

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Worcester College of Technology

May 1997

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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

College inspections are carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines described in Council Circular 93/28. They involve full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have knowledge and experience in the work they inspect. Inspection teams normally include at least one member who does not work in education and a member of staff from the college being inspected.

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GRADE DESCRIPTORS

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

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

College grade profiles 1993-96

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

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 70/97

WORCESTER COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY

WEST MIDLANDS REGION

Inspected February 1996-February 1997

Summary

Worcester College of Technology offers an extensive range of courses. It has good links with schools, universities, employers and with other European countries. College governance and management is effective. Communications within the college are good. There are thorough procedures for students' recruitment, guidance and support. Marketing is effective. Most of the teaching is of a high standard. Retention rates are high and students' achievements on many courses are good. Staff development is well organised and effective. The curriculum review panel and the peer group reviews by departments are effective features of the quality assurance system. Most curriculum areas are well equipped. The science accommodation needs refurbishing. The college should improve: its management information system; the monitoring of its provision against the performance indicators and standards in its charter; its use of space; and students' social and sports facilities. In addition, the college should ensure that more authority is delegated to middle managers, and that the industrial and commercial experience of teachers continues to be updated.

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	2	Hospitality and catering and leisure and tourism	2
Computing	2	Health and community care	2
Construction	2	Art and design	2
Engineering	2	English and law, psychology and sociology	2
Business administration	2		
Management and professional studies	3		

INTRODUCTION

1 Worcester College of Technology was inspected in three stages. The college's induction and enrolment procedures were inspected at the start of the autumn term 1996. Specialist inspections took place in February and October 1996, followed by an inspection of aspects of cross-college provision in February 1997. Sixteen inspectors spent 69 days on the inspection. They visited 187 classes and scrutinised students' work. Meetings were held with members of the corporation, senior managers, staff, students, parents, local employers, and representatives from local schools. Discussions also took place with representatives of the Chamber of Commerce, Training and Enterprise, Hereford and Worcester. Inspectors examined college policy statements, working papers and documents, the college's strategic plan and minutes of committee meetings.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Worcester College of Technology celebrated its centenary year in 1996. It is situated in the city centre of Worcester and consists of the Deansway campus (All Saints, St Andrews and Cathedral Buildings), the Sidbury Centre, the Business and Office Technology Centre, Unicorn Chambers and the Learning Shop. The School of Art and Design is at Barbourne, which is two miles away. The college competes with other providers of post-16 education and training. It is one of 11 colleges in the County of Hereford and Worcester. With the exception of six schools in the city, all the secondary schools in the county have sixth forms. Within the city boundary there is one sixth form college, one higher education college and four independent schools. Numerous private training organisations operate in the area. The college regards the whole of the county as its catchment area, and for some of its specialist part-time and commercial provision it also recruits from the West Midlands conurbation to the north and from Gloucestershire to the south.

3 The population of Worcester City has expanded by 6 per cent in the last five years and is now 90,000. Many residents commute to work in Birmingham. The County of Hereford and Worcester has a population of 700,000 which is expected to grow to 745,000 by the year 2001. Minority ethnic groups make up 2 per cent of the population. There is a small Asian community in Worcester. Hereford and Worcester has a high economic activity rate and a significantly lower unemployment rate than the West Midlands or the United Kingdom as a whole. There has been a shift in employment from the manufacturing to the service sector and most of the companies in the area are small to medium sized. In 1994-95, 70 per cent of 16 year olds in the county remained in full-time education and 9 per cent entered government-funded training schemes.

4 The college executive comprises the principal, three assistant principals, the college secretary and the finance manager. The three assistant principals hold cross-college responsibility for resources and

planning; student services and marketing; and staffing and curriculum, respectively. They are also faculty resource managers. Ten heads of department and three divisional managers report to the assistant principals.

5 In 1995-96, the college enrolled 2,372 full-time students and 13,132 part-time students and trainees. Student numbers by age, by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3. The college employed 185 full-time teachers, 27 full-time equivalent part-time teachers and 163 full-time equivalent support staff. A staff profile, with staff shown as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

6 The college's mission is 'to aim to identify and respond to the needs of individuals and organisations by providing high quality, relevant and continuing learning opportunities which are accessible to all who can benefit from them'.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

7 The college offers a wide range of courses. This includes courses leading to national vocational qualifications (NVQs) from level 1 to level 5 and courses leading to general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. Courses for professional qualifications include those of the Chartered Institute of Marketing and the Institute of Personnel Development. Higher education provision includes Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) higher national diploma and higher national certificate courses, and courses for degrees, postgraduate diplomas and a master's degree. Twenty-nine subjects at general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) and 18 at general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) are offered. There is a well-established adult community education programme of part-time vocational, recreational and leisure courses.

8 Managers and most staff have responded well to the developments and changes in further education. Courses that no longer meet a need are reviewed or replaced. The college has increased the number of GNVQ and NVQ courses, and its access to higher education programmes. It has aimed to recruit students who might not normally participate in full-time further education. For example, the college has developed a programme for 16 to 18 year olds who leave school with few qualifications. There are 140 students on this programme. Courses specifically for adults, students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and women returners have all recruited successfully. They are organised in a way which allows various modes of attendance including full-time and part-time provision, day and evening classes and Saturday courses. Students may also study through open learning, whereby they work on their own at times of their choosing on learning materials suited to their individual needs. The college runs courses in outreach centres away from the main college, and offers collaborative provision in conjunction with other organisations. There is

an effective mix of college-based and work-based elements within the hotel and catering part-time NVQ programmes, but there are no work-based elements in business administration and construction.

9 Most employers said the college responds effectively to their needs and concerns. Short courses have been developed to meet the specific requirements of some employers. For example, the college has run programmes on staff appraisal for a firm of stockbrokers and it has provided assertiveness training for women employees. Employers are satisfied with the information they receive from the college on their employees' attendance. Some said, however, that they would like more details on their employees' academic progress.

10 Relationships with local schools are good. The college is a member of the local education partnership of secondary and special schools and the local further education providers. Through this partnership, staff at several levels, such as head teachers and principals, deputies and subject heads, maintain contact with one another, and they are able to share and develop ideas on the curriculum for 14 to 19 year olds. Through a compact arrangement, the college provides NVQ programmes for 14 to 16 year olds. Schools' representatives are appreciative of the help they receive from the college. Pupils visit the college for open days and other events. College staff attend careers events at the schools. There are productive links with the Universities of Central England, Staffordshire, Wolverhampton, Coventry and Worcester College of Higher Education. The college's links with the University of Central England have been established for over 20 years. The college runs some higher education programmes in partnership with these universities, at diploma, degree and postgraduate level. Higher education representatives commented favourably on the ability of students from the college.

11 The Chamber of Commerce, Training and Enterprise, Hereford and Worcester has a very positive view of the college. Relationships between the Chamber and the college are open and strong. Representatives of the Chamber consider that the college meets the education and training needs of most of the local community well. The Chamber works closely with the college in helping it to draft its strategic plan. In turn, the college assists in the preparation of the Chamber's corporate and business plans. The college runs training programmes which are funded by the Chamber and meets most of the educational and training targets set by them. The college has received finance from the Chamber for several initiatives including the learning shop and the centre for languages and international studies.

12 European links are particularly good. The college has developed the European dimension of many of its courses. Funding has been obtained from a variety of European funds to support staff and student exchanges and joint projects with partners in other member states of the European Union. For example, finance students from France visit the college to study English and the British banking system and GNVQ engineering students from Worcester travel to Germany for craft training.

13 Representatives from the community said that the college's image has improved in recent years. They commented favourably on the college's participation in a Worcester street fair and on the quality of the college's marketing. The college's work with the community also includes involvement with the city churches, a local theatre group and organisations which support people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

14 Marketing is effective. The college's marketing staff have a clear understanding of their role in developing and promoting the college's activities. Prospectuses and course leaflets are attractive and they provide clear information on courses. The college has built up a comprehensive picture of its different markets. This is based on direct contact with employers and also on an analysis of local and regional labour market information, and data on the occupations, age, ethnicity and gender of local people. The college recognises that these data need to be brought together in a more manageable form to assist strategic planning. An important element in the college's marketing activities is a shop located on the city's main street that is open every day except Sunday. The shop enables people who would not normally call at the college to obtain details of courses. Relations with the media are well managed; students' individual achievements are regularly reported by the local press and radio.

15 The college promotes equality of opportunity. Equal opportunities issues are included in staff-development programmes and in staff and student induction programmes. A checklist is used to ensure that equal opportunities issues are addressed through the curriculum. The college has conducted audits on how it ensures equality of opportunity. There is an equal opportunities committee which reports to the college executive but it does not represent all sections of the college.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

16 The college has an effective, supportive and committed corporation of 13 members, which includes the principal. There are eight independent members, and one nominated by the local Chamber. Three members are women including the chairman. At the time of the inspection there were two vacancies. To improve accountability and openness, the corporation has recently decided to include two members of the local community and a staff member on the board. Governors are drawn from industry, commerce, and education. Following a skills audit, the governors recognised the need to strengthen the corporation with a person who has expertise in management accountancy. Induction for new governors is thorough. The corporation has a clear understanding of the distinction between governance and management; members have an effective working relationship with the college executive.

17 Meetings of the corporation are carefully scheduled and attendance at these is high. There are committees covering finance; resources and employment policy; audit; remuneration; search and nomination; and a

consultative committee. All have clear terms of reference. Corporation and committee minutes give an informed account of discussions and resolutions. The corporation receives the minutes from each committee by an agreed date. Reports which provide information for committees are detailed and well presented. A code of conduct and a register of members' interests were adopted last year. A handbook provides members with clear guidance on governance, and on the roles and responsibilities of the corporation and its committees. The corporation has recently evaluated its own performance. There are new procedures in place to monitor its effectiveness. Members receive training which includes a series of weekend seminars and events at the Further Education Development Agency in Blagdon. Nationally known figures are invited to speak to members to inform them about current educational issues. Governors talk to staff and students to gain insight into curriculum issues and developments. The college secretary acts as clerk to the governors. He provides independent advice to the corporation but his job description does not conform to the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) guidelines.

18 The strategic plan provides a good overview of local education and training needs. The operating statement is based on a thorough analysis of the college's strengths and weaknesses in responding to demand. Staff are involved in the development and review of the strategic plan. Reviews take place every half term. Some operational activities have measurable targets to aid monitoring and control. The corporation takes a leading role in establishing strategy. It systematically monitors key features of college business such as finance, enrolment and students' achievements. In January each year, the governors review the college's mission and the previous year's strategic plan, and formulate the plan for the coming year. The principal and other senior managers provide the governors with good briefings on issues which affect, or are likely to affect, the college.

19 The management structure is generally effective and is well understood by staff. Areas of responsibility are clearly defined. The executive generally provides good management and gives friendly support and guidance that is valued by staff. However, insufficient delegation of authority from the executive to middle managers leads to some difficulties in working relationships and causes delays in decision making. Recent reductions in staffing have been well managed. Staff are effectively deployed. Teamwork is good throughout the college. Departmental plans and minutes, however, do not show what action is required, by whom it should be taken, and by what date it should be completed.

20 Communications within the college are effective. There is an informative weekly newsletter called 'Newslink'. Standing committees include the principal's forum, the staff council, faculty and departmental committees. Each committee has clear terms of reference and reports to the principal via a member of the executive team. The recently-revised academic board is an effective forum for curriculum review and

development. It advises the college and the principal on education and training issues.

21 The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are shown in figures 5 and 6. The college's average level of funding for 1996-97 is £16.84 per unit, compared with £16.86 per unit in 1995-96. In 1996-97 the median for general further education and tertiary colleges is £17.97 per unit and for all sector colleges, it is £18.66 per unit. The college does not establish unit costs for its programmes or courses.

22 The management information system is currently being improved. At the time of the inspection, it did not provide reliable and timely data to support decision making. The system is not networked to departments, which receive paper-based management information only. Management information is rarely used at programme level to measure course effectiveness; it is seldom available in a format which would help course managers in their decision making. Some departments have created their own systems and procedures for monitoring and recording information for departmental management. There is poor liaison between staff in the examinations office and staff who administer the college's information system, particularly when data on students' achievements are being collated. There have been some errors and omissions in these data.

23 The college has a health and safety policy, for which a member of the executive is responsible. The governors do not regularly review health and safety procedures in the college. A health and safety committee meets once a term to discuss safety and welfare issues and to formulate guidance. Departments do not carry out risk assessments or regular safety audits.

24 An enthusiastic environmental conservation group has instigated various projects to improve the college's environment and reduce waste. An impressive project to develop woodlands for environmental education has recently been launched at the environmental centre at Bishops Wood.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

25 Students' recruitment, guidance and support are co-ordinated well by the assistant principal responsible for marketing and for student services. Teaching and support staff work effectively together to provide students with a range of services. There are strong links between the college and outside agencies such as the Hereford and Worcester Careers Service Ltd.

26 Staff attend careers and advice sessions in city and county schools and provide a range of open days, careers events and 'taster' days, all of which are well publicised. There is a range of promotional material about childcare facilities, accommodation for students, financial services, learning support, study support services, qualifications and course content. The college recruits substantial numbers of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are strong links with special schools, social services and other agencies including the college's adult guidance

centre at Sidbury. To increase its appeal to adults, the college runs special events including an adult learners' week, a women returners' day and open evenings for access and foundation students. There is a street fair about education each May. Students value the guidance provided by the college to enable them to choose an appropriate course of study. Their parents also expressed their appreciation of the guidance their children receive. Parents and students reported, however, that in some local schools, there was a lack of information about the college and its courses.

27 Enrolment is carefully planned. Staff are well briefed for it. They give prospective students impartial advice about courses and explain course requirements, course content, and assessment methods clearly. Staff are friendly, helpful and positive. There is an effective system for checking enrolment documentation. Secure areas are set aside for fee collection on the main site. Childcare facilities are available for parents during enrolment. Whilst general arrangements for enrolment are centrally controlled, the actual enrolment process is carried out in departments. There is some variation in enrolment practice between departments, and the good practice which exists is not shared. Areas are not always clearly signposted and there was some unnecessary queuing at the start of enrolment for part-time courses.

28 The college has clear procedures for the assessment and accreditation of students' prior learning. All vocational departments have staff who have qualified as assessors of prior learning. The extent to which students' prior experience is accredited varies across the college, and is greatest in construction and engineering. Such accreditation is used increasingly in management and professional studies, catering, retailing and hairdressing.

29 Induction is carefully planned and it is generally effective. Staff receive detailed guidance on what induction programmes should contain. Students are provided with a clear overview of their course and its assessment arrangements. The student handbook is attractive. It is laid out clearly and it contains the college charter. Although part-time students receive information about the college from their subject teachers, they are not always aware of the range of services available to them, or of their rights and responsibilities under the college charter. Students' skills in communication and numeracy are assessed efficiently. Additional teaching in these skills is provided for students who need it. There are suitable arrangements for students to transfer between courses and between teaching departments.

30 The college is committed to meeting the needs of all its students who require additional support for their learning. This support is provided either through specialised programmes or through additional literacy or numeracy teaching on an individual basis. The college has a learning support manager and each department has a learning support co-ordinator. The learning support service has links with a wide range of specialist agencies, such as the local education authority (LEA) service for

the sensory impaired and the speech therapy service provided by the Community Health Care Trust. Currently, the college provides specialist help for 21 students with dyslexia. There is a range of specialised programmes for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; students and their parents speak highly of these programmes. The literacy and numeracy support for students on mainstream courses, particularly in the vocational departments, is not always fully effective.

31 Tutorial support for all full-time and for some part-time students is good. Course tutors have clear responsibilities and receive information packs about tutorial support. Tutorials are used for the completion of students' national records of achievement, and the development of portfolios of work relating to GNVQ and NVQ programmes. In some tutorials, students are given advice on careers. Personal and welfare support for students is provided through a team which includes the college nursing/welfare officer, the three members of the ecumenical college chaplaincy, and the college staff/student liaison officer. Members of this team work well together and they also work closely with course tutors and with the students' association. Two members of the team are well qualified and experienced counsellors. Students may avail themselves of support services at any time on a 'drop-in' basis or by appointment. The services are explained in the college handbook, on college noticeboards and during induction programmes and tutorials.

32 The college has an agreement with Hereford and Worcester Careers Service Ltd. Currently six specialist careers officers visit the college to provide advice and guidance to students. Their work is well integrated with that of course tutors but is mainly intended for full-time students. Part-time students are made aware of the service but their attendance patterns often limit the extent to which they can use it. There is a good careers information and guidance centre in the All Saints' building, which is open from 09.00 to 17.00 hours, Monday to Friday. Guidance for adults is provided at the adult assessment centre at Sidbury.

33 Students' attendance is monitored by teachers and course tutors. Systems for registering attendance are departmental and vary across the college. Parents and others have widely differing perceptions of the effectiveness of the way the college reports students' absenteeism. Attendance rates across the college are reviewed by the executive and they have recently improved.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

34 Inspectors observed 187 teaching sessions. Of these, 73 per cent had strengths that outweighed weaknesses. Three per cent of the lessons had weaknesses which outweighed the strengths. These percentages compare with 63 per cent and 8 per cent, respectively, for all colleges inspected in 1995-96, according to figures published in the *Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1995-96*. Students' attendance rates in the lessons observed ranged

from 67 per cent to 87 per cent with an overall average of 80 per cent. The average size of the classes inspected was 11. The following table shows the grades awarded to the sessions inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade 1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level	8	17	6	0	0	31
GCSE	0	4	2	1	0	7
GNVQ	11	27	10	3	0	51
NVQ	4	10	5	0	0	19
Other vocational	5	18	15	2	0	40
Access to further and higher education	1	3	0	0	0	4
Basic education	0	2	1	0	0	3
Other	9	17	6	0	0	32
Total	38	98	45	6	0	187

35 Most of the teaching is good. Many lessons are well planned. Relationships between teachers and students are positive and promote learning. In a number of curriculum areas, students with learning difficulties receive effective support which enables them to take mainstream courses. Some students do not have sufficient opportunities to develop their information technology skills. Some teachers do not question students effectively to check that learning has taken place. Most full-time students undertake work placements. Some students considered they were poorly prepared for work experience. Some employers in the health and care sector feel that meetings should be organised at which work placement providers could discuss common issues.

36 The teaching methods employed in science are effective. Teachers use teaching aids well. In a human biology lesson, the teacher made good use of the overhead projector, microscope demonstrations and dissection to illustrate the different aspects of muscle structure and behaviour. Teachers provide students with detailed and constructive feedback on their work. Records of students' progress are thorough and teachers use them well to give students guidance and learning support. A few teachers do not provide sufficient help for students working on their own or in small groups.

37 The planning of assignments and tasks in computing is good. Teachers organised practical lessons well and linked them to students' own experiences. Teachers gave helpful support to most students on an individual basis, but in some cases, they provided insufficient assistance to those whose computing skills were particularly weak. In a few ineffective lessons, the computer software which was used was out of date. Teachers'

written comments on the quality of students' work they had assessed were, in some instances, insufficiently detailed to aid learning, or to help students to improve their performance.

38 In construction, students successfully develop trade skills in realistic, simulated work environments, and they benefit from a range of education visits. Most practical and theory lessons are organised effectively. They have clear aims and teachers take account of students' different abilities. The key features of each lesson are usually summarised at the end. Assignment briefs are clear. The quality of course material and handouts is good but some overhead transparencies are poor. A few teachers make inappropriate use of imperial units of measurement. Unsafe working practices, such as the operation of woodworking machinery by students who are not wearing goggles, are sometimes not corrected.

39 Engineering teachers prepare good schemes of work and lesson plans. Learning programmes cover the syllabus and lessons have clear objectives. Teachers use a variety of effective teaching methods and make good use of learning aids. They keep detailed records of students' work and progress. Teachers set a wide range of appropriate assignments. Those undertaken by students on the higher national certificates and diplomas are particularly well designed. The written comments on students' assignment work are insufficiently detailed. Very little homework is set. Students are given insufficient work to do on their own.

40 Most teachers in business administration use a variety of effective teaching methods. For example, they make good use of small group work and question and answer sessions. In the secretarial and administration courses, use is made of simulated work environments. The simulated work environment provided for students on courses leading to the NVQ level 3 in administration, is, however, insufficiently realistic. The key skills of numeracy, communications and information technology are successfully integrated with NVQ and GNVQ units. In a few lessons, teaching methods are poor and students are inattentive. Some teachers do not make effective use of the overhead projector.

41 In management and professional studies, some lessons are of a high standard and extend students' abilities. In other lessons, students spend too much time taking notes from dictation or copying from whiteboards and overhead projector transparencies. Standards of marking are appropriate. Schemes of work contain insufficient detail. Many overhead transparencies and handouts are of poor quality.

42 Most lessons in hospitality and catering and in leisure and tourism extend students' knowledge and understanding. The schemes of work and lesson plans in leisure and tourism are generally better than those in hospitality and catering. The simulated work environments are realistic. Staff provide students with effective teaching and help them to cope successfully with the requirements of a commercial operation. Teachers make good use of specialist equipment and teaching aids. They monitor

students' progress well and provide students with helpful support in most lessons. However, they provide insufficient comments on students' written work. Some leisure and tourism lessons are long and teachers are unable to sustain students' interest.

43 In art and design, the teaching of drawing is very good. Lessons have clear objectives. Teachers make good use of learning materials and visual aids. In art history, teachers sustain students' interest by providing interesting contextual information and by making use of well-directed questions. Briefs for assignments are clear and of a high standard. Teachers provide individual students with support and encouragement. In some lessons, students are not given the opportunity to explore and develop topics for themselves. On the foundation course, they are not given opportunities to develop skills in information technology or photography. A few students disrupt lessons by arriving late and their unpunctuality passes without comment from teachers.

44 In health and social care, teachers make good use of worksheets, assignments and group work. Most lessons have clear aims and objectives that link to schemes of work. In one lesson, there was a useful and pertinent debate on the issue of payment by the national health service for surrogacy. A few teachers do not make good use of students' own work experiences. The organisation of some lessons is poor. Occasionally, teachers make spelling errors when writing on the board which are left uncorrected.

45 In law, teachers draw on their professional experience to strengthen learning and to add appropriate variety to their teaching. Handouts are particularly good. Schemes of work and lesson plans lack detail, however. In lessons, students engage in effective group work. In English, schemes of work and lesson plans are carefully prepared. Teachers do not always take sufficient account of the differing abilities and experience of their students. In both law and English, teachers place appropriate emphasis on the importance of key skills. Some students, however, are not sufficiently encouraged to take part in class discussions in order to develop their oral skills. In psychology and sociology, there are well-structured plans for most lessons and these link effectively with the scheme of work and the syllabus for the course. Teachers regularly set homework and they mark it to an appropriate standard. Teachers do not, however, always check carefully to make sure that students understand the lesson, especially when new or difficult concepts are being dealt with.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

46 There are some examples of outstanding success by individual students. In 1996, a GCE A level law candidate who studied at home through distance learning was awarded a certificate of excellence by the examining body. In 1992, a student won the national Young Woman Engineer of the Year award; students were runners up for this award in 1995 and 1997. A student on the Chartered Institute of Public Finance

and Accounting course achieved a national award for the best project in the final stage of the professional qualification.

47 GCE A level science results are variable. In 1996, students aged 16 to 18 achieved a pass rate of 90 per cent in chemistry compared with the average of 75 per cent for general further education colleges. However, pass rates were below average in physics (62 per cent) and biology (63 per cent). The pass rate for students on the GNVQ advanced science course was above the national average and students produced portfolios of work of a particularly high standard. The higher national certificate pass rate was 100 per cent.

48 Students on computing courses produce good assignment work. In the BTEC national diploma in computer studies, 73 per cent of students who completed the course in 1996 achieved a pass. The pass rate on the intermediate level GNVQ course in information technology was considerably above the national average. Twenty-five per cent of the students on this programme achieved a pass at distinction level. All 19 students on the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) 7261 information technology course achieved a pass in 1996. Retention rates on some courses are poor; on the BTEC national diploma course in computer studies course, 39 per cent of the students left during the first year.

49 Students on construction programmes produce assignment work of a consistently high standard. Some students on craft courses lack study skills in note taking and coursework organisation and presentation. Examination pass rates vary considerably. Excellent pass rates are obtained in the higher national certificate in building and NVQ level 3 brickwork but there are some poor examination results in NVQ level 2 brickwork and plumbing craft courses. Retention rates on some craft courses are poor.

50 Engineering students achieve high levels of skills, knowledge and understanding. There are particularly good examination pass rates on the Engineering Training Agency course (95 per cent) and GNVQ advanced engineering (76 per cent). Eighteen of the 21 students who completed the Engineering Training Agency course in 1996 obtained employment. Of the 22 students who completed the GNVQ advanced engineering course, 20 progressed to higher education or employment.

51 The examination results in business and administration are generally good. Students' achievements at intermediate and advanced level on the GNVQ course in business are at or above the national average. The level of achievement at NVQ level 2 has risen slightly over the three-year period between 1993 and 1996 but there has been a corresponding fall in NVQ level 3 achievement rates during the same period. Retention rates are generally good. In 1995-96, there was a 93 per cent retention rate on the GNVQ intermediate course in business. Students' ability to plan their own work varies. Some students have acquired the skills to review their work effectively and evaluate their achievements critically but others have not.

Students' portfolios are well organised but contain little evidence of their achievements in the workplace.

52 On most management and professional studies courses, examination results are at or above the national average, although there are some unexplained year-on-year variations in the success rates. There are good retention rates on most courses. Students on the higher national certificate in the business and finance course produce outstanding portfolios. Most students develop good information technology skills.

53 The success rates for intermediate and advanced level GNVQ courses in leisure and tourism are well above the national average. Students' attendance and punctuality are generally good. In hospitality and catering, most students display well-developed practical skills but some aspects of their skills in food presentation do not match the standards required by industry. Some students allow their attention to wander during lessons and their ability to analyse and ask questions is underdeveloped. In leisure and tourism assignments, the standard of students' English is often poor.

54 Many art and design students progress to higher education. In 1996, the pass rate on the GNVQ advanced course in art and design was 80 per cent, which was above the national average. The pass rate on the GNVQ intermediate course in art and design was 59 per cent, which was slightly below the national average. A significant number of students who enrol for the GNVQ advanced course in art and design fail to continue with the second year of the course.

55 Pass rates on health and social care courses are generally at, or above, the national average. The average pass rate is over 80 per cent on BTEC national diploma and certificate courses. Eighty-seven per cent of students on the BTEC national diploma childhood studies programme completed their course successfully. Some students' assessed work is of a high standard but some is incomplete or poorly organised.

56 In English and law, GCE A level and GCSE results are consistently above the national averages. In 1996, there were pass rates of 100 per cent and 89 per cent for GCE A level English literature and GCE A level English language and literature, respectively. In GCE A level law, 85 per cent of students aged 16 to 18 obtained a pass. Some students' written work is cogent and well informed and it displays a secure knowledge of literary texts or key legal concepts. In English, students' oral skills vary significantly; some can debate and extend their ideas in discussion but others are more hesitant. Examination results in sociology and psychology are variable. GCE A level sociology pass rates at grades A to E were 95 per cent in 1994, 43 per cent in 1995, and 88 per cent in 1996. In GCE A level psychology, the results have declined over the past three years. In 1994, the pass rate was 95 per cent and it fell to 74 per cent in 1995 and 63 per cent in 1996. In psychology lessons, students made little attempt to initiate discussion or ask questions, but assignments showed that some students were developing effective interpretive and evaluative skills.

57 Students on many vocational courses have the opportunity to develop and apply key skills. In most cases, these skills form an integral part of their programme of study. From 1996, all full-time students studying GCE A level subjects are required to study for the diploma of achievement. The aim of this programme is to improve students' skills in areas of numeracy, communication, information technology, problem solving, working independently and working with others. Students' enthusiasm for the programme is varied. Some feel that they are repeating work previously carried out at school. The college recognises the need to adopt an approach to key skills which is based more closely on the needs of individual students.

58 The college subscribes to an external service which enables staff to measure the extent of students' achievements on GCE A level courses. This is calculated by comparing the actual GCE A level grades achieved by students with the grades predicted for them on the basis of their GCSE results. It shows that over the last four years:

- in seven subjects (English literature, English language and literature, economics, geography, physics, government and politics and accounting) the students' average level of achievement was above that predicted
- in eight subjects results were, on average, in line with predicted results
- in four subjects (psychology, history, general studies and electronics) results, on average, were below the level that was predicted.

59 Seventy-five per cent of the 260 students in their final year of study on the advanced vocational courses included in the Department for Education and Employment's (DfEE's) 1996 performance tables were successful. Sixty-four per cent of the 148 students studying intermediate vocational courses included in the DfEE's 1996 performance tables also achieved success. This places the college among the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on both measures. The 185 students aged 16 to 18 who entered for GCE A level examinations in 1996 scored, on average, 3.8 points per entry (where grade A=10 points, E=2). This places the college in the middle third of colleges on this performance measure based on the tables published by the DfEE.

60 The college does not hold sufficient data on students' achievements centrally. Each department holds information about its own courses and sometimes this is subject to extensive and effective analysis. The data collected in this manner are not presented in a consistent format. The college does not produce collated documentation on students' destinations. The recording of students' destinations at departmental level is generally good although in some cases there is little analysis of these data. On most courses, students' retention rates are good.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

61 The college's charter is contained in the handbook issued to all students. It is updated annually and it has been revised recently to include information specifically for students with disabilities. The charter contains some measurable standards, but monitoring of the college's performance against these standards is limited. It is not clear who has overall responsibility for such monitoring. Students do not attach great importance to the charter. They have not been consulted about its contents. Charter commitments to employers and the community are included, inappropriately, in the students' handbook. These commitments have not been the subject of any formal consultation with employers or community representatives. The charter contains a formal complaints procedure. In practice, the college finds that most complaints can be resolved informally. The few formal complaints received are reported to the college executive.

62 The responsibility of individual staff and staff teams for assuring the quality of the college's provision is outlined in a well-established college policy. This is clearly understood by staff and supported by a recently updated quality assurance framework and a coherent system of annual planning and review. The planning and review system brings together strategic objectives, operating plans and end-of-year analyses of strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for development. These culminate in an annual college management report, which is discussed by the academic board and the corporation. The management report is a useful collection of reports by departments and functional areas, using standard formats and a method of reporting which focuses on major strengths and weaknesses. The policy on quality assurance provides a good basis for the development of a quality assurance system. The college's quality assurance procedures, however, have several shortcomings. The framework for quality assurance has evolved over several years. It is described in what is now a very complex document which does not provide a clear overview of the quality assurance system or clearly identify standards against which the college's performance is to be assessed. There are no identified standards for many of the college's business support services. The college has established enrolment targets and targets for efficiency gains but, until this year, it had not established performance indicators. The data provided by individual departments to support their reports vary widely in their level of detail and depth of analysis. There is little analysis of trends in performance from year to year, either at college or department level.

63 The training services division of the college has achieved the International Standards Organisation (ISO) 9001 for its work with employers. College departments which provide training for students recruited by the division are required to meet this national standard. The college is now working to co-ordinate its various quality assurance systems.

64 In 1994, the college established a curriculum review panel which is a committee of the academic board. This panel has proved valuable. Its

remit is to assist with the assessment of the quality of the college's provision. It advises on departmental proposals for new courses and undertakes peer group reviews whereby departments assess the quality of each others' work. In the past two years, departmental heads and other nominated staff have conducted reviews of departments, other than their own. In 1995-96, the reviews focused on issues relating to the attendance, retention and achievement of students. The staff involved in these reviews have found them a valuable developmental activity. The reviews have been followed by discussions with the assistant principal responsible for the curriculum and these have led to agreed action plans. The college recognises that the usefulness of the reviews is limited because the review process does not include any formal observation of teaching and learning. The findings of the 1995-96 review have not yet been fully analysed or discussed. The college principal has conducted a review of departmental monitoring and evaluation methods.

65 The college has a well-established system of course reviews which lead to written reports to the head of department and usually include action plans. Some business support areas also conduct reviews. Those produced by the library and multi-media service are particularly informative. The college has a policy of allowing departments to produce their reports in the format which they consider best suited to ensuring a clear evaluation of the course being reviewed. An example of good practice in report writing is provided in the document on the quality framework. In practice, the level of detail and quality of analysis in course reviews vary considerably. Some include detailed data and take into account the reports of external verifiers and moderators and, where appropriate, FEFC inspections. For GCE A level courses, there is effective use of the external system which analyses the achievements of students compared with their predicted performance based on GCSE results. However, most course reviews contain little reference to targets, monitoring of performance against criteria or analysis of trends in performance. Where there are action plans, they rarely include targets, timescales within which action must be completed, performance criteria, or named staff responsible for ensuring that action is carried out.

66 The assistant principal responsible for the curriculum receives all reports from external verifiers and inspectors and monitors the action plans resulting from them. There is a college policy on internal verification. Departments produce their own guidelines and supporting documentation for verification procedures, but there is no system for ensuring consistent standards across the whole college. The college relies mainly on reports from external verifiers to ensure that internal verification is of an appropriate standard. Students' opinions on the quality of their courses and of college facilities have been sought through surveys conducted by course teams. Most course teams include student representatives on their review panels. Information about the college from various sources is not

collated. The college has only recently introduced a college-wide survey of students' perceptions and the analysis of this is not yet complete. There is no formal survey of employers' views of the college.

67 The college produced a detailed self-assessment report using the headings in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. It was written by the college executive group and was subsequently amended and endorsed by the corporation. It includes strengths, areas for further development and grades. It does not clearly analyse weaknesses. There are also some notable omissions. For example, in the section on quality assurance there is no reference to the college's charter. Some content in the report is placed in inappropriate sections. The cross-references which are used to support judgements confuse actual evidence with sources of evidence. The strengths identified in the report were broadly confirmed by the inspection but the grades are, on the whole, slightly higher than those agreed by the inspection team.

68 There is a well-established staff-appraisal scheme. All full-time and many part-time staff have been appraised during the past year. The appraisal process is linked closely to the identification of individual staff-development needs. Staff find the process supportive. In 1996-97, a revised appraisal scheme was introduced. The time allowed for appraisal interviews has been increased and the effectiveness of the appraisals has been improved. All appraisers have received training. Until now, the appraisal of teachers has not included a requirement that appraisers observe teaching. Staff reported that little observation of their teaching had taken place.

69 The college has a strong commitment to developing its staff. It is one of the college's targets that all teachers should have professional qualifications, to at least the certificate of education level, by the year 2000. Staff development is well organised. A staff-development advisory group, established in 1995, draws up annual guidelines on staff development which include a clear statement of the college's priorities. The annual budget for staff development is £50,000. A wide range of staff development has been undertaken. A comprehensive programme of staff development helps to keep staff well informed about developments in further education. There is an increasing emphasis on inviting specialists into the college to train teams of staff. Course teams can bid for curriculum development time when mounting new courses. In response to staff requests and the findings of recent inspections, there has been a significant increase in the number of staff involved in updating their industrial and commercial experience. All staff now have an entitlement to one part-time course at the college outside their working hours. New staff receive a formal induction to the college which is supplemented by departmental induction. Guidelines recently produced for departments include a requirement for all new staff to have mentors. The guidelines do not, however, clarify the role of mentors and there is no requirement for mentors to observe teaching. Mentors have not received training.

70 The college made a commitment to gaining Investor in People status in 1993 but progress towards achieving the award has been slow; the final assessment is now planned for June 1997. The college has found the process of working on its Investors in People action plan to be useful as a form of staff development, and as a means of reviewing the way the college is organised. A pre-assessment in 1996 identified a number of areas in which the college has since made improvements. These include the revised staff-appraisal scheme and the production of a revised and improved staff handbook. Some staff have yet to be convinced of the value of these developments but others are enthusiastic about their benefits.

RESOURCES

Staffing

71 Teaching staff are well qualified and experienced for the courses they teach. Ninety per cent of full-time teachers have a certificate of education or an equivalent qualification and 83 per cent have a professional qualification at degree level or its equivalent. A further 20 per cent hold a postgraduate qualification. Many teaching staff have obtained the awards of a training and development lead body. Of the full-time staff for whom these awards are relevant, 67 per cent currently hold the vocational assessors' award and 33 per cent have the internal verifiers' award. Although many staff have industrial or commercial experience, this is often outdated; the college has identified the updating of such experience as a priority for staff development. Clear and appropriate personnel procedures have been developed and there are key policies on personnel matters. These are contained in a comprehensive and informative staff handbook. Standardised procedures for the recruitment and selection of staff are set out in the college's management handbook. Nearly all of the permanent teaching staff and all the business support staff have signed new contracts of employment, and as a result, managers have been able to adopt a more flexible approach to staff deployment. There are, however, inefficiencies in the deployment of teaching staff in some curriculum areas.

72 Teachers generally receive good assistance from well-qualified and competent professional, technical and administrative staff. The use of training supervisors, for example in engineering, provides students with particularly good levels of learning support. The level of technician support in art and design is low.

73 There is a considerable imbalance between the sexes among the full-time teaching staff. Sixty-two per cent of staff are male and 38 per cent are female. In those curriculum areas which traditionally attract students of one sex, the teaching staff are mainly of the same sex as the students. There are no women in the college executive. No member of the teaching staff is from a minority ethnic background.

Equipment/learning resources

74 Most programme areas have sufficient equipment and learning resources. Engineering equipment and resources in the manufacturing technology centre are of outstanding quality. The college obtained £240,000 from the competitiveness fund towards the cost of this centre. Leisure and tourism has a well-equipped fitness centre. However, there is no travel agency where students of leisure and tourism may develop their vocational skills. There is a good range of equipment for art and design. Most classrooms have an adequate range of teaching aids. A few do not; for example, one of the classrooms used for business and office technology courses has no overhead projection screen.

75 The quality of information technology equipment throughout the college is variable. The ratio of students to computers is good at 8:1. However, nearly a quarter of the machines are not up to the standard of those normally used in industry. There is no college network and access to the Internet is limited. Arrangements for students to use computers when they need to are satisfactory at the Deansway campus, but they are unsatisfactory at other sites. On some courses, the development of students' information technology skills has been hindered by the lack of computing facilities in classrooms. Most staffrooms are not provided with computers. Technician support is adequate.

76 At the Deansway campus, the college has a conveniently located learning centre which combines library and multi-media facilities. The new language and international studies centre is well equipped. Other useful facilities include the art and design library at the Barbourne campus and a skills centre at the business and office technology centre. The library and learning resources budget has been substantial at £70,000 a year over the last three years. This budget covers the cost of textbooks which are supplied free to all full-time students. Most programme areas have sufficient library books; provision for law is particularly good. Computerisation of the library catalogue has begun recently. The opening hours of the library are convenient for most students. There are sufficient library staff and a high proportion of them are professionally qualified. The number of private study places is insufficient. In the main learning resource centre, there are only 12 computers with compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases, and there are 37 titles, although 21 extra titles are available elsewhere.

Accommodation

77 The college's buildings date from the nineteenth century to the 1970s. They have been reasonably well maintained. Over £1 million has been spent on the buildings since incorporation, but the college's 10-year planned maintenance programme has now been substantially cut back because of limited finance. The college is generally clean and tidy although there were examples of classrooms used on business and management

courses which were not kept in good order. Some toilet facilities are poor. Although the college has given attention to the saving of energy and other utility costs, there is scope for reducing these further. The town centre sites are easily accessible to students who use public transport. These sites have no car parking facilities for students, however. There are no external road signs to the college. The main entrance in the All Saints' building is drab and it does not give a visitor a good first impression of the college. New developments include the attractive sixth form centre, the language and international studies centre, and a refurbished fitness suite. The size, layout and furnishing of buildings are mostly suitable for their purpose. For example, there is good specialist accommodation for catering and hospitality courses and for construction courses which provides students with realistic, simulated work environments. Students can use good, off-site facilities such as the distinctive environmental centre at Bishops Wood near Stourport. The science areas require refurbishing.

78 The college's use of its space is poor, despite some action which has been taken to improve it. Engineering work has been concentrated on the Cathedral building and the number of buildings occupied by the department of health and community education has been reduced from three to one. The college expects that it will significantly improve its use of space shortly, when it moves the business and office technology department from its present location to the Sidbury Centre. There is scope for the college to improve its timetabling system.

79 There are stimulating wall displays in the classroom used by leisure and tourism, and health care courses, but the classrooms used by engineering, catering and hospitality, and business and management courses have bare, drab walls. Students with restricted mobility have access to most of the Deansway campus buildings. Wheelchair users have access to the ground floor only in the art and design building and the business and office technology centre. The size of the refectory at Deansway is adequate but the refectory at Barbourne is too small. Social facilities in the college are limited and there are no students' common rooms. Students can use the college's fitness centre, but the gymnasium facilities are poor.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

80 The main strengths of the college are:

- its wide range of courses
- its strong European links
- its effective governance and management
- its effective marketing
- good retention rates on most courses
- effective systems for students' recruitment, guidance and support

-
- some good teaching
 - students' achievements, particularly on vocational courses
 - its extensive staff-development programmes
 - the outstanding quality of its manufacturing technology centre.
- 81 If the college is to succeed in achieving its aims it should address:
- the insufficient delegation of authority from the executive to the middle managers
 - the inadequacies of its management information system
 - students' lack of awareness of the college charter
 - shortcomings in the quality assurance arrangements
 - the poor use of space
 - the lack of social and sports facilities
 - poor science accommodation
 - the need to continue to update the industrial or commercial experience of teachers.

FIGURES

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

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

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

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

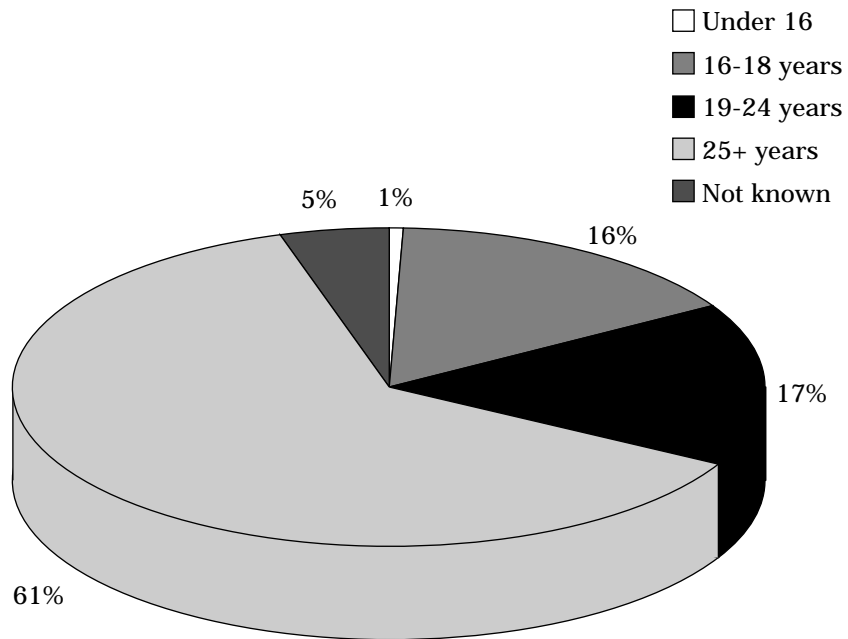
 - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1996)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)

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

Figure 1

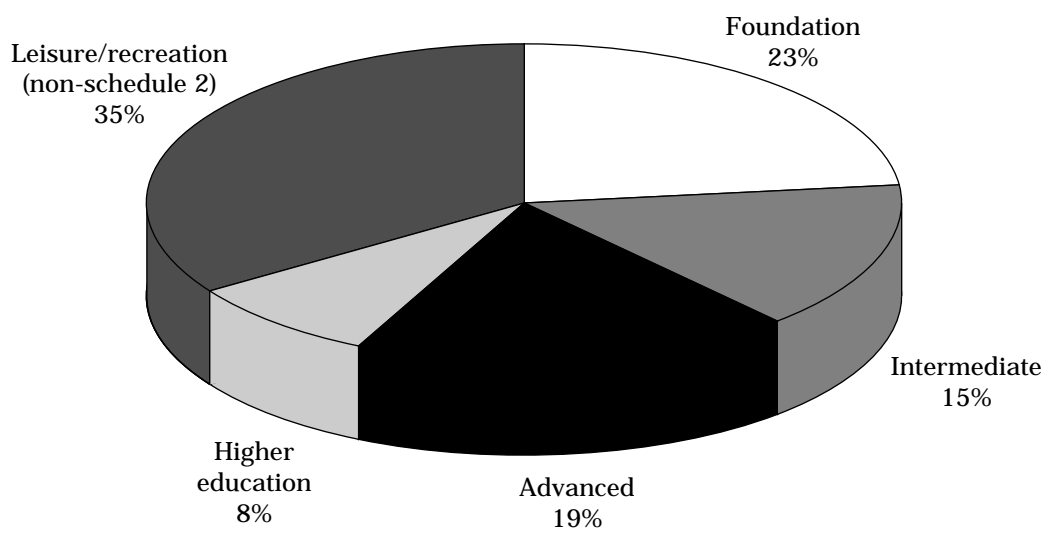
**Worcester College of Technology: percentage student numbers by age
(as at July 1996)**



Student numbers: 15,504

Figure 2

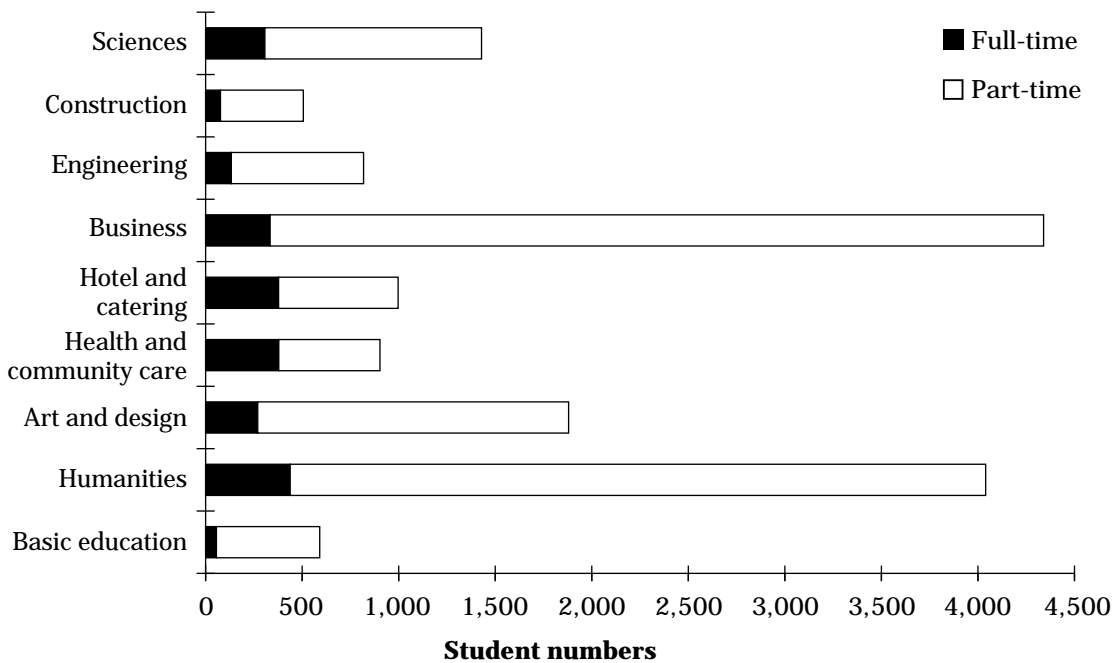
**Worcester College of Technology: percentage student numbers by level of study
(as at July 1996)**



Student numbers: 15,504

Figure 3

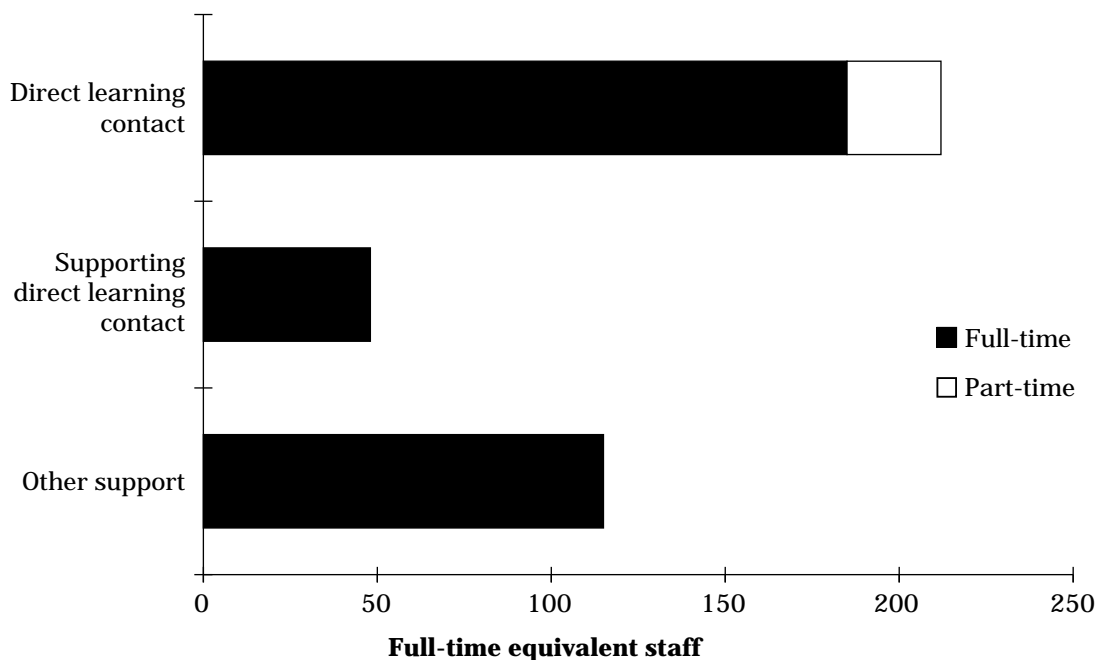
Worcester College of Technology: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at July 1996)



Student numbers: 15,504

Figure 4

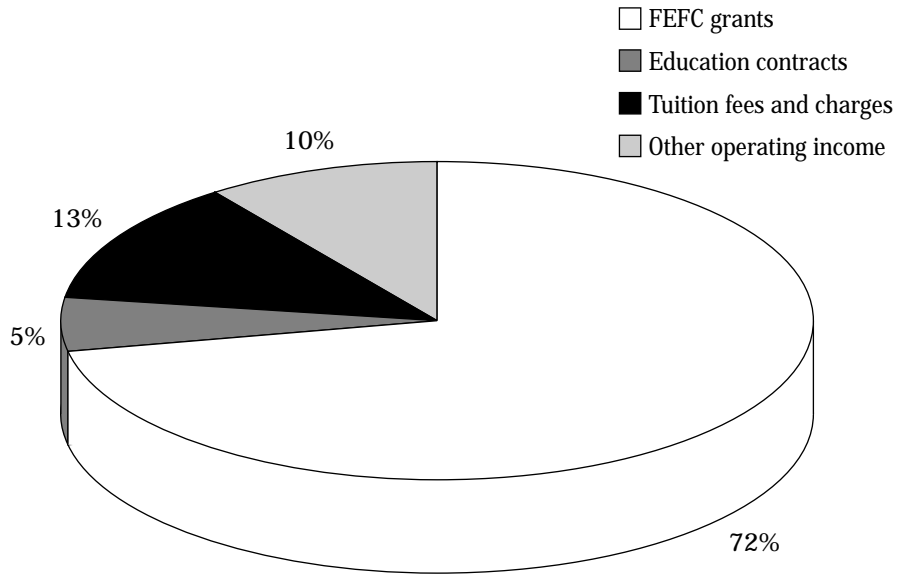
Worcester College of Technology: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at July 1996)



Full-time equivalent staff: 375

Figure 5

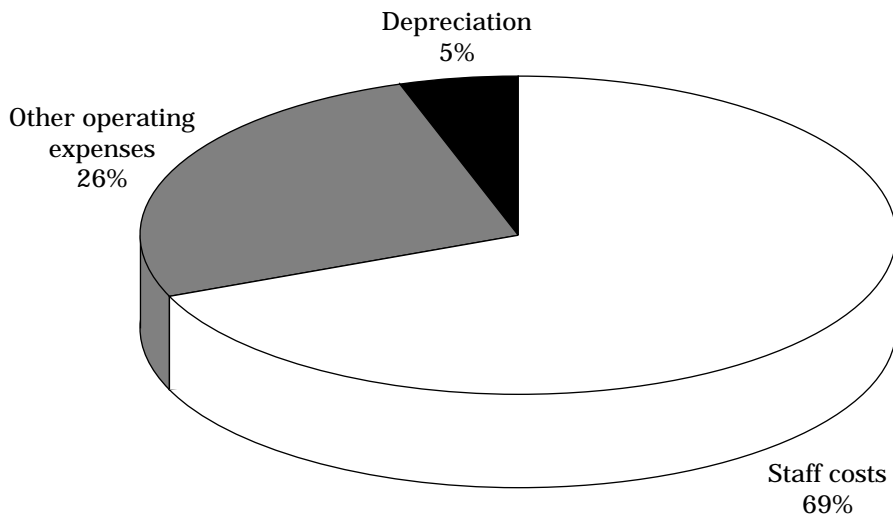
Worcester College of Technology: income (for 12 months to July 1996)



Income: £10,486,000

Figure 6

Worcester College of Technology: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)



Expenditure: £11,552,000

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