

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Wakefield 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.

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GRADE DESCRIPTORS

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

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

College grade profiles 1993-96

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

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 13/97

WAKEFIELD COLLEGE YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE REGION Inspected September-November 1996

Summary

Wakefield College offers a wide range of courses. It is responsive to its local community, and flexible in meeting individual students' needs. It has strong links with employers, local schools, other educational institutions and European organisations. The college is effectively governed and managed. Its processes for planning and review are consultative and well developed. It has effective communications and management information systems. Students' achievements are good in a number of areas, including GCE A levels, and satisfactory in others. Staff provide students with good teaching and support. The quality of provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is particularly high. There is a comprehensive quality assurance framework and extensive opportunity for staff development. Staff are well qualified and experienced and teachers and support staff work well together. Good learning resources and high standard accommodation reflect the college's recent heavy investment in these areas. To build on its strengths the college should: take further steps to ensure the college's financial health; improve some aspects of faculty and school management; address inconsistencies in the provision of additional learning support; continue to improve retention rates; spread good tutorial practice; and improve the rigour and consistency of course reviews.

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		2
Resources:	staffing	1
	equipment/learning resources	2
	accommodation	1

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science, mathematics and computing	2	Health and social care, hair and beauty	2
Construction	2	Art, design, performing arts	2
Engineering	2	Humanities	2
Business and management	2	Languages including English	2
Hospitality, catering, leisure and tourism	2	Adult basic education	2
		SLDD provision	1

INTRODUCTION

1 Wakefield College was inspected between September and November 1996. The enrolment and induction of students were inspected during September. In October, 23 inspectors spent a total of 71 days inspecting programme areas. They visited 298 classes, held meetings with college staff, inspected students' work and examined documentation relating to the college and its courses. In November, eight inspectors spent a further 37 inspector days examining aspects of cross-college provision. During this period, they held meetings with governors, representatives from the Wakefield Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), head teachers, local employers, parents, other members of the wider community, students, college managers, teaching and support staff.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Wakefield College became a tertiary college in 1981 with the merger of Hemsworth College of Further Education, the Whitwood Mining and Technical College in Castleford and the Wakefield College of Technology and Arts. It is the main provider of further and higher education in the Wakefield district. The college has four main centres: one close to the city centre, another a mile away at Thornes Park, one at Whitwood and a fourth at Hemsworth, eight and 10 miles away, respectively. The college uses a further 30 centres. The college works within a competitive environment: in the Wakefield district there are six local education authority (LEA) schools with sixth forms and within 10 miles there are two sixth form colleges, another tertiary college and eight general further education colleges. In addition there are over 20 private training organisations in the area. There are thirteen 11 to 16 secondary schools maintained by the LEA.

3 The Wakefield district is a major industrial and commercial area with a population of 310,000. Whilst the coal mining industry has declined, there has been growth in food manufacturing, and in the distribution and technology-based sectors. The decline in mining has led to high rates of unemployment: in April 1996, 8.3 per cent of the workforce were registered as unemployed. However, there are pockets of higher unemployment. Wakefield has European objective 2 status which provides opportunities for grant-aided development programmes. In 1995, the staying-on rate of 16 year olds in full-time education was 58 per cent, well below the national average of 68 per cent. One per cent of the population is from minority ethnic groups.

4 In July 1996, there were 14,430 students enrolled at the college. Of these, 3,109 were undertaking full-time courses and 11,321 were part-time students using a variety of modes of attendance including day release, block release, and evening only. Three-quarters of the students are over 18 years of age. 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. The college employs 349 full-time equivalent teaching

staff and 270 full-time equivalent support staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

5 The principalship comprises the principal, the vice-principal and the finance director. There are three assistant principals with responsibility for curriculum and quality, management information systems and internal development, and planning and external relations. There are six faculties, each led by a director: sixth form and higher education studies; continuing education; business and hospitality; social care; technology and the built environment; and performance, media, arts and management. The directors based at the Whitwood, Thornes Park and Hemsworth Centres are responsible for the development of these centres. A seventh director has responsibility for student services.

6 The college's mission statement commits the college to respond flexibly to the education and training needs of the community by maximising opportunities for achievement and success. In order to focus developments, 10 strategic priorities have been established, for example in the areas of finance, accommodation, marketing, quality, and curriculum. The college aims to be the first-choice provider of further and higher education in the Wakefield area, and to make a significant contribution to the economic and social regeneration of the district.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

7 The college is responsive to the needs of employers and the local community. It is making a significant contribution to the achievement of national targets for education and training by offering courses leading to general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) in 10 vocational areas and national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in nine vocational areas, from foundation to advanced level. The college offers 29 general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) subjects during the day, many of which can also be studied in the evenings. There are several higher education courses, some franchised from local universities, and substantial adult education provision including an access course to prepare adults for entry to higher education. The college provides an enrichment programme on Wednesday afternoons, comprising sport, leisure and cultural activities, in which over 1,000 students have enrolled. There are some gaps in provision, for example in aspects of business and management studies and in the range of part-time GCE A level and general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) subjects.

8 The college is flexible in providing educational opportunities at times and places which suit students' needs and circumstances; for example, on company premises, through open learning, on Saturday mornings and sometimes on Sundays. In a number of programme areas, assessment of students' competence takes place in the workplace. Increasing use is being made of new technologies such as computing, and of learning centres which allow students to learn at a time of their own choosing. Each of the four main centres has a general learning resource centre, and there are

also learning centres to promote key skills and business skills. There are smaller learning centres at four community centres.

9 The college is active in assessing the needs of the community. Marketing staff take account of labour market surveys undertaken by the local TEC, the college's own analyses and surveys of students' opinions. Surveys have been commissioned to ascertain, for example, how the community views the college and what the training needs of small companies in the area are. There is a college marketing strategy and a detailed action plan. Faculties are expected to consider the identified needs of the community and overall college strategies when planning their provision. Market research has prompted, for example, the provision of GCE A levels at the Whitwood Centre and other courses such as those for students aiming to gain employment in the public services. Publicity information is of high quality and presents a strong corporate image of the college. The college's activities are featured prominently in the local press.

10 The college does a large amount of training work for local employers. Approximately £600,000 was earned last year through activities paid for by employers. There have been strained relations with the local TEC relating to the loss of the two contracts for TEC-funded youth and adult training in 1994-95. However, the college has taken on new work with other managing agents, including modern apprenticeships, which compensates for the reduction in revenue from the TEC. The college has recently won a competitiveness bid in conjunction with another local college. There are weaknesses in some aspects of liaison with employers. For example, some employer liaison meetings are poorly attended and the liaison group for sport, travel and tourism is not fully representative of the area it serves.

11 About £2.5 million has been obtained from European sources to improve college facilities and develop new courses, and about 550 students and staff made visits abroad in 1995-96. The European visits are well integrated with the students' main programmes. For example, students taking part in visits study additional units in aspects of European life and have some basic preparatory language tuition. The college works with 150 partners in 14 countries. A higher national diploma in European travel and tourism has been developed with partner institutions in four other European countries, and the first students graduated in 1996.

12 There is effective liaison with local schools. A well-established college link programme enables pupils from special schools to sample different vocational areas. 'Compact' arrangements have been developed with five local schools to identify pupils in year 9 who are likely to underachieve at GCSE level and to encourage them to progress to the college. College staff are involved in the teaching of GNVQs in two schools. Pupils from a third school study some subjects at the college, use the college's learning centres and take part in the enrichment programme. The college has productive links with local higher education institutions. These links help to ease students' progression from college to higher education. In one project, for

example, Huddersfield University has agreed to accredit units gained on the college's higher national certificate course in social care towards the university's diploma in social work. Many college projects involve work with other further education colleges in the locality.

13 A broad range of provision has been developed to meet the needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In 1995-96, over 200 such students studied on three full-time and three part-time courses, and an additional 28 were integrated with other students on mainstream courses. The college has effective systems for identifying and responding to students' needs for additional support, which involve close liaison with schools and local agencies. A development group has reviewed the college policy for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and an approach has been adopted which will enhance their opportunities to join mainstream programmes whilst continuing to receive appropriate additional support. Pre-vocational programmes enable students to develop the skills they need to progress to higher level courses and the college provides good support for students progressing to employment. An exemplary 'supported employment' initiative is jointly funded by the college, the social services and a private company. This scheme enables students in employment to return to college to develop or practise the skills they require in the workplace.

14 Many college staff serve on local and regional committees. Community links are well established, for example with the adult education service and the youth service. An innovative scheme has been developed jointly with the youth service to provide youth work training for young people identified as unlikely otherwise to participate in post-16 education and training. The youth service's Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme is part of the college's enrichment programme. The college offers a joint programme of courses with the local authority in several local centres but does not keep records of how effectively students progress from this outreach work to mainstream college provision. Some students have found this progression difficult and some adult students studying in the day time have felt uncomfortable studying alongside the younger students in the main centres. Community liaison groups have been established at each of the college's centres to facilitate the identification of local needs; a recent community conference was well attended.

15 Local sports and arts organisations make extensive use of the college's facilities. The college provides the education programmes at Wakefield and New Hall prisons. Recent work with the travelling community has resulted in a programme of 'taster' activities linked to basic skills development. In conjunction with several other agencies the college is developing provision aimed at unemployed former miners. The college participates in several projects run jointly with the Asian community. For example a modular framework of courses in English for speakers of other languages has been developed and Asian youth workers are active on college sites supporting Asian students.

16 The college's equal opportunities committee has reviewed the equal opportunities policy and has established a college implementation plan. This informs faculty development plans, which are required to address equal opportunities issues. The college's staff-development programme gives appropriate attention to equal opportunities issues. There is effective monitoring of equality of opportunity in relation to recruitment, retention and achievement, and follow-up action has been taken to attract students from a wider cross-section of the community and to encourage women to enrol on courses where traditionally the proportion of female students has been low. For example, the location of social care courses has been changed in order to increase participation by the Asian community, female role models have been used to encourage women to follow information technology courses, and the college has introduced some 'women only' courses, such as the course in motor vehicle work. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is larger in the college than in the local community as a whole.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

17 The board of governors has 19 members. There are 10 business members, two co-opted members, two members elected by college staff, a member elected by students, a member nominated by the local community body, and the principal. There are vacancies for a representative from a local TEC and for another community representative. Six governors are women. No member is from a minority ethnic group. Governors have experience in law, finance, personnel, estates management, secondary and higher education. Their wide range of experience and contacts have proved to be a valuable asset to the college. The board has a clear view of the strategic direction of the college and of its mission in the local community. Its members are well informed and committed to the college's success. They have agreed on 10 strategic priorities for the college and monitor progress rigorously against targets, requesting a wide range of detailed reports to help them in this task. These include annual reports on health and safety, on quality assurance including an analysis of complaints, and on students' achievements and destinations. They also commission reports on matters such as retention and marketing.

18 The corporation has four committees: audit; remuneration; finance, employment and general purposes; and a search committee. In addition, governors' task groups are set up for particular purposes. Agendas, minutes and supporting documentation are of good quality. The clerk to the governors is a full-time member of the college staff. He clerks other formal college meetings such as senior management meetings and those of the academic board and its committees. This arrangement assists communications between the various committees and the setting of appropriate agendas. Governors have recently agreed and used a set of performance indicators to monitor their performance. Partly because of unfilled vacancies, attendance at meetings of the governing body and of

the finance, employment and general purposes committee was relatively low in 1995-96, and one meeting of the corporation was inquorate. The governors have few contacts with staff and students. They believe that their non-executive role precludes them from close involvement with the daily life of the college.

19 The board and the principalship have led the college through a period of significant change. The major challenge has been to manage a substantial reduction in funding since incorporation. The college has met its recruitment targets for the last three years and has succeeded in reducing its average level of funding from £26.95 in 1993-94 to £22.88 for 1996-97, largely through staff reductions. Since incorporation, the college has reduced its staffing establishment by over 200 academic posts, a reduction of 44 per cent from pre-incorporation levels. Despite this, the college's average level of funding for 1996-97 is still one of the highest for colleges of its type in the sector. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges is £17.97.

20 To reflect staff reductions and curriculum needs, college structures have undergone considerable changes. There has been a reduction in the number of schools and faculties, and a gradual shift of emphasis from line management by curriculum area to one that is based on the four main college centres. In this way the college has sought to increase operational effectiveness and reinforce each centre's ability to respond to local needs. There has also been a gradual increase in the amount of delegated responsibility. This has now reached course team level. As part of its approach to organisational change, the college seeks to promote effective communication and teamworking at all levels in the organisation. It achieves this through a variety of mechanisms, including a college-wide schedule of meetings, a monthly newsletter, electronic mail, regular visits of the principalship to faculty meetings, away-days and workshops.

21 The corporate development and performance monitoring unit is led by the assistant principals and supported by the academic board and its committees. The unit manages the curriculum at cross-college level. It identifies and disseminates good practice and promotes consistency. Such consistency has not yet been achieved in management at faculty level, following the recent changes such as the creation of the faculty of technology and the built environment, and the shift to centre-based management at Thornes Park. Although school and course management are generally effective, some related areas of the curriculum have not developed sufficiently strong links. Practical matters such as rooming and timetabling are poorly managed in some areas.

22 The college's aims and objectives are supported by a comprehensive framework of policies, procedures and regulations. These range from the college's quality policy to regulations governing the use of computer facilities. Where appropriate, they are accompanied by implementation plans, which are monitored regularly. The policies themselves are

reviewed regularly. The health and safety policy is promoted through a health and safety management committee with representatives from across the college. It includes a commitment to health awareness amongst students and staff. Annually, the committee establishes key objectives, monitors their implementation and presents reports to senior management and the corporation.

23 The process for planning and review at strategic and operational levels is well structured, understood and implemented. Annual plans for faculties and cross-college areas are written to a common framework to ensure that the college's 10 strategic priorities and its key policies are addressed. The plans include objectives, strategies, targets, timescales, responsibilities and arrangements for review. School teams are fully involved in the production of the plans, which contribute to the college's strategic plan. The implementation of the plans is reviewed three times a year by senior management. The college publishes an annual schedule for planning, monitoring and quality assurance, which includes a list of the performance indicators to be used throughout the college.

24 The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are shown in figures 5 and 6. The college inherited a deficit of £1.2 million at incorporation which it repaid within the required timescale. Since the college has been in deficit for three years, the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) has required the college to submit a recovery plan. The college management and the board take the view that the college's overall financial position is sound, but the financial pressure under which the college is operating has had some adverse effects. Staff have been faced with uncertainty, students with changes of timetable and teachers, and there have been delays in the purchase of learning resources.

25 The finance, employment and general purposes committee of the corporation endorses financial targets and receives detailed management accounts at each of its quarterly meetings. Despite the financial position of the college it does not receive monthly financial information. There is substantial delegation of budgets to heads of faculty. The mechanism for allocating faculty budgets, which is based on the FEFC's funding methodology, is clear and understood by budget holders. Financial training is provided for staff. Below faculty level, the extent of downward delegation varies between faculties, and there is some variation in the understanding and use of course costing. Costings for staff development are largely historical and are not based on an analysis of need.

26 Management information is available to managers and administration staff through the college's computer network which serves over 300 users. A wide range of reports can be generated on demand. Financial reports are generated centrally, while a programme developed by the college allows faculties to model projected and actual numbers of funding units and income. A clear strategy for the development of the management information system was produced for the period 1994-97.

An active users group is in operation and changes have been made in response to its members' views. The college has purchased an optical mark reader to develop further the collection of attendance records. Regular training in the use of information technology is provided for managerial and administrative staff. Faculty management teams use data from the system to report on performance against targets for student applications, enrolments, retention, examination results and the achievement of funding units.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

27 The college has developed a number of strategies to ensure that students are provided with impartial information and guidance before entry to programmes of study. It has a wide range of attractive publicity information, including a general college prospectus, a prospectus for part-time and community programmes, a guide for adult students and general course literature. There is an extensive schools liaison network, and there are opportunities for prospective students to visit the college during course exhibitions, open days and 'taster' days. Most students receive adequate and appropriate advice and guidance, although staff in some curriculum areas need to improve their links with local schools. Policies and procedures for admissions and enrolments are clearly defined and effective. The college registry is well managed, and applications for entry are handled promptly and efficiently. However, there is no formal channel for notifying guidance staff about new curriculum developments. Staff conducting guidance interviews use common guidelines and checklists, and school-leavers are encouraged to bring national records of achievement to their interviews.

28 Induction procedures are comprehensive and well structured, and carried out according to a cross-college induction framework. Full-time students receive a minimum of one week's induction, and a shorter programme is provided for other students. All students are advised about the full range of college services, and receive a copy of the college charter and student handbook. Students also undertake activities which are specific to their programme of study. Many examples of effective team-building exercises were seen during the course of the inspection. There are weaknesses in some aspects of the induction process. Some of the activities are unsuitable for mature students, and the induction process does not fully address the needs of students with non-traditional attendance patterns, for example those on open learning programmes. Arrangements to assess and accredit students' prior experience and learning are centrally co-ordinated and effective. Opportunities to acquire accreditation are well publicised. The TEC's accreditation of prior learning voucher scheme was piloted in a number of vocational areas within the college and resulted in 83 candidates achieving vocational awards last year.

29 Students are given opportunities to transfer between programmes of study at an early stage of their course, and they receive guidance to ensure that they transfer to appropriate courses. During the first week of their course, GCE A level and GNVQ students can sample GCE A level subjects or GNVQ units outside their original choice, and in 1995-96 30 per cent of GCE A level students made changes. There are systems in place to identify students' additional learning support needs. All full-time students undertake diagnostic screening tests in literacy, numeracy and information technology. They negotiate individual action plans to address identified needs, and records are kept of their progress and attendance. The additional learning needs of some part-time students are also assessed but there is no formal structure to promote this. The recent reorganisation of this area of the college's work has led to some lack of clarity and consistency in the provision of additional learning support.

30 All programmes carry an allocation of 5 per cent of their guided learning hours for tutorial support. All full-time students and most part-time students have regular timetabled tutorials, with additional opportunities to meet personal tutors on a one-to-one basis. A comprehensive tutor handbook and resource packs have been developed, and a tutor review group disseminates good practice. In business administration, tutors have devised a series of tutorials on issues affecting women. There is effective individual action planning and recording of achievement in some curriculum areas. However, tutorial support varies in quality. In some curriculum areas, individual progress reviews are infrequent and action planning is underdeveloped. In some programme areas, tutors are uncertain about what is expected of them, and unfamiliar with the documentation required to provide effective support.

31 Support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very effective. Parents and prospective students are encouraged to visit the college to meet staff. With the help of faculty-based assessors, they agree an appropriate level of support, which is carefully planned, monitored and reviewed. A team of seven care and welfare staff provides assistance inside and outside the classroom. A support service for deaf and hearing-impaired students is provided by a team of three communication support workers and a teacher of the deaf.

32 A supportive and confidential careers guidance, counselling and welfare service is available to all students in the college. Four qualified careers guidance counsellors, supported by independent advisers from Wakefield District Guidance Services, provide impartial advice. Careers guidance and careers libraries are available at each main centre. A personal counselling service is provided by three qualified counsellors, and there is a college chaplaincy service. A team of four financial and welfare support staff offers help on finance, welfare and accommodation, and administers the college's access and discretionary support funds. The nurseries at the Wakefield and Whitwood Centres have 28 and 20 spaces, respectively, and there are creche facilities at the Hemsworth and Upton

Centres with 12 and 10 spaces, respectively. Aspects of guidance services which are underdeveloped include: the planning and delivery of careers and counselling support within the formal tutorial system; the links with external and voluntary agencies; and the publicity for registry services within the college.

33 A standardised system for monitoring students' attendance is in place, with procedures for following up absences. However, in some curriculum areas the implementation of these procedures is poor and inconsistent. Students are generally well advised about their rights and responsibilities. There is a college charter, student handbook, and welcome booklet, along with a range of attractive leaflets on a variety of issues. There is a formal complaints procedure, although this is not sufficiently well publicised. The students' union is a potential channel for consultation between college management and the students, although few students are actively involved at present.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

34 Strengths clearly outweighed weaknesses in 59 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 only 4 per cent of sessions. This compares with a national figure of 8 per cent for colleges inspected during 1995-96 according to the *Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1995-96*. The average rate of attendance at classes was 82 per cent. Attendance varied from 91 per cent in provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to 71 per cent in hair and beauty. The following table summarises the grades given to the teaching sessions inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level		8	24	11	2	0	45
GCSE		3	3	2	0	0	8
GNVQ		9	21	17	3	0	50
NVQ		5	20	51	5	0	81
Other vocational		24	29	11	2	0	66
Higher education		1	3	6	1	0	11
Basic education		4	8	6	0	0	18
Other		9	6	4	0	0	19
Total		63	114	108	13	0	298

35 Lessons in science were well planned and structured. Teachers adopted a businesslike and purposeful approach, and made effective use of question-and-answer methods. Students received additional help at

voluntary revision workshops. In many cases, teachers had not formulated precisely what it was that they intended students to achieve by the end of the lesson. Insufficient attention was paid to health and safety in some lessons. Mathematics teachers conveyed enthusiasm for their subject. The sessions had clear objectives and were followed up by a systematic programme of homework and tests. Where appropriate, the teachers set the work in a vocational context, so that students could see its relevance. In many cases, the teacher could have improved the lesson by employing more imaginative approaches, for example using information technology, conducting investigations or encouraging group discussions.

36 Computing lessons were thoroughly planned; there were clear objectives and practical work was well designed. Many of the assignments were based on examples from business and industry to make them more realistic. In some courses students worked in groups to design and give presentations. In one practical session, the students were required to explore and contrast a software facility available in three different software packages. After they had finished work on the computers the teacher took the class into a nearby classroom and asked them to consider what they had learned, thus reinforcing the material. In some of the sessions the teaching, although competent, failed to convey enthusiasm. Teachers made little use of media such as the overhead projector, video or compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases to enliven their teaching.

37 On construction courses, teachers made good use of learning packs to enable students to study on their own in the learning resource centre. The materials produced for this purpose were of high quality. Practical work for craft students was made as realistic as possible. For example, students were involved in the planning and construction of new workshop facilities for electrical installation work. They had opportunities for work experience and visits, some of them abroad. In some lessons students were given insufficient opportunity to ask questions or discuss issues; for example, a number of lessons involved lengthy periods during which students did nothing except copy notes from poorly-presented overhead transparencies. In some craft areas there was insufficient emphasis on the maintenance of safe working areas and the safe use of tools.

38 Engineering students' programmes of work were well planned to include an appropriate range of activities. Students were set appropriately challenging assignments, according to a schedule which was issued to them in advance so that they could plan their work. The quality of some of the practical work was enhanced by the use of a good range of modern equipment. The progress of students following craft engineering courses was meticulously recorded. However, on full-time technician courses the monitoring of students' overall progress lacked rigour. Poor planning of some practical sessions resulted in a slow work rate for students.

39 Lessons in management and professional studies started with a clear statement of objectives and concluded with a summary of what had been

learned. Teachers drew on students' previous work experience and maintained their interest by varying the methods of working and by making good use of overhead transparencies and handouts. Group work was well managed. Students of administration and related business information technology worked with high-quality learning materials designed to enable them to study at their own pace. A feature of some well-planned teaching sessions was an introductory plenary, delivered using a large computer screen to demonstrate key features of a particular software programme. Teachers were responsive to the needs of students with different abilities. The mentoring of NVQ level 2 students by those studying for level 3 enabled the latter to develop their supervisory skills, whilst providing the former with effective support. By contrast, in some business education classes, there were insufficient checks on learning; the approach to assignment work was overly theoretical; and insufficient prominence was given to company visits or case studies.

40 Programmes of study in catering and hospitality had been clearly thought out and logically developed. The teaching in most lessons was of a high standard. Assignments were imaginative, regularly set and promptly marked. There were opportunities for students to learn in situations outside the classroom, including foreign exchange visits. A recent visit to a hotel exhibition was well planned and well executed. In a number of lessons the teacher's questioning technique was poor and resulted in some students not making a contribution. In others, there was insufficient use of visual aids and handouts, and students spent too much time taking notes.

41 Teaching in leisure, tourism and sports studies varied in standard. In most lessons, teachers used a variety of approaches suitable to the needs and abilities of the students. Sports studies and public services programmes included an appropriate mix of theoretical and practical modules. The practical activities were enhanced by the excellent range of sports facilities on the college site. Sports studies students also made good use of opportunities for outdoor pursuits, including residential visits. All programmes included work experience placements, some of them abroad. The teaching of the key skills of information technology and communication was poorly co-ordinated on some sports studies and public services courses, and this had a detrimental effect on the quality and consistency of students' learning. The planning and scheduling of assignments was poor on some leisure and tourism programmes. In a number of classes, group work and class discussion were not sufficiently well organised so that students were unable or unwilling to participate as fully as they might have done.

42 In hairdressing and beauty therapy, teachers demonstrated technical skills effectively. In practical lessons, they checked students' progress regularly and gave them sensitive support and encouragement. Most of these sessions lacked commercial rigour, and, in some cases, the teacher

failed to ensure that students' work was up to professional standards. Lesson time was sometimes poorly managed, with the result that students were kept waiting without being engaged in purposeful activity. Health and social care classes were well managed, and included a suitable balance of contributions from teachers and students. In some class discussions, however, teachers failed to draw out contributions from the more reticent members of the group. In childcare classes, teachers presented the material in creative and interesting ways; there were, for example, practical demonstrations of child development theories and an exploration of children's literature which involved students in drawing and writing. Information technology and communications were taught in the context of childcare, demonstrating their vocational relevance.

43 The teaching on most courses in art and design was sound, well prepared and supported by well-devised programmes of work. Teachers placed suitable emphasis on the development of knowledge and skills to underpin the practical work. Students' work was used in class as a means of stimulating ideas and discussion. There was insufficient emphasis on life drawing and the teaching of graphic design did not reflect current commercial practice. Most performing arts classes, however, were charged with creative excitement. In one session, a group of dance students performed dances which they had choreographed themselves, and which were later commented upon by other students and the teacher. This was an effective way of promoting group work and of developing the ability to engage in constructive criticism. In a few cases, poor management of question-and-answer sessions meant that too many students sat silent whilst others dominated proceedings.

44 English teachers enlivened their lessons by drawing on the students' own experiences wherever possible. Some of the best lessons were designed to encourage students to ask questions and air their own ideas, and to enable them to respond suitably to challenging tasks. For example, students of English literature analysed texts in pairs or groups, and were invited to discuss their conclusions freely. In some English classes, the pace of work was geared to the slowest learners and the more able suffered. Teachers of modern foreign languages structured their lessons well in order to provide a suitable variety of activity. On vocational language units, they used authentic materials which were relevant to the vocational area. Lessons were conducted mainly in the language being studied and work in class was often supplemented by directed study in the languages workshop and conversation with the foreign language assistant. Good use was made of language laboratories and of video. The less effective lessons were marked by poor questioning technique, overuse of English, and insufficiently imaginative work. Sometimes teachers talked for too much of the lesson. The potential for the use of information technology, satellite television and library resources in students' private study time was insufficiently exploited.

45 The teaching of social science and humanities subjects was of a generally high standard. The lessons were thoroughly prepared, delivered in a lively manner and accompanied by good handout material which had been developed by the staff. In the best lessons, the teachers maintained a suitably brisk pace and pressed students into thinking and acting for themselves. Teachers employed a good variety of teaching methods and students benefited from working in small groups and from regular feedback on their progress. There were opportunities for learning outside the classroom; for example, GCE A level geography and biology students attended a joint field course in Majorca, and trade union studies students observed an industrial tribunal as part of their work. In some classes, the teacher's excessive use of dictation, as a means of presenting information, slowed the pace of work and led to the students being bored and inattentive. The large size of some of the teaching groups restricted the range of teaching methods which could be employed.

46 The teaching of basic education was sound though sometimes unimaginative. Students often worked on their own in basic skills workshops, using materials designed for the purpose. These workshop sessions were well organised. In most of them, teachers maintained a purposeful and rigorous approach. Learning resources and a wide range of printed materials were readily available. Elements of the college's basic skills provision have been awarded the Basic Skills Agency quality mark. However, although the key objective in this area of provision was to enable students to work effectively on their own, this was frequently not achieved. In many classes students were unable or unwilling to respond to tasks as effectively as might have been expected. In some cases, teachers set tasks and activities at inappropriate levels, failing to take enough account of students' prior learning and achievements.

47 The college adopts a rigorous approach to the planning and delivery of provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Teachers are skilled in devising creative teaching strategies to help students to learn skills which are relevant to their needs and interests. Students have the opportunity to learn practical vocational skills in the college's simulated working environments. Of particular note is the strategy of linking a vocational tutor with a specialist tutor to plan and teach the pre-vocational programmes. Teaching and support staff have high expectations of the students and lessons are interesting and challenging. Individual programmes are devised for students which include specified targets they are expected to achieve. Students are aware of their targets and the criteria used to assess progress. Their progress is carefully monitored and recorded.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

48 The 308 students, aged 16 to 18, who were entered for GCE AS/A level examinations in 1995 scored, on average, 4.3 points per subject entry (where grade A=10 points, E=2). This placed the college among the top

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). In 1996, the average points score per entry for Wakefield College rose to 4.8, also placing the college in the top third of colleges based on the DfEE's tables. The overall pass rate for GCE A level subjects has improved from 75 per cent in 1995 to 81 per cent in 1996. These rates compare favourably with the national pass rate of 69 per cent for all age groups in further education colleges in 1995. The percentage of students gaining A to C grades was 45 per cent in 1995 and 47 per cent in 1996; these rates are also significantly above the 1995 national average for further education colleges of 37 per cent. The percentage of students gaining A to C grades for GCSE subjects in both 1995 and 1996 was 59 per cent, which compares favourably with the 1995 national figure for further education colleges of 48 per cent.

49 Of the 351 students in their final year of study on the vocational courses included in the DfEE's 1995 performance tables, 70 per cent were successful. This placed the college among the bottom third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. The average success rate for tertiary colleges in 1995 was 78 per cent. The pass rate for 16 to 18 year olds completing all vocational courses in 1996 rose to 84 per cent. Of those students enrolled on the final year of the vocational courses included in the DfEE tables, 71 per cent were successful at advanced level and 51 per cent at intermediate level. This places the college among the middle and bottom third, respectively, of colleges in the further education sector on these performance measures.

50 The college aims to retain at least 85 per cent of its students each year. It monitors retention carefully and undertakes a review if retention on any course falls below 75 per cent. The average retention rate for one-year full-time vocational courses in 1996 was 84 per cent, but for two-year courses it was only 53 per cent. For part-time vocational courses the retention rates for one-year and two-year courses were 80 per cent and 56 per cent, respectively. The rate for two-year full-time GCE A level subjects was 78 per cent and for one-year GCSE subjects it was 54 per cent. Retention rates vary considerably between programmes and curriculum areas.

51 Achievements at advanced level in mathematics, computing and science are good. Pass rates in GNVQ science and information technology in 1996 were both higher than the national rates for all schools and colleges. The GCE A level pass rates in mathematics and science subjects were considerably higher than the 1995 national averages for general further education colleges. In physics, pass rates of 68 per cent at grades A to C and 95 per cent at grades A to E compared well with the 1995 national averages of 38 per cent and 71 per cent, respectively. However, pass rates in GCE A level computing, and in GCSE science, mathematics and information technology were less good. In GCSE mathematics, for

example, the A to C pass rate was only 33 per cent. Retention was poor on some courses; in half of the science programmes it was below 70 per cent. Students' performance during lessons indicated that most of them had acquired relevant knowledge and developed appropriate practical skills.

52 Students on construction courses responded well in class. Their portfolios, assignments and practical work were all completed to an appropriate standard. Key skills were well developed: for example, in one communications class, plumbing students conducted mock interviews and made presentations. Skills of teamworking and problem solving were promoted through a one-week residential outdoor pursuits course, attended by all full-time students. Pass rates are generally above national averages and, in some cases, very good: three courses achieved 100 per cent pass rates in 1996. The annual retention rate for construction programmes has improved from 73 per cent in 1994-95 to 79 per cent in 1995-96. However, retention rates are still poor on some programmes: NVQ levels 2 and 3 in brickwork both had retention rates in 1995-96 of 57 per cent.

53 Some good results were achieved by engineering students. For example, of those full-time students following technician courses in 1996, 74 per cent of intermediate level students and 80 per cent of advanced level students gained the full award. Results were also good on the full-time and part-time intermediate level craft courses, with pass rates of 93 and 81 per cent, respectively. All these pass rates are above average rates recorded for these courses in the FEFC's Curriculum Area Survey Report, *Engineering*. Pass rates on part-time national and higher national certificate courses, however, were both below the survey averages. Students' retention rates were good on craft and part-time courses but poor on full-time technician courses. Students achieved a good rate of progression from full-time technician courses to further and higher education. Engineering students were generally attentive and enthusiastic in class. Their portfolios were well presented and their written and other assignment work was of a good standard.

54 Students of management and professional studies achieved high levels of examination success; on four courses there were pass rates of 100 per cent in 1996. In group work and debate, students were able to apply their knowledge to support their arguments. Students of business administration were self-reliant, competent in information technology and produced portfolio work of high quality. Examination achievements were good: pass rates in word and text processing were 80 per cent at stage 1 and over 70 per cent at stage 3. Ninety-six per cent of all students completing their course gained at least one award. There were some sound achievements in business studies courses during 1996, notably the 87 per cent pass rate for the GNVQ foundation programme and the 89 per cent success rate in the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national certificate part-time course. Achievements at intermediate level have been less satisfactory; no students at foundation or intermediate

level have been awarded merit or distinction grades over the past two years.

55 Students of catering and hospitality achieved good results in most courses. Although only 52 per cent of GNVQ advanced students gained the full award in 1995-96, this was higher than the national rate of 46 per cent. The students had developed practical skills which enabled them to achieve high standards in the preparation and service of food. They were able to work effectively as members of a team, and demonstrated good social skills in dealing with members of the public. Progression rates were good: all students completing their courses in 1996 were successful in finding employment or a place on a course of further or higher education.

56 Students on the sports studies and public services programmes displayed good practical ability. In sports and outdoor pursuits they developed key skills such as communication, teamwork and problem solving. Progression rates on to further and higher education were high: in 1996, 71 per cent of students who completed the BTEC national diploma in sports science progressed to higher education. Leisure and tourism students were enthusiastic and well disciplined within the classroom, and had a good rapport with their tutors. However, their skills of oral presentation were sometimes poor. Retention and achievements were low on a number of courses: for example, only 54 per cent of students enrolled on the GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism programme completed their course, and of these only 50 per cent gained the full award, compared with the national average of 63 per cent.

57 In hairdressing and beauty therapy, students demonstrated appropriate levels of skill in their practical work and in beauty therapy the students' portfolios were of a high standard. However, due to an ineffectual recording system, students were insufficiently aware of their progress. Students of health and social care, including childcare, made effective contributions in class and displayed vocational knowledge and understanding appropriate for progression to relevant employment or a higher level study. Written and display work was of a good professional standard. Students understood the importance of communication, numeracy and information technology to their vocational work. They worked effectively in groups. Pass rates in health and social care were good. For example, 77 per cent of those completing the GNVQ advanced health and social care course in 1996 gained the full award, compared with the national average of 56 per cent. However, retention rates in these curriculum areas are poor, particularly for courses of two years' duration.

58 Students of performing arts and music approached their work in a disciplined manner, displaying confidence and a sense of enjoyment. Their achievements, both in their practical work and their portfolios, were of a very high standard. They made good use of information technology. Students of art and design produced lively, imaginative work in a variety of media and materials. They spoke and wrote about their studies with confidence and enthusiasm, and were mutually supportive, sometimes

tutoring each other. Their skills in using information technology were insufficiently developed, particularly to support their work in graphic design. Art and design students achieved results which, in many cases, were above national averages. For example, of those completing intermediate and advanced GNVQ programmes in 1996, 76 per cent and 94 per cent, respectively gained the full award compared with the national figures of 63 per cent for both programmes. However, the overall retention rate in art and design is poor, at 65 per cent.

59 Students studying English produced well-presented coursework of an appropriate standard. Students of modern foreign languages usually spoke confidently in the language being studied and showed enjoyment and motivation. In other humanities subjects the students' oral responses indicated good levels of understanding and their written work showed good linguistic ability and high standards of presentation. In 1996, pass rates above the national averages for further education colleges were achieved in a number of GCE A level subjects, including English language (79 per cent), French (100 per cent), Spanish (100 per cent), sociology (82 per cent), psychology (79 per cent), law (77 per cent) and politics (100 per cent). However, in some GCE A level subjects a low proportion of those on roll enter the examination and, in others, the retention rate is poor. At GCSE level, 82 per cent of candidates gained A to C grades in foreign languages, but only half the students sitting English language gained a grade A to C, and in geography the figure was only 43 per cent. A high proportion of students who took vocational units in foreign languages were successful. Achievements on other courses such as the teacher-training courses, the access to higher education programme and the women returners course were also good.

60 Adult students following classes in basic education were highly motivated and enthusiastic. Most students were producing work which was at an appropriate standard for their courses. Pass rates in literacy and numeracy courses are good. Although the primary goal of over half the students in their first year of study at the college is to progress to courses which lead to qualifications, the records of the progress made by these students are insufficiently detailed. Some courses have low retention rates and some, such as those in English for speakers of other languages, have low pass rates.

61 Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enjoyed their studies and were developing confidence and competence in a range of practical skills. They responded well to the challenges set by their teachers and were making good progress. They contributed willingly and sensibly to discussions. They were able to accept responsibility for their work and were developing the skills necessary for independent learning. A high proportion of the students progress to more advanced studies and to employment. In 1995-96 for example, of the 12 students on the level 1 pre-vocational programme, five remained on this programme for a further year, six progressed to level 2 and one progressed to supported

employment. Overall, 86 per cent of the students on the pre-vocational course at level 2 in 1995-96 have progressed to level 3, 92 per cent of those on level 3 have progressed to mainstream programmes and the others have entered employment.

62 In 1995, 35 per cent of full-time students who completed their courses progressed to higher education, 26 per cent continued in further education, 19 per cent entered employment relevant to their course, 7 per cent entered other employment and 7 per cent were unemployed. The destinations of 6 per cent were unknown. The college is recording destinations by level of study for the 1996 leavers. Preliminary data collected by 1 November showed that, for students studying advanced level qualifications, 46 per cent went on to higher education, 22 per cent to employment, 14 per cent to other destinations and 18 per cent were unknown. Of those completing courses at intermediate level, 57 per cent progressed to further education, 16 per cent to employment, 7 per cent to other destinations and the destinations of 20 per cent were unknown.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

63 The quality assurance framework is designed to support the mission of the college which is to promote excellence in education and training. The framework is comprehensive and covers both the curriculum and support services. Quality manuals have been produced for all areas of the college's work. Many are in their second or third annual revision. Quality assurance operates on three levels: course or service level, faculty or service area level, and college level. Annual course reviews, for example, contribute to faculty reports which in turn inform the college's self-assessment report. All faculties have quality managers and a separate team of quality leaders promotes specific improvement initiatives; in 1996-97 the focus is on retention strategies. Quality managers conduct in-depth evaluations of courses at least every three years. These triennial reviews are written to the headings of the FEFC inspection framework but currently do not involve any direct observation of teaching and learning. Proposals for new courses are considered against established criteria by a programmes committee, which reports to the academic board. A college quality policy, of recent origin, identifies key priorities for further development.

64 Performance indicators are used to underpin the annual course reviews and a template has been developed to record recruitment against target, retention, achievement and destinations according to particular categories. The college has set a target of 85 per cent for achievement as well as retention. There are currently no targets for destinations. Course reviews include the findings of student questionnaires which are undertaken three times a year and involve a sample of one-third of the students. The results are aggregated at faculty and college levels. Although many of the course reviews are completed satisfactorily, there are a number of inconsistencies. Some of the strengths listed are assertive and

lack supporting evidence; in some of the humanities subjects in particular, students' achievements have not been recorded. There are incomplete student questionnaire summaries in a number of the reviews, and instances where poor achievement or progression are not appropriately addressed. All reviews result in an action plan. Targets are reviewed after six months and all the key performance indicators can be addressed. However, no comment is made on external moderators' or verifiers' reports.

65 Faculty reports are rigorously evaluated by a quality assurance panel, appointed by the academic standards committee. In a number of cases, heads of faculty have been required to produce additional evidence to the panel in order to substantiate some of the strengths listed. After approving faculty and service area reports, the panel produces the college's self-assessment report and presents it to the corporation. The report is evaluative but it does not contain college-wide performance indicators to support some of the judgements made. An annual quality action plan, approved by the academic standards committee, accompanies the self-assessment report. The establishment of an audit team to develop self-assessment is a priority for 1996-97. Over the past two years, the college has developed its own value-added scheme for GCE A level students. It now subscribes to a national monitoring system. Value-added indicators are not yet used extensively in course reviews, or to provide feedback to students about their actual progress compared with that predicted by their GCSE achievements.

66 Service area teams have developed sets of standards in consultation with their user groups. The student services quality manual is particularly comprehensive and contains standards for a wide range of operations including the learning resource centres, additional learning support and childcare services. A survey of students' perceptions of student services gathers additional evidence to inform the annual quality report and action plan. The standards for many of the service area teams are at a developmental stage and subject to continual revision.

67 The college charter is lucid and clear. It has been revised in each of the last three years. It is available in Braille and cassette formats, and a video made by students with severe learning difficulties dramatises charter issues. During the last academic year a review group was established to consider progress in meeting charter standards. The resulting report helped to inform the college's self-assessment report. Although the charter review identified the need to strengthen the procedures for handling complaints, the charter does not include a summary of the college's complaints procedure. There is no employers' charter. The college does not publish an annual summary of students' views, as recommended in the *National Charter for Further Education*.

68 A high priority is accorded to staff development across the college. In 1995-96, 1.5 per cent of the college's budget was allocated to staff-development activities. The college publishes a wide range of events,

including a summer vacation programme which was piloted this year. As a condition of approval to attend, staff are required to evaluate the activity and disseminate any information gained. The programme of staff-development activities clearly reflects corporate and faculty priorities. For example, in 1996-97 there are courses promoting European awareness, equal opportunities and the accreditation of prior learning. The college, in partnership with Leeds Metropolitan University, offers a credit accumulation and transfer scheme allowing members of staff to gain higher education qualifications up to master degree level. A management development programme, introduced in 1993, supports all middle and senior managers through a series of practical sessions designed to develop management skills. In recognition of its commitment to staff development, the college was awarded Investor in People status in July 1995.

69 Full-time staff who are new to the college are provided with an induction programme which continues throughout their first year of employment. A check-list for staff is provided to ensure that all key elements of induction are covered. Arrangements for part-time staff are less formal although, where possible, they are encouraged to attend the programme. There is no mentoring system to support staff new to teaching. The college appraisal system, recently revised, applies to all staff and operates on an annual basis. The outcomes inform training and development needs. For teaching staff, classroom observation normally forms part of the appraisal process. An element of performance reward for academic staff is applied through a discretionary payments system.

RESOURCES

Staffing

70 Teachers are committed to the success of their students, are suitably experienced and well qualified. Eighty-three per cent of full-time teachers have a degree or a higher national diploma, and 80 per cent have qualified teacher status. Teachers on vocational programmes have appropriate professional and technical qualifications for the subjects they teach. The college has undertaken an audit of all staff to determine the range of skills, qualifications and experience they have available, and to match these to the courses offered or planned. Part-time teachers are well qualified for the work they undertake, and 71 per cent have a teaching qualification. At the time of the inspection 80 per cent of full-time permanent teaching staff were on new contracts of employment. Forty per cent of staff possess training and development lead body assessor awards but they are unevenly distributed across the curriculum areas.

71 Many staff are professionally active in their specialist fields, and bring commercial and professional expertise to their teaching. This is the case, for example, in art and design, and management and professional studies. In most curriculum areas, teaching staff have considerable

industrial and commercial experience; in only a few areas is this dated or not directly relevant to the subject matter. Teachers keep up to date through involvement in professional organisations and in the work of validating bodies and examination boards. They approach their work with a high level of enthusiasm and commitment to their students' welfare and progress.

72 The college has a specialist personnel department which operates effectively. Employment policies and procedures are well documented and those covering the recruitment and selection of staff are particularly clear. All staff receive a comprehensive staff handbook, which is a valued source of information. Job descriptions are up to date. Employment policies and practices have been harmonised in key areas such as maternity and paternity rights, conduct and grievance procedures. There is rigorous monitoring of staff absence, including monthly returns to faculty heads.

73 Technical, professional and clerical staff are well qualified and experienced, and provide particularly good levels of technical support in art and design, catering and science. They attend curriculum area team meetings and contribute to the planning process. They receive the same encouragement and support as teaching staff to further their qualifications.

Equipment/learning resources

74 Learning materials and equipment in most areas are sufficient. For example, in most teaching rooms there are appropriate teaching aids, including whiteboards or screens and overhead projectors. In addition, specialist equipment is provided to meet the needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, for use at college and at home. Course materials, marketing information and handbooks are produced to a high standard by the print section based at the Wakefield Centre. For example, tutors have provided students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities with materials which are of high quality and reflect the adult status of the students. Much of the provision of specialist equipment in curriculum areas is good. Performing arts and music, computer-aided design, engineering and catering are well equipped. The simulated working environments, established for the assessment of NVQs, are realistic and of an appropriate standard. However, there is a shortage of specialist equipment in some areas of the college, for example in art and design and beauty therapy.

75 The college has invested heavily in developing attractive learning resource centres at each of its four main centres. The cost to the college has been over £650,000 in the last three years. The learning resource centres are well equipped with books, audio-visual material and other resources, including information technology. The college's annual expenditure on its learning resource centres in 1995-96 was £35 for each full-time equivalent student. The centres have adequate up-to-date resources to support learning in most subjects. For example, in

management and professional studies 28 computers for use with CD-ROM databases were purchased last year. There are access points to the Internet at all the centres. Library provision in modern foreign languages lacks sufficient films, audio-cassettes and CD-ROMs. The learning resource centres are not open at the weekend.

76 The college is well equipped with modern computers. Students have good access to 750 modern computers and software of professional standards. There is a ratio of one machine to every eight full-time equivalent students. This reflects the college's strategic commitment to the development of information technology and multi-media technologies. The college's information technology policy group determines a strategy for acquisitions and co-ordinates its implementation across the college. Capital expenditure since incorporation on computers and software has been £1.4 million. The staff have direct access to the network, which is available in many of the staffrooms. In some curriculum areas there is a lack of functioning computing facilities, for example in hairdressing, reception and business studies.

Accommodation

77 Since incorporation, the college has invested £5 million in updating and upgrading its buildings. A high proportion of the accommodation at its four main centres is attractive, comfortable, and well designed for its intended purpose. Specialist vocational areas have been created or refurbished to a high standard. These include a new and attractive performing arts block, up-to-date hairdressing salons, practical kitchen and restaurant areas and high-quality accommodation for administration and secretarial studies. Classrooms are well decorated, clean, comfortable and carpeted. In a number of curriculum areas the learning environment is enhanced by technical displays and students' work of a professional standard. In a few cases, accommodation is unsuitable. For example, in mathematics and construction some classrooms are drab and unattractive. The external appearance of some buildings at the Wakefield and Hemsworth Centres is poor.

78 Communal areas are bright, well furnished and comfortable. The foyers of all the centres provide welcoming entrances to the college, and there are ample social areas. Throughout the college there is good access for students and members of the public who use wheelchairs or have mobility difficulties. The accommodation has been improved by the provision of new lifts and ramps. Considerable efforts have been made to ensure that students can work in a secure environment; for example, the car parks are floodlit and the centres are patrolled by security staff. The catering facilities at each centre are of commercial standard. The sports facilities on site are extensive; they include a swimming pool, a sports hall, tennis courts and access to an astroturf all-weather games pitch.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

79 The college has made substantial progress towards achieving its mission. Its strengths are:

- the wide range and flexibility of its provision, which provides many opportunities for progression
- strong links with the local community, employers, higher education institutions, schools, and European organisations
- the effective governance and management of the college
- the well-developed processes for planning and review at strategic and operational levels
- the good management information systems
- the effective admission and induction arrangements
- the excellent provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- the generally high standards of teaching
- the comprehensive quality assurance framework, and in particular the extensive use of performance indicators
- the good staff-development programme
- the well-qualified, experienced staff
- the high standard of accommodation and learning resources.

80 If the college is to build on these strengths it should:

- take further steps to ensure the college's financial health, including more frequent financial information to governors
- improve aspects of faculty and school management
- address inconsistencies in the provision of additional learning support
- improve the monitoring of students' attendance
- improve retention rates on some courses
- spread good practice in tutorial and guidance processes
- improve the consistency and rigour of course reviews.

FIGURES

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

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

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

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

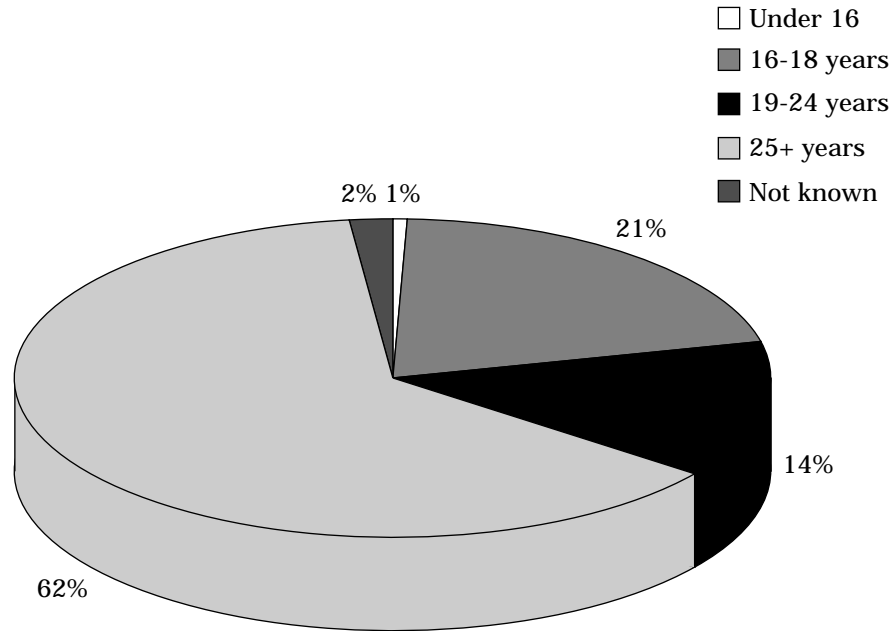
 - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1996)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)

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

Figure 1

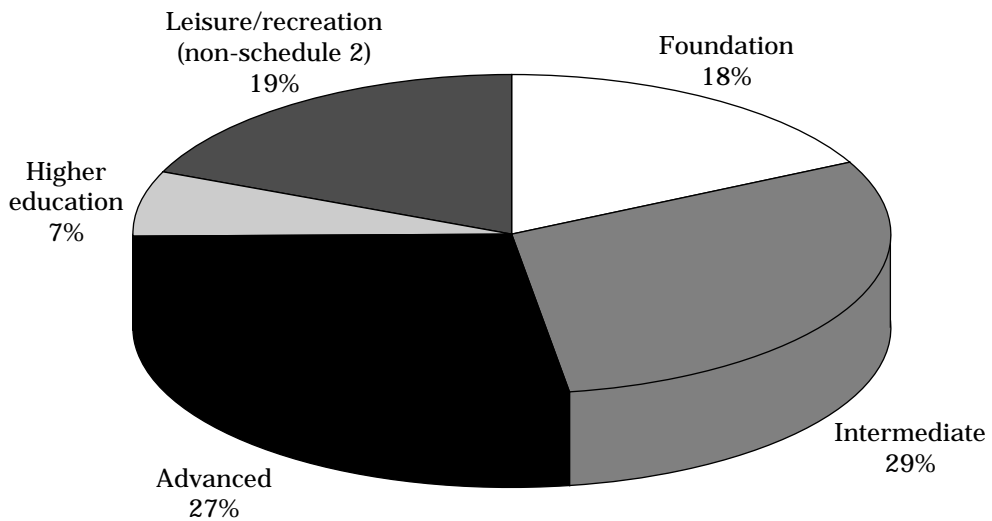
Wakefield College: percentage student numbers by age (as at July 1996)



Student numbers: 14,430

Figure 2

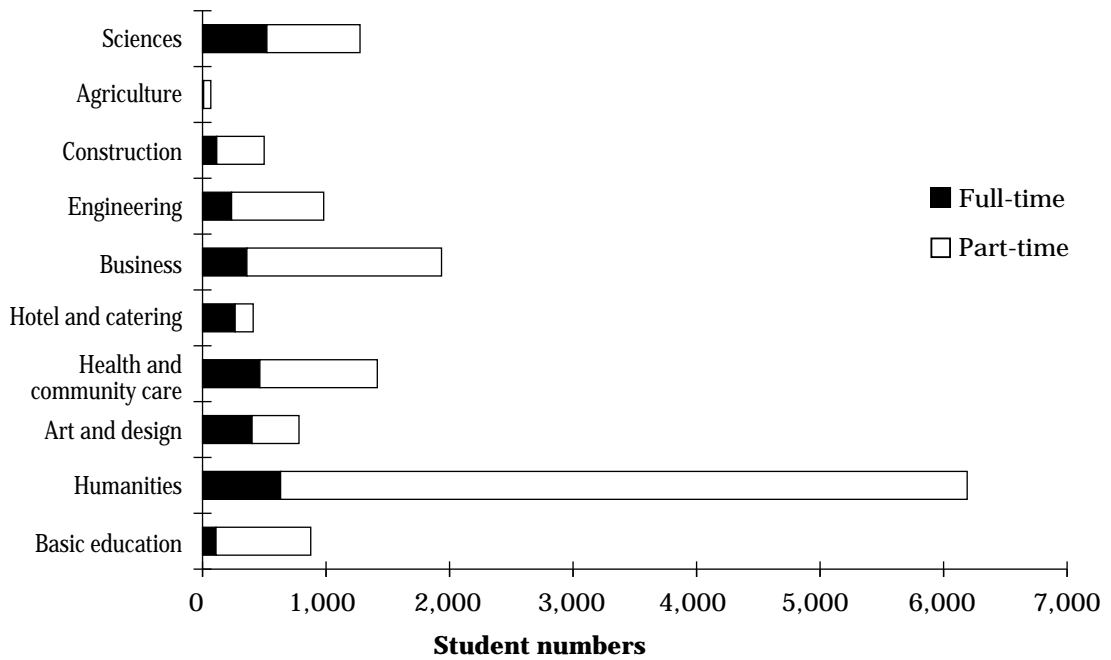
Wakefield College: percentage student numbers by level of study (as at July 1996)



Student numbers: 14,430

Figure 3

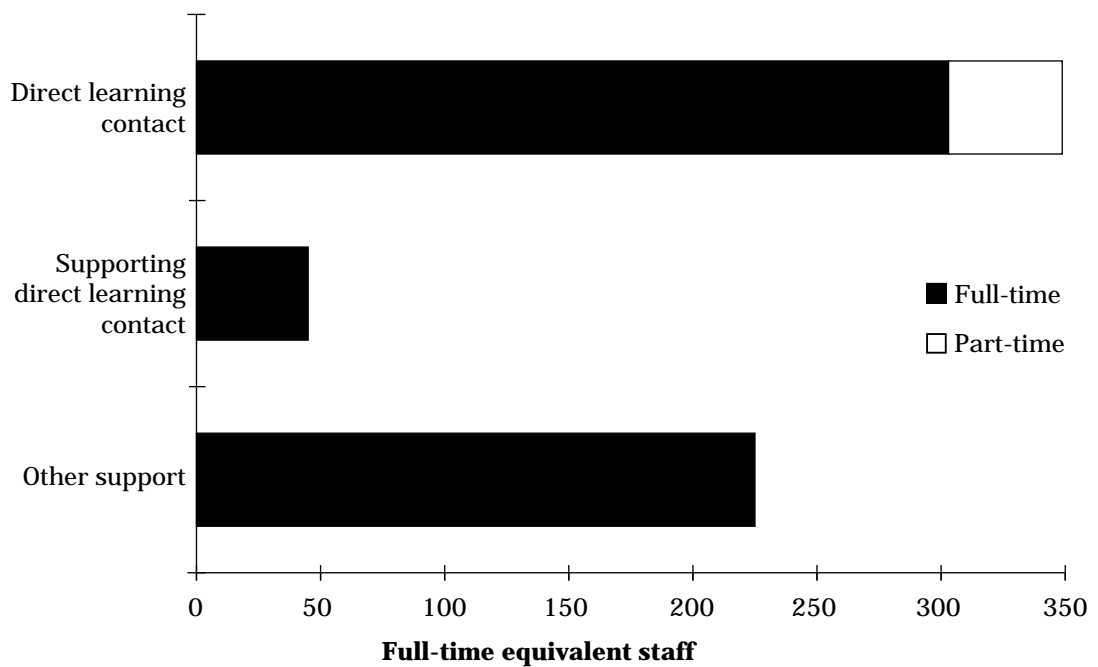
Wakefield College: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at July 1996)



Student numbers: 14,430

Figure 4

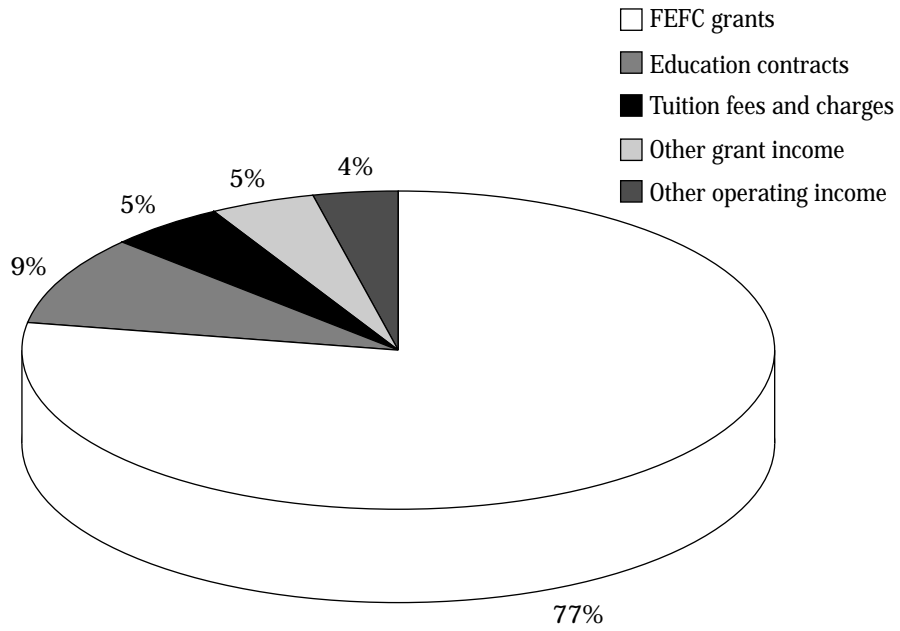
Wakefield College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at July 1996)



Full-time equivalent staff: 619

Figure 5

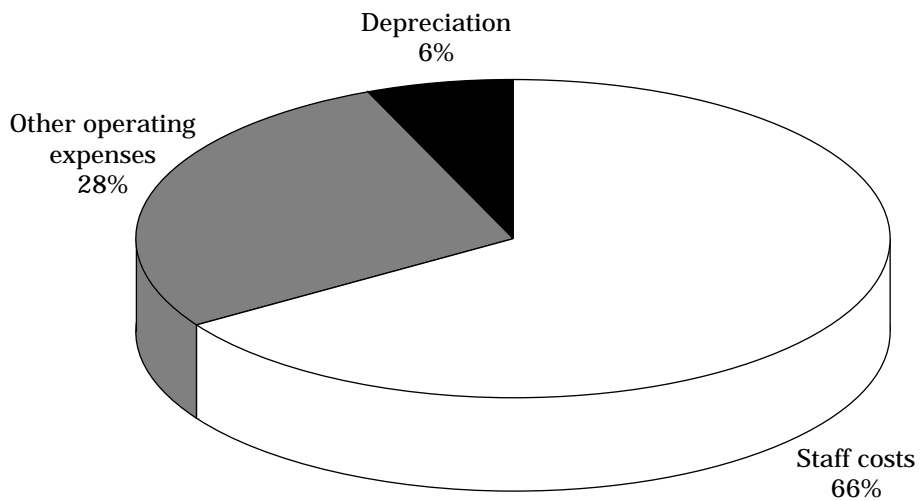
Wakefield College: income (for 12 months to July 1996)



Income: £21,722,000

Figure 6

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



Expenditure: £22,085,000

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