

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Lancaster and Morecambe College

August 1994

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

THE FURTHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL

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

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

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

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

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

*Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
Telephone 0203 863000
Fax 0203 863100*

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 74/94

LANCASTER AND MORECAMBE COLLEGE

NORTH WEST REGION

Inspected April - May 1994

Summary

Lancaster and Morecambe College, Lancashire, is a well-managed institution which provides a range of general education and vocational courses for school leavers and adults, including specialist courses for those with learning difficulties and/or physical and sensory impairment. There are high standards of teaching, especially on vocational courses, and close links with local employers enhance the work in many areas. The support and guidance offered by subject and personal tutors is widely appreciated by students. There are high levels of student achievement in many vocational areas but GCE A level examination results are below average for the sector. Staff training needs are closely matched to college priorities. There are good information technology facilities and the library and a new learning centre offer valuable resources for students. Retention rates are not high overall; the college should analyse carefully the reasons why some students leave before completing their programmes of study. The college should also address deficiencies in the accuracy and presentation of management information; ensure that the good practice operating in some induction programmes is applied across the college; and involve employers and the college's development committees more closely in course planning and evaluation.

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		2
Students' recruitment, guidance and support		3
Quality assurance		2
Resources:	staffing	2
	equipment/learning resources	2
	accommodation	2

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Sciences, mathematics computing	3	Catering, hairdressing, leisure and tourism	1
Construction	2	Care	2
Engineering	2	Art and design	3
Business and administration	2	Humanities	2

CONTENTS

	Paragraph
Summary	
Introduction	1
The college and its aims	3
Responsiveness and range of provision	8
Governance and management	21
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	29
Teaching and the promotion of learning	41
Students' achievements	50
Quality assurance	58
Resources	69
Conclusions and issues	76
Figures	

INTRODUCTION

1 Lancaster and Morecambe College, Lancashire, was inspected between September 1993 and May 1994. Enrolment and induction arrangements were inspected in September 1993. Subjects were inspected in March and April and aspects of cross-college work in May. In all, inspectors spent a total of 89 days in the college. They observed 192 classes, examined samples of students' work and held discussions with governors, college managers, teaching staff, students, the head of a local school, staff from the careers service and the Lancashire Area West Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). Inspectors also had access to a wide range of documentation relating to the college and its courses.

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

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

3 Lancaster and Morecambe College's main campus has purpose-built accommodation on a greenfield site of over 12 hectares some two miles from Lancaster city centre and one-and-a-half miles from Morecambe. The earliest building on the site was constructed in the 1950s and further blocks have been added subsequently to accommodate increased student numbers. The college has two further sites. The Morecambe Community Centre, a former art school, adjacent to the open market square, houses a range of courses for adults. The school of art and design is located in leased accommodation in the White Cross Education Centre, a recently restored mill in the centre of Lancaster.

4 Most students are recruited from within the district of Lancaster and Morecambe but significant numbers are attracted from south Cumbria, Garstang and the western edges of North Yorkshire. This large area, with a relatively low population of 250,000, is characterised by small rural communities and traditional market towns. People from ethnic minority backgrounds account for 1.3 per cent of the population. The economy of the area has reflected the national trend away from manufacturing to service industries and the latter accounts for some 75 per cent of employment in the Lancaster and Morecambe district. The most recent figures show some decline in the service sector, with manufacturing increasing from 12 to 19 per cent, and a growth in tourism-related employment. Unemployment rates in Lancaster average around 10 per cent but pockets of high unemployment and social deprivation exist especially in parts of Morecambe.

5 In September 1993, approximately 65 per cent of 16 year olds in the Lancaster District continued in full-time education; 22 per cent went to college, 43 per cent stayed at school. In addition to private sector organisations providing training for school leavers, the college competes with six 11-18 schools. These schools have begun to diversify their sixth form curriculum beyond the General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) to include courses which overlap with those traditionally provided in further education colleges. A further four schools provide for pupils from the ages of 11 to 16. In the areas of Cumbria and North Yorkshire, from which the college also attracts students, there are three 11-16 and five 11-18 schools. Kendal College 20 miles away, Furness College 49 miles and Preston College 25 miles also draw students in the area.

6 The college employs 239 full-time equivalent staff, 141 teachers and 98 support staff (figure 1). At the start of the current academic year the college enrolled over 6,000 students of whom 1,600 were full-time. Just over a quarter of the full-time students were over 21 years old. Since then the college has recruited additional students and has met its target growth of 8 per cent for 1993-94. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities account for 348 enrolments on full-time and part-time programmes. Enrolments by age and level of study as at 1 November 1993 are shown in figures 2 and 3, respectively. Full-time equivalent enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figure 4.

7 The college's mission statement sets out an intention to provide quality education and training relevant to both school leavers and adults. The mission includes a statement of a core of values which influences the college's activities: equal opportunities, citizenship, responsibility towards the environment and the community, careful quality-orientated resource management, the enhancement of individual self respect and self confidence, a European dimension to the curriculum and equal value to academic and vocational achievements. Specific targets achieved since 1993 have included:

- increased enrolments, particularly of the unemployed and adults seeking to return to education
- a more flexible provision for those whose personal circumstances make attendance at traditional full-year courses difficult
- the introduction of General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) at both intermediate and advanced levels
- the development of a centralised learning-resource centre
- the expansion of the counselling and careers guidance service
- a continued investment in the training of and facilities for students with physical disabilities.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

8 Lancaster and Morecambe College is responding well to the needs of its community. Its portfolio of courses is affected by the competition from an adult education college as well as the local schools. Two major features of the provision are the vocational routes to higher education and employment in a wide range of subjects, and the flexibility afforded by differing patterns of study and attendance which attracts increasing numbers of adult students.

9 The main elements of the provision are:

- full-time programmes leading to advanced and intermediate level GNVQs and other vocational qualifications in science, computing, construction, engineering, business studies, secretarial studies, hotel and catering, hairdressing, beauty therapy, health and social care, leisure and tourism and art and design
- part-time programmes in a number of vocational areas leading increasingly to NVQ awards
- provision for students with learning difficulties and students with physical and sensory impairments on separate, specialist programmes, or, with additional support, on mainstream courses
- open college and access courses for mature students preparing for entry into higher education
- full-time and part-time General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) and General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) courses for mature students and school leavers
- courses provided in conjunction with higher education institutions
- adult education programmes in the Morecambe area, funded by the Lancashire Local Education Authority.

10 There has been a good response to national training targets. Developments in most areas of the curriculum reflect changes towards national vocational qualifications. In engineering, developments have been slower than in some other curriculum areas.

11 There has been little progress in developing programmes which mix academic and vocational elements. On the GNVQ courses students have few opportunities to enhance their programmes of study by including additional qualifications. Opportunities within vocational programmes to study a foreign language are also inadequate. The scope for broadening the vocational and academic options available to students has been recognised by the college and there are plans to extend opportunities for the next academic year.

12 Adult students are well catered for; there are opportunities for them to study full-time and part-time at all levels, including adult basic education. They are encouraged to attend courses through, for example, the waiving of fees for full-time courses. A well-developed access programme offers an alternative route to higher education. Other courses provide a flexible

alternative for those unable to attend college full time. A new short-course programme enables people to join the college at different times throughout the year. The learning resource centre provides students with opportunities to extend their skills through computer programmes and learning packages.

13 There are productive links with a number of external organisations including the Lancaster Strategic Forum, the Business Support Network and the Technical Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) co-ordinators group. The college has responded positively to local TEC initiatives and has worked with the TEC on staff training for NVQ developments. It has received funding for a number of projects, including a shop in central Lancaster which is shared with the adult education college and the University of Central Lancashire. Members of the public can gain advice and enrol for college courses at the shop.

14 Links with employers are well developed and support most of the college's vocational areas. In hairdressing and beauty therapy, the needs of industry are well met; the college is working with the chamber of commerce to provide a youth training programme in hairdressing. The development committee for care includes representatives from social services, the health authority and a local private homes consortium. In hotel and catering, links with employers are excellent. The engineering section maintains links with major industrial companies and holds regular breakfast meetings with employers. Courses for local firms are provided in computer studies and links with industry assist the college to find work placements for students. There is a small range of part-time professional courses relevant to local businesses, particularly in the field of management. Links with industry are underdeveloped in art and design, science and business studies.

15 The marketing of courses is soundly based on an analysis of the needs of the local community. The college has successfully raised its profile in the area by using a variety of media and promotional activities. Advertisements are carried on local radio, in buses and newspapers; there are promotional video-tapes for school leavers and mature students; a play-bus is used for extending provision into the community and advice desks have been set up in the staff canteens of local firms. The advertising campaign has been successful in attracting students from outside the area as well as locally. Not all publicity materials are easy to use and understand but the college has reviewed them and there have been some recent improvements. A marketing manager and a committee of staff drawn from across the college co-ordinate developments effectively. Information on the labour market is gathered from a range of sources and courses are discontinued when they are no longer meeting needs.

16 Liaison with local schools enables the college to offer effective advice and guidance to young people in those schools to which the college has access but there are few links with schools at course level.

17 Equal opportunity issues are covered in various aspects of the college's curriculum. Special efforts are made to attract groups which are traditionally under-represented in education: a research project has identified barriers to access for people in one of the local areas. TEC funding was used to carry out the project which is now being used as a model for other areas and groups, including isolated rural communities. The strategic plan emphasises the need to overcome gender bias in recruitment to subjects.

18 The college tendered successfully to provide education services for Lancaster Farms Young Offenders Institution, where the curriculum on offer includes vocational courses, basic education and access to higher level study. Inmates can join taster classes, a community studies course and a parenting group as well as taking advantage of a course, 'Jobclub', in job-seeking skills. Although the institution experiences a high turnover of its population, many of whom are on remand, almost one half of the inmates are engaged for an average of over 20 hours each week in education and training. Over 150 awards have been achieved by students.

19 A particular strength of the college is the provision it makes for students with a wide range of learning difficulties and/or physical and sensory impairment. Links with external agencies have helped to identify needs within the community and provision has been developed to meet them. A useful information booklet has been produced about the specialised provision offered by the college. A notable feature is the work being undertaken to enable adults with physical and sensory impairments to attend the college. The college has a very flexible approach to developing programmes for individuals. Youth training courses provide appropriate progression routes for some students with learning difficulties and/or physical and sensory impairment but the lack of vocational courses at foundation and pre-foundation level is restricting opportunities for progression.

20 Commitments in the college's mission to implement equal opportunities are being actively pursued and a committee is currently reviewing the equal opportunities policy. Although the college has no comprehensive policy on environmental matters, several initiatives have been taken to raise environmental awareness. Staff have been commissioned to write open-learning modules on environmental issues for the learning resource centre; students' projects have been encouraged in energy conservation and the recycling of waste. The statement in the college's mission 'that personal and social development towards responsible citizenship should be an integral component of the college's curriculum' has not been accompanied by a strategy for its implementation. The college's commitment to introducing European issues into the curriculum has led to several initiatives taking place and links have been established with countries including Denmark, Poland, Latvia, Greece, France and Belgium. The college should consider developing a more comprehensive policy, which embraces these initiatives and involves all areas of the college.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

21 The governing board has 11 members, including the principal. Membership is drawn from industrial, commercial and professional interests in the community. The board has three committees: an executive committee, a remuneration committee and an audit committee. The small size of the board and the number of its committees avoids placing excessive demands on members' time and ensures that key decisions are dealt with at board meetings. In the absence of a more extensive committee structure and of a staff or student governor, board members are conscious of the need to gauge the likely effect of their decisions upon the college community. To this end, the governing body receives academic board reports and some governors act as chairpersons of college subject development committees. Two governors teach part time on college courses and one has provided valuable advice to the school of management in its application for the British Standards (BS) 5750 quality award. Some early tension between governors and senior college staff over their respective decision-making roles has been reduced partly through regular meetings of the executive committee which is attended by senior college managers. Information is provided to the board to assist them in monitoring the college's performance in achieving its strategic targets but more comprehensive analysis of examination and retention rates should be made available to the board.

22 The college is well managed and has been successfully led through a period of rapid change. The senior management team meets weekly. It consists of the principal, deputy principal, three faculty heads, finance manager and college services manager. Agendas and minutes reflect a business-like approach to the consideration of strategic matters affecting the management of the college. Some information provided to the senior management team is, however, inadequate to review overall college performance. Enrolments against targets are thoroughly reviewed but the analysis of examination results, room utilisation and student retention rates are given insufficient attention. Individual senior managers review performance in these areas and, within faculties and schools, reasons are sought for performance which falls below expectations, but the results of the review are not aggregated to provide a college overview for senior managers and governors.

23 All staff have had the opportunity to be consulted on the development of the strategic plan and are well informed about its contents. Staff are made aware through regular briefings from the principal of how college proposals fit with the requirements of the government and of funding bodies. Senior and middle managers jointly review and develop strategies for the implementation of the college's mission and strategic plan. School development plans have been produced in the context of the strategic plan and form the basis of action planning and review involving school and faculty heads. Some school plans set out clearly the development priorities for the school and subject area. Others have weaknesses; for example, there are no plans for the development of mathematics and languages.

24 The curriculum is managed through three faculties: technology, general and community education, and business and service industries. The structure replaced a matrix organisation in 1988 and has succeeded in establishing clear lines of communication and accountability within faculties. In most cases faculty management is effective; it involves regular reviews of performance against targets in the areas of resource and curriculum management. Strong support and guidance is often provided to middle managers and the strategic role of senior managers helps to shape the processes of innovation and development. The college should ensure that the good practice operates in all faculties. Heads of faculty have additional responsibility for cross-college functions such as student services, staff development, information technology and the development of GNVQs. Some overlap has occurred where different senior managers exercise strategic responsibilities in the same area, especially in relation to staff development, staff appraisal, and the college's approach to obtaining the Investors in People award. In other areas, such as budget and room management, where a senior manager has a cross-college brief, the role of the heads of faculty adds little to the decision-making process.

25 Within the faculties, the day-to-day running of courses and subjects is devolved to the 13 schools. Teachers in the schools meet regularly and minutes are distributed to senior managers who provide reports to schools on issues which are raised. The responsibilities of heads of school for curriculum, staff and resources are clearly set out in job descriptions. In most respects, their roles are well understood and management at this level is often purposeful and well directed.

26 Teachers belonging to vocational course teams within the schools also have a clear understanding of their roles. Teams meet regularly to review the progress of their students and the effectiveness of their course planning. Course meetings are generally well documented and actions to be taken, and the responsibility for these actions, are clearly recorded. Where course provision involves contributions from other faculties, some weaknesses in course and subject management occur. Not all staff attach the same priority to their involvement in courses outside the faculty to which they belong. The responsibilities of subject leaders are not always clearly understood and variation in practice can occur, especially in general education, over such matters as the recruitment and support of staff and the management of the curriculum. Examples exist of successful sharing of good practice, especially in the development and implementation of Business and Technology Education Council, (BTEC) and GNVQ courses, but there are insufficient opportunities for staff teaching the same subject to share good practice where the teaching occurs in different faculties.

27 Information technology across the college is well managed and provides students with good facilities. A college committee meets regularly to identify resource needs and to recommend improvements. Equipment is in good supply and software, as far as possible, is the latest available. The college plans to extend the availability of information technology to

support senior and middle managers. The computerised register system provides regular reports on patterns of student attendance to school and faculty managers. The linking of part-time staff payment to the system has improved the accuracy of register returns but the system does not provide sufficient information to personal tutors to support their role in monitoring student attendance. Some of the information from the college's management information system is unreliable, and this restricts its effectiveness in monitoring and reviewing the work of the college, especially at the subject and course level. The college is aware of the improvements required to its management information system and a detailed action plan is already being implemented.

28 The college's unit of funding for 1992-93 as recorded in the FEFC report, *Funding Allocations 1993-94*, was £2,285 per weighted full-time equivalent student. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges was £2,444. Summaries of the college's estimated income and expenditure for 1993-94 are shown in figures 5 and 6. The finance manager is a member of the senior management team and produces regular reports to governors, senior managers and heads of school to enable them to carry out their financial responsibilities. The allocation of budgets for consumables has moved from a historical base to a formula based on student enrolments, although no adjustment is made to budgets when students leave before completing their courses. Progress has yet to be made in the calculation of detailed course costs to assist in the effective management of resources.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

29 The admissions system is well organised. Timescales are laid down for responses to applications and interviews. For part-time students the enrolment period was started during adult learners week to provide continuous enrolment throughout the summer. Students interviewed during enrolment found the college welcoming and the staff involved in the admissions process supportive and caring. The development of a guidance and counselling unit has been a positive move to improve students' access to information. Adult students reported that advice on finance and benefits was particularly useful. The one private interview room is inadequate for needs at peak times.

30 The policy of liaison with local schools is well thought out. Students who came from local schools to which the college has access testify to the high-quality advice they received. Open evenings for prospective students are widely welcomed as an opportunity to meet staff and to ease the transition from school to college. The college reports that the advice available to local pupils in their final year of compulsory schooling is limited by the restricted access allowed to college staff by some schools.

31 In most cases, the quality of guidance provided by subject specialists and the central guidance unit is good. The staffing of the unit has recently

been strengthened by the appointment of a personal counsellor. However, staff new to the unit at the start of this academic year did not always have sufficient information and experience to explain course requirements and, in some cases, subject specialists did not make students aware of the full range of opportunities available to them. At the start of the year, partly as a result of design faults in the application form, students who were uncertain of their course choice were not clearly identified or given appropriate advice. Steps have already been taken to rectify this. There is a well-organised procedure to enable students who wish to change their course to do so in the first half term.

32 Although there is a clear framework for the induction of full-time students the programmes varied significantly in quality. In some, too much emphasis was placed on rules and discipline and opportunities were missed to use the college's student contract to set out rights and responsibilities. The college induction booklet helps to familiarise students with general aspects of college life and with the services the college offers, and there are good examples of course handbooks which set out useful information on course structure, resources and assessment policy. The college should consider ways of meeting more systematically the induction needs of part-time students.

33 Most full-time students are well supported by the tutorial system. The one-hour-a-week tutorial is widely used to help students with their coursework, monitor their progress and provide them with guidance. Some tutorials include a focus on social education topics. Each tutor is required to agree a programme with their students at the start of the course and submit it to their head of school. Programmes are generally well conceived and include formal sessions for assessing students' progress. Time is built in for work with students on an individual basis. Students interviewed spoke highly of the personal and subject support given to them and good practice was observed in English, languages, art and design, mathematics, hotel and catering, construction, engineering and business studies. Tutors are also responsible for monitoring attendance. Whilst this is carried out diligently in most cases, further improvements should be made to ensure that all tutors have up-to-date information on their students' attendance.

34 Closer monitoring of the tutorial programme is required to ensure consistency of practice. The system is less effective for some general education students where there is inadequate communication between subject teachers and personal tutors. The college has recognised the need to define student entitlement more clearly and a tutorial booklet, to be introduced in September, will go some way to redress the situation. The system of support for part-time students is less formalised but teachers are available for help informally and the guidance and counselling unit offers a good backup service.

35 In addition to the help available in the guidance and counselling unit, careers and higher education advice is built into the tutorial system.

Careers materials are adequate and available in a number of locations. Higher education applications are checked by senior managers. Links exist with the careers service, and they are represented on curriculum development committees. However, despite the allocation of time, the service has little involvement in advising students directly.

36 A sound start has been made to develop individual action plans for students. Examples of good practice exist in some vocational areas. In hairdressing and beauty therapy, all full-time and part-time students have a four-weekly review of their action plans where targets for learning are set by students and initialled by staff on completion. In hotel and catering, both staff and students maintain records of the work completed by students and the assessment grades achieved. The system in catering is particularly thorough and gives a clear overview of every student's progress. In business studies students' records of achievement, brought with them from their secondary schools, are regularly updated. Effective action planning takes place on NVQ and GNVQ courses. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities on specialist courses have individual action plans which enable them to identify their strengths, weaknesses and goals. Recording of progress and achievement is weak in psychology, science, mathematics and history.

37 The accreditation of students' prior learning is a strong feature of the provision in areas where national vocational qualifications have been introduced, in particular in secretarial studies. In hairdressing and beauty therapy, accreditation of prior learning is well documented and implemented for individual students. In engineering, construction, and art and design, procedures are not yet in place.

38 There is generally good support and guidance for students with learning difficulties and physical or sensory impairments. A useful and concise booklet is produced describing the specialist provision available in the college. The work foundation course has a clearly-written booklet which is sensitive to the needs of students.

39 Admissions procedures enable students to identify the support they require and staff involved then contact the learning support co-ordinator who discusses these with the student. The college has access to an educational psychologist for specialist assessment. However, there are no systematic procedures for identifying the needs of students who do not declare their disability or for those who may find difficulty with some aspects of their courses. There is effective support for students with learning difficulties and physical or sensory impairment who are integrated into catering courses. On other courses, teachers need more help in developing skills appropriate for the support of these students.

40 The identification of, and provision for, students who need additional support requires improved co-ordination. The college has made progress in establishing a central learning support service for core skills, offering help with English, numeracy and study skills but many students appear unaware of its existence, despite publicity across the college. Staff are

aware of the problem and plan to pilot systematic screening on selected courses to identify students who would benefit from additional support. Informal links between course tutors and the central service should be formalised to allow staff to work together to devise programmes and materials for individual students, and to monitor students' progress in the learning support centre.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

41 The teaching and the promotion of learning in the two programme areas providing courses in care, catering, leisure, tourism, hairdressing and beauty therapy was of a high standard. In business studies, engineering, construction and humanities the strengths clearly outweighed the weaknesses and in other areas there was a balance of strengths and weaknesses. Much of the provision is of a high standard. In approximately two-thirds of the sessions inspected the strengths clearly outweighed the weaknesses and in a quarter of classes there were very few weaknesses. Consistently good teaching was found on vocational courses especially those leading to NVQ awards where well over three-quarters of the sessions had strengths clearly outweighing the weaknesses.

42 The following table summaries the grades given to the sessions inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE A/AS level		3	5	6	1	0	15
GCSE		1	8	6	1	0	16
GNVQ		1	4	2	1	0	8
NVQ		16	15	8	0	0	39
Other		26	45	39	4	0	114
Total		47	77	61	7	0	192

43 Teaching methods take full account of the different learning needs of the students. Individuals are given ample opportunity to work on their own at a pace and level of difficulty well matched to their abilities. The teaching of adult students on courses validated by the Open College of the North West, and other courses preparing them for higher education, is generally of a high standard. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and there is close support from teachers which successfully builds the confidence of individuals returning to study. There is a more even balance of strengths and weaknesses in the GCE A level and GCSE programmes. Here good teaching is often in evidence but, in a number of sessions, methods fail to take account of the learning needs of different students and they receive insufficient guidance when undertaking study on their own.

44 Most lessons are well planned and many schemes of work are shared with the students. Good use is often made of visual aids, handouts,

classwork sheets and other resources that provide structure for the lesson and keep the students informed and involved. On courses designed specifically for students with learning difficulties and/or physical and sensory impairment, teachers make effective use of materials appropriate to the different ages of the students. Open college modules for history are particularly well organised and documented. In practical classes in construction, students are provided with well-designed worksheets that support and guide their work effectively.

45 In vocational classes the teachers are careful to ensure that links between theory and practice are clearly understood. In a well-planned care lesson, concerned with non-verbal communication, theoretical concepts were applied to employment, and skilful questioning drew usefully on the experience of adult students. In an NVQ hairdressing class, knowledge and skills previously acquired were built upon in the session and students applied them in practical tasks in the college salon. The session closed with a summary of the day's outcomes and the next stage of learning was outlined for the following week.

46 In most vocational programmes the teachers effectively reinforce the commercial relevance of the topic and much of the practical work is carried out under realistic employment conditions. In a number of areas this is further extended by planned work experience. The knowledge the students gain during their placements is often built upon when students return to their classes. The work experience for catering students is based upon clear job specifications for the activities to be undertaken. Students complete assessments and keep a daily diary of work which is agreed with the teacher. In beauty therapy, practical classes are well planned and directed and activities relate closely to the standards expected in a commercial salon. In mechanical engineering, some of the projects are based on industrial problems encountered by local companies. These are used effectively to develop the students' project management skills in a commercially-relevant context.

47 Most students experience a variety of methods of learning. Individual, group and class exercises provide good opportunities for students to develop their subject knowledge and understanding. During many of these activities students are able to work at a pace matched to their abilities and teachers provide well-directed and supportive guidance. Most teachers regularly check on students' levels of understanding in order to review their progress. In all programme areas, teachers establish good working relationships with students. In language classes, excellent relationships between staff and students facilitate oral work and the wide range of students' previous experience is well used. In psychology, the teaching is varied and stimulating and provides opportunities for discussion and individual and group research, to which students respond well. Open College English provides a wider range of learning experiences than English classes taught elsewhere in the general education programme. In science, mathematics and computing the range of activities

is too restricted and in some classes insufficient opportunities for the students to make a contribution cause their levels of interest to decline.

48 In most programme areas there are good opportunities for students to develop personal skills, such as communication, problem solving and independent working skills, though the extent to which these skills are systematically developed and assessed varies widely. In some vocational areas, for example on care courses, they are a distinct element in course documentation and lesson planning, and form an integral part of students' learning experience. The development of core skills is well planned within all GNVQ programmes. Support for students to develop these skills is provided in the learning resource centre but there is scope for closer integration between the centre and course managers. For GNVQ business studies programmes, the use of the centre by students is incorporated in their action planning. In part, this compensates for a reduction in taught hours on this programme. By contrast, in some general education programmes there is little formal reference to core skills or to their development. All students have an entitlement to 12 hours information technology tuition and this is effectively implemented. Although the provision is taught separately from the students' main course programme, efforts are made to ensure that the content is relevant to the students' major subject area. More could be done to ensure that information technology is incorporated into the teaching of specialist subjects.

49 Assessment schemes for most courses are clearly stated and well matched to the aims of the programme and/or the requirements of external awarding bodies. Internal verification of NVQs is generally well advanced. In some areas, for example catering, this includes sampling of assessed work. Although course work is set and marked in almost a third of subject areas, assignments are not efficiently scheduled to avoid an uneven work load on the students. Marking is generally fair and consistent and observes appropriate standards. The quality of the teachers' responses to students on their performance in assessments varies within and between subject areas, though most teachers provide helpful written comment indicating to students how they might improve their performance. For BTEC programmes the written brief for assignments normally includes the criteria for success, but in some other programmes the students are given insufficient information on the assessment requirements and on how different parts of an assignment are weighted for assessment purposes.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

50 In all subjects, students are well motivated and appear to enjoy their work. Many of the mature students show great commitment to their studies. They are responsive in class and willingly contribute in discussion. Students with learning difficulties and/or physical and sensory impairment are developing confidence and self esteem.

51 Overall, a reasonable proportion of students on full-time vocational courses successfully complete their studies. In 1992-93, 70 per cent of the

372 students enrolled on BTEC and City and Guilds of London Institute (CGLI) intermediate and advanced programmes at the start of the year gained the award. However, there is a wide variation between the levels; 98 per cent of the advanced level students were successful compared with 51 per cent at the intermediate level. In 1993, 88 per cent of the 164 students who were 16 to 18 years old in their final year of study for BTEC or CGLI national diplomas achieved their qualification. This places the college in the top third of colleges in the sector. On full-time vocational programmes, the overall retention rate for 1992-93, is just over 80 per cent, but for a number of courses over the last two years there have been rates significantly below this percentage.

52 Assignments in care and engineering are of a high standard. Students show an ability to apply theoretical concepts to professional practice. Good-quality artefacts are produced by child care students. Construction, hairdressing, beauty therapy and catering students are competent in practical work. In humanities, open college students achieve high standards in oral work. Art students complete a good range of exploratory diagnostic work and demonstrate good oral skills. However, major weaknesses are their limited development of basic drawing skills, and poor level of achievements in three-dimensional work. Business studies students on the office skills programmes show an ability to apply their knowledge to simulated work tasks.

53 In 1992-93, students aged 16-18 taking two or more GCE A levels obtained an average points score of 5.7 (where A=10, E=2) which placed the college well below the national figure for all schools and colleges of 14.7 points and places the college at the lower end of institutions within the further education sector. Sixty per cent of the students who entered the examination achieved passes at grades A-E. This compared with a national average of 66 per cent for all candidates in colleges of further education. However, good pass rates were achieved in a number of subjects including art, English and mathematics. A high proportion of full-time GCE A level students, some 43 per cent, leave before taking the examination.

54 A significant factor influencing the GCSE results is the relatively low level of achievement of some students on entry. The majority of students taking GCSE examinations are either re-taking examinations to improve the grades or are taking single subjects. Although counselled against it, a number of students enter for examinations which the college regards as inappropriate. Last year a third of full-time GCSE students left before taking the examination. The proportion of students gaining A-C grades in GCSE examinations varies significantly between subject and mode of attendance. In 1993, the percentage of full-time 16 to 19 year old students gaining grades A-C varied from 8 per cent for business studies to 74 per cent for human biology. Good rates of success were achieved in some subjects including English (57 per cent) and science (71 per cent). The proportion of students gaining A-C grades in mathematics varied from 19

per cent of full-time students aged 16-18 to 72 per cent of part-time students aged 19 or over. As yet the college is not in a position to conduct an analysis of added value by comparing students' level of achievement before taking, or retaking, examinations with their examination results.

55 Six full-time programmes had poor overall retention rates:

- the national diploma in computer studies (45 per cent)
- the NVQ level 2 in hairdressing (66 per cent)
- the national diplomas in engineering (52 per cent)
- the national diplomas in leisure (63 per cent)
- the national diplomas in art and design (62 per cent)
- the BTEC first diplomas in information technology (64 per cent).

Overall retention rates for part-time courses are not reliably calculated but significant numbers of part-time students do not achieve their target award. According to the college's published information on student achievements for 1992-93, only 56 per cent of students enrolled at the start of the year on BTEC and CGLI intermediate and advanced programmes gained the award. Part-time student completion and success rates for NVQ qualifications are generally good. The numbers were relatively small last year, and mostly in construction, but 88 per cent of construction students attained NVQ level 2.

56 The reasons students leave early are not always directly related to their programme of study. Personal, domestic and often financial difficulties are often given as the reason for withdrawal. In the light of the policy to widen access, the college should carry out a more comprehensive and detailed analysis of the reasons for withdrawals from courses. This should include a more systematic recording and analysis of the entry achievements of students and a review of pre-course guidance. The college has recognised the need to evaluate its own contribution to the value added to students' learning and last year, as a first step, began recording the entry achievements of full-time students.

57 The college has destination information for about three-quarters of the full-time students who successfully completed their studies in 1993. Of these just under 50 per cent progressed to more advanced educational programmes. Approximately 45 per cent of BTEC national and GCE A level students entered higher education and 67 per cent of BTEC intermediate level students remained in further education. Over 50 per cent of open college students who completed their studies progressed to higher education programmes of study, a further 26 per cent remained at the college to continue their studies, and the remainder entered employment. In total, almost a third of last year's students found jobs. Although the records show only 6 per cent unemployed, the students for whom destinations are not known, some 26 per cent, may include a high proportion in this category.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

58 The quality assurance framework has now been extended beyond course review and evaluation to encompass internal services such as personnel, recruitment, guidance and support. Policy statements, quality standards and monitoring procedures for these wider college functions have been defined. It is too early to evaluate the effectiveness of these extended quality processes. A pilot programme for BS5750 quality procedures in the school of management development is being evaluated for its suitability for wider adoption.

59 Course review procedures are formalised in the curriculum review, evaluation and development system and there is a procedures manual which includes accompanying proformas and student questionnaires for use by course teams. However, implementation across courses and programmes, is inconsistent.

60 Performance indicators are used to monitor enrolments, attendance, retention, completion and success rates. Targets are set for enrolments and attendance but this practice is underdeveloped in other areas. There is no comprehensive use of norms and benchmarks against which to monitor performance.

61 The review process effectively includes responses from moderators and verifiers but in some areas there is little evidence that the process leads to quality improvements. Statistical data to support course review is sometimes unreliable. Student perceptions of courses, as revealed in questionnaires, are summarised to identify key issues of concern. There is little evidence of employers' feedback on course quality.

62 A review of the results of the evaluation process is undertaken at faculty level. Outcomes from individual course reviews are used to make adjustments to course provision. A rolling programme of reviews of full-time and major part-time courses is undertaken by a subcommittee of the academic board which brings a useful perspective on the evaluation process from outside the faculty.

63 The college's response to the Charter for Further Education include strategies to raise staff awareness of the charter's implications and draft proposals for implementation.

64 There is an active staff-development committee which includes senior management team representatives. Staff-development practices have been carefully established and are closely matched to the college's strategic and operational objectives. All teaching and support staff are encouraged to participate in training events. There is a particular emphasis on assessor and verifier training to meet NVQ and GNVQ requirements. Staff are required to produce a report or presentation on the training they attend. The college bulletin publicises the outcomes of staff-development activities and identifies any staff accreditation.

65 There are detailed and informative handbooks for both full-time and part-time staff and a well-conceived induction programme for new staff. A mentoring system is under development.

66 The college has a high proportion of part-time teachers on some of its courses and the adequacy of their professional updating and skills development has a significant impact on the quality of this provision. Part-time teachers have been encouraged by the college to become involved in relevant training events but take-up is variable and the college should review strategies to widen the participation of part-time staff.

67 A scheme of appraisal for full-time teaching staff has been piloted and implemented over the last two years. A similar process is now being followed for support staff. The current arrangements are based on a developmental model and interim evaluation has been undertaken. Staff who have been appraised comment favourably on the opportunity afforded to discuss their developmental needs.

68 The college is seeking Investors in People recognition. An action plan has been drafted drawing upon the results of a staff survey to identify both good practice and areas requiring further development, analysed against national standard indicators. The initiative is steered by a college working party.

RESOURCES

Staffing

69 In recent years, the college has made adjustments in its staffing profile to achieve a balance of teaching and support staff more closely matched to its needs. While the college has expanded its student population significant economies in the numbers of full-time teaching staff have been achieved. Efficiency gains are reflected in the rising student to staff ratio, currently 16:1 for the college. The college has been able to do this by reducing taught hours on courses and by the phased contraction of staffing. Teaching staff now account for 46 per cent of total college expenditure.

70 Most teachers are well qualified for the courses they teach. Many staff have good vocational expertise. In some programme areas, however, there is a need for full-time staff to update their commercial and industrial experience. There has been a well-considered expansion of posts in support services, some to cover tasks formerly undertaken by teachers, such as those in guidance and counselling, and in the learning resource centre. There remain some inadequacies in the level of technician support particularly for information technology and art and design. Many programme areas rely heavily on part-time staff. This has allowed flexibility of staffing in some schools but occasionally results in problems of co-ordination and quality control.

Equipment/learning resources

71 An appropriate range of specialist equipment is available in most subject areas. Hair and beauty and catering students work with an excellent range of up-to-date industrial standard equipment. Materials for

use in construction courses are in plentiful supply. There is a shortfall of some specialist equipment in construction and in art and design. Some of the older machine tools in engineering are no longer representative of modern industrial practice. Teaching and learning aids, such as overhead projectors and audio-visual equipment are in good supply and easily accessible to staff. The supply of text books is adequate in all areas except mathematics and history. The availability of reference books is poor in some areas including science and business studies. The library has recently had most of its old stock removed and a rolling programme of replacement closely linked to the needs of the individual subject areas is being implemented. Of the library budget, 17.5 per cent is spent on subject-specific journals and newspapers and there is a good selection of audio and video tapes appropriate to humanities studies. The learning resource centre has a wide range of self-study material and equipment appropriate to most subject areas.

72 Information technology across the college is well resourced. There are over 300 modern workstations housed in several rooms. These provide a good student to workstation ratio of 8:1. Both the library and the learning resource centre have computers with CD-ROM facilities and a good range of relevant software. Information technology equipment at the White Cross Mill is inadequate for the present number of students and there is a shortage of relevant electronic engineering computer-assisted design software. There is also a shortage of computer equipment in the science laboratories.

Accommodation

73 The accommodation at the main site and at the Morecambe site is clean and well decorated. It constitutes a pleasant learning environment. There are sufficient class rooms available of an appropriate size to allow flexibility. There is good use of relevant wall display material and enough shelf and storage space to meet the needs of staff and students. At the White Cross Mill site, the classrooms and workshops are too small for the sizes of many groups and there is inadequate space for display and storage of students' work. The staff room in the leisure and tourism area is cramped and has insufficient storage space. Almost all class rooms are accessible to students who use wheelchairs and the main site has a lift which has been adapted for people with a sight impairment. The library and learning resource centre at the main site are adequate in size though the latter can become crowded around midday. A small area for quiet working has recently been set aside in the library but it only accommodates 25 students. There are limited library facilities at the Morecambe and White Cross Mill sites.

74 Specialist accommodation for hair and beauty and for information technology is of a high standard. It is adequate for courses and programmes in all areas except art and design. The college actively seeks sponsors from industry and has been successful in several areas: for

example, a brewery has recently made a significant donation towards the building of a training bar enabling the college to offer new licensed trade courses. The college makes available a range of its facilities to students, staff and the local community: the training restaurant, the ski slope, the health, fitness and rehabilitation centre, and a playgroup.

75 The students' common room on the main site is sparse in terms of facilities and decoration but students and staff have the use of excellent restaurant and bistro facilities. There are small but adequate common room areas at the other two sites. The reception areas are comfortable and welcoming with plentiful displays of literature giving information on courses. The college shop in Lancaster town centre provides a friendly and informative first port of call for potential students.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

76 Lancaster and Morecambe College is making good progress towards achieving its aim of providing high-quality and relevant education for its students. Particular strengths of the provision are:

- the high standards of teaching especially on courses leading to vocational qualifications
- a range of courses designed for school leavers and adults especially those traditionally under represented in further education
- the specialist provision for students with physical and sensory impairments
- the good links with employers in most vocational areas
- clear lines of communication with staff
- a well-managed information technology facility
- strong support and guidance for students
- a well-managed staff development programme which is closely related to college priorities.

77 If the college is to build upon its existing strengths it should:

- improve the accuracy and presentation of information to senior managers and governors especially on examination results, student retention rates and destinations
- ensure that good practice operating in some faculties and student induction programmes is applied across the college
- undertake a thorough review of the reasons for students leaving courses early and identify appropriate courses of action
- involve employers and the college's development committees more closely in the process of course planning and evaluation.

FIGURES

1 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1993-94)

2 Percentage enrolments by age (at 1 November 1993)

3 Percentage enrolments by level of study (at 1 November 1993)

4 Full-time equivalent enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (at 1 November 1993)

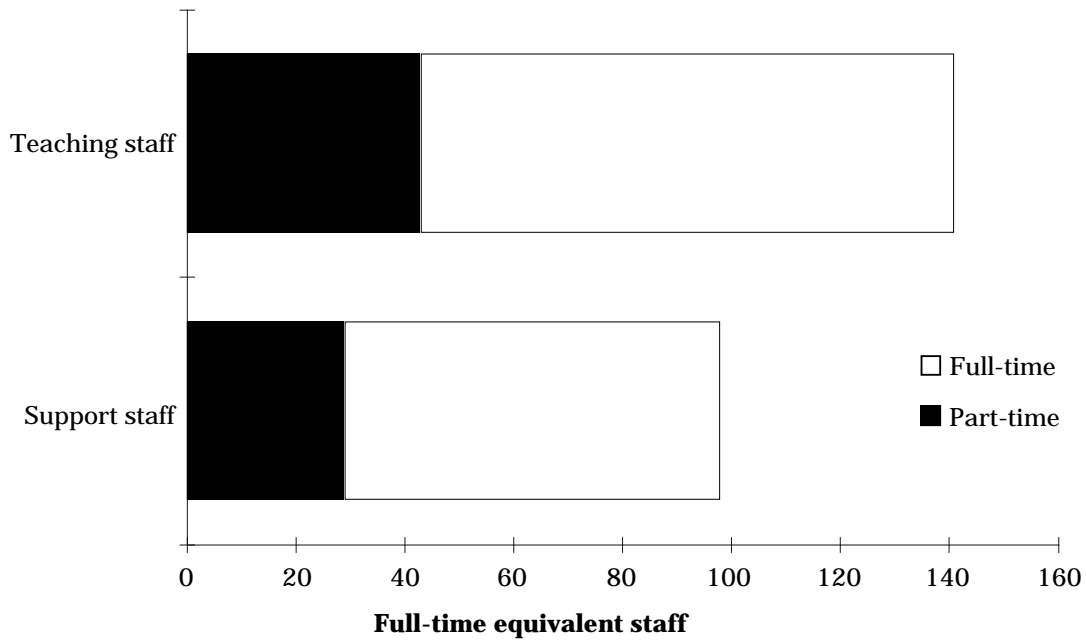
5 Recurrent income (1993-94)

6 Estimated expenditure (1993-94)

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

Figure 1

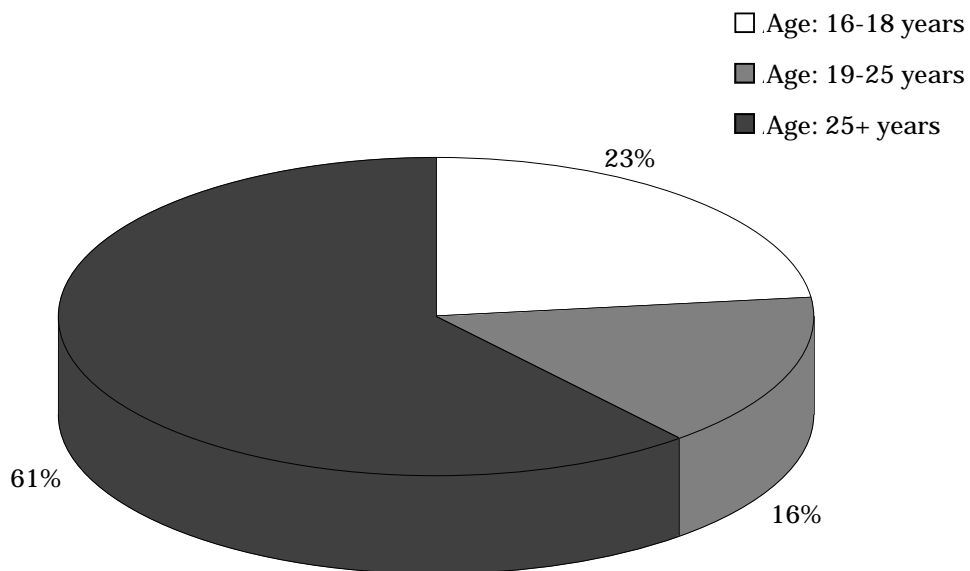
Lancaster and Morecambe College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1993-94)



Full-time equivalent staff: 239

Figure 2

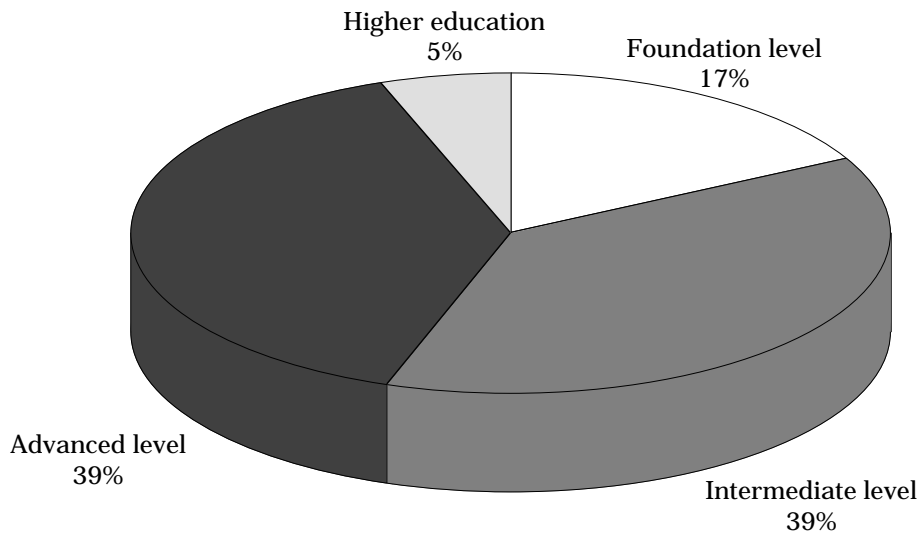
Lancaster and Morecambe College: percentage enrolments by age (at 1 November 1993)



Enrolments: 6,570

Figure 3

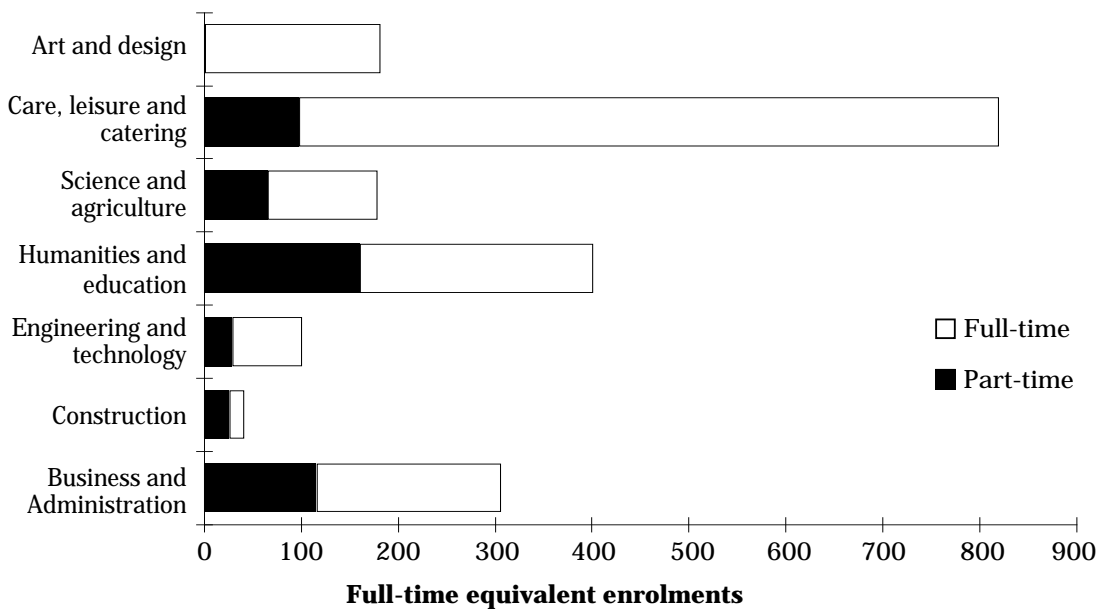
**Lancaster and Morecambe College: percentage enrolments by level of study
(at 1 November 1993)**



Enrolments: 6,570

Figure 4

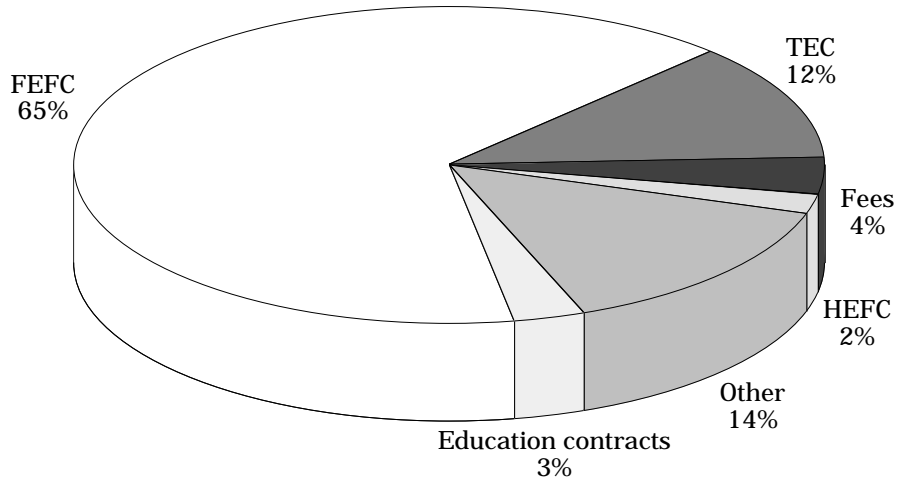
**Lancaster and Morecambe College: enrolments expressed as full-time equivalents by
mode of attendance and curriculum area (at 1 November 1993)**



Full-time equivalent enrolments: 2,033

Figure 5

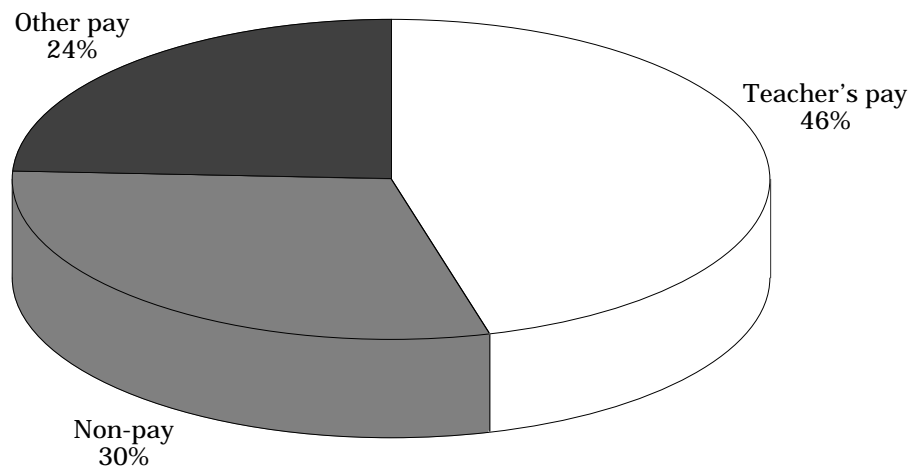
Lancaster and Morecambe College: recurrent income (1993-94)



Recurrent income: £8,990,000

Figure 6

Lancaster and Morecambe College: estimated expenditure (1993-94)



Estimated expenditure: £8,545,000

Published by the
Further Education Funding Council
August 1994