

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Westminster College

September 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 117/95

WESTMINSTER COLLEGE
GREATER LONDON REGION
Inspected August 1994 - May 1995

Summary

Westminster College has good links with the community, the local authority, the local TEC and employers. It is developing educational services in response to identified needs. It offers a wide range of vocational courses which cater for the great majority of its students. About twenty GCE A level and GCSE courses are offered. The college is effectively governed and well managed. Suitable arrangements are made for the enrolment and induction of students. There is much good teaching. Students' achievements are outstanding in fashion and good in some other vocational areas. However, they are below national standards in a substantial number of areas, particularly in GCE A level subjects. Problems of poor attendance and retention are widespread. Implementation of the tutorial system is variable. The extensive learning support for students should be better co-ordinated. Quality assurance systems are being developed but have not yet been fully implemented. Specialist equipment is generally satisfactory and some of it is good. The recently-refurbished fitness centre and the skills development centres provide attractive learning environments. Computerised management information is often inaccurate. There are not enough computers and insufficient study spaces for students working individually or in groups.

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

Aspects of cross-college provision	Grade
Responsiveness and range of provision	1
Governance and management	2
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	2
Quality assurance	3
Resources: staffing	2
equipment/learning resources	2
accommodation	3

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science, mathematics and computing	3	Fashion, art, design, theatre, media, film studies	1
Business studies	2	Humanities	3
		English as a foreign language and modern languages	2
Hotel and catering	2	Basic education, English for speakers of other languages and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	2
Sports, leisure and tourism	3		

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INTRODUCTION

1 Westminster College was inspected mainly during April and May 1995, the recruitment and guidance procedures having been inspected in August and September 1994. The team of 17 full-time and part-time inspectors spent a total of 82 days in the college. Inspectors observed provision in science, mathematics, computing, business studies, hotel and catering, sports, leisure and tourism, fashion, art, design, media, film and theatre studies, modern languages, English for speakers of other languages offered as one programme with English as a foreign language, humanities, basic skills, and courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. They visited 242 classes, saw some 2,400 students and inspected students' written and practical work. There were meetings with members of the corporation, senior and middle managers, teachers and support staff, students, parents, employers, representatives of the local training and enterprise council known as AZTEC, Wandsworth local authority, the local community and universities. The inspectors also had access to extensive documentation relating to the college and its courses.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Westminster College is a large general further education college with over 11,000 students. It has 193 full-time equivalent teaching staff. Three of its four sites lie to the north of the River Thames, two in Victoria and one in Soho in the City of Westminster. The largest site is in Battersea in the north east of the London borough of Wandsworth. The tradition of technical training and education at the college sites dates from the 1890s. The site at Battersea was opened in 1894 having been planned as 'a people's palace for Battersea, Clapham and Wandsworth'. The site at Vincent Square in Victoria was opened in 1893 as the Westminster Technical College and soon became a pioneer in catering education. The site at Peter Street in Soho has been used for language courses since 1913. Language courses have also been provided at Castle Lane in Victoria since the early 1970s. The present college was formed in 1974 following the Inner London Education Authority's (ILEA's) reorganisation of further and higher education. By 1977, the college was established on the four sites it now occupies. It lies in the areas covered by AZTEC and Central London TEC. There is a large tertiary college, three further education colleges and a sixth form college within easy travelling distance. There are two city technology colleges in Wandsworth and many of the local schools have sixth forms. There are numerous private language schools in central London.

3 The area surrounding the college's sites is cosmopolitan and has a population of approximately 300,000. This includes most of Westminster, several wards in Wandsworth, and parts of Lambeth and Kensington. Just over 21 per cent of the population are from minority ethnic groups. The largest percentage of these is African-Caribbean at 10 per cent; 7 per cent are of Asian origin and there are significant numbers from the Middle East

and North Africa. Another significant group is white Europeans for whom English is not their first language. The City of Westminster attracts young, single people who come to work in London. Owner occupation in the area of the college is less common than the average for London. The percentage renting their homes from private landlords or from housing associations is about twice the London average. Nearly 24 per cent of families in the area are single parent families, which is notably higher than the figure of 18 per cent for London as a whole.

4 The employment patterns of residents in the area of the college differ from those in the rest of London. Only 6 per cent of workers are employed in manufacturing industries compared with 11 per cent for London as a whole. A further 3 per cent are in construction and 6 per cent in transport, figures which are also below London averages. The proportion of workers employed in the distribution and catering sector is slightly higher than the 20 per cent average for London and the proportion working in banking and finance or other services is higher at over 61 per cent compared with London's 52 per cent. The overall unemployment rate for the area is 12.7 per cent, rising to 20 per cent for 16-19 year olds and 17 per cent for 20-24 year olds. Patterns of social class indicate that a greater proportion of residents are in the upper and the lower socio-economic groups than for London as a whole.

5 When it was administered by the ILEA, the college developed a range of vocational and general education courses and specialised in languages and hotel and catering courses. After the demise of the ILEA in 1990, the college moved to the control of the London borough of Wandsworth and, after a year's experience of operating a delegated budget, was incorporated in 1993. These changes brought successive revisions to the governing body, the academic board and the college's management structures. Since incorporation, the college has extended its range of vocational courses.

6 There are 18 programme areas organised within four schools. The school of hotel and catering studies at Battersea and Vincent Square in Victoria is the largest in the region. The school of languages, based at Peter Street in Soho and Castle Lane in Victoria, specialises in modern foreign languages, English for speakers of other languages and English as a foreign language. The work of the school of business, leisure and tourism, and creative and general studies takes place mainly at the Battersea site. The courses offered by the college range from foundation level to higher education. There is a significant programme of courses, such as training for work for the adult unemployed, which is funded by the local TECs. The college also provides courses for employers and other clients on a full-cost basis.

7 On March 11 1995, there were 11,012 enrolments at the college. Recruitment continues throughout the year and the college expects to meet its target of 12,294 enrolments in the current year. Some 85 per cent of the students are aged 19 years or over; about 59 per cent are female. Enrolments by age and level of study are shown in figures 1 and 2. About

33 per cent of the students are of minority ethnic origin, the largest single category (21 per cent) being African-Caribbean. The college attracts a large number of overseas students to its language courses. Catering courses recruit students nationally. Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figure 3. The college employs a total of 380 full-time equivalent staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

8 The college mission states: 'at the centre of London, Westminster College aims to provide quality education and training and to serve key employment sectors by providing a flexible response to the learning needs of our clients based on our tradition and international reputation as a college of excellence'.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

9 Staff are well informed about issues affecting the further education sector and are aware of the national targets for education and training. They are involved in strategic planning and share a well-defined view of the college's mission. Newsletters and additional bulletins keep staff informed of important developments. The college is responsive and offers a broad range of education and training opportunities for a wide variety of students. There is an extensive range of vocational courses in the majority of the Further Education Funding Council's (FEFC's) programme areas. This includes 73 vocational qualifications validated by the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC), City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G), RSA Examinations Board (RSA), London Chamber of Commerce and Industry and other awarding bodies. The college is developing further its already extensive provision in hotel and catering studies, languages and business studies. The portfolio of vocational courses is changing to meet identified needs. There are nine General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) programmes and seven courses designed to provide access to higher education for adult students. National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) are offered in 11 vocational areas. The college has recently started courses in health and social care, and new courses in sports, leisure and tourism. The range of the provision in computing has been extended and now includes a 15-week course offered on a Saturday. Although there is only limited separate specialist provision, 140 hours each week of staff time has been allocated to provide support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to enable them to join mainstream courses.

10 General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) courses account for only 7 per cent of the students enrolled. The college offers 17 subjects at GCSE on a full-time and part-time basis. A total of 271 students have enrolled in 1994-95. Twenty subjects are offered at GCE A level with a total enrolment of 477 over the two years of the course. The college is developing its GNVQ courses to offer students a wider choice. It is ensuring

that, in some areas, students will be given the opportunity to study for a GCE A level alongside their GNVQ course, in order to widen the scope of their studies and enhance their prospects for entering higher education.

11 The college is part of the London consortium which is developing systems to enable students to gain accreditation for education and training which will be recognised by any participating organisation and count towards a full award. It is working on a similar venture as one of four colleges in the country on a collaborative project funded by the Department of Employment. Plans are at an advanced stage for offering open and flexible learning for students who cannot attend classes on a regular basis.

12 Enrolment targets were exceeded by 8 per cent in 1993-94. The college conducted its own market research, carried out an analysis of labour market data supplied by external agencies such as the local TECs and structured its marketing accordingly. The commitment to marketing has been enhanced by the appointment in 1993 of a professionally-qualified and experienced marketing manager who has established a marketing department which now has designers and a copy writer. The department is responsible for market research, which includes surveys of students' and employers' perceptions of courses and surveys of staff about curriculum and course development. Recent surveys have focused on the range and quality of students' catering facilities and the extension of college opening hours. These have resulted in a variety of courses being provided on Saturdays. Data collected from surveys are collated and published by the marketing department. The department also organises publicity and advertising.

13 The marketing manager is a member of the college's senior management team and contributes to strategic planning. His attendance at a variety of cross-college committees including those for quality assurance, curriculum development and equal opportunities, as well as course team meetings, enables him to identify and discuss marketing issues. This system of consultation and communication works well. Managers and staff consider the marketing of programmes to be effective. The marketing plan contains a range of strategic objectives. The prospectus, charter and publicity material are well designed and provide relevant information in an interesting and visually attractive form. The marketing department has published a set of guidelines for staff to help them in designing publicity material. The guidelines provide useful information on maintaining the corporate identity through the use of the college logo, advertising design and signposting.

14 Effective links have been established with higher education institutions. There are arrangements for franchising courses and other partnerships with the University of Westminster, Thames Valley University, Middlesex University, North London University, the South Bank University, Goldsmiths' College, Rose Bruford College of Speech and Drama and the Guildford School of Acting. As well as providing good

progression for students, such partnerships contribute to curricular and staff development by involving staff in regular meetings with the universities to discuss quality assurance, assessment and evaluation. There are some effective links with local schools. They are particularly strong in hotel and catering. A foundation GNVQ in hospitality and catering has been franchised to a local city technology college. Such arrangements are also being developed in other areas, including art and design and business studies. Through monies provided by the technical and vocational education initiative, the college is working with schools in Wandsworth to provide pupils with work experience in hospitality and catering and placements in the college's travel shop.

15 The college has a range of partnerships with local community organisations such as the Doddington and Rollo Community Association, based on a local housing estate in Battersea. In addition to its membership of the association's management committee, it provides National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) assessment for staff in the association's hairdressing salon. Students also use the childcare facilities offered by the association. The college is working with the association to set up an information technology centre. There is positive liaison with local community police officers. At weekends, the site at Peter Street in Soho is let to the Chinese community for educational purposes. Language support for refugees and asylum seekers is provided through English courses run by the college. A link with Kingston Community Education centre is providing opportunities for women studying on an intensive course in travel services which leads to an NVQ at level 2.

16 The college is developing an extensive range of European links with education and training organisations. Since September, 180 students have undertaken work related to the college curriculum in Belgium, France, Germany, Denmark, Holland, Spain, Sweden and the Czech Republic. This work is planned and co-ordinated by a full-time European programmes manager who is responsible, with course teams, for the production of bids for funding. All four academic schools in the college have had success in obtaining funds through the European Social Fund. Many different curriculum areas are involved. For example, there is an exchange for computing students with a college in Valencia, Spain; a language skills audit is being undertaken of the hospitality and tourism industry in Britain, France and Spain; there are projects in business studies in France and in theatre wardrobe and contemporary dress design in Gijon, Spain; and there is a comparative study of government, politics, media, literature and economics in Mainz, Germany. Students in hotel and catering are working for the third year in the final stages of their studies in Paris and Gijon. The college is collaborating with its European partners to develop joint common modules that can be studied in each country. A total of £245,158 has already been obtained this year for a variety of European initiatives. Bids for more than £1,300,000 have been submitted.

17 The partnership with AZTEC is strong at strategic and operational levels. The deputy principal (finance and resources) is responsible for the preparation and submission of the college's bid for work-related further education funding which was £421,397 for 1994-95. Funding in excess of £400,000 has also been agreed with local TECs for projects such as training for work which offer courses for the adult unemployed. The college has been successful in preparing high-quality, realistic proposals. It has a reputation for being pro-active and for providing an effective response to requests for training. Finance generated by successful contracts has contributed to the refurbishing and equipping of a new fitness centre, the development of an adult guidance and assessment centre, programmes for learning for work and skills choice, the provision of NVQ assessment for employees, and training in export management which includes language training. Plans for modern apprenticeships in catering, care, and retail and distribution are at an advanced stage. The college has representatives on a number of TEC committees including the AZTEC and South London TEC training providers' forums and Central London TEC's access to assessment network.

18 There is a good range of commercial activities. These include lettings, trading activities in the restaurants and travel services, as well as the provision of training and consultancies. The college has been successful in identifying, planning and delivering courses for commerce, industry and the public sector. Many of the courses are designed to meet the particular needs of employers and result in accredited qualifications such as NVQs, GNVQs and higher national certificates. There is an enterprise manager who co-ordinates all bids and contracts, including those submitted to the European Social Fund, the TECs and the LEA. The college has an extensive range of income-generating activities which have produced a turnover of some £755,000 so far this year. The Westminster College Business School occupies a prime location in Victoria, one of London's busiest commercial and business areas. It delivers a wide range of courses for individuals and companies. At the time of the inspection, 500 students were enrolled on a variety of professional courses.

19 There are good working relationships with employers, many of whom are closely involved with the college. There is a range of work placements in areas such as care for the elderly, nursing, business studies, hotel and catering, travel, tourism and leisure studies. Employers take part in the planning and development of courses, for example in computing and information technology. They also contribute by assessing the business plans of those students who wish to start their own companies. With the exception of travel and tourism, there are no formal advisory committees. The marketing department has built up a comprehensive database on employers who work with the college.

20 The equal opportunities policy, approved by the corporation, is related to all areas of the college's work. The vice-principal (curriculum

and personnel), chairs the college committee on equal opportunities, one of three standing committees of the academic board. Equal opportunities issues are an integral part of staff and student induction programmes and copies of the policy are widely available. A co-ordinator has responsibility for the development of equal opportunity matters. The employment policy committee, a subcommittee of the corporation, has produced guidelines to support equitable and fair recruitment of staff. The committee requests regular updates on issues such as gender and ethnicity. The college library stocks books by black and Asian writers and publicises these through a separate leaflet and booklist.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

21 The corporation has 20 members including the principal. There is currently a vacancy for an independent member. The senior managers and the governors have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Governors are enthusiastic and active in the fulfilment of their duties. There are 12 independent members, a member nominated by AZTEC, two co-opted members from secondary and higher education, a manager from a local community association, two elected members of staff, one elected student member and the principal. The director of administration acts as the clerk to the corporation. The independent members hold senior positions in business in fields such as accountancy, surveying, hotel and catering, personnel and the legal professions. Their expertise has been invaluable to the college.

22 The full corporation meets once a term. The deputy principal and the vice-principal attend the meetings of the corporation to give advice when required. The corporation has seven committees: finance and general purposes, audit, disciplinary, employment policy, premises, remuneration and strategic policy. These have a regular cycle of meetings during the year. Committee meetings are attended by appropriate members of the college management in an advisory capacity. For example, the estates manager attends meetings of the premises committee. This enhances communications between the college management and the corporation. In addition to formal meetings, the chair of the corporation meets regularly with the principal to discuss issues and matters of interest which may be raised at future meetings. The composition of the board and its committees is appropriate. The recording of business is meticulous and effectively managed, and there is due attention to statutory and legal requirements. Attendance at meetings is good. Minutes of the meetings of the corporation are available to college staff in the libraries on each site. Minutes of committee meetings are also available, with the exception of items which are confidential to the corporation.

23 Members of the corporation are kept very well informed about the college. The papers of the full corporation and its committees are comprehensive and clear. Westminster News, a monthly newsletter containing information primarily for staff of the college, is sent to all

members of the corporation. They frequently attend functions at the college; for example, four members and the vice-chair attended the recent opening of a skills-development centre. Members with professional interests related to major curriculum areas of the college are often consulted by the staff about developments. The elected staff members produce informative reports on the work of the corporation which are distributed to all staff in the college. Members of the corporation have been involved in a number of training events; 16 members attended the most recent event. Managers from the college make presentations to the corporation on educational issues of relevance to them, such as the development of GNVQs and open and flexible learning.

24 The college has undergone major restructuring of its management over the past two years. There are two senior management committees. The directorate comprises the principal, the deputy principal (finance and resources), the vice-principal (curriculum and personnel), who are all female, and the director of administration. The senior management team of 16 is composed of the members of the directorate, the heads of the four academic schools, the financial controller, the personnel manager, the quality manager, the head of student services, the head of marketing, the head of library and open learning, the estates manager and the head of information technology. Team responsibility is encouraged. The directorate meets formally each week to consider strategy and policies; the senior management team meets monthly and is concerned with the implementation of policies and operational matters. Meetings are well documented and have action minutes identifying the member designated to take action and the timescale for action. The college has recognised that the senior management team of 16 is too large to give proper consideration to matters concerning academic development and has formed for this purpose a sub-group. Its membership consists of the directorate and the heads of school, and it is known as the corporate strategy group.

25 There is a clear management structure and communications in the college are generally good. There are four schools: hotel and catering; business, leisure and tourism; general and creative education; and languages. Each is managed by a head of school with one or two deputy heads of school. The role of the deputies varies according to the specific needs of the school. For example, in the school of languages, which operates on two separate sites, the deputies have a site management role; in the school of hotel and catering one deputy is mainly concerned with curriculum and course management and the other is responsible for resource management. In each school, there are programme area managers who have responsibility for related groups of courses. Each course has a course manager. The post of programme area manager was created in the recent reorganisation. The college has set up a forum for these post holders with the intention of clarifying their role. This initiative is being supported by management training. Schools hold a board of study

meeting at least once each term in which academic issues are addressed. These are attended by the head of school, deputy/deputies, the programme area managers, a representative from the library and in many cases the vice-principal or deputy principal. Meetings of all of these groups are properly documented.

26 The college has an academic board which meets termly. It advises the principal and its reports are received by the corporation. Its membership includes the directorate, the heads of school, an elected staff representative from each school and an elected member of the support staff, currently a librarian. The academic board receives reports from the boards of study of the schools and is concerned with policy development and quality relating to curriculum matters. Working groups are set up to address specific issues such as the charter and equal opportunities. Minutes of meetings are displayed in staff rooms. Staff report that the academic board is a forum for open and sometimes spirited debate.

27 Strategic planning is managed effectively. All staff were able to contribute to their school's operating plan through their heads of school and boards of study. The strategic plan, which is closely linked to schools' operating plans, was presented at each stage of development to the corporation, whose members suggested amendments. The strategic plan is comprehensive; it details timescales and allocates responsibility. There is effective monitoring of its implementation by the senior management team and staff at all levels are aware of its content.

28 Allocation of resources is administered by the deputy principal (finance and resources) who is supported by the financial controller and a qualified accountant. Heads of school make bids for capital funds and the directorate prioritises the allocations according to criteria linked to the strategic plan. This year, budgets for consumable items for the school were based on historic costs. Heads of school decide how best to manage their budgets and have individual methods of allocating funds to the courses in their schools. Managers of the 18 cost centres, including the heads of school, receive monthly financial reports from the college finance department.

29 The college began the year with a planned deficit agreed by the governors. By implementing measures of efficiency this deficit had been reduced to under £100,000 by May 1995. Efficiency measures have included a reduction in the part-time teaching budget, which has been facilitated by the calculation of course unit costs and by making appropriate modifications to the teaching programme. The system for improving efficiency is understood by heads of school and programme managers who are developing businesslike methods of working. The college's estimated income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1995 are shown in figures 5 and 6. Its average level of funding for the same period is £21.76 per unit. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges for 1994-95 is £18.17.

30 The college has made a significant investment in its management information systems, in hardware, software and in additional staff, yet the production of management information is still inadequate. Information relating to enrolments, attendance and retention are collected, but the reports received by managers are frequently inaccurate. Lack of confidence in the centrally-produced data has resulted in many managers keeping their own records. The college has identified this as an issue in its information technology strategy. There are plans to introduce a co-ordinated management information system which will simplify the production of data. Network terminals will be located in managers' offices from September 1995 to allow individual access to information.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

31 The recently-formed student services unit has responsibility for students' recruitment, guidance and support. Initial enquiries and applications for full-time and part-time courses are centrally handled by the admissions unit which operates throughout the year. The unit records all applications, schedules interviews and sends out offers of places. Admissions advisers help potential students to complete action plans which record their career aspirations and any relevant learning or experience which they bring to their studies. The college prospectus is attractive and of high quality. Informative leaflets are available on most courses. Additional details about tuition fees and the range of college services are provided by the admissions unit. Information about courses is widely disseminated through the careers services to schools, employers and community organisations. Courses are promoted by the marketing department through the minority ethnic press, in local newspapers, on local radio, through regular open days and parents' evenings. In January, an open day at the Battersea site attracted 310 visitors, mostly under the age of 20, from 23 of the 32 London boroughs. Staff use a vehicle adapted as a publicity unit to disseminate information about the college at venues such as railway stations, supermarkets and shopping malls. Most students come to the college as a result of personal recommendation.

32 The procedures for enrolment inspected in September 1994 were efficient and sensitive to students' needs, in spite of some problems caused by the breakdown of a newly-introduced computer system. Staff offered students careful guidance on their choice of course. There is some acknowledgement of the learning and experience students have gained in the past. Some teaching staff are experienced in carrying out formal procedures for the accreditation of prior learning. However, at the time of the inspection, only one member of staff had achieved the Training and Development Lead Body award in the accreditation of prior learning. Accreditation of students' prior learning is underdeveloped and further training is needed to ensure consistency and a spread of expertise across the schools.

33 All students receive an induction to familiarise them with the college. Each course has its own individually-designed induction programme. Clear guidelines are provided for staff on what should be included and students' views on the effectiveness of the programme are sought immediately after induction. The programmes provide information on the college charter, counselling and advice services, careers advice, the library and workshop facilities, the complaints procedures, equal opportunities, the students union, sanctions applied in the case of poor attendance or behaviour, and the system of class representatives. The induction period also offers students a valuable opportunity to assure themselves that they are appropriately placed on the right course. New students who enrol on part-time English language courses have separate induction sessions at the beginning of the spring and summer terms. This causes some disruption for students who have already enrolled.

34 A college-wide strategy for the management of assessment is thoroughly documented and promotes consistent, reliable and valid processes. A number of initial screening tests are used to inform decisions on the placement of students at the most appropriate level of study. Not all of these tests are effective in diagnosing students' levels of ability. The test used for English language students is quick and easy to administer, but teachers have to give more detailed diagnostic tests to determine individual needs; as a consequence, students are often transferred from one level to another during the first week. All students on full-time and substantial part-time courses are tested to assess their need for support in literacy and numeracy. The tests devised by the Basic Skills Agency have been in use for two years. Results for 1994-95 show that 38 per cent of students are below level 1 in literacy and/or numeracy. Many other students are marginally above this level. It is estimated that 50-70 per cent of students may need additional basic skills support for their chosen course. Initial assessment of the core skills of students on GNVQ courses focuses on reading, writing and comprehension skills. The application of the screening tests yields valuable information on support needs. However, there were several full-time groups for whom the results of the tests were still not known at the time of the inspection.

35 The range of learning support and workshop provision is good and is being expanded. Some of the provision has been rationalised by bringing together support systems for students with numeracy, language and specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia. The systems are overseen by a co-ordinator. However, the language and numeracy workshops are available on a drop-in basis for only 10 hours each week. For part of the remaining time they are occupied by timetabled groups. There is the capacity to extend the use of this provision. The newly-opened core skills development centres are used almost exclusively by GNVQ students and their use could be extended to benefit other students. The college recognises the need to achieve greater co-ordination between, and wider access to, the GNVQ core skills development centres at Battersea and

Vincent Square, the language and numeracy workshops at Battersea and the learning support provided on courses. This last provision is available to all full-time students. They are entitled to one hour support each week which is provided in a number of ways. For example, some students on C&G computing courses spend one hour each week with a specialist language tutor or numeracy tutor. In other courses, a specialist tutor works alongside the subject teacher.

36 Where possible arrangements are made to provide appropriate support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Access to the college buildings for wheelchair users is restricted and few students with restricted mobility attend courses at the college. An excellent professional service is offered on a one-to-one basis for students with dyslexia. Students are referred by tutors or seek help themselves. Staff-development activities increase specialist tutors' understanding of the needs of dyslexic students. Subject teachers also are advised on the best way of offering additional support. Sixty-two students have received support during 1994-95.

37 The tutorial system is well documented although the quality of tutorial support varies. All full-time students have a personal tutor and are allocated to a tutorial group. Weekly tutorials are timetabled, each lasting one hour. There is resistance from some teachers and some students to spending time reviewing academic progress. A co-ordinator has been designated to draw together good practice so that a common framework for tutorials can be introduced next year. English language students attending part-time courses can book appointments to see tutors but, otherwise, tutorial support for part-time students is neither consistent nor widespread.

38 Poor attendance and a lack of punctuality hinder students' progress on many courses. The college has set a target of 85 per cent for retention in its strategic plan. There is a system for monitoring attendance and lateness, but the effectiveness of its implementation varies. A computerised register system, designed to monitor attendance in the numeracy and language workshops, fails to provide reliable data and attendance is monitored manually by programme managers.

39 The college employs two counsellors and two welfare advisers. Their service is available for four-and-a-half days a week. Staff can be contacted, in an emergency, outside office hours. The service provides information and advice on grants, welfare benefits, accommodation, refugee status, personal issues and alternative sources of financial assistance. Data for the 1993-94 academic year show that there were 4,093 interviews held at the four college sites. Provisional numbers for the current year suggest a substantial increase in activity. A significant number of the students seeking assistance have financial problems. An access fund has provided £19,023 this year and £20,000 is available from a hardship fund. So far, 322 students have received financial support.

40 The library and open-learning services hold a substantial amount of information on careers and further education courses. A computerised database holds information about almost 60,000 courses. The library at the Battersea site houses an extensive collection of careers resources which has been developed by a specialist librarian. Students can request induction or information sessions. At present, college staff work closely with members of the Wandsworth careers service who attend the college regularly to give advice to students and to help them prepare action plans. Careers guidance is soon to be extended through the appointment of a new member of staff to the admissions unit.

41 The college has contracted with the Doddington and Rollo Community Association for the provision of 25 nursery places for students on full-time courses. Currently students pay fees to cover their costs. From September 1995, as a result of additional subsidy from the FEFC, supplemented by college funding, these places will be offered free to students who are in receipt of benefits. An interviewing system will help to determine priority based on need. Funds from AZTEC and the European Social Fund are used to buy additional places. Shared use is made of the City of Westminster adult education service creche at the Castle Lane site which offers another eight places. These services are highly valued by students but there continues to be an unmet demand for additional childcare provision.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

42 Of the 242 teaching sessions inspected, 66 per cent had strengths which outweighed the weaknesses and 10 per cent had weaknesses which outweighed the strengths. The following table shows the grades awarded for the teaching sessions inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level	5	20	10	8	2	45
GCSE	3	9	5	3	2	22
GNVQ	5	14	7	0	1	27
NVQ	8	10	5	5	0	28
Other vocational	12	22	11	0	0	45
Other non-vocational	17	34	20	3	1	75
Total	50	109	58	19	6	242

43 Courses were well planned. The college charter states that details of the courses will be published for students in a handbook for each programme of study. Guidance is available for staff when preparing these documents. It recommends that the handbook should include the syllabus, the scheme of work, the assessment schedule and the marking and grading

schemes. In practice, schemes of work were in place for most courses and informative course handbooks had been distributed to students. Most lessons had clear aims and objectives which were shared with students. However, the lesson plans for some courses in English for speakers of other languages and classes in English as a foreign language, where there was continuous enrolment throughout the year, did not take into account the needs of new arrivals on programmes. In some GCE A level humanities subjects, the schemes of work were not sufficiently detailed and did not identify the conceptual understanding or analytical skills to be developed. The plans for some cookery classes did not always reflect current industrial practice.

44 There was much good teaching. In the best practice, teachers used a variety of teaching methods and were adept in their use of teaching aids. Students often worked in pairs and groups on clearly-defined tasks. Their work frequently culminated in a presentation to the rest of the class. Students were encouraged to ask questions and to develop their own ideas through making contributions to discussions. Teachers checked students' understanding and learning by the skilful use of challenging questions. Various materials and tasks were available which enabled students to make good progress to a level of skill or understanding suited to their ability.

45 In the less successful sessions, methods of working were not always suitably adapted to the range of students' abilities and knowledge. Poor attendance and lack of punctuality were commonplace in most subjects. Other than for English language classes, which were generally well attended, the average number of students present in the classes inspected lay between 7 and 12. In a number of classes, late arrivals had an adverse affect on the teaching and on the learning of those students already present.

46 The teaching in art and design and in the sciences had many strengths and few weaknesses. In the fashion courses, there was an emphasis on creativity and students were encouraged to develop their own ideas. In one lesson, students were working on projects to design hats and bags for use on the beach. The project brief was clear, work was based on sound research and students were learning to make good-quality products which incorporated creative designs. In the sciences, problem solving, practical exercises and collaborative groupwork enabled students to deepen their understanding of some challenging concepts through reflection and discussion. In one class, a practical exercise presented as a pathology investigation was used to develop students' skills in carrying out chemical analysis.

47 Good teaching was the rule rather than the exception in mathematics, government and politics, law, English language and literature, English courses for speakers of other languages and English as a foreign language, the provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, basic skills courses, hotel and catering, leisure and tourism, and business

courses. In the mathematics workshops, students worked on tasks which enabled them to progress to the limit of their abilities. There were excellent resources to support this approach including computers, worksheets and equipment for practical work. In a GCE A level English literature session, students working in groups examined Shakespearean sonnets. Each group followed guidelines set by the teacher and one student from each group presented the group's views to the rest of the class using an overhead transparency. The literature texts chosen for English included books by minority ethnic writers and these often elicited a good response from students.

48 Catering students were encouraged to develop a competent professional approach to their work which included good social skills in dealing with the public. Teachers gave students appropriate support while they were working in the college's public restaurants and their guidance enabled students to develop high levels of skill. In leisure and tourism, students worked in groups on projects such as the design of a fitness centre and the production of a marketing plan to attract customers to a museum. Students made effective use of realistic information in their work. In business courses, teachers required students to tackle business problems and explain business phenomena in a rigorous and systematic manner. The importance of theory was stressed and students were encouraged to gather empirical evidence from a variety of sources.

49 In English courses for speakers of other languages and in courses of English as a foreign language, a variety of activities included well-organised groupwork and work in pairs. Teaching aids were used effectively. Teachers were sensitive about the correction of punctuation, vocabulary and word order. One teacher discreetly drew students' attention to their errors, avoiding frequent interruptions to the lesson by passing notes to individuals. In basic skills classes and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, teachers used methods of working which were appropriate for the students. For example, students were asked to describe unknown objects which they had explored using a microscope; this gave them good opportunities to develop their skills of observation and description.

50 Although there were strengths to the teaching of computing, psychology, sociology, communication studies and modern languages these were offset by weaknesses. In computing, teachers helped students with their practical work during workshop sessions and monitored their progress. There were also examples of reference materials prepared by teachers being put to good use. However, failure to share such materials led to duplication of effort and discouraged the spread of good practice. Students' progress suffered by having to use unreliable and outdated computing equipment in a number of classes. Teaching in modern languages varied a great deal. There were lively and imaginative lessons in some GCE A level classes, in part-time evening classes and on the course

for language teachers. Teachers put students at their ease so that they felt confident enough to use the language being taught and students were encouraged to correct each others' faults in grammar and pronunciation. In some classes, however, students did not have enough opportunity to speak and in others, despite the use of the foreign language, teachers failed to check students' understanding regularly.

51 Appropriate assignments and homework were set for most classes. Assessments met the requirements of the examination and awarding bodies. Students' work was marked and returned promptly and in most cases was annotated with helpful written comments and suggestions for improvements. Teachers kept careful records of progress which were used in regular reviews conducted with the students. In English for speakers of other languages and English as a foreign language, teachers followed a clear marking policy. Standards were consistent and the use of agreed symbols was helpful to the students. In some GCE A level classes, a significant proportion of students either handed their work in late, or failed to complete their work.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

52 Effective teaching and excellent relationships between teachers and students were key factors in encouraging students' interest and motivation. In many sessions students appeared to enjoy their studies and most students were keen to learn. In some GCE A level classes in modern languages, students lacked the confidence to use the language being taught. In some sociology, economics and history sessions, students were unresponsive and showed lack of interest in the topics under discussion.

53 Most students were developing a good understanding of their subject and a sound appreciation of how to apply theory to practical tasks and problems. The work produced in fashion was of outstanding creative and technical quality. Students displayed a mature ability to evaluate critically their own and follow students' work. The good grasp that some computing students had of the theoretical principles of the subject enabled them to solve problems with minimal assistance from their teacher. Students on English courses for speakers of other languages and English as a foreign language programmes were developing a good standard of spoken English. While most modern language students could communicate effectively in the foreign language, others were much less competent. Many of those studying GCSE mathematics had an inadequate grasp of essential principles and were poorly prepared for their impending examinations.

54 Good standards of practical work were observed in many subjects. Catering students showed good technical skills in food preparation and well-developed social skills when serving customers. They also displayed a strong awareness of the need to work safely and hygienically. The end-of-year show in fashion highlighted the imaginative, professional standard designs which students had produced. In business studies,

students demonstrated a good awareness of how various sources of evidence could be used to test hypotheses and substantiate propositions. Some GCE A level computing students had acquired sophisticated programming expertise although they often failed to test their programmes thoroughly. Although most science students possessed sound practical skills, they gave insufficient thought to the planning of their laboratory work.

55 The quality of written work and its presentation was generally satisfactory and sometimes good, and there were examples of high-quality work in most subjects.

56 Most students were developing relevant communication and presentational skills. On most vocational courses and on some GCE and GCSE programmes, good progress was being made in acquiring the skills necessary to work effectively as a member of a team but there was little evidence of team-working skills in GCE A level sociology and psychology. The majority of students were acquiring organisational and note-taking skills which allowed them to study effectively. In some GCE A level subjects, students were keeping well-organised, comprehensive files of notes which provided a vital aid to revising for examinations. The use of information technology in presenting and analysing data was underdeveloped in many subjects.

57 Many students do not complete their course. For example, 777 GCE A level subject enrolments on one and two-year courses resulted in only 470 completions in 1994, a retention rate of only 60 per cent. Retention rates in individual subjects varied widely, from over 80 per cent in chemistry, physics and English literature to under 40 per cent in art, communication studies, psychology and history. The rates for part-time GCE A level courses, while generally above those for full-time programmes, were low in several subjects. The rate for the one-year GCSE courses was 67 per cent and ranged from 93 per cent in English to 38 per cent in law, and government and politics.

58 The overall picture for retention on vocational courses is similar. Out of 552 BTEC course enrolments, 371 students subsequently completed their course in 1994, a retention rate of 67 per cent. Most BTEC national certificate and diploma courses had rates of approximately 65 per cent although the rates in 1994 for the national diplomas in theatre studies and in hotel and catering were 82 per cent and 70 per cent, respectively. Retention rates on a few catering programmes exceeded 80 per cent. However, the retention rates for many C&G courses were between 50 and 65 per cent and there were retention rates below 50 per cent for sports and leisure courses.

59 In 1994, 70 per cent of the 115 students aged 16-18 were successful in their final year of study on vocational courses, an improvement over the 1993 figure which was 65 per cent. This placed the college in the lower 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 pass rate achieved by students aged 19 and over does not differ significantly.

60 Some 3,932 students of all ages entered for vocational awards up to advanced level last year. The average pass rate for BTEC courses was 65 per cent. There were high pass rates achieved on some national diploma and certificate courses. For example, the pass rates for the national certificate in business and finance, and the national diploma in travel and tourism were 96 and 93 per cent, respectively. However, the pass rates achieved on intermediate GNVQ courses were very low: 22 per cent in business and 14 per cent in leisure and tourism. An analysis of the entry qualifications of GNVQ students carried out by the college suggests that many students are weak in mathematics and need additional support in this subject. The proportions of students achieving full awards on C&G and London Chamber of Commerce and Industry programmes were as variable as those for BTEC courses. However, some students on these programmes choose not to take all the units which make up the full award. For example, although only 29 per cent of students following a legal secretarial course achieved the full award in 1993-94, the pass rate for the course units entered was 79 per cent.

61 In 1994, the 80 students aged 16-18 entered for two or more GCE AS/A levels achieved an average point score per entry of 2.1 points (where A=10, E=2). This places the college in the bottom 10 per cent of colleges in the further education sector based on the data in the 1994 performance tables published by the Department for Education. In 1994, the average pass rate for the 21 subjects offered by the college was approximately 46 per cent for students aged 16-18, compared with a provisional national average of 72 per cent for sector colleges other than sixth form colleges. The average pass rate for students aged 19 years and over was 51 per cent compared with a national figure of 62 per cent.

62 In 1994, the pass rates in a few GCE A level subjects exceeded national averages. For example, the pass rate in art and design was 83 per cent compared with a national figure for all age groups of 81 per cent. In addition, 50 per cent of students who entered the art and design examination obtained grades A-C compared with 49 per cent nationally. The pass rate in biology was 83 per cent compared with 64 per cent nationally and 50 per cent of those who entered for the examination obtained grades A-C compared with a national figure of 32 per cent. In contrast, many GCE A level subjects had pass rates which were below the figures achieved nationally. Results fell well below average in computer studies, English, physics, economics, history, law and communication studies.

63 The proportion of students achieving GCSE grades A-C was also below average in 1994. Approximately 31 per cent of subject entries resulted in passes at grades A-C compared with a national figure for 16-18 year olds

of 38 per cent and for students aged 18 and over of 60 per cent. Only in chemistry, politics and English did the rate for students aged 16-18 exceed the national figures. There was no subject, apart from law and politics with one entry each, where the rate for students aged 19 and over exceeded the national figure.

64 Students with learning difficulties were making good progress in acquiring knowledge and skills that would help them lead independent lives in the community. All of the students had achieved a nationally-recognised qualification in cookery and were acquiring appropriate numeracy and communication skills.

65 Students from the school of hotel and catering have performed consistently well in competitions involving cooking and menu design, such as those organised by the Worshipful Company of Cooks, the Reunion Gastronomique, Hotelympia and Toque d'or. They have won the United Kingdom Catermind event on a number of occasions and, in 1995, gained second place in the European student of the year competition. They have twice won, and once been placed second, in a food service design competition organised by a major designer of catering furniture. Students from Westminster College achieved the highest marks in the United Kingdom in 1993 and 1994 at different levels of the C&G examinations in cookery for the catering industry.

66 The college has a good record of sporting success in the London region, particularly in team games. In 1994, for example, the men's under-19 soccer team won the London region cup competition organised by the British Association for Sport in Colleges while the under-19 women's team were runners up in the basketball competition.

67 A telephone survey organised by the registrar among a sample of students who had completed their course in 1994 revealed that 21 per cent of the students had gone on to higher education, 33 per cent were taking another course in further education, 29 per cent had obtained jobs and the remainder were unemployed. The results have not been analysed further to discover the destinations of students when they finish particular courses although some individual course tutors have obtained this information. The data gathered by the college indicate that courses for adults designed to provide access to higher education have a generally good record of students going on to universities and colleges of higher education. For example, all the students on the access to sports science course and 88 per cent of students on the access to business programme took up higher education places after leaving the college in 1994.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

68 The recently-developed quality assurance policy addresses both the curriculum and support functions. New procedures for quality assurance were introduced in September 1994; these have yet to be fully implemented. Documentation about quality assurance is good. All staff

are provided with relevant information to help them implement college policy. The vice-principal (curriculum and personnel) has overall responsibility for quality assurance and a manager was appointed in 1994 to co-ordinate the development of the systems and refine existing procedures. She is assisted by a co-ordinator responsible for the college charter. The academic board is responsible for advising the principal on the improvement of academic standards, which it does on the basis of advice from one of its subcommittees, the academic standards committee, and reports from boards of study. There is also a quality assurance committee with cross-college representation, chaired by the vice-principal, which reports to the senior management team and the directorate. This group formulates cross-college policy and procedures, and prioritises areas for improvements.

69 The course review and evaluation process has several stages. Students complete a survey form about the induction process. This is followed by brief surveys of students' opinions during the autumn, spring and summer terms which focus on course content, delivery and resources. Course teams summarise the findings of each survey and devise action points based on survey results. Under the new procedures, course teams will carry out a detailed review in the summer term commenting on key aspects of the course and taking into account feedback from students, employers and external verifiers. They will also collate evidence for a range of performance indicators, which will enable comparisons to be made with the targets set for attendance, retention and achievement. The teams will then produce short and long-term action points. The quality cycle includes a triennial review of each area of the curriculum by a panel comprising one member from each of the academic standards committee and the quality assurance committee, and one internal auditor. There are abbreviated versions of the process for part-time and short courses.

70 There is an effective system for auditing the process of course review and evaluation. A team of trained volunteer auditors, comprising teaching and support staff, has carried out two audits. The first audit was carried out following the survey of students' opinions in the autumn term. This demonstrated that key elements of the new process were not being carried out. For instance, the audit showed that boards of study had not considered the findings of most course reviews. It also highlighted a need to clarify the purpose of boards of study. Action has been taken in response to all the issues raised by the audit, including an instruction that course reviews are to be standard items for the agendas of boards of study.

71 Reports produced by course teams following the first two surveys of students' opinions show that the analytical rigour and the levels of detail in action plans varied between and within programme areas. The course review and evaluation process does not give adequate attention to individual subjects within programmes of study, particularly GCSE and GCE A level subjects. Course teams are not required to report on the achievement of their targets for attendance, retention and students'

progress as part of the reviews carried out in the autumn and spring terms. The academic board discussed only one issue arising from the survey carried out in the autumn and brought forward by a board of studies. However, some improvements have resulted from the quality assurance procedures. These include increasing the amount of written work on courses in the school of languages and improving open access to computing facilities in the school of business, leisure and tourism.

72 Students have further opportunities to express their views of the college's provision. Meetings between senior managers, including the principal, and class representatives take place twice a term on two sites. The agenda is published in advance on the basis of items raised by students' representatives. This is a valuable initiative. In the school of business, leisure and tourism, course teams hold review meetings with students. The students set the agenda and run the meetings; the results are fed into the process of course review. This practice has yet to become widespread. In the library and open-learning centres, students' comments and complaints are displayed on a noticeboard, together with a copy of the written reply sent to each individual. This makes a lively and topical display and demonstrates the responsiveness evident in a range of quality procedures carried out by staff responsible for these services, including the operation of a library users' group.

73 A survey on general issues affecting all students was carried out by the marketing department during the summer term of 1994. It involved a sample of over 500 students across all three sites and obtained a response rate of about 50 per cent. As a result of its findings, leisure facilities have been improved through the development of the gymnasium and health club. Changes have been made to security arrangements and the common room area at the Battersea site is being extended. Although surveys have led to some positive outcomes, the extensive sampling of students' opinion could be reduced with careful planning.

74 Detailed service standards have recently been devised by the teams of support staff working in all of the cross-college functions. These are to undergo an internal audit in June 1995 as part of a review designed to ensure consistency. Subsequently, the standards and their implementation will be subject to review every two years.

75 There is a handbook for full-time staff which includes the college's mission and extracts from the strategic plan. There is also a briefer handbook for part-time teachers. All new teaching and support staff are provided with an eight-hour induction programme. Part-time teachers are encouraged to attend.

76 An appraisal scheme has been in place since 1993 and nearly all full-time teaching staff have been appraised. The emphasis of the scheme is on professional development. The process includes observation of teaching and a discussion between the teacher and their line manager during which progress towards agreed objectives is reviewed. A scheme

for the appraisal of support staff is being developed. The college has registered for the Investors in People Award which it expects to achieve during 1996.

77 There is a staff-development budget of £100,000 which represents 1 per cent of the staffing budget. The quality assurance manager spends 25 per cent of her time in managing staff development and is supported in this by another member of the teaching staff. The first aim of the staff-development and training policy is to enable the college to achieve its mission and objectives as outlined in the strategic plan. Staff-development plans are drawn up within each school of study on the basis of needs identified during the staff-appraisal process and by programme managers in the context of the college's strategic objectives. The training needs of support staff are currently identified by their line managers and a plan drawn up for each department. There is also a cross-college programme of in-house training and development activities covering topics such as GNVQ development, open and flexible learning, and guidance and learning support. Initial teacher training is provided for all teaching staff without a teaching certificate. There are in-house programmes of management training for middle managers and also for those with supervisory roles. Fifty-five staff participated in a well-received computer applications course leading to a C&G qualification, whilst other staff are working towards NVQs. Although there is a need for subject or vocational updating in some areas of study, the college provides a good range of relevant training and development opportunities for its staff.

78 There is a programme of training and accreditation for the awards of the Training and Development Lead Body. Progress has been slow in the first 18 months, with 11 staff achieving the units for assessment and verification (D32 and D33), five achieving the internal verification unit (D34) and one the unit in the accreditation of prior learning (D36). However, a further 55 staff are working towards D32 and D33, 11 are working on D34 and one on D36 and it is expected that most will complete the process during the current academic year.

79 A college charter has been produced following extensive consultations with staff, students, governors and the two local TECs. It is a comprehensive document which contains clear and measurable standards of service. It fulfils the requirements of the national charter for further education and was a runner-up in a competition held by the Department for Education. The charter contains a section for employers and the local community and a section on how to make complaints. Monitoring is carried out by means of additional questions in students' and employers' surveys, through the monitoring of service standards and through the course review and evaluation process. Non-compliance notices are issued by the college charter co-ordinator. The charter would be more accessible if some of the language was more simple.

80 The college produced a self-assessment report based on the FEFC's inspection guidelines contained in Council Circular 93/28, Assessing

Achievement. This was prepared by the vice-principal using college-wide contributions. The document provided a useful overview for inspectors of many aspects of the college's work but the level of critical analysis varied from section to section. For example, the section dealing with governance and management identified some weaknesses, such as the limitations of the management information system, as well as strengths. In contrast, the section on teaching and the promotion of learning failed to address many of the issues identified in *Assessing Achievement*. Overall, the report was more descriptive than evaluative.

RESOURCES

Staffing

81 Teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced for the work they do. Both full-time and part-time teachers have relevant degrees or professional qualifications and more than 10 per cent have higher degrees. Three-quarters of the full-time and just over half the part-time teachers have a teaching qualification. There are sufficient staff and they are appropriately deployed.

82 The recent growth of student enrolments has resulted in an increased use of part-time teachers. They make an important contribution to the work of the college. For example, in modern languages the first language of many of the part-time teachers is the one they teach. In a number of areas, including provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, English language courses and business, the high reliance on part-time teachers has resulted in an increased administrative burden for full-time staff. Progress is being made in converting a number of the hourly-paid posts to fractional posts which will offer benefits to the college and those it employs.

83 The level of technical and administrative support is generally adequate. Some additional appointments are being made to ensure that teachers and managers receive the administrative support they require. The support available for the use of audio and visual teaching aids is of a good standard.

Equipment/learning resources

84 In the years leading up to incorporation, little was spent on capital items. The college now has a plan for upgrading and replacing equipment. There are three aspects to the plan: curriculum development and innovation; information technology; and a rolling programme for the replacement of equipment. The capital equipment budget for 1994-95 is £750,000, the majority of which is being spent on information technology. The allocation of resources is guided by the strategic plan.

85 Specialist equipment is generally adequate and well maintained; in some areas, it is of a high standard. For example, in catering there is a good range of industrial standard equipment, and of table silverware. The

ingredients used in cooking are also of high quality. The fitness centre has been equipped with up-to-date facilities. The travel agency uses modern technology and is stocked with a good supply of brochures. The lighting, soundbooth and other equipment in the theatre studio are good. Two new language laboratories have been set up, although the use of one for class teaching is restricted by its location in the language workshop. The supply of furniture, text books, teaching materials and learning resources in classrooms is generally adequate. Whiteboards and overhead projectors are readily available.

86 The college is addressing the shortage of computing equipment in line with its new strategy for information technology. The skills-development centres and the recently-refurbished computer rooms are well equipped with computer hardware and software. There is some access to computer rooms outside timetabled lessons but the 49 available workstations are insufficient to meet the demand. There are only 16 computer stations in the open-learning centres adjoining the libraries. The total number of computers available for students' use on all four sites is 381, providing a ratio of one workstation to every 13 full-time equivalent students. Students on computing and business studies courses use a variety of equipment of different ages. The access to information technology equipment is limited or inadequate in a number of courses including leisure and tourism, English language classes and some GCSE and GCE A level humanities subjects. In science there were no computers for use in the laboratories. Students in art and design had no specialised computing equipment.

87 At each of the four sites, the libraries incorporate open-learning centres. At Battersea, the oak panelling and stained-glass windows in the Tate library give a sober and stately air which contrasts with the bustle of the bright adjoining open-learning centre in which the computers are located. There are 211 study spaces, provision which is inadequate for the numbers of students. There are only 16 spaces set aside for group study in the library at Battersea. The libraries have 43,323 books, 54 compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases, 2,901 audio tapes and 1,034 video cassettes. There is also a good range of periodicals and newspapers. There are sufficient books in most curriculum areas, including an excellent range for catering and hospitality. However, the stock in a few subjects needs to be improved. The budget for the library and open-learning centres has been increased for the current year to £121,000 from £107,000. This includes a sum of £68,000 for books and periodicals. Library staff, in consultation with tutors are improving the stock by replacing old and out-of-date items and by developing new areas.

Accommodation

88 Westminster College occupies four sites, each with one main building, all within four to five miles of each other. The buildings which vary in age from 50 to 100 years old, were purpose built for educational use, are

mainly of traditional brick construction and range from four to five storeys high. The building on the Battersea site is listed and has many attractive period features, as befits a 'people's palace'. These include the plasterwork frieze in the grand entrance hall and 10 statues which adorn the front of the building depicting the areas of work offered when the college was first opened. The building at Vincent Square, Victoria, is in a conservation area. At the two larger sites, at Battersea and Vincent Square, quadrangles and central open areas exist but there is no recreational land attached. Some staff are required to travel between sites. Travel by students is kept to a minimum through careful timetabling. The Battersea site is served by railway and bus routes while the other three are served by the London underground transport system.

89 The college owns the freehold of all four sites. The City of Westminster adult education service leases approximately 50 per cent of the building at Castle Lane, Victoria. The combined area of the sites is 1.4 hectares and the gross internal area of the buildings, as advised by the college, is about 24,538 square metres. The classrooms are suitable for the current student numbers, although those at Castle Lane and Peter Street are heavily used. The strategic plan and the accommodation strategy include options to make better use of the available space, for example by more effective timetabling of rooms and through alterations at Battersea and Vincent Square.

90 Substantial improvements have been carried out this year. For example, fire doors have been improved and the canteen at Battersea has been refurbished. There is still work to be done: the mechanical and electrical services require updating and many flat roofs and window frames are in a poor condition. In the year 1994-95 the college intends to spend £587,000 on planned maintenance, £247,000 on response maintenance, and £504,000 on schemes costed at less than £100,000. A further £600,000 is being allocated from the revenue budget as a reserve for future major works. It is proposed that the same level of revenue spending on property will be maintained for the next four years. Access for wheelchair users is restricted at all four sites. Only Battersea has lifts and although some of that site is accessible, there are areas which are not.

91 The quality of the specialist teaching accommodation varies; much has been refurbished but the programme has not yet been completed. Much of the provision for hotel and catering studies is of a high standard. The public restaurants provide a pleasant environment for students and for customers. The floor in one kitchen needs replacing and there is paint peeling off another kitchen ceiling. In leisure and tourism, the lecture theatres and some classrooms are of good quality. The fitness centre, which will be open to the public from September 1995, has just been refurbished to a high standard and the travel agency provides good accommodation as does the theatre studio. The location of the fashion studios requires students to cut fabrics in one room and machine in another

some way along the corridor. The provision for print making is poor and there are no secure lockers for students to store their work. The classrooms at Castle Lane and Peter Street are too small for the larger classes and some are in need of decoration. The science laboratories, preparation and storage rooms are adequate for the college's needs and are clean and well maintained, although there is little display in some of the laboratories. The rooms used for GCSE and GCE A level mathematics are large and pleasant, and the numeracy workshop is of a good standard. However, failure to co-ordinate the facilities for learning support has resulted in underuse of some of this accommodation. Some of the classrooms are set aside for general use. These rooms have little educational display and lack an identity. Some are drab and in need of decoration. In a number of classrooms on the Battersea site the acoustics are poor, making them unsuitable for teaching languages.

92 There is a good range of canteen facilities on the various sites. In some the provision is shared between staff and students, in others it is separate. At Battersea there is a large student refectory which incorporates a common room. At Peter Street in Soho, a bistro offers refreshments and a pleasant communal area. Most of the food at Battersea and Vincent Square is provided by the college's catering department, the exception being the main student refectory at Battersea. There are public restaurants at both sites and at Vincent Square there is a large banqueting room.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

93 The college is making good progress towards achieving its objectives. Particular strengths of the provision are:

- a wide range of courses
- good teaching in many subject areas
- effective arrangements for recruitment, admissions and induction
- sound procedures for diagnosing and addressing students' needs for learning support
- good counselling and advice services
- enthusiastic and knowledgeable governors
- effective liaison with external bodies
- substantial European links
- effective marketing and publicity
- good specialist equipment for catering, sports, leisure and tourism and theatre studies
- well-equipped skills-development centres and language and numeracy workshops.

94 The college should address:

- the low pass rates in many GCE A level subjects and in some vocational courses
- the low proportion of grades A-C achieved at GCSE
- poor attendance and punctuality amongst students
- poor retention rates on many courses
- the variable quality of tutorial support
- the poor access to and accuracy of management information
- the variable quality of course review and evaluation
- the poor co-ordination of the extensive learning support for students
- insufficient computing resources
- insufficient study spaces for individual and groupwork
- the quality of some teaching accommodation.

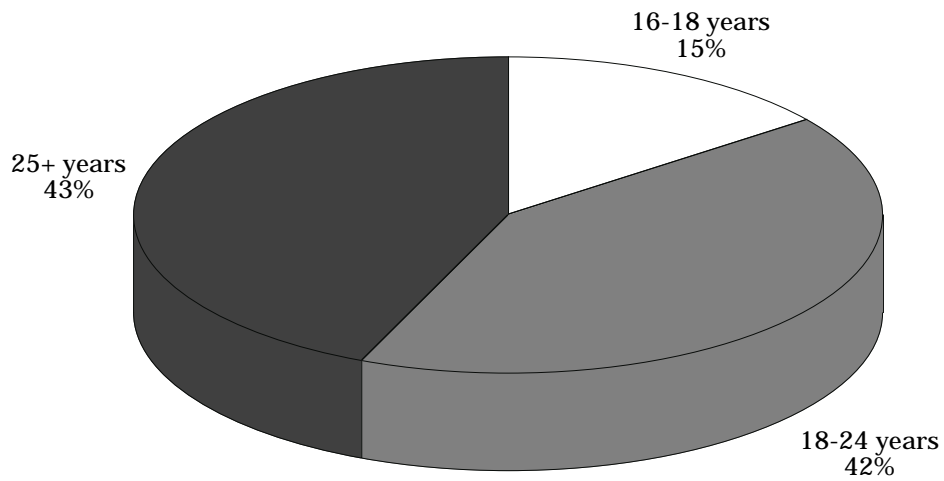
FIGURES

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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 | Estimated income (for 12 months to July 1995) |
| 6 | Estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995) |
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Note: the information contained in the figures was provided by the college to the inspection team.

Figure 1

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

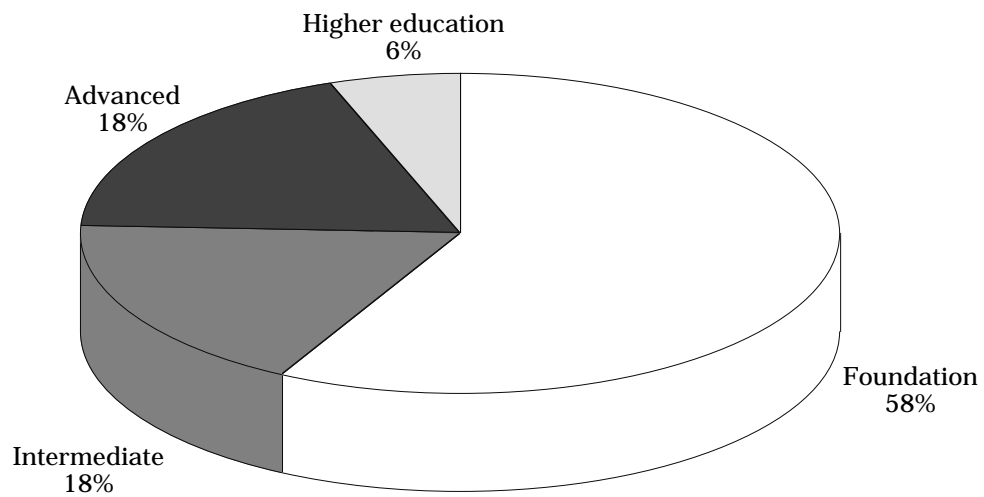


Enrolments: 11,012

Note: this chart excludes 16 enrolments under 16.

Figure 2

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



Enrolments: 11,012

Figure 3

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

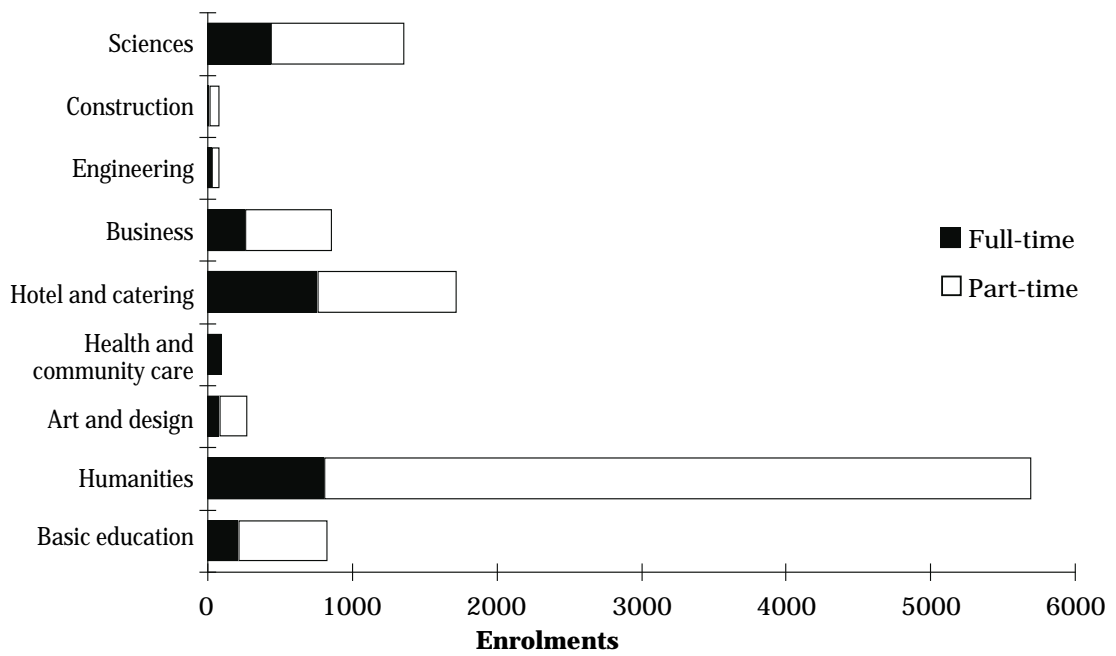


Figure 4

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

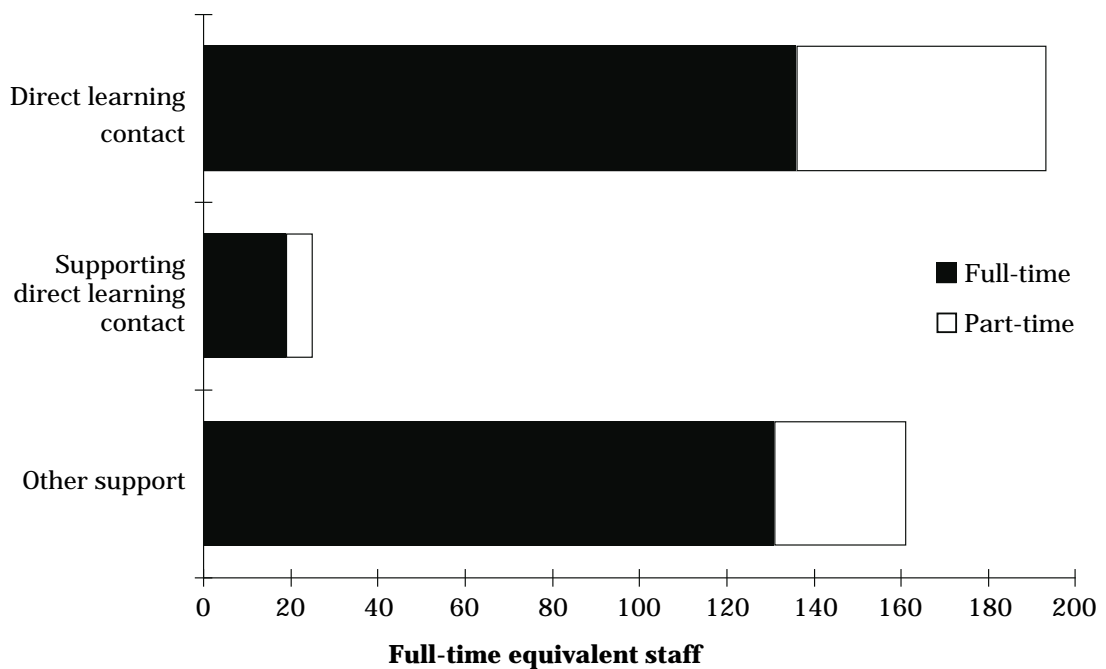
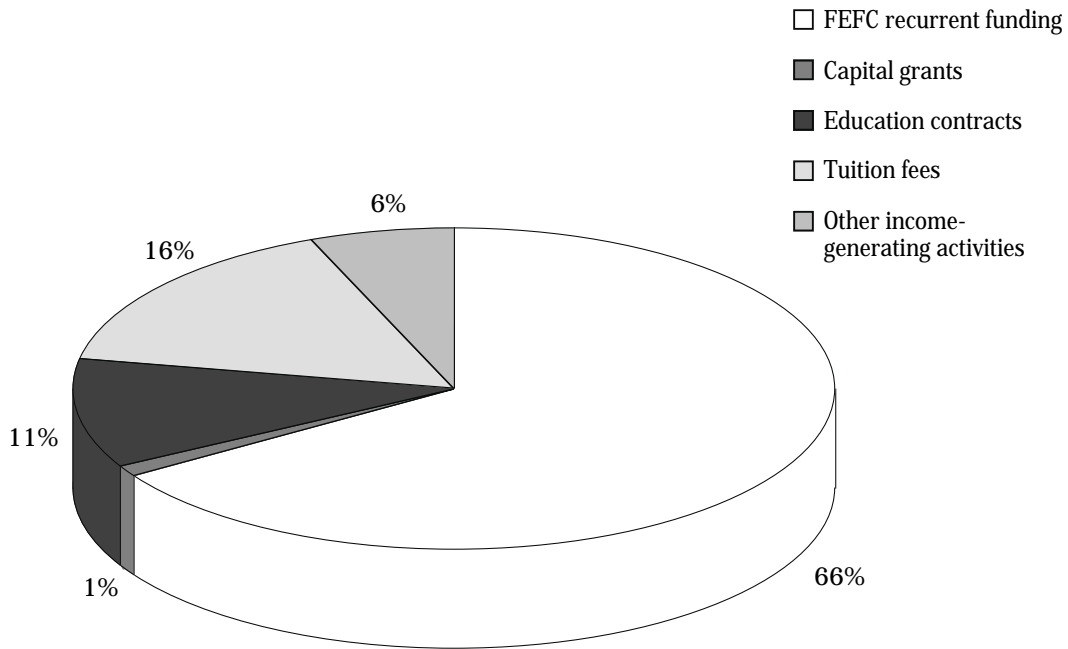


Figure 5

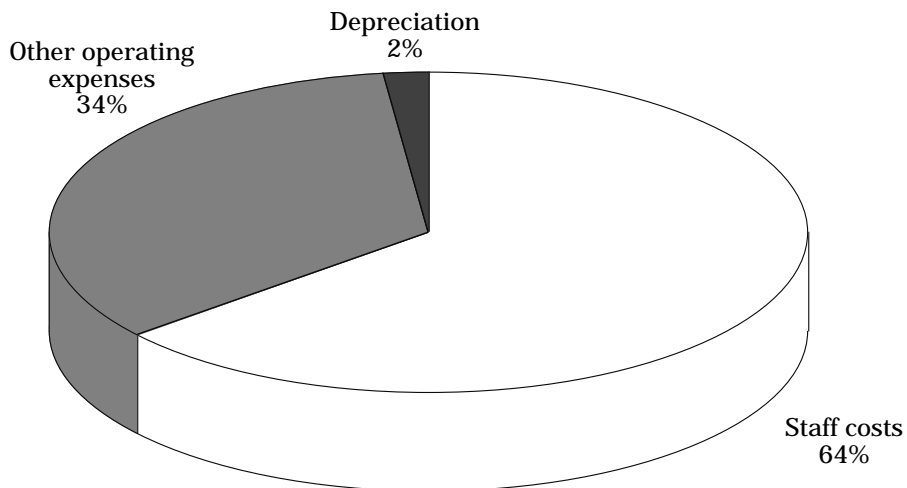
Westminster College: estimated income (for 12 months to July 1995)



Estimated income: £15,526,000 *Note: this chart excludes £68,000 other grant income.*

Figure 6

Westminster College: estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)



Estimated expenditure: £15,336,000

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