

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Kingston College

September 1997

**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 the 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 1996, some 329 college inspections had been completed. The grade profiles for aspects of cross-college provision and programme areas for the 329 colleges are shown in the following table.

College grade profiles 1993-96

Activity	Inspection grades				
	1	2	3	4	5
Programme area	9%	59%	29%	3%	<1%
Cross-college provision	14%	50%	31%	5%	<1%
Overall	12%	54%	30%	4%	<1%

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 118/97

KINGSTON COLLEGE
GREATER LONDON REGION
Inspected September 1996-June 1997

Summary

Kingston College provides an extensive range of academic and vocational courses for full-time and part-time students of all ages. Provision extends from foundation level to higher education, but there is limited provision at foundation level. Enrolments have risen considerably since incorporation. Most teaching is well planned and effective. There are some good achievements in external examinations and good rates of progression to higher education. Governors are committed and supportive and the college is well managed. There is a well-established strategic planning process which builds on a sound quality assurance system, and involves governors and staff at all levels. Governors chair departmental advisory committees which are unusually strong and productive in maintaining links between departments and employers. Students receive good tutorial support. Staff are generally well qualified and experienced. Equipment and accommodation are generally of a high standard. The college should address: some uninspiring teaching; some poor examination results, levels of retention and attendance; the underdeveloped systems for diagnosing and meeting students' needs for additional learning support, and the isolated provision for students with learning difficulties.

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

Aspects of cross-college provision	Grade
Responsiveness and range of provision	1
Governance and management	1
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	2
Quality assurance	2
Resources: staffing	2
equipment/learning resources	2
accommodation	2

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science and mathematics	2	Art and design, including media and photography	3
Computing	2	English	2
Engineering	3	Modern foreign languages, including EFL	3
Business	2	Other humanities	1
Leisure and tourism	2	Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	3
Health and community care, including hairdressing and beauty	2		

INTRODUCTION

1 Kingston College was inspected between September 1996 and June 1997. Twenty inspectors spent a total of 78 days inspecting curriculum areas and aspects of cross-college provision. They observed 203 lessons involving about 2,060 students, examined students' work and college documentation and attended a meeting of governors. They met governors, managers, students, parents, teachers and support staff, and representatives from the local training and enterprise council (TEC) known as AZTEC, the local education authority, employers, universities and schools.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 The forerunner of Kingston College, Kingston Technical College, was founded in 1899. In 1962 it was divided into two colleges on separate sites, the present college of further education and a college of technology, now Kingston University. The main site is in the centre of Kingston-upon-Thames. There are two smaller annexes within two miles of the main site. In 1996-97, 6,036 students enrolled on over 300 courses across all programme areas. Nearly half of the students are full time. About a third come from Kingston and the rest from a wide area of south-west London and Surrey. About 46 per cent are female and about half are aged 16 to 18. Twenty-two per cent are from minority ethnic groups. Student numbers by age, by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3.

3 Kingston is in the AZTEC area which has relatively low levels of unemployment and deprivation compared with Greater London as a whole. Kingston itself is easily accessible from central and south London. The town is an important retail and business centre and it borders on parkland extending into a green-belt area. The unemployment rate in Kingston is less than 1 per cent. The rates of attainment at general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level), in general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) examinations and the level of participation in education post-16 are above average for London and the United Kingdom as a whole. In the AZTEC region, 34 per cent of the population are educated to degree level. About 14 per cent of residents over 16 are from minority ethnic groups. There are 15 schools providing education for 11 to 18 year olds in the borough. Ten other colleges of further education are within easy travelling distance.

4 At the time of the inspection, the college was organised into eight teaching departments and four service divisions. It employed 397 full-time equivalent staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4. The mission statement says that the aim of the college is 'to provide the best of further, higher and adult education and training across a broad range of ability'. It commits the college to professional excellence and to providing a stimulating and supportive

atmosphere for students and staff, and an effective and efficient response to education and training needs.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

5 The college has successfully increased its student numbers each year since incorporation. Enrolments have risen by 18.5 per cent since 1993 and the growth in funded units exceeds 50 per cent. Full-time student numbers have increased by 59 per cent. There has been substantial growth in enrolments for courses in higher education, adult education and training, GCE A levels and courses in art and design.

6 A wide range of vocational courses is offered mainly at intermediate, advanced and higher education levels. There is limited provision at foundation level. In most vocational areas, students can progress from further to higher education courses within the college. There are two courses leading to general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) at foundation level, eight at intermediate level and nine at advanced level. A few departments offer Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diplomas and certificates. Twenty-three courses leading to national vocational qualifications (NVQs) are offered, mainly at levels 2 and 3. A small number of students are taking courses leading to NVQ levels 4 and 5 in management. Many courses, including evening courses, are offered to part-time students. There has been little development of open learning courses which allow students to study on their own, at times which suit their personal circumstances.

7 The general education provision and the provision for adults is extensive and flexible. Over 1,000 students, most of them 16 to 19 year olds, are on GCE A level courses and there are 172 students on GCSE courses. Forty GCE A level subjects are offered, most of which can be studied full time or part time over one or two years. Twenty-two GCE A level subjects are available in the evening. Twenty-three GCSE subjects can be studied full time or part time. Over 300 students are following GCE advanced supplementary (AS) courses. Seventeen students are taking a combination of GCE A levels and GNVQs. The adult education and training department provides a thriving range of courses for about 1,100 adults. These include return to study and access to higher education courses, GCE A levels, and courses leading to qualifications in general and personnel management, secretarial and office skills, and English as a foreign language (EFL). Some NVQ courses are delivered on employers' premises.

8 One of the college's strategic objectives is to expand its range of full-time and part-time higher education courses. The close collaboration between the college and a number of universities helps students to enter higher education. The college has particularly strong links with Kingston University, of which it is an associate college. Over 10 per cent of the college's provision is franchised from universities including the universities of Kingston, Greenwich and London. The franchised courses include

higher national diplomas in computer applications, engineering, geographical information systems and business information technology. The college provides the first year of degree courses and makes significant teaching contributions to the second year of degrees in engineering, science, sports science and geographical information systems. A course leading to a certificate of education is franchised from Greenwich University. There are good links between the college and the universities; for example, college staff are members of Kingston University's academic board and course boards. Representatives from higher education institutions sit on the college's advisory committees. In 1996-97, 569 students were enrolled on higher education courses.

9 The college is responsive to the needs of industry and has positive working relationships with employers, who speak highly of the college. The unusually strong and effective departmental advisory committees are models of good practice. They scrutinise and advise on the work of the departments. Governors chair the advisory committees and members include representatives of education, industry and the community. They are well attended and their well-thought-out agendas provide opportunities for fruitful discussion. Specialist short courses are provided for industry and commerce, mainly by the engineering department. Another recent development has been the provision of an information technology diagnostic service for members of the chamber of commerce, used last year by 25 companies. All departments have targets for attracting income from sources other than the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). In 1995-96, the turnover from commercial activities was £270,000. The business community gives strong support to the college by providing visiting lecturers and work placements and by contributing to curriculum design and course validation.

10 Regular contact is maintained with 130 schools and the school liaison group fosters closer links with 30 schools. Teachers represent the college at careers conventions and give presentations to schools. Over 80 pupils from two schools attend the college for 'taster' days in motor vehicle engineering, hairdressing and beauty, health and social care, and science. Sixteen pupils from three schools attend the college to gain an NVQ level 1 in hairdressing and over 30 GCSE pupils from another school use the media workshop. There is no joint curriculum planning by school and college staff.

11 The college collaborates effectively with AZTEC. The value of AZTEC's contracts with the college exceeded £400,000 in 1996-97. Courses include hairdressing and motor vehicle engineering and involve over 650 students. The college has a contract to provide courses which develop skills relevant to small businesses and is also delivering four courses funded by the European Social Fund. In recognising the college's responsiveness to employers' training needs, AZTEC has invited it to be a member of its 'partners in training' network. There are good working relationships

between AZTEC and college staff. For example, a member of AZTEC staff sits on the college's adult education and training advisory committee.

12 Each department promotes its own courses, supported by the business development unit. The college's marketing committee, which is a subcommittee of the academic board, reviews all aspects of marketing policy and recommends future marketing strategies. The format of course leaflets varies but all include standard information. Departments identify labour market needs with the help of information provided by AZTEC.

13 The college's commitment to equal opportunities is emphasised in its mission statement and reinforced by a comprehensive equal opportunities policy statement. This is promoted and reviewed by a working group which has representatives of staff and students. The working group identified, as a priority, the need to address issues raised by the *Disability Discrimination Act 1995*, and this led to the appointment of a disability liaison officer. Other outcomes of the working group's deliberations have included improved security arrangements for female staff in the evenings, the availability of personal alarms, improved options for vegetarians and diets for students from minority ethnic groups in the canteens. There is limited provision for students with learning difficulties. There are 52 students with moderate learning difficulties on a course, which is designed to prepare them for further education or training and to increase their potential for work. About 30 adults with severe learning difficulties from a local day centre visit the college for one half-day each week to use the hairdressing and sports facilities.

14 Students' learning is enhanced by a wide range of additional activities. About 250 students each year take part in personal development weekends which have been run by the college for over a decade. Wednesday afternoons have traditionally been set aside for activities such as sports, although these are not available to all students because of timetable pressures. Other activities are arranged by departments and include visits to European countries, exhibitions and museums. About 185 students are studying a foreign language, using the open access centre, in addition to their main course.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

15 The college is well governed. The board of 20 comprises 12 independent governors, many of whom hold senior positions in industry, representatives of AZTEC, higher education, and the Kingston Racial Equality Council, a co-opted member from the local authority, two members of staff, a student and the principal. Governors have a wide range of expertise and experience in finance, personnel and industrial relations, management, the law, quality assurance, training and property. Three members of the board are women. Fourteen governors have served for more than five years. In the past year, the board has adopted a code of conduct and instituted a voluntary register of interests. Governors have

also agreed, and have started to implement, formal procedures for evaluating their own performance.

16 The board has five committees: finance and personnel; audit; property; remuneration; and strategic planning. The board has agreed the terms of reference for a search committee to recommend new governors whenever vacancies occur. There is a calendar of meetings which ensures that committee reports are available for full board meetings. Meetings are well managed and the average attendance of governors since incorporation has been 75 per cent. The director of administration, who has substantial experience of committee work, acts as clerk to the governors. Papers for all meetings are well prepared and presented in good time. Minutes are sufficiently detailed and record clearly the board's decisions and proposed actions.

17 Governors are committed to the college and supportive of managers. They ensure that they are kept up to date about the management and work of the college. Heads of departments and divisions give formal presentations on their work to governors' meetings. Involvement in the advisory committees and visits to departments keep governors in touch with the curriculum. They receive termly briefings on education and training issues. Governors understand the strategic nature of their role and respect the distinction between governance and management. Governors do not formally appraise the principal nor set personal targets for his performance. In effect, however, the college's annual strategic objectives constitute the targets for the principal. The chairman of the board meets regularly with the principal.

18 The college is well managed. There are three key management bodies. The senior management team comprises the principal, vice-principal and director of administration. Their complementary skills and experience make them an effective team. They meet every week and there are brief minutes recording what was discussed, the actions to be taken and by whom. The management board comprises the senior management team, the eight heads of department and four heads of support divisions. It meets every month. Although the board has a decision-making function, it is also an important forum for managers to exchange information. The academic board has a membership of 30 which includes teachers, support staff and students. It meets once a term and is concerned primarily with matters relating to the curriculum and quality assurance. Governors receive reports from the two boards and any recommendations which require their formal approval. Both boards have subcommittees which have a cross-college focus and membership. These groups provide valuable opportunities for staff from different areas of the college to be involved in decisions and to communicate with each other.

19 Most staff consider that managers are open and supportive. Management roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and understood by staff. In the majority of departments, management is good. In some,

however, staffing reductions have led to less effective management of courses. For example: in engineering, course teams do not meet regularly; in business studies, there is too much reliance on informal meetings with the result that actions are not always followed up; and there is a lack of direction in, and effective monitoring of, the provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

20 Communication in the college is good. The main channel of information is through the department or division in which staff work. There is also a regular newsletter issued by the principal, a termly information sheet from the vice-principal and a bulletin produced by staff. Increasingly, staff are using electronic mail to communicate quickly. When there are major issues to discuss, senior managers hold briefing sessions for all staff. Minutes of governors, senior management team, management board and academic board meetings are all published. Governors and senior managers make themselves accessible to staff and students.

21 The strategic planning cycle is well established and effective. It involves governors at key stages and staff at every level. Its starting point is the annual review which is conducted by each department and support division to inform their development plans. Governors who are members of advisory committees have an early sight of these plans. Plans are collated by heads of department or division and carefully costed to ensure that they are realistic and are consistent with the college's strategic objectives. During the year, the governors' strategic planning committee discusses key issues with senior managers. Targets are a key element of the strategic plan and are monitored throughout the year.

22 The college calculates the cost of provision carefully and uses the information as a basis for planning. Procedures for allocating funds to teaching departments for books, equipment and materials are clear and understood by staff. Allocations are being related increasingly to enrolments and are weighted according to programme areas. Twelve and a half per cent of allocations is withheld subject to retention targets being met. Capital items have to be approved by governors and there is an annual bidding process. Budget holders and governors receive detailed monthly financial reports. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are shown in figures 5 and 6. The college's average level of funding for 1996-97 is £20.81 per unit compared with £21.38 per unit in 1995-96. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges in 1996-97 is £17.97 per unit.

23 The college installed a new management information system in September 1996 which has the capacity to meet both internal and external requirements for data on staff, students and finance. As the system is widely available on the computer network, managers have ready access to key information, such as management accounts and up-to-date details of student enrolments and retention. Other data are gradually being incorporated. At the moment, accommodation data and the planned

maintenance programme are held on a separate database but will eventually be transferred to the new system. Strategies to make the system an effective management tool are well advanced and training in its use is gradually raising awareness of its potential for all staff.

24 The range of policies and procedures, including those for health and safety and equal opportunities, are firmly established and widely publicised. The policies are reviewed every three years. Their implementation is monitored by working groups which report to senior managers. Governors ensure compliance through regular reports at their meetings.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

25 Departments are responsible for the recruitment, guidance and support of their own students, supported by a number of services which operate across the college. Overall, these arrangements operate in the best interests of the students. Effective guidance and support have developed largely through the impetus provided by a working party on students' entitlements, established in 1994. The group is open to any member of staff and attracts strong support from departmental and divisional staff. By identifying good practice throughout the college, the group has produced a useful file of guidelines, suggestions and supporting materials for tutorial and induction activities. The file is available on disk and this enables teachers to modify materials to suit their own courses.

26 The college promotes itself locally and further afield through the prospectus, press advertisements and attendance at promotional events in schools and local stores. Open days and evenings for adults and school-leavers are widely publicised and attract large numbers. Printed information gives telephone numbers for departments, where initial enquiries are dealt with by departmental administrative staff. Central information services provide the necessary documentation and ensure that the general reception area is kept supplied with promotional materials for visitors who drop in. All applicants have an interview with specialist staff. Interviews are thorough and advice is impartial. Where appropriate, applicants are advised to consider alternative courses in other departments and are taken to see the relevant course staff by the interviewer. Parents of younger applicants are encouraged to attend part of the interview. There is a designated adult careers adviser who provides information and guidance interviews for adult applicants, or directs them to the relevant specialist.

27 Enrolment is carried out within departments. Staff suggest alternatives for those people who have not achieved the entry criteria for the course for which they applied. Enrolment is generally smooth, although the allocation of responsibilities to departments can result in queues in some departments while staff in others have little to do. Careers advisers and welfare staff are on hand to deal with enquiries, mainly about grants and benefits, and also to support students with disabilities.

28 All full-time and most part-time students receive an induction to the college and their courses. In the case of full-time students, this includes an introduction to senior managers, welfare services and a freshers' fair at which they can sign up for optional enrichment activities. All students receive a useful introduction to the resources centre. Each course has its own timetable of induction activities, which help students to get to know each other as well as providing essential information on the course and the college. Course handbooks guide students through the early stages of their courses. These vary both in format and quality. Students also receive a handbook containing a diary, a digest of the charter and college policies. A few course teams provide induction for parents. For example, parents of new young students on engineering courses were invited to accompany their sons and daughters to an evening social event at which a video on the work of the department was shown. There was a tour of the specialist facilities, and expectations regarding work, attendance and punctuality were made clear.

29 The quality of the tutorial support is generally good. Of the 12 tutorials observed during the inspection, seven had more strengths than weaknesses. All students are allocated to a named tutor within their departments. There is a tutor to support overseas students. The use of the allotted time and the content of tutorials is adapted to meet the differing needs of students and, in some cases, is negotiated between tutors and students. The students' entitlement file provides guidelines on the role of the tutor, a general outline of core activities for each term, and suggested activities and supporting materials. Tutors are responsible for teaching the personal and social development curriculum, for careers and higher education guidance, and for monitoring the overall progress and welfare of students. They are generous with their time, and this is appreciated by students. Some departments have regular times when students can assess their own performance with the help of their tutors. Parents are kept informed of their children's progress through written reports. There are parents' evenings, although only about 50 per cent of parents attend these. Employers are kept well informed of the progress of employees they sponsor on courses.

30 There are clear procedures for monitoring and following up students' attendance and punctuality which are well understood by students and followed assiduously by most staff. Registers are taken in each class and the heads of section check these twice a term. Some teachers do not always record lateness in the registers. Students report that they are aware of which staff are lax in following the procedures and some admit to taking advantage of this.

31 Welfare services are wide ranging and effectively publicised. They include counselling by qualified counsellors and financial and other advice. Welfare staff support tutors and organise displays to raise students' awareness of health or social issues such as the dangers of smoking and

over-exposure to the sun. They report a steep increase in the number of students who worry about having to leave their course for financial reasons. In 1995-96, the college's access fund helped 51 students with grants totalling £9,209. Smaller sums from the college's welfare fund, totalling £6,000, were awarded to 148 students. The college does not provide childcare but has an arrangement with a nearby nursery which gives priority to students from the college. Two or three students have children in the nursery and they receive a small contribution to their fees for this from access funds. The head of welfare manages a team of two qualified nurses who attend four days a week and two doctors who attend weekly.

32 A member of the welfare team is responsible for arranging support for students with physical disabilities, of whom 18 are enrolled at the college. The college has a disability statement which is available in large print and a Braille version is being prepared. Students with moderate learning difficulties receive good support from their tutors. Almost all of them spend a small part of their time in mainstream courses at the main college site. However, some find that the support from the teachers on their mainstream courses is inadequate. The separate location and admissions arrangements exacerbate the situation. There is insufficient liaison between the college and special schools in the borough when the curriculum for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is planned.

33 Specialist careers advice from a local careers company is available to students under the age of 19. Many students, however, are not aware of the service and see their tutors and subject teachers as the main sources of careers information. The careers adviser is now vigorously promoting the service through personal visits to tutor groups. A service level agreement, currently being negotiated, will provide for a careers presence at key times of the year, including enrolment and induction. The resources centre stocks careers materials for students' reference.

34 Students who apply for NVQ training through the adult education and training department can receive credit for their previous learning and experience. A number of students, both individually and through companies, have benefited from this. A co-ordinator provides advice and training to college staff, for example on hairdressing and some care courses, who wish to accredit students' prior learning within their courses.

35 The diagnosis and provision of additional support in numeracy and literacy is underdeveloped. Students can indicate their need for support on their application form, or at interview, but few do so. Some course teams have devised diagnostic tests relevant to the skills needed for their course. In 1996-97, 638 students starting GNVQ courses at levels 1 and 2 were tested for literacy and numeracy and 174 were identified as needing additional support. Forty-six were offered one-to-one support in a learning support centre; of these half attended regularly. Lecturers can also refer

students to the centre. Some students are reluctant to attend but those who persevere with the sessions find them valuable. Learning support staff are encouraging alternative ways of providing support, for example, by training teachers to integrate it with other elements of their courses. Some less able students were taking GCSE English courses which were unsuitable for them, and they were receiving inadequate language support. Students who are speakers of languages other than English are invited by letter to attend extra lessons in English. Twenty-six students attended these lessons in 1996-97. Extra lessons have also been provided for a whole class on a GNVQ computing course.

36 The students' union is active and supported by the college. A union officer liaises with staff and encourages and supports activities. As well as providing the student representative on the governing body, elected members of the union executive sometimes attend meetings of the student entitlement working party and the equal opportunities committee. The union subsidises and organises social and fund-raising events, and runs a radio station which broadcasts in the refectory at lunchtimes.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

37 Strengths outweighed weaknesses in 59 per cent of the lessons observed during the inspection, which is slightly lower than the average for all lessons observed during the 1995-96 inspection programme, according to the *Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1995-96*. Weaknesses outweighed strengths in 8 per cent of lessons. The average attendance in the lessons observed was 71 per cent. The following table gives the grades awarded to the lessons inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade 1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level	19	19	15	1	2	56
GCSE	1	6	8	2	0	17
GNVQ	7	16	11	2	0	36
NVQ	3	7	7	0	0	17
Other vocational	5	21	14	7	1	48
Other	6	10	11	2	0	29
Total	41	79	66	14	3	203

38 Most teaching was thoroughly prepared and effective. The best was imaginative. Teachers made use of a wide selection of teaching methods to stimulate learning. There were many examples of well-planned opportunities for students to work in small groups. Most assignments were relevant to the topics being studied and suitably demanding. Students' work was usually marked thoroughly, and teachers provided helpful written feedback. Most schemes of work were carefully written,

and had clear aims and objectives. Some lesson plans lacked information about how sessions were to be taught. There were a number of weak lessons where the teaching lacked sufficient variety to secure students' interest and involvement. This was particularly true of theory lessons across a range of courses. The development of students' key skills was carefully integrated with other elements of work on many vocational courses.

39 In humanities, the standard of teaching was high. Teachers were enthusiastic. They had high expectations of students and challenged them to think for themselves by encouraging debate. They managed lessons well, introduced suitably varied learning activities and made effective use of teaching aids. GCE A level students attended useful conferences on sociology and economics at the college to help prepare for forthcoming examinations. The subject of the sociology conference was the mass media. Students received an illustrated handbook of articles written recently by college staff. They worked in groups discussing particular topics and subsequently presented their findings to the whole conference. General debate was lively and informed. On all courses, students' learning was checked regularly. Teachers marked written work thoroughly and gave good guidance on how it might be improved.

40 Courses and lessons in English and communication studies are well planned. Each student is provided with a worksheet to record the work they submit together with a date and the grade awarded. The worksheet is valued by students because it provides useful information on their progress at a glance. Teaching on GCE A level and access courses was imaginative and well focused. For example, in an access lesson on *Othello*, students had to assume a character and answer questions from other members of the group. In small groups they had to refer back to the text to check the accuracy of their answers and then perform a short scene involving the characters under discussion. The quality of GCSE teaching is more variable; some of the work in class is not demanding enough. There is an assessment policy for all courses, but there was considerable variation in the extent to which teachers fulfilled the requirement to give guidance to students on assessments. Teaching of English and communication studies incorporates the development of students' study skills.

41 In science, mathematics and computing, teachers were enthusiastic and generally succeeded in motivating the students. Lessons had clear aims and were well planned. Most students' assignments were thoroughly marked and returned with helpful comments. Class teaching and the support provided to individual students was equally effective. In one GCE A level computing class the teacher worked with individual students who were undertaking a programming assignment. The students were enthusiastic and knowledgeable about what they were doing and benefited from the teacher's personal attention. In many lessons teachers used visual aids imaginatively. In a GCE A level geology revision lesson the

teacher used slides, rock samples and a short video to introduce a question and answer session; a short written exercise concluded a profitable and enjoyable learning experience. Some lessons were less well structured and managed. Teachers failed to give students opportunities to develop their own ideas. Sometimes, when only a few students answered the teacher's questions, there was no attempt to find ways of involving the rest of the class.

42 Most business studies lessons were carefully planned and teachers used a variety of activities to help develop students' understanding. In an NVQ level 3 administration lesson, students were learning shorthand by means of dictation, an instant recall test, and a speed test. The lesson concluded with questions to the whole class to check that all had understood. Business assignments were interesting, relevant and assessed carefully. In some lessons teachers made good use of students' experience to make topics more relevant; in others, however, they failed to relate theory to topical issues and events. A number of classes were dull and the teacher's slow delivery failed to sustain students' interest. Some teachers did not involve all students in discussion, allowing a few to dominate lessons.

43 On leisure and tourism courses, many lessons were well planned and provided good opportunities for purposeful learning. Students' programmes were enhanced by work experience, a variety of visits and opportunities to take part in sports and outdoor pursuits. Advanced level GNVQ students benefited from a residential programme at the beginning of their course which enabled them to develop team-building skills through outward-bound and sporting activities. Much of the work in lessons and assignments was designed to help develop students' communication and presentational skills. The use of information technology was integral to the work. Some teachers were not as skilled as others in coping with students of differing levels of ability, so that the less able often had difficulty in understanding the work while the more able students finished it early.

44 Care and hairdressing teachers effectively related students' work experience to other elements of work. Most lessons were well planned and linked to detailed schemes of work. Most students were well motivated. Methods of working were varied and purposeful. In one GNVQ advanced level care class, students successfully analysed case studies illustrating some of the ethical dilemmas associated with care work. Some lessons were managed less effectively. In a hairdressing class, students spent long periods copying notes and labelling diagrams. Some teachers gave students too little opportunity to learn on their own.

45 Modern language students and students of EFL are thoroughly prepared for their examinations. Many lessons were carefully planned. Teachers taught mainly in the language being studied and used visual aids effectively. In a Spanish GCE A level lesson, an overhead transparency indicating types of crimes and punishment was used to focus discussion

on the Spanish legal system; students worked in pairs to list all the relevant vocabulary they knew, and finally the whole class worked together to improve their language proficiency. In some lessons, students lacked confidence in the language being studied and teachers spoke the language without checking whether the students had understood what they were saying. Some lessons were dull and failed to motivate students. In a number of EFL classes the teachers relied too much on text books. There was little use of video. Students benefit from exchanges with French students, and study visits to Spain and Germany. Staff provide good open-access support sessions. There are also facilities for individuals to learn on their own though students are not always given sufficient guidance or encouragement to use these facilities effectively.

46 Engineering courses were well designed and had clear aims and objectives. The most effective teaching was in practical sessions. Mechanical and engineering workshop classes, in particular, were well organised and students received good support from teachers. Students were given opportunities to work purposefully and develop important skills. Their work was assessed regularly and teachers maintained careful records of their assignments and test results. Theory classes were much less successful. Teachers made little use of teaching aids and provided too few demonstrations. Many individual lesson plans listed the topics to be taught but gave no indication of how they would be developed. Consequently, the lessons were not sufficiently focused and the work often lacked rigour. Time was wasted in some lessons by the teacher dealing with a minor point in too much detail, or by students spending large amounts of time copying diagrams from the board.

47 On art and design and media studies courses the teaching was carefully planned. In the better sessions in media studies the tasks set were appropriately challenging, built on students' previous experience, and allowed them to work productively in teams. In one successful lesson, students were given a stimulating handout with information on an incident from a variety of media sources. Using this they worked enthusiastically in groups to produce a one-minute television script. Art students were given the opportunity to develop a wide range of skills, and to benefit from a stimulating environment which included displays of their own work. Teaching methods were suitably varied and included some successful team teaching. Students' learning was enhanced by frequent visits to galleries and museums, locally and abroad. Some teaching in art and design, and media was too rigidly structured; teachers failed to give students enough opportunities to work out their own ideas. In one GCE A level art lesson, the teacher presented students with some uninspiring and poorly-presented, still-life materials. On some media studies courses, students were given fewer opportunities to undertake practical assignments than the introductory course information had suggested.

48 Students with learning difficulties were able to choose individual learning programmes from a range of options and this helped to strengthen their motivation to learn. However, students' programmes were not always sufficiently coherent and well balanced to provide them with the knowledge and skills necessary to progress to other courses. Practical sessions were well organised and varied. Worksheets were well produced. Classroom work lacked variety. Often students were encouraged to memorise material rather than to develop their understanding of a topic. The predominant method of teaching was by question and answer involving the whole class. Generally, teachers failed to check that students were learning effectively.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

49 Most students worked well and contributed to the pleasant but purposeful atmosphere noted in many classes. On most courses, students' work consistently reached a high standard. The college recognises and celebrates special achievements in prizes awarded each year to individual students. Recent awards have included one made to a student who overcame severe health problems to complete a BTEC national diploma course in computing and progress to higher education. Another award was given to a student who gained four grade As in GCE A level sciences and mathematics and who went on to a mathematics degree course. Students' achievements outside the college have also been recognised. Two students gained bronze medals, and one a silver in the British Physics Olympiad, in 1997. A student on the advanced level GNVQ course in information technology represented Britain in the International Informatics Olympiad in the Netherlands in 1995. Illustrations by students on art and design courses were published in the *Guardian* newspaper in 1997. An engineering student won the top prize in the 1996 BMW apprentice project competition.

50 Students were developing appropriate practical skills on a range of courses. Science students were thorough in their practical work and the recording of experiments. Hairdressing students had good commercial skills. Students on advanced level land and environment courses have developed a tomato growing business which has given them useful commercial and interpersonal skills. On many courses, students were willing to contribute effectively and confidently to class discussion, and work in groups. Much of their work was well presented; files and portfolios were usually well organised. Engineering students generally produced good written work, sketches and diagrams. They did not always write accurately, however. Students on many courses were confident in using computers and were able to wordprocess their work, although their proofreading skills were variable. On other courses, such as hairdressing, students were not acquiring essential information technology skills. Some students on GCSE mathematics courses lacked basic numeracy skills. In art, design and media, students did not always demonstrate the expected enthusiasm and flair.

51 Eighty per cent of the students who enrolled in September 1995 completed their course and the college's figures indicate an improvement on this in 1996-97. By May 1997, 89 per cent of students who had enrolled in September 1996 were still on their course. Retention rates vary widely. Several two-year GCE A level and vocational courses completed in 1996 had 100 per cent retention rates. Retention rates on GCE A level courses were usually good, except in art and computing, where only 58 per cent and 50 per cent, respectively, of those originally enrolled completed their course in 1996. On GCSE courses retention was generally high. In many individual subjects, such as mathematics, it has improved over the last three years. There were examples of poor retention levels on some vocational courses within all programme areas. The sports option of the advanced GNVQ leisure and tourism programme retained only 23 per cent of its students by the end of the course in 1996. This was significantly below the retention levels of the BTEC national diploma course which it replaced. Retention was low on the GNVQ foundation and intermediate level courses in health and social care.

52 In many programme areas, attendance and punctuality were poor. Some engineering classes had very high absence rates. Attendance at lessons observed in sciences, English and modern languages was often below 70 per cent. Registers indicated that these levels were not unusual. Some second-year students missed lessons to revise for examinations in the later stages of courses. Lessons were frequently disrupted by late arrivals. In business studies classes, lateness at the beginning of morning sessions was commonplace. Some teachers started lessons late to accommodate late arrivals.

53 In 1996, 533 students aged 16 to 18 entered for GCE AS/A level subjects. According to the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) performance tables, 1996, students taking two or more subjects scored, on average, 4.0 points per entry (where grade A=10 points, E=2). This places the college in the middle third of colleges in the further education sector, on this performance measure. Results in English literature have been good over the last three years; there was a 99 per cent pass rate, at grades A to E, on the two-year courses in 1996. Several other subjects which had a much smaller number of candidates achieved 100 per cent pass rates. Results on one-year and two-year business studies and economics courses, and two-year French courses were disappointing in 1996. French, for instance, had a pass rate of 61 per cent in 1996 compared with 86 per cent two years earlier. GCSE results vary from well above the average for further education colleges in some modern languages and English language, to well below that level in mathematics, psychology, photography, history and science. In 1996, only 24 per cent of those entered for GCSE mathematics obtained a grade C or above.

54 The DfEE performance tables for colleges in 1995-96 indicate that 78 per cent of the 309 students completing advanced level vocational

courses gained the full award. This places the college in the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. Statistics from the same source indicated that 69 per cent of the 182 students completing intermediate level vocational courses gained the full award, placing the college in the top third of colleges in the sector. Almost 500 students followed GNVQ courses in 1995-96. At advanced level, they achieved well in information technology, business studies and science. Advanced level leisure and tourism (sports option) results were poor in 1996; only 23 per cent of those who started the course gained the full award. Pass rates at intermediate and foundation levels were well above the national average in information technology, but significantly below the national average for health and care courses. Pass rates in the intermediate GNVQ in art and design were below the national average in 1996. Only 55 per cent completed the course successfully, which was lower than in previous years.

55 About 250 students followed NVQ courses in 1996. They performed well in information technology at intermediate and advanced levels. Achievements on NVQ courses in hairdressing and beauty have been generally good over the past three years. On the NVQ administration courses at advanced level, 95 per cent or more of students have gained an award over the last three years. Students who have completed BTEC courses in art and design, and engineering since 1994 have achieved at, or above, the national average on many courses. However, on the BTEC national certificate in graphic design only three students out of the 11 who started the course were successful in 1996. Many of these results are much less satisfactory when calculated against those who started courses. For example, the pass rate of 94 per cent of those completing the national diploma in engineering was only 48 per cent of those initially enrolled. Students enter for a wide range of other vocational qualifications. Some results are very good. The City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) electrical installation pass rate for block release students has been high each year since 1994. Over 90 per cent of students passed the C&G information technology course in 1995 and in 1996. Pass rates on some courses have been far lower; for example, the pass rate on the C&G photography course was less than 20 per cent in 1995 and 1996.

56 In 1996, 535 Kingston College students progressed to higher education. The most popular degree subjects were business studies, computing, engineering, science and humanities. Many students progress to higher education from vocational courses. For example, 56 per cent of the students who completed the BTEC national diploma in art and design and 40 of the 65 students who completed the GNVQ advanced level business course in 1996 progressed to higher education courses. Students on access to higher education courses have achieved consistently well, over the period 1994-96.

57 The college provides a wide range of opportunities for students to achieve outside their main areas of study. It has many successful sports teams, and individual students' achievements are acknowledged with an award from local sponsors for each major sport. In 1997, a number of college athletes gained medals in the British Colleges' Championships in Sheffield. The college represented the South East of England in five of the eleven sports which were contested at the championships. In September 1996, over 500 students elected to take part in sporting activities. The Duke of Edinburgh award scheme is popular and successful. Forty-three students took part in 1995-96, some of whom have achieved gold and silver awards over the last three years.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

58 The college expresses its commitment to maintaining and improving the quality of its provision in its mission statement and strategic plan. There is a full-time quality assurance manager who has academic and administrative support. The quality assurance policy is concise and supported by an extensive range of established procedures. There are clear reporting lines through departmental advisory boards to the academic board, the management board and the governing body. Managers are responsible for quality assurance in their areas. The quality assurance subcommittee of the academic board concerns itself mainly with academic and curriculum issues; the quality assurance subcommittee of the management board concentrates on cross-college and environmental issues. There is some overlap of the work of the two committees.

59 The system for annual course review is in its seventh year and has been revised regularly. The reviews take into account students' views and make use of performance indicators for enrolment, students' achievements and retention. Course teams are expected to report on progress under each of the major headings in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. A useful set of guidelines has been prepared to assist staff in completing the review. Most, but not all, course reviews are evaluative. The quality of the reviews and the level of detail they contain varies. Course managers report in detail on courses which have exceeded or failed to meet agreed targets. Heads of departments and support divisions produce annual self-assessment reports and operating plans. The plans identify the action to be taken to improve specific aspects, but do not always state the timescale or the people responsible for taking action. Monitoring the quality of the work of support divisions is at different stages of development. In a few areas, for example reception, standards have been set for performance, including response times in answering the telephone. In most areas, service standards have not been set and monitoring is informal.

60 There is a comprehensive system for the validation of new courses. Clear guidelines set out what teams are required to do. When the documents are complete, the quality assurance manager convenes a

validation board. The chair and some members of the board are drawn from other departments. Employers and representatives from higher education are also invited to join the validation board. The board meets to consider the submission, and then discusses it with the course team. They pay close attention to quality assurance and cost efficiency. The board may agree that the submission should go forward to the awarding body; they may set conditions to be met before the submission goes forward, or they may recommend fundamental changes to the course submission. Courses are revalidated regularly, usually within five years.

61 Arrangements for obtaining the views students have about their courses and the service the college provides include questionnaires and student representation on course teams. Questionnaires are completed by students after enrolment, at the end of the first term and towards the end of the academic year. The surveys cover a wide range of aspects, including questions on teaching and learning. The responses are analysed in detail. Some of the questions were vague, and the tick-box format did not give students enough scope for individual comment. Course teams take students' views into account when they draw up their action plans. For example, some course teams have altered timetables to improve punctuality and attendance. Students see course team meetings as a valuable forum in which to express their views. Employers' views on the quality of courses are obtained through a questionnaire and through the departmental advisory boards. Staff complete an annual questionnaire giving their views of the college.

62 There is an effective induction programme for all new full-time staff. An experienced member of staff acts as mentor to the new appointee during their first year. All teachers receive a copy of the staff handbook. The teaching of newly-appointed teachers is observed. There is no formal system for observing the teaching of existing staff, although there are many examples of departmental initiatives in lesson observation, and in sharing of good practice.

63 Staff development in the college is closely linked to the college's strategic objectives. There is a staff-development manager. In 1995-96, £50,000 was allocated for staff development which represents 0.5 per cent of the staffing budget. The college has been operating a system to identify staff-development needs for many years. Each member of teaching and organisational staff is entitled to a professional development interview with their line manager at least once every two years. In carefully prepared interviews, staff review progress against objectives and identify their training needs. Teachers on new contracts have fifteen days allocated each year for professional development. Some teachers have used the days to produce learning materials for use by themselves and colleagues. Others have worked with external organisations. For example, one teacher used the time to produce a joint report with staff at Kew Gardens on the usefulness to members of the public of labelling plants. The governors

have agreed to waive fees for staff participating in courses in the college which are funded by the FEFC. Over 100 members of staff have taken advantage of this facility. The college offers a wide range of internal courses to all staff which are set out in a comprehensive handbook. Courses have covered funding, management and information technology.

64 There is an effective system and standard documentation for verifying that consistent standards are achieved on courses which involve internal assessment. Verifiers have clear job descriptions and meet regularly to address current issues and developments. The quality assurance manager, heads of department and course team leaders receive reports from all external moderators and verifiers, and teams are required to identify any action to be taken in response to those reports. The quality assurance manager summarises the findings of reports, which are used to monitor progress.

65 The charter was produced as a result of extensive consultation with students, parents and employers. It is incorporated in the students' handbook and sets out clearly what students, employers and the local community can expect of the college, and what to do if they have a complaint. Quantitative standards have been set in a few areas. The college does not yet systematically monitor achievement of the standards set out in the charter through questionnaires or course reviews.

66 As part of the college's quality systems, heads of department and support divisions produce annual self-assessment reports. These provided the supporting evidence for the college's self-assessment report which was produced for the inspection. The reports follow the headings in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement* and indicate strengths and areas for development. All were evaluative, referred to sources of evidence, and had action plans. The judgements made matched those of the inspectors in most cases, but some strengths and weaknesses were not identified by the college. The report paid insufficient attention to the quality of teaching and students' achievements.

RESOURCES

Staffing

67 The college employs 304 teaching staff. Of these 65 per cent are full time. Two-thirds of the full-time staff are men and 82 per cent are white. Teaching staff are well qualified. Seventy-seven per cent of the full-time staff have degrees and teaching qualifications, and a significant number have higher degrees. The level of commercial, industrial and professional experience varies amongst teachers but it is generally good. There are many practitioners amongst the art and design staff. Many teachers of the sciences, travel and tourism and law have relevant industrial experience. In business studies, few teachers have up-to-date industrial or commercial experience. Teachers of students with learning difficulties are experienced and well trained, but lack vocational experience. Teachers of vocational

subjects sometimes lack experience in dealing with students with learning difficulties. Good progress has been made towards the achievement of assessor and verifier qualifications in most curriculum areas.

68 Staff responsible for central support functions such as estates, finance, information technology, learning resources and human resources are well qualified and have relevant experience. Overall, the level and quality of technical support for teaching is good. There is good technical support for all art and design courses. Sciences, engineering and languages are adequately supported. There are appropriate personnel policies and procedures in operation, and the deployment of staff is effectively monitored.

Equipment/learning resources

69 Most general classrooms are well equipped, with television, video, and slide projectors. The standard of specialist equipment varies but is generally good. Students of electrical, mechanical, and automobile engineering are taught in well-equipped workshops. However, much of the equipment in the science laboratories is ageing, and some needs more regular servicing. In hairdressing and beauty therapy there is an adequate range of salon equipment and materials. Modern language students are taught in well-equipped rooms and have access to language laboratories and listening stations. Environmental studies, geography and geology students have access to a good range of Ordnance Survey and geology maps and some other materials developed by staff. There is a wide range of up-to-date equipment for art and design and photography, but some of the media equipment is not up to the standard of that used currently in industry.

70 The resources centre on the college's main site includes a library, study area, open access information technology facilities, careers area, video recording facilities, and a learning support room. In addition to the spaces associated with the information technology facilities, there are 88 study spaces. In the small centre at the Richmond Road there are 15 additional study spaces. Although extended only a year ago, the main centre is still too small for the number of students using the site. At peak times, the centres become very crowded. Together the libraries contain a total of about 36,000 books and a good range of compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases, cassettes, newspapers and periodicals. The library budget, excluding staffing, totals £51,000, of which £20,000 is for books. This is an increase of about 5 per cent over the last year. There is effective liaison between the staff of the resources centre and teachers. As a result, the provision of books is good in the vast majority of curriculum areas.

71 The new information technology policy is designed to encourage the dissemination of good practice in the use of information technology for teaching, and to standardise equipment purchases. The college has made a large commitment to the provision of information technology over the

last few years. There are 475 computers available for students' use, a ratio of full-time equivalent students to computers of 10:1. Most of the computers are purchased from departmental budgets and are held within departments. The number of computers available for students to use for private study is small. There are 25 within the resources centre, and a further 22 available during break times and in the evenings. However, when terminals are available, lecturers usually allow students to use them during lessons. Access to up-to-date information technology equipment across the curriculum is good, apart from certain areas such as travel and tourism and courses for students with learning difficulties.

Accommodation

72 Since incorporation, the college has reduced the number of sites from four to three and used its assets to improve buildings which had previously been neglected. Most of the courses are based at the main site. Here, the standard of general teaching accommodation varies, but is mainly good. Many rooms have been refurbished recently, but some are in a poor decorative state, lack adequate soundproofing or are too small for the groups that use them. Good use is made of display in a number of areas. For example, students' work is on display in rooms used for health and social care, and maps and photographs of high quality are hung in the rooms used for geography and environmental studies. The standard of specialist accommodation varies, but is generally good. Computing and engineering accommodation is good, though the welding shop is underused. There is a good range of science laboratories, but they need refurbishing. The business centre provides valuable opportunities for a realistic work environment, but the current travel office does not. Much of the accommodation used for media studies is too small for the size of groups using it. There are two hairdressing salons and a number of well-decorated beauty salons, but the size of some of these restricts the number of students who can be taught and limits changing and storage facilities.

73 Most of the art and design provision is at Richmond Road. Rooms are generally spacious and enhanced by examples of students' work, though some lack adequate storage and washing facilities. There is a large purpose-built, three-dimensional workshop and a variety of other facilities, including a printmaking studio. New facilities for photography have recently been provided, but their size may restrict the college's planned expansion in this area. The courses for students with learning difficulties are based at the North Kingston Centre, which provides a welcoming environment. Its isolation limits the courses that can be offered and restricts the opportunities to integrate these students with others in the college.

74 The social facilities for students are limited. There are two canteens on the main site and one at Richmond Road which together seat about 365 people. Two staff canteens seat about 100. There are no separate

common rooms for students. There is a sports hall at the main site. The college mini-buses transport students to off-site sports facilities. Work is due to start, later in 1997, to increase the canteen facilities on the main site and to improve the entrance to the building for those using wheelchairs who at present have to enter the building through the car park. Most areas inside the main building are readily accessible for wheelchair users.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

75 The main strengths of the college are:

- an extensive and developing range of courses
- teaching which is well planned, generally effective and sometimes imaginative and challenging
- some good achievements in external examinations and good rates of progression into higher education
- strong and productive advisory committees involving employers and representatives of schools and higher education
- effective governance and management
- a well-established strategic planning process involving governors and staff
- effective management information on students and finances
- effective systems and materials for the guidance and support of students
- good tutorial support
- a well-established approach to course review and self-assessment, effectively linked to planning
- an appropriate system of internal validation
- effective induction and support for new staff
- well-qualified and experienced staff, many of whom have relevant industrial experience
- equipment and accommodation of a generally high standard.

76 To make further progress, the college should address:

- limited provision at foundation level and for students with learning difficulties
- some ineffective teaching
- some poor achievements in external examinations
- poor retention on some courses
- poor or inconsistent management in a minority of departments
- underdeveloped systems for diagnosing and providing additional learning support

-
- its variable success in addressing students' attendance and punctuality
 - the variations in the quality and detail of some course reviews
 - students' lack of access to computers at particular times of the day
 - the relative isolation of provision for students with learning difficulties which restricts opportunities for them to be integrated effectively with other students.

FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage student numbers by age (as at November 1996)

 - 2 Percentage student numbers by level of study (as at November 1996)

 - 3 Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area
(as at November 1996)

 - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents
(as at July 1996)

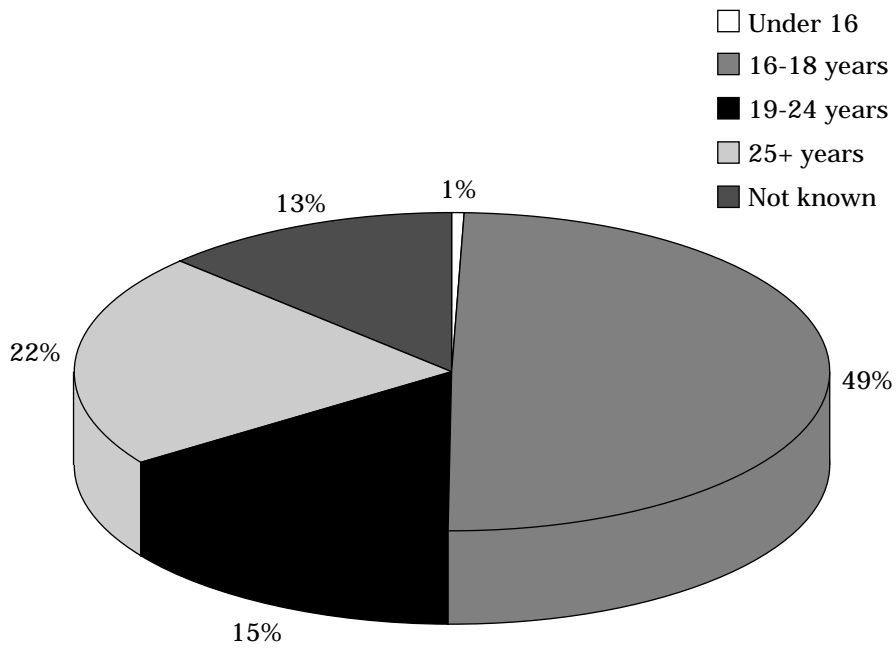
 - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1996)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)

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

Figure 1

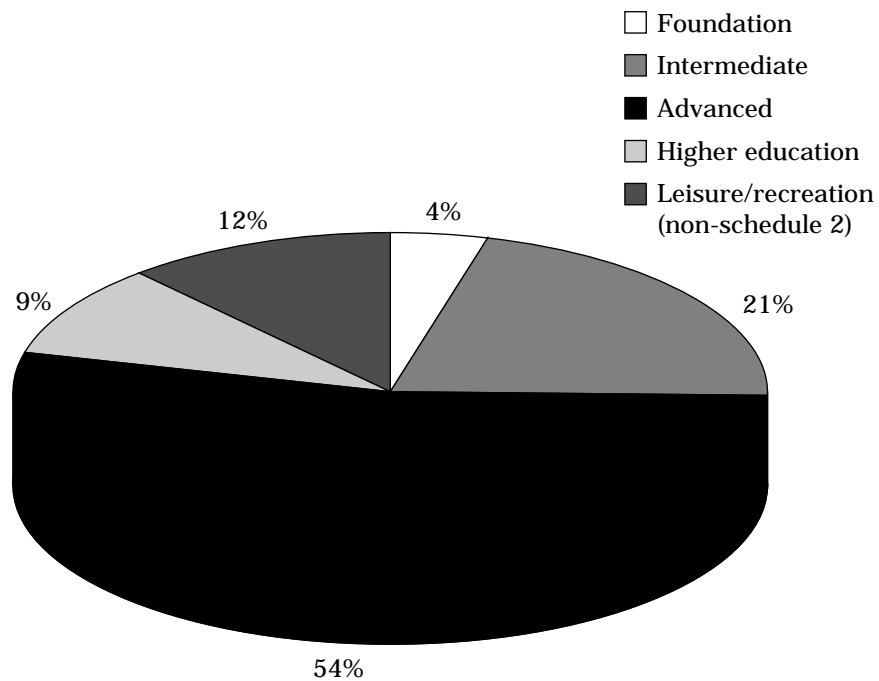
Kingston College: percentage student numbers by age (as at November 1996)



Student numbers: 6,036

Figure 2

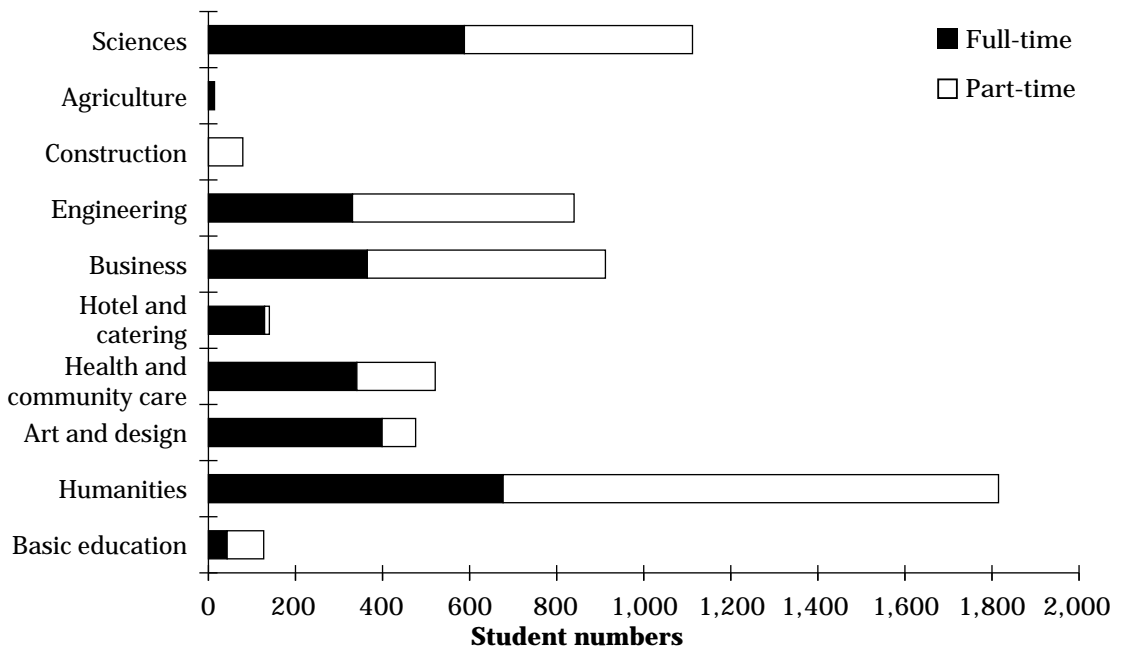
Kingston College: percentage student numbers by level of study (as at November 1996)



Student numbers: 6,036

Figure 3

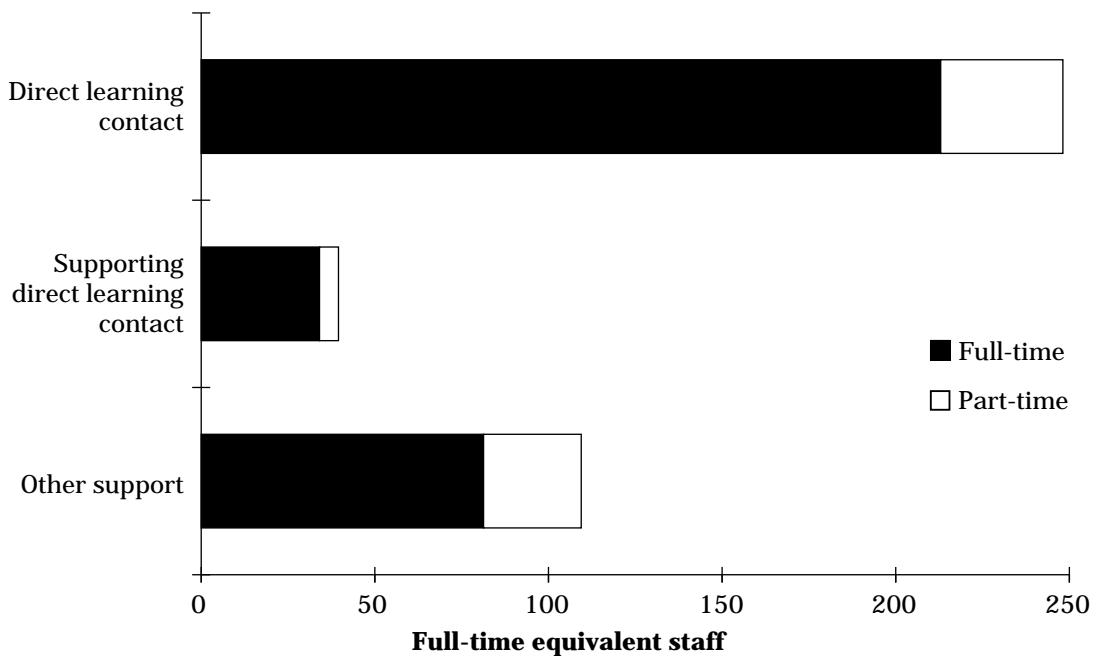
Kingston College: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1996)



Student numbers: 6,036

Figure 4

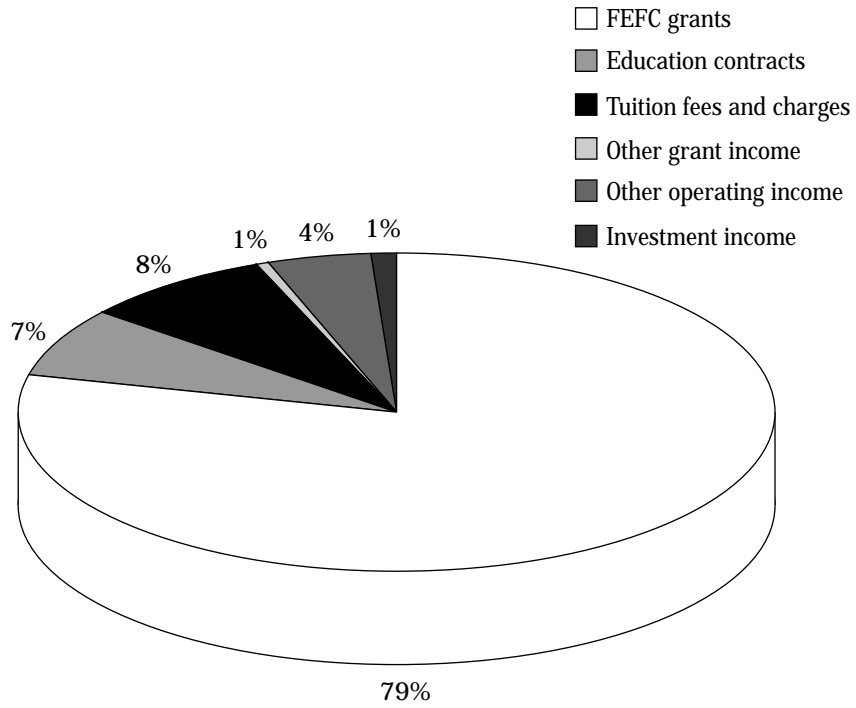
Kingston College: staff profile - staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at July 1996)



Full-time equivalent staff: 397

Figure 5

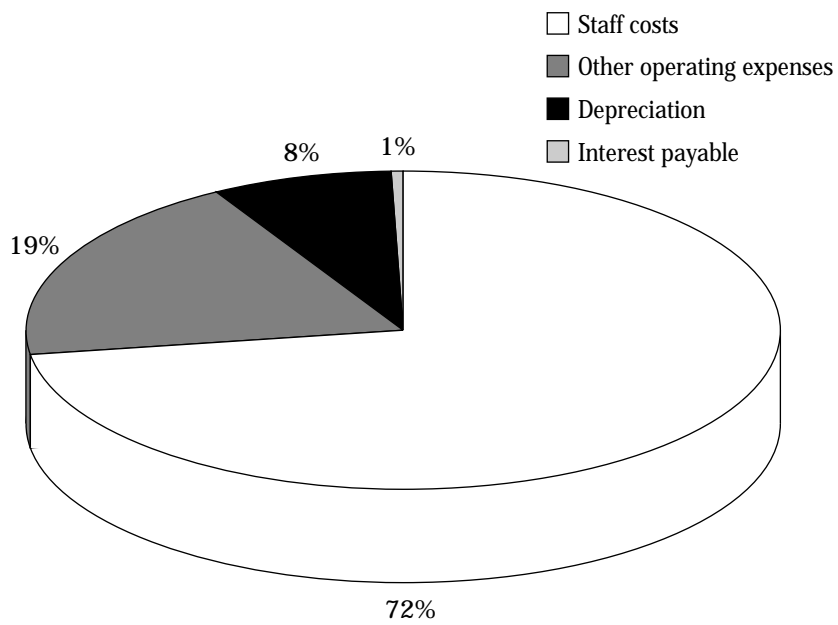
Kingston College: income (for 12 months to July 1996)



Income: £13,214,000

Figure 6

Kingston College: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)



Expenditure: £13,794,000

Published by the
Further Education Funding Council
September 1997