

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

The Working Men's College

July 1996

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL**

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.

*Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
Telephone 01203 863000
Fax 01203 863100*

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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 1995, some 208 college inspections had been completed. The grade profiles for aspects of cross-college provision and programme areas for the 208 colleges are shown in the following table.

College grade profiles 1993-95

Activity	Inspection grades				
	1	2	3	4	5
Programme area	9%	60%	28%	3%	<1%
Cross-college provision	13%	51%	31%	5%	<1%
Overall	11%	56%	29%	4%	<1%

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 95/96

THE WORKING MEN'S COLLEGE
GREATER LONDON REGION
Inspected January-March 1996

Summary

The Working Men's College is a designated institution in the further education sector. It is situated in central London and is one of the oldest adult education colleges in England. It provides schedule 2 and non-schedule 2 courses and derives 13 per cent of its income from the FEFC; the average level of funding per unit is amongst the lowest in the sector. The college has co-operative links with other institutions and organisations. There are good relationships between staff and students and there is some good teaching in most subjects. Students are encouraged to participate in college activities. Teachers are highly qualified in their subjects. The college should develop a more effective approach to identifying students' needs and provide better educational guidance and learning support. There are significant weaknesses in some aspects of the governance and management of the college. Strategic planning is weak and the volume of schedule 2 provision is decreasing. There are no adequate arrangements for quality assurance. The tracking, analysis and reporting of students' achievements is inadequate. There are low rates of students' attendance and retention. There are few learning resources and most are of poor quality. Much of the college's accommodation is of poor quality.

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

Aspects of cross-college provision	Grade
Responsiveness and range of provision	3
Governance and management	4
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	3
Quality assurance	5
Resources: staffing	3
equipment/learning resources	4
accommodation	4

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science, mathematics and information technology	3	Languages	3
Visual and performing arts	3	Humanities and basic education	3

INTRODUCTION

1 The Working Men's College was inspected during the period January to March 1996. Seven inspectors spent a total of 29 days at the college. The team visited 57 classes and examined students' work and a wide range of documentation. Meetings were held with the chairs and members of the college corporation and the college council, the wardens, voluntary officers, teachers, support staff and students. In addition, there were meetings with representatives of the Open University, local further education colleges, the Workers' Educational Association and voluntary and local community organisations.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 The Working Men's College was founded in 1854 to provide a liberal education for adults in London. It is one of the oldest institutions in England for the provision of adult education. In 1957, the Frances Martin College, originally the Working Women's College, moved in to The Working Men's College building. Recently, the two charities merged. Of the current students, 60 per cent are women. The college occupies a purpose-built grade II listed building which is owned by the institution's trustees and is situated in Camden Town, in central London. The college became designated, under section 28 of *The Further and Higher Education Act 1992*, to receive financial support from the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) from April 1993. The college provides courses identified under schedule 2 of the Act, but 69 per cent of students are on non-schedule 2 courses which do not lead directly to qualifications.

3 The college's mission is to provide general education and progression routes for both men and women. College programmes aim to develop the creative, analytical and critical potential of adults in a curriculum which includes recreational classes, introductory programmes and examination courses. The college provides courses in mathematics, science, information technology, art and design, humanities, languages, classical studies and basic education. The range of courses includes General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) subjects and some City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) courses. There are, in addition, a large number of courses which are not accredited. The college intends to extend its basic education programme to serve the local community by providing courses in English for speakers of other languages and to develop guidance and support.

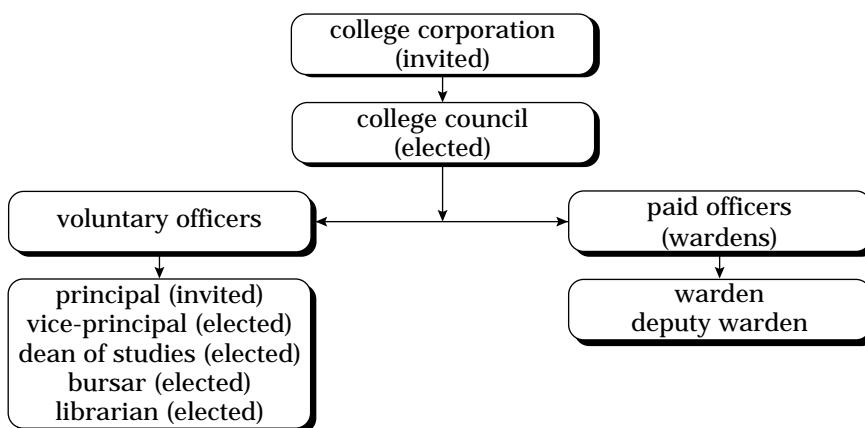
4 In 1994-95, there were 2,244 students at the college. All students are part time and most attend during evenings. The college estimates that 46 per cent of students are unwaged and that 77 per cent are aged 25 and over. Of the students who declared their ethnicity at enrolment during 1994-95, 17 per cent were from minority ethnic communities compared with 20 per cent in the immediate vicinity of the college. Few students are from the local Bangladeshi community. Student numbers by age and by

level of study are shown figures 1 and 2. Part-time student numbers by curriculum area are shown in figure 3.

5 Most students live in north London and the main catchment area of the college covers Camden, Islington, Haringey and Hackney. The college estimates that 30 per cent of students live in the postal code areas of NW1, NW3 and NW5. Other students travel from all over London, especially for the more unusual courses. There are nine other providers of adult education offering similar programmes within a three-mile radius, including the City Literary Institute, the Mary Ward Centre, the Workers' Educational Association, Birkbeck College, City and Islington College and Kingsway College, in addition to some voluntary organisations. The college works co-operatively with these neighbouring institutions and organisations.

6 The college is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. It has a democratic, self-governing, collegiate structure with two tiers of governance, a corporation and a council. There are seven officers; five are voluntary and two, the warden and deputy warden, are paid. The warden is the chief executive of the college. There are six permanent administrative and support staff, and 86 part-time teachers. The structure of governance and management in the college is shown in the diagram below. There are 88 academic staff, of whom 86 are part-time teachers. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

Structure of governance and management at college



7 The college derives most of its income from students' fees, lettings and private trust funds, with FEFC recurrent funding of £78,260 amounting to only 10 per cent of total income in 1994-95. In 1994-95, the college had an average level of funding for schedule 2 provision of £3.39 per unit, compared with the median of £14.64 for all designated institutions, and an average level of funding of £1.33 per unit for non-schedule 2 provision. These average levels of funding per unit are amongst the lowest in the sector. During 1994-95 and 1995-96, the college failed to achieve its target for schedule 2 units and exceeded its target for non-schedule

2 units. The proportion of schedule 2 provision is, therefore, decreasing. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1995 are shown in figures 5 and 6.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

8 The college offers over 100 part-time courses throughout the year. Most courses are run for two hours a week in the evenings, and most are 30 weeks in length. A few courses are provided during the day. Saturday classes, and a recently-introduced summer programme, extend the provision and also increase the range with intensive and specialised short courses. Most courses recruit some students from beyond the Camden area, for example, metal sculpture, mosaics, anatomical drawing, Irish studies, Chinese and Japanese.

9 A coherent range of courses at different levels is offered within most subject areas. For example, in languages there are courses at beginners, intermediate and advanced levels and classes are timetabled so that students can move easily from one level to the next. In some subjects, there are few progression opportunities although one of the college's aims is to facilitate progression. In art, humanities and social sciences only advanced examination courses are offered. College publicity does not make sufficiently clear the distinction between different levels of courses. The range of accreditation offered to students is narrow, particularly in some subjects. Provision for basic education is small. There is no specific provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are some activities organised to enrich students' learning, for example visits to art galleries, science field trips and occasional educational visits to other countries.

10 The college programme overall is reducing in size. A significant number of courses do not recruit the planned number of students and in 1995-96 almost 20 per cent of courses closed because of low enrolments. A further 13 per cent of courses did not meet the minimum target number of students set by the college. The summer programme reduced in size by 40 per cent in 1995 compared with 1994. A particular cause for concern is that the college set targets for growth in schedule 2 provision in 1994-95 and 1995-96 but the number of enrolments has decreased in both years. In 1994-95 the college was 10 per cent below target.

11 The college does not have effective arrangements for identifying students' needs to assist the planning of programmes offered each year. Teachers rely mostly on repeating courses offered in the past and asking existing teachers for ideas about subjects they would like to teach. There is no systematic arrangement for seeking the opinions of existing students on what else they would like to study. Links with community groups are not used to identify needs. The college makes poor use of market research carried out by other agencies to inform planning. Few new courses are introduced each year.

12 The college has no planned publicity strategy but a working party was established this year to review and improve publicity. The annual prospectus is the main means of publicising provision. This year the production of the prospectus was delayed and staff believe that this had a negative impact on recruitment. Some other approaches are used including posters on underground trains and advertisements in local newspapers and on local radio. A college survey has shown that other forms of recruitment, for example word of mouth and entries in the London *Floodlight* magazine, were more successful than the prospectus. Several teachers publicise their own courses, partly because they do not have confidence in the college publicity, but most teachers do not see this as part of their role. Advertising of enrolment days is poor. The college has little targeted publicity designed to attract students from minority ethnic groups although it aims to increase participation from these groups. Little attention is given to publicising college facilities such as the library and the sports hall.

13 The wardens are aware of developments, policies and targets in further education but some teachers are not in touch with these developments. Some staff in the college have beneficial links with local community organisations and national adult learning organisations. The college has developed some useful initiatives with other providers, for example, jointly run courses, thus extending the range of courses offered, and some staff training. The college has no formal links with the local training and enterprise council (TEC). There is some liaison with minority ethnic community groups. For example, an Ethiopian group uses college rooms for meetings and community events and some students from this community have joined college courses. No steps have been taken to develop any courses specifically to meet the interests of minority ethnic communities. The college lets part of its building during the daytime to other providers of adult education which it sees as complementing its own provision, for example, the Workers' Educational Association and the University of the Third Age.

14 The college has an equal opportunities statement which has not been revised since 1987. The arrangements for implementing the statement and reviewing progress are inadequate. Staff and students are generally aware of the college's commitment to equal opportunities and feel that people are treated equally. The college collects data relating to the ethnic backgrounds of students and staff but there is little analysis of the findings. Some teachers have developed a few courses specifically for women and also courses with multicultural dimensions. The college offers a 50 per cent reduction in fees for those on benefit allowances. It considers that it cannot afford to offer 100 per cent fee remission, as some other providers do, because of its current low average level of funding per unit. There has been a decline in the proportion of students who are unemployed or in receipt of various benefits over the last few years.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

15 The college has two tiers of governance. The first is the corporation which has legal responsibility for the control of assets, college buildings and the setting of fees. Members of the corporation perform the functions of a board of directors and also act as trustees. The second tier is the college council which is elected and has a majority of places for teachers and students. The council has responsibility for the college's financial and educational policy and members act as college governors. There is a lack of clarity about the respective functions of the corporation and council which leads to some ineffective governance. There is not a shared understanding amongst corporation and council members of their respective responsibilities. The corporation is distant from many of the activities and aims of the college and allows the council to set policy and objectives. A clear strategy for the college is not provided by either body.

16 The corporation has an establishment of 21 members, two of whom are elected by the college council. There are currently six vacancies. Members of the corporation have a substantial range of expertise and include lawyers, civil servants, business people, and educationalists. The corporation meets four times each year and elects three members of the college council. The council comprises 32 members of whom 12 are teachers, 12 are students, three represent the corporation, four are observers from other bodies and one represents college administrative staff. Three members are from minority ethnic communities and 10 are women. There is a low level of participation by students in elections and only 67 out of 2,244 students voted for six student places in the most recent elections. There are good levels of attendance at council meetings and members are committed to the values and ethos of the college. However, some teachers believe that the council does not represent effectively the interests of the whole college.

17 The council has committees with responsibility for education, finance and general purposes, and social and recreational matters. The committees are not effective in monitoring the implementation of policies determined by the council. The education committee acts as an academic board and is responsible for approving the annual educational programme. However, the committee delayed essential planning of the 1995-96 programme and this had a detrimental effect on college publicity and recruitment. The college subsequently failed to meet its enrolment target. The process of programme review and planning employed by the education committee lacks sufficient rigour. An equal opportunities working group considers relevant issues but has not set targets or agreed a procedure for effective review of progress.

18 There are no agreed criteria by which the chairs of the corporation and council can assess the effectiveness of officers and wardens and the performance of the college. Some significant deficiencies are, therefore, not being addressed. Strategic planning is weak and the chairs are not

sufficiently involved in the formulation of strategy. The plan has no targets other than enrolments and gives no clear direction for programme planning. There is no annual operating statement and no curriculum plan. Monitoring of the educational programme is ineffective. The college annual report is brief and lacks critical analysis of performance against strategic objectives. Officers have strong views on the mission and policy matters, but do not relate agreed action closely enough to the strategic plan. There are inadequate arrangements for monitoring the retention of students and no procedures for collecting and reporting information about the destinations of students.

19 There is some overlap between the roles and responsibilities of officers and the wardens and there is a lack of clarity about responsibility for monitoring policies and action agreed by the council. The college has a tradition of voluntary involvement by part-time tutors and students and depends on this involvement for many aspects of its work. The voluntary officers advise the council and steer its business. They also advise the wardens. Some functions are undertaken by both officers and the wardens. Working relationships between officers and the wardens are generally good, but there are some significant areas of disagreement.

20 There are weaknesses in the management of the college. The warden manages all members of the paid staff. The permanent staff meet only once a term to share information. One-to-one line management meetings happen informally to tackle problems. Job descriptions do not adequately reflect the overall needs of the organisation. There is insufficient supervision of part-time staff. Part-time teachers are invited to attend occasional curriculum seminars but this is voluntary and unpaid and attendance is irregular. Teachers receive written memoranda in their registers but there is no staff newsletter. Discussions about the curriculum occur irregularly and informally. In spite of these limitations, teachers feel able to approach the wardens for help with particular problems. They support the ethos and aims of the college.

21 There is an effective system of budget management and monitoring which is supported by internal audit planning. The budget is managed by the warden and accounts are prepared by the financial controller. Monitoring has been undertaken by the vice-principal, who chairs the finance and general purposes committee, and the treasurer of the corporation, a qualified accountant, who chairs the audit committee. There are regular reports with financial statements at most meetings of the corporation and the council. The council approves the annual college budget. Unit costs for courses have been calculated and are used to inform decisions about courses. There is awareness of the need for efficiency but little scope for improvement given the low level of recurrent funding. Budget allocations are held centrally by the wardens, and teachers bid for funds according to need. However, these needs are not identified in the form of curriculum objectives or targets, nor linked directly to the strategic

plan. Some council members regard this central control of expenditure as being in conflict with the self-governing aims of the college.

22 The newly-introduced management information system has improved the ability of the college to provide data on courses, students and staff. This information is now proving valuable in marketing new courses. The system is, however, in its infancy. Access is restricted to permanent staff. The full potential of the system has not been developed to inform curriculum planning. Reports take a long time to emerge from the system. There is little readily available information to inform strategic planning or to assist with monitoring students' attendance and retention.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

23 The college prospectus provides useful information on college courses, enrolment procedures and course fees but information is not available in ethnic community languages. Staff respond helpfully to course enquiries and refer enquirers to other providers where appropriate. Where courses are not fully subscribed, students are encouraged to visit classes before enrolling. Feedback from student questionnaires indicates that a significant minority of students would like to have received advice before, or during, enrolment.

24 The college has developed flexible enrolment procedures. Students are able to enrol by post, in person or by telephone from mid July, and enrolment and advice days are held in September. Students attending the enrolment and advice days are welcomed by volunteers. However, not all tutors attend the enrolment and advice days. While some have been trained to provide advice on all courses within their subject area, they do not always feel confident in doing so. Course outlines, which are available at enrolment, are of variable quality; most are handwritten and some are difficult to read. There are early opportunities to transfer between courses and this is commonplace in language courses where students often start in beginners' classes.

25 Induction to courses is not systematic and induction to college facilities is sometimes weak. Enrolment forms do not enable students to identify their learning support needs and/or disabilities and there is no central record to enable the college to co-ordinate support. Teachers do not have access to specialist advice within the college and are not always aware of students' support needs. Where students make their needs known to college staff efforts are made to secure appropriate arrangements, often through collaboration with other providers. For example, an induction loop was borrowed for a student with hearing impairment and dyslexic students are referred to neighbouring colleges.

26 Although the need is currently small, there are no arrangements to assess students' prior learning. All basic education students are interviewed on entry, but there are no assessment procedures to identify other students who need to develop language and number skills. There

are no procedures for reviewing individual students' progress or recording achievement, but there is a high level of commitment by teachers who devote considerable time and effort to providing feedback on individual progress and discussing areas of difficulty with students. Some students receive helpful advice when applying for entry to higher education but others are often left without appropriate guidance and support. There is no agreed procedure for monitoring attendance and it is left to the discretion of individual teachers to follow up student absence or to request that action is undertaken by the wardens.

27 The college has no tutorial policy or formal guidelines on tutoring and the level of tutorial support provided by teachers is inconsistent. Students do not have access to personal counselling. Some teachers provide good personal support and problems are sometimes referred to the wardens who, in turn, consult or refer to outside agencies. The college intends to provide financial advice in the future through the learning support centre. There is no creche provision but a small number of students receive a contribution to childcare costs.

28 The college has obtained funding from the Baring Foundation to introduce a learning support and educational advice centre staffed by a full-time support worker and a part-time administrative assistant. Links are being developed with agencies including Camden Careers Service, local guidance networks and other providers to enable more effective referral of students. The centre will open for about 12 hours a week on a drop-in basis and some individual appointments will also be arranged. A modest library of careers education and guidance materials has been developed together with subject specific learning resources to support the development of study skills. Some tutors run Saturday classes to prepare students for examinations and further Saturday workshops on essay writing skills and examination techniques are planned through the learning support centre. The relationship between the learning support centre and basic education provision is not yet clearly defined. At the time of the inspection, the overall college provision of educational guidance and learning support was not adequate.

29 Students are encouraged to participate in the activities of the college and to make their views felt. Evaluation questionnaires are distributed in November each year and students are able to take complaints directly to the warden. Many students have a loyalty to the college and speak highly of the support provided by teachers. They feel that full-time staff are approachable and responsive to their needs and some value the ethos of the college and its voluntary tradition. Students are represented on the council and all of the college committees but few are prepared to devote sufficient time to these activities. A student handbook is being prepared, but at present there is no direct medium for making most students aware of their rights and responsibilities.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

30 Of the 57 sessions inspected, 53 per cent had strengths which outweighed the weaknesses. Five per cent of sessions had weaknesses which outweighed the strengths. The distribution of inspection grades is shown in the following table.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE A level and GCSE		2	14	8	1	0	25
Other		2	12	16	2	0	32
Total		4	26	24	3	0	57

**other includes non-schedule 2, C&G and NVQ courses.*

31 The college has co-ordinators for art and sculpture courses. In other areas, teachers are responsible for the co-ordination of their own courses. There is no overall curriculum plan to guide teachers in the design of their courses. This year teachers have been asked to describe course content in units and to keep a record of their course outlines and objectives. Some courses are well planned and have clear schemes of work but others have plans and course outlines which are inadequate. Some course objectives are vague and describe areas of knowledge rather than specific learning outcomes.

32 There is some good teaching in most subjects. The best teaching is characterised by good relationships between teachers and students, effective responses by teachers to students and confident instruction based on sound knowledge of the subject. Some teachers have significant achievements in their own fields and bring stimulating experience to their teaching. However, in many lessons teaching methods lack variety and teachers place an over-reliance on printed materials. Little use is made of audio and visual equipment. There are insufficient checks made by most teachers on the progress being made by students. There are few opportunities, except in science classes, for students to work together in small groups. Many classes are small, with an average of seven students in the classes inspected.

33 Teachers in mathematics, science and information technology provide clear explanations of difficult concepts and principles. They make effective use of questions to extend discussions and to support students' learning. A high proportion of time is spent in giving individual students help with their problems. Students' written work is of a good standard. Some students are set insufficiently demanding tasks and the work set for students of different abilities is often inappropriate. Printed learning materials and transparencies for overhead projectors are often of poor quality. Teachers use textbooks in some classes but some printed sheets in use originate from schools and are not appropriate for adult students.

34 In visual and performing arts, teachers are enthusiastic and committed. They have varied specialist expertise and are practising artists, designers, craftspeople and performers. Some students produce work of a high standard in both examination and recreational classes. In life painting sessions, students are encouraged to experiment with colour, form and shape on large canvasses and in sculpture classes students are encouraged to work with clay, plaster, cement, fondue, metal and marble. Some teaching is successful in encouraging students to reach their potential but in other lessons the teaching is too slow and undemanding. Teachers do not make effective checks of the standards of students' work across courses or provide sufficiently detailed project briefs for students. In some classes, teachers are too willing to allow students to determine the pace of work and progress of a lesson.

35 Foreign language teachers use the medium of the languages being studied to communicate with students. They set demanding tasks for the students and pursue contemporary topics to sustain their interest. Most teaching takes into account the differing abilities of students. There is an emphasis on oral communication and most students respond positively to the challenge of thinking and speaking in another language. Teaching materials are of variable quality. In some cases poor classroom management inhibits effective learning. For example, seating arrangements do not encourage effective group work and some students are allowed to disengage from the planned activity. A more formal approach used by teachers in some classes was not effective with less confident students.

36 In humanities and basic education, some teachers use well-presented assignments and encourage students to develop confidence and knowledge. Most teaching is competent but in some lessons few demands are made of students and there is no variation of activity. In the best classes, teachers succeed in bringing their subjects alive. For example, in one class the teacher made effective use of enthusiasm, humour and sensitivity to teach spelling to a diverse, multi-ethnic group of students. The folders of work of many students are untidy and incomplete. There are no effective arrangements for designing and providing individual programmes of learning on courses, for example in basic education, where this would benefit students.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

37 Most students enjoy their studies and speak positively about their courses. They develop knowledge and skills at appropriate levels. The majority of students are on courses which do not lead directly to qualifications. Many students on these courses produce work of high quality. However, there is no guidance to teachers about the internal assessment of students' work. As yet, there has been no development of a value-added analysis of students' progress at the college. Work on the identification of learning outcomes is in the earliest stage of development.

In some areas, for example basic education, accreditation could be introduced to recognise students' achievements and enhance their progression opportunities. The college is unable to report satisfactorily on students' achievements on non-schedule 2 courses. On schedule 2 courses, there is no analysis of students' achievements in relation to internal targets or national comparisons. No records are kept of students' progression from their courses. Most teachers, on all courses, do not have adequate records of students' progress.

38 A small number of students, 294 in 1994-95, are entered for subject examinations. Students' performances in these examinations during the last three years have been variable. Pass rates of students improved generally in humanities and languages in 1994-95 but in mathematics and science subjects the improvement was not general. The performance tables produced by the Department for Education and Employment for students aged over 19 years in 1994-95, show that students at the college achieved pass rates above the national average in some GCE A level subjects, for example English literature, history, French and Italian. Students' achievements in other GCE A level subjects including economics, law, sociology, biology and mathematics were below the national average pass rates. Achievement in GCSE mathematics was, however, above the national average pass rate as was achievement in GCSE European languages. Students in some other GCSE subjects were less successful.

39 There are 17 subjects provided at GCE A level and eight at GCSE. A significant number of students are recruited to courses which are at an inappropriate level for their experience and ability. Some students study GCE A level subjects because the subject is not provided at GCSE level or because they prefer to do so. The achievement of these students is understandably low and reduces the college pass rates in these subjects. The retention of students is poor on many courses across all programme areas. Information on retention rates is monitored by the college council at the level of individual classes so that decisions may be made about class closures, but there is no collation of data at college level which could be used for planning purposes. Information made available by the college showed that in 1994-95 the retention of students was below 60 per cent in some humanities and languages courses, below 55 per cent in some information technology courses and under 50 per cent in some art courses. Students' attendance is also poor. The average across all the classes inspected was 62 per cent; in languages, attendance was 51 per cent and in mathematics, science and information technology it was 50 per cent.

40 Students are encouraged to develop their practical skills in some subjects. In science, the level of skill is adequate. However, some students could be set more demanding tasks. For example, they could attempt more experiments on their own rather than working in groups. Students are confident in handling materials in GCE A level classes and some skills are developed to a higher level than is often found in students attending classes only in evenings. The development of skills in information

technology is inhibited by restricted access to machines. Students could achieve more if they had access to machines in their own time together with structured learning guides. There is good development of practical skills in sculpture, photography, clay construction, casting and carving, and also in some performing arts including ballroom dancing, singing and harmonica and flute playing.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

41 There are no documented or clearly-understood arrangements for quality assurance. There is no quality policy and quality assurance is not mentioned in the mission statement or the strategic plan. There are no procedures, and no criteria, for reviewing and evaluating the success of courses. The college is introducing a requirement for teachers to provide a written description of their courses together with a tick-box record of their students' achievements. There is no evaluation by tutors of the effectiveness of their courses in meeting agreed objectives. There is insufficient course documentation. Issues relating to quality assurance are not well understood by teachers and there is a low awareness amongst voluntary officers and council members of the need to introduce more systematic and rigorous procedures.

42 College committees are not effective in monitoring and improving quality. Neither the corporation nor the council have agreed criteria for judging the performance of the college. Quality assurance issues are discussed at the education committee. However, this has little impact on the quality of provision. For example, some recommendations take too long to be implemented and the committee does not have a system for checking implementation. It discusses examination results but does not comment on trends or consider comparisons with national average pass rates. New course approvals and the removal of courses from the programme are not reviewed sufficiently rigorously. Reports from examining bodies are not considered by the committee. The college council does not provide a clear direction to the wardens on action leading to quality improvement. There is little evidence of the council and corporation reviewing and evaluating their own performance.

43 There is a lack of clear accountability for the management of quality assurance. The warden and one officer have responsibility for developing educational standards and monitoring and evaluating courses. However, there is a lack of guidance from the council on appropriate standards and there are no agreed methods for achieving these tasks. Management of quality assurance at course level is undertaken by individual teachers without guidance from the council on acceptable standards. For example, the low percentage of students, only 43 per cent in 1994-95, enrolled on GCE A level and GCSE courses who are entering for examinations is not being addressed. No reports on aspects of quality assurance are produced at course level.

44 The college has a charter which itemises commitments to students, staff, tenants and other organisations. It has been revised since its introduction and includes information about the complaints procedure but it does not identify measurable levels of service performance. It is not distributed to students and is available only on request from the reception office. There is a low awareness of the charter amongst students and staff at the college. There are annual student satisfaction surveys and the results are reported to the education committee. There was only a 26 per cent response in 1994-95 but, of those students who responded, most indicated a high degree of satisfaction with the college. The scope of the questionnaire is limited and does not, for example, ask whether students would recommend the college to a friend.

45 Few targets are set for key aspects of the work of the college and there is no clear understanding amongst teachers of the levels of performance and achievement which are required. There is no tradition in the college of setting standards and a low awareness amongst teachers of the need to develop performance indicators. There are no targets for students' retention or achievements. There is also inadequate reporting of aspects of performance in the college. The college annual report includes a summary of examination results but does not make comparisons with pass rates in previous years or with national average pass rates. There are no reports on other aspects of college performance including students' retention, progression and achievement. There are no targets set, other than enrolments, for performance in the college.

46 The college has produced a self-assessment report. It follows the headings in the inspection framework set out in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*, and was discussed and edited by the education committee and college council. It is a useful summary of college activities but lacks analytical judgements about the performance of the college. Some significant weaknesses in the areas of resources, governance and management and quality assurance were not identified in the self-assessment report. The wardens, however, have a clear understanding of many of the strengths and weaknesses of the college and have produced an analysis which is more closely matched to the conclusions of the inspection team.

47 The college has a programme of activities for staff development, but there is no plan with agreed priorities linked to strategic objectives. The total budget for staff development in the college in 1995-96 is 0.75 per cent of expenditure. There is a teachers' handbook with an introduction to the college and an outline of administrative procedures, but newly-appointed teachers do not receive an adequate induction. Records of staff development give a profile of activities during the last five years. Some recent activities include six tutors working towards the C&G 7307 teaching certificate, seminars on increasing students' participation, and work on the identification and recording of learning outcomes for non-schedule

2 courses. However, the dissemination of information from external events is informal. There is no evaluation of the staff-development programme.

48 Some initial steps towards peer appraisal of teachers were undertaken five years ago, but this has not become an established practice and no scheme of appraisal for teachers is in place. The warden has not been appraised and there is no agreement of personal targets with the council or corporation. Targets have not been agreed for the performance of academic staff. The wardens and officers observe a small sample of lessons each year and feed back their comments to teachers and record their observations. Permanent staff have an annual review meeting with the warden which results in agreed tasks with target dates and staff development plans.

RESOURCES

Staffing

49 Teaching staff are well qualified in their subjects. Some bring to their teaching significant achievements in their own fields which enrich their work and their students' experience. However, a significant number of tutors do not have teaching qualifications. Of the 86 teachers, 71 have relevant specialist degrees but only 22 have a teaching qualification.

50 There are inevitable pressures on a small permanent staff team. However, the limited delegation of responsibility for operational matters sometimes hinders the effective use of limited staff resources.

51 Support staff make an important contribution to the work of the college. Good audio and visual technician support is provided. This support includes the production of computer graphics material in addition to the maintenance of the small stock of equipment. In science laboratories, technicians work only on those evenings when classes are held. This leads to a lack of effective management of laboratories and support for students. The building services support is effective within the limited resources available.

Equipment/learning resources

52 There is a small supply of basic audio and visual equipment. All teaching rooms have a black or white board but in some there is only a small mobile board. A small number of overhead projectors, video recorders, projectors and other items of equipment are held in a central store. A few items have recently been acquired and are in good condition. Others are old and out of date. Some audio-visual equipment is of poor quality. For example, some audio tapes used in modern languages teaching are barely audible. Arrangements for equipment inventories are unsatisfactory.

53 The standard of specialist equipment varies but is generally poor. General art and design areas are poorly equipped and much of the

equipment is old and shabby. Printmaking and photography are adequately equipped but can only cater for small numbers of students. Art history students have access to adequate audio-visual resources. The teaching computer network has recently been upgraded and, although the machines are old, they are adequate for the courses taught. In May 1995, a new computer network was installed to run the management information system. After some early difficulties this is beginning to work well.

54 In the science laboratories there are large stocks of old chemicals, poorly labelled and in a potentially dangerous condition. This hazard, identified in the specialist inspection of science, had not been removed at the time of the cross-college inspection two months later, although estimates for the necessary work had been received. Much science equipment is old and some unusable. Electrical equipment tested and marked as not working is still on display. Much equipment is dirty. When computer courses were inspected screens were covered in dust and ink finger prints were visible on many of the computer casings. This pattern of neglect is evident across much of the college. While minor repairs are undertaken by support staff, there is no system for logging breakages and recording that action has been taken.

55 The library is an imposing and spacious room housing many historic texts. It is known as a significant resource by researchers who visit regularly. However, it has very few books relevant to the programmes offered by the college. Although it is a good place for quiet study it is little used by college students.

Accommodation

56 The college was purpose built between 1902 and 1905 and the freehold is owned by The Working Men's College corporation. There are 31 teaching rooms, 10 of which are specialist rooms. These comprise two science laboratories, a gymnasium, a photographic room, two art studios, two sculpture studios, a print room and a large hall. In 1991 a major structural survey was carried out, at the request of the college corporation, following a period when little attention had been given to the condition of the building. This recommended a seven-year programme of repairs and maintenance which was costed at £848,000 and work costing £590,000 has been completed. The accommodation strategy lists further work planned up to 1998-99. The college received from the FEFC a total amount of £30,106 following the initial FEFC commissioned survey of buildings in the further education sector. The college was excluded from the FEFC standard allocation for capital minor works in 1994-95.

57 Despite the recent investment, the building looks neglected. The condition of many teaching rooms is barely adequate. Some furniture has been replaced but much is old and in poor condition. The internal design is complicated with the five main floors occupying fifteen different landing

levels. However, there are good-sized communal areas and a large front entrance hall which have great potential. In particular, they would benefit from imaginative use of visual displays. The lack of display, poor signing in the entrance and general drabness of the building significantly reduce the overall quality of the learning environment.

58 The standard of cleaning is unsatisfactory and some rooms are in an unacceptable condition. The two science laboratories and the sculpture studio are particularly dirty. Some teachers do not take care of teaching rooms and fail to maintain satisfactory levels of cleanliness and organisation. In the worst examples, this detracts from the learning environment and creates an impression that low standards are acceptable. Some specialist rooms are small and limit the size of teaching groups. Other groups are taught in rooms which are too large. Lighting is poor in some art rooms. The cafeteria, which is contracted out, provides a good service. The common room is a well-used meeting place although the furniture is in poor condition and the tables are often dirty.

59 The financial need for the college to let rooms during the daytime is a major constraint on room use. Currently there are three main tenants. The University of the Third Age and the Workers' Educational Association each occupy five teaching rooms and office space, and the International Community School uses seven teaching rooms and office space. The Workers' Educational Association will be leaving in July 1996 and plans are currently under consideration for collaboration with another local adult education provider. In addition to these tenancies, Relate uses self-contained accommodation formerly occupied by the warden. The college does not produce adequate utilisation data to assist with planning and to ensure that maximum use is made of accommodation. Some specialist rooms are underused.

60 Access for people with restricted mobility has been improved in recent years. A wheelchair lift has recently been installed and there is now wheelchair access to 75 per cent of teaching rooms. Wheelchair access is by a side entrance, with a small sign at the front entrance giving directions.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

61 The strengths of the college include:

- the co-operative links with other institutions and organisations
- the good relationships between staff and students
- the good teaching in most subjects
- the encouragement given to students to participate in college activities
- the high level of subject qualifications of teachers.

62 In order to improve the quality of its provision the college should address the following:

- the lack of an effective approach to identifying students' needs and planning programmes
- the lack of adequate educational guidance and learning support
- the reasons for the reduction in the size of the college overall programme
- the lack of effective strategic planning
- the lack of shared understanding amongst members of the corporation and the council of their respective responsibilities and functions
- the lack of criteria by which the chairs of the corporation and council can assess the effectiveness of officers and the wardens and the performance of the college
- the inadequate arrangements for quality assurance
- the inadequate tracking, analysing and reporting of students' achievements
- the low attendance and retention rates of students
- the amount, and poor quality, of learning resources
- the old and unusable science equipment and chemicals
- the poor quality of much of the college's accommodation.

FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage student numbers by age (as at July 1995)

 - 2 Percentage student numbers by level of study (as at July 1995)

 - 3 Part-time student numbers by curriculum area (as at July 1995)

 - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at July 1995)

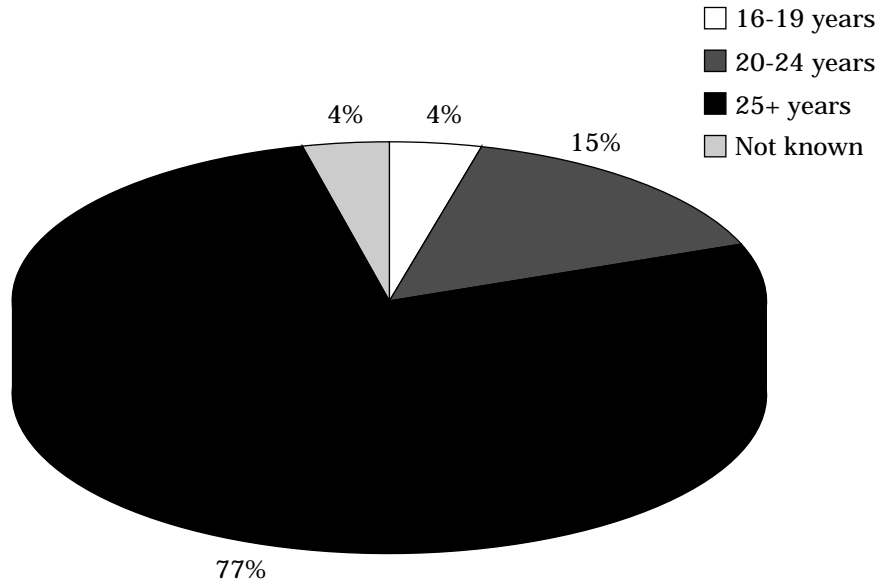
 - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1995)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)

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

Figure 1

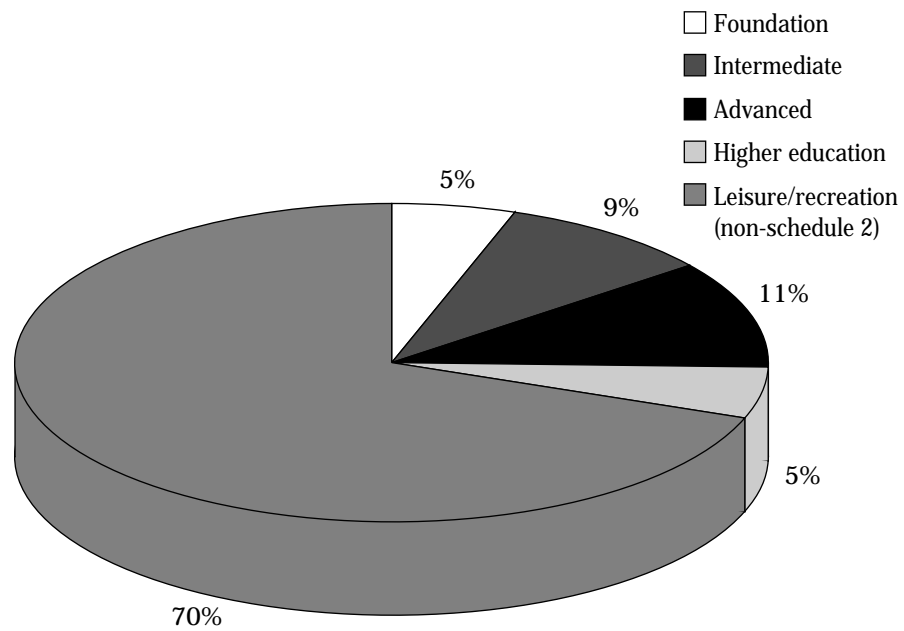
The Working Men's College: percentage student numbers by age (as at July 1995)



Student numbers: 2,244

Figure 2

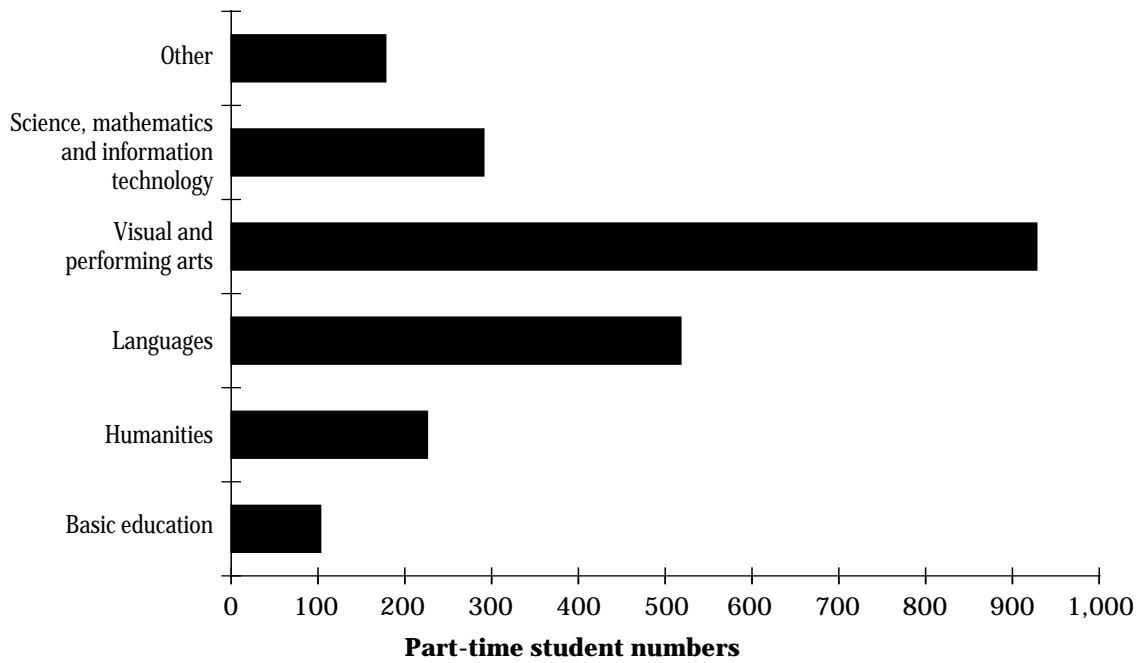
The Working Men's College: percentage student numbers by level of study (as at July 1995)



Student numbers: 2,244

Figure 3

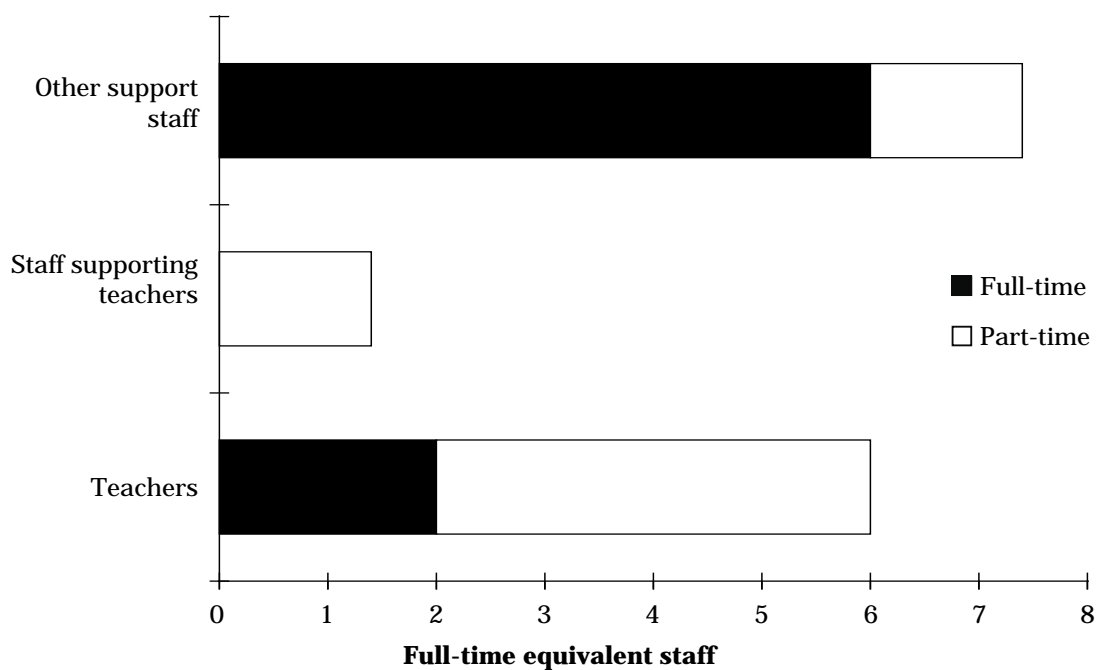
The Working Men's College: part-time student numbers by curriculum area (as at July 1995)



Student numbers: 2,244

Figure 4

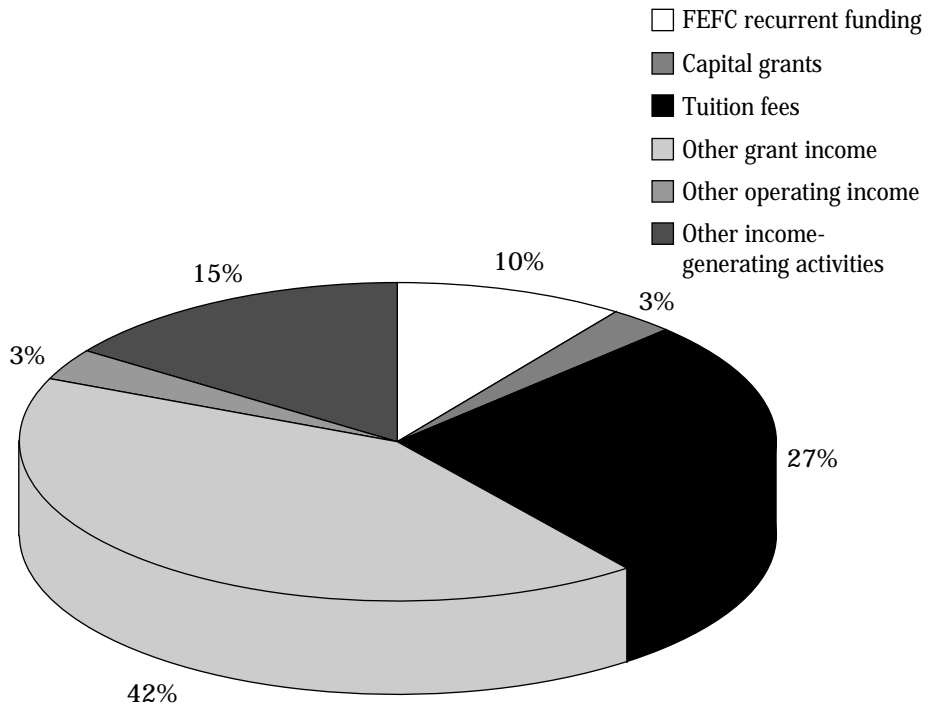
The Working Men's College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at July 1995)



Full-time equivalent staff: 15

Figure 5

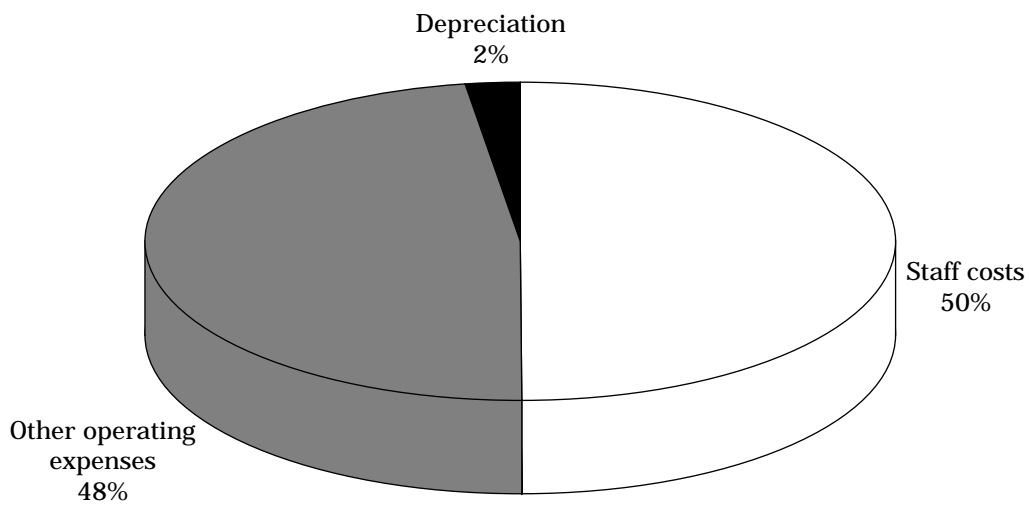
The Working Men's College: income (for 12 months to July 1995)



Income: £769,270

Figure 6

The Working Men's College: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)



Expenditure: £817,709

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