

REPORT FROM THE INSPECTORATE

Rugby College of Further Education

September 1995

THE **FURTHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL**

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

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

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

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

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

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FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 112/95

RUGBY COLLEGE OF FURTHER EDUCATION WEST MIDLANDS REGION Inspected May 1994 - May 1995

Summary

Rugby College of Further Education provides opportunities for students from several counties bordering the eastern parts of Warwickshire. It offers a wide range of vocational and general courses for students of all abilities and many short courses which benefit local employers. There are good opportunities for adults seeking qualifications or access to higher education and there is well-established provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Over eighty per cent of students at the college are aged 19 or over. The corporation board members invest much time and effort in supporting the college's activities. There is good teaching in all subjects. A well-developed tutorial and counselling system assists students in their studies. Staff are expert and knowledgeable in their subjects. The college has a firm sense of direction on quality assurance. Accommodation improvements have added to the appeal of the college. There is an urgent need to continue recent initiatives intended to rectify the college's serious financial weakness. Corporation members and senior managers should ensure there are adequate contingency plans to meet any threats to the college's financial recovery plan. The college should also: improve its marketing; strengthen its links with the local community; ensure that there are effective arrangements for replacing retiring members of the corporation; improve the quality of management information available to members of the corporation and senior managers; ensure that staff are effectively deployed; and tackle low attendance at classes.

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

3
4
2
3
3 3

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Engineering	2	Art and design	2
Business studies	2	Humanities	2
Catering, leisure and tou	ırism 2	Students with learning	
Caring	2	difficulties and/or disabiliti	es 2

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INTRODUCTION

- and May 1995. The first specialist visit was made from 18-20 May 1994 and the second took place from 13-15 December 1994. Enrolment and induction were inspected at the beginning of the 1994-95 academic year. Twelve inspectors took part in the inspection for a total of 58 inspector days. Inspectors visited 93 classes and examined students' work. Meetings took place with members of the corporation, senior managers and other staff, students, employers, members of the community, parents, and a member of the Coventry and Warwickshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). Inspectors examined college policy statements, minutes and background papers to meetings, working papers, and various reports generated by the college's management information systems.
- 2 At the time of the inspection the college was called East Warwickshire College of Further Education. Subsequently, it has changed its name to Rugby College of Further Education.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

- 3 Rugby College of Further Education is one of five further education colleges in Warwickshire. It is well served by major roads, motorways, railways and airports. It attracts students from a wide geographical area, including Northamptonshire and Leicestershire. In the town of Rugby there is a major public school, two single-sex grammar schools, a 12-18 comprehensive school and four 12-16 schools. Seventy-one per cent of school leavers in Rugby stay on in full-time education after the age of 16. The post-16 education sector both in Rugby and the county is increasingly competitive, particularly in vocational areas.
- 4 The local economy has recovered from the decline in manufacturing and is buoyant. The unemployment rate is about 5 per cent. New jobs have been created in the caring services, distribution, warehousing, retailing and office services. Supported by initiatives such as 'Business Link', the small business sector is growing. The number of employers sending students to the college is increasing and there are links with many local employers who contribute to the curricula, provide work placements, send students on programmes and buy customised training. The college has recruited nationally to specialist programmes. Recently, an 'Electrical Training Institute' has been set up in collaboration with a company based in Dallas.
- 5 The college occupies a single site in a semi-residential area which is over a mile from the town centre. There are plans to establish a centre in the Benn ward of the town which will improve access for members of the local community. In the last 18 months a £2 million refurbishment and new building programme has been undertaken.
- 6 The college achieved growth of 5 per cent in 1993-94. At the time of inspection 727 students were enrolled on full-time programmes and 6,497

on part-time programmes. Over 80 per cent of the student population was over 19 years of age. Forty-six per cent of students were male and 54 per cent female. Minority ethnic groups comprise approximately 7 per cent of the local population and this is mirrored in the college's enrolments. Enrolments by age and level of study are shown in figures 1 and 2 and enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area in figure 3. There are 152 full-time equivalent lecturers, and 120 full-time equivalent support staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents is shown in figure 4.

- The principal, two assistant principals, a business manager and seven heads of division make up the college management team. Directors manage cross-college activities, such as health and safety, provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and quality. A director of sales is responsible for developing short courses, joint ventures and franchises.
- 8 The college's mission is to 'provide an excellent service for people locally, nationally and internationally, in a supportive and pleasant environment'.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

- 9 The strategic plan reflects the national targets for education and training and the requirements of the Council. The college is committed to achieving growth. Its prospective clients include school leavers, employers, employees and the unemployed. In 1994-95 the college has planned a growth rate similar to that which it achieved in 1993-94. At the time of the inspection it was arranging contracts in order to meet its target.
- The college has some good links with the local community. Members of staff serve on various committees for education and business. For example, the principal is a member of the Area Community Council, and meets with the heads of local secondary schools. The Rugby Music Centre is based at the college and forms an essential part of musical life in the town. Good links are also enjoyed with the Percival Guildhouse Adult Education Centre where non-vocational courses are provided in crafts and languages, mainly for senior citizens. The college provides and administers the teaching support for the centre. A liaison group has been formed with local art teachers to improve school links and recruitment. The special needs consultative committee is a strong body and has many local statutory and voluntary organisations among its members. The college is a member of the Warwickshire Education Business Partnership. Amongst other initiatives, the partnership provides work experience for post-16 students studying General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) and General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs). Parents and employers made positive comments about the college and were pleased with the services which had been provided. The college could strengthen its involvement in meeting the training needs of the local authority and in working with community organisations involved in economic regeneration.

- 11 There is a good working relationship, especially at senior level, between the TEC and the college. The TEC's opinion of the college is generally positive. College staff liaise effectively with the TEC's training and development adviser and education co-ordinator. The college is well represented on a number of TEC committees, including those for planning, marketing and training. The college is a youth training provider, running youth training courses in most of its curriculum areas. The TEC expressed concern at the low retention of students and problems of inadequate and poor administration on some of its training courses. The college has responded positively to course administrative problems identified by the TEC.
- 12 The college won its bid for competitiveness funding in the regional competition organised by the TEC with a project to enhance the competitiveness of British engineering and manufacturing. An award worth £196,000 was achieved. The college and private industry will contribute to future funding. One of the objectives of the project is to establish and equip an engineering training centre of excellence that will include the latest advanced engineering equipment for manufacturing and maintenance workshops. A second objective is to develop an Electrical Training Institute to supply training for the electrical distribution industry in partnership with an international electrical equipment manufacturer. The construction section in the college also has received some funding from the Construction Industry Training Board to promote and develop all aspects of the construction industry and to promote a GNVQ in construction and the built environment.
- The college offers a wide range of general education, pre-vocational, vocational and training courses. Levels of study range from basic education to higher education and courses are available in various attendance modes to meet student preferences. A number of courses lead to the award of a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) or GNVQ. Three GNVQ courses managed by the college are franchised to local schools. Some outreach provision is provided mainly in schools. This includes school link programmes based on construction activities, courses for English as a second language and adult basic education provision. 'flexi-foundation' course provides valuable opportunities for adult students to engage in serious study or prepare for entry to higher education. Current timetabling arrangements create problems for part-time foundation students who have work or home commitments. The college is distinctive in that it runs a 12-week summer vacation course in engineering for unemployed graduates. Of the 40 enrolled in 1993-94, 70 per cent obtained employment and 20 per cent started a post-graduate course. The engineering division of the college is an Engineering Training Authority resource centre for the area.
- 14 A successful commercial strategy has helped the college to secure over half a million pounds of short-course activities. Engineering, business studies and languages are the main areas of provision involved in delivering

specific and specialist courses for a predominantly industrial clientele. A local car components manufacturer, who was interviewed, expressed satisfaction with the quality and flexibility of specialist training his company's employees had received from the college's commercial unit. The college may wish to consider how it can build on its success and increase the amount of income-generating work.

- 15 A number of higher education courses are offered. Courses in business studies, management and engineering are franchised from Coventry University, social studies from The University of Warwick, and law, through a 'flexi-study' programme, from London University. Some good European links have been established. The art and design department arranges cultural visits to Paris and Amsterdam and has established painting courses in Lurais and Coulon for mature foundation students. Catering students visit France to study French cuisine and catering. European studies forms a large part of the curriculum for travel and tourism and students undertake annual study visits to the continent. European elements in other programmes are in the form of a foreign language.
- The main thrust of the marketing strategy in the short term is to increase full-time student numbers and to improve liaison with schools. Expenditure on marketing is low for the size of the college. The college produces a series of student prospectuses and other guides which are well produced and informative although there are no community language versions. A successful adult learners week has recently been promoted from a retail unit in the centre of Rugby and is to be followed by another in nearby Daventry. As part of its public relations, the college has produced a series of news items that feature regularly in the local media. There are two main advertising campaigns in January and April timed to coincide with the start of new courses. Other advertising includes mailshots, signs on local buses, telephone marketing and floral displays sponsored by the college in the Rugby in Bloom Festival. Recently, the college, in collaboration with the TEC, organised a working lunch for local businessmen and women in an effort to increase local awareness of the college and the services it can offer.
- 17 At the time of the specialist inspections there was a general lack of awareness of marketing issues. Community representatives made perceptive criticisms of the college's marketing efforts. A head of division co-ordinates and chairs the recently-formed marketing group. He reports directly to the principal. The marketing group is responsible for advising each of the divisions, and the college marketing officers, of various marketing initiatives. Each area of the college is responsible for its own marketing. Three of the seven divisions in the college have recently assessed which of their courses are successful and which are declining. However, marketing operations generally lack a clear focus. Insufficient time is devoted to its management with the result that there have been problems of co-ordination and of duplication of effort by staff. The college has recognised the difficulties and is taking action.

- The division of learning support provides good opportunities for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to achieve development through an appropriate range of separate specialist learning programmes. Most successful students gain entry to a youth training scheme at the end of their personal and social development programme. The work-related skills programme is a part-time course for adults which is operated in conjunction with other adult providers in the area. The programme offers a number of vocational inputs, for example work relating to the catering and distribution trades, alongside other elements of the curriculum to develop independence and social competence for adults with learning difficulties. There are strong links with outside agencies and the college has successfully continued a part-time link course with specialist schools. There is a termly meeting of the advisory committee for learning support where local and national issues are discussed by representatives from specialist schools, careers, social services, employment and voluntary organisations. This advisory committee is one of only two in the college.
- 19 The equal opportunities policy has not been revised since 1991 and monitoring and evaluation have not been carried out for some time. There is no equal opportunities co-ordinator at middle management level. Good nursery facilities are provided to help students with children. Up to 45 places are available and the accommodation has recently been refurbished to a high standard.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

- 20 At the time of the cross-college inspection, members of the corporation, the newly-appointed principal and senior managers of the college were addressing a major imbalance in income and expenditure, and a substantial cash-flow deficit. The new principal came into post six weeks before the inspection and has taken quick action in an effort to improve the college's position.
- 21 The college is governed by a corporation board of 10 members. Six members are from business backgrounds, one is nominated by the TEC, and one is co-opted from the community. There is one staff member and the principal is also a member. The board is strongly committed to the principles of operating with a small number of members and involving all members in as much of the deliberation as possible. Members have a good record of attendance at board meetings. They invest much time and effort in attending monthly meetings and supporting formal and informal events in the college. They have relevant experience to contribute to the work of the board.
- 22 There are committees for audit, finance and employment. The employment committee deals with remuneration. The terms of reference for the finance and employment committees have been discussed and agreed but the audit committee's terms of reference were not available at the time of the inspection. The audit committee has just appointed its

fourth chairman. A review of its composition and approach to its work is needed. The board was unable to find a replacement when the chairman of the finance committee resigned and, for nine months, the chairman of the board had to undertake the duties of chairing the finance committee while a search was conducted for a suitable replacement. The board may wish to consider how it can best ensure a steady succession of well-qualified members to these important posts.

- 23 The minutes of board meetings indicate that members have received frequent and detailed updates on the sale, purchase and construction of various buildings. Many committee meetings have been preceded by general board meetings held to give members such updates. In other areas of the board's work the position is less satisfactory. Much of the information received by the board to support it in its decision making could be improved in its timing, accuracy and completeness. In view of the financial situation, a thorough review of the adequacy of the financial information the board receives is urgently required.
- 24 The college's strategic plan has been discussed by the corporation and a further update is being produced this summer. There has been wide consultation during the preparation of the strategy but, in the immediate circumstances of the college, its relevance is limited. A highly-focused recovery plan is a more urgent requirement and the prospects for achieving some of the objectives in the strategic plan are limited by the financial position of the college.
- 25 The management structure of the college is under review. Changes intended to reduce the complexity of the previous structure and to clarify responsibilities were occurring in the week of the inspection. Fewer posts will have direct lines of accountability to the principal and more authority will be delegated. Although job descriptions state broad areas of responsibility, the requirements of post holders have not always been clear. Reviews of the performance of senior managers conducted to date have not been rigorous.
- 26 There are regular meetings of senior managers. These have been concerned with issues arising from developments within further education, improvements to college systems and procedures, staffing, the strategic plan and a wide array of other matters. They have helped to keep managers informed and up to date, and have assisted with decision making. Meetings have included reviews of how well the college is doing in key areas of concern, but a more consistent system for monitoring the main operational objectives and targets is required. Contingency planning has not been strong and should be improved, given the college's present circumstances.
- 27 Reports of management meetings are an important element of communications within the college. Agendas are set and minutes are recorded and circulated. Their value as a means of communication has increased as their content has been improved. Following senior management meetings, there are briefings for staff in the divisions but

these vary in content and comprehensiveness. Staff in support services have found communication channels inadequate and the information they receive too limited. There is a college diary which provides news of recent developments and includes the corporation's minutes, though the latter have provided limited insight into the corporation's proceedings.

- 28 Annual revenue allocations to budget holders are set at historical levels which are adjusted to recognise the extra costs of new developments. There has been little progress towards using a budgetary formula that reflects the number of students in divisions, or more thoroughly accords with the costs of different curriculum areas. Once financial resources have been allocated, the college accountant regularly compares expenditure with budget amounts. Monthly financial reports are sent to all budget holders and are found useful, though circulation of reports is sometimes slow. Control on levels of expenditure have not been fully effective in the past and overspends have arisen. More vigorous budgetary controls have now been placed on all budget holders. A closer scrutiny of all the part-time teaching hours has been made possible by the use of a computer programme developed within the college. Redundancies have been declared in order to cut management costs and to continue to make progress towards more efficient use of staff.
- 29 The average level of funding for the college for 1994-95 is £18.14 per unit, which is just below the median of £18.17 for general further education and tertiary colleges. Summaries of the college's income and expenditure are shown in figures 5 and 6. Income has been generated from many sources. Funds from the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) account for no more than 60 per cent of the college's income. The loss of expected income has been part of the cause of the college's financial difficulties.
- 30 At the time of the cross-college inspection, it was not possible to predict the number of enrolments in 1994-95. The college's present goal is to avert a 10 per cent shortfall in funded units before the end of July. A contract has recently been agreed which college managers expect to generate sufficient units to achieve the target. Divisions set their own enrolment targets on the broad understanding that there is a need for growth. A computerised summary of the target enrolments for all courses is being developed and will assist in setting future targets. It should provide an accurate report for the whole college. The new principal has examined options for attracting more students and a new strategy is emerging. It has yet to be fully developed and agreed at all levels.
- 31 Management information has been inadequate and sometimes inaccurate. Double counting of students contributed to a serious misunderstanding of the college's true position. Much of the information held in the computerised system has been difficult to obtain and the absence of accurate information has been a serious constraint on decision making and planning. The systems have been greatly improved recently and

managers are now making better and more confident use of the information for course administration, planning, and monitoring. However, many of the reports that are needed are still not supplied on a regular basis and there is poor networking of the computer system to the divisions. There is an urgent need to develop management information to ensure that college managers can respond rapidly and effectively to changing circumstances and avert further threats to the college's recovery.

- 32 Policies have been formulated for equal opportunities, health and safety and for quality assurance. There is now a sound policy for the development of the computerised management information system. Responsibility for health and safety policy lies with the director of safety who reports directly to the principal. The health and safety committee meets once a term and is well attended. Monitoring activities are effective and safety reports are thorough. The equal opportunities policy needs updating and there is no college-wide policy for student support.
- 33 Performance indicators such as numbers of students on courses, retention rates, and destinations are collected. Students' examination results have been discussed by managers and the corporation; the analysis that is presented in background papers and the clarity of the recommendations for action should be improved. Performance indicators should be monitored more formally and more frequently to ensure proper control of the key aspects of the college's activity.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

- Publicity for recruitment and advice on entry to the college are co-ordinated by the college information and guidance centre. Service is provided to both full-time and part-time students. Applications and admissions to full-time courses occur over the whole of the academic year. For part-time students, the college operates a policy of continuous enrolment and advice with a peak two-day enrolment period in September. Updated information on enrolments is regularly supplied to the teaching divisions. Procedures are well documented; information and advice are readily available for students. There is a comprehensive guidance pack for staff undertaking enrolment. Publicity for part-time courses reflects individual divisional policy rather than a clear college-based marketing strategy. This may explain why part-time students generally, and those on general education courses particularly, express less satisfaction with college publicity than full-time students. Parents of full-time students who met with inspectors expressed considerable satisfaction with the college's processes of guidance, admission and subsequent reporting on progress.
- 35 The college and neighbouring schools participate in an annual exercise which ensures that all pupils reaching school-leaving age receive free and impartial advice on all post-16 opportunities, including those related to work-based training and employment. College links with schools are in some cases being extended to offer joint curriculum developments

and provision particularly in those areas related to GNVQ. This process is at an early stage. Compact arrangements are currently being developed with Coventry University.

- 36 There is a written policy concerning the accreditation of students' prior experience and learning; the college is seeking to implement this across all of its teaching divisions. Currently, accreditation takes place on a limited scale. All full-time students are tested using the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit (ALBSU) test at the beginning of the session.
- The college has a well-established tradition of offering induction courses to all of its full-time and to a significant number of its part-time students. The length of such programmes varies from two weeks for some full-time students to part of one day for part-time students. Evening students generally receive written information through their class teacher. All induction courses for full-time students follow the college model. Information is provided on college services, careers, counselling and library services in combination with information about the courses students are following. The course-related element in some of the programmes was imaginatively conceived. For example, in art and design it focused on the development of drawing and painting skills and included a sketching visit to Oxford. Students in this area spoke of their induction programme enthusiastically and considered it to be an excellent beginning to college life. Other programmes were more prosaic. They were concerned mainly with administrative and organisational matters and students were given little insight into their areas of study. Good practice in induction is not disseminated or related to any corporate planning of the induction process and its development. The induction process, together with tutorials and advice from the careers and information centre staff, help students to ensure that they are enrolled on the right course. Transfer between courses is possible, at least during the early part of the year.
- 38 The college has clearly-expressed policies on tutorial support, personal counselling and careers education and guidance. The implementation of these policies extends to all full-time and many part-time students. However, there is no overarching policy for the whole of student services provision, its direction and management, and no monitoring and evaluation of the extent to which such services are used.
- 39 There is an established and well-documented tutorial programme. All students are assigned a personal tutor who is one of their subject teachers. Full-time students have a weekly timetabled tutorial. Tutors are provided with support packs defining their role and indicating useful agendas for tutorial sessions. Students' comments are supportive and indicate that the system works well.
- 40 Workshops offering learning support in literacy and numeracy are available to all students of the college. The provision is maintained throughout each weekday and is also available on certain evenings. Few students attend workshops regularly, partly because they perceive learning

support as a low level activity and partly because attendance involves them in an additional commitment. Each workshop has a tutor and attendance is recorded. Learning support provision is not co-ordinated centrally, nor is there any structured connection to the ALBSU screening process being used by the college. Provision of regular specialist support for those students in mainstream provision who may require it appears to be limited.

- 41 The careers advice service is well used and effective. The college has a careers office on site, together with a full-time careers officer, both provided jointly by the college and the local careers service. The work of the course tutors and the careers service is well integrated. The careers officer contributes to tutorial programmes and is available for special guidance sessions and individual appointments.
- 42 The college provides a personal counselling and guidance service to all of its students. The service is well publicised and contributes to induction and tutorial programmes. There is appropriate accommodation for the conduct of confidential interviews. The service is monitored by analysing case loads. Half-yearly reports are made to the assistant principal responsible for students services.
- 43 Students' records of achievement are linked to action plans which involve students in setting their own learning objectives and assessing their own progress. All course tutors are provided with a guidance pack and have been involved in staff-development activity to enable them to assist students in completing their records. Records of achievement are held on computer files and are based on individual course programmes. There is cross-college liaison to ensure that additional subjects or interests are recorded.
- 44 Students' attendance is effectively monitored at course level. Any necessary action, including communication with parents and employers, is speedily and effectively undertaken.
- 45 The college uses a bursary system to reward good attendance for full-time students below the age of 19.
- 46 A clear statement of students' rights is made in the college charter. Students' responsibilities are outlined in course documentation. Procedures are not yet in place for monitoring the effectiveness of the commitments made by the college and its students.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

47 The strengths outweighed the weaknesses in 73 per cent of the classes inspected. There was a significant number of absences from many of the classes. The average attendance in classes inspected was 64 per cent. The grades awarded for the sessions inspected are shown in the following table.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
Access	1	2	0	0	0	3
GCE AS/A level	0	2	2	0	0	4
Basic education	1	8	1	1	0	11
GCSE	0	4	0	0	0	4
GNVQ	3	6	3	2	0	14
NVQ	3	14	6	1	0	24
Other	9	15	8	1	0	33
Total	17	51	20	5	0	93

- 48 Standards of teaching and the promotion of learning were high in all curriculum areas inspected. The working relationships between staff and students were also consistently good.
- 49 Teaching in construction was well planned and well managed, and there was effective integration of theory and practice. Students' differing achievements in numeracy and literacy were identified at the beginning of their studies. The close proximity of workshops and resource rooms enabled students to move easily between them as their learning required. Students' practical skills benefited from the opportunity to undertake brickwork, carpentry and joinery at the college's own garden centre. A project with British Waterways involved the improvement of stairs and pathways along the local canal and has been valuable in strengthening community links. A helpful feature of the work in construction was the encouragement given to students to appraise and mark their own work before submitting it to the teacher. In the few weaker sessions, the pace of the work was sometimes too slow or teachers failed to give students enough opportunity to ask questions, present opinions, or discuss matters with other students.
- 50 Classes in engineering were lively. Teachers used a wide variety of teaching methods. Students were able to take some responsibility for their own learning, particularly in practical classes. There was rigorous attention to health and safety. Many students kept log books, although this good practice was not universal. Teaching was supported by high-quality handouts. Students' oral presentations of assignments helped them to develop their communication skills. Assignments and homework enabled teachers to keep a close watch on students' progress. A few weaker features included lack of guidance on the volume of work expected for assignments and some lacklustre teaching.
- 51 There were realistic and effective schemes of work for catering and leisure and tourism. Teachers used a wide variety of teaching techniques and taught their subject enthusiastically. Good use was made of the college restaurant as a realistic working environment. A first-year catering group

showed excellent social and practical skills together with a thoroughly professional approach. Students' commitment was underlined by their early arrival at class to ensure the proper layout of the restaurant. Their learning was well supported by the lecturer in charge who effectively conveyed to them the operational requirements of running a restaurant. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities were introduced effectively into the restaurant service. There was a good mix of modern and traditional catering processes. In some classes there was inadequate attention to practical skills and students were not always stretched to the limit of their ability. Low attendance sometimes detracted from effective group activity.

- 52 Schemes of work in art and design were thoroughly planned and were developed by staff into carefully-prepared projects. Students were offered an appropriate range of experiences with a strong emphasis on observation and life drawing. The best teaching was varied and there was well-prepared technical demonstration in which students were alerted to good practice in their work and encouraged to develop drawings and paintings from an initial sketch to a finished work. Comments made upon weaknesses were carefully directed towards improving students' performance. Teaching would have been improved by clearer specification of aesthetic and visual learning objectives in some briefs and by ensuring that all projects were at a level which matched students' abilities. More opportunities could have been taken to reinforce students' success in drawing in the context of more specialised design work. Some younger students were too ready to rest, content with first solutions to tasks rather than pursuing them with greater rigour.
- 53 In caring, courses were well planned. Students experienced a wide range of methods of working, including working independently on resources designed for the purpose, designing play activities for nurseries, giving group presentations to fellow students, role playing and reporting. Staff used their experience well and students learned much from the teaching. The pace of work was brisk. More effective use of questioning, however, would have challenged students more, encouraged the development of more critical and analytical thinking and promoted a greater facility in using evidence to justify statements.
- 54 Schemes of work for business administration and office studies were well constructed, and individual lessons were well organised and well managed. Teachers used well-directed questions to ensure that students had a clear grasp of relevant concepts. Much of the work was conducted at a lively pace; topics were appropriately demanding and students were confident and articulate. There was some lack of variety in teaching methods and teachers occasionally missed opportunities to reinforce students' understanding of important points. In business studies, staff were well prepared, and the tasks set made sure that students worked to the best of their abilities. Students responded well to teachers' comments and made good use of the high-quality handouts. Teachers sometimes

failed to use visual aids where these would have been helpful. On occasion, there was too much dictation of notes.

Humanities staff were knowledgeable and enthusiastic and conveyed their interest in their subject to students. Sessions were well organised and had clear aims. Effective teaching was reinforced by handouts of a high standard. Students were developing good oral skills. Audio-visual aids were little used. Staff were not always successful in managing the wide range of students' experience and ability. Teachers appeared reluctant to stress the importance of regular attendance. GNVQ students taking English courses were disadvantaged by the conflicting requirement of attendance at class and at work placement. In a number of classes, attendance was low.

Detailed schemes of work provided a firm basis for the effective teaching of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The work was of a high standard. Learning methods included a mixture of individual study and group work. There was some opportunity for students to manage their own learning. Home skills were taught in the students' base room. Students' experiences would have been strengthened by the wider use of staff from vocational areas and an increased use of mainstream college facilities.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

57 Students in the college, notably adult part-time students and students on the access to higher education course, are highly committed to their studies. Business and administration students have gained significantly in confidence since commencing their courses and are articulate and knowledgeable in talking about their work. The craft students in construction are well motivated and keen to progress and develop their skills. In art and design, all students clearly enjoy their studies, are well motivated and feel a sense of commitment to the art school. Art and design students speak with enthusiasm about their work but some have difficulty using technical vocabulary and making reference to the history of art.

58 In most areas of the college, students are producing work to an appropriate standard. Assignments are well-presented. The students in business management and administration demonstrate a high level of understanding and application and are able to give good responses to tutors' questions. The work of NVQ business students is supported by thorough evidence and a good use of logbooks. Students are developing skills at all levels of wordprocessing, typing, shorthand and related skills. The quality of presentation of the work in the completed assignments is of a high standard, although the work often suffered from poor written English. Students are able to make effective use of computers in business management and administration. Engineering students acquire technical expertise and skills consistent with course requirements. The assignment work for construction students is of an appropriate standard. They respond well and are developing understanding and knowledge of

construction processes as well as practical skills. Catering students are enthusiastic and their practical and written work demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject. They were able to demonstrate this in practice in the training restaurant. The college produced the national winner of the prestigious British Gas Caterbility Craft Competition; an outstanding achievement.

- 59 The range of work covered by art and design students is wide. Most students are developing skills in photography, computer-generated imagery, typography, ceramics and print technologies. The best work is produced where students are encouraged to develop their work from observational drawings. The achievements of the part-time art and design students, particularly those on the 'flexi-foundation' course, are exceptional. The thoroughness of their work in its research and finished quality is above the level expected of foundation students. In health studies, the students' assignment work was generally well presented, although the content was sometimes superficial and lacked sufficient familiarity with key concepts. Humanities students' written work showed that they had acquired appropriate levels of knowledge and skill including communication skills. They were achieving adequate standards although low attendance limited the achievements of some pupils.
- A number of good examples of group work were seen although there was a tendency in some subjects for classroom activities and group discussions to be dominated by the more confident students. Students are generally supportive of each other and construction students and catering students work well on their own and in groups. Students on the social care course were developing skills of presentation, group planning and role-play through a range of activities. The practical work in vocational courses is carried out competently and safely and most students are aware of health and safety issues.
- 61 Students have additional opportunities to develop their core skills in the timetabled workshops for literacy, numeracy and information technology. A small number of students' core skill achievements are recorded and accredited by appropriate nationally-recognised bodies. An example is the accreditation of the personal and social development programme under the RSA Examinations Board (RSA) practical skills profile scheme. Significant amounts of numeracy and literacy work incorporated in the programme are not accredited to appropriate schemes such as the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) wordpower. Students from a number of areas reported that inadequate library facilities and the lack of up-to-date books were affecting their achievements.
- 62 Eighty-seven per cent of the 71 students aged 16-18 were successful in their final year of study on the vocational courses included in the performance tables published by the Department for Education in 1994. This places the college among the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. The measure does not

include older students completing vocational qualifications. High pass rates are achieved for the art and design foundation studies course, the national diploma in general art and design, and the nursery nursing course. However, only 50 per cent of those in their final year of study on the national diploma in graphic design were successful. In construction, the numbers entered are in single figures and pass rates vary between 70 per cent and 100 per cent. In catering, results for C&G qualifications are similar to the national average. In engineering the pass rates are at 75 per cent or above with all students achieving NVQ level 2. However, on the higher national certificate in electrical engineering course and higher national diploma in mechanical engineering course the pass rates were low, 55 per cent and 56 per cent respectively. The pass rate for the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) first diploma in engineering has improved from a low start to 60 per cent in 1994, a pass rate which is above the national average. There are high pass rates in the RSA business studies and, although only small numbers were entered, 100 per cent pass rates were achieved in the foreign languages for commerce and industry courses and the Institute of Linguists courses. The college results in the Association of Accounting Technicians assessment are above the national average with 30 per cent gaining a merit.

In 1993-94, the college entered 212 students for GCE A level examinations across a range of subjects. The 41 students aged 16-18 entered for GCE A level examinations scored, on average 2.8 points per entry (where A=10, E=2). This places the college in the bottom third of colleges on this performance measure, based on the data in the 1994 performance tables published by the Department for Education. Better results were achieved by students over 19. In 1994, the overall pass rate in English language was 84 per cent from 53 entered; 28 achieved A-B grades and six achieved grade A. In psychology, 43 students were entered in 1994; 72 per cent achieved pass grades, a high proportion gained A-B grades, and seven gained grade A. These results in psychology are a significant improvement on previous years. In sociology, the overall pass rate was below the national average for general further education colleges and only five students gained A-B grades from the 30 entered. Large groups have been entered for law over the last three years. In 1994, 43 were entered; the pass rate of 54 per cent was low, similar to that of the previous years. Only two students achieved grades A-B. The college has not conducted a value-added analysis of these results.

64 In 1994, 439 students were entered for General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in a range of subjects. Results are at or above the national average for general further education colleges. In English 72 per cent of the 54 entered gained A-C grades, in law 75 per cent (41 entries), in sociology 65 per cent (32) and in psychology 71 per cent (49). The achievements in mathematics are close to the national average with 41 per cent of the 150 entered achieving A-C grades. There is less success in biology and accounting where the pass rates are 41 per cent and 45 per cent, respectively.

The college produces a booklet showing students' destinations after leaving college. The rates of progression to higher education are good. In 1994, the BTEC foundation studies art and design course and the BTEC general art and design course led to 67 per cent of students gaining a place on degree or higher national diploma courses. Fifty per cent of students from the BTEC national diploma in graphic design progressed to related higher education courses and 50 per cent gained relevant employment. The part-time BTEC foundation studies in art and design course for mature students was highly successful in enabling students to enter degree courses; five students decided to develop their own studios in the area. Only one student from the foundation music dance course progressed to higher education; others continued to develop their music skills. Progression rates from intermediate GNVQ courses in health and social care, and business are low; many students fail to complete their courses. Students from travel and tourism, catering and nursery nursing are successful in achieving employment. Of the students completing the BTEC national diploma in business and finance most were progressing to higher national diploma courses and a few were entering relevant employment. The marketing and management studies courses place a high proportion of students into relevant employment and all eight students on the BTEC electronics and computer technology course were placed, seven on degree or higher national diploma courses and one in employment. The access to higher education course for adult students at the college, one of the first access courses established in the region, has achieved high success rates. Fourteen of the 17 students completing the course gained places on degree and higher national diploma courses in a wide range of subjects, including, business studies, engineering, art, social sciences and teaching.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

The whole college has been approved for the quality standard ISO 9002. An overall quality policy is in place and an annual report is submitted to the governing body. The quality assurance system includes surveys of students' perceptions, course reviews and other quality initiatives. There is a quality cycle with action plans which enable quality issues to be carried forward, although these plans are not always consistently implemented. The quality assurance manager, who carries substantial teaching responsibilities, reports directly to the senior management team. She leads in the monitoring and development of quality but the college seeks to emphasise that quality should be a responsibility of all staff.

67 Quality documentation is clear and comprehensive. The system is defined at three levels: quality policies, quality procedures and work instructions, and document manuals. Quality manuals give clear information on responsibilities, procedures and the checks to ensure that procedures are in place. There is a regular audit of procedures. The college is hoping to obtain the Investors in People award by December 1995.

68 The college has undertaken some short-lived experiments with quality circles, for example in finance. Support staff have a commitment to advancing quality, particularly in terms of responses to customers. College quality files examined during the inspection were generally in good order and complied with the requirements of the quality system. There is evidence that most course teams meet regularly and that decisions and responsibility for actions are minuted. A recent innovation has been the appointment of quality co-ordinators. They have a brief to lead on issues of quality within the divisions. It was not possible to appoint to all divisions and in these cases, the head of division has assumed the role.

Surveys of students' perceptions are carried out three times a year. They address such issues as the quality of information prior to entry to the college, course organisation, teaching, resources and students' level of satisfaction with their courses. The questionnaires have been revised recently to obtain more precise information. Surveys do not generally include courses with less than eight hours contact per week on the grounds of cost effectiveness. In practice, this means that coverage of part-time day and part-time evening courses is limited. Seven courses which should have returned survey responses this year did not do so. Surveys generally indicate a high degree of satisfaction, except for the quality of pre-course information where levels of dissatisfaction tended to be higher than in other areas. It has been suggested that accommodation questions could be included in the future. A limited survey of reasons for students' withdrawals has been carried out for the first time this year and tentative proposals for action have been indicated. A recent survey of employers had a response rate of only 8 per cent. The survey might have benefited from more careful advance planning, including the use of a pilot. A helpful college feature is the use of suggestion boxes, located in the library, the refectory and the reception area. Students and staff are invited to make suggestions for improvement upon any aspect of the college's activities. Records are kept of the suggestions and of action taken. The responses to these suggestions could be more widely publicised.

There is no college-wide policy on the use of performance indicators although senior managers are beginning to consider this. Standards and targets are left to divisional heads and practice is neither comprehensive nor consistent. This year, for the first time, information has been gathered on withdrawals. Performance indicators such as enrolments, attendance, withdrawals and achievements should be addressed by all parts of the college. Many courses investigate the reasons for withdrawals and most evaluate achievements. However, the value of setting enrolment targets as a means of evaluating the effectiveness of marketing is not wholly agreed at divisional level. The lack of a clear college-wide strategy makes it difficult to generalise from best practice. The academic board has not been used effectively in the evaluation of quality. It has examined the returns from student surveys on one occasion but has never evaluated examination results. A greater focus upon academic quality issues could enable the

board to function more effectively. External moderators' and examiners' reports are acted upon by curriculum area teams.

- 71 Course review procedures are in place but are not always consistently applied. All course files contain records of meetings and course documents such as schemes of work. Many include student records and show evidence of the analysis of the student surveys. They do not generally contain evaluations of students' achievements, retention rates nor reasons for students' withdrawals, except in the context of some defined action plan. The adult basic education course file contains interesting examples of student tracking, and quality procedures for volunteer tutors. Minutes of meetings are sent to the assistant principals who may refer issues to the senior management team. Responsibility for course review lies with heads of division in collaboration with course tutors. If a division fails to act the issue is referred to the assistant principal curriculum who endeavours to ensure that appropriate action is taken. Issues are not drawn together college wide and there is no significant feedback to course tutors on quality matters discussed by senior managers.
- 72 The national charter for further education was made widely available to staff. The college charter gives information on the members of the governing body. It is mostly addressed to students and has only a very small section addressed to employers and the community. The charter has clear brief statements on its services to students but there is only one measurable target, response to applications. Students are alerted to the charter at induction. Students wishing to pursue issues further are advised to approach their tutor in the first instance.
- 73 The college has produced an assessment of its own quality using the seven headings from Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. The assessment includes under each heading evidence, analysis, action, the staff responsible and a brief summary. However, the report refers mainly to college strengths and makes little reference to weaknesses. It is not therefore a complete basis for judgement of quality and does not take account of the substantial weaknesses which undoubtedly exist in some areas. The judgements were less critical than those made by inspectors. The college decided not to grade its judgements.
- The staff-development budget for 1994-95 was set at £60,000 but, owing to the college's financial problems, has been frozen at a likely expenditure of £12,000 for this financial year, with some provision to cover essential activities such as Training and Development Lead Body assessor training. This equates to the low figure of 0.3 per cent of the budget. The staff-development budget for the 16 month financial year 1993-94 was £44,000. Staff development is available for both teaching and support staff. Activities cover both curriculum updating and cross-college support. One member of staff has obtained long-term secondment this year. The budget is held partly centrally by the personnel manager for cross-college staff development, and is partly delegated to heads of divisions. Staff applying for support have their proposals matched

against overall college criteria. Staff-development activities are evaluated immediately by the participant and again three months later. The personnel manager carries out an overall evaluation of the effectiveness of the programme and reports annually to the senior management. Clear records of staff-development activities are kept.

75 An appraisal scheme for teaching staff has been introduced this year. It has not yet been extended to support staff; this is only at a very early stage of discussion. All teaching staff have received training for appraisal. The senior management have been appraised together with about 15 teaching staff. The scheme does not require staff to be appraised by their line manager, although this is the case with the great majority of staff. The scheme includes appraisal interviews, action plans and the setting of targets. Appraisal of teaching staff is planned to be completed by the end of 1994-95.

RESOURCES

Staffing

76 At the time of inspection, the college was responding to its financial difficulties by reducing staff and rationalising its divisions. A significant number of the lecturing and support staff were leaving through natural turnover, early retirement and compulsory redundancy. This has had an adverse affect on staff morale.

77 The teaching staff are generally well qualified and have appropriate professional and industrial qualifications and experience. The part-time staff in most areas have current industrial experience which informs their teaching. About half of the teaching staff are graduates and 20 per cent have post-graduate qualifications. There are adequate numbers of appropriately qualified technicians and support staff in most divisions. The historically high number of technicians in engineering has been reduced during the recent restructuring. The support staff are appropriately qualified and committed to serving the needs of students.

The deployment of full-time teaching staff and technician staff has been uneven, reflecting a historical imbalance of staffing between subjects. The current restructuring is addressing this imbalance. Forty per cent of the teaching across the college is delivered by part-time hourly-paid teaching staff and this proportion is even higher in business and administration and health studies. This is adding to the stress on the full-time staff, who are involved in extensive course development and are revising a considerable amount of teaching material to take account of changing approaches to vocational education. In catering and leisure, staff are often used inefficiently owing to the low number of students. There is a generous ratio of staff and care staff to students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In construction, there is inadequate technician support and workshop practice and maintenance is suffering.

79 There is an equal number of male and female full-time and associate lecturers. There are three women on the senior management team of nine and eight out of 24 middle managers are female. The majority of part-time staff and 80 per cent of the support staff are female. Two per cent of staff are from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Equipment/learning resources

- 80 The college has a new policy on capital equipment which aims to provide its clients with up-to-date, relevant equipment. As well as using funds from the FEFC it is also bidding for funds from other sources. A notable success has been the award of a substantial sum from the competitiveness fund. A large part of the award will be spent on new computer-controlled machinery for the engineering programme. The college is now working towards the development of a three-to-five year rolling capital-replacement programme. Divisional bidding has not been done on a totally formalised basis and there have been anomalies in supplies budgeting. For example, the community and general education budget has paid for the English and mathematics workshops, although these are a cross-college resource.
- 81 In most programme areas the range, quantity and quality of teaching and learning aids are satisfactory. There is high-quality equipment for the nursery nursing course and above average levels of equipment in art and design. Less positive features are the lack of a loop system in teaching areas for sensory-impaired students, and a shortage of refrigerators and freezers in the teaching kitchens. These failings are being rectified. In the construction section, woodworking machinery is ageing.
- 82 The college library is situated on the first floor but is accessible to wheelchair users. It has recently been extended and now offers sufficient space. Opening hours and staffing levels are satisfactory. There is a reasonably-sized quiet study area, although the chairs provided are far too low for the study tables. The bookstock for most programme areas is adequate although some deficiencies were noted in catering and travel and tourism. Out-of-date books are regularly removed. At the time of the inspection, the library had no compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) database equipment and its cataloguing system was wholly manual. An initial CD-ROM facility is planned for summer 1995. The library's budget has been £27,000 for several years and is currently frozen. Overall, the library and learning resources areas would benefit from more long-range planning. Senior management responsibility needs to be settled, budget resources redefined and a strategy established for developing the links between the art and design resource area and the library.
- 83 The college has recently formulated a clear and coherent policy on information technology. The college has made a considerable investment in computers and associated equipment. Subject to financial constraints, the college plans to spend further significant sums in 1995-96, continuing its process of replacing the remaining old equipment and completing the

introduction of up-to-date modern software during the summer of 1995. The current ratio of students to computer terminals is 7:1. The college has developed an open-access policy. Students are able to book to use computers in the library, or go to the central computer workshop where they can book a computer elsewhere.

Accommodation

- 84 The college is situated on a pleasant and extensive campus site approximately one mile from the town centre. The college's main accommodation consists of four blocks of buildings, dating from the mid 1940s to the early 1960s. A small and diminishing proportion of the accommodation is provided by temporary buildings. In addition, the college leases a substantial tract of land, about half a mile away, where it has a commercial garden centre which originated as a training unit for horticulture courses. Its future is currently under review.
- Acting on a comprehensive survey undertaken by consultants in December 1993 the college determined to improve the efficiency of its accommodation by concentrating on a core site. A number of major projects to achieve these aims were successfully completed by the spring of 1995. The changes have also enabled the college to respond both to the changing nature of its course requirements over the past two years and the identified needs of students. Key features have been the sale of a distant old building, conversion of an old engineering workshop to the Rugby Music Centre and the construction of a new wing to the main teaching block to accommodate a new reception and student information centre. Other major facilities on site include a sports hall, used also for events such as induction days, a bar, restaurant and adjacent conference facilities which are all open on a commercial basis to the public. The college's main student refectory has also been extended and refurbished to a high standard, although there is some overcrowding at peak times. Overall, the buildings are now appropriate to the college's needs and are in good condition.
- 86 The size and layout of accommodation are generally appropriate for the courses and programmes of study. Some teaching rooms are still poor acoustically and the quality of display in teaching rooms varies. The college's strategy for ensuring full accessibility for students with restricted mobility has been exemplary. There are lifts in both blocks and designated toilets. Improvements in the provision of changing facilities for such students have been made since the specialist inspection of May 1994. Car parking at the college is sufficient to meet current needs.
- 87 After taking professional advice, the college produced a planned maintenance strategy in May 1994. This has not yet been fully implemented, although essential maintenance on the non-refurbished buildings has been carried out. Following the major building works, a new 10 year maintenance programme has now been prepared and is awaiting corporation approval. The college is clean and tidy. It employs its own labour force on a cost-effective basis.

88 A full survey of the main teaching block was last carried out in March 1994, before the major accommodation changes. This revealed a disturbingly low space utilisation. The strategic plan for 1994-95 included a commitment to rationalise room usage by centralising allocation. While some action has been taken to free some engineering rooms, a perception of fixed divisional ownership of rooms, continues in parts of the college. This is creating growing problems. For example, the allocation of suitable rooms for examinations now has to be requested one year ahead. With the completion of the building programme a new space survey, followed by implementation of the strategic plan's objective, would be timely.

89 Students have access to off-site learning opportunities. For example, there are placements for nursery nursing students and others attend outdoor activities work in Wales. In addition, the garden centre contains a useful open-air construction facility and college students help with local canal improvements.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

- 90 The college has the following strengths:
- a broad range of courses for students of all abilities
- effective teaching
- well-developed tutorial support and counselling
- · expert and knowledgeable staff
- a clear overall quality policy and an established quality system
- accommodation improvements which have added to the appeal of the college.
- 91 If it is to maintain and improve its provision the college should:
- continue its constructive approach to resolving its financial difficulties
- ensure it has adequate contingency plans to overcome future threats to its financial recovery
- improve the effectiveness of its marketing
- strengthen links with the local community
- strengthen arrangements to replace retiring members of the corporation rapidly and appropriately
- improve the management information available to the corporation and senior management
- extend senior management reviews of the college's performance
- establish an overarching college policy relating to all aspects of student services

- tackle the problem of low attendance at classes
- ensure the effective deployment of staff
- ensure quality procedures are consistently applied across the college.

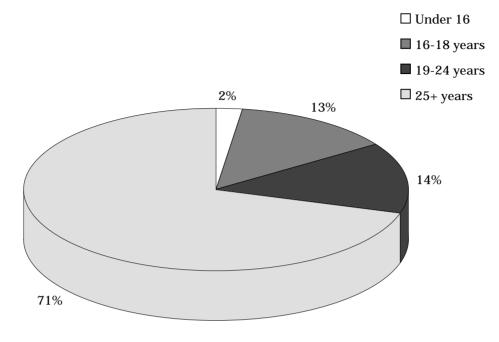
FIGURES

1	Percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)
2	Percentage enrolments by level of study (1994-95)
3	Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1994-95)
4	Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994-95)
5	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

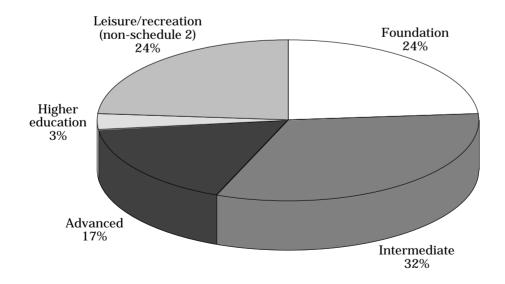




Enrolments: 7,224

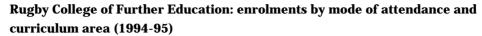
Figure 2

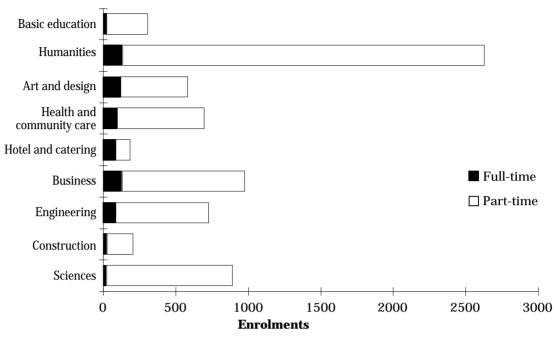
Rugby College of Further Education: percentage enrolments by level of study (1994-95)



Enrolments: 7,224

Figure 3



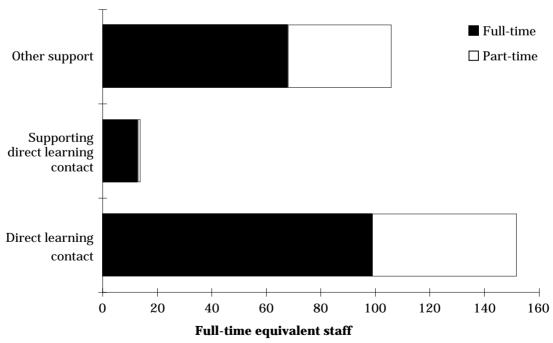


Enrolments: 7,224

Note: this chart excludes three agricultural enrolments.

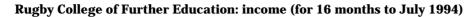
Figure 4

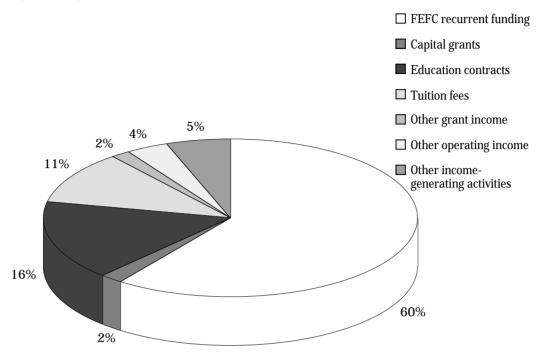
Rugby College of Further Education: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994-95)



Full-time equivalent staff: 272

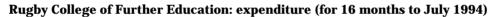
Figure 5

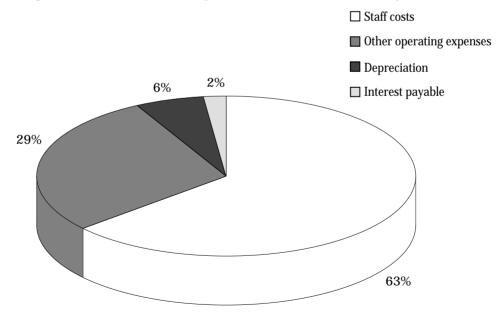




Income: £6,801,000

Figure 6





Expenditure: £7,639,000