

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

The People's College of Tertiary Education

April 1995

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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

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

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

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

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

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FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 34/95

THE PEOPLE'S COLLEGE OF TERTIARY EDUCATION

EAST MIDLANDS REGION

Inspected August - December 1994

Summary

The People's College of Tertiary Education is located in the centre of Nottingham. Its students come from a variety of backgrounds and include many from groups who are not normally involved in further education. There are appropriate procedures for admissions and initial counselling, and students continue to receive good support and guidance. The college has a good range of equipment for the courses it offers. Adult students achieve good results on courses which prepare them for entry to higher education, and 16-18 year old students on their final year of vocational courses achieve excellent results. In contrast, GCE A level results, and the results in some GCSE subjects are poor. Discontinuities in leadership since the end of 1993, and the recent postponement of arrangements to appoint a new principal while the governors evaluate a merger proposal, have hampered the development of appropriate systems and procedures for the general management of the college. The procedures of the governing body and the strategic planning process should be reviewed. The college should devise a strategy to meet its targets for growth, implement fully its quality assurance procedures, improve relations with the Greater Nottingham TEC, improve attendance on some courses, and make better use of the accommodation on the main site.

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

Aspects of cross-college provision	Grade
Responsiveness and range of provision	3
Governance and management	4
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	2
Quality assurance	3
Resources: staffing	3
equipment/learning resources	2
accommodation	4

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Sciences	2	Leisure	3
Mathematics	3		
Electrical installation	2	Health and community care	3
Mechanical engineering	3	Humanities	3
Electronic engineering	3		
Business	3	Access to higher education	2

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INTRODUCTION

1 Twenty registered inspectors visited the college for 80 inspector days between 26 August and 9 December 1994. They observed 148 learning sessions and examined samples of students' work. Discussions were held with staff, students, college governors, representatives from industry, the local community, and the Greater Nottingham Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). Documents including the strategic plan, the college charter, policy statements, and information system reports were also consulted during the inspection.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 The college is one of eight in the Nottingham conurbation. There are five general further education colleges, a tertiary college, and two sixth form colleges as well as a number of schools with sixth forms. The area covered by the Greater Nottingham TEC has a population of about 607,500 amounting to 61 per cent of the population of the county. About 6 per cent of the areas's population is from minority ethnic groups. Unemployment in the city of Nottingham in September 1994 was 16.9 per cent compared with 12.4 per cent for the Greater Nottingham TEC area, and 10.6 per cent for the United Kingdom.

3 The college is based on two main sites, Maid Marian Way in the city centre, and Carlton Road, approximately one-and-a-half miles away. Founded in 1846, it became a tertiary college four years ago as the result of a merger with a sixth form college. Within Nottingham, each of the further education colleges has traditionally offered a specialist vocational curriculum in addition to broad programmes of general education. The People's College of Tertiary Education has special expertise in science and engineering.

4 Ninety-six per cent of full-time students and 85 per cent of part-time students are from the local districts of Nottingham. The more specialised courses in science and engineering, including pharmacy, dental technology and medical physics, attract some students from a wider area. The college has a policy of encouraging adult students, and students from the inner city. The number of enrolments at the time of the inspection was 6,077 and 58 per cent of the students were aged 25 and above. There were 1,476 full-time students of whom 66 per cent were in science or engineering programme areas. Twenty-six per cent of the full-time students were from minority ethnic groups. Percentage enrolments by age and level of study are shown in figures 1 and 2. Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figure 3. At the time of the inspection, the college employed 103 full-time and 42 full-time equivalent part-time teaching staff. There were 88 full-time and 25 full-time equivalent part-time support staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

5 In 1993-94, the college increased its financial reserves despite enrolments which were 36 per cent below target. In 1994-95, income

from the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) has been reduced by 9.1 per cent.

6 The mission of the college is 'to deliver a quality education service which recognises and responds efficiently and effectively to the needs of the whole community'.

RESPONSIVENESS AND THE RANGE OF PROVISION

7 The range of courses offered reflects the college's strengths in science and engineering. Care, art and design, business, sports and leisure, and General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) courses are also offered. General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) are being introduced as they become available. The college recruits many of its students from the inner city area and provides opportunities for those who do not normally follow courses in further education colleges. These include 'freestart' and 'access' schemes and specific courses such as 'women into engineering and science'.

8 Some of the schemes are designed for unemployed adults. Free day-time courses are offered in a wide range of subjects from business to welding. About 400 adult students are following access courses which prepare students for entry to higher education. Students on access schemes can choose a course from a specific subject area or build up a study programme from a mixture of subject areas. The college also offers 12 GCSE subjects and GCE advanced level mathematics in a form which allows students the flexibility to determine their patterns of study.

9 There is no clear strategy for marketing. The college has recently employed a number of consultants to help in its marketing. One report from the consultants stimulated a number of physical changes to the main foyer and led the college to attempt to present itself more positively in the local press. Other recommendations have not been implemented. There is a need for a structure within which such recommendations can be assessed and the appropriate resources committed.

10 Leaflets and other publicity material are attractively presented and informative. College staff help to distribute publicity materials. The majority of staff involved in marketing and promotion are academic staff. Their teaching commitments limit the amount of time they can devote to marketing. One assistant principal has a designated responsibility for marketing alongside a number of other duties. A marketing assistant has been appointed to a temporary one-year post to help with the administrative work. The promotion and publicity budget was increased in response to last year's drop in enrolments.

11 The college and the 11-16 schools in the immediate locality have formed a consortium to facilitate collaboration on a range of issues. The college has used its expertise in GNVQs to develop learning materials and there are useful exchanges of subject staff. There are frequent open days

and other events at the college which are attended by school leavers and those about to leave school. The college also has a developing programme of higher education which it offers in conjunction with Nottingham Trent University. A significant expansion of higher education is planned, although appropriate accommodation and staffing have not yet been identified. The college has a contract with the local education authority for non-vocational education covering the teaching of 49 subjects on 15 sites in the suburbs of Nottingham in addition to the college sites. At the time of the inspection, there were 1,567 enrolments on these courses.

12 Relationships with the Greater Nottingham TEC have been poor but are beginning to improve. There has been difficulty in identifying a representative from the Greater Nottingham TEC to serve on the governing body and there are legal issues in dispute between the college and the TEC. The college receives work-related further education funds but its share of other TEC funds is low. The college has made no bid for monies from a local initiative fund.

13 Although the college has obtained support from a range of bodies for its work in the inner city, it has been less successful in this than many other colleges. Its strategy and procedures for making bids to external agencies should be re-assessed. A major project, the People First Centre, was due to open in March 1995. This is a purpose-built centre, two miles from the main site, located in an area which has a high rate of unemployment. It was built in partnership with the City Task Force, Nottingham City Council and supported by the European Regional Development Fund. Funds for a further eight projects, covering about 120 students, have been obtained from a range of agencies including City Challenge and the Greater Nottingham TEC.

14 The college organises a range of full-cost courses for local companies, which are taught mainly by staff from engineering and science. The courses created a profit of approximately £40,000 in 1993-94. Other areas of the college fail to identify and exploit the opportunities for full-cost courses. The college has no formal employer liaison committees but there are strong informal contacts at course level. The employers who use the college, especially those in engineering and science, are satisfied with the service they receive. This year, for the first time, a questionnaire will be sent to employers to obtain their views on the college's services.

15 College staff have developed effective learning materials which allow students to study without attending the college. Examples include a foundation course in gastroenterology and a Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) continuing education certificate for the Dispensing Doctors' Association. Appropriate learning materials also support the attainment of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) for chemical and pharmaceutical process workers, and the development of a range of skills for workers in instrumentation, electrical and mechanical engineering.

16 There are equal opportunities policies for staff and students. Staff conducting interviews of applicants are trained and the college keeps records of applications and selection procedures. However, the equal opportunities policy document is not widely available and is not referred to in the college's publicity.

17 The college has links with a number of countries, mainly through engineering. All students are invited to apply for projects involving travel abroad and visits to European countries may be subsidised from the college budget. A BTEC module in European studies is offered to students on a wide range of courses.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

18 The college has lacked continuity of leadership. The vice-principal left at the end of December 1993 to take up another post. Early in 1994, the principal was absent through ill-health and the assistant principal (resources) was appointed acting principal. The principal retired officially in August 1994 and the appointment of a new principal was planned for January 1995. Arrangements for the selection procedures were in place when an approach was made by another college to consider a possible merger. The governors decided to defer the appointment until the merger proposal had been evaluated. These events have hampered the development of college systems and initiatives but have had little impact on the experience of students. This has been mainly due to the senior management team, upon whom a considerable burden of additional work has fallen, and the professionalism of the staff.

19 The board has 17 members but currently there are two vacancies. One of the vacancies is for the student member; a vacancy which has not been filled since incorporation. The college has an arrangement with Nottinghamshire County Council who supply a clerk to the governing body on a renewable annual contract. The clerk is also retained as an adviser to the board on issues of post-16 education. It is clear that the governors value the contribution the clerk has made but the appropriateness of the arrangement should be reconsidered. The governors have not established a view on the balance of expertise and background they consider to be desirable for the governing body. There is no register of interests and this matter has not been discussed. Not all meetings, especially committee meetings, have been well attended. The governing body has not yet developed a mechanism for monitoring its own performance or that of the college.

20 The governors do much of their work through committees. The terms of reference for the finance and general purpose committee and the audit committee have now been formally agreed but the terms of reference for the employment and personnel committees have yet to be accepted. The estates committee has no agreed terms of reference. Working through a committee structure has made board meetings more efficient but

information is not always passed effectively between the committees and the board. This has resulted in long delays in establishing policies and inadequate monitoring of progress in some key areas.

21 Planning, especially at a strategic level, is weak. The governors had little involvement in the development of the strategic plan. The current mission statement is the one written for the tertiary college when it was formed in 1991. The plan does not contain a clear statement of the college's current strategic objectives and there are no target dates for the achievements of the objectives which are in place. The objectives for growth in student enrolments are an essential part of the plan but have been variously interpreted by governors. The plan also contains a comprehensive accommodation strategy drawn up by an external consultant. However, even with entirely favourable circumstances the ambitious accommodation plan could not be realised before 1997. This means that significant parts of the declared forward strategy are unlikely to be implemented.

22 The governors have given little consideration to finance at a strategic level. For example, they have not set an annual target for an operating surplus/loss or considered how to maintain the asset value of the college. Resource deployment would be more effective if the cost of meeting the strategic objectives was estimated and taken into account. The college took a substantial reserve into incorporation and this has been maintained. There is, however, no clear consensus amongst members of the board as to the purpose of this reserve or the criteria to be applied for its release. The finance and general purposes committee of governors receives regular financial reports.

23 A culture of corporate governance and management has yet to be developed. The governing body has recognised a need for training and their first corporate event, which included the senior management team, took place in December 1994. It appropriately focused on the roles and responsibilities of governors. The development of the college charter has assisted in identifying some common values and expectations across the college. In the current period of uncertainty, the senior management team have understandably concentrated on operational issues. They have begun to develop the systems and procedures which the college lacked; for example, the systematic collection of student data for the management information system and the development of quality assurance procedures. Progress has been hindered by a lack of clarity about the strategic direction of the college and an unwillingness to commit resources to developments. Some teaching areas have produced plans for their future development which show clear links to the objectives of the strategic plan. Non-teaching areas such as the refectory, the childcare centre, and the accounts section, have yet to be involved in the process. Progress in recognising the contribution that support staff can make to the achievement of the mission has been slow.

24 There are a number of ambiguities in the roles and the responsibilities of staff, many stemming from the reorganisation in 1990, which established The People's College of Tertiary Education as a tertiary college. Management operates through individual relationships rather than through clear procedures for delegated authority and accountability. Many of the middle managers have heavy responsibilities. In the matrix management structure, heads of school are responsible for resources, including staff, while curriculum directors are responsible for the delivery of the curriculum and the progress of the students. This works well in areas such as engineering, where a group of courses are the common responsibility of the curriculum director and head of school because both managers work together to resource and deliver a specific programme. The structure is more difficult to implement for GCE courses where the curriculum director must liaise with a number of heads of school. Generally, curriculum directors do not have sufficient time to deal with administrative duties, management responsibilities, individual student problems and development work. There is a lack of clarity in the roles and responsibilities of some cross-college co-ordinators. Some have realistic co-ordinating roles. Others, such as the learning support co-ordinator, require more resources to carry out their management function and more clearly-defined procedures for accountability. Responsibility for technician staff is particularly ill defined. The college has demonstrated a commitment to restructuring but the project, involving a consultant, has been halted pending consideration of the merger. This enforced delay could be used profitably to identify the rationale for restructuring.

25 The central collection of data on course retention rates and student achievement is becoming more consistent across the college. Information is available to managers but it is not presented in a form which is easy to digest. The college lacks a system for monitoring attendance: in a number of cases, temporary attendance registers were still in use in mid-October. In general, there is more management information available than is used. The college subscribes to an interesting project which compares various performance indicators across colleges. The report from the project suggests that most areas of the college are operating efficiently. The report has not been discussed widely with managers.

26 The college's income and expenditure for the 16 months to July 1994 are shown in figures 5 and 6. The college's average level of funding for 1994-95 is £14.01 per unit. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges is £18.17. The sharp decline in enrolments in 1993-94 compared with 1992-93 means that the college must achieve a growth of 47 per cent in 1994-95 to achieve its target average level of funding. Budget allocations are generally clear. The accounting software is being developed to provide monitoring statements which meet the needs of budget holders. Senior managers receive management accounts on a regular basis. Tight

control over resources is exercised by the acting principal. The need to operate efficiently is well understood at all levels.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

27 College staff are involved in a wide range of events at which young people and adults are offered advice and guidance on careers. They attended the annual Nottingham Opportunities Fair, the women returners' convention and careers sessions for school pupils and their parents. Formal presentations are made to a range of minority ethnic and community groups. A variety of 'taster' events are held with local schools, including one-day visits to the college and work experience placements at the college. Conferences are held to update school careers staff on the range of courses offered, including GNVQs. Students committed to a full-time course of study may attend the college for a day in June to sample their chosen course.

28 Student admissions procedures are well managed by a central admissions and enquiry unit. There is a full range of advice and guidance services which includes a service to assess students' previous experience, and where relevant, to accredit it as counting towards an NVQ qualification. The assessment and accreditation of prior learning, however, is not well publicised in the college prospectus. Regular minuted meetings are held by the admissions team at which systems and procedures are reviewed, and recommendations made. The admissions system has recently been reviewed to ensure that it addresses all the requirements of the college charter. The college has developed an inviting reception area. Personal callers are normally dealt with promptly and there are quick responses to telephone enquiries. All enquiries are recorded and the relevant information entered on an admissions database. The database is shortly to be linked to the college management information system in order to make better use of the information available. The college sets enrolment targets, and enquiries, interviews and offers of places are monitored monthly. The number of reception staff is inadequate to deal with the volume of enquiries at many times, particularly at the start of the academic year.

29 Initial interviews are carried out by the admissions team and there is a clear structure for the interview. Staff deal with applicants from a wide variety of backgrounds. They include the unemployed who have vocational skills that require updating, the long-term unemployed with few qualifications, adults returning to study, adults seeking further qualifications, and students who have just left school. Where appropriate, students are given additional specialist guidance by staff from curriculum areas.

30 All full-time students have a personal tutor and a timetabled tutorial each week. The role of the personal tutor is to support the development of the student's plan of action and the recording of achievement, to carry out

formal academic reviews, to follow up specific issues with individuals or small groups, and to develop students' learning skills. Some materials have been produced to help tutors. In practice, the quality of tutorials varies considerably across the college. There were several examples of successful group activities and some tutors used outside visits to encourage and develop group cohesion. Levels of attendance at tutorials vary. Support for part-time students is provided through the subject or course tutors. Part-time students do not have support for developing study skills or personal skills unless this is undertaken as part of their course of study.

31 There is an appropriate induction for full-time students. The induction programme has a common half-day for all new full-time students at which staff introduce the college and its facilities. Students are given an induction pack containing the college charter, the student handbook, and an induction checklist. In practice, coverage of intended topics is variable. Some students are made fully aware of the charter and the student handbook but in many instances, students are not aware of their rights and responsibilities. The college induction is followed by an induction which is designed by, and is the responsibility of, course teams. In most cases, the induction programme works well but, on GNVQ courses, for example, it lasts too long. All students are interviewed individually by their tutor during enrolment week. The meeting, valued by students, is used for general administration, to identify future career aspirations, and to begin the development of students' individual plans of action. There are opportunities for students to change courses for several weeks after the start of their course and some have taken advantage of this option.

32 A record of achievement system is being introduced successfully for all full-time students. Students use a computer software program that allows them to match their own records to the National Record of Achievement. The system is compatible with those operated by some local schools. Part-time students are not covered by this process.

33 The professional counselling service provided by the college is effective. The counselling room is suitable and the booking system affords the required level of privacy. The counselling service also provides advice on welfare rights. There is a heavy demand for the service at the beginning of the year. Many adult students are unemployed and have difficulty in interpreting the Department of Social Security regulations concerning study and availability for work. The situation is made more difficult by different interpretations of the regulations by benefit offices.

34 The local authority careers service provides 100 days of careers support at the college. The range of services includes presentations to groups, individual guidance, local job information and advertising of local careers events. The level of students' participation varies: not all student groups are effectively targeted. The library has a well-resourced careers section with both general and specific careers information.

35 There is a clear and fair policy on student discipline which is described in the college charter. It is adhered to within the college. In the isolated instances where disciplinary infringements occur, action is taken promptly following the procedures outlined in the college charter.

36 A working group of student volunteers is reviewing the role of the student union in relation to national legislation and the constitution which has recently been approved by governors. There is no student executive. The lack of a student representative body has reduced the ability of students to raise issues of concern and to communicate effectively with senior managers.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

37 The strengths outweighed the weaknesses in 57 per cent of the 148 classes inspected. Weaknesses outweighed strengths in 6 per cent of the sessions. The profile of grades is in line with the norms established for the colleges so far inspected. The following table summarises the grades awarded as a result of the inspection.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level		2	5	6	1	0	14
GCSE		1	4	1	0	0	6
GNVQ		2	3	6	2	0	13
NVQ		5	9	6	1	1	22
Other vocational		7	21	18	3	1	50
Access		4	11	5	0	0	20
Higher education		0	6	5	0	0	11
Other		0	4	8	0	0	12
Total		21	63	55	7	2	148

38 In mathematics, there is a good range of courses, including those for students who have minimal entry qualifications. Relationships between staff and students are in most cases excellent. The good features of mathematics teaching include high-quality materials for GCSE and access courses, good support for students in the classroom and changes in teaching styles to meet the needs of particular groups. On some courses, student attendance is poor. Careers guidance for GCE A level mathematics and access students is informative, especially for students wishing to go on to higher education.

39 In science, there is a wide range of courses and good links with local industry. All classes have schemes of work with target dates by which topics will be covered. A variety of teaching methods are used and there are regular checks on learning during most classes. In some classes,

teachers pay insufficient attention to the needs of high and low achieving students. Students are aware of assessment criteria. The quality of science teaching for sports science students is poor. In contrast, the teaching of pharmaceutical sciences is of a high standard. In general, science teachers use too narrow a range of teaching methods and make insufficient use of appropriate visual aids. The equipment used in science is good but some of the science textbooks are out of date.

40 The separation of engineering courses into three distinct areas of electrical, electronic and mechanical prevents some students from following the programme which best meets their needs. New units or modules should be introduced into courses to reflect technological developments. In electronic engineering, there is a good range of courses which provide progression from foundation through to higher national level. Teaching is sound and generally well matched to the needs of students. Practical skills are suitably linked with the development of knowledge. The equipment is suitable to support the development of students' skills. Retention rates particularly for year-long programmes for the unemployed need to be improved. A range of courses in electrical engineering are available from installation craft to higher national level and there are several electrical courses for industry. Students work on good-quality learning and assessment materials but the range of teaching methods is too narrow. In mechanical engineering the course provision is matched to the needs of the local industry and the community. There is effective liaison with schools, the careers service and the job centre. There are good arrangements for the induction, support and the guidance of students but the monitoring of students' progress is weak. Teaching and learning materials for existing courses are underdeveloped.

41 There is good provision in business administration and for mature women returners but other aspects of business studies are still being developed. In the best organised teaching there were appropriate schemes of work and lesson plans, and good-quality learning materials. Information technology equipment and associated learning packages are generally well used, but information technology is not a sufficiently integral part of GNVQ work. Portfolios of NVQ work are carefully maintained and presented in an appropriate format. The relationship between staff and students is mature and businesslike. In most classes there were significant numbers of students who were either absent or late. There are no employer advisory panels and there is no development plan available for business studies.

42 Students on leisure and recreation courses benefit from the links established with the industry through work experience and staff contacts. Students experience a variety of learning activities. Assignments are interesting and contain relevant material. Inter-personal and information technology skills are developed effectively but there is insufficient attention to the development of communication skills. Levels of attendance and standards of punctuality are unsatisfactory. The area is well resourced with computers, specialist equipment, and text and reference books.

43 All students following courses in health and community care undertake work experience. There are good relationships with the health authority. Although there is a significant amount of group work and some interesting and challenging role-play and case study exercises, teachers fail to make best use of the responses of students or the resources available. In some of the best lessons, students are prepared to question and discuss and there were examples of well-structured handouts. In some classes, there are poor levels of attendance, in others the number of students who should be attending is not clear.

44 The schemes of work used in GCE A level programmes are generally satisfactory. In the better classes, questioning techniques are well used and the work is challenging. Handouts are of high quality but the quality of some overhead projector transparencies is poor. There are suitable procedures to review progress. Student absenteeism is a problem in a number of classes. Some rooms are unsuitable for group work.

45 The modular structure of the access programmes allows for flexible patterns of study. Students gain credit for individual modules which can be built up to the full qualification in many different ways. The course documentation is well written. There are a wide range of stimulating and challenging learning activities. Staff and students show a high level of mutual respect and support.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

46 The 83 students aged 16-18 entered for GCE AS/A level examinations in 1994 scored, on average, 3.1 points per entry. On this performance measure, based on the data in the 1994 performance tables published by the Department for Education, the college is among the bottom third of colleges in the further education sector. In subjects with 10 or more entrants, the overall pass rates in GCE A level subjects in 1994 are below the average for all sector colleges other than sixth form colleges. The one exception is arts and crafts.

47 In 1994, there were a number of GCSE subjects with pass rates, grades A-C, above the national averages for general further education and tertiary colleges: chemistry, computer studies, history, psychology, sociology and French. The college had pass rates, grades A-C, below the national averages in: English, mathematics, biology, human biology, physics, art and design, physical education, law and German.

48 Ninety-seven per cent of the 98 students in the final year of study on the vocational courses included in the Department for Education's 1994 performance tables were successful. This places the college among the top 10 per cent of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure.

49 Access courses are an important part of the college's provision. Of the 372 full-time students in 1993-94, 63 per cent successfully completed their courses and obtained access certificates. Fifty-one per cent of the

students went on to higher education; most to follow degree courses, a few to study for higher national diplomas.

50 Generally, students enjoy their work and are well motivated. In all curriculum areas, there were students who spoke confidently and enthusiastically about their studies.

51 Students are developing appropriate levels of skill and knowledge. Good-quality work was seen in practical and theoretical assignments. In access to higher education courses, standards of achievement are high, particularly in creative work. Students were observed working safely and competently in the pharmacy laboratory and in the electrical engineering practical work areas. Students and staff in the mechanical engineering workshop areas were safety conscious and all wore appropriate protective clothing.

52 Many students have opportunities to work as a member of a group. Case study discussions and role-play featured strongly in health and community care courses. Oral presentations, discussions and paired work were used effectively in the teaching of communications. However, on some of the engineering courses, students were given few opportunities to develop the skills involved in working constructively as a member of a group.

53 The college lacks a co-ordinated strategy for the development of core skills to ensure that appropriate support is available for all students. All full-time students are assessed for numeracy and literacy in order to identify those who require additional learning support. Students so identified are interviewed by personal tutors and, where necessary, referred for further counselling by specialist staff. They receive effective help to develop numeracy, communications and information technology skills where these form an integral part of their study programmes, but little support beyond this. The college provides a good basic education programme for the local community through a project called Online, originally organised by the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

54 One of the college's strategic aims refers to 'enhancing the quality of the provision to meet the needs of the community, business and industry'. The college's operational objectives are developed from the strategic aims but they make no reference to quality. Apart from the recently-established academic board and examinations subcommittee, there is no focus for the reporting of quality issues within the college or to governors.

55 The college has a corporate quality plan which forms an appendix to the strategic plan. It states that the governors are committed to total quality management and that quality management will apply to all the services provided by the college. Quality standards and characteristics have been developed for use by course teams and these also apply to some support functions, for example, to student guidance and to admissions

procedures. A number of course teams have a history of working with external quality systems, for example, the BTEC and the North East Midlands Access Partnership.

56 A quality review process is being implemented for course teams. All curriculum areas including GCE A levels were part of a pilot exercise in 1993-94. The system will operate fully for the first time during the academic year 1994-95. Questionnaires are used to obtain the views of students, including their views on the quality of teaching. After analysing each questionnaire, key points for action are identified by the course team and recorded on an action planning sheet. There is also a written annual course review which includes relevant data on students and courses. The course reviews and planning sheets vary in quality. In the better documents, teams identified key features and the actions which were required to improve provision. Course review meetings are normally attended by the curriculum director, teachers and tutors, and student representatives. Although intended, industrial representatives are little involved in such meetings. The pilot exercise in quality review has led to improvement on a number of courses. The college intends to introduce overview reports for curriculum areas. At present, there is no mechanism for making such overviews available to a wider college audience.

57 An effective internal verifier system is being developed. Staff, with an involvement in NVQs and GNVQs, have been appropriately identified for Training and Development Lead Body internal verifier training. Procedures are fully documented and provide a clear record for audit by external verifiers.

58 The college is seeking Investors in People status. The target date for achieving this was December 1995, but the timescale has drifted recently. Staff-development opportunities are available to teaching and support staff. The human resources development plan, which is an appendix to the strategic plan, identifies staff-development priority areas which include teaching styles, GNVQ and NVQ developments, records of achievement, Training and Development Lead Body awards and management training. Staff applications for development have to be related to relevant college priorities and feedback on completed activities is required. The college makes no formal report on staff-development activity. In 1993-94 less than 0.5 per cent of the college expenditure was spent on staff development activities. In 1994-95, it has been reduced further.

59 Appraisal schemes for teaching staff and for support staff operate on a two-year cycle. The teaching staff scheme began in September 1992; the support staff scheme in September 1993. All full-time teachers on permanent contracts have had an initial appraisal meeting and have completed forms recording their staff-development needs. Although it is more than a year since some staff were appraised, review meetings, the next stage in the process, have yet to be held. Completed development forms have been copied to a member of the senior management team but they have not been used in the staff-development planning process.

60 Induction for new staff consists of a broad introduction to the college, and a briefing on relevant issues. A more extended, and appropriate, induction programme is being developed.

61 The college charter is distributed widely. It was highly commended in the Department for Further Education's competition to find the best college charter. The charter is comprehensive without being over complex, and is written in simple, clear language. The charter lays down minimum expectations of service for its customers. The success in attaining these expectations will be difficult to measure unless the charter is linked more closely to the college's quality assurance procedures.

62 The college self-assessment report is written to the headings in the Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*, but does not include governance and management or resources. It consists of a brief text supported by information which was collected from student survey questionnaires. There are cross-references to supporting documentation. The text does not explicitly identify strengths and weaknesses nor give overall judgements. Overall, the report does not provide a realistic evaluation of the college's strengths and weaknesses.

RESOURCES

Staffing

63 Teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced. A consequence of the 1991 merger is that an unusually high percentage of them have a middle management grade. Approximately one-third are female. Less than 4 per cent are from minority ethnic groups. Part-time teachers make up 39 per cent of the total full-time equivalent teaching staff which is above the college's own target of 35 per cent. There is a generous level of technician support at the main site. One technician is attached to the Carlton Road site, and this level of support is inadequate.

Equipment/learning resources

64 Overall, the range and quality of specialist equipment are at least adequate for the programmes offered. Electrical engineering, business, care, and pharmacy have good resources but some engineering equipment is out of date. Some teaching rooms are not equipped with appropriate teaching aids.

65 On both college sites, students have access to modern computer workstations running appropriate commercial software. In addition, there are a number of portable computers which are used for work on community sites which are not equipped with computers. The college computing network is being expanded to make more efficient use of the available software packages. All the computing facilities are timetabled for classes. Individual students are able to use computers in periods when no classes are timetabled and during classes if computers are free and if space is

available. Examples of good information technology resources include the support for business students and the well-equipped multi-media computer room. The college has no information technology policy and there is no strategic overview of how information technology should develop to meet the needs of the evolving curriculum. A reasonable budget is available for the purchase of general purpose information technology equipment, but there is no formal policy for replacing equipment.

66 The libraries on both sites provide pleasant working environments. The main site library has a limited amount of study space. There is an adequate stock of 24,500 books and 200 periodicals. There is also a large collection of some 500 videos. There are few resources specifically designed to support the growing amount of assignment and project work undertaken by students. The library loses 15 per cent of its bookstock annually and measures are being introduced to try to reduce this. The smaller library at the Carlton Road site has a reasonable amount of study space. It has an adequate stock of 6,000 books and 70 periodicals, and a collection of 107 videos. Duplication of texts between the two sites has been sensibly avoided. On both sites the provision of compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases, is limited. The library staff have few formal links with teaching staff and there is no systematic programme to introduce all students to the library. Only 26 per cent of the students enrolled at the college are registered as members of the library. Both libraries have restricted opening hours: the main site library closes at 19.00, limiting its use by evening class students, and the Carlton Road site library closes at 17.00. There is no computerised system for the management of the bookstock although several systems have been reviewed.

67 Over the period 1991-95 a total of £2,200,000 has been allocated for the purchase of consumables and equipment, of which some £900,000 has been used for equipment. Of the global sum, £440,000 will have been spent on appropriate information technology equipment. Schools are allocated budgets under various headings on a formula related to their projected student numbers and with a weighting dependent upon their specialisms. The amounts are adjusted in the light of actual enrolments. Financial allocations to schools are generally sufficient to enable heads of school to implement rolling replacement programmes but the purchase of expensive equipment is difficult. Schools may bid for further funds for development projects. Funding for non-teaching areas is based on historical allocations adjusted for approved developments and growth.

Accommodation

68 The main site is located near the city centre and consists of three buildings which house the college administration and the engineering and science facilities. The engineering workshop building provides a number of spacious areas, but the overall ambience is depressing and corridors, in particular, are in need of redecoration. The administrative building also

contains a number of classrooms and laboratories. Some piecemeal refurbishment has taken place, but much of the teaching accommodation is drab and a number of laboratories contain out-of-date furniture and fittings. Some computer rooms in particular lack an appropriate modern image. The Hunter survey identified that a significant amount of work needs to be carried out on both these buildings. The third building is in a generally satisfactory condition. It houses the learning-resources centre, the mathematics, science and communications workshops and a childcare centre. The accommodation is spacious, well furnished and offers attractive and stimulating learning environments.

69 Carlton Road was the site of the former sixth form college. The site has suffered from vandalism and break-ins. It accommodates general and adult education programmes together with business studies, sport and recreation, and art and design. A number of small rooms have been converted into teaching areas of a more useful size. Some are well furnished and provide a bright working environment. There is a modern childcare centre, which has been funded partly by the City Challenge initiative, a refectory and a student common room. The college also has use of the gymnasium and changing rooms of the adjacent comprehensive school, and rents some of its classrooms. There is a regular free bus service between the two sites.

70 Student social facilities are limited. On the main site, the refectory is uninviting in appearance and the poor image is reinforced by its designation as a canteen. There is no common room for students and no social facilities to cater adequately for the large number of adult students attending the college. Students have access to a gymnasium on each site which is supervised during the lunch breaks. There is no wheelchair access to the buildings on the main or on the Carlton Road sites.

71 Teaching accommodation is managed centrally, although workshops, laboratories and other specialist areas are normally timetabled directly by heads of schools. A survey of room occupancy has been carried out twice a year but there has been no other systematic monitoring of the use of space. The mature students who attend for a shortened day contribute to the low use of parts of the accommodation. On the main site, the engineering workshops, the gymnasium and the hall are underused. Because of the proposed new building programme, no attempt has been made to adapt the underused accommodation on the main site.

72 The accommodation strategy is based on an intention to concentrate all the work on the city centre site. A significant amount of rebuilding on the main site is planned. Because of the anticipated limited life of the existing buildings there has been a reluctance to improve the quality of the accommodation. An 11-year maintenance programme has been drawn up, but actual work has been limited to that which is essential. As a consequence, the overall quality of the environment has failed to improve as much as it has done in many other sector colleges.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

73 The strengths of the college are:

- the recruitment of a wide range of students, and especially of those who would not normally enter further education
- good guidance and support for students
- students' success on access courses which prepare adults for entry to higher education
- the good examination results for students on vocational courses
- good specialist equipment.

74 The college should:

- resolve as quickly as possible the uncertainties over the future of the college and its leadership
- review the procedures of the governing body
- strengthen its strategic planning
- ensure that it meets its targets for growth
- clarify its management structure
- improve relations with the Greater Nottingham TEC
- raise levels of attendance on some courses
- improve examination results at GCE A level and in some GCSE subjects
- implement fully the procedures for quality assurance
- make better use of the accommodation on the main site and improve its appearance.

FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage enrolments by age (as at November 1994)

 - 2 Percentage enrolments by level of study (as at November 1994)

 - 3 Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1994)

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

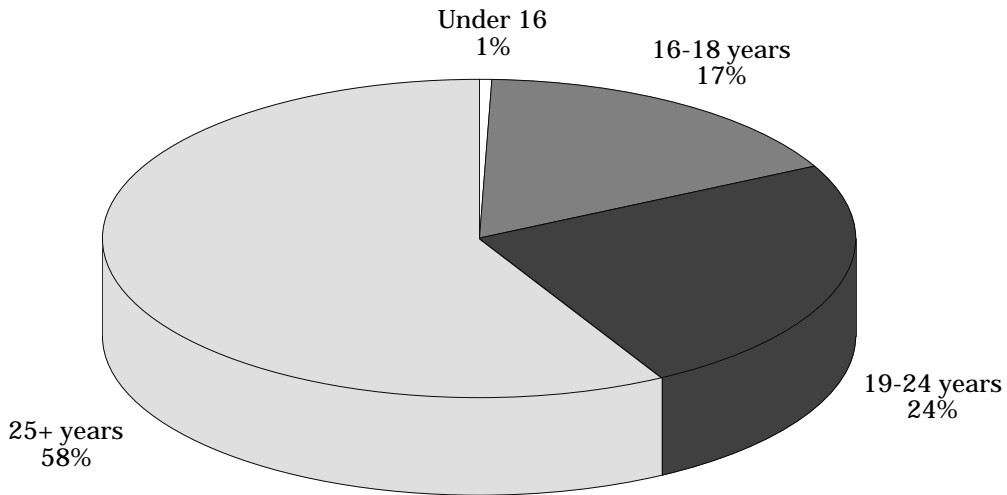
 - 5 Income (for 16 months to July 1994)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)

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

Figure 1

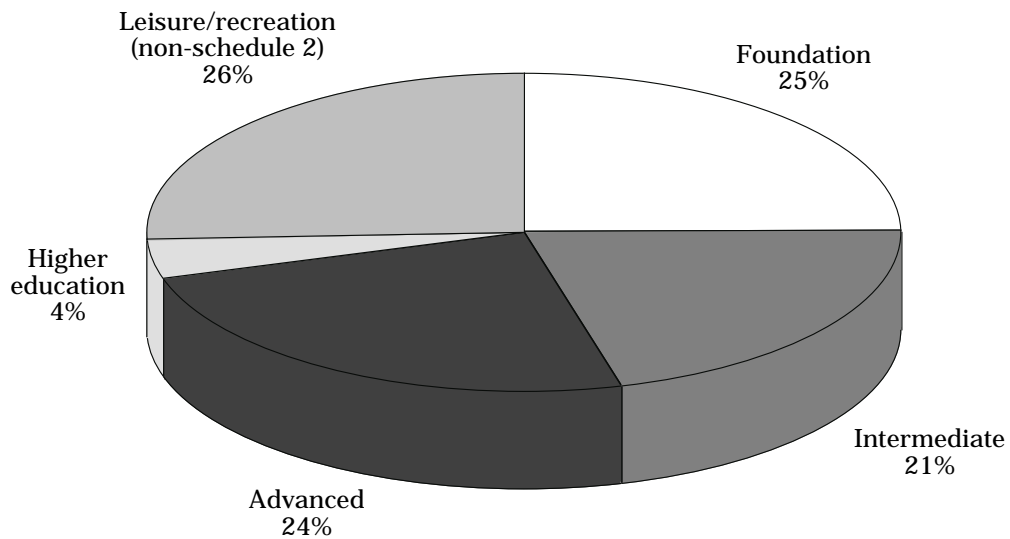
The People's College of Tertiary Education: percentage enrolments by age (as at November 1994)



Enrolments: 6,077

Figure 2

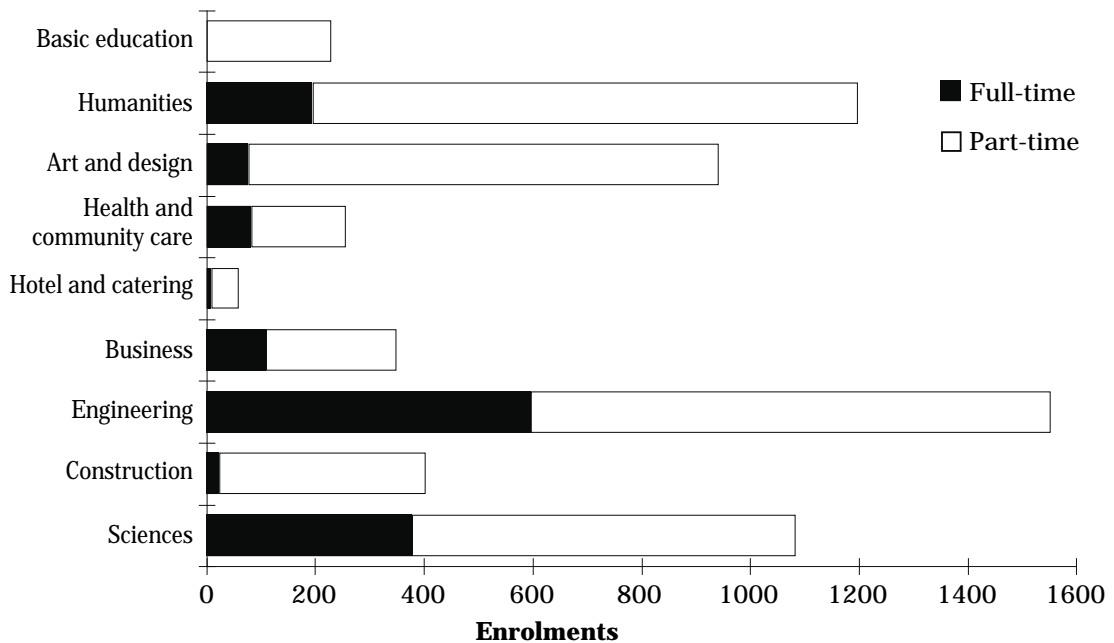
The People's College of Tertiary Education: percentage enrolments by level of study (as at November 1994)



Enrolments: 6,077

Figure 3

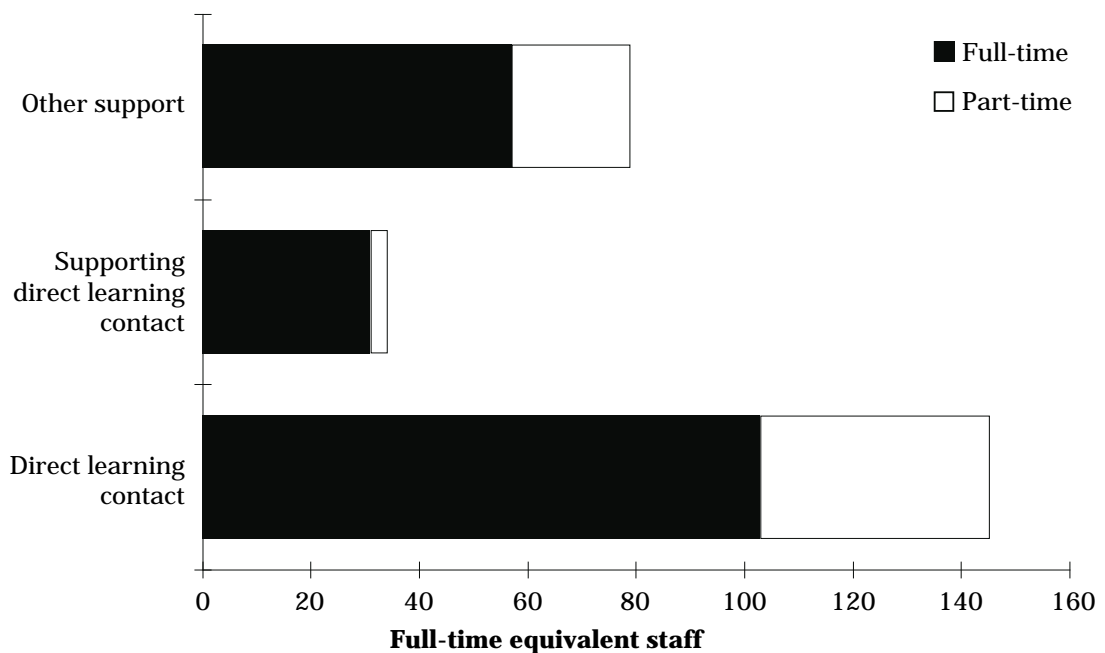
The People's College of Tertiary Education: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1994)



Enrolments: 6,077

Figure 4

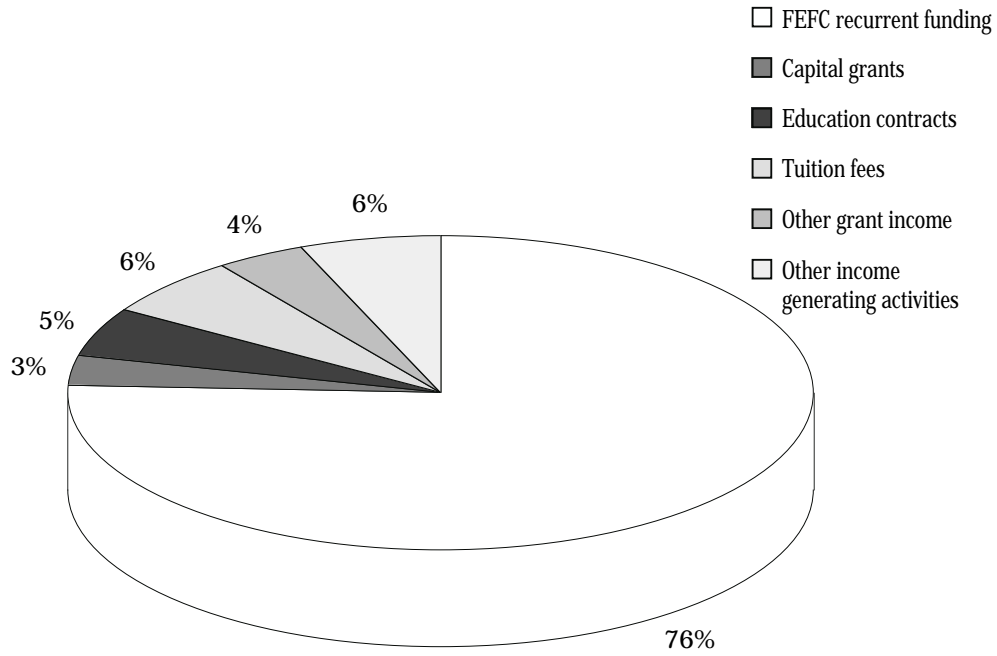
The People's College of Tertiary Education: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at November 1994)



Full-time equivalent staff: 259

Figure 5

The People's College of Tertiary Education: income (for 16 months to July 1994)

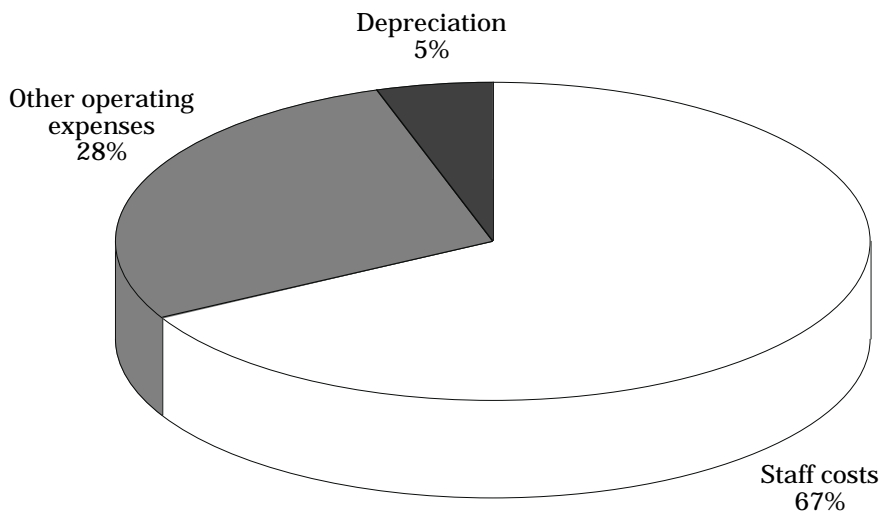


Income: £9,853,000

Note: this chart excludes £146,000 Hunter money.

Figure 6

The People's College of Tertiary Education: expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)



Expenditure: £9,271,000

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