

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Weald College

April 1995

**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 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.

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.*

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FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 66/95

WEALD COLLEGE
GREATER LONDON REGION
Inspected October – December 1994

Summary

Weald College is a tertiary college which has good links with other local colleges and schools, the local education authority, employers, and the North West London TEC. It offers a wide range of academic, vocational and recreational courses to school leavers and adults. The college is effectively governed and well managed. There are good arrangements for recruitment, admissions and induction, and tutorial support is effective. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are generally well supported. Most teaching is of a high standard. Retention rates on most full-time courses are high. GCE A level and GCSE students achieve good examination results, and the results on vocational courses are satisfactory. Many of the college's students go on to higher education. There is an effective system of course review for full-time courses. The new arrangements for reviewing part-time courses should now be linked to this. There is a well-managed staff-development programme linked to the college's strategic objectives. There are good resources and equipment to support learning in most subjects, although the amount of information technology equipment is inadequate. The college should: extend its quality assurance to administrative teams and cross-college functions; improve the levels of attendance and standards of punctuality on some courses; increase the number of study spaces for students.

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	1
Quality assurance	2
Resources: staffing	2
equipment/learning resources	2
accommodation	3

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Mathematics	2	Art and design	2
Computing and science	3	English	1
Business	2	Other humanities	2
Catering, leisure and tourism	2	Adult basic education and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	2
Health and social care	2		

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INTRODUCTION

1 Weald College was inspected between 10 October and 8 December 1994. The recruitment and induction procedures were inspected during September 1994. The inspection team of 17 full-time and part-time inspectors spent a total of 57 days in the college. The team inspected courses in science, mathematics and computing, business, leisure and tourism, catering, health and community care, art and design, humanities, adult basic education and courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The subsequent inspection of cross-college aspects drew on evidence from the specialist inspections. Inspectors visited 150 classes, saw some 1,900 students and inspected a broad range of students' written and practical work. There were meetings with governors, senior and middle managers, teaching staff and support staff, students, parents, employers and representatives of the North West London Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), the technical and vocational education initiative and the local education authority (LEA). The inspectors also had access to extensive documentation relating to the college and its courses.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Weald College opened as a tertiary college in 1987, replacing a sixth form college on the site of a former grammar school, after the London Borough of Harrow reorganised its post-16 provision. The greater part of the college's work is carried out on a single site in a pleasant suburban part of Harrow Weald. The college also collaborates with the two other tertiary colleges in Harrow in a borough-wide adult and continuing education programme operating on a number of sites within the borough. Weald College manages an adult-learning centre and has a business centre providing customised courses for local businesses. As well as the two other tertiary colleges, there is also a Roman Catholic Sixth Form College in the borough. Pupils leave the 10 high schools in the borough at the age of 16, and, in 1994, 86 per cent stayed on in full-time education. There are seven independent schools with sixth forms in the borough.

3 The population of Harrow is approximately 200,000. The college draws 19 per cent of its full-time and 22 per cent of its part-time students from neighbouring areas, notably from the London Borough of Brent which supplies 12 per cent of full-time and 9 per cent of part-time students. Small proportions of students also travel from Hertfordshire and the boroughs of Hillingdon, Barnet and Ealing. Unemployment has continued to rise in the North West London TEC area at a time when it has begun to decline nationally. In October 1994, the overall rate of unemployment was 9.2 per cent in Harrow and 16.5 per cent in Brent, compared with 16.2 per cent in Greater London as a whole. In Harrow, 26.2 per cent of the population is of minority ethnic origin, compared with 20.2 per cent in London as a whole. Approximately 54 per cent of the college's students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, 32 per cent of Indian origin.

4 At the time of the inspection, 5,848 students were enrolled at the college. Of these, 30 per cent were attending on a full-time basis and 34 per cent were 16-19 years of age. Enrolments by age and level of study are shown in figures 1 and 2. The college employs 327 teachers, of whom 102 are on full or fractional contracts, and 225 are hourly-paid teaching staff. This represents 121 full-time equivalent staff. There are 66 support staff, of whom 34 are full time, representing just over 76 full-time equivalent staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 3.

5 The college has 10 teaching divisions which provide a broad range of General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) and General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) courses; vocational further education and adult basic education programmes; training courses for industry; access courses; the foundation year of a degree course; and adult and continuing education. The curricular areas covered by the 10 divisions are: computing and information technology, English and communications, business, humanities, mathematics and numeracy, science, creative arts, catering, management and training, and adult and continuing education. Enrolments by mode of attendance are shown in figure 4.

6 In its mission statement, the college emphasises that its purpose is to be a leading provider of a broad-based quality educational service to meet the needs of the community. It states that all members of Weald College are valued as individuals and are offered a range of opportunities to enable them to attain their maximum potential. An accompanying statement of values adds that it will create an environment that encourages and enables staff to perform to the best of their abilities. In this regard, the college places great emphasis on effective relationships between staff and students.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

7 The college collaborates with the other two tertiary colleges in the borough through systems which were established before incorporation. The intention of the tertiary system was that local young people and adults should have access to the widest possible curriculum, without unnecessary duplication. Each college had particular specialisms and this affects the current distribution of some courses within the borough. The continuing collaboration works to the advantage of the students. There are co-operative arrangements for the recruitment and guidance of borough pupils. Approximately 40 per cent of the Harrow high-school pupils choose to continue their education at Weald College, and they constitute 66 per cent of the existing number of full-time students.

8 The college offers a wide range of courses which are responsive to the needs of the local population. Careful analysis is made of trends likely to influence demand. Market intelligence provided by the North West London TEC, the Department for Employment and the Harrow Careers

Service is used to inform curriculum planning. The effects of the national curriculum in schools are also taken into account. In 1993-94 the college met its growth targets, partly by responding to increasing demand from people living outside the borough. Full-time courses, catering mainly for the 16-19 age group, include 30 subjects at GCE A level, 22 at GCE advanced supplementary (AS), and 18 at GCSE. GCE AS subjects are offered mainly as one-year courses, to be taken at the end of either the first or second year of programmes of study. They are also used as alternatives for students who are not able to manage a full advanced level course.

9 While maintaining its traditional base of mainly GCE and GCSE provision, the college has steadily increased its offer of vocational programmes since its opening in 1987, so that these are now being followed by approximately 48 per cent of full-time students. Students are enrolled on advanced General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) courses in art and design, business, hospitality and catering, leisure and tourism, and science. Of 191 students currently enrolled on advanced GNVQs, over half are taking a GCE A level as an alternative to additional units. Intermediate GNVQs are offered in business, hospitality and catering, leisure and tourism, and science and there is a foundation GNVQ programme with five vocational options. There is no suitable progression route at the college for students from the foundation GNVQ course into health and social care nor, at intermediate level, in art and design. Students can transfer to courses offered elsewhere in the borough. The college has also introduced several courses leading to National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in both full-time and part-time modes. These are in business administration, catering, floristry and retail.

10 Full-time students have two 50-minute periods a week for enrichment activities, many of which are directly related to their programmes of study; for example, students of GCE A level psychology can study statistics and there is a Young Enterprise group run within the business division. Other activities include team games and dramatic productions. At the time of the inspection, a production of 'The Shoemaker's Wonderful Wife' was in progress. The college achieves impressive results in a number of competitive sports.

11 Other more specifically recreational activities are organised by and funded through an active students' union, and are publicised at a freshers' fair when students enrol. Societies include a Hindu students' forum, an Islamic society, a union of Jewish students, a gospel society and a pre-journalism group which produces an occasional magazine with the assistance of an English teacher. The students' union is organising a fashion show, in conjunction with other colleges, to raise money for charity.

12 The college collaborates with the borough and the two other tertiary colleges to offer a rich and varied range of day and evening part-time adult education courses which reflect the needs and interests of local residents. There are classes in Indian vocal music, Indian bridal make-up and Asian

dressmaking, which are successful in encouraging Asian students to take up part-time study. Classes in lip reading and sign language build on the college's expertise with students whose hearing is impaired. Saturday classes in information technology and computing, introduced for the first time in 1993, are having some success in recruiting additional male students to part-time adult education, where the majority of students are female. A successful bid to the European Social Fund helps to provide courses for women wishing to return to work. The borough subsidises part-time adult education courses through concessionary fees. The college works closely with the other tertiary colleges to find places for students who have particular learning needs which could not be met in the college to which they first applied.

13 The curriculum is further enhanced by productive links the college has developed with some higher education institutions. Within the adult and continuing education programme, there are over 200 students on the modular course for diplomas and certificates in counselling, validated by the University of Middlesex. The first year of a four-year science degree is franchised from the University of Westminster, in partnership with another borough college. In January 1995, the first students will begin to study for a part-time modular degree in humanities, which is linked to Middlesex University. The majority of the students on a well-established access to Bachelor of Education course go on to take the course at the University of Hertfordshire. Another access course caters for students wishing to enter nursing and health careers, and has links with hospitals, including some offering higher education courses.

14 The college has developed a fruitful working relationship with the TEC. As a result, it has a number of good links with industry which enable it to work towards meeting national training and education targets, and which offer it considerable potential for growth in the provision of training. The college currently provides assessor training to 36 external clients from eight companies and organisations. It has collaborated with the TEC, Brent Social Services, two other colleges and voluntary organisations in the setting up of the 'Carequest' consortium to enable the staff of residential homes to achieve NVQs, and to provide assessor training. In its first year, Carequest has exceeded its target of the numbers of assessors to be trained. The manager of the hospitality division at the college is seconded to the TEC for one day a week, with staff from other colleges in the TEC area, to work on a project designed to increase access to assessment in NVQs. The seconded staff identify companies' training needs and arrange for appropriate training and assessment by other college staff. There is a business centre at Weald College which provides training for industry through open and flexible forms of learning, using materials from the Open College, as part of a borough scheme to support local industry.

15 Personal links arising from the secondment of a teacher to Guinness two years ago have led to contracts to provide training for several firms,

including Guinness, Cable and Wireless, British Airways, and Kodak. The Kodak scheme concerned the implementation of NVQs in laboratory skills and resulted in the college being awarded the Tertiary Colleges' Association National Curriculum Award in 1993. The college also won this award in 1991 and 1992. The college was winner of the North West London TEC's Rubicon award as Trainer of the Year in 1993. Business managers and other professionals who have been involved in the training programme speak highly of the quality of the training provided by the college, and of the management and support provided.

16 The college has benefited from the borough's technical and vocational education initiative scheme, now in its final year. Activities funded under the scheme include implementation of national records of achievement, staff training in core skills, information technology, open-access provision, and curriculum development for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The scheme also part funded a resource room to develop flexible and resource-based learning, and several teacher placements in industry.

17 The college has a detailed policy and codes of practice on equal opportunities. The implementation of the policy is monitored by a subcommittee of the academic board. At induction, students are made aware of the difficulties which may be faced by fellow students with disabilities such as a hearing impairment. There are curriculum initiatives on equality of opportunity. For instance, some students on work experience placements have surveyed their place of work, with the agreement of the employers, and reported on equal opportunities issues. Some staff development has taken place on the difficulties facing students with dyslexia. There is a Weald College Watch scheme, involving staff and students which operates in collaboration with the police and local residents to maintain safety and security on site.

18 Weald College also manages the adult learners' centre. This is the specialist centre in the borough for adult basic education, which is supported by funding from the European Social Fund. The centre has been awarded the quality standard of the Adult Learning and Basic Skills Unit and co-ordinates adult basic education throughout the borough. There are seven adult basic education groups in operation at Weald College. A manager with cross-college responsibilities for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities was appointed in September 1994.

19 A variety of learning difficulties and/or disabilities are catered for, including dyslexia. Approximately 70 students are presently receiving some form of additional support. Links with schools operate well to ensure that students are placed in an appropriate college, and that their special needs continue to be met. Applicants from outside the borough are asked to identify any needs they might have on their application form. Weald College has developed particular expertise in supporting students who have hearing impairments. Currently, there are 11 of such students on

full-time courses and 56 on part-time courses. There is a hearing impaired unit which provides support for hearing-impaired students across the college, and which also provides courses in sign language and lip reading for the hearing and the hearing impaired. The college attempts to provide access for any student who wishes to enrol, and where necessary and where possible, re-schedules classes to provide access for wheelchair users. There has been some staff training on the teaching of students with specific learning difficulties. The youth training programme for students with moderate learning difficulties is flexible and supportive.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

20 There are effective arrangements for governing the college. The governors focus on the strategic direction of the college and policies arising from the mission statement. At the time of the inspection, there were 14 governors, and one vacancy for an additional governor representing the community. The governing body includes the principal, one elected member of the teaching staff and one elected member of the support staff. The governors have substantial expertise in aspects of business and the professions which are relevant to the college, such as finance and management. North West London TEC is represented and liaison with other local providers of education is fostered through the co-option of one governor who is also a member of the governing bodies of a local primary school and a secondary school. Another co-opted member is the vice-chancellor of Middlesex University. The students' union is invited to send a representative for specific agenda items and can ask for items to be added to the agenda for meetings of the governing body, although these options are rarely used.

21 The governing body receives regular, concise reports from its subcommittees which deal with personnel, assets, finance and general purposes, audit, and the remuneration of senior postholders. Senior college staff sometimes attend governors' meetings to make presentations, and they attend subcommittees by invitation. Governors comment upon the issues put before them in an open and knowledgeable manner. The principal takes care to ensure that governors are informed about the monitoring of strategic objectives and the context of current strategic decisions and planning. Through the finance and general purposes and audit subcommittees, the governors take a close interest in the college's financial affairs. Governors participate in other college activities, such as the annual graduation ceremony to mark students' achievements, although the extent of this involvement is limited by their other commitments. One governor chairs the college's records of achievement validation committee. The role of clerk to the governors is presently carried out by the vice-principal.

22 The main focus of governor training has been an annual development day, which in 1994 was on the theme of planning for inspection. The induction of new members has been carried out through externally-

provided courses. The governing body should consider introducing a process of self appraisal for its members to enable them to identify their individual development needs. Governors have agreed three quality standards for their own performance. These concern attendance rates, involvement in college activities and development opportunities. Meetings of the full governing body are generally attended by about two-thirds of its members. Attendance at subcommittee meetings is good.

23 The college is effectively managed. Senior managers have strategic vision, a detailed knowledge of the local context, and a good grasp of national developments in education, training and funding. The strategic plan is supported by detailed annual operating statements. The college executive consists of the principal, vice-principal and five assistant principals. More than half the executive are women. The assistant principals are responsible for client services, personnel, curriculum, finance and administration, and marketing and planning, respectively. There are 10 teaching divisions which are further divided into sections or course teams depending upon the nature of the work covered. Seven teaching divisions are managed by the assistant principal curriculum. Three further divisions, which deal mainly with external agencies, are managed by the assistant principal marketing and planning. In addition, to the 10 teaching divisions there is a pastoral division, and other sections dealing with the management of the library, information systems, property services, staff development and quality. Seven of the 16 divisional managers or their equivalent are women. All divisions have business plans related to the college's strategic objectives. In general, management within divisions is good, but there is inconsistent quality of management and record-keeping amongst course or section teaching teams.

24 Communications within the college are good. The principal meets regularly with the executive team and also chairs the college management team of 23 which consists of the managers of all the teaching divisions, the pastoral division and other section managers, and the executive team. The assistant principal curriculum meets regularly with the managers of the teaching divisions and occasionally the principal also joins these meetings. Divisional managers hold meetings with their staff and, within divisions, there are course team and section meetings. There is a monthly meeting for the whole staff, including support staff, at which the principal or another senior manager briefs the staff on national perspectives as well as college issues such as the progress being made towards achieving objectives in the strategic plan. There is an occasional staff newsletter and a weekly bulletin to which staff and students can contribute. Teaching staff and divisional managers feel that they are kept informed of important developments within the college and that they have opportunities to contribute to debate. The principal writes directly to all parents and guardians on issues of general concern and to welcome newcomers to the college.

25 The academic board offers an opportunity for staff to influence decisions. There are 21 members including the executive team, nine elected teaching and support staff and a student. The functions of the curriculum planning subcommittee and the resource planning subcommittee are currently under review. The subcommittees for health and safety and equal opportunities have important roles in implementing college policy. The quality management group reports to the academic board.

26 Summaries of the college's income and expenditure for the 16 month period to July 1994 are shown in figures 5 and 6. The college receives approximately 80 per cent of its funding from the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). In 1993-94, the average level of funding per unit was £16.85 compared with a median of £19.06 for general further education and tertiary colleges. In 1994-95, the average unit of funding per unit is £16.68. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges is £18.17 and the median for the sector is £19.02. The college achieved its target of 8 per cent growth in enrolments in 1993-94.

27 In 1994-95, 30 per cent of the funds available to support teaching directly is devoted to consumable items. It is allocated to divisions on the basis of student numbers, weighted according to an internal system which is well understood by divisional managers. There is further devolution of funds to some course or section teams. To provide for capital items, 60 per cent of the funding is allocated through a bidding system. Divisions that bid for capital items must show how these are related to their divisional plans. The bids are closely scrutinised by the resources planning committee of the academic board which makes recommendations to the principal. Detailed bids were submitted to support information technology developments in art and design and science, and for equipment to support catering and humanities. In addition, the resources planning committee allocated 10 per cent of resources to non-teaching, but curriculum-related, areas of the college's operations, such as audio-visual aids and cross-curricular information technology provision. The allocation of cross-college expenditure for property and the central administrative information systems is carried out by the executive team within limits set by the governing body.

28 The quality of management information on financial matters is generally good. The assistant principal finance and administration produces a monthly income and expenditure account and a balance sheet which are discussed by the senior management. Detailed breakdowns of staffing costs with forward projections are also produced. Governors receive regular quarterly reports through the finance and general purposes committee. Divisions are provided with monthly reports of their actual and committed expenditure, showing variance from their annual budget. A training session was provided for divisional managers to ensure understanding of these reports. Financial information is used as an aid to

strategic planning. For instance, the growth in student numbers that would generate sufficient funds to finance further building work was calculated and used to inform decision making at executive level. The college has not yet calculated the unit costs for each course but expects to have this information by June 1995.

29 Performance indicators are monitored centrally but their widespread adoption is impeded by middle managers' poor access to computerised management information. To date, no divisional managers, course leaders or programme leaders can access enrolment, finance or attendance data directly from their own workstations. The priority for action in this area has been recognised by college managers and a working group has been set up to ensure that developments in management information systems support the delivery of the curriculum. Recent investment has led to the establishment of electronic network links throughout the college and improvements in software facilities are planned for the near future.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

30 There is a well-established arrangement in which all three tertiary colleges in the borough and the Roman Catholic sixth form college collaborate to provide Harrow high-school pupils and their parents with information on courses and routes for progression. A common prospectus of full-time courses offered by all four colleges is produced by an inter-college committee of senior staff. This prospectus is distributed to the pupils in the high schools, and is given to other prospective students. Open evenings and school liaison visits are planned between the colleges to avoid clashes. A place at Weald College is guaranteed to all borough students who apply, although entry to a particular course depends upon entry criteria being achieved. Weald College also produces course leaflets and other documents specific to its own provision.

31 Pre-entry information and support is provided effectively. Full-time students at Weald College and their parents consider that they have had full and accurate information on which to base their choice. Considerable effort is made by college staff to provide impartial guidance and to recruit with integrity, assigning students to the most appropriate courses to meet their needs.

32 There is a common borough-wide prospectus for part-time, adult and continuing education which lists courses provided by all three tertiary colleges. Weald College also publishes its own literature giving more detail about its provision. Prospective part-time students have access at Weald College to advice and guidance tailored to their individual needs, both before and during the enrolment period. The advice is friendly and impartial, and students are sometimes referred to other colleges where provision is more suitable for their needs.

33 Advice is also available for potential full-time students, who are provisionally allocated to courses on the basis of an interview in the spring

term prior to entry. In September they are interviewed again on the basis of their GCSE results and assigned to specific courses by the senior tutors. Senior tutors can also help students to transfer between courses, sometimes as late as December, and sometimes more than once. These procedures are well understood by students, and implemented supportively by the staff concerned.

34 The enrolment and induction arrangements for full-time students are well organised, although they take longer than is necessary. There is a strong cross-college approach, designed to meet individual students' needs, to encourage community and family involvement and to emphasise the shared responsibility of college and learners. Full-time students receive a handbook addressed to themselves and their families. Induction provides them with information and advice about the wide range of facilities and support available. Induction for part-time students is less extensive and takes place mainly within each course. There is some use of procedures for the assessment and accreditation of prior learning at the start of courses. Previous achievement is assessed and can be accredited in business administration and catering NVQ or equivalent courses. Accreditation of prior learning is also being used to accredit students' school experience, for instance their achievements in information technology, as GNVQ core skills or vocational units. Students' prior achievements on the diploma of vocational education can be assessed and accredited in this way.

35 The college provides an adult atmosphere, much valued by students, in which students make their own decisions. Full-time students are supported through a well-established tutorial system. A college-wide tutorial programme covers social and health issues, as well as induction, careers, higher education applications and personal and academic support. The delivery of the programme is co-ordinated by a team of senior tutors. The tutorial system provides an effective communications network and is largely successful in encouraging students to meet college expectations in respect of behaviour, punctuality, attendance and work.

36 Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning, in partnership with the college, through a student contract. The contract summarises students' rights and responsibilities while at college. The tutorial programme includes regular reviews of students' progress once a term; each student has an individual meeting with his or her tutor.

37 The college participates in a borough-wide scheme for the implementation of national records of achievement. These are used effectively at several stages of the students' college careers. They are referred to at the interview for a place at the college and are brought up to date during the students' courses. Students are encouraged to use their records of achievement to support their higher education applications or employment interviews. The college co-ordinator of records of achievement has introduced systems to make their use easier, for example,

by encouraging students to use wordprocessing to produce their statements. Students' records of achievement are scrutinised by the college's records of achievement validation board, which verifies standards across the college using criteria agreed across the borough. The work of this group is externally verified by a cross-borough accreditation board, which moderates standards throughout Harrow. In May 1994, 467 students' records of achievement were validated. This exceeded the target figure of 70 per cent of eligible students which the TEC provided as a guideline. Nevertheless, some students perceive records of achievement as irrelevant.

38 There is initial diagnostic testing for students on one-year courses. For those who require it, learning support is available to students through the English and mathematics workshops. Other students may attend by making their own arrangements or as a result of referrals by teachers or tutors. A total of 70 students has been enrolled for help in the English workshop during the autumn term 1994, including 23 students who have been diagnosed as dyslexic and nine students who are speakers of other languages. There has been an increased demand for English support in recent years. In 1993-94, it was not possible to offer support time to 30 students who asked for assistance with English because resources were insufficient. There were nearly 450 recorded attendances at the mathematics workshop during the autumn term 1994, of which 400 were self referrals. Most of these students were taking GCE AS/A level mathematics. The workshop does not generally attract GCSE mathematics students. The college should review the scope, mode of operation and facilities provided by both workshops in the light of an analysis of all the learning support needs of the college.

39 Students receive appropriate information and support in choosing a job or in applying for further or higher education courses. Careers education for full-time students is delivered through the tutorial programmes as well as through the college's careers service. The careers service is well resourced, welcoming and highly regarded by the students. The college has its own trained careers advisers, who receive assistance from the borough careers service. One senior tutor has specific responsibility for students identified as wishing to apply to Oxford or Cambridge. Special events are organised, for example, for all students who wish to go on to higher education in humanities subjects. Work experience is managed by a full-time co-ordinator who is building up an extensive bank of firms able to offer placements; it is available to all students on vocational courses. There is good supporting documentation which enables staff, students and employers to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the placements. The opportunity to undertake work experience has recently been extended to students on non-vocational courses and about 50 such students were placed last year.

40 A range of other services is available to provide students with personal support. The college provides a playgroup, which has places for 16 children

aged between three and five. Most of the places are taken up by the children of students. There is a well-used, confidential counselling service provided by trained counsellors. In 1993-94, there were 539 interviews involving 81 students. Students needing welfare advice are referred to local welfare agencies. In addition to the college's access fund, part of the college's trust fund, which is made up of voluntary contributions from full-time students of between £5 and £10, provides financial help to some students to meet costs associated with their studies, such as travel, materials or childcare. During the autumn term 1994, 38 students were supported by the trust fund and seven students by the access fund. The allocation of trust fund monies to students is administered by one of the senior tutors and supplemented by students' union funds. The remainder of the trust fund is used to provide items of benefit to all students. In 1993, a minibus was purchased, and its servicing is also paid from the fund.

41 There are unsatisfactory levels of attendance on some courses. Although registers are kept, and although there are clear systems for tutors to monitor attendance and for senior tutors to take action where necessary, the college has recognised that these systems are too slow to be fully effective. The college is currently reviewing the systems with a view to tightening up the existing arrangements. Punctuality was identified by inspectors as a problem on some courses in mathematics and business, particularly at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

42 The strengths outweighed the weaknesses in 61 per cent of the 150 lessons which were inspected. The weaknesses outweighed strengths in 8 per cent of lessons. The grades awarded during the inspection 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		14	27	14	2	0	57
GCSE		1	3	7	1	0	12
GNVQ		4	11	9	2	0	26
NVQ		4	5	2	0	0	11
Other		1	22	14	7	0	44
Total		24	68	46	12	0	150

43 In all curriculum areas, teachers were knowledgeable and competent, and the teaching was effective. In most cases, the teachers responsible for delivering a course co-ordinate their planning. In English, there is a detailed calendar of meetings for the teams teaching GCE AS/A level and GCSE courses which enables teachers to co-ordinate key aspects of the programmes, including assessment, moderation and reviews of students'

progress, and to share materials and discuss teaching methods. Management is dynamic and practices are consistent across the large number of groups involved in the study of English. The schemes of work used for GCE A level English literature follow a common format, setting out the literary content of each lesson, the study skills being promoted and the tasks and assessments to be undertaken. In the course that leads to the diploma in counselling, schemes of work are supplemented by detailed lesson plans which include approximate timings for each activity. In some sections, the use of schemes of work is less well developed. In science, for example, there are considerable differences between subject teams and between individual teachers. In computing, there is little evidence to suggest a co-ordinated effort to ensure that all students cover subjects in equal depth when year cohorts are divided into separate teaching groups.

44 Many of the most effective lessons began with an exposition of aims and objectives and included regular summaries of key points. In GCE A level mathematics lessons, for example, clear introductions helped to demonstrate that progress was being made by students and that their learning related to the objectives of the course. In a GCSE psychology class the teacher made effective use of the whiteboard for summary notes and sketches throughout the lesson. Equally effective use was made of the whiteboard in a GCE A level economics lesson as a way of ensuring that students had grasped the key points. Occasionally there was insufficient reinforcement of learning. In some of the lessons on care courses, there was an over-emphasis on learning through listening and insufficient attention to the development of students' note-making skills.

45 Teachers frequently used questions to discover the level of students' prior experience and to monitor their progress. For example, in a GCE A level statistics lesson on hypothesis testing, the teacher used questions to draw out students' previous knowledge of the topic. In contrast, in a Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) computing lesson, the lack of preliminary questioning to determine what students knew meant that an introductory presentation about spreadsheet programs was of limited value, since most of the students had previous experience of using this kind of software. In some lessons in economics, care, history and geography, opportunities for monitoring progress through questioning were under exploited, either because few questions were asked or because questions were posed to the whole class rather than directed to individual students.

46 There was a good range of teaching methods in all subjects. In some lessons, group work provided opportunities for lively and effective learning. In an English lesson on Shakespeare's play 'Othello', students discussed the work in groups, acted out parts of the text, and answered questions in the manner of characters in the play. In history, geography and English, teachers made use of video tapes to enrich students' learning.

47 In many lessons teachers put theory into a practical context by making reference to realistic examples, and practical work was used well to promote understanding. Catering, care, business studies, English, mathematics, science and computing courses all provided examples of constructive interrelationships between theory and practice. In some cases, understanding the application of theory involves activity outside the college. Geography students follow an appropriate programme of fieldwork and history students make use of a nearby specialist library of newspapers. In the advanced GNVQ in business, students are encouraged to form links with local industry and to invite external speakers to the college. Arrangements have been made for students on catering courses to provide service in a local hotel during 1995 to broaden their otherwise limited experience of producing food within a commercial context. Students on many courses are accompanied by staff on visits outside the college. For example, computing students visit companies with computerised systems for demonstrations and practical activities.

48 Teaching was almost always supported by reference to text books or handouts prepared by teachers. Psychology and sociology students benefit from carefully-structured, well-presented handouts. In art and design, project briefs and handouts are professionally presented and expressed in language appropriate for the students. Students on almost all full-time courses receive course handbooks setting out course requirements and an introduction to their studies. GCE A level and GCSE mathematics students are provided with comprehensive introductory material. Computing students on vocational courses and students on GNVQ programmes receive handbooks which set out the details of common or core skills assessment and the grading criteria. In GCE A level English, the course handbook is supplemented by an excellent induction programme through which teachers introduce an agreed range of literary concepts, and critical and study skills by selecting from a bank of materials generated by the course team.

49 Many teachers encourage students to take some responsibility for managing their own learning. GNVQ business courses are carefully structured around a range of assignments designed to allow students the opportunity to investigate and research vocational areas of their choice. Students on GCE A level mathematics and those on vocational computing courses make constructive use of workshop sessions, supervised by teachers. In psychology, sociology and economics, students benefited from exercises in essay planning, marking their own work and relating theoretical work to their own experiences. Sometimes when students manage their own learning, work proceeds at too slow a pace. In GCSE mathematics, for example, students spend long periods working through examples and some lost concentration. On computing courses, students engaged in projects extending over several weeks are not given the short-term targets which should help them to achieve a faster pace of

work. In some GCE A level and GNVQ science lessons, the teachers concentrate heavily on providing information and instruction and allow students little opportunity to think for themselves or to discuss issues.

50 On some courses, such as the foundation GNVQ; the access to nursing courses and the access to Bachelor of Education course, teachers are skilful at organising work to cater for individual needs and abilities. In other curriculum areas, however, the teaching and assignment work fail to take adequate account of students' differing abilities. In some computing and humanities sessions, for instance, the most able students were not always offered sufficient challenge.

51 Much of the work with students who have particular learning difficulties and/or disabilities is of high quality. Support for deaf students is a particular strength within the college. Experienced teachers provide well-designed courses in lip reading and signing. In cases where a student with a disability is studying on mainstream courses, teachers receive specialist training and are well supported by expert assistants. Students on adult basic education courses follow individual programmes of study which are appropriately linked to their aims. Some provision on a youth training work skills course does not meet the aims of the course nor prepare students adequately for the world of work.

52 Learning is assessed on a regular basis through assignments and homework. In most instances marking is accurate and fair. In the advanced GNVQ in art and design, the documentation for assessment and the tracking of students' achievements is well designed and thorough. Students are provided with clear feedback and hold their own records of achievement during the course. On other courses, most marked work is returned with helpful written comments from the teacher. Students are generally well informed about what is required of them although some humanities students gave a variety of conflicting answers when asked about the criteria used for marking their assignments.

53 Teachers set assessments regularly. For instance, GCE A level and GCSE business assignments are set according to a regular schedule which includes the marking and return of work to students within agreed deadlines. The portfolios of evidence prepared by students on GNVQ business are assessed through a process which is properly conducted and fair. In mathematics, marks for coursework and assessments are recorded consistently and regularly and students are kept informed of their progress. In English, formal agreements with students have been introduced. These include undertakings from students about the amount of private study they will do and by teachers about the time in which they will mark and return work. Sometimes teachers encourage students to contribute to the assessment process. In one GNVQ science lesson students energetically debated the criteria which would be used for marking a group exercise which involved making a model of the molecular structure of deoxyribonucleic acid.

54 The promotion of study skills and core skills, including communication, numeracy and information technology, varies across the college. In English, study skills and examination technique are an integral part of all the courses. In the social sciences, the use of study skills and assessment techniques which encourage students' self-evaluation, are particularly notable. In science, insufficient attention is paid to the development of communication and research skills. In business studies, the attention given to the use of language and number varies. There is good use of information technology in geography and in leisure and tourism courses but it is not used sufficiently in the sciences, business and humanities.

55 The college has recognised the need for a co-ordinated cross-college approach to the delivery of core skills in vocational studies. Six vocational and three core skills teachers have been allocated the task of preparing materials, developing schemes of work and devising appropriate methods of assessing and recording the achievement of core skills in each vocational area.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

56 The majority of students are well motivated. They were keen to contribute during class discussions and to take part in practical work. In catering, the work involved considerable interaction between teachers and students. In health and social care, all the students who were consulted by inspectors said that they enjoyed their studies and felt that they had made significant progress. In English, students spoke enthusiastically about their work and were able to explain what they had been doing in a way which demonstrated the continuity and progression within their courses. Students put considerable effort and enthusiasm into public events, for example, art exhibitions, drama productions and open evenings, and their presentations often form part of course work.

57 Students are developing appropriate levels of knowledge and understanding and are generally able to apply it. Oral presentations and performance in discussions are assessed and students demonstrate an ability to communicate effectively. The most able have a thorough understanding of their studies and are able to apply economic concepts in assignments. In history, geography, government and politics a good command of appropriate facts and concepts had been developed, and some good graphical achievements were evident in geography projects. In English, the written work demonstrated an ability to apply knowledge gained in class to practical tasks of writing and literary criticism. Both in class and written work, students of health and social care displayed knowledge appropriate to the level of programme.

58 The ability to work effectively as members of a group was demonstrated in many of the activities inspected. Good examples of group work were observed in English and catering. Science students worked

well in pairs, but opportunities for other forms of group work were constrained by the physical limitations of laboratories with fixed benches. In the social sciences, some good contributions were made during group work. Of particular note were examples of students constructively helping each other with assignments, briefing peers on information missed because of absence through illness, or making confident contributions to class discussion.

59 Course work was generally of a good standard and practical work was carried out safely. Standards of practical work were very high in some catering groups, for example, the group of adults on the training for work programme. In art and design, some good work in ceramics was inspected. In business studies, students were well organised. One group presented useful extended pieces of work as part of an assignment on costing.

60 Retention rates on full-time courses are generally high. The retention rates in 1993-94 across all courses range from 87 per cent in art and design to 97 per cent in computing and information technology. Retention rates were lower on courses in the adult and continuing education division. These ranged from 61 per cent in practical subjects to 88 per cent on counselling courses. Attendance rates were satisfactory on most full-time courses, ranging from 81 per cent in mathematics and English to 88 per cent in science. Attendance rates were lower for business administration, and art and design courses at 77 per cent and 79 per cent, respectively.

61 GCE AS/A level examination results are generally good. The 411 students aged 16-18 entered for two or more GCE AS/A level examinations in 1993-94 scored, on average, 12.6 points (where A=10, E=2). The average score per entry was 4.3 points. This places the college among the top third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure, based on the data in the 1994 performance tables published by the Department for Education. The tables did not include the 59 students aged 16-18 who took AS examinations at the end of their first year of study.

62 The college's average pass rates at GCE A level were 76 per cent in 1992, 84 per cent in 1993 and 80 per cent in 1994. In the last two years an average of 46 per cent of entries have been successful at grades A-C. These results are well above the averages for all general further education and tertiary colleges in 1994, the provisional average pass rates for all colleges in the sector other than sixth form colleges was 68 per cent, and the pass rate, grades A-C, was 36 per cent.

63 In 1994, 10 subjects achieved 100 per cent pass rates. These were: ancient history, art and design, classical civilisation, dance, modern Greek and five of the six different aspects of mathematics. Results are consistently good in many other subjects. Subjects where pass rates approach or exceed 90 per cent include English literature, business studies, geography and physical education. In many subjects, high proportions of entries are successful at grades A-C. The achievements in mathematics are particularly notable, where an average of 82 per cent of entries achieved

grades A-C across six mathematics syllabuses. Other subjects achieving high proportions of passes at grades A-C include geography, ancient history, classical civilisation, human biology and psychology.

64 The college's GCE AS results are also good. The average pass rate was 70 per cent in 1992, 73 per cent in 1993 and 63 per cent in 1994. In 1993, the pass rate, grades A-E, and the pass rate, grades A-C (40 per cent), exceeded the average rates for all colleges in the sector including sixth form colleges. Although, the college's proportion of passes at grades A-C fell to 28 per cent in 1994, the pass rates, grades A-E and grades A-C, remain higher than the provisional average pass rates for general further education and tertiary colleges. In 1994, there were notable successes in English and sociology, with pass rates of 87 per cent and 94 per cent and pass rates at grades A-C of 53 per cent and 75 per cent, respectively. Good pass rates were achieved in history (73 per cent) and business studies (100 per cent). There were poor results in biology (33 per cent), human biology (29 per cent), psychology (38 per cent) and electronics (25 per cent).

65 The college's GCSE pass rate, at grades A-C, rose to 63 per cent in 1994, compared with 54 per cent in 1993 and 57 per cent in 1992. These rates compare favourably with the national average pass rates, grades A-C, for 1993: 39 per cent for general further education and tertiary colleges and 50 per cent for sixth form colleges. In 1994, 100 per cent of candidates achieved grades A-C in the small cohorts taking Spanish, German and Italian, and also in the larger group for English literature. The proportion of students achieving grades A-C in English language has been consistently high at around 73 per cent for the last three years. In mathematics, results have fluctuated over the last three years; in 1994, 50 per cent of candidates achieved grades A-C. In 1994, the results were weak in art and design (46 per cent) biology (43 per cent), human biology (27 per cent), accounting (36 per cent), history (15 per cent) and law (8 per cent). In most of these subjects, the results have been weak over the last three years.

66 Levels of achievement on vocational courses are generally satisfactory. Of the 116 students aged 16-18 in their final year of study on vocational courses, 87 per cent were successful in 1994. The college is among the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure, based on the data in 1994 performance tables published by the Department for Education. There were a further 12 students on full-time courses leading to BTEC awards who were over 19 and whose achievements were therefore not counted. Examination results on BTEC first diploma and intermediate GNVQ courses has improved over the last three years. In 1994, an average of 84 per cent of students achieved full awards over five vocational areas. At national diploma level, an average of 91 per cent of students achieved the full awards over six vocational areas in 1994, compared with 94 per cent in 1993 and 96 per cent in 1992.

67 The results for both RSA Examination Board (RSA) and Pitman single subject skills awards in 1994 were an improvement on those for 1993. The overall pass rate for RSA entries was 73 per cent in 1994, compared with 69 per cent in 1993, and the proportion of distinctions rose from 29 per cent in 1993 to 43 per cent in 1994.

68 Good progress is being made on NVQ awards and equivalent courses. A total of 1,478 units were achieved at all levels of the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry NVQs in business administration, and there were 158 full awards. In addition, 20 students have achieved NVQs at level 1 and 2 in floristry, and 12 students NVQ level 2 in childcare and education. Catering courses are taught in mixed groups of full-time and part-time students working towards individual learning targets. Of 100 entries in 1994 for five City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) qualifications and two awards by CENTRA Education and Training Services, 46 resulted in full awards and the remainder in partial awards.

69 The college acknowledges that it does not yet have a comprehensive system for measuring the value added to students' initial achievements by their study at Weald College. There is currently no analysis of examination successes in relation to the numbers of students enrolling on courses, and fuller information is required on the achievements of part-time students.

70 Opportunities exist for students on the youth training scheme and for those in adult basic education to achieve accreditation in the form of C&G wordpower and numeracy awards. A total of 14 adult basic education and 11 youth training students achieved various levels in wordpower, and 13 adult basic education students achieved certificates in numeracy during 1993-94. Twenty-nine youth training students, from a total of 47, achieved full-time or part-time employment in 1994. Twenty-four adult basic education students progressed to other college courses. Nine out of the 10 students with hearing impairments went on to take other courses.

71 Large numbers of the college's students have progressed to higher education: 330, 448 and 394 students achieved higher education places in 1992, 1993 and 1994, respectively. In 1994, 78 per cent of students on the access to Bachelor of Education course and 83 per cent of students on the access to nursing and health careers course achieved accreditation and offers of places in higher education or professional training. Of the 19 students who completed the foundation year of a degree in biological sciences, involving a franchise partnership between Weald and Stanmore Colleges and the University of Westminster, 16 students entered the first year of the degree in 1994.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

72 Senior managers take a strong lead on quality assurance. There is a quality management group, chaired by the principal, and a quality manager who develops and promotes quality assurance procedures. A college policy gives course teams the responsibility for maintaining the quality of their work through setting and achieving targets. Guidelines for course teams,

section leaders, curriculum managers, tutors and senior tutors, recently approved by the academic board, specify performance indicators which are linked to the requirements of the FEFC and the objectives set out in the college charter. About 20 indicators cover students' achievements, the service provided by teaching staff and associated management activities. The guidelines also include minimum targets; for example a 90 per cent attendance by students at tutorials, the development of an agreed policy within the course team on the setting and marking of homework assignments, and the establishment of a regular regime to monitor registers and follow up persistent absentees. All course teams have agreed targets for the current year and arrangements for monitoring these at divisional level have been established.

73 The use of statistical performance indicators for quality improvement by course teams is hampered by the lack of accessible, computerised management information. As a result, many course teams have developed their own systems for monitoring and analysing performance data. These vary in detail and scope but the best provide useful assistance in improving quality. For instance, the mathematics division maintains and uses information on retention and attendance rates. Examination performance is compared with data from the previous two years as part of an annual analysis which determines priorities for action.

74 Each course is reviewed once every two years through a procedure which draws on performance indicators, surveys of students' views of provision, assessments by external moderators and examiners, and an analysis by the teaching teams of the strengths and weaknesses of provision. Each review report concludes with an action plan. Course team leaders are required to present their reports to the quality management group which identifies key aspects of good practice and areas for action. The conclusion of the group are set out in a personal letter from the principal to the relevant course team and the divisional manager who is responsible for monitoring progress and improvement. Special attention is paid to teams teaching courses on which students achieve results significantly below or above expected examination pass rates. In such cases, the quality manager takes personal responsibility for ensuring that appropriate staff development or dissemination of good practice takes place. As a result of surveys of students' opinions, there have been changes to the timetable to reduce the gaps of time between teaching sessions, and the refectory has been refurbished. A base room has been created for students on access courses.

75 Arrangements for improving the quality of adult continuing education courses are being developed energetically. Retention rates, examination results and levels of student satisfaction are analysed and issues arising are brought to the attention of divisional managers. A pilot project involving lesson observation and assessment has received funding from the LEA and is now being launched on a wider scale in conjunction with the other colleges providing adult education in the borough. At present,

initiatives to improve the quality of adult provision are not clearly linked to the quality assurance procedures which apply to the college's other provision.

76 Quality assurance procedures for administrative teams have not yet been implemented. This is a priority for 1994-95. Nevertheless, commitment to improving the quality of service offered to clients is pervasive within the college. For example, a survey carried out by library staff uncovered some dissatisfaction amongst library users which resulted in a reallocation of study areas and the acquisition of new furniture.

77 Commitment to standards of service are clearly set out in the college charter. The charter is closely modelled on the government's charter for further education. It includes specific targets for responding to course applications from prospective students, to applications for financial assistance in cases of hardship and to written complaints. The charter has been distributed to staff, and students were due to receive it in January 1995. In many respects the college charter summarises a range of existing guidance documents and handbooks which have already been issued to students and discussed as part of their induction. It also provides a framework for the use of performance indicators.

78 Staff development is effectively managed through a central unit which has a budget of £75,000 in the current year. This represents about 1.6 per cent of the college's staffing budget. Priorities are set in consultation with team managers and a detailed plan for delivering staff development contains targets, lists of activities, performance indicators and cost estimates. Quarterly reports are submitted to the governing body. The reports indicate that staff are involved in a wide range of in-house and external activities, and that there is good progress towards meeting targets.

79 Staff-development needs are identified through appraisal and line management interviews, course reviews, curriculum planning and through requests from individual staff. Procedures for the approval of funding are rigorous. Objectives are always identified, links to college priorities are explicit and the outcomes of supported activities are monitored. Attention is paid to the needs of non-teaching staff. Those interviewed confirmed that they received good support in meeting their development needs. For instance, 32 support staff are currently undergoing training and assessment for NVQs in business administration at levels 2 and 3.

80 There are effective arrangements for the induction of new teachers and support staff. All new staff are issued with a handbook. A one-day induction programme includes a talk from the principal on the college's mission and strategic objectives. After five weeks' employment, full-time staff are interviewed to evaluate their induction and identify their initial development needs. The college recently introduced an induction programme for part-time teachers on the adult and continuing education programme, together with an informative teachers' handbook. At the time of the inspection, about 50 per cent of part-time teachers have participated in this initiative.

81 Since 1987, 40 teachers have had some opportunity to gain recent industrial experience. Placements have been very varied and have lasted on average about five days. They have included opportunities in management, appraisal and personnel, as well as in work related to specific curriculum areas. One senior staff member was seconded to a major computing company for a year, during which time she collaborated with Harrow LEA on a policy for education and industry links, as well as working on internal company projects which included aspects of quality assurance. The organisations offering placements have included many large well-known firms as well as the army, a football club and the National Theatre.

82 The college is working towards Investors in People status and aims to achieve this during the current academic year. An appraisal scheme for teachers, which includes classroom observation, is in place, and the first round of appraisals is nearing completion. Administrative staff do not have an appraisal scheme, but procedures for the development of personal action plans are being introduced in the current year.

83 The college has a plan for training and accrediting assessors under the Training and Development Lead Body programmes. At the time of the inspection, 30 teachers had achieved accreditation as assessors and small numbers of staff had completed training and accreditation for the units concerned with internal verification, external verification and the accreditation of prior learning. A further 75 teachers were engaged in Training and Development Lead Body programmes.

84 A self-assessment report, organised under the headings of the Council's inspection framework, has been produced. The report looking at aspects of cross-college provision provided the inspection team with a useful analysis of the college's operations. It incorporated findings from the earlier subject specialist inspections and identified weaknesses as well as strengths. In some respects, for instance in relation to the quality of management of the course and section teams, the report was not sufficiently analytical. The report also paid insufficient attention to aspects of teaching and the promotion of learning, such as the inconsistent development of core skills across curriculum areas, and the quality of schemes of work and the use teachers make of them.

RESOURCES

Staffing

85 Academic staff are suitably qualified for the subjects they teach. Almost all have a teaching qualification and, where relevant, most have vocational or industrial experience. The catering division employs a large number of part-time teachers, most of whom also work in industry. In most subject areas, the staff are efficiently deployed, but in isolated instances less experienced teachers are sometimes unsuitably assigned.

86 There are 102 teachers on permanent contracts, 32 of whom have fractional full-time posts. In addition, there are 225 hourly-paid teachers. Women make up 61 per cent of the permanent teaching staff and 70 per cent of the hourly-paid teaching force. Almost 10 per cent of the college staff are from minority ethnic backgrounds. There is a moderate turnover of staff which allows some managers flexibility in the redistribution of resources. A total of 24 teachers have left since April 1993, 15 because of retirement or the termination of fixed-term contracts.

87 There are seven full-time and seven part-time technicians, and there is one vacancy still to be filled. The level of technical and support staff is adequate in most areas and especially good in science. A recent technician review programme has identified the areas which need additional support: two new posts are currently being advertised for technicians to work in information technology and to organise audio-visual aids. Administrative support within the teaching divisions is adequate. Each member of the clerical staff assigned to this work supports two or three divisions.

88 The library is open for five days a week including two late nights during term time. There are two full-time qualified staff and four part-time assistants, two of whom are receiving training for chartered librarianship. The resource centre, which houses 25 computer work stations, is staffed by a qualified information technology technician.

Equipment/learning resources

89 In most areas, the quality of equipment and other physical resources is good. The science section has high-quality microscopes and spectrophotometers, and the catering section is particularly well equipped. The college has 70 overhead projectors available for 76 teaching rooms and most classrooms have screens and window blinds. Staff have contributed considerably to the development of learning materials for many courses. The English section has built up a particularly good bank of teacher-generated learning resources. Inspectors identified gaps in the provision of resources in a few areas. For instance, there is not enough basic equipment to support the NVQ level 2 childcare courses.

90 The quantity and quality of information technology equipment are inadequate to meet all students' requirements. The resource centre has 25 modern computer workstations running the latest versions of relevant software and two units equipped with compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) database facilities. These machines are available for students' use, but the demand is such that there are often no places available, especially at peak times. There is some access to the dedicated computer teaching rooms for students wishing to work on their own but the times when terminals are free are limited. The computers and software in the mathematics workshop are out of date and fail to meet the study needs of GCE A level students in particular. Some of the equipment and software in computing and science is also out of date. In English and humanities, inadequate access to equipment makes it difficult to develop information technology as an integral part of the work.

91 The library stock is almost wholly computer catalogued. Students can use an excellent software package on two terminals which enables them to find books easily. The number and quality of textbooks, periodicals and reference materials are satisfactory in all subject areas, with the exception of business studies.

92 The systems for purchasing equipment and consumables are efficient, though further savings might be made by centralizing the purchasing of certain items, including computer software. Most items of equipment are repaired or replaced as required. The college does not have a rolling programme of planned repair and maintenance.

Accommodation

93 The college's main campus is located in the borough of Harrow, on the edge of the green belt. The area of the main campus site is 6.3 hectares, and of the adult-learners' centre 0.22 hectares. There are eight permanent buildings, two mobile huts and two playing fields. The main building was erected in the 1930s as a grammar school. The most recent addition is a teaching block built in 1993. A house, converted to use as an adult learning centre, stands on a small site close the main campus. Some of the buildings had been poorly maintained prior to incorporation.

94 Overall, the college provides an attractive learning environment for students. The quality of general purpose teaching accommodation is satisfactory, though some rooms are in need of decoration and general refurbishment. Just over half of the teaching rooms are accessible to students who use wheelchairs.

95 There is little spare teaching space at Weald College. Currently the allocation of 5.62 square metres per full-time equivalent student, places the college in the upper quartile of tertiary colleges in terms of space efficiency. Careful timetabling has produced high rates of occupancy of seats and rooms while keeping classroom overcrowding to a minimum.

96 Off-site space is utilised wherever possible. A local hotel is to be used to provide the required realistic work environment for catering students, and part of the nearby leisure centre and other local sports facilities are booked for the college to use on four days every week. Examinations requiring rooms with a large seating capacity are held off site.

97 Funding is available for some short-term building and conversion work, which is now being carried out to accommodate next year's planned growth in student numbers. A detailed, professional accommodation plan has been drawn up to meet the planned growth for the next five years. This is linked closely to the college's strategic plan and contains several options. The accommodation strategy is being overseen by the college's premises manager, who is a chartered surveyor with considerable commercial experience.

98 There is frequent overcrowding in the refectory, corridors and communal areas. The library and refectory are pleasant areas but were

designed for a student population considerably smaller than it is now. There is no student common room, and the 120 private study spaces are not sufficient for the number of students at the college. Most of the specialist accommodation is adequate to meet the demands of the curriculum, but the gymnasium is of an inadequate size to meet the requirements of students taking physical education, and leisure and tourism courses. Some of the staff workrooms are too small and provide insufficient desks for the number of staff who are based there.

99 Storage space is at a premium. Several areas of the college including corridors and boiler rooms are used inappropriately to store equipment and materials. In the art area, the lack of an efficient strategy for storage restricts the space available for learning activities. Efforts have been made to maximise book storage space through minor building conversion work. This has worked well in providing a book store for the English section.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

100 Weald College is making good progress towards achieving its mission. The strengths of the college are:

- the wide range of academic, vocational and recreational courses
- the fruitful working relationship with the North West London TEC and a number of large companies
- effective arrangements for governing the college
- senior managers who have a clear strategic vision and a good knowledge of local and national developments
- good arrangements for recruitment, admissions and induction
- a well-established tutorial system and well-developed use of records of achievement
- progress in diagnosing students' learning support needs
- good teaching
- high retention rates on full-time courses
- generally good examination results at GCE A level and GCSE
- the high proportion of students going on to higher education
- well-established procedures for course review and evaluation, which have led to improvements
- a well-managed staff-development programme linked to the college's strategic objectives
- appropriately-qualified staff
- good resources to support learning in most subjects.

101 If the college is to continue to raise its standards, it should:

- improve the quality of record keeping, schemes of work and management for some courses and sections

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- improve access to computerised management information for division managers and course leaders
 - ensure that learning support is adequate to meet students' needs
 - improve attendance levels and punctuality on some courses
 - strengthen the links between existing quality procedures and the new quality assurance procedures for adult and continuing education courses
 - introduce quality assurance procedures for administrative teams and cross-college functions
 - increase the number of computers available to students and update software
 - address problems of overcrowding in communal areas and increase the number of study spaces for students.

FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)

 - 2 Percentage enrolments by level of study (1994-95)

 - 3 Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1994-95)

 - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994-95)

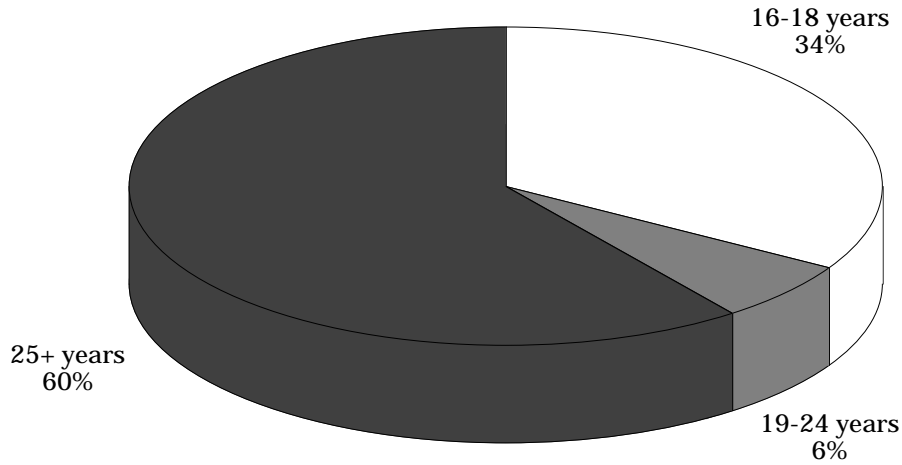
 - 5 Income (for 16 months to July 1994)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)

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

Figure 1

Weald College: percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)

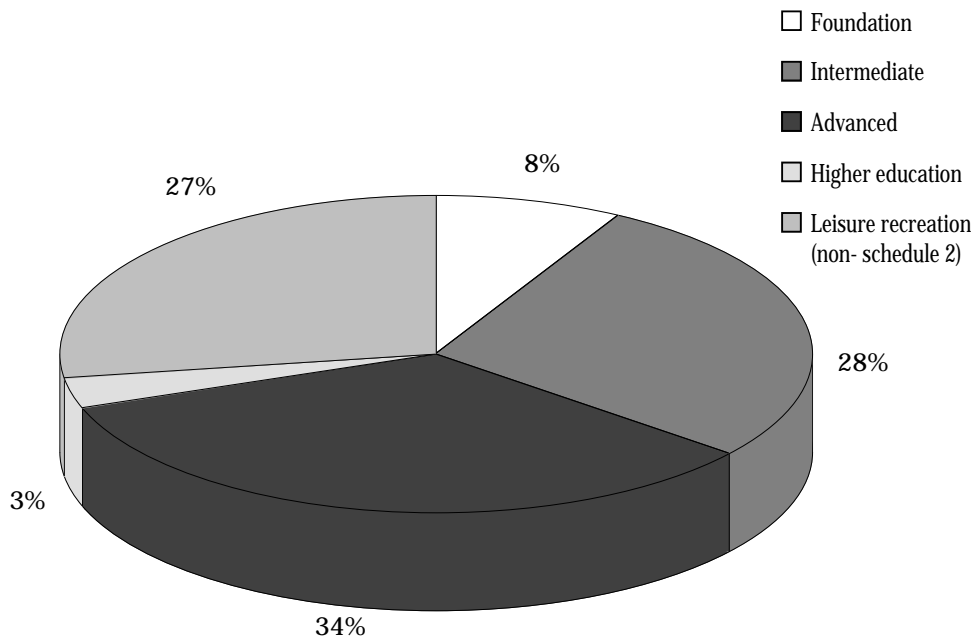


Enrolments: 5,848

Note: this chart excludes 12 enrolments age under 16.

Figure 2

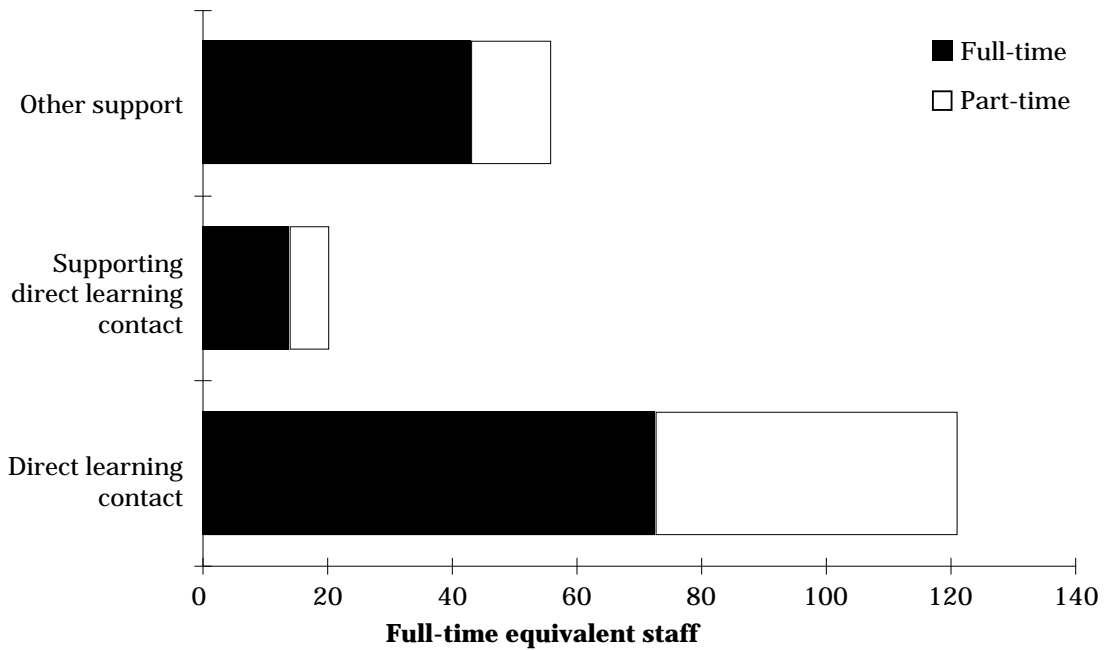
Weald College: percentage enrolments by level of study (1994-95)



Enrolments: 5,848

Figure 3

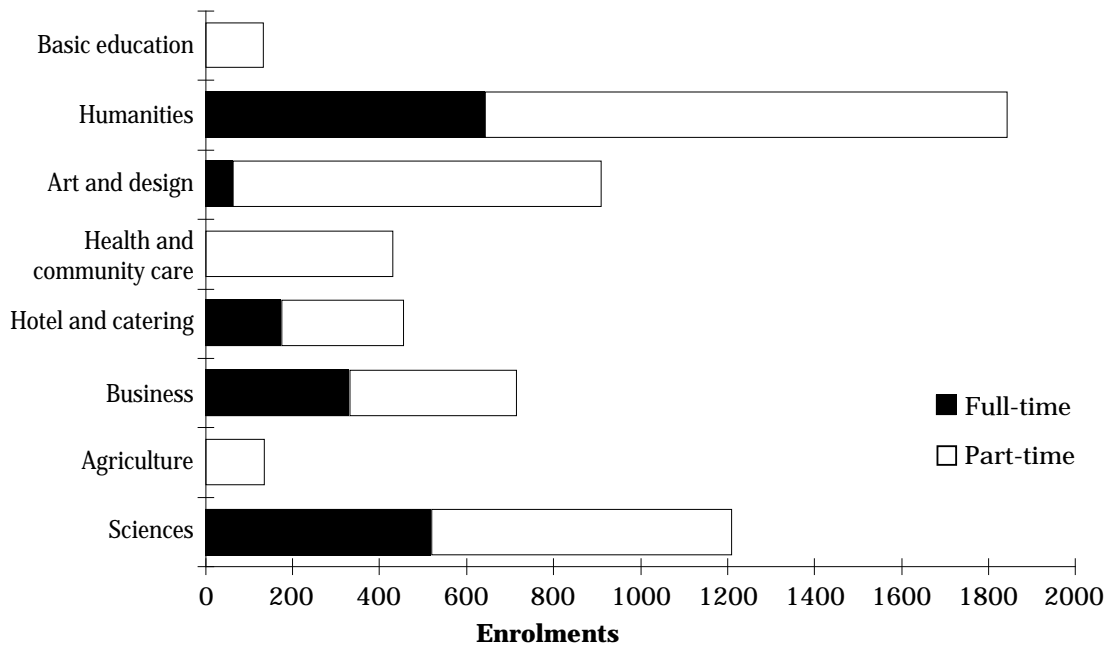
Weald College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994-95)



Full-time equivalent staff: 198

Figure 4

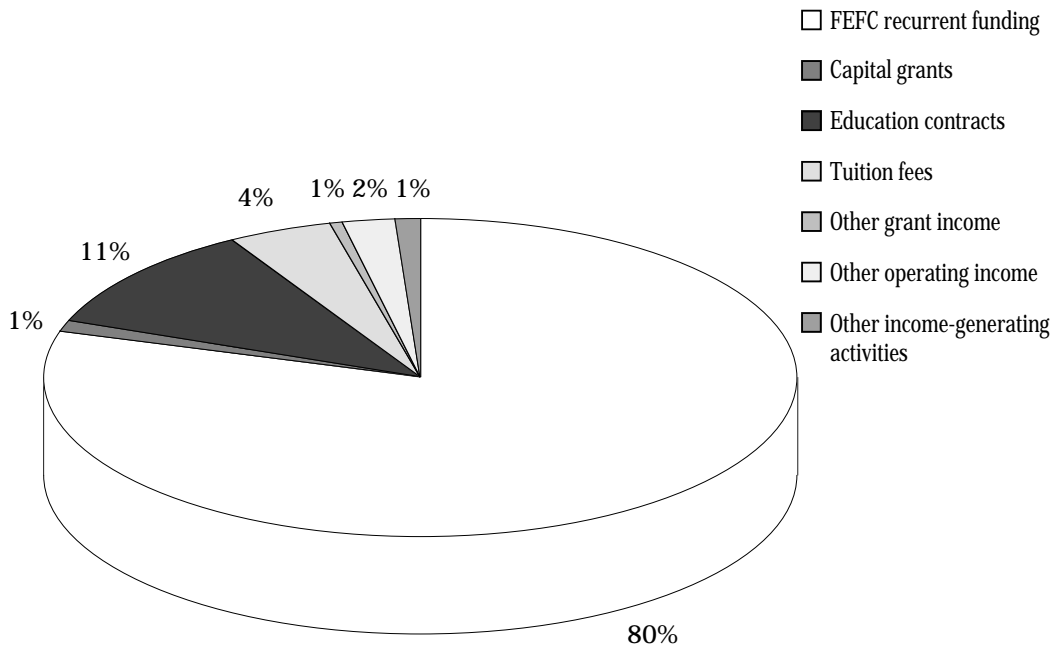
Weald College: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1994-95)



Enrolments: 5,848

Figure 5

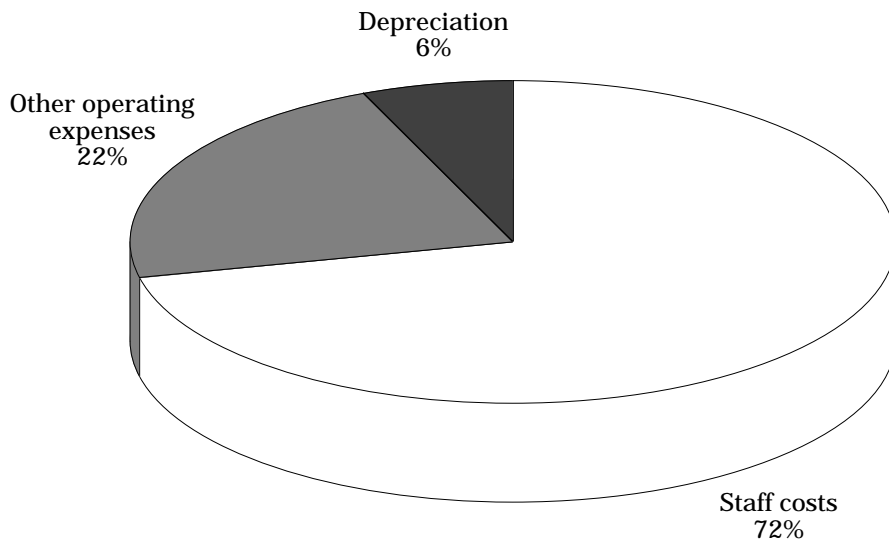
Weald College: income (for 16 months to July 1994)



Income: £7,883,000

Figure 6

Weald College: expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)



Expenditure: £7,816,000

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