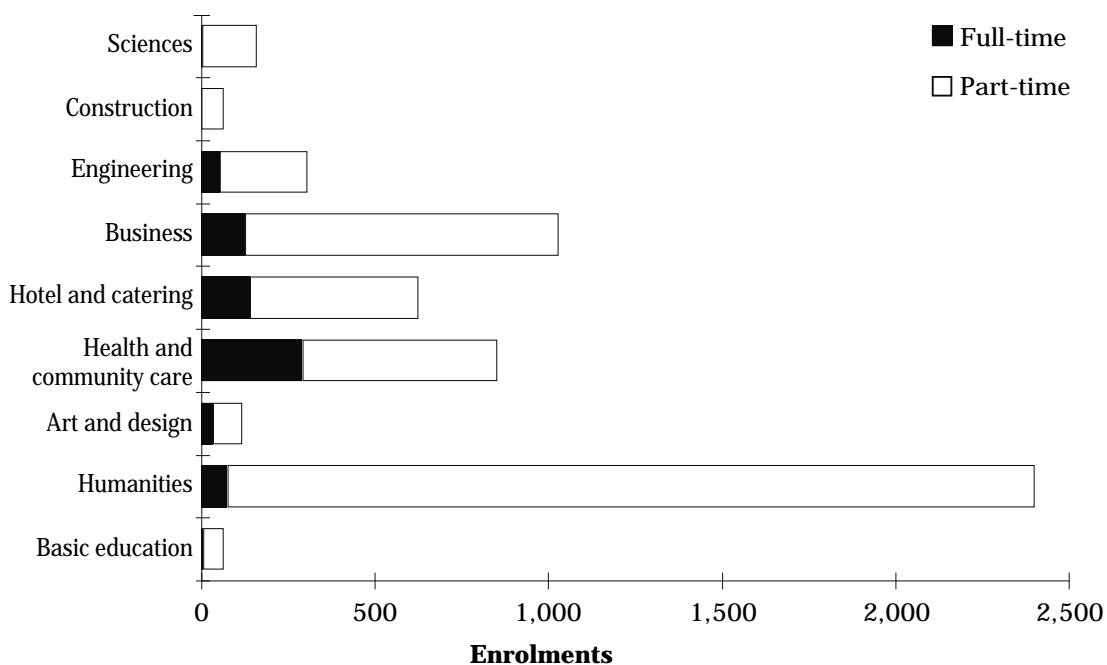


Figure 4

Kendal College: staff profile - staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at November 1995)

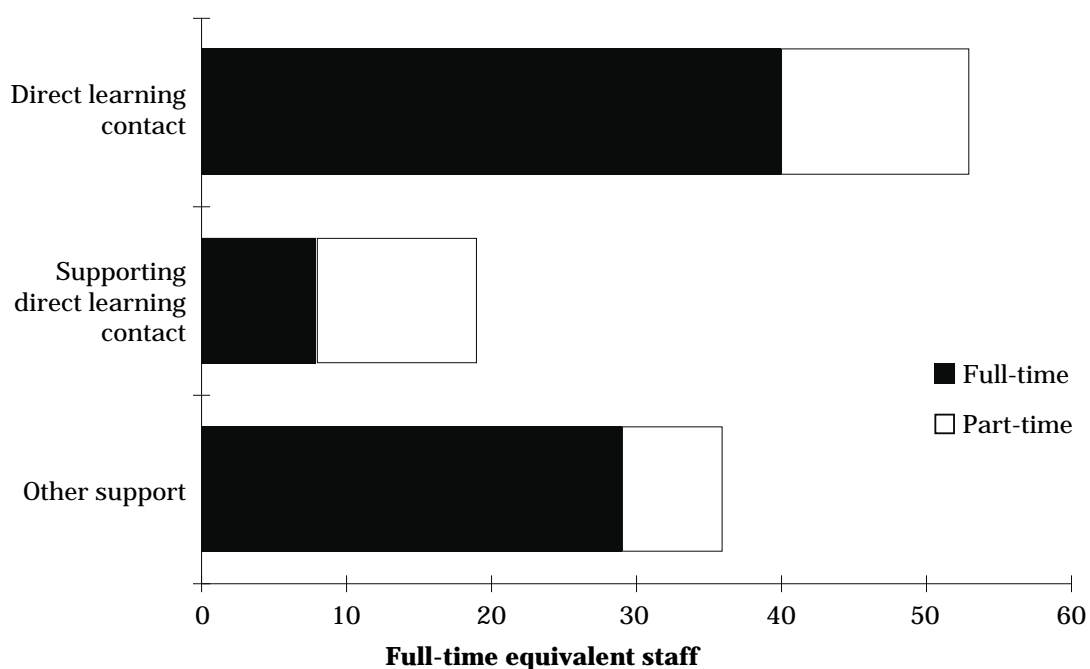
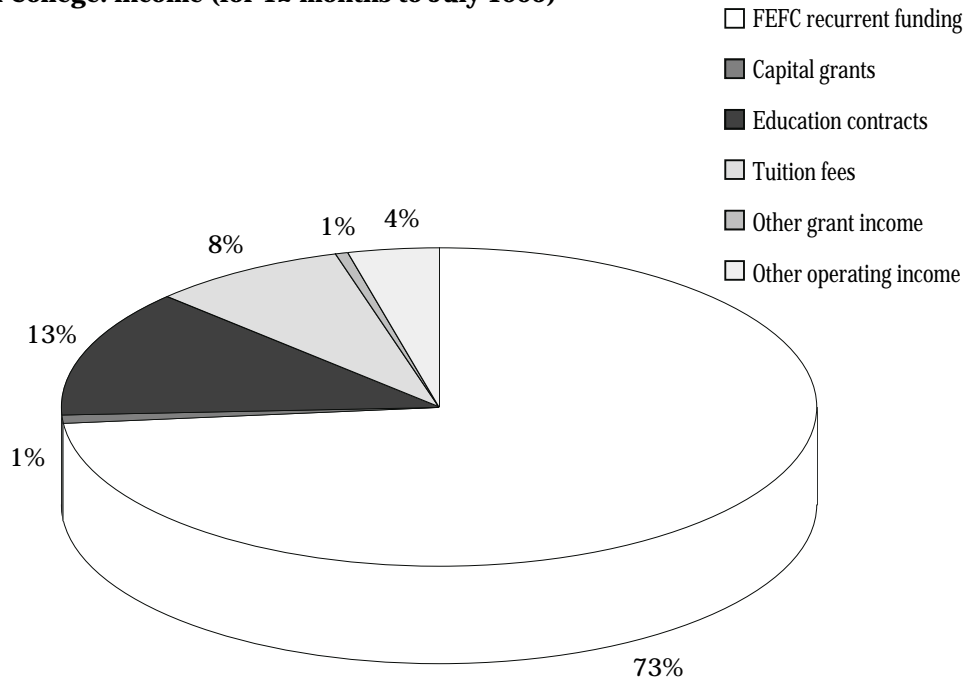


Figure 5

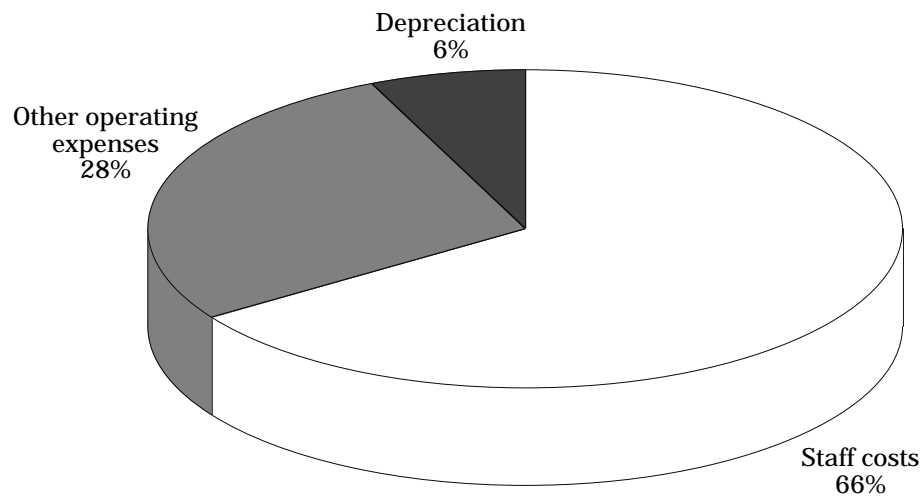
Kendal College: income (for 12 months to July 1995)



Income: £3,478,000

Figure 6

Kendal College: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)



Expenditure: £3,399,000

Note: this chart excludes £11,000 interest payable.

