

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

York College of Further and Higher Education

August 1997

**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 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 120/97

YORK COLLEGE OF FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE REGION

Inspected April 1996-June 1997

Summary

York College of Further and Higher Education offers an increasingly wide range of courses. The college has developed collaborative links with other institutions. Its long-term planning is successful. The college is managed effectively and communication between managers and staff is good. The range and quality of support services for students, including provision of additional learning support, are good. The teaching on many vocational courses is effective and well planned. Students benefit from good-quality learning resources, including those for information technology. The college's main campus is pleasant. Most accommodation is of a high standard. The college should: extend the provision which is organised flexibly in order that it may respond to students' particular needs; use performance criteria more effectively in decision making; improve the standard of teaching on some courses; address the unsatisfactory examination results of many of its students aged 16 to 18; and improve its procedures for quality assurance.

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

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Mathematics, science and computing	2	Health, social care and hairdressing	2
Construction	2	Art and design	2
Engineering	3	Humanities	2
Business, administration and management	2	Basic education	3
Hospitality, leisure and sport	2		

INTRODUCTION

1 York College of Further and Higher Education was inspected between April 1996 and June 1997. Inspection of art and design courses was carried out in April and May 1996. The college's enrolment and induction procedures were inspected in September 1996. Other programme areas, and aspects of cross-college provision were inspected in March 1997 and in June 1997 respectively. A team of 23 inspectors spent 89 days in the college and at various sites. They visited 252 classes, inspected students' work and examined college documentation including the mission statement, strategic plan and self-assessment report. Inspectors met members of the college corporation, managers, staff, students, parents and employers. They also held meetings with representatives from the North Yorkshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), the City of York local authority, the University of York and heads of secondary schools.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 The origins of the college lie in the establishment of a Mechanics' Institute in York in 1827. The present college was established in 1975 and is located two miles from the city centre in buildings, the oldest of which date from 1954. It is the principal provider of vocational education for the City of York and its environs, but also recruits students regionally, particularly for more advanced part-time courses. The college has had, until recent changes in funding regulations, a history of working in partnership with secondary schools at considerable distances from York to provide locally accessible further education in the remoter parts of Yorkshire.

3 At the time of the inspection, 10,235 students were enrolled at the college. Of these, 7,387 students were aged 19 and over and 2,366 were full time. Student numbers by age, by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3. Approximately 10 per cent of the full-time equivalent students are following higher education courses. The college employs 211 full-time equivalent teaching staff and 240 full-time equivalent support staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4. The college serves a population of 200,000 in its immediate vicinity, of whom 174,000 live within the boundaries of the City of York Council, a unitary authority created in 1996. About 1 per cent of the population, and 1.4 per cent of the students, come from minority ethnic groups.

4 The economic performance of York has been slowing since 1993. Employment opportunities in traditional industries such as railways, confectionery, health and defence have declined, and the tourism industry has expanded more slowly than was expected. Unemployment has ranged from 5.4 to 6.7 per cent during the last 12 months. The continuing presence of multinational companies in York has boosted the local economy, however. The main science laboratories of the Ministry of Agriculture,

Food and Fisheries are based in York and they form the centre of the growing bioscience industry in the area.

5 The college's range of courses complements that of other local further education providers. The nearby York Sixth Form College mainly provides full-time general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) provision and Askham Bryan College of Agriculture and Horticulture, two miles away, offers mainly land-based courses. In 1985, the city's secondary schools were reorganised as eight comprehensive 11 to 16 schools. Following the establishment of a new local authority, there are now four 11 to 18 schools in the area. Local establishments within the higher education sector are the University of York, and the College of Ripon and York St John which is an associate college of the University of Leeds.

6 In 1994 and 1995 the college carried out reorganisations of its management structure. The objective of these reorganisations was to create a small strategic management team for the college, comprising the principal and three associate principals responsible for curriculum, finance and administration, and support services, respectively. The management of the curriculum is the responsibility of two curriculum directors and 17 curriculum managers. Other middle managers have responsibility between them for learning support, marketing, international work, liaison with employers, academic standards, finance, and management information. The college corporate management team, comprising the principal, associate principals, the two curriculum directors and the personnel manager, is responsible for implementing and monitoring policy.

7 In its present mission statement, the college states that it 'has a commitment to providing high-quality education and training opportunities in an environment which enables all students to develop their full potential. The college strives through partnerships to make a major contribution to the well being and prosperity of the industry, commerce, community groups and individuals that it serves'.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

8 The college provides an increasingly wide range of courses from foundation level to degree course level. It offers more than 500 courses in nine of the 10 Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) programme areas. Recently courses in public services, sports studies, and media and performing arts have been introduced. The numbers of students on foundation, intermediate and advanced level courses are evenly distributed. Courses leading to national vocational qualifications (NVQs), mainly at levels 2 and 3, are provided in hairdressing, construction, leisure and tourism, information technology, engineering, business and management, hospitality and science. Courses leading to general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) are offered in business, health and social care, information technology and leisure and tourism at foundation,

intermediate and advanced levels, and in art and design, science and engineering at intermediate and advanced levels. Other provision includes part-time courses in 23 general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) subjects and 29 GCE A level subjects. The college offers some comparatively unusual courses; these include courses in millinery and in tour guiding, and a course leading to a certificate in baby massage. This year, the college has increased its provision with new courses which lead to 59 additional qualifications. There are, however, gaps in provision. In a few programme areas, courses are not provided at all levels. For example, there are no GNVQ courses in construction and no courses leading to NVQs in health and social care.

9 One of the college's five strategic objectives for 1996-97 is to 'provide flexible and responsive study patterns and modes of learning'; the college has been partially successful in achieving this objective. The college's learning resource centre provides such modes of learning, in mathematics, communications, and information technology. Opportunities for open learning are available in some subjects for students who are unable to attend classes regularly. Through open learning, students can work on their own, at times of their choosing, using materials suited to their individual needs. In 1996-97, 65 students were enrolled to study specifically through open learning. The college offers little provision outside term time. On Saturdays, it provides a few courses in the learning resource centre and also at 'outreach' centres where some courses are also run during the summer holidays. A range of additional studies is provided for full-time students. These studies include GCE A level subjects, GCSE subjects, foreign languages and tuition leading to NVQs; they were taken by more than 2,600 students in 1995-96.

10 The college has made some progress towards establishing a modular curriculum; six higher national certificate courses and the GNVQ health and social care course have been modularised. It has made slower progress, however, in creating a 'credit accumulation and transfer framework' whereby students, who do not complete courses or transfer to others, are able to have their achievements recognised by gaining partial accreditation. New accreditation processes, for example, those carried out through the West and North Yorkshire Accreditation Network, have been introduced for some courses and these have assisted developments towards a modularised curriculum. Few courses are organised in such a way that students can join them at various times during the year; in addition, few courses are timetabled to suit the needs of students such as single parents or those who have to travel some distance to the college.

11 The college has 'off-site', franchised, collaborative provision for sports, leisure and tourism. Franchise agreements with sports national governing bodies date from 1994, and the college has established partnerships with the National Coaching Foundation, the English Basketball Association and the English Table Tennis Association. In 1995, it also established a partnership with the Yorkshire Tourist Board. In

1995-96 the college developed a significant amount of this franchised provision on a regional basis and derived 8 per cent of total income from it. After the publication of Council Circular 96/06, *Franchising*, the college reviewed its arrangements for franchised provision of GNVQ courses in schools and it has reduced the scale of its franchised provision. Other franchised provision is based in 'outreach' centres in York and comprises a range of vocational adult education courses in partnership with the City of York education department. All of the franchised provision is organised flexibly to meet the requirements of students and to increase participation.

12 The college has successfully developed a collaborative approach to many of its activities and is quick to respond to initiatives from other agencies. For example, it works with the North Yorkshire TEC, the North Yorkshire Careers and Guidance Service and the local authority in providing 'Future Prospects', an advice and guidance 'shop' in the city centre. In addition to providing advice, 'Future Prospects' runs some training courses and manages community provision through seven field workers at various locations around York including schools, community centres and youth clubs. The college's 'outreach' provision is currently restricted to the City of York. The college plans to offer provision for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, in conjunction with other agencies. Staff work productively with the City of York education department in organising family literacy projects. Several projects undertaken in collaboration with the City of York Economic Development Unit aim to widen participation, and these include provision for disaffected 16 to 25 year olds. Enrolments of adults on part-time courses have increased during the last three years but the college has few initiatives which specifically aim to encourage participation by adults. There are 176 students on an access to higher education programme which is modular. The number of adults who are full-time students at the college is, however, decreasing. The proportion of students who are over 18 is comparatively low for the sector.

13 The college has a positive relationship with many schools, especially the 11 to 16 schools. Students are recruited from more than 30 schools in York and in an area of up to 20 miles away. A schools liaison manager co-ordinates the provision of advice and guidance to prospective students. College staff have established successful collaboration with some schools. For example, a GNVQ advanced course in business is provided at one school, taught jointly by staff from the college and the school. The college has provided short vocational courses for underachievers at another school. The college has a reciprocal arrangement with a school for the deaf; students from the school attend courses at the college and the school provides the learning materials they use. The college is responsive to the needs of some individual school pupils. For example, it makes arrangements for pupils to attend its GCE A level courses. The college has productive links with the North Yorkshire Careers and Guidance Service and the City of York education department. The principal is a member of

the 'York 14 to 19 strategic forum', and he serves on this with representatives from schools, the sixth form college, the TEC and the University of York. The college is an associate of the University of York. Staff from the university and the college undertake some joint planning activities. The college has links with five other higher education institutions. It provides 30 higher education courses including four degree courses.

14 The college has some strong links with employers. It has, for example partnership agreements with the fire service, to train its employees to gain NVQs and assessor and verifier awards. The college also provides training in information technology for university staff and it carries out the assessment of the prior learning of former rail industry workers who have been made redundant. In conjunction with a major printing company the college has developed a sponsorship scheme for students on GNVQ courses which involves them in finding solutions to business-related problems. Ten advisory groups have been established as part of a strategy for liaison with employers. In some programme areas, for example hairdressing and construction, these advisory groups assist in the planning of provision and courses are adapted to employers' needs. In some other areas, the advisory groups are less effective and the strategy is still evolving. Work placements are well organised and effectively monitored. The placements form an integral part of some vocational programmes and are highly valued by students and employers.

15 The college is a major provider of youth training from which it currently derives an annual income of £600,000. The college provides modern apprenticeship training for 90 young people. It makes a significant contribution to the achievement of the national targets for education and training. The college has productive links with North Yorkshire TEC and is involved in a wide range of TEC-funded projects. For example, it is the lead college, with seven other institutions, in a collaborative project on students' retention and it has taken part in a research project on the participation of men in education and training. In partnership with the University of York, the local authority, bioscience industrial companies, York Sixth Form College and Askham Bryan College of Agriculture and Horticulture, the college made a successful bid for £500,000 from the competitiveness fund to fund bioscience provision. As a result, the college has built a new bioscience facility to meet the current and future education and training needs of local people and to support the developing growth of the bioscience sector in the greater York area. Through a project which the college runs jointly with the TEC, young, jobless, disadvantaged people are given guidance, help and preparatory training at a centre on the college campus.

16 Full-cost work is successfully undertaken through the college's consultancy and training company, Ashfield Associates Limited. The unit generated an income of £234,000 in its second year of operation in

1995-96 through the provision of customised training courses provided in the college and on employers' premises. Recent training contracts include one to train employers in the brewing industry to become 'multi-skilled' to NVQ levels 2 and 3, and one to provide modular training and assessment to meet new legislation for gas safety. The college has acknowledged that it needs to develop a more corporate approach to its commercial work.

17 Marketing has become a high priority for the college during the last two years following a review of its marketing strategy by the corporation. There is a marketing plan. Marketing functions have been refocused with groups of teachers working as marketing 'champions' to collect market intelligence and maintain links with customers. The groups are co-ordinated by the marketing manager and each has a separate marketing function such as schools liaison. A consultant is employed effectively for public relations and promotional activities. The college receives positive coverage in the local press. Publicity material at college level is of good quality although some information at programme level is less effective. The college has been successful in recruiting an increased number of part-time students following the effective distribution of the part-time course prospectus by direct mailing. The marketing team is undertaking an increasing amount of market research including postcode analysis and the identification of areas of high unemployment. The findings of such research do not yet inform planning in a systematic way.

18 The college has had links with about 20 institutions in seven European countries during the last two years. Staff take part in study exchanges and students visit other countries as a part of their learning programmes. The college receives visits from staff and students from colleges in other European countries. However, this year only nine students from the college have made formally-organised visits to Europe. The college has been successful in obtaining funding from the European Social Fund to the value of more than £200,000 during the last year. There are 40 students from overseas at the college.

19 The college has had an equal opportunities policy for some time and this was reviewed in 1996. A cross-college equal opportunities committee meets regularly. Recently, the college created a new post of 'equal opportunity co-ordinator'. It is the intention that the co-ordinator will, with the equal opportunities committee, ensure the continued implementation and evaluation of the equal opportunities policy. Recent developments in relation to equal opportunities practice include the installation of a lift in the new science building to improve access for students with restricted mobility. Parents of students aged 16 to 18 speak positively of the supportive and caring environment which the college provides, especially in relation to provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In a few instances, female students are succeeding on courses which have been exclusively, or almost entirely, taken by male students. For example, a female student recently obtained

an NVQ level 3 in stonemasonry and became the first woman to be appointed as a stonemason by York Minister. There is, however, no action plan for the implementation of the equal opportunities policy; targets against which the college's performance in providing equal opportunities for all its staff and students can be measured, have not been agreed.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

20 The corporation board has 17 members; currently there are four vacancies. Business members bring an appropriate range of expertise from their professional, business and industrial backgrounds. The board includes a TEC nominee, two members of the college staff, a student, a head teacher and the principal. Two governors are women. Although there is a search committee and the college advertises for governors, two vacancies have existed for over three years. The board has an appropriate committee structure. The chair and principal meet regularly and have a positive working relationship. Attendance at board meetings is good, and averaged 85 per cent during the last year. Governors take an active interest in the college. For example, nominated governors link with a curriculum area or cross-college activity. They regularly attend lunchtime meetings with small groups of staff and students to discuss issues facing the college. These meetings are valued by staff and students. Board members have adopted a code of conduct and have recently established a procedure for the formal declaration of their personal interests.

21 There is no formal induction training for new corporation board members, although they receive a members' handbook and briefings from the principal and other managers. Members can, however, attend regular training events with governors of the two local colleges. Board members have yet to determine appropriate performance indicators against which they can measure their own effectiveness. They appraise the principal annually and check the extent to which the college meets its objectives stated in the strategic plan. The board has recently appointed as its part-time clerk, a former member who has yet to become fully effective in this role. The board has only recently approved draft standing orders for the conduct of its meetings. Members receive regular financial information with commentaries. In terms of its detail, this information has improved in quality within the last six months. Members acknowledge that while they have a good understanding of financial matters, their knowledge of curricular issues and issues relating to the quality of the college's provision, is more restricted. They have recently established a cycle of reviews of the effectiveness of the college's key policies. The board does not receive an annual report on health and safety matters in the college. The college has, however, a health and safety policy, and separate policies on health and safety are being prepared for each curriculum area.

22 The college takes a long-term view in its planning. The college has a good and increasingly productive working relationship with the two other local colleges; there is collaboration between the senior managers and

governors of all three institutions. Following incorporation, the college's strategic plan included detailed operating statements and performance indicators. Subsequent plans have been less sharply focused. A strategic planning group comprising board members and senior managers has been established and this group reports to the corporation board. The college is now developing a more comprehensive planning process which includes the specification of clear performance indicators. Through their involvement in this process, governors are enabled to develop a greater understanding of the college. They have recently reviewed the college's mission statement and the five key strategic objectives. Governors are beginning to take more responsibility for reviewing the college's progress in meeting its objectives. The curriculum directorate has an established cycle for strategic planning which brings together quality assurance and planning processes. This cycle has, however only recently been adopted by the other directorates. Development plans for both curriculum and non-curriculum areas vary in quality and structure. Some are comprehensive and specific and they have been produced as a result of consultation between managers and staff, but others lack substance. The college is aiming to improve the quality of these development plans and to give staff, through team meetings, greater involvement in devising them. Managers' use of performance indicators in order to set targets against which the college's effectiveness may be measured, and to inform their decision making, is still evolving.

23 Senior managers function well as a team, understand their roles, are able to prioritise their activities and provide clear direction. Staff see them as professional, accessible and open. A cautious but positive management approach has enabled the college to come through a significant restructuring process successfully. As a result of this process, curriculum areas have been formed from clusters of courses and these are led by curriculum managers who report to one of two curriculum directors. The new structure enables staff at all levels to become involved in the development of new initiatives and to take a corporate view. Although there was only limited debate between managers and staff prior to the restructure, the changes were introduced sensitively and staff view them positively. Curriculum and business support managers provide effective management and staff value the support they provide. Working relationships between support staff and teaching staff are positive. However, the quality of course team management is variable. In some curriculum areas, the new structure is yet to prove its effectiveness. In these areas, the extent of change is greater than in others and some staff lack managerial experience.

24 Senior managers and governors place an emphasis on effective communication with staff. There is a timetable of meetings to assist with the dissemination of information across the college. Minutes of meetings, although brief, are carefully kept and well structured. The college strategic management team meets weekly and the college managers' forum,

comprising all senior and middle managers, meets monthly. All staff are members of teams which meet at least monthly. Part-time staff are paid to attend two meetings each term. Most teachers are involved in some cross-college activity such as internal verification or the improvement of students' retention. All staff receive a comprehensive staff handbook. There is an informative newsletter, and electronic mail facilities are being made available to middle managers. The academic board meets termly and is an effective forum where teachers can advise the principal on curriculum issues. College managers, except for the principal and the associate principal (curriculum), are specifically excluded from membership of the academic board. As part of each meeting, members form small groups to focus on issues such as students' indiscipline and ineffective teaching. Staff report that there has been substantial improvement in internal communication within the last two years and they consider that they have good opportunities to contribute to the development of the college.

25 The college has substantially met its targets for units of activity in two out of the last three years. In 1995-96, it had a financial deficit, following changes in the arrangements for funding franchised provision. The college has taken a decision to reduce the amount of its franchised provision. This year, it expects to achieve 95 per cent of its target for units of activity. The college's average level of funding for 1996-97 is £16.79 per unit which is lower than the median of £17.97 per unit for general further education and tertiary colleges. Nearly 70 per cent of its income is from the FEFC. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are shown in figures 5 and 6. Budgetary controls are effective and financial procedures are clear. The system for financial allocation is not always understood by staff and the college is holding staff training sessions on the funding methodology. The college is at an early stage of delegating budgets to curriculum areas and currently only non-teaching costs are delegated to them. The college recognises the need to establish the cost effectiveness of its various types of business activity. It has undertaken research into the comparative costs of each curriculum area and is extending this to investigate the cost of courses. Curriculum areas do not set targets for income from short courses or other sources.

26 Management information is collected efficiently and it is increasingly used to inform planning. It includes data on students which relate to enrolments, students' gender and ethnicity and retention rates. In 1995-96, on completing their courses, all former full-time students, and a sample of former part-time students were sent a questionnaire about their destinations. Staff followed this up by telephoning the former students. Information was obtained on the destinations of 92 per cent of the full-time students, and this was carefully analysed. Data on students' achievements are reliable. The management information user group has not yet focused on the specific needs of individuals, and the full potential of the management information system has not yet been fully realised.

The management information and finance systems are separate, although links between the two are being continually improved.

27 A project which has gained national recognition is being undertaken to investigate the reasons for students' failure to complete their courses. Information collected by the college indicates that students often leave their courses early for a variety of reasons, including their perception of their courses, inadequate personal finance or because they take up employment. 'Retention improvement' teams have been set up in each curriculum area and have introduced procedures which are designed to help retain students. Staff give increased attention to the attendance and progress of students. Students' retention rates have improved by 5 per cent this year compared with those for 1995-96.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

28 Student support services are managed jointly by the 'threshold services' manager, the learning support manager and the learning resource centre manager. Students are well served by the wide-ranging guidance and support services which are provided. These services are centrally located in attractive accommodation and are easily accessible to students. The three admissions co-ordinators provide general guidance to students. Between them, they co-ordinate the provision of extra help for students during their course, careers guidance and work-related training. Other services include a nursery for students' children, advice on financial matters and financial assistance for students in need which is drawn from an access fund containing £40,000. An advisory committee for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has effective links with special schools and local community services. A range of appropriate policies guide this support work. Many of the structures and procedures are relatively new, and the extent to which some are implemented in the curriculum areas is variable.

29 Prospective students benefit from a wide range of information from a variety of sources. Prospectuses provide clear information on courses and there is a good range of leaflets on college services, for example careers and counselling. College advice evenings are held which are supplemented by curriculum area activities. Students may attend 'taster' classes prior to enrolment; for example public services students undertake a pre-enrolment introductory programme at an army barracks. However, the practice of enabling students to sample provision is not common to all curriculum areas. A schools liaison team provides advice to prospective students. From January onwards each year, college staff interview applicants for full-time courses. 'Future Prospects' provides valuable advice at a convenient location in the city centre. Prospective part-time students are provided with clear guidance on enrolment procedures. In some cases, students who are employees may enrol on college courses at their work place. Data on students' retention and destinations for some courses were not available to prospective students at enrolment periods.

30 All full-time students receive an interview within a short time of their application. During the interview, staff give due attention to students' records of achievement. The college provides interviewers with training and guidance documents to help them to give advice which is impartial. Careers staff are available to provide additional guidance. Most students are positive about the quality of the pre-enrolment advice they receive. However, some students reported delays in being provided with information and others said that they had received inappropriate advice. An 'additional studies fayre' organised in late August provides advice to students on the range of additional courses that they may study alongside their main course. Staff have policies and documentation on the accreditation of students' prior learning. Although students may progress more quickly, for example to the second year of courses, as a result of having their prior learning accredited, few students take up this option.

31 In general students receive effective induction to their courses and to college provision such as the library and learning resource centre. During induction the college's charter is given to all students, both full time and part time, and students are informed of its importance. Induction is well organised and most students are positive about its quality. On some courses students were particularly enthusiastic about residential opportunities arranged during the induction week. Some students, however, felt that induction was too long, some felt that it had been poorly provided and, in some cases, late starters did not receive an induction. In a few cases, students received advice of variable quality on additional subjects which they might take alongside their main course. Induction for part-time students is shorter than that provided for full-time students.

32 During induction all full-time students, and a few part-time students take numeracy and literacy tests. A pilot project for testing students in information technology skills was undertaken in 1996-97. Additional support is available to students who require it. There is a wide range of methods whereby students may receive this support. Decisions on the most appropriate ways of providing additional support for the students are taken during discussions between learning support staff, tutors and the students themselves. For example, students may receive tuition in the learning resource centre, through timetabled classes or by using learning materials in their own time. They may also undertake a programme of additional tutorials, taught by specialists in vocational subjects. Courses leading to qualifications such as GCSE and the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) numberpower certificate are available. Some of these students receive support through classes in key skills. Vocational tutors are kept well informed of their students' attendance and progress. However, the provision of additional support is optional and many students elect not to take it. Some students who were not identified as needing extra support ask for, and receive it. Students who receive the support speak well of it.

33 There are good procedures for the provision of comprehensive additional support for students with other particular learning needs. The close links with schools which provide specifically for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities help to ensure that effective support is provided for those students at the college. Application forms are carefully screened to ensure that students who express a particular need for such support are identified. The college provides tests to identify students who may be dyslexic. Six education care officers, a group of designated staff from the curriculum areas, and a register of other staff provide additional support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This includes help with hearing and visual impairment, dyslexia and problems related to mental health. Records indicate that a high proportion of the students who receive this support complete their programmes of study.

34 Full-time students have tutorials. On most courses, there is a group tutorial once a week and formal individual tutorials take place at least once a term. Discussions at individual tutorials are appropriately recorded; a review of the students' progress including an action plan for improving future performance are completed and filed, and a copy is kept by the student. Tutors are well informed about their students' progress and attendance. The process of reviewing students' progress is carried out more rigorously on some courses than on others. In the best practice, students are encouraged to meet deadlines for the completion of work; their action plans are carefully recorded and their success in carrying them out is effectively monitored. Some students' learning plans, however, are not written clearly enough to enable staff to monitor their implementation thoroughly. In many instances, tutors provide students with more tutorial support than the minimum amount to which they are entitled. Tutors also refer students to the college's specialist advisers. Many curriculum areas have established useful links with the parents of 16 to 18 year old students, for example through parents' evenings. Some students are unclear about the procedures used to monitor and encourage their attendance. Many commented, however, that their attendance was rigorously monitored. They praised the requirement that they should maintain contact with the college by telephone when they were absent.

35 Group tutorials on many courses are well managed. Some have wide-ranging schemes of work which include recording of achievement, coverage of equal opportunities issues, careers guidance, study skills tuition and a programme of visiting speakers. Staff receive no overall guidance on the topics which should be covered in tutorials; in some instances, the range of topics is limited in scope. However, relevant tutorial topics are often covered in other timetabled periods, such as those for key skills. A recent review of tutorial provision highlighted the fact that there is some duplication of topics covered in tutorials and in other lessons. A working party has therefore been established with the responsibility of developing a 'pastoral curriculum' which will be implemented specifically through tutorial periods. Most students were appreciative of their tutorials.

Some topics, such as time and stress management, and guidance for students who are applying for higher education, are addressed in tutorial periods which are taken by specialist staff from outside the curriculum areas; students' attendance at some of these sessions is, however, poor. Careers guidance is provided by one of the college's admissions co-ordinators and by the North Yorkshire Careers and Guidance Service. This, and the specialist personal counselling service, are available mainly through prior appointment and by a 'drop-in' service. Staff providing careers guidance have had insufficient links with the tutorial process. This year, however, the provision of careers guidance through the tutorial process is becoming more systematic.

36 The college's students' liaison officer helps to ensure good communication between the students' union and the college. The union arranges events for students which include health awareness days and fundraising activities, for example for children in need. The union has been active in arranging meetings with the student representatives on course teams. Many of these initiatives have been poorly supported by students and currently several of the union officer posts are vacant.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

37 Two hundred and fifty-two teaching sessions were observed. Of these, 60 per cent had strengths that outweighed the weaknesses. This is 3 per cent lower than the average for all sessions observed during the 1995-96 programme of inspections according to the *Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1995-96*. Weaknesses outweighed the strengths in 8 per cent of sessions. Attendance rates in the classes inspected ranged from 83 per cent in art and design to 65 per cent in science, mathematics and computing. The average attendance was 75 per cent and the average number of students in each session was 11. The following table summarises 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	0	6	6	1	0	13
GCSE	2	2	4	1	0	9
GNVQ	7	17	14	6	0	44
NVQ	10	23	24	1	0	58
Access to higher education	1	5	3	0	0	9
Other vocational	24	43	23	8	1	99
Other	6	6	6	2	0	20
Total	50	102	80	19	1	252

38 Teaching in mathematics was competent and the planning of lessons was sound. Teachers provided effective exposition of mathematical principles and good individual support for students working on tasks. They had a systematic approach to reviewing students' progress. The well-equipped mathematics workshop was underused as a resource to support teaching in the classroom. Mathematics staff taught on vocational courses across the college using mathematical examples which were relevant to vocational areas. Little use was made of equipment such as overhead projectors and graphical calculators, and opportunities were missed to involve students in group discussions and mathematical debate. Science teachers designed appropriate schemes of work and used a variety of teaching methods to engage the attention of the students. Learning materials were of high quality. Teachers marked students' assignments promptly and with careful regard to assessment criteria. In a minority of lessons, the teachers lacked enthusiasm or used question-and-answer techniques unproductively. Most information technology lessons were well planned and the teaching of theory and practical work involved the effective use of printed sheets and workbooks. These allowed practical lessons for adults to be appropriately organised as workshops in which students could work effectively on their own.

39 Teachers in construction displayed sound industrial knowledge and they drew on their industrial experience. Schemes of work were well developed. Students on craft courses were encouraged to work at their own pace. Teachers maintained clear records of students' progress. Learning materials were of good quality, particularly in specialist craft areas such as stonemasonry. The introduction of learning tasks which students can carry out on their own using learning materials tailored to their individual needs, was at an early stage of development. Assignment work for technician students was carefully designed. For example, an end-of-unit assignment required technician students to consider how to adapt a 60-year-old semi-detached house for a newly-married couple. The house had faults that might commonly be found in a house of that age. Information provided for students carrying out the assignment included estate agent's details, a copy of a structural survey and a builder's estimate. The realistic and challenging project had a detailed assessment plan. In the less effective lessons, teachers failed to draw on students' experience in order to enliven learning. In some of the weaker lessons, activities lacked variety and teachers made little use of audio and visual teaching aids. Some printed sheets and overhead transparencies were of poor quality. There was insufficient emphasis on the need to maintain safe working areas.

40 In engineering, lessons varied in their effectiveness. Many lessons were well planned. Teachers provided effective support for individual students. They made good use of learning materials such as pre-prepared notes with spaces for students to add their own comments. In craft work and electrical engineering in particular, teachers made effective use of

practical activities to further students' learning. In some lessons, the teachers talked too much and note-taking was the only activity required of the students. In some instances, teachers did not ensure that learning activities were sufficiently and appropriately related to the vocational area. In other instances, teachers failed to sustain the students' interest with the result that students did not pay attention and they gave inappropriate responses to questions. In the more effective lessons, teachers used a good variety of appropriate activities. For example, one teacher provided a short introduction and then gave students suitable documentation to assist them in the selection of materials to make an engineering product. The teacher questioned the students and provided appropriate help as students worked in groups to discuss the criteria they would use in choosing materials. A computer database was used to assist in the selection of the materials. Some teachers did not monitor students' progress with sufficient rigour. They did not check frequently enough that students were carrying out their learning plans thoroughly; in some instances, students' assignment work was overdue.

41 Courses in business administration were well planned and had clear schemes of work. Teachers provided some thorough and demanding assignments for students, particularly on information technology and public services courses. They helped students to identify their learning objectives and to focus on achieving success. The level and pace of most lessons were appropriate. Some lessons, however, were not well structured and teaching styles lacked variety. In a few instances, some younger students were allowed to behave inappropriately and, as a result, they did not learn much. In some lessons teachers allowed the more extrovert students to dominate discussions. In business, management and professional studies, most students received effective tuition. For example, in a lesson on business planning on a GNVQ advanced course, students watched a relevant videotape and were then required to complete a worksheet. The lesson held their full attention. Teachers were generally successful in motivating students to learn and to achieve success. In some lessons, the teaching lacked a sense of momentum; activities lacked sufficient variety and they did not fully engage the students' interest.

42 Teachers on catering and hospitality courses provided a good range of opportunities for students to be assessed in varied and realistic work environments. In general, students were well taught by staff who demonstrated good technical skills. In the more effective lessons, teachers organised appropriate practical activities and provided students with useful feedback about their work. In other lessons, however, students were allowed to do little and some did not learn much. Leisure and tourism courses were carefully planned and had clear schemes of work. Students were provided with relevant work experience. Some teachers were particularly successful in helping students to carry out tasks effectively individually or in groups. Most staff used a good range of suitable teaching methods. They ensured that there was an appropriate balance between

practical and theoretical work. In one tourism lesson, students with few language skills were encouraged to practise conversation in a European language and they understood the relevance and importance of this learning activity. Teachers have established effective procedures for the assessment of students' work, for verifying each other's marking, and for providing students with constructive feedback on the quality of their work. In some instances, however, students have been required to carry out substantial amounts of work to meet assessment schedules, and at times, their workloads have been too heavy. When planning learning activities, some teachers did not take sufficient account of the range of experience and abilities of the students in the class; some students were not fully involved in classroom activities. The teaching of sports studies was of a high standard.

43 Health and social care lessons were well planned. Most teachers used a good range of teaching and learning methods, but some designed activities that were inappropriate for their students' abilities. Most teachers ensured that students participated effectively in lessons by setting tasks for small groups and by requiring students to make presentations. For example, a teacher at an 'outreach' centre encouraged adult students to share their views on caring. The teacher received their contributions sensitively and, as a result, the students' confidence increased. Some teachers depended heavily on overhead projectors when communicating information, but they did not use them effectively. Most teachers questioned their students. In most instances, however, teachers addressed questions to the whole class rather than to individual students in order to check whether they understood the lesson. In hairdressing and beauty therapy, teachers linked their lesson plans to well-designed schemes of work. Teachers made good use of a range of appropriate teaching methods. Students were encouraged to link theoretical and practical work. Teachers used well-presented packages of learning materials. They encouraged students to work to professional standards. In some lessons, the teachers made insufficient demands upon the students and failed to challenge them to think and use their abilities to the full. Some students found their work placements unsatisfactory.

44 Teachers in art and design planned lessons effectively. Students were provided with detailed handbooks containing relevant information on teaching and assessment methods. Teachers organised programmes effectively by using a variety of appropriate assignments and projects. In one lesson, students studying for the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diploma were combined with students on the second year of the GNVQ advanced course in art and design, thereby bringing together over 100 students working across four different disciplines. Teachers were well prepared as a team, they briefed the students clearly and guided them through an extensive range of ideas and experiments. Teachers paid due attention to the learning needs of individual students. Assignments were realistically assessed and students

received detailed feedback on the quality of their work. Students had good opportunities to practise their vocational skills. For example, students from the performing arts programme have appeared in the York mystery plays. City centre venues are used as locations where students' work is assessed. In a few instances, teachers had not prepared their lessons sufficiently. Some teachers did not check sufficiently that the students understood the lesson. Other teachers set assignments which were too complex for the level of the course or they were not sufficiently rigorous in their assessment of students' work.

45 Humanities teachers planned lessons which had momentum and which involved the students in a variety of appropriate activities. They used up-to-date learning materials to maintain the interest of the students. Students found most lessons demanding. Teachers assessed students' work with rigour and provided prompt and helpful comments on students' progress. On the access to higher education programme, teachers used lecturing effectively as a teaching style. Teachers of GCE A level subjects used an inappropriately narrow range of teaching and learning methods. Teachers of some subjects paid insufficient attention to the requirements of external examination syllabuses. Most lessons in English, communications and modern foreign languages were well taught. Teachers organised lessons well, ensured that students were fully involved in classroom activities and held their interest. In a British Sign Language class, for example, the teacher used games and role-play to encourage students to communicate with each other by signing. Students communicated with one another effectively, asking questions and responding to them appropriately; they demonstrated that they could sustain an extensive dialogue and discussion entirely in sign language. In the best lessons, teachers enabled students to communicate with each other effectively in the language being studied. In the weaker classes, the lesson planning was poor, group work was ineffectively managed, and in some foreign language classes there was unnecessary use of English.

46 Teaching in basic education and on courses specifically for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities was of a variable standard. In the effective lessons, teachers had a purposeful approach and they used a good variety of appropriate activities, and learning materials which challenged the students to use their abilities to the full. Teachers had clear learning objectives for their students and they communicated these to them successfully. In one lesson for pre-vocational students, the teacher led a group discussion about working in teams and the students participated in this with enthusiasm. This was followed by a practical problem-solving exercise designed to demonstrate the need for team members to work co-operatively. The teacher was successful in ensuring that the students achieved their learning objective. The best teaching was confident and competent. Most teachers made explicit links between learning activities and students' learning plans. Some lessons were insufficiently demanding for the students. In the less effective lessons on

the full-time courses, the teacher failed to provide some students with the help and guidance they needed in order to learn successfully. In the weaker lessons on all courses, teachers did not have clear learning objectives for their students. Some teachers used unimaginative and ineffective methods of assessment. Learning materials, especially printed sheets, were variable in quality and some were poor. The college provided a good level of additional learning support for students, including signers for students with hearing impairment and learning support assistants for students with visual impairment.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

47 In many of the lessons, students enjoyed their studies and were able to speak about their work with confidence and enthusiasm. Adult students, in particular, demonstrated a conscientious attitude to all aspects of their programmes of study. On vocational programmes, many students had the opportunity to develop work-related skills through practical activities and assignments. Most students carried out practical work competently and safely. In catering, for example, there are food safety policies and procedures which staff and students followed rigorously. In art and design, there were some high standards of practical work across a range of subject areas. Some of the practical craft work, for example, antique furniture restoration and stonemasonry, was of a high commercial standard. In business administration, there was an over reliance on simulated activity in the training office; in construction there were some instances of untidy or unsafe working methods.

48 There was variable practice in the teaching and learning of key skills. On GNVQ programmes, where the skills are mandatory, students were confident in their use of information technology; some particularly good practice in key skills was observed on business programmes. On many of the GNVQ programmes, students developed their oral communication skills extensively through group work; there was, however, less evidence that they were developing numeracy skills to the same extent. In media studies, students handled computer-based applications with dexterity in a range of multimedia applications. Students on the access to higher education programme were given good opportunities to use and develop key skills. On some other courses, these skills were less consistently developed. For example, on GCSE and GCE A level programmes there were few opportunities to develop key skills. The information technology skills of students on performing arts courses were poor. In computing and construction, the students' study skills were underdeveloped, especially in relation to note taking, the careful reading of assignment briefs and the meeting of assignment deadlines.

49 Portfolios of students' work were often thorough and well organised, particularly on the higher level courses. Project work on the higher national certificate building studies course was of a professional standard. In engineering, there were some examples of excellent assignment work

by part-time students which they related to their employment duties. Standards of students' written work were good on catering courses and they were satisfactory on health and social care programmes. Some students' work on performing arts courses was not up to the required standard. In English, some students demonstrated effective powers of expression and good analytical skills in their written work. The spelling and punctuation of many students, particularly those on GCSE courses, were poor, however.

50 Some students' achievements, particularly those of 16 to 18 year olds, are unsatisfactory. In 1996, 68 per cent of the 430 students aged 16 to 18 on their final year of advanced vocational courses were successful. This places the college in the bottom third of colleges in the sector according to tables published by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE). Of the 239 students who completed intermediate vocational courses, 62 per cent were successful. This places the college in the middle third of colleges in the sector according to the DfEE tables. Eighty students in the same year, aged 16 to 18, were entered for one or more GCE A level. They scored on average 3.1 points per subject entry (where grade A=10 points, E=2) which places the college in the bottom third of colleges in the sector, according to the DfEE tables.

51 Students' examination results on a number of science courses, including GCSE physics, GCE A level physics, GCE A level chemistry and GNVQ advanced science, are above the national average. Results are, however, poor in human biology where the success rate has been below 35 per cent in the last two years. The retention rate on many science courses is satisfactory; it exceeded 80 per cent on the national diploma science programme in 1995, and on GCE A level courses in physics and chemistry in 1996. The results of most adult students taking GCSE mathematics are at, or above, national averages. All full-time students who do not have a grade C or above in GCSE mathematics are strongly encouraged to retake this subject through the additional studies programme. Many fail to attend mathematics lessons regularly. They obtain poor results and, in consequence, the overall proportion of students in the college aged 16 to 18, who obtain grade C or above in GCSE mathematics is low. Students on full-time national diploma courses in computing and information technology perform well. The varied part-time provision in this curriculum area successfully meets the needs of a large number of students.

52 Over the last three years, many pass rates on construction programmes have been above the national averages. In the last two years, students have obtained excellent pass rates of 100 per cent on NVQ level 3 courses in stonemasonry, carpentry and joinery. Retention rates on some courses, and particularly on one-year, full-time craft courses, are less satisfactory. In engineering, pass rates are good on the higher level part-time technician courses and they are satisfactory on part-time advanced level courses. They are poor on some full-time technician courses

at both intermediate and advanced levels, and on several of the part-time craft courses. Retention rates are good on the full-time intermediate level courses. On both full-time and part-time advanced level programmes, however, they are poor and are a cause of concern to the college.

53 In 1995-96, most of the students' achievements on business administration and public services programmes were close to national averages. A minority were particularly good, notably on the higher diploma course in administrative and secretarial procedures, where the success rate was 81 per cent, and on the short intensive courses for adults leading to NVQ level 1 administration. Only 20 per cent of the foundation GNVQ information technology students who started in 1995 achieved the full award in 1996; this course failed to recruit any students in the current academic year. Students' achievements were good on other business courses, including some professional courses and the GNVQ intermediate course in business. Of the students, however, who enrolled on the higher national certificate course in business studies in 1994, only 18 per cent completed the course and obtained their qualification in 1996.

54 Students' achievements on the main catering courses are at least satisfactory and some are high. For example, in 1995, the pass rate on the national diploma course was 92 per cent and, in 1996, 95 per cent of students who completed the NVQ level 2 food preparation and cookery programme were successful. On some programmes taken by smaller numbers of students, results are poor. For example, in 1996, no students passed on the NVQ level 2 food and drink course and on the NVQ level 3 supervisory management courses. In 1996, retention rates averaged 59 per cent on all catering courses and they were particularly low on a number of these. Students' achievements on sport and leisure programmes were high. For example, in 1996, 81 per cent of students on the GNVQ advanced course in leisure and tourism, and 85 per cent of students on the national diploma course in sports studies, were successful. Students' achievements on GCSE and GCE A level courses are variable. A significant number of students taking GCE A level subjects leave at the end of the first year of their course. Results on courses in this programme area which are offered as part of the college's collaborative provision were also variable. They were excellent on the short one-day 'welcome host' courses but poor on courses leading to some national coaching foundation assessor awards.

55 Retention rates on health and social care and on childcare courses have been consistently good over the last three years. The level of students' achievements on GNVQ foundation courses is high; students' pass rates are more than double the national average. There has been a steady decline in students' achievements on nursery nursing courses. The retention rates of the last three cohorts of students on these courses have, however, been good, ranging from 75 per cent to nearly 90 per cent. Retention rates on hair and beauty courses have been unsatisfactory and on many full-time programmes they have been under 60 per cent;

currently, however, they are improving. Examination results are variable. In 1996, pass rates ranged from 48 per cent on aromatherapy courses to almost 90 per cent on full-time hairdressing courses.

56 In general, examination results in art and design are good, particularly in foundation studies, fashion and graphic design. In 1995, for example, the pass rate in foundation studies was 98 per cent. In the same year, the retention rate on the foundation studies course was also good, at 82 per cent. In 1996, the retention rate on the GNVQ intermediate art and design programme was over 90 per cent although the pass rate, excluding franchised provision, was less satisfactory, at 43 per cent. In 1996, the first cohort of students to complete the national diploma course in performing arts achieved an excellent pass rate of 94 per cent. In the same year, the first cohort of students to complete the national diploma course in media studies achieved a lower pass rate of 71 per cent.

57 The high standards which students reach on the C&G teacher training programme are exemplified by the work of an individual student who, during the last academic year, received one of only two silver medals issued by C&G for high achievement. Results on the access to higher education programme and in GCSE psychology and GCE A level psychology are good. Pass rates in GCE A level history of art are consistently above the national average. Results in other humanities subjects on GCSE and GCE A level courses are more variable. The number of students who obtain passes in GCE A level subjects or grade C or above in GCSE subjects is small in proportion to the number who originally enrolled for them. For example, many part-time students enrol for GCSE and GCE A level courses in English and modern languages but few complete them successfully.

58 Few students on basic education courses choose to take advantage of opportunities to have their achievements accredited, partly because they find the accreditation fees too expensive. As a result, in 1995-96, few students achieved qualifications, and the proportion who did so on some courses was as low as 3 per cent. Teachers use schemes of accreditation which are inappropriate for some students' learning needs and they do not set targets for students' achievements in this programme area. In general, retention rates on the basic education courses are good. Students are well motivated in class although only some of them learn effectively.

59 Upon completion of their courses, the largest group of leavers progress to higher education; in 1996, nearly 30 per cent did so. The proportion of students on GNVQ advanced and access programmes who go on to higher education is usually more than 60 per cent. Over 26 per cent of students left to take up permanent employment and nearly 25 per cent progressed to other further education courses. In 1996, for example, 58 per cent of students on the GNVQ intermediate course in leisure and tourism, went on to the corresponding GNVQ advanced course. Of the remaining students, 9 per cent are categorised as 'destinations unknown' and just under 4 per cent as 'seeking employment'.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

60 The college places a high priority on quality assurance. The strategic objectives of the college include a commitment to improve the quality of the learning experience. A well-established policy provides a framework of procedures for assuring the quality of the curriculum. The strategic management team shares a corporate responsibility for quality assurance. A quality assurance committee, comprising the college strategic management team and three members of the corporation board, receives regular reports on quality assurance matters. The academic standards committee is responsible for monitoring procedures for the quality assurance of the curriculum, and these focus on new programmes, programme review and evaluation, and curriculum audits. In its charter, the college gives clear commitments to meet the needs of those who use the college's services. A periodic review of the charter is undertaken, involving consultation with students, parents, employers, staff and governors. Curriculum teams evaluate the college's performance in meeting the service standards prescribed in the charter.

61 A number of performance indicators have been introduced recently by the college to inform the process of monitoring and evaluating the quality of its provision. For example, targets are set for attendance and retention, and a benchmarking exercise has been undertaken, comparing college services with those of other colleges in the further education sector. The college has been slow to develop performance indicators and to implement their systematic use. There are no performance criteria for students' achievements, and there is inconsistency in the use and monitoring of performance indicators by course and curriculum teams in the course review and evaluation process. The college acknowledges that there is inconsistent use of quantitative analysis in its curriculum planning. Some business support teams have introduced service standards, but the college lacks a comprehensive framework for setting cross-college service standards and monitoring progress towards their achievement. The college recognises the need to extend its quality assurance system to include cross-college services. A 'non-curriculum quality assurance committee' has recently been set up, but policy and procedures for such quality assurance have not yet been fully established. The college does not produce an annual quality assurance report on cross-college services.

62 There are effective procedures for the approval of new courses. All proposals for new courses are submitted to the academic standards manager for consideration by the curriculum directorate team. Following the initial approval of proposals, the academic standards committee monitors their development for internal and external validation, and co-ordinates the submission of papers relating to the proposal for final approval by the senior management team. There is a formal process for course review and evaluation. Course teams submit end-of-year review and evaluation reports to their respective curriculum managers, using

headings in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. Summary curriculum area reports using the same headings are submitted to the academic standards committee, which prepares an overall report for governors and senior managers. The quality of course team and curriculum area reports is variable. Whilst some are detailed and rigorous, others contain little commentary or statistical analysis of performance against targets. In the 1995-96 annual course review reports, enrolment was the only performance indicator referred to in the commentary. Some reports lack detailed action plans. Most course review reports lack references to key weaknesses, to evaluative comments from students, employers and external verifiers, or to the previous year's action plan.

63 The annual review process is complemented by a planned cycle of minuted course and curriculum team meetings. The views of students on the quality of the college's provision are obtained regularly, for example through surveys of students' opinions which are carried out twice a year. The findings of the surveys are used by curriculum teams for planning purposes, and students are informed of action which is taken in response to their views. A summary of the findings of the surveys is provided for governors. Although employers' views of the college are obtained informally, these are not collected or acted upon systematically. No survey of employers' perception of courses has been carried out during the past year. A well-established programme of curriculum audits is undertaken by the academic standards committee on a two-yearly cycle. Members of the strategic management team play an active part in this process. The audit includes observation of teaching and learning, the preparation of action plans to address issues raised during the audit, and a review of progress in making improvements. Audit reports are issued to the curriculum manager concerned and the staff-development manager is notified of staff-development issues raised during the audit. An annual college audit report is produced. The previous years' action plans are discussed by staff when they set the agenda for the audit but they are not referred to in the final audit report.

64 There is a clear framework of quality assurance procedures for franchised provision. A quality standards subcommittee of the academic standards committee is responsible for overseeing these procedures, which include an individualised quality assurance policy for each provider, a range of appropriate documentation, comprehensive annual course reviews, and collaborative management team meetings which are held on a regular basis. The quality of franchised provision is closely monitored in various ways including surveys of students' opinions, a programme of audit visits, and regular telephone calls from college staff to providers.

65 The college's quality assurance procedures meet the requirements of external examining, validating and awarding bodies, and the college places a high priority on the evaluation of external verifiers' reports. The reports are received by the academic standards manager, associate principal (curriculum) and curriculum directors, and weaknesses identified in

reports are considered by the appropriate curriculum teams. The college has participated in national projects on GNVQ internal verification strategies. Internal verification procedures are co-ordinated by the college assessment subcommittee of the academic standards committee, which was responsible for developing an assessment policy. The extension of assessment and verification procedures across the college is at an early stage of development.

66 The college was recognised as an Investor in People in July 1996. There is an annual performance appraisal system for all teaching and support staff. Appraisal procedures are clear and well documented, and they are well regarded by staff. All staff are invited to appraisal training sessions. The appraisal of teaching staff includes observation of teaching and learning, and support staff are able to have their own work observed as part of their appraisal. All new staff receive an induction to the college. A mentoring system has been established for new teaching staff. Support staff are mentored more informally. A range of staff-development events is provided to meet the training needs of staff. The college provides a management development programme for teaching and business support managers, which enables them to achieve NVQs. The college states that it spends approximately 2 per cent of the total staffing budget on staff development. An annual staff-development plan is produced, which is linked closely to the strategic plan and reflects training and development needs highlighted during the appraisal process. The staff-development plan is evaluated annually, and individual training activities are evaluated and disseminated to other staff across the college. The level of participation in staff training and development by some business support staff is poor.

67 A first self-assessment report was produced by the college for the inspection. The report was written by the principal and associate principal (curriculum) following consultation with college staff and governors. The report followed the seven major headings of the Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*, and considered each aspect in terms of strengths and weaknesses, with cross-references to supporting documentation. Clear judgements were made about strengths and weaknesses, with weaknesses supported by development actions. The judgements in the report generally matched those of the inspection team. However, some strengths were overstated, and some weaknesses identified by inspectors were not included.

RESOURCES

Staffing

68 Most full-time teaching staff are well qualified. Eighty-six per cent possess a degree or higher vocational qualification and 94 per cent have a recognised teaching qualification. Twenty-five per cent of full-time equivalent teaching staff are part time. Of these, 49 per cent possess a degree or higher vocational qualification and 56 per cent have a recognised

teaching qualification. In some curriculum areas, for example science and construction, part-time staff do not receive sufficient help and support. Whilst the proportion of part-time to full-time staff is appropriate in most curriculum areas, it is too high in catering and modern foreign languages. In most curriculum areas, the number of staff who hold appropriate assessor awards is sufficient. However, in two vocational areas, leisure and health and social care, only half the staff have obtained these awards. In some vocational areas, for example sport, leisure and hairdressing, a high proportion of staff have recent and relevant industrial experience. However, the proportion of staff with recent industrial experience is considerably lower in a number of other curriculum areas, such as science, information technology, engineering, business administration and catering. The college is currently finding out how many staff have recent industrial experience. It recognises that it must comment, in its self-assessment report, on the extent to which staff need to update their industrial experience.

69 Support staff provide particularly good assistance for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for students on basic education, construction, information technology, engineering, catering and modern foreign languages courses. Teaching staff commented on the high quality of administrative and technical support they receive across many of the programme areas. Support staff meet formally with their line managers on a regular basis. They are appropriately qualified for the work they carry out. Support staff who help students with their learning have been provided with opportunities to gain assessor awards and a significant number of them possess basic qualifications in health and safety or first aid. Fifty-three per cent of all college staff are non-teaching staff, and this proportion is similar to that found in other further education colleges of a similar size.

70 Personnel policies and procedures are clearly presented in the human resources management manual and staff handbook. They include references to staff selection and recruitment, pay and benefits, discipline and grievance procedures, health and safety regulations and employment contracts. A computerised personnel database combines payroll and other staff records. Evaluation of information produced by the database is still at an early stage of development. Some staff were incorrectly categorised. Staffing costs as a percentage of total costs have fallen since incorporation and stood at 63 per cent in July 1996. In order that staffing costs may be monitored, all new posts have to be requisitioned and approved by the strategic management team. The college is seeking to ensure that all teaching staff have fair and equitable workloads. Over 90 per cent of teaching staff have accepted new contracts of employment. All support staff have accepted similar contracts which were introduced in 1995. Support staff have their job descriptions revised when they receive their annual appraisal. The job descriptions of full-time teaching staff, however, are not systematically updated. At present the college lacks a set of

measurable performance indicators which may be used to further its aim of managing the performance of middle and senior managers.

Equipment/learning resources

71 The college has good information technology resources. There are three pools of networked computers in the main learning resource centre and in a large open-plan facility in the business studies block, as well as a range of smaller computer facilities. Most of the workstations are modern and industrial-standard software may be used at them. An internal electronic mail facility is available for students and staff. A display in the entrance of the learning resources centre shows the availability of machines which students may use at any time. Staff at an information technology help desk in the centre are able to provide effective support for students with queries on how to use the computer system. The ratio of full-time equivalent students to workstations at 13:1 is lower than average for the sector, but students have no difficulties in gaining access to machines. The college has decided not to become part of an external network until it can afford to do so. A preferential buying scheme for staff has been recently introduced to encourage them to use computers. This scheme includes a modem facility for use at home, providing a link into the college network system. Managers plan the use of information technology resources effectively; for example, the college set up optical-fibre links between learning support centres in 1992. A data cabling system has been installed which links all of the buildings on the campus.

72 The main learning resource centre provides an attractive environment for its users. There are 53,000 stock items listed giving a ratio of 13 items per full-time equivalent student, just above the median for larger further education colleges. Resources for engineering, business, catering, health and social care, and hair and beauty are of particularly good quality. Of the £68,800 allocated to the learning resource centre in 1996-97, about 15 per cent has been spent on periodicals. Funds are appropriately distributed to curriculum areas, largely on the basis of weighted student numbers. The centre opens for a total of 61 hours a week during term time; this includes four hours on Saturday mornings. There are 17 staff assigned to the learning resource centre, two of whom are qualified librarians. Six designated assistants liaise with teachers in the curriculum areas. No stock-take of the centre's resources has yet been undertaken so the scale of book loss is not known. There are few materials which can be studied through open learning, partly because the demand for this form of study has fallen over the last four years. Learning resources used on the 'welcome host' programme are of a very high professional standard and include a students' pack with audio cassette.

73 Many of the programme areas have learning resources and equipment of high quality. Examples include: bioscience laboratories which have a video conferencing facility; the fabrication and welding

equipment for engineering courses; the surveying equipment and the craft workshops for construction courses; the business administration training office; the fitness centre and the equipment in the sports hall; many of the facilities for catering courses; the new hairdressing salon; and the specialist equipment for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The college also has some deficiencies in its equipment and learning resources. For example, the lathes in the engineering workshops need to be replaced with more modern equipment, the language laboratories are old, and some new equipment is required in one of the kitchen preparation rooms. It is college policy that all items of equipment should be purchased centrally and a buying unit has been established. A high-quality reprographic facility has recently been installed. This will form part of the planned expansion of the computer network for staff to enable them to carry out desktop publishing from terminals located in different parts of the college.

Accommodation

74 The college is located on the south western edge of the city on a spacious campus of 14.3 hectares. There are nine major buildings which provide 33,000 square metres of mainly purpose-built accommodation in attractive landscaped grounds. Car parking facilities are good. In addition, the college holds the lease for the 'Future Prospects' building, situated in the city centre.

75 Since incorporation, some major improvements to the accommodation have been completed. These include the building of a central learning resource centre, a bioscience block, an open-plan student services section and the creation of a students' union from the previous boiler house. In total, nearly £1.5 million has been spent on updating the buildings over the last four years. Some accommodation, such as the building craft workshops, the business training office, the leisure studies classrooms, the sports hall and a new hairdressing salon is of particularly high quality. The college has purpose-built studios for art and design, a large tiered lecture theatre in community studies and a nursery with 35 places. Some teaching accommodation is of a low standard. For example, some business studies classrooms are in poor decorative order with some graffiti on the walls and they contain broken storage lockers. Some staff work rooms and business support offices are in need of refurbishment. The cellular structure of the motor vehicle workshops makes it difficult for staff to supervise the work of students there. Some areas used for construction courses were found to have health and safety hazards; but these have been addressed. Social and recreational areas for students are restricted.

76 A detailed accommodation strategy was prepared by the college after incorporation, from which a 10-year planned maintenance programme has been derived. A modernisation programme has been devised and the condition of classrooms has been classified on a five-point scale. An accommodation group, upon which teaching staff are represented, meets

monthly to review and update accommodation priorities. Much of the estates maintenance is undertaken by staff employed directly by the college. This has allowed the college to monitor maintenance activities carefully and, as a result, the premises are cleaned and maintained to a higher standard than they were formerly. Efficiency measures, such as a new dispersed heating system, lowered ceilings and low energy light fittings, resulted in the annual energy bill being halved. Almost 80 per cent of buildings are accessible by wheelchair users. Security measures include a 24 hour camera surveillance system which operates across all the college premises. College statistics indicate that during the 1995-96 academic year, room usage was low.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

77 The strengths of the college are:

- its collaborative links with other institutions and agencies
- its increasingly wide range of provision
- successful long-term planning
- effective management and communication
- the range and quality of support services for students
- the provision of comprehensive additional learning support
- effective and well-planned teaching on many vocational courses
- students' good achievements on some vocational courses
- good-quality learning resources and information technology equipment
- its pleasant campus and the generally high standard of much of its accommodation.

78 If it is to continue to improve the quality of its provision the college should:

- extend the provision which is organised flexibly to respond to students' particular needs
- use performance indicators more effectively in decision-making
- improve the teaching on some courses
- address the unsatisfactory level of achievement of many 16 to 18 year old students
- implement more effective quality assurance procedures.

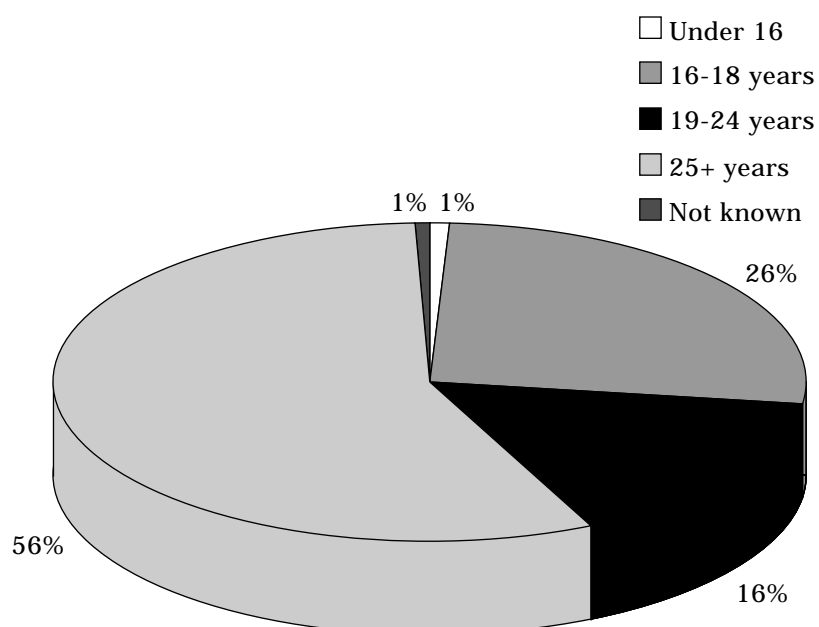
FIGURES

1	Percentage student numbers by age (as at November 1996)
2	Percentage student numbers by level of study (as at November 1996)
3	Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1996)
4	Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at March 1997)
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

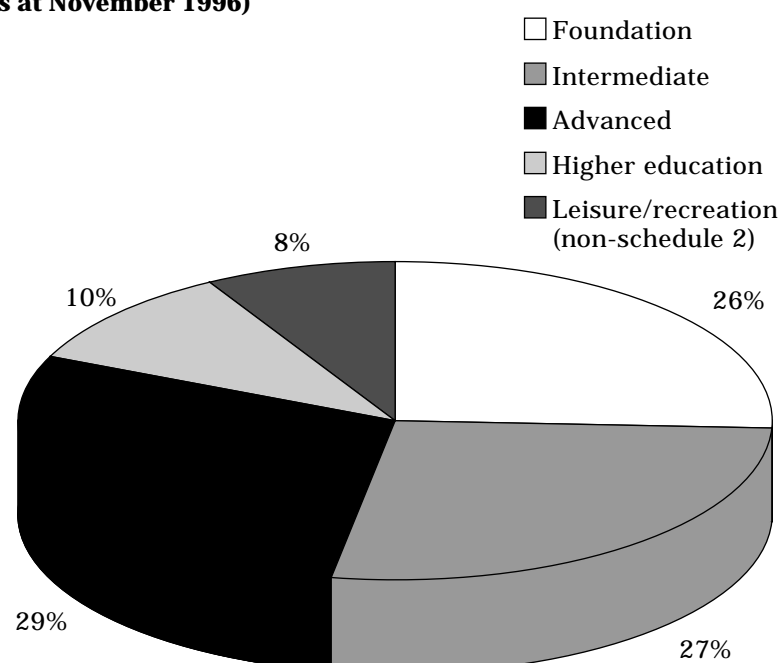
**York College of Further and Higher Education: percentage student numbers by age
(as at November 1996)**



Student numbers: 10,235

Figure 2

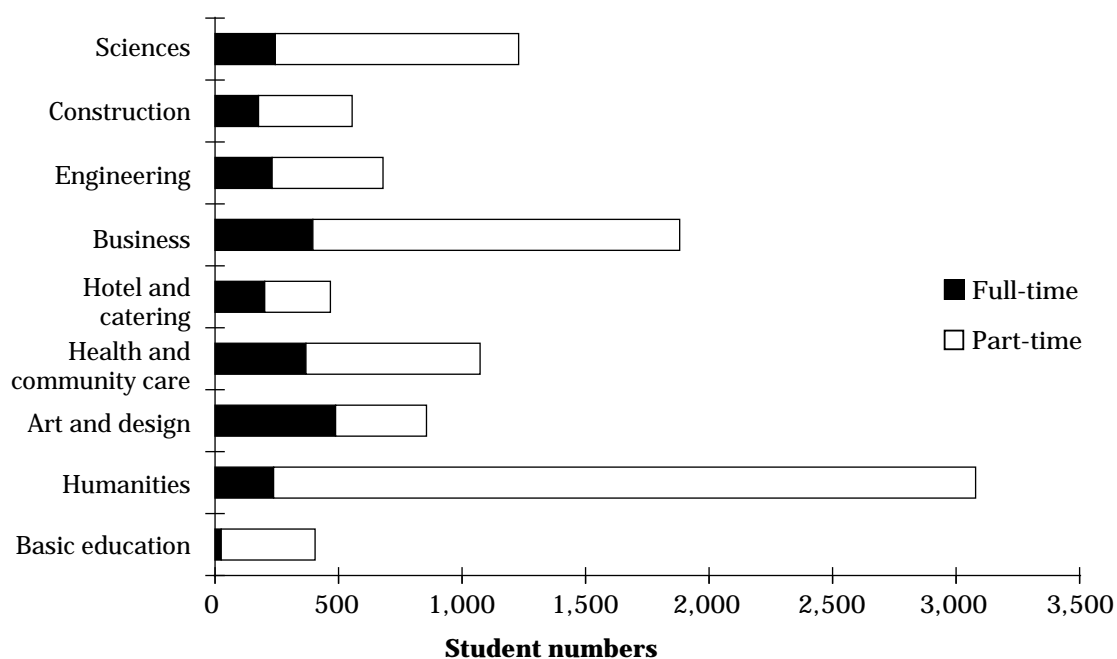
**York College of Further and Higher Education: percentage student numbers by level
of study (as at November 1996)**



Student numbers: 10,235

Figure 3

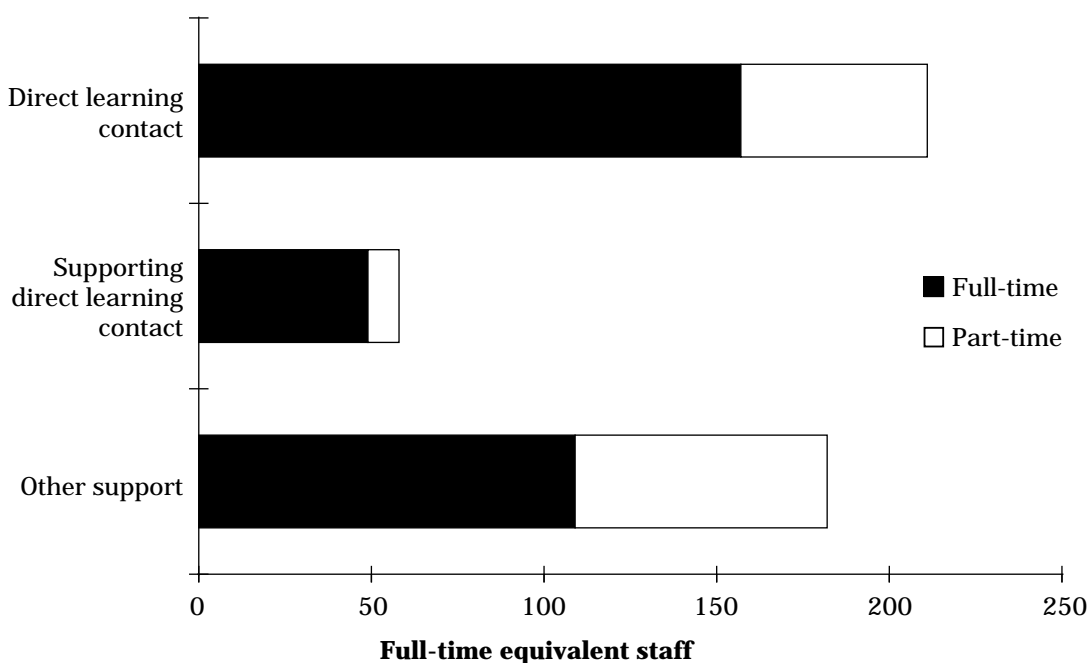
York College of Further and Higher Education: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1996)



Student numbers: 10,235

Figure 4

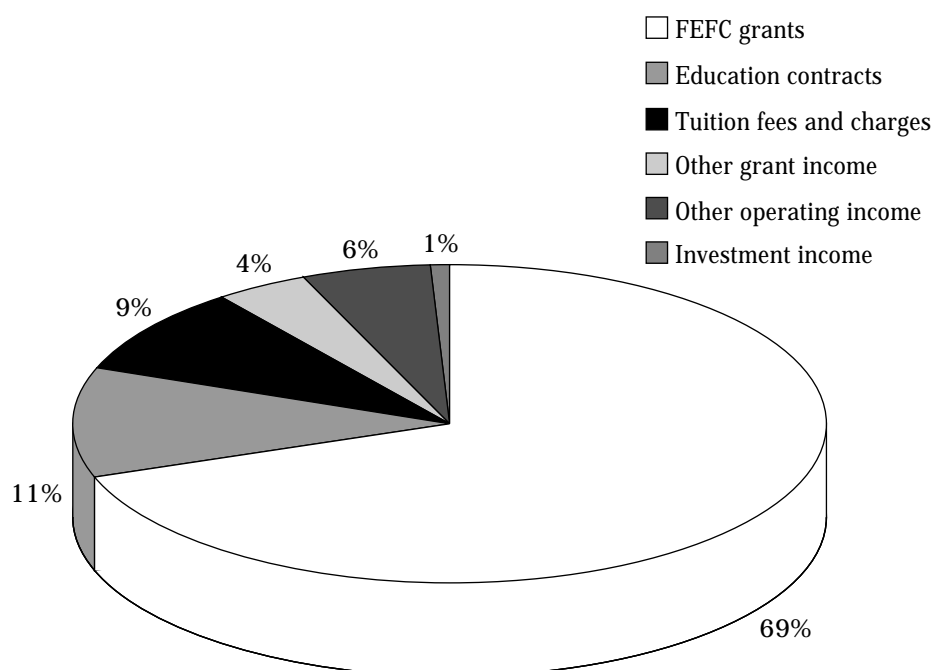
York College of Further and Higher Education: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at March 1997)



Full-time equivalent staff: 451

Figure 5

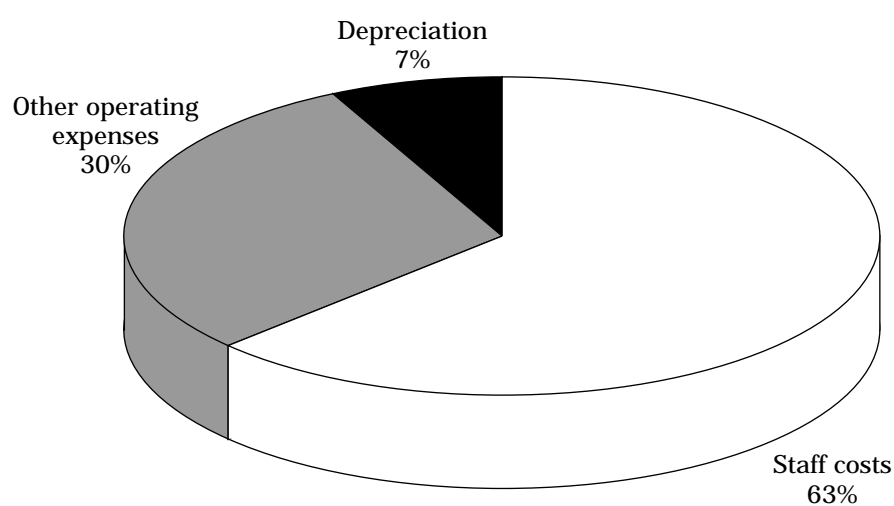
York College of Further and Higher Education: income (for 12 months to July 1996)



Income: £12,597,000

Figure 6

York College of Further and Higher Education: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)



Expenditure: £13,471,000

