Loughborough College

February 1997

THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL

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

CONTENTS

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 22/97

LOUGHBOROUGH COLLEGE
EAST MIDLANDS REGION
Inspected February-November 1996

Summary

Loughborough College is a responsive college with good links with all of its external organisations. Extensive and thorough market research is undertaken, including a wide ranging needs analysis. It is managed by a closely knit and flexible senior management team. They have developed a well-structured and effective strategic planning process which involves staff at all levels. There are comprehensive and effective student recruitment, enrolment and guidance procedures. Students benefit from good care and personal support during their time at the college. There is good practice in teaching and learning in most curriculum areas. The quality of teaching and support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is of a particularly high standard. The accommodation generally provides a pleasant working environment. Most curriculum areas are well equipped. The college has developed some aspects of a systematic approach to quality assurance. However, if it is to build on its strengths it needs to develop greater consistency in the implementation of quality assurance procedures. It must improve aspects of management information related to performance and address areas of poor student achievement, retention and attendance. The college needs to draw together procedures for staff development and appraisal into a coherent system. It also needs to consolidate and extend the implementation of strategies for the delivery of key skills support. The library provision requires improvement.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science, mathematics and computing	2	Health and community care	2
Technology	3	Humanities including languages	2
Business and management	2	Basic education and SLDD provision	2
Leisure and tourism	2		

INTRODUCTION

1 Loughborough College was inspected between February and November 1996. A team of six inspectors spent a week in the college from the 25 to 29 November 1996. A further 56 days were spent inspecting curriculum areas, guidance, enrolment and induction. Inspectors observed 231 teaching and learning sessions and samples of students' work were examined. Meetings were held with governors, staff, students, employers and representatives from the local community, schools and the Leicestershire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC).

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Loughborough College was opened as a technical institute in 1909. The original college split into three separate institutions which exist today as Loughborough University, Loughborough College of Art and Design and Loughborough College. In 1966, Loughborough College was relocated, with Loughborough College of Art and Design, to a site now adjacent to the university. More recently, the Royal National Institute for the Blind Vocational College has moved on to the campus. Loughborough students' union covers all four institutions. The college, in addition to its main site, owns eight halls of residence and a small teaching unit near the town centre. The college rents property in Loughborough from the county council in which it runs courses for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). The college also hires accommodation in schools for academic programmes that include adult basic education and access to higher education courses. The college also works off-site with manufacturing and service sector organisations in the East Midlands region and beyond.

3 Loughborough is the largest town within the Charnwood district. Its traditional industries of textiles and engineering have contracted over recent years. Although the economy has diversified into pharmaceuticals, general manufacturing, warehousing and distribution, there are areas of the town where people are experiencing above average deprivation. The wider Charnwood area is mainly rural. The district population, at the last census, was 142,000 of whom 62,000 lived in urban areas.   In Loughborough there is a minority ethnic group of approximately 5,000 which is predominantly Indian.

4 Loughborough College is the largest of three further education institutions in north Leicestershire. All local upper schools have sixth forms and there are independent grammar schools in Loughborough. The college works in partnership with local maintained schools through the Charnwood cluster and the Charnwood progression accord. The Royal National Institute for the Blind Vocational College provides staff and equipment to support visually impaired students on programmes within Loughborough College. The college is involved in small-scale franchising with De Montfort and Nottingham Trent Universities and joint projects with Loughborough University. The college is also a member of the further

and higher education Leicestershire compact and has a progression accord with Loughborough University. There are links with the careers service, community organisations, local government, public organisations, industry and enterprise groups and Leicestershire TEC.

5   In 1995-96, there were over 8,400 students enrolled. Traditionally, the college had provided full-time courses for students aged 16 to 19 and part-time courses mainly related to engineering. Growing competition and changes in the local economy have made an impact on the college. Whilst the number of full-time 16 to 19 year olds has remained stable since incorporation, significant growth has occurred on full-time and part-time programmes for students over 19. Their number rose from 53 per cent of all enrolments in 1993-94 to about 75 per cent in 1995-96. There was a 25 per cent increase in full-time enrolments in this age range in 1995-96. Student numbers by age, by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area, are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3, respectively. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

6   Full-time enrolments totalled over 2,200 in 1995-96. Humanities provided the largest grouping, followed by hotel and catering including leisure and tourism, business studies, engineering, the sciences, and health and community care. Of the 6,209 part-time enrolments, the largest numbers were in business, management and professional programmes, followed by humanities, health and community care, engineering and basic education. Most enrolments came from Leicestershire. The college attracts significant numbers from the rest of the United Kingdom and from other European nations particularly France, Germany, Italy and Spain. Full-time students from more than 60 countries have joined college programmes. There is significant provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities which, as a result of a joint project with an NHS trust, is soon to be complemented by programmes for students with profound learning difficulties.

7   For teaching and learning, the college is organised into three faculties; business services, community and general education and technology. The faculties are assisted by college support services for students, by units with financial, personnel and administrative functions and by a European office. Quality assurance operates independently.

8   The college's mission is that it will 'create opportunities for learning for all those who seek them, will promote excellence in education and training for all its students and will enhance their individual potential in co-operation with others where this is desirable'. The college's objectives for the next three years focus upon growth and responsiveness, the promotion of education and training, and making a significant contribution to the achievement of national targets for education and training in Leicestershire.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

9   The college offers a broad range of full-time and part-time courses at levels that range from foundation to higher education. Some programmes are also offered through open or distance learning. In addition, there are activities which are individually designed to meet the needs of specific groups such as employers, community groups and individuals. These activities include short courses, conferences, consultancy and in-company training. Twenty-three subjects are available at general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level), 12 at GCE advanced supplementary (AS) and 17 at general certificate of secondary education (GCSE). General national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) are offered in 11 vocational areas; three at foundation level, 10 at intermediate level and nine at advanced level. There are 12 courses leading to higher national certificates. National vocational qualifications (NVQs) are available in 28 different areas, mainly at levels 1, 2 and 3, but include some at levels 4 and 5. A wide range of other qualifications is offered. Hairdressing was only introduced at the start of 1996-97. Catering provision was reviewed during 1995-96 in the light of increasing costs and falling enrolments and has been revised and reshaped. The development of courses in laser technology is a new initiative which involved collaboration both within this country and the United States of America. A number of awarding bodies validate and accredit courses. Extensive use is made of the open college network for accreditation. Clear information to help students in their choice of courses is available. The age profile has changed over the last three years. There has been a sharp increase in the number of students aged between 20 and 40 which has caused some programme areas to change their methods and has also led to the development of external courses for adults.

10   There are two key developments in the range and style of provision. The first is the introduction of more additional subjects to enhance full-time courses. Some courses have already developed a wide range of additional units, subjects and qualifications which can be added to the main qualification to improve progression opportunities. The second development is the commitment to offer more flexible modes of study and attendance. Opportunities for students to study on their own have increased. There are fewer time constrained courses with fixed entry and exit points and the college is conscious of the need to extend and accelerate the innovative progress that has been made in this respect.

11   The college offers education and training to companies and organisations. Development opportunities are reviewed carefully and decisions are made on the best mode of delivery and the appropriate funding method to support the course which may be delivered in college or on the clients' premises. Each faculty has a target for such work. Loughborough College Enterprises Limited is the college unit that runs commercial full-cost activities: the heads of faculty are executive officers. External funding is used to support courses and initiatives that range from

basic education to higher national certificate laser technology. The European Social Fund supports initiatives, particularly for unemployed adults, unwaged returners to study and adult basic education/ESOL for employees. The college has also made successful bids for the competitiveness fund and, as a partner in the Loughborough Town Partnership, for monies from the single regeneration budget.

12   There are a number of other positive ways in which the college works with employers. Technician Engineer Career Path is a non-profit making company set up with the encouragement of the college and Leicestershire TEC to promote and advance the training and vocational education of people intending to work as technician engineers. There are 20 member companies who support selected trainee students on levels 3 or 4 engineering technician courses primarily through work experience. Work experience is a feature of many other courses across the college and benefits from the numerous links that have been made with local employers. A comprehensive database has been developed to assist in these liaison activities with employers and a new post of employer services manager is planned. The involvement of employers in curriculum design varies. Examples of good practice include their contribution to the information technology advisory group and the joint development of assignment work between employers and the college on higher national certificate and GNVQ business courses. Relationships with a number of professional bodies are also good. For example, there are positive links with the local and national activities of the Institute of Personnel and Development.

13   The college has entered into some off-site collaborative provision, which it describes as 'strategic alliance'. It considers that these alliances will make a major contribution to the achievement of planned growth in 1996-97. Care is taken to ensure that alliances are clearly linked to strategic objectives and that there is careful control of partnership agreements. Current agreements include: some innovative work with Her Majesty's Prison Service for the provision of assessor and verifier training and NVQ custodial care; agreements with another provider for hairdressing and for customer service at NVQ levels 2 and 3; provision for key skills; courses for management qualifications; and a small access to higher education course in music at Soar Valley Music Centre. Contracts that have been made with other bodies include Norwich Union, Leicester Mental Health Trust, Hero Drinks, and Castle Donington Community College. A number of initiatives help students gain entry to courses from groups that have not usually entered further education. They range from courses in the community for adult basic education and ESOL to access to higher education courses. European social funding provides specific vocational training for unemployed people. The college has also taken initiatives to reach clients in rural areas. These include the development of the vocational training centre at Ashby Grammar School and work in Castle Donington.

14   Generally, the college has good working relationships with the local schools that are members of the Charnwood cluster of schools. The cluster works hard to develop ways of working collaboratively despite the intense competition to recruit 16 to 19 year old students in the area. The college provides opportunities for school pupils to sample vocational areas as part of pre-vocational courses. Pupils from the cluster spend half a day a week on some form of link activity with the college. A compact agreement has been drawn up by Loughborough College, Loughborough College of Art and Design and five schools to establish clearly-defined routes into post-16 education and training.

15   Relations with higher education are good. The college benefits greatly from the proximity of Loughborough University. Staff from the university speak enthusiastically of the responsiveness and co-operation of managers and staff from the college on joint projects. Student links are also good. College staff have developed curriculum links with university staff. The franchise for a combined studies degree programme with De Montfort University continues, but with low numbers. There are also productive curriculum links with Nottingham Trent and Wolverhampton Universities.

16   The college has productive working relationships with the Leicestershire TEC. The college is regarded as a responsive partner that has good links with employers and operates in a dynamic and far-sighted way. The college has been successful in securing funding for a number of projects through Leicestershire TEC. Loughborough College Enterprises Limited is a member of the Training Services Network and offers courses, including the skills for small businesses programme. Leicestershire TEC also awarded Loughborough College Enterprises Limited a contract to undertake diagnostic surveys for four organisations that were preparing for Investors in People. Contracts with Leicestershire TEC have been secured by the college for projects to support individual lifelong learning and to develop national records of achievement in prisons. Carillon Training is the division of the college which has contracts with the TEC to supply training to 16 to 25 year olds as part of career start and career apprenticeship schemes. The majority of the 149 young people on these schemes are employed.

17   The college has an increasingly influential role in the local community and in the economic development of the Charnwood District. There are effective links with the network of agencies in the town and surrounding district. These include the Charnwood Community Council which co-ordinates voluntary sector activities and for whom the college provides accredited training for volunteers. The college is playing a significant role in the development of a community transport project and provides training and premises for the maintenance and co-ordination of community transport. A good proportion of the minority ethnic groups in the locality attend the college. The community-based adult basic education provision is well established and covers the geographical region of north Charnwood.

It supports a broad range of learning needs which includes adults who want to improve their literacy and numeracy skills, adults with specific learning difficulties, adults with learning difficulties and physical disabilities, and adults who attend day centres. The marketing and advertising of adult basic education is effective. The college has been active in the Loughborough Town Partnership, in Business Link and with other members of the business community in the area, for example, the Charnwood Tourism Association. The college has played a key role in securing the £13 million for the single regeneration budget project. There are plans to develop further work to meet the needs of community groups that have been identified through market research.

18   The college has developed important international links. Students are recruited from a number of overseas countries. The availability of halls of residence is important for such students. There are links and exchanges overseas with colleges and employers in the United States of America, Spain, Malta, France and Germany. Specific strategic objectives identify the need to improve links with Europe and to plan the curriculum in a European context which includes increasing the study of European languages. This has met with limited success. A manager is charged with increasing this activity as well as increasing staff awareness of opportunities in Europe.

19   There is a strong emphasis on research and needs analysis as a basis for decision making. The college undertakes extensive and thorough market research which includes a wide-ranging needs analysis. The strategic planning process and all marketing activities are based upon this research. Labour market intelligence is sought from Leicestershire TEC and other sources. Original research is also commissioned. Marketing is well developed in all aspects, from initial needs analysis and promotional activities to monitoring and evaluation. All marketing operations are organised within the framework of the college strategic plan and there is close liaison with faculties. Recruitment targets are set and monitored in detail. A useful guide to marketing services called the 'marketing and promotions information pack' is produced. This gives information on the services that are available and explains how staff should undertake promotional activities. In addition, an extensive range of marketing activities includes a highly-professional range of literature, promotional events, exhibition stands, open days, and press and public relations.

20   The college caters well for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are effective links with outside organisations. In 1995, the new pathways programme for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities superseded all previous provision. New pathways is a dedicated college programme. It also supports the transition to the college of students attending schools and day centres. There are effective links with Ashmount and Maplewell Hall special schools and Mountsorrel Day Centre. Students on the new pathways programme have some opportunities to learn

alongside mainstream students. The college is developing programmes at NVQ level 1. It recognises the need to develop further opportunities for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities within mainstream college programmes. The age profile of the students on the new pathways programme is broad with 16 to 18 year old students learning alongside mature students. The college is beginning to support students recovering from mental illness with funding from care in the community. Close links with the Royal National Institute for the Blind have enabled significant numbers of students with visual impairments to study at the college. Currently, 24 students are supported by a staff team from the Royal National Institute for the Blind Vocational College. A new and supportive initiative has been developed jointly with the Mulberry Trust and Leicestershire Social Services Department which provides a day service for adults with profound and multiple learning difficulties. The college has leased a single-storey building to the trust which plans to develop a partnership to run courses at the centre and offer training placements for care students.

21 The college has appropriate equal opportunities policies and procedures. During 1995-96, there has been a renewed emphasis on some aspects of implementation linked to a new round of training for staff. The previous level of training and action planning did not fully support policy development. There is an equal opportunities policy covering students and staff. The college profile in terms of gender, ethnicity and disability was discussed by governors in September 1996 and it was agreed that no action was needed currently. The matter is to be kept under review. Clear guidance is given to all staff involved in admissions, guidance and tutorial support. There are also guidelines in course logs on the appropriate approach to equal opportunities issues in the curriculum. Guidance notes are in the process of being updated in some areas. Equal opportunities procedures are in place for the recruitment of all staff and a series of personnel policies have been developed and revised recently.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

22 There are, at present, 19 members of the corporation of whom three are women and one is from a minority ethnic background. Five members were appointed recently to vacancies that had been advertised in local newspapers; one vacancy still has to be filled by an appointment from the TEC. Eleven independent members are directors and managers of small to medium-sized enterprises all of which have relevance to college activities. The corporation includes members with skills in the management of human resources, accountancy and computing. Other governors bring experience from the community, local government and higher education. The principal and two members of the staff and a student are governors.

23 Senior managers are strongly linked to the functions of the corporation. Nevertheless, a clear distinction exists between governance

and management. Members of the senior management team frequently make presentations to the corporation and its committees on a range of academic and operational issues. There is a systematic training programme for the corporation that has been agreed by governors. They often participate in joint training sessions with senior management and teaching staff. One governor has been elected as a member of the academic board and is also carrying out a comparative survey of the achievement of learning goals. Another governor is principal of the Royal National Institute for the Blind Vocational College and has contributed to the development of provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities within the college. This year the board reviewed governors' perceptions of their role through a self-assessment exercise. Issues which were identified are now being considered. The corporation meets at least once a term. Governors also serve on four committees; audit, employment and finance, assets development, and remuneration. All of these meetings are well attended. They are supported by clear briefing documents and concise minutes which identify actions to be taken. The clerk to the corporation works closely with the chair and principal in managing the business of the governing bodies. The corporation has agreed a register of interests and code of practice. Governors have not yet established performance criteria to assess the effectiveness of operational and academic management. They show an awareness of key strategic issues, particularly those related to finance and assets. Their role in overall strategic planning is more to validate than to participate.

24   The acting principal was confirmed in post in September 1994. Since then the college has been restructured. A closely-knit, functional and well co-ordinated senior management team has evolved. It comprises the principal, directors of personnel, curriculum and operations, corporate development, and the chief accountant. A head of quality reports directly to the principal. Managers of facilities, learner services, learning resources and the three heads of faculty report to the director of curriculum and operations. A manager for activities in Europe and a manager for projects and planning report to the director of corporate development, who is responsible for strategic planning, marketing and employer and community development. The corporate information service manager reports to the chief accountant. Faculty heads manage teaching and learning and control the budgets. Two of the three faculties are very large. The three faculties all have a clearline-management structure for resourcing, staffing and students. However, there is some confusion over the roles and responsibilities of the programme leaders for quality assurance and curriculum leadership. This needs to be resolved. Systems to integrate and support part-time teaching staff vary from faculty to faculty. There needs to be greater consistency. College policies on health and safety and equal opportunities are monitored and reviewed.

25   A comprehensive and well-structured cycle of timetabled meetings has been established throughout the college. Heads of faculty meet weekly

with the director of curriculum and operations. A development group is convened weekly by the director of corporate development. There are learning support, programme leader and course team meetings in addition to a GNVQ and NVQ council. There is a termly meeting of the academic board, whose role as an advisory body is being reviewed. All of these meetings are minuted and action is planned to implement decisions. There are staff meetings in the faculties which vary in frequency. A college newsletter, 'The Rover' is produced each month.

26   College management has made judicious use of consultancies to develop cost comparators and systematise the management of new business activities. One consultancy produced an analysis which compares the college with sector averages for the cost of running premises and of employing teaching and non-teaching staff. Similarly national consultants have been used to assist in planning the management of collaborative activities which occur off-site. For contracts the college has developed management systems and procedures which are detailed, accurately priced and linked to strategic objectives.

27   The annual review of strategic planning is a well-structured and rigorous exercise which requires and receives the co-operation of staff at all levels. It begins with an analysis of competitors and external environmental factors and an assessment of the college curriculum in the context of courses, faculties and resources for learning. Key objectives are then determined by the senior management team. After this, new courses are fully costed and then tested to ensure that they match strategic objectives. Analysis of marketing, resources, investment and staff development are combined into a complete projection of expenditure that assists in the creation of the budget. Although strategic objectives are clearly specified, several of the operating statements lack detailed explanations of the action that is required.

28   Since incorporation, the college has maintained a high borrowing level to repay a large deficit to the local education authority (LEA). In June 1995, the sum was finally agreed at £1.25 million and the college is now in a position to begin the scheduled repayments of capital on the loan from its trading surplus. For the past two years the college has successfully achieved its unit targets, growing cumulatively by 7.1 per cent. The college's average level of funding for 1995-96 was £19.41 per unit. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges was £18.13 per unit. For 1996-97, the college's average level of funding is £19.09 per unit. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges is £17.97 per unit. An objective of the business plan for 1996-97 is seeking to reduce the average level of funding by a further 10 per cent. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are shown in figures 5 and 6.

29   Financial budgets have been delegated to faculties and other cost centres, mainly to cover consumables and materials. Staffing has been

retained as a fixed central cost, although faculties calculate the cost of courses by the hour for each programme area as a means of planning for the delivery of courses. The chief accountant operates a tariff planner to apportion budgets on the basis of the units planned by each faculty, but withholds the cost of administration and staffing. Budget holders receive individual reports. There is regular monitoring by the corporation and by senior managers, but no system of commitment accounting is yet in place. Senior managers and faculty heads display a clear understanding of funding methodology. Teaching staff have little knowledge of budget allocations at course or programme level.

30   The priority in the development of management information systems has been to establish an accurate individual student record to ensure accurate accreditation of units and financial viability. Reports are available upon request but most staff do not regard them as totally reliable. The director of curriculum and operations has evolved his own spreadsheets for collating attendance totals. As yet, faculties cannot access management information directly, nor are data on student destinations collated on a college-wide basis. There is as yet no overall policy on investment, equipment and training necessary to develop management information systems.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

31   There is comprehensive information on college courses. Well-produced course leaflets in a standard house style are available in the learner services unit. There is a separate 'English as a Foreign Language' prospectus for overseas students and a 'Guide to Higher Education at Loughborough College'. Only ESOL publicity literature is available in community languages and no indication is given in other college leaflets that they are available in other languages, if required. The new pathways information leaflet is similar to the leaflets for other programmes in the college but the vocabulary and the syntax are too complex for prospective students.

32   There are effective student recruitment, enrolment and guidance procedures. Learner services is a cross-college unit with responsibility for advice, guidance, counselling and support for learning. Enquiries are dealt with promptly by the information centre which is staffed by personnel from learner services who give initial general advice and guidance. The centre is open throughout the year to handle enquiries, offer guidance and process enrolments. Administrative staff and appropriate teaching staff are present to deal with queries and undertake interviews. The information centre and faculty offices offer advice and guidance efficiently. Staff are helpful and establish a good rapport with students. Enrolment procedures are well organised and effectively operated both in college and in the town centre.

33 The induction of students is generally thorough. Programmes, which include elements that are common to all students, are well planned. In presenting information a balance is achieved between general college and faculty matters and specific vocational and course detail. An induction pack for tutors provides clear guidelines. The majority of induction sessions that were inspected had strengths which clearly outweighed weaknesses. Good practice was observed in introductory exercises, practical activities, briefing sessions and team-building exercises. The skills that some staff displayed in organising these could be shared more widely among the whole staff. There was also good practice in the opportunities that were made available for GCE A level students to attend additional 'taster' classes during the first three weeks of courses to ensure that the most appropriate subject choices had been made. When it is necessary, students in any programme area can transfer between courses or add units of study to the original course. There is a well-designed and useful handbook for all students and some clear and helpful course literature. During induction, there is an appropriate emphasis on the college charter and on issues that involve health and safety and equal opportunities. There is good coverage throughout the induction programme of the sporting activities, social events and support for learning that are available to students to complement their courses of study. The size and layout of some of the rooms used for induction were not suitable for the groups nor the activities. In a minority of sessions, there was not enough opportunity for participation by students. For the off-site collaborative provision for the prison service, there was a comprehensive one-day induction event held at the prison. All aspects of NVQs were explained and a useful list of prison and college contacts was provided.

34 Tutorial support for students is generally effective. It is described by the college as managed learning time. The college uses the concept of managed learning to bring together support for learning centred on action planning and individual tutorial and personal support. The time is used to track and monitor students' progress, to plan ahead for courses and careers, to record achievement, to identify any support needed for assignments and for study skills, and to deal with issues of a pastoral nature. All full-time students, and those studying for more than seven hours a week, have a personal tutor and receive this support during managed learning time. The minimum entitlement is one and a half hours a week and this can increase to as much as four hours on GNVQ intermediate programmes. There is a college standard which describes the nature and content of the provision. Programme leaders can seek approval for variations to suit specific programme needs. For example, in GCE A level and GCSE courses they have adapted the system to take account of the need for subject teachers to plan within subjects and to provide subject reports to personal tutors. The quality of the action plans produced is variable. Tutors are provided with a useful pack to help them in the management of this tutorial provision. Attendance is monitored and absences reported and investigated through the personal tutor. The rigour

with which the system is implemented is variable and this needs to be made consistent.

35   All full-time students are screened to assess their need for literacy and numeracy support where necessary. There is also screening for language support. Part-time students are screened at the request of course teams. Tests are marked jointly by the members of course teams and by language and learning support staff. Referral recommendations are considered jointly by course teams together with individual students. If referred, students make an appointment with a member of the learning support team who discusses their needs and makes appropriate and timetabled arrangements. Students are then placed with a language or learning support tutor on a one-to-one, small group or whole group basis, according to need. Further support is planned and a review undertaken after 12 hours of study.

36   The college policy on key skills is not implemented by a consistent operating plan. Procedures are at present neither fully understood nor supported by all staff. The required staffing resources are not always available. The key skills co-ordinator has produced assignments for use at induction to identify students who need to be referred for support. The tests are not widely used. Implementation of the referral system varies across the college. Some vocational areas use their own assessments. In most cases, key skills are taught and assessed through vocational programmes. For example, application of number is integrated with assignments and key skills staff often work closely with teachers taking vocational courses. The mathematics and English workshops which are required to teach key skills are not yet fully operational. Students are told that support for key skills is available but are not always encouraged to use it. There has been some investment in staff development to achieve consistent standards in the teaching of key skills across the college, but the teaching of the staff who have not been trained in key skills work varies in quality. Particular attention is paid to ensuring that students have appropriate information technology skills before they need to use those skills on their courses.

37   The college is well served by Leicester Careers and Guidance Services which has an office prominently located at the front of the college. The service has established strong links with deputy faculty heads. Both general information sessions and individual advice on career paths are provided. Information covering the provision of careers guidance support and action planning is contained in the tutorial pack; take up is variable. There is a careers section in the college library and a member of staff is available for individual consultations. Students also have access to the careers and job-seeking facilities at Loughborough students' union which serves the four education institutions on the extended campus. The recent appointment of a job search administrator supports students on programmes for European Social Fund courses and is extended to those on a job seekers' allowance. It assists with the production of curricula

vitae and the construction of job applications. It is accredited by the open college network. There is good support for students applying to higher education.

38   The college has an effective counselling service provided by both a male and female counsellor through learner services. Usage is monitored and surveys to assess client satisfaction are undertaken. In addition, students can make use of the facilities provided for counselling, welfare and advice at the students' union.

39   Support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well established and very effective in providing support on mainstream programmes. Wherever possible, students are placed on mainstream courses and supported by a team of classroom assistants. All classroom assistants are members of course teams. There is a supportive relationship and good communication between tutors, student support assistants, volunteer tutors and students. Students speak very positively about the support they receive and this is reflected in their achievements. There are strong links with the Royal National Institute for the Blind Vocational College which has not only supported students but also runs development sessions to raise staff awareness on disability issues. For students with visual impairment, specific course materials are enlarged or produced in Braille, according to students' needs. A tutor guide about people with disabilities has been produced for the tutorial pack.

40   There is a strong students' union for the four post-compulsory educational institutions operating on the campus which include Loughborough University. Loughborough College is represented on the committee of this union by students elected from courses. The union provides comprehensive training to course representatives which aims to build up their self-confidence and provide opportunities for them to contribute to students' affairs. Students benefit from the extensive facilities for performing arts, music, social life and sports that are provided by the union. A chaplaincy, which ministers to all denominations and faiths, is available for students. The college also has a well-run, 60-place nursery which provides subsidised childcare for both staff and students.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

41   Strengths outweighed weaknesses in over 71 per cent of the sessions inspected. This compares with a national figure of 63 per cent for colleges inspected during 1995-96 according to figures published in the Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1995-96. Weaknesses outweighed strengths in just under 8 per cent of classes. Attendance in the classes observed averaged 78 per cent and varied from 59 per cent to 95 per cent. Curriculum areas with attendance rates below 70 per cent included some of the sciences, English and ESOL. Average attendance taken at a census on 25 November 1996 showed the faculty of technology at 80 per cent, faculty of business services 73 per cent and the faculty of community and general education at 71.5 per cent. The grades awarded to the sessions inspected are shown in the following table.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level	4	13	7	2	1	27
GCSE	0	6	6	4	0	16
GNVQ	7	20	8	5	0	40
NVQ	10	10	7	1	0	28
Basic education	2	13	1	0	0	16
Access to higher education	8	4	0	0	0	12
Higher education	2	7	4	0	0	13
Other vocational	13	22	9	2	0	46
Other	4	20	6	3	0	33
Total	**50**	**115**	**48**	**17**	**1**	**231**

42   In mathematics there were well-structured course outlines. Assessments were set and marked regularly. Staff-student relationships were good. Informal additional support was given in lessons to students who need it. Most questions were worked through on the board or on an overhead projector, and students copied what was written. There was little provision for different activities to meet the particular needs of the weaker or the more able students. The modular GCE A level scheme has sometimes been used to modify learning programmes to meet individuals' needs. In vocational areas there were few attempts to place work in a relevant context. In computing and information technology, teaching and learning and general classroom management were good. There was an appropriate balance of theory and practical work. Clear objectives were set in most lessons. Appropriate methods were used to meet these objectives, including group work, presentations, practical assignments, discussions and worked examples. Often students were highly involved in the work through question and answer sessions and discussions on problems. The pace of work was maintained at a level appropriate to the course and the abilities of the students. Teachers' comments on students' work were constructive and suggested ways in which it might be improved. In the sciences, detailed schemes of work were the basis for well-organised teaching. A range of methods was used. There were some stimulating question and answer sessions which effectively provoked students to think and consolidated their learning. Well-organised practical sessions provided opportunities for students to develop experimental techniques. The use of information technology was minimal. There were some poor-quality learning materials.

43   In electrical and electronic engineering, the aim is to ensure that students develop appropriate professional competences. Health and safety issues were given appropriate attention. Students generally participated

in learning activities but in a few lessons too much time was spent in copying from the board or writing dictated notes. There was a good rapport between staff and students. The industrial experience of mature students was used effectively. In mechanical engineering, the emphasis was on teaching topics in a didactic way rather than involving students in learning activities. Support was provided to students when necessary. Good use was made of standard forms to provide feedback to students on the quality of their assignment work. In automobile engineering, students experienced a suitable balance of practical and classroom activity. In practical sessions in the workshop, students were involved in a variety of tasks and received individual support and guidance. In some classroom lessons, teachers did not provide enough opportunities for students to discuss the work. There was little systematic assessment of students' progress.

44   In business administration and professional courses, schemes of work, assessment plans and assessment materials were of high quality. The documentation for GNVQ courses was of outstanding quality. Teaching and learning was well organised. Lessons in NVQ administration were of a high standard. Strong support was given to both NVQ and GNVQ students who were preparing portfolios. In some professional courses teaching varied in quality. The needs of individual students were not given enough attention. In the poorer lessons the work did not challenge the students sufficiently and as a result they showed little enthusiasm.

45   In leisure and tourism, teachers have strong industrial backgrounds. They used their knowledge and experience to help students to gain insights into the requirements of the industry. There were excellent relationships between staff and students who received much individual attention. Some lessons were well planned; the work challenged and stimulated all of the students. Question and answer techniques were well used by teachers to check students' progress and understanding. Many of the tasks set for students in class were relevant to working life. In a national diploma class, the interest of a large group of students was captured by a case study on the new national forest in the neighbourhood of the college. Students' knowledge of the area was drawn on and all were able to contribute to the discussion. In a few lessons, sketchy planning and poor classroom management resulted in too many students remaining passive. The correction of students' written work was not always sufficiently thorough and often poor grammar and spelling went unchallenged.

46   Students in health and social care benefit from good relations with their teachers who use a variety of teaching and learning methods to engage them in active learning. Lessons were well structured and managed and the content was frequently related directly to a vocational context and, in particular, to work placement experiences. An appropriate emphasis was given to equal opportunities issues and practices. In some lessons, planned activities were sometimes overambitious or foiled by the lack of preparation by students. Some handouts were poorly presented. Assignments were imaginative and well structured. Tutors mark students'

responses in detail, providing an effective critical commentary on the work, but do not always correct spelling or grammatical errors.

47   In media and photography, the aims and objectives of most lessons were clearly stated. The majority of lessons were well managed. Work was presented in the context of what had gone before. Relationships between students and teachers helped learning to take place. Teachers were sensitive to the differences in ability within a teaching group. They took care to build on students' current skills and sustained their interest by a variety of methods. Independent work was encouraged and, in practical lessons, teachers circulated answering questions and guiding students.

48   In history, law, sociology and psychology, teaching was generally of good quality. Teachers used an appropriate variety of methods to ensure that students could understand the subject matter. Good use was made of handouts, worksheets and discussion methods but there was little use of audio-visual material. In GCE A level English, teaching was generally unimaginative. There was an over reliance on imparting knowledge and insufficient emphasis on developing students' ability to learn. There were too few checks that learning was taking place. Often students were presented with poorly-produced handouts and overhead transparencies. In GCSE English, there was an attempt to use a variety of methods to keep students' attention. Some classes suffered from poor attendance. Retention is often low particularly on two-year courses. On access to higher education courses, tutors were attuned to the needs of mature students and took care to develop their understanding. Across the humanities area there is scope for sharing good practice between teachers both within and between subject areas. In teacher education, teaching and learning is of a high standard. Students are motivated and committed and have a good rapport with their teachers. Lesson preparation was rigorous, systematic and based on a clear view of curriculum objectives. The way learning was organised helped individual students to develop their understanding.

49   In modern languages, English as a foreign language (EFL) and ESOL, the standard of teaching is good and stimulating. Teachers use a variety of methods and activities to maintain students' interest and encourage active participation in lessons. Classrooms have displays of posters, maps and students' work which stimulate learning. Lessons were at an appropriate level and many language skills were developed in a single lesson. Teachers of some high level ESOL classes used local news stories to stimulate students' interest. They persuade students to write or speak on the issues in the style of the different sections of the media in order to develop their language skills. Some staff teach on both modern language and EFL courses and this results in much good practice. Their lesson planning and teaching demonstrated a real grasp of the learning process. The use of language was carefully considered to help students to extend their vocabulary. In some modern language lessons, an unnecessary

amount of English was used. Some students on vocational courses who study languages were not motivated.

50 For students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and adult basic education students, teaching is of high quality. Students were challenged at levels appropriate to their needs. Students on the new pathways and adult basic education programmes demonstrated understanding and application, responded positively to assessment and readily accepted the setting of new targets. There were some missed opportunities to link learning to key skills and to record the progress of individual students in their personal and social development. In the majority of adult basic education sessions, there was too much dependence on volunteer tutors for the management of the teaching and provision of one-to-one support.

51 The college runs off-site collaborative provision to offer NVQ level 2 courses in custodial care specifically for the prison service. It gives prison staff a nationally-recognised qualification. It is undertaken in the prisons using senior officers as assessors. Students benefited from a clear introduction to NVQs and to the course. Learning was reinforced by the use of high-quality and appropriate teaching aids. Tutors displayed a sound knowledge and understanding of the subject. The college also runs collaborative off-site courses in music at the Soar Valley Music Centre. Tuition in composition was of a high standard and was enhanced by the competence in information technology of both staff and students. Music teaching was of a very high standard. Teachers show a commitment to meet the needs of individual students who come from a variety of age groups and ethnic backgrounds. The provision has a record of success; those who wish to progress to higher education usually do so. It meets the requirements of a wide range of abilities, ages and backgrounds.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

52 The retention and attendance of students are issues which the college needs to address. As yet there is no effective college-wide management evaluation of student retention. Inspectors found some variation in retention across all three faculties. There are particular areas of concern in computer studies, engineering, health and social care, media studies, some GCE A levels and the foundation programme in general education. Information is collected on student destinations. Detailed records are kept course by course at faculty level. These are then collated to produce overall faculty data and a comparison of faculties.

53 The 118 students, aged 16 to 18, who entered for at least one GCE AS/A level examination in 1994-95 scored, on average, 4.2 points per entry (where grade A=10 points, E=2). This placed the college in the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure, based on the data in the 1995 performance tables published by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE). The 152 candidates entered for GCE AS/A levels in 1995-96 scored, on average, 4.2 points per

entry according to the 1996 tables published by the DfEE. This again places the college in the middle third of colleges on this performance measure. In addition to these students, a number of candidates aged 19 and over sit GCE A level examinations, many after one year of study. College data show that in 1995 the average score for the 95 candidates over 19 who entered for at least one GCE AS or A level equivalent examination was 5.4 points. There are variations in the quality of results between different subjects and between one-year and two-year programmes of study.

54   In mathematics at GCE A level, the pass rate and the proportion of high grades are above the national average for all institutions and well above the average for further education colleges. A value-added analysis has shown that, on average, students retaking GCSE mathematics improve their results by one grade. Students do not develop well their skills of working in groups, their discussion skills, or their ability to learn on their own, mainly because the college offers them few opportunities to practise these skills. In computing, students' achievements and results are variable. Practical skills are being developed effectively and the level of skill is at or above the level expected for the course. On GNVQ and City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) 7261 courses, results are generally good. Pass rates on the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diploma computer studies are at or slightly below the norms for the sector. GCE A level computing results are generally poor. Some students on access to higher education computing and information technology courses make excellent progress. Group work and presentational skills are good on the BTEC national diploma in computer studies. In sciences, results in most external examinations are well above the national averages. Students on vocational or access courses show considerable achievement. In experimental work, some students possess good skills, whilst others are less competent. Many students show impressive levels of analysis and understanding. Skills in numeracy, literacy and communication are also high.

55   In electrical engineering, students' performance in examinations and assessments is variable. Most full-time courses have successful completion rates similar to national averages. There are some good results on electrical installations courses. Pass rates on the national diploma courses in electronics are good. In practical sessions students are developing appropriate competences. Students are well motivated and work well, both as individuals and in small groups. In automotive engineering, students respond well to individual and group activities in the workshop and keep a log of completed tasks. In assignment work, students generally demonstrate appropriate understanding and knowledge. Where students have been referred for additional help, lecturers offer appropriate advice and guidance to enable them to complete their courses successfully. In some classroom activities, there is little evidence of student achievement. In mechanical engineering students' achievements are variable. Students'

responses to set work vary. The better students present their work clearly, and show that they understand the principles involved. They appear to be confident in their mathematical work. The weaker students present untidy work. Their spelling and grammar is often poor, and their drawing skills are not of a professional standard. Relatively few pieces of work have been produced using information technology. In workshops, students carry out practical work safely and competently. In engineering, careful attention is paid to health and safety.

56   In business studies results are above the average in many of the professional areas and good in some secretarial skills courses. Students' portfolios, ranging from GNVQ intermediate to NVQ management, are well presented and well organised. The general level of students' basic communication and numeracy skills is good. Some students achieve high standards, but in GNVQ their achievement is constrained by narrow and over rigorous assessment and in NVQ administration it is sometimes hampered by inadequate resources.

57   In leisure and tourism, for students who stay the course, achievement rates for most examinations are good. Many students are skilled in drawing on their own experience and relating it to their theoretical studies, especially in sports and sports science. Students generally work well together in groups and with their teachers. They behave in a mature and responsible fashion. Their oral skills are generally well developed. However, some students make little effort to practise and improve their key skills. Some fail to prepare thoroughly for their lessons; others are unable to maintain their concentration during long teaching sessions. Students do reasonably well in individual sports and in coaching and leadership awards.

58   In health and social care, students enjoy their learning and make confident and knowledgeable contributions to class discussion. Some students' assignments are of a particularly high quality. However, there are very few examples of students making use of information technology skills when completing assignment work. There is a consistently high pass rate for the diploma in nursery nursing course. There are high pass rates on some part-time programmes. Progression routes from health and social care programmes are good. Attendance in some classes is poor.

59   In media and photography, students' achievements in external examinations are variable. For those who complete the course, achievements are generally at or above national averages. However, there is considerable variation in the percentage of students who choose to remain on courses, particularly the two-year courses. Students enjoy their studies but prefer practical sessions to theory. They collaborate well in group work. Most students appear interested and diligent and take a good deal of responsibility for their own learning. One GNVQ advanced media student, who is visually impaired, produces a regular radio programme for the campus radio. Others contribute to both the campus radio and the college newsletter.

60   In the majority of subjects in humanities, student achievement is commendable. Good levels of understanding are displayed in the classroom. The standard achieved in public examinations and in progression to higher education and employment is generally high. There are outstanding individual performances, and some results are significantly above national averages. Achievements, as measured by examination grades at both GCSE and GCE A level, are generally above national averages for the sector. Students tackle tasks with enthusiasm and good sense. Their written work is of a good standard and they pay appropriate attention to presentation, grammar and spelling. Students' oral and discussion work is good. Access students study at an appropriate level to prepare them for entry to higher education. However, in GCE A level English, pass rates are near or below the national average. Some students in GCE A level groups do not demonstrate an appropriate level of achievement. GCSE English pass rates are close to the national average but too many students obtain grade D or below. In modern languages and EFL pass rates are generally good. GCE A level results in Spanish are outstanding and GCE A level French results are generally above national averages. Pass rates for EFL are consistently high. Students enjoy their courses and develop good social skills. They display confidence in speaking the languages, work together well and often show creativity in their written work. Most ESOL students are returning to education for the second time to develop their language skills and improve their fluency. Students are encouraged to enter for appropriate qualifications and there is a high pass rate.

61   All students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and adult basic education students are working towards and achieving nationally-recognised accreditation. However, there is no initial assessment to ensure that students take the most appropriate courses. Students on the new pathways programme have opportunities for work experience. Achievement in the workplace is well documented, effectively monitored and results in a summarising record for each student. Some tutors do not record progress and achievement within lessons. Students speak positively about their programmes.

62   Students studying music at the Soar Valley Music Centre are provided with an imaginative choice of options which focus on the importance of live music making, including composition. Students are highly motivated. A range of different styles of music making, from classical to rock and including Asian music, feature in students' work. There is a high rate of progression to higher education. Some students have compositions published. The NVQ level 2 in custodial care course only began in summer 1996. No courses have been completed yet. Internal assessment is at an early stage but work that has been seen shows appropriate levels of knowledge and understanding.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

63   The college charter is contained in a single document aimed at all the college's students. It has recently been revised to include information directed specifically to students with disabilities. The same document is used for students who are working off-site through collaborative arrangements, or participating in basic education and ESOL provision. The charter fails to express entitlements which are sufficiently realistic and specific to make sense to all its groups of students. Audio and Braille versions are readily obtainable for students with visual impairments. Although the charter is distributed widely, the majority of students are not aware of its existence. There is a formal complaints procedure. Complaints are investigated carefully and a report is made to the college's executive group. Governors receive complaints reports. There is no other effective way in which implementation of the charter is monitored.

64   A policy on quality, and a framework and criteria to assist with self-evaluation, were approved by the academic board in November 1995 and by governors in January 1996. These documents built upon a well-established system of course logs which contain descriptions of learning activity and annual course reports. The academic board highlighted the college's emphasis on this improvement of quality by distributing notepads which include a summary of key elements. The policy identifies a role for governors in establishing their expectations and explaining how they will judge the effectiveness of the college. However, the statements are broad descriptions of good practice rather than criteria which can be monitored objectively over time. The framework is intended to be used throughout the college. Many teams have made progress in using the criteria in their own evaluation processes, but there is no consistency across the college.

65   The college's strategic plan and organisational structure contain clear references to accountability for quality assurance. In particular, the deputy heads of the three faculties have key roles in ensuring that the college's strategic objectives for enhancing quality and promoting excellence are met. The role of the academic board in advising the executive management team on aspects of quality is less well developed. The purpose of the quality council as a subcommittee of the academic board is not clear. Implementation of the college's policy, framework and procedures is most successful where the activity and objectives for improvement are identifiable within a team. Implementation is least successful when the activity crosses the work of several teams. In some instances, objectives for improvement lie outside the remit of the team because they have resource or organisational implications and it is not clear to the team how these issues can be addressed. The lack of a standardised core of information in the annual course reports means that consistent monitoring of the implementation of policies, and the aggregation of data, across the college are difficult to achieve.

66   Self-assessment reports have been produced for the academic years 1994-95 and 1995-96. The second report is clearly a development from the first, is more comprehensive and links more closely to the college's planning procedures. Grades are included as a contribution to the inspection process and are organised according to the headings in Council Circular 93/28, Assessing Achievement. In many areas, the judgements in the self-assessment report accord with those of the inspection team. However, aspects of students' performance such as completion rates, success rates and progression are not prominent. This reflects the lack of emphasis and rigour in the analysis of these areas in many of the annual course reviews which are aggregated to form the core of the self-assessment report. Heads of faculty contribute their own reviews to the report. The self-assessment report identifies appropriate action points but, in many cases, these are not sufficiently specific. They do not identify targets or performance indicators by which progress can be monitored. Similar weaknesses in action planning are evident at course team level.

67   The college is developing its use of statistical information to support evaluation of quality. Generally there is little target setting to support quality improvement or monitoring. Better use of statistical information is made to support the college's efforts to improve its efficiency of working and its planning. The corporation does not receive reports on key performance indicators in a systematic way. The executive group receives far more analytical information, including data relating to college responsiveness and student performance. This information has recently been shared with the academic board who recommended its wider dissemination. The college has several approaches to measuring the value added by the college to students' achievements. A start has been made in analysing the increase in students' employability as a result of the additional units of study they have added to their main qualification; the progress students have made along defined vocational routes from foundation to advanced levels; and the gain made by GCE students with their predicted performance based on GCSE achievements.

68   Course team reviews address issues raised by students. Students are generally aware of ways in which they can make their views known either through course representatives or their tutor. There are many positive examples of prompt action being taken to address students' concerns. The use of questionnaires to find out students' views is a more recent innovation and it is not yet proving to be effective in bringing about improvement. Employer feedback on the provision of information technology is received through an active consultative committee. However, employers' views are not used by other courses. The college recognises the need to improve these arrangements for finding out, and responding to, employers' views. It has recently developed a new industrial liaison strategy.

69   The college has developed some effective initiatives in quality assurance. New courses, including those provided through off-site collaborative arrangements, are subject to a rigorous validation procedure. A system of curriculum audit has resulted in a wide cross-section of staff being trained in observation and evaluation techniques. The process is of particular value in providing members of the assessment team with evaluation techniques and insights into practice which differ from their own experience. External verifier reports are received by the executive management and shared with the teaching teams; action is taken speedily on any points identified. Internal verification is taken seriously. A set of agreed guidelines for verification procedures has been developed and a common forum for further work has been established. The procedures that have been introduced provide a useful vehicle for spreading good practice in assessment. The strategy for quality assurance in off-site provision is well thought out and has resulted in thorough monitoring and action for improvement. The training manager of the organisation, collaborating with the college in some aspects of hairdressing, has worked with the college to translate the quality statements in the framework into appropriate evaluation criteria. This is an excellent pilot study.

70   The college re-introduced a system of annual appraisal in 1995. The current scheme is common to all staff, including all part-time staff. It aims to identify systematically the personal development needs of individuals and relate them to college objectives. Objectives for the year are agreed and personal training is planned. The director of personnel builds individual plans into the annual staff-development plan which also includes requirements derived from the college's operational plan. The budget for staff development for 1996-97 is £40,000. Each faculty is delegated £6,000; the remainder is held centrally. This amount is the same as the allocation for 1995-96 and follows a year when all staff-development funds were frozen. At the time of the inspection, one complete cycle of development reviews was not complete. An advisory staff-development committee had been established but it had not yet met. The staff-development policy had been approved. Staff development was unco-ordinated. The implementation of policy is not yet effective. Issues to be addressed include: the transfer of information about personal objectives; the workload for trained appraisers; confusion over responsibilities and procedures for monitoring the effectiveness of faculty staff-development activities; and the system for establishing adequate budget provision. The college is taking active steps to address many of these issues.

RESOURCES

Staffing

71   The college's full-time staff are well qualified in terms of the range of subjects on offer. Most staff have industrial, commercial and professional experience. Some of this experience is not recent but the situation is helped

to some extent by part-time staff who have current industrial experience. The relatively high number of lecturers with fractional appointments offer additional flexibility in teaching the programmes. The college employs 489 staff, a full-time equivalent of 317 staff. There are 300 lecturers. Part-time lecturers make up 17 per cent of the lecturing staff. Forty-five per cent of the full-time lecturers, but 75 per cent of the fractional lecturers, are women. Women are under represented in the management structure. They hold only five of the 19 posts identified in the management structure. Forty-seven per cent of the full-time lecturers are over 45 years of age. There are 15 staff from minority ethnic backgrounds. Eighty-five per cent of the full-time staff have teacher training qualifications but a much lower percentage of part-time staff either hold a qualification or are on teacher training programmes. There are 57 full-time lecturers with training and development lead body awards; five have or are in the process of obtaining verifier awards. In the business faculty, 38 full-time staff have a training and development lead body award but there are 11 staff in the technology faculty and eight staff in the community and general education faculty with such an award. There are sufficient technical staff to support vocational programmes. The college's 1995-96 accounts show that staff salary expenditure, as a proportion of total expenditure, is only 63 per cent.

72   The college's recruitment and selection procedures are well developed. All new staff participate in an individual induction programme and receive a staff handbook which is clearly written. New staff also receive separate information on equal opportunities, staff development, health and safety, personnel procedures and a copy of the policy on quality. The corporation has approved disciplinary, grievance and redundancy procedures. All lecturers have transferred to new contracts which provide for an increase in flexibility. Support staff, other than those recently appointed, are not on flexible contracts. There is no formal consultative committee involving the unions but a staff council is planned.

Equipment/learning resources

73   There is a clear procedure for ensuring that capital investment is related to current curriculum needs. Faculties formulate bids against clear criteria. Bids include improvements to the accommodation as well as capital equipment. A three-year programme of improvement has been agreed. Funds have been earmarked for upgrading furniture, further equipping learning centres and improving access for students with restricted mobility.

74   Most curriculum areas are well equipped with a wide range of teaching aids. Staff have easy access to audio and video replay equipment. There is an appropriate range of specialist equipment in most of the vocational areas. The motor vehicle workshops are well equipped and contain modern electronic diagnostic facilities. In electrical and electronic engineering, there is a wide range of appropriate equipment and facilities.

These have recently been expanded to meet the needs of the electrical contracting industry, and include some unusual features such as equipment for high voltage testing and the developing of laser facilities. Engineering students have access to appropriate computing hardware and supporting software. The mechanical workshop has machines which are suitable for basic training but they are dated. The fabrication equipment takes up considerable space and is becoming out of date. The computer numerically controlled equipment will soon be out of date. The computer-aided design suite has modern pentium computers and the latest version of AUTOCAD. Pneumatics training equipment is available in one of the electrical laboratories. The science workshops have good basic equipment and an appropriate range of spectrometric and chromatographic facilities. Information technology facilities in the science area are inadequate. The photography area, including the darkroom facilities, is adequately equipped.

75   Business students have access to modern computers and the training office has recently been re-equipped with facilities normally found in a modern business office. The travel shop contains equipment typical of a high street travel agency. In addition, students benefit from undertaking work experience and using the commercial equipment in the travel agency situated in the college foyer. The sports centre houses a gym and fitness centre, both equipped to the highest standards. A new fully equipped hairdressing salon opened in September 1996. The information technology resources for specialist courses are generally of good quality. New facilities allow students to use faculty learning centres at times of their own choosing. There are 362 workstations available for students on the main site. Individual printers serving each workstation are being gradually replaced by more modern printers serving a network of computers. There is a base room with large screen facilities for the partially sighted. Students on the new pathways course have access to a room which has been equipped with modern computers and access to the Internet. In three base rooms used by students on non-specialist courses, there are outdated machines which use software which is incompatible with the software used with the new machines. The college is a member of the language development network from which resources have been made available to the college; these are not readily available to students. A sum of money amounting to £38,000 has been set aside recently to build a language centre.

76   Learning centres are being established in each faculty to implement the college information technology strategy. The centres are equipped with 78 modern pentium machines with appropriate software. The centres are being well used by students and appropriate staff are available to provide advice and support. There are compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) database and Internet facilities in the centres. The centres provide some complementary and compensatory equipment and facilities to redress some of the inadequacies identified in the library. However, at the time of the specialist inspections, they had only just opened and there was insufficient evidence of their effectiveness to make a judgement.

77   The library is inadequate to meet the needs of students. It is shared with the Loughborough College of Art and Design whose plans to relocate their facilities have been deferred for a further year. Currently, two-thirds of the bookstock serves the needs of Loughborough College of Art and Design students. There are only 11,000 books held for college use, which is insufficient. In science, mathematics, social and health care and basic education, many of the existing books are out of date. Opening hours and staffing levels are satisfactory. There is only one quiet study area. The decor and the furniture is outdated. The cataloguing system is difficult for students to use. There is a limited range of materials available for home use. There are six workstations in the library, of which three are CD-ROM machines. These are not easily accessible to students. A CD-ROM network has been installed but, as yet, it is not available to students. There is a shortage of space for journals and periodicals. The material available is not well organised in terms of display. The college recognises the deficiencies in the library and, when Loughborough College of Art and Design relocates, it intends to address this issue. The new learning resources manager has drawn up an action plan for the existing library. An additional allocation of £10,000 has been made to enable some new books to be purchased and these have been catalogued using the Dewey system; computer terminals have been installed which will enable the number of workstations to be increased; a careers library has been relocated to be more accessible to students. A separate area for a good range of staff-development material has been set up. A library upgrading bid of £45,000 per annum for the next two years has been submitted. This is needed to increase the bookstock to 20,000. It does not allow for further disposal of outdated stock. No decision has been taken, as yet, to make a financial allocation for this.

Accommodation

78   The main college site comprises purpose-built accommodation and extensive grounds and gardens. The premises are externally well maintained and there is clear signposting to all parts of the site. The majority of the teaching accommodation is adequately maintained and provides a pleasant working environment. Classrooms are clean and tidy, most are comfortable and many are carpeted. Some contain old furniture. Most laboratories and workshops are spacious, clean, well lit and in good decorative order. The brickwork area and the darkroom are too small for the size of some of the groups using them.

79   The college runs provision in a number of community schools. These outreach bases are generally of good quality. The computer centre at Castle Donington is shared with the school to mutual benefit. The ESOL provision at the Limehurst Annexe is housed in an unattractive, drab building in the grounds of a school. However, it is in a convenient location and has an adequate number of rooms which have displays of students' work and colourful posters. There is a creche at the annexe which is well

used. At the Soar Valley Music Centre, the accommodation is good but is handicapped by poor soundproofing and the lack of a recording studio.

80   Facilities for students are satisfactory. The cafeteria, which is modern and has recently been extended, provides a clean and friendly environment. There is a spacious sports and leisure facility which includes a modern and well-used fitness centre and a well-equipped gymnasium. A travel shop, run by a commercial company, and a general shop run by the students' union, are conveniently located near the main entrance. Funding from a private company has enabled some redundant catering kitchens to be converted into a purpose-designed hairdressing salon to provide accommodation for new college programmes and work simulation for the company trainees. The students' common room is often crowded and smoky, and it is not cleaned often enough. Ramps provide wheelchair access to over 90 per cent of the main site and accommodation. The lift to the science block does not service the sixth floor and this means that students with impaired mobility may be excluded from biology and photography courses. At the time of the inspection, the lift, which had been breaking down frequently, had to be taken out of action for the rest of the term to allow urgent repair work to be undertaken.

81   The college owns eight student halls of residence, one of which is a locally listed building. They are well maintained, in good decorative order, and provide basic self-catering places for 142 students. Demand for residential places has declined in recent years. There is a 60-place nursery available to college students and staff on the main site, providing all-day nursery care for pre-school children from the age of six weeks and above. The facilities are spacious, well maintained and safe. There are 400 car park places which is sufficient for current student needs, but alleged fly-parking by students from adjacent educational institutions makes it difficult for students to find a space.

82   There is a comprehensive accommodation strategy which has been agreed and reviewed by the governing body. The estates are managed by the director of operations and curriculum, supported by premises officers and a maintenance officer. The maintenance team has been streamlined and more work is undertaken by outside contractors. All maintenance work undertaken is monitored and reviewed at monthly meetings for responsiveness and quality. The allocation of rooms for classes is organised by the faculties. A room survey is carried out each term. The findings are outlined in a report on group sizes and occupancy; this information is used as a basis for re-allocation of rooms. Surveys show that overall room utilisation is low. While there is overcrowding in some rooms within social studies and humanities, there is under utilisation of other rooms in technology based areas leading to a mismatch between group size and room size.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

83   The particular strengths of the college are:

•   its responsiveness and effective links with all its external organisations

•   a closely-knit and flexible senior management team

•   a well-structured and effective strategic planning process

•   extensive and thorough market research

•   comprehensive recruitment, enrolment and guidance services

•   good care and personal support for students

•   the development of aspects of a systematic approach to quality assurance

•   good practice in teaching and learning in most curriculum areas

•   the high-quality teaching and support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

•   aspects of accommodation and equipment which enhance learning.

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

•   improve aspects of management information related to performance

•   consolidate and extend the implementation of strategies for the delivery of key skills support

•   develop greater consistency in the implementation of quality assurance procedures

•   draw together procedures for staff development and appraisal into a coherent system

•   address areas of poor student achievement, retention and attendance

•   improve the current library provision.

FIGURES

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

Figure 1

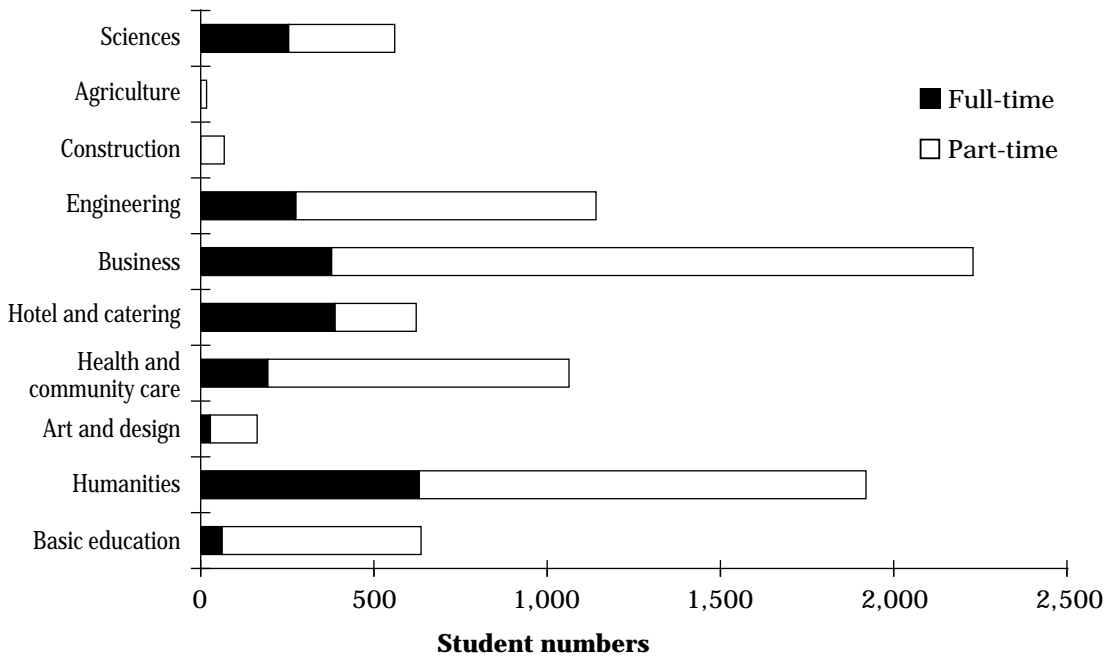**Loughborough College: percentage student numbers by age (as at July 1996)**

- ☐ Under 16
- ▨ 16-18 years
- ■ 19-24 years
- ▢ 25+ years
- ▦ Not known
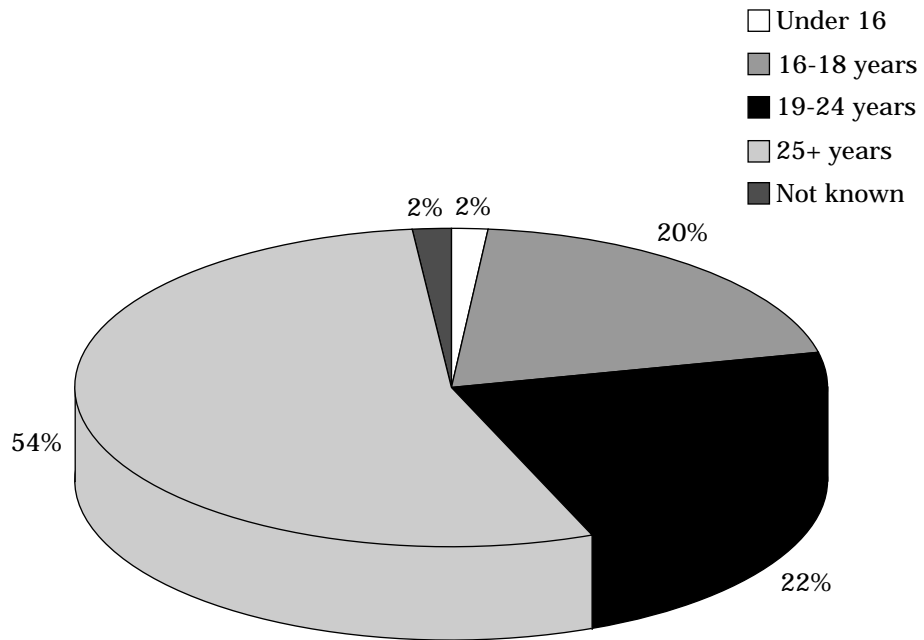
Student numbers: 8,419

Figure 2

Loughborough College: percentage student numbers by level of study (as at July 1996)

- ☐ Foundation
- ▨ Intermediate
- ■ Advanced
- ▢ Higher education
- ▦ Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)
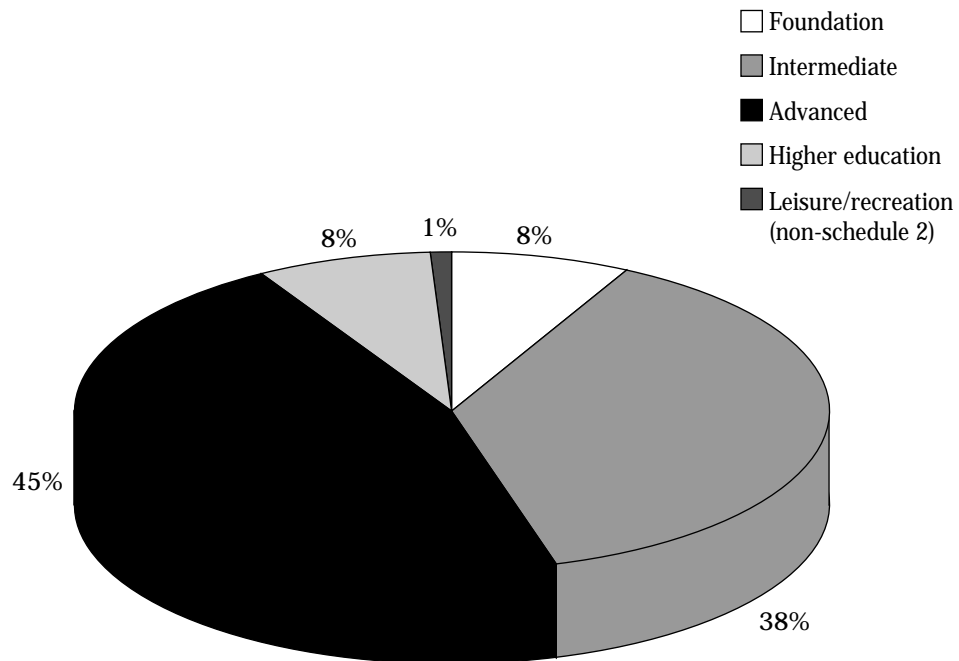
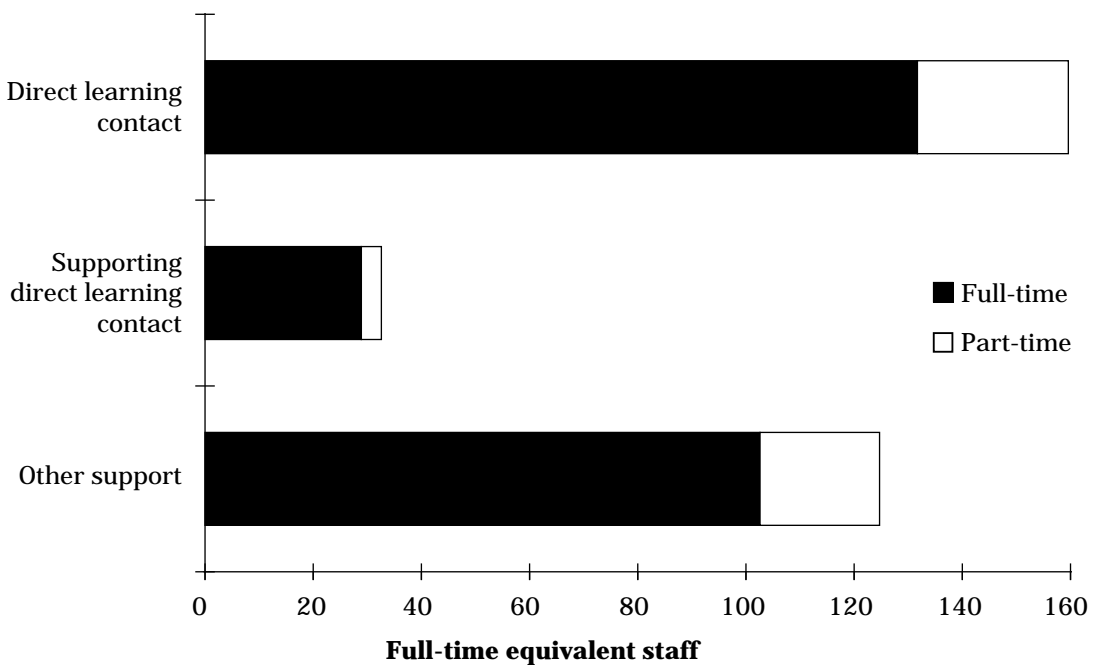Student numbers: 8,419

Figure 3

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

Student numbers: 8,419
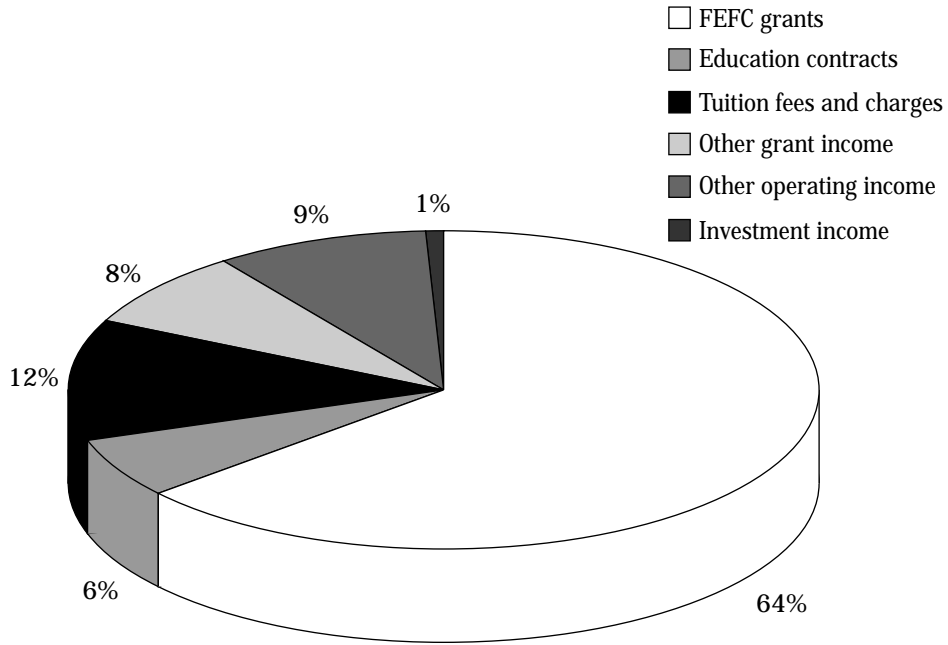
Figure 4

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

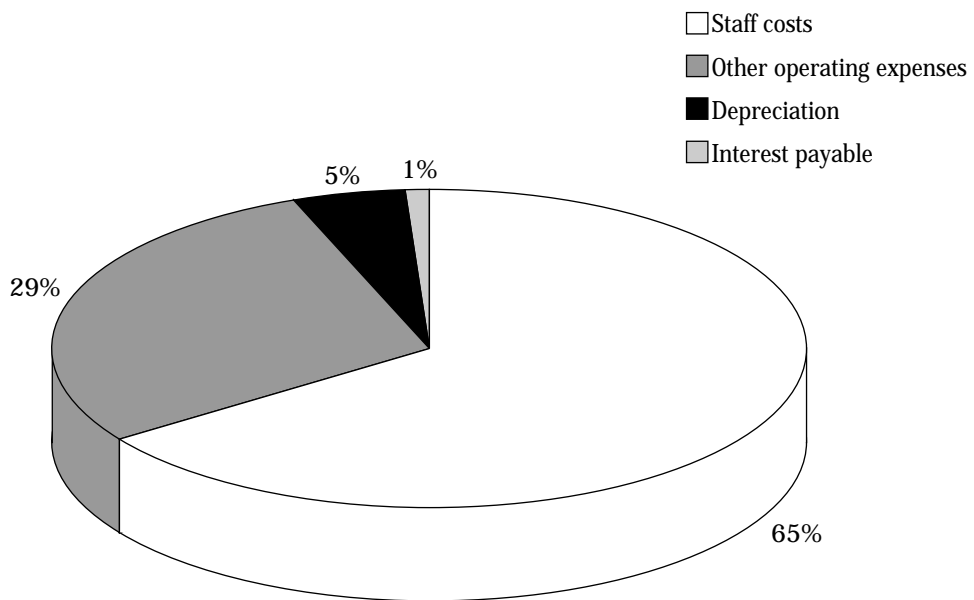Full-time equivalent staff: 317

Figure 5

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

☐ FEFC grants
▨ Education contracts
■ Tuition fees and charges
▨ Other grant income
▨ Other operating income
■ Investment income

Income: £10,292,000

Figure 6

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

☐ Staff costs
▨ Other operating expenses
■ Depreciation
☐ Interest payable

Expenditure: £10,102,000

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