Burnley College

October 1995

THE FURTHER EDUCATION
FUNDING COUNCIL

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

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 89/95

BURNLEY COLLEGE
NORTH WEST REGION
Inspected January-March 1995

Summary

Burnley College is a well-governed college of further education. The governing body is energetic and involved with college life and its members have an appropriate range of professional expertise and community interests. There is a well-established strategic planning process. The college is responsive to the changing needs of local industry and commerce. There are good links with schools, higher education and the community. There is a wide range of courses, providing good opportunities for student progression. Teachers are enthusiastic and well qualified and have good working relationships with their students. They provide sound pastoral support and effective advice and guidance on careers. Many students who complete vocational courses achieve success in their examinations and assessments. There are good GCE A level results in some subjects, but GCSE results are below average for the sector. The college should: improve retention rates; further develop its quality assurance system; ensure that procedures for course review and evaluation are operated consistently; and continue to improve the quality of teaching accommodation.

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

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science, mathematics and computing	3	Care	2
Construction	3	Art and design	3
Engineering	3	Humanities	4
Business	3	Adult education and students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	2
Leisure and tourism	3		

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

1   Burnley College was inspected in three stages during the 1994-95 academic year. Arrangements for the enrolment and induction of students were inspected on 31 August and 5 September 1994. Specialist inspections of curriculum areas took place in the week beginning 30 January 1995 and aspects of cross-college provision were inspected during the week beginning 13 March. Twenty-five inspectors carried out the inspections which used 102 working days. Sixty per cent of full-time teaching staff took industrial action during the first two days of the specialist inspection. As a result of this disruption to teaching programmes, a limited amount of inspection work was rescheduled. Inspectors visited 162 classes, examined students' marked work and read a wide range of college documents. They observed two meetings of the corporation board and one senior management team meeting. Discussions were held with governors, college managers, teachers and support staff, students, parents, local employers, and representatives of the local community, local schools, a partner higher education institution, the careers service and the East Lancashire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC).

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2   Burnley College owes it origins to a Mechanics Institute formed towards the end of the last century. Originally, the technical college catered for the training needs of the two major industries in the locality, cotton and coal mining. From the 1950s, the college developed to meet the wider demands of the manufacturing industry and it has recently expanded its work to include academic studies, community access and education and training for the growing service sector.

3   Burnley has a population of approximately 90,000. In 1993-94 it ranked as the twenty-ninth most socially-deprived local authority in England. People from minority ethnic backgrounds account for 5.5 per cent of the population. Thirty-five per cent of the Asian population under 25 are unemployed compared with 17 per cent of other ethnic groups. In 1994, only 56 per cent of 16 year olds in Burnley chose to continue in full-time education. This low figure represents a fall from 62 per cent in 1993. With the decline of the Lancashire aerospace industry, there has been considerable loss of employment. However, 34 per cent of the workforce are still employed in manufacturing, against a national norm of 23 per cent, and there remains a substantial role for technical training. The unemployment rate in the borough is about 9 per cent. Approximately 3,000 individuals are currently registered as unemployed. One-third of these are in the 16-24 age group.

4   The college is based on three sites. The main site is a listed building on the northern edge of the town centre close to a higher education centre. The Padiham Education Centre, three miles away from the main site, became a part of Burnley College in 1985 and is now home to a range of non-vocational courses and the college's conference centre.

5   The college is organised into four departments: business studies, community studies, construction and engineering, and general education. At the time of the inspection, a new management structure was being put into place. This reorganisation has been a stated aim in the college's strategic plan for some time, but implementation has awaited the appointment of a new principal.

6   The college recruits mainly from the town of Burnley itself and from the surrounding areas of Pendle, Hyndburn and Rossendale. The immediate catchment area contains eight secondary schools, four of which are single sex. There is strong competition for students in East Lancashire. Within a 10-mile radius of Burnley College there are three tertiary colleges, and within the town itself there are two sixth form centres attached to 11-16 schools. In addition, there are several private training providers.

7   At the time of inspection, 9,013 students were enrolled at the college. Of these 1,597 were full-time students, 225 students were on higher education courses franchised from the University of Central Lancashire, and 1,894 were attending non-vocational adult education programmes. Seventy-three per cent of vocational course students were attending part time. Enrolments by age and level of study are shown in figures 1 and 2 and enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figure 3. The college employs 132 full-time equivalent teaching staff and 94 full-time equivalent support staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

8   The college's mission is to provide quality education and training for individuals and organisations. The objectives in its strategic plan are:

- to increase the number of people in Burnley and East Lancashire gaining relevant qualifications and skills commensurate with identified local and national needs
- to ensure the existence of a responsive curriculum
- to improve service levels and facilities to its customers.

9   Specific targets achieved since 1993 have included:

- the introduction of General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) courses
- an increase of full-time equivalent student numbers by 4 per cent
- an increase of employer-based training and assessment
- the expansion of higher education provision
- the development of major technical initiatives in telematics (the transmission of information and learning materials through computer and telecommunications links), electronics and science
- initiation of a quality assurance system
- systematic improvement of the college environment.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

10   Staff, particularly managers, are aware of, and act upon, national and local initiatives in further education and training. The college is

responsive to the needs of the community; it offers a wide range of courses at various levels. The provision includes vocational courses in business studies, information technology, engineering, construction, furniture, health and social care, art and design, and leisure and tourism. General education courses include 22 General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and 33 General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) subjects. Students can chose to study full time, part time or through open and distance learning. This variety of attendance modes has been particularly successful in attracting older students. A request for an appropriate course is met quickly and effectively by the college. For example, students' requests for Islamic studies led to the provision of an appropriate GCSE course in religious studies. There are plans to offer higher level courses in this area of study. In a number of subject areas, students can follow routes from foundation level to higher education without leaving the college. This is a particular strength of the provision in computing. The college has a limited range of adult basic education courses which allow students to develop their communication and vocational skills.

11   There is a comprehensive and realistic marketing strategy based on market research. Marketing teams within the college cover a variety of activities including schools liaison and publicity. They also analyse the strengths and weaknesses of existing provision. Effective co-ordination of the marketing strategy and monitoring of its implementation have yet to be achieved. There is no recording of enquiries or quality checks on points of contact with the college and the college does not have a systematic approach to links with industry. Some departments fail to make good use of the marketing information which is available.

12   The college is working hard to promote a positive and dynamic image within its community. Publicity for the activities of the college and the achievements of its students is good. The college provides a weekly column for a local newspaper. Staff organise and attend many publicity events in Burnley and its district. A variety of well-produced materials inform prospective applicants of the courses on offer and these are readily available in a number of places including public libraries. Course leaflets have a common house style. Prospectuses are attractive, but some of the language used is unnecessarily formal and/or complex.

13   Links with local schools are good. The schools appreciate the time and effort college staff devote to maintaining partnership activities. Designated link staff from the college regularly visit secondary schools to participate in personal, social and careers education programmes, and to develop curriculum links. The college has also helped schools to develop the expertise required to run GNVQ courses. There are teleconferencing links between the college and four local schools. This has enabled joint curriculum and social activities to take place. For example, during the inspection period the college and a school undertook a sponsored aerobics session through the teleconferencing facilities to raise money for Comic

Relief. The college runs a successful scheme to introduce primary-school children to the construction industry in partnership with a Construction Industries Training Board curriculum centre.

14   The college is an associate college of the University of Central Lancashire. The university representative speaks highly of the efficiency and enthusiasm with which the college is developing this partnership. Courses are offered within a system of credit accumulation and transfer so that students can set their own target for the time they take to achieve the qualification. The partnership has successfully attracted students from groups which have not normally entered higher education.

15   Burnley College responds well to the needs of local industry by offering opportunities for the development of employees' skills. A particularly-innovative scheme is a care consortium in which the college has worked in partnership with employers to run National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs). Employers speak highly of the level of service they receive and of the standards of training. The extent to which employers are involved in curriculum and course delivery varies across the college. Employers make strong contributions to some courses. On other courses their impact is small.

16   Most full-time students are offered the opportunity to participate in good-quality work experience. Both they and the employers who offer the placements are well briefed about the aims and objectives of the scheme. All students on placements are visited by a member of college staff and employers are asked to assess the achievements of the student. This scheme is planned so that students apply the theory and knowledge they have acquired on courses in the work place.

17   There is a sound working relationship with East Lancashire TEC. The college audits work-related further education activities effectively and this efficiency has enhanced the relationship. The college provides training under the youth training scheme both as a managing agent and using other agencies. It runs a successful workshop to provide training for people with a disability who wish to set up their own enterprises. This is funded through East Lancashire TEC with support from local borough councils and the European Social Fund. The college and the TEC have worked together on a number of initiatives, such as the development of education-business partnerships. The college has also used its knowledge of establishing and running GNVQ courses to provide a series of national GNVQ conferences.

18   Links with the local community are strong. The college has maintained a good working relationship with the borough council since incorporation. This has enabled the college to be fully involved in the borough council's bidding for developmental funding from the European Union. The college is an active member of Initiative Burnley, a consortium of business and community groups which aims to promote and support economic development. It works well with other groups such as the youth

and community service and those involved in community-development projects. The college has responded positively to requests for support in developing suitable education and training for those under represented in further education, both on college premises and elsewhere. The college runs an efficient and effective job club for people who have been unemployed for more than six months.

19 There is a comprehensive strategy for the introduction of European elements into the curriculum. A good start has been made in developing a resource base, undertaking staff-development activities and using information technology links with other parts of Europe. The college is undertaking joint projects with education establishments in Sweden, France, Greece, Hungary and Spain. The college has taken a prominent role in the newly-formed Burnley twinning association with a town in France. This is seen as a way of expanding international activities while, at the same time, participating in a local community initiative. International activities have not been confined to Europe; the college is a key member of an economic developmental network project which links four British colleges with Californian community colleges. The college has yet to develop a systematic method of recording all these activities centrally, but it is starting to monitor them and to assess their effectiveness.

20 Staff and students have a good awareness of equal opportunities issues. The staff handbook contains a detailed equal opportunities statement and a brief statement appears in most college literature. The college collects data on the ethnicity, gender and age of staff and students. Developmental activities with an equal opportunities theme have been run for both staff and students and departments have also conducted reviews of curriculum content and delivery focusing on issues of race, gender and ability. The college is active in trying to attract members of its local ethnic communities into further education. Strategies to challenge stereotypes in the choice of courses have had some limited success. An example of good practice has been the women into technology course which has encouraged participants to go on to higher level courses in engineering and technology. There are members of staff of Asian origin in both teaching and support posts and these provide good role models for students.

21 Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported. They are introduced successfully into classes across the college as well as being offered a number of separate courses tailored to their needs. Those following specially-designed courses can sample vocational programmes to help them decide where they want their studies to lead. Links with external agencies which support students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have assisted curriculum planning. The low number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities which the college has managed to recruit suggests that there may still be unmet needs within the community. Students with restricted mobility experience problems of access in many parts of the college.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

22   The board of the corporation works energetically. It has been effective in setting the framework for the college and taking strategic decisions. Board members bring a spread of expertise from the business, professional and industrial interests of the town. A wide range of community interests is represented including schools, the community relations council and health care. Ten of the members are independent, four are co-opted, one is from the East Lancashire TEC and two are members of staff. There is no student member. Five members, including the chair, are women. The board has a good balance of experienced and newer members. Seven have joined since incorporation in 1993. Some training for governors and the clerk to the board has taken place and this has been effective in developing members' awareness of the respective roles of governors and managers. However, there is need for a systematic induction to acquaint all members with their legal and other responsibilities

23   There are six committees of the board; audit, finance, personnel, remuneration, curriculum and staff liaison. The main committees meet regularly. However, the audit committee currently contains members of the finance committee, and its membership is being revised in recognition of the advice given by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) in its *Guide to College Governors*. Committees report back to the full board regularly and there are established procedures for checking the financial health of the college. The curriculum and staff liaison committees have met infrequently and their purpose is unclear.

24   The principal has been in post since January 1995 and was charged by the board with the design and implementation of a restructuring of management and support services. Staff and governors were involved in a full consultative review, which was handled sensitively and professionally. The new structure is intended to strengthen middle management roles and functional support in areas such as finance and personnel. Some important posts have remained vacant for some time and this has caused operational difficulties. At the time of the inspection, restructuring had begun and some of the new posts were being advertised: the vice-principal was confirmed as the deputy principal from January 1995. The principal and deputy principal manage the college effectively and are providing leadership within the college after a difficult period without a permanent principal. The new management structure is well defined; there are clear lines of accountability and responsibility. Departments vary in size and the range of courses they contain. Courses are generally well managed but the co-ordination of some GCE A level, GCSE and open-college courses should be strengthened.

25   Communications between managers and staff are generally good. There is a wide variety of teams at course, department and college level and these meet regularly. Managers of cross-college services work together effectively to improve the standards of service to the college. Other groups

of staff meet to develop new approaches; for example teleconferencing and using the Internet. However, some staff teams do not meet sufficiently often and opportunities to share good practice in teaching and the promotion of learning are being lost. Some cross-college initiatives, such as the internal verification of GNVQ courses, have not developed sufficiently quickly. The consultative approach to new college developments is valued by the majority of teaching and support staff. Staff are kept informed of developments through meetings, team briefings and a variety of college bulletins. Aspects of the college structure make communication between teachers of similar subjects in different departments difficult and communication between some teachers of similar humanities subjects is weak. Governors have developed strong channels of communication with staff particularly in areas such as provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and equal opportunities where a named governor has a liaison role. The governors have held discussions with managers, course teams and students.

26   A large number of policy statements are used within the college but they vary in quality and there is no coherent approach to their implementation. Although the health and safety policy has been presented to governors, other key policies need to be ratified by the governing body. The board does not monitor progress in the implementation of major policy statements. It has had minimal involvement in the development of the student charter.

27   The academic board meets regularly. The agenda is relevant and meetings are lively. Although its role and remit require review it has been useful in advising the principal and governors on academic matters. Members of the corporation regularly attend meetings of the academic board and find them useful. Students are not represented on the academic board. They contribute to discussions at course review meetings but no other formal channels of communication exist for them to express their views on wider issues within the college.

28   The strategic planning cycle is firmly established in the college. A published timetable is used to ensure that teams from across the college, including governors and support staff, are involved. Clear targets are set for student enrolment, retention and completion and agreed by the senior management. Detailed monitoring of progress against each strategic objective is undertaken by the deputy principal. Departments complete strategic plans using a range of standard performance indicators, but some strategic objectives, such as those for equal opportunities, are not translated into operational objectives within teaching teams or departments.   The nature of the planning process results in a comprehensive strategic plan which is not easily understandable.

29   Under the new structure it is intended that financial management will have greater prominence within the senior management team. The chair of the finance committee receives monthly accounts. A potential

deficit at incorporation in 1993 has been turned into a substantial projected surplus for 1994-95. The college has recently been faced with a large repair bill for urgent health and safety work on a number of buildings and intends to use its reserves to pay for this unanticipated expenditure. Budgets are devolved to a large number of cost centres. Staff are fully aware of their role in financial control and teams review unit costs as part of the course review process. All staff are involved in identifying their resource needs at course level. New courses and developments are appropriately resourced.

30   The college has developed a powerful and effective computerised management information system which produces a valuable range of reports. The further education management information system is complemented by a wide range of software developed within the college. Communication between different parts of the system takes place easily, frequently and effectively. The wide variety of reports produced are used by managers at all levels of operation to review and plan provision. Performance of departments against a variety of performance indicators is reported at frequent intervals to heads of department. The management information system unit responds quickly to requests for information. Managers' personal computers are currently being networked into the system, but not all managers are trained to derive the full benefits from this facility. Returns to the FEFC on the demand-led element of funding have been delayed because of difficulties using the software within the further education management information system.

31   The college's average level of funding for 1994-95 is £17.01 per unit. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges is £18.17. Details of the college's income and expenditure for the 16 months to July 1994 are shown in figures 5 and 6. The college failed to meet its enrolment targets for 1993-94. College procedures for calculating units of student activity have been revised and targets for 1994-95 are expected to be met.

STUDENT' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

32   Pre-course information is made available to prospective students from a number of sources including an attractive prospectus and a coloured brochure which outlines the courses and services available and presents a small number of student profiles showing how students have fared after their college courses. Two additional leaflets outlining the college's facilities for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and support available across the college are particularly helpful. Pre-entry guidance is available from student services staff, course teams and school link staff. Information about courses and services are translated into community languages on request. A college prospectus is available with passages translated into other languages.

33   The central admissions unit provides a staff handbook outlining policy and practice on admissions. Quality guidelines on the timescales

acceptable for the interval between enquiry and interview are laid down. Further advice on admissions guidance and practice is to be found in the student services handbook. Students services staff monitor the admissions process. Interviews are conducted by members of the admissions team located within each curriculum area. There are regular meetings of the central admissions team to monitor and evaluate the processes and to recommend and implement changes.

34   Enrolment procedures are generally efficient. Students are well informed and receive good pre-enrolment counselling. Staff who conduct interviews and advice sessions prior to enrolment take particular care to ensure that students make informed choices. In some cases, students are directed to other institutions if this is felt to be more appropriate. Enrolment forms are comprehensive and well designed. On enrolment day some delays were experienced in processing enrolments, especially by those paying fees by credit card. Queues of students waiting to receive identity cards were excessively long at peak times.

35   All full-time students have access to a one-week induction programme involving an introduction to their specialist studies and familiarisation with college systems, student services, library and learning resources and learning support. Although a checklist for tutors had been generated by student services, the content and extent of induction programmes were largely the responsibility of the course team managers. Some good induction programmes included contributions from work placement providers, opportunities to talk to previous students, and an introduction to action planning, which involves students in setting their own learning objectives and evaluating their own progress. Other induction programmes were less efficient. The quality and extent of supporting documentation also varied and there was no evidence of the sharing of good practice across the college. Part-time students received induction programmes which varied from one hour to a day in length, but all experienced some form of introduction to the college and its services and spoke positively about its value.

36   There is effective assessment and identification of the needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is a clear indication of the support applied for and resources allocated. Students spoke positively about the support they receive. As yet, the college does not have systematic procedures for assessing students' levels of literacy and numeracy when they enter college. There have been pilot assessments on eight courses during induction and students have been subsequently referred for learning support. The college's provision of additional support in language, literacy and numeracy is good and is well publicised.

37   The college has a policy on the accreditation of students' prior learning but there are no specific guidelines for each curriculum area. In construction and engineering policy statements are in place and operating effectively. Other areas have procedures for accrediting prior learning available but they are rarely used.

38   Action planning, which involves students in setting their own learning objectives and evaluating their own progress, is not well established. Generally, it exists only where profiling is an important component of the course, as in GNVQs. The college is working with the careers service to introduce a cross-college approach so that school leavers, most of whom will have experienced action planning at school, will be able to continue to work in this way.

39   Records of achievement are organised through the tutorial system. In one tutorial, students were observed preparing statements for their national records of achievement. Everyone in this group had a computer disk and could input information into their records of achievement as part of their course. In other areas of provision, records of achievement were not updated consistently. For some courses, the profiling practices required by the awarding body, such as the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) or the course, such as GNVQ, take precedence.

40   Guidance and counselling for students is operated from the centrally-located student services base, which has a drop-in social area where students can seek help informally or make an appointment. The director of student services heads a team comprising one full-time administrator and seven counsellors who are also teachers. They provide an efficient and effective service for students which includes personal counselling and advice on welfare benefits, accommodation, careers and opportunities in higher education. Counsellors in student services operate to British Association of Counsellors guidelines under the supervision of a qualified counsellor.

41   Careers guidance and education are also offered by course team tutors and the local authority careers service. Tutors provide vocationally-specific advice within their own areas or refer students for more general advice from student services. The college has had a good working relationship with the Lancashire Careers Service for a number of years and the service offers a regular appointment system in the college. Student services and the college library have an extensive collection of information on careers and higher education. There is also access to appropriate databases such as the education counselling and credit transfer information service. Students are well prepared for entry to higher education and are briefed at appropriate stages of the applications process. All first-year GCE A level students attend the higher education fair at Preston in the spring and are invited to talk to student services staff about their applications.

42   The college has an effective tutorial system. Each student has a personal tutor. Full-time students have a weekly one-hour group tutorial built into their programme and individual tutorials available when necessary. Part-time students have a named person from whom they can seek tutorial support or they can visit student services. Full-time students are introduced to their tutors at enrolment or induction and spend the induction week with them. Student services staff issue guidelines for

tutors. The majority of students are taught by their tutors. Tutors offer personal counselling and vocational guidance. They also monitor attendance and oversee students' work placements. Tutors can initiate disciplinary procedures by the issue of a verbal warning before referring a student to a course team manager for further action. Most students spoke highly of the tutorial support they received and felt tutors were available to give them help when they wanted it. Some humanities students felt they were disadvantaged in the support they received because their subjects lay in more than one curriculum area.

43   Attendance patterns are monitored by tutors from registers and referral slips. Lateness at classes and non-attendance are followed up carefully in some areas, but there is no common practice and not all tutors are aware of existing guidelines. The procedure for dealing with early leavers is clearly documented and works effectively.

44   Students' rights and responsibilities are made known at induction, through tutorials, course team meetings, the student charter and the student learning agreement. Students are encouraged to voice their opinions and to raise issues of concern. Students have good facilities. The library, learning resources and study facilities are well used. There is a creche and a prayer room.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

45   Of the 162 teaching sessions inspected, 53 per cent had strengths which clearly outweighed weaknesses. The grades awarded to the sessions inspected are shown below.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level	2	13	14	5	1	35
GCSE	1	2	5	2	1	11
GNVQ	2	15	17	3	0	37
NVQ	1	5	3	2	1	12
Other	7	38	15	6	1	67
Total	**13**	**73**	**54**	**18**	**4**	**162**

46   In some of the good lessons in mathematics and information technology, students were well motivated and engaged in an interesting range of activities. Teachers questioned students frequently and helped them to develop their understanding. Generally, students responded well. In a good computing practical session, second-year BTEC national diploma students were working on individual projects based on real problems which students could describe clearly and with understanding. In some of the weaker sessions, students were inattentive and the pace of the work was too slow. In one practical session, several students sat and chatted, having finished all the work that had been set for them.

47   Science staff displayed a sound knowledge of their subject and teaching was competent. Learning programmes were well planned, lessons were effectively organised and students experienced a variety of methods of working. Homework was set regularly and marked promptly. Teachers maintained records of students' achievements. There was a good rapport between students and their teachers who were supportive and encouraging. Work was related to the students' experiences wherever possible. Useful handouts were often provided for summary notes, practice exercises or trial examination questions. Practical sessions were well organised and there was effective support from technicians. In some classes, however, students spent too much time copying from the board, or questions were rarely addressed to particular individuals. There was little evidence of stimulating learning material in laboratories and no display of students' work. There was insufficient use of information technology in the teaching of science.

48   Construction teachers displayed sound knowledge and experience of industry but the quality of teaching varied considerably. Some lessons were well organised and effective and there were good working relationships between teachers and students. However, in a significant minority of lessons, teachers appeared unenthusiastic, the work was presented in a dull manner, and students were not provided with adequate support materials. In a few instances, teachers arrived late for their classes. On NVQ programmes, the tracking of students achievements was comprehensive and thorough. Workshops were provided with industrially-relevant training and assessment facilities, and students' progress charts were openly displayed. Some project assignment work was good, but generally there was insufficient attention to core skills and the knowledge required to underpin activities. Assessment procedures are consistent and standards are appropriately aligned with the requirements of the external bodies, such as BTEC and the Construction Industry Training Board.

49   In engineering, a good portfolio of courses comprises programmes from BTEC first awards to higher national diploma. Lessons were generally well planned. Many staff prepared detailed schemes of work which helped to ensure that programmes were covered in the time available. Mature students were catered for in terms of subjects, levels and modes of attendance and opportunities for open learning. Relationships between students and staff were good and students appeared to enjoy their courses. Most projects and assignments were designed to promote effective acquisition of subject knowledge and skills and to encourage the development of core skills including planning, problem solving and communication. However, students did not receive enough practical work and the written briefs were sometimes unclear. Marking schemes were often not provided and some teachers failed to provide adequate feedback to students on their performance in assignments. Course documentation, and in particular student guides and assessment schedules for the City

and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) electrical installation programme, either do not exist or are ineffective.

50   Business studies staff, working as a team, produced a range of useful learning materials. Schemes of work and lesson plans ensured that students were set appropriately challenging tasks and understood the context in which they were working. Students were encouraged to work on their own and teachers supported this method of working by providing them with appropriate materials, demanding high standards and giving advice where required. Some of the coursework was innovative and exciting. Courses were designed to develop a range of core skills and study skills including the use of the library and central learning-resources area. There were appropriate standards of assessment. Assessment procedures met NVQ requirements and the regulations of the examination boards. The small size of some classes meant that some of them had to be merged.

51   There were good schemes of work for leisure and tourism courses. Lessons were well planned and there was effective use of a range of learning resources. Teachers were knowledgeable in their subjects but their expectations of advanced level students were too low and in several lessons the work was not demanding enough. Some classes were held in inappropriate accommodation and this adversely affected the quality of teaching and learning.

52   In health and caring courses, teaching was well structured and learning objectives were clear. Systematic schemes of work and lesson plans provide clear links between teaching, learning and assessment. Teachers were well informed. The material used in lessons was up to date. There was effective use of the whiteboard and video and students were provided with good-quality handouts. The variety of learning activities helped to sustain students' motivation during long sessions. Students worked well in small groups, particularly where the tasks required of them were well defined. Good links were made between theory and practice and teachers were adept at persuading students to make use of the experience they had gained in their work placements.

53   In art, design and the performing arts, the relationships between staff and students were generally good. Programmes were well balanced and met the objectives of syllabuses. Additional units on the GNVQ programmes were introduced at a stage which was inappropriate for the development of students' skills. Most lessons were well planned and effectively delivered. In a few sessions, the work was not demanding enough for the students. Some sessions took place in poor accommodation. For example, the workbenches in a studio designed for three-dimensional work were unsuitable for a drawing class which was held there and the teacher was unable to set appropriate professional standards.

54   Some humanities courses, for example English and foreign languages courses, were well planned and schemes of work were comprehensive

and detailed. Schemes of work in other subjects were less well developed, particularly in respect of learning methods. Lesson planning also varied in quality. Teacher education classes were properly prepared and had precise learning objectives. Some social science lessons were well organised and teachers' notes were of good quality; others were planned less effectively. The working relationships between most staff and students in most humanities lessons were good. Teachers valued students' opinions. This was a particular strength in sociology, psychology and law. In one English literature class, students worked with great enthusiasm in groups, discussing the qualities of a central character and providing evidence based on a sound knowledge of the text. Islamic studies students were set learning targets and encouraged to make links with their previous work, and their progress was carefully monitored. However, in many humanities classes the pace of work was too slow and activities were not intellectually demanding enough for the students. Aimless and ineffective discussion, the use of anecdotal evidence and excessive dictation were too prevalent. In some language lessons there was a heavy emphasis on grammatical work and not enough opportunity for students to interact and develop their communication skills. Across humanities subjects, there were insufficient attempts to encourage students to develop the ability to work on their own. In many instances, humanities students were failing to develop adequate higher level skills, such as evaluation and interpretation, and this was reflected in their coursework and ultimately in their examination results. The work set for humanities students was of an appropriate standard but the quality of marking varied. Languages and English work was carefully marked and there were constructive comments from teachers to help students improve. In a number of other subjects the marking was less helpful to students. The marking of GCE A level sociology is not explicitly related to the skills assessed in the final examination. In teacher education the summative profile on students is too limited in scope.

55   The teaching of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities was undertaken with enthusiasm and enterprise and there were good relationships between teachers, care assistants and students. Lessons were purposeful and the approaches used by teachers enable students to feel confident about their ability to succeed. In basic and adult education the staff operated to schemes of work in which aims and objectives were clear and the individual needs of students were taken into account. However, there was some inconsistency in record keeping, individual action planning and marking. Most lessons contained a mix of individual and group work, and the work was appropriately demanding for students. In a session for English for speakers of other languages, the teacher used oral presentations to improve students' grammatical structure and pronunciation, to build self-confidence and to get them to consider body language. This was done in a way which addressed individuals' learning needs and which allowed the students to participate at their own level.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

56   Engineering students demonstrated good study skills working both individually and in groups, although the communication skills of a significant minority were weak. Mature students attending evening or day classes or those who follow open-learning programmes are supportive of each other and are highly motivated. Open-learning students enrolled on the BTEC national certificate in electrical engineering have highly-disciplined attitudes to study. In business studies, students are developing an understanding of the requirements of competence-based courses, but some of their work is poorly presented. Assignments and projects in health and care, in contrast, are well presented. Core skills for the intermediate GNVQ programme in leisure and tourism are insufficiently integrated with vocational aspects of the work. In art and design these skills form an integral part of assignment work, although information technology and numeracy are taught separately. In GNVQ construction, students lacked confidence in using information technology; only two made effective use of the available resources to complete their assignments.

57   Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well motivated and enthusiastic. They work for approved qualifications, have their progress regularly monitored and achieve timely moves to mainstream classes. Work placements provide them with valuable experience.

58   Science students carry out their practical work competently and safely. They work co-operatively with the teacher and with other students and maintain accurate notes and diagrams. Some excellent work was produced by art foundation students, but on other art and design courses there was little evidence of broad-ranging work in a variety of media and materials and in many cases, students' drawing ability was poor. The work carried out in the engineering workshop was of a high standard. However, in some areas of engineering, the amount of laboratory work was too low. Safety standards in construction were generally high. The exception involved students working in a steel-framed structure built originally as a covered area for large-scale project work. It included a mezzanine storage area built on top of training cubicles which had restricted access. The accommodation was cramped and untidy and there were safety hazards caused by protruding nails in waste timber which was left lying around.

59   Because there was some evidence that staff industrial action may have had an adverse effect on student attendance, punctuality and behaviour during the specialist inspections, a more detailed study of registers was made during the team inspection week. In an analysis of the percentage attendance of each teaching group during the team week, figures varied from 64 per cent to 100 per cent attendance. The percentage attendance of individual students throughout the first term or throughout the whole course was also analysed. The lowest attendance figure for a single student was 52 per cent, though the majority of students attended

between 80 per cent and 90 per cent of their classes. In one department during the autumn term, registers showed that only 29 students out of 258 had recorded 100 per cent attendance. During the specialist inspection, students' timekeeping, attendance and, in a few instances, classroom behaviour required attention. In mathematics and in engineering, several sessions had relatively high numbers of absences or students arriving late. Some students arriving late for a business studies class were noisy and disruptive. In art and design, many students had poor records of attendance and were not called to account for this.

60   In 1993-94, GCE A level examinations candidates taking business studies, scientific and mathematical subjects performed better than their counterparts studying humanities subjects. Students aged 16-18 entered for GCE A level examinations in 1993-94 scored, on average, 3.8 points per entry (where A=10, E=2). This places the college in the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure, based on the data in the 1994 performance tables published by the Department for Education. College figures show that all students who entered for GCE A level biology and all full-time history students passed their examination. All candidates were similarly successful in GCE A level mathematics, applied mathematics and statistics, and pure and applied mathematics, though the number of candidates was small. Full-time students aged under 19 achieved 100 per cent pass rates in GCE A level environmental science, physics and pure mathematics and in GCE advanced supplementary (AS) mathematics. Pass rates in all modes of study were above the national average for sector colleges other than sixth form colleges in GCE A level business studies, environmental science, fine art (painting), law, physics, pure mathematics and statistics, psychology and Urdu and in the part-time mode in French. Students under 19 years of age achieved pass rates higher than the national average in English language and English literature. In a number of subjects where pass rates were high the number of higher grades achieved was lower than the average nationally. Full-time students achieved below national average GCE A level pass rates in French. Part-time students achieved below average GCE A level pass rates in human biology and sociology.

61   The proportion of passes at grades A-C in GCSE examinations is low in the majority of subjects. No full-time students achieved grades A-C in art and design (drawing and painting), chemistry, geography or history. Small numbers of part-time students did better in some of these subjects, for example in chemistry and history. Part-time students did well in English literature, French, psychology, sociology, and Spanish and there were some good results from those studying Urdu or Bengali. In art and design (photography), human biology and mathematics, GCSE pass rates were poor.

62   Significant numbers of GCSE and GCE A level students fail to complete their courses. For example, less than 75 per cent of students who initially enrolled on the daytime part-time human biology course completed it.

There are also relatively high withdrawal rates on some computing courses. Student retention rates on GCE A level and GCSE photography courses are between 50 and 55 per cent this academic year. When taken as a percentage of those who initially enrol, ultimate examination success rates in GCE A level English language, English literature, psychology and sociology are all at 50 per cent or below.

63   Completion rates on vocational programmes are also variable. There are poor retention rates on some two-year programmes in construction. About 50 per cent of full-time electrical engineering students who started courses in 1992-93 completed their target award. On most full-time engineering courses, the proportion of students who do not complete their course or who fail to achieve an award is high. In contrast, 30 out of 33 students on the BTEC higher national certificate in engineering gained the full award in 1994 and retention rates and examination results are generally good for part-time courses in engineering. On many business studies courses, the continuation rates from year one to year two of a programme and overall retention rates are low. Course completion rates for GNVQ leisure and tourism students have fluctuated over the last two years between 66 per cent for part-time advanced students and 87 per cent for full-time intermediate students. Completion rates for BTEC and National Nursery Examinations Board (NNEB) programmes in health and social care courses are generally at or above national averages. In art and design, retention rates for BTEC programmes are significantly better than those for GCE A level and GCSE. BTEC foundation art has a retention rate of 80 per cent, whilst in GNVQ programmes 69 per cent complete the intermediate programme and 85 per cent the advanced.

64   Eighty-four per cent of students in their final year of study on the vocational courses included in the Department for Education's 1994 performance tables were successful. This places the college in the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. All students achieved their target qualification on the BTEC national diploma in media studies, social care and nursery nursing in 1994. In BTEC foundation and in BTEC first and national diplomas in art and design, target qualifications were achieved by between 80 per cent and 89 per cent of candidates. In health and social care courses the percentage of students sitting their examinations who were successful ranged from 75 per cent to 100 per cent. In business studies, examination results are near or slightly above national averages. The BTEC national diploma in business and finance recorded an 86 per cent pass rate in 1994. All 41 students who entered the National Examining Board of Supervisory Management diploma and certificate examinations passed. Students entered for the RSA Examinations Board certificate in office technology were successful, with 12 obtaining the full diploma and one achieving 11 units. Of nine students who completed the NVQ level 2 in business administration, two gained a full award and five students obtained unit accreditation. In contrast, only two students at NVQ level 1 gained a full diploma and seven obtained unit accreditation.

65   Destinations of students are monitored efficiently at course and college level. Course teams analyse the data by age, gender and ethnic background of students, though targets are not set. There were fewer than 15 per cent of unknown destinations for the 1993-94 cohort of full-time students leaving college. Twenty-four per cent went on to higher education and a further 36 per cent continued in full-time or part-time further education or training. Slightly over 17 per cent went directly into employment, including a small number into self-employment.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

66   The college's self-assessment report is concise and follows the format of Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. It gives the background to the college's history and the industrial and social context of the locality. Evidence presented in the report is supported by references to both college and external documents. There are no judgements in the self-assessment report that are in conflict with the findings of the inspection team, but some strengths are neglected and not all the weaknesses identified by inspectors are included.

67   A quality policy statement and developmental plan were formulated in August 1993, but systems and procedures are not yet fully established. There is also a plan to produce manuals of standards and procedures but work on these has just begun. A quality manager was appointed in May 1994 and procedures have been developed with the intention of providing a uniform approach to quality assurance. The co-ordination of processes for the internal verification of NVQ and GNVQ programmes has started but needs further development. At the time of inspection, an effective strategy was emerging. The college youth training managing agency has achieved the European quality standard ISO 9002.

68   Course review and evaluation are central to the quality system and were applied to all full-time courses in 1994. The reviews are based on standardised documentation, and use performance indicators, the outcomes of a student questionnaire, minutes of course team meetings and external moderators' reports. The review process leads to an action plan. Some course teams produced realistic action plans which were effectively implemented. Other reviews were superficial and little action resulted. Processes were not implemented consistently throughout the college in 1994, and some part-time courses were not reviewed. The review mechanisms are less effective in subject-based programmes such as GCE A level and GCSE. The course review and evaluation process is now being reviewed. New procedures are being introduced which will establish timetables for action throughout the year and provide audits of the implementation of action plans.

69   The students' evaluation of college provision is assessed through the use of a questionnaire. In 1994, 50 per cent of full-time courses and less than 10 per cent of part-time courses were sampled. Responses were

received from 30 per cent of the students involved. Questionnaires have now been revised so that they focus more on particular issues. For example, in October 1994 a sample of students was asked questions about admissions interviews and induction. There is no systematic collection of the opinions of employers and parents.

70   Performance indicators used in course reviews include admissions, course completion, progression and examination results. For the admissions process, there are quality standards and procedures which are closely monitored, but in many curriculum areas the process of quality monitoring is less well developed. Course and departmental teams meet regularly and discuss quality issues but they need to undertake further work on quality improvement targets, standards, action plans, and on procedures for monitoring and evaluation. There is no formal system for the evaluation of teachers' performance by managers. However, the college has recently introduced a useful voluntary scheme in which teachers' classroom performance is appraised by their peers. It has been taken up by a large proportion of the staff in three departments.

71   The college is making good progress towards achieving Investors in People status. Staff-development policy and procedures are comprehensive and apply to all teachers and support staff. Priority areas for training are defined and activities are monitored by a staffing and curriculum group involving representatives from each department. There is a well-planned staff induction programme and a system of individual staff reviews which identifies training needs. Recent staff-development activities have included Training and Development Lead Body training, customer-care training for service team leaders, computer training for art and design staff, a one-day classroom management course and a governor training day. Staff are expected to disseminate information to colleagues following a training event. Some evaluation reports are rather superficial but an improved system of evaluation has been recently introduced which involves line managers in discussion of the outcomes of staff training. Resources allocated to staff development are sufficient to meet currently identified needs and the training budget is well managed. Records of staff training needs, activities and evaluation are held manually but there are plans to transfer the data onto a computer. The college is piloting a staff-appraisal scheme. A comprehensive system of appraisal has yet to be established.

72   The college has a leaflet setting out, in clear statements, charter commitments for students. The college charter has a low profile. Many students are not aware of its contents. The college charter does not meet all the requirements of the national further education charter. For example, there are no specified commitments for employers. However, the college is delivering commitments beyond those explicitly stated in the college charter. Charter standards are not stated in quantitative terms and there is only limited monitoring of the delivery of all charter commitments. The college has a student grievance procedure but it is not well publicised and

there is no central monitoring of students' complaints. The college is aware of current deficiencies and a working group has been established to develop the existing charter and accompanying procedures for monitoring its commitments.

RESOURCES

Staffing

73   The numbers of teachers and support staff are sufficient to deliver the courses which the college offers. There is an awareness among staff of the strategic issues facing both the college and the sector. Morale is generally high. Staff are enthusiastic about their subjects and work together well in departmental teams, although there is little sharing of practice across departments. Staff are well deployed. There is good forward planning for contracting part-time staff. This includes a formal registration process.

74   Teachers are generally well qualified. Almost all full-time teachers have a teaching qualification, and half the remainder are working towards one. Most part-time teaching staff also have a teaching qualification, and are appropriately qualified. With some exceptions full-time teachers have appropriate, up-to-date experience of industry and commerce. The college provides opportunities for teachers to update their experience, as required. Technician staff are well qualified or are working towards industrially-relevant qualifications. There is a shortage of technician support in a few areas of work. Otherwise, the number of support staff is adequate. Administrative support is good.

Equipment/learning resources

75   The quantity and condition of most general and specialist equipment are acceptable and the level of classroom equipment is good. Most teaching rooms have basic items such as overhead projectors, whiteboards and window blinds. Some of the older audio-visual equipment is unreliable and the standard of language laboratory equipment is poor. Staff are supported by comprehensive and efficient reprographic services. There is good, well-used specialist equipment for computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacturing facilities in engineering. There is a rolling programme for the systematic replacement of equipment in many, but not all, programme areas. Strenuous efforts are made to obtain value for money through standardised purchases, contracts and tight specifications, but there is some confusion of responsibility for specifications. Materials required by students, including textbooks, are often supplied by the college or are available at subsidised rates.

76   The purchase of information technology equipment takes good account of curricular needs. There are adequate numbers of computer workstations and work is continuing to install fibre-optic cabling to provide networking facilities throughout the main campus. More than half the

computers are able to run the latest windows-based software and efforts have been made to standardise applications. Choice of software is linked to local needs. There are extensive computer facilities for a variety of purposes, including resource-based learning, computer-aided design and adjacent computer-numeric controlled machines. In a few departments, information technology facilities remain poor.

77   The library is adequately funded and resources are well used. There is a good stock of periodicals, a videotape collection, and a growing number of project files. Students increasingly use compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases. There is a poor range of reading materials for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and adult basic education. The art bookstock is poor and many of the English texts are out of date. Social science and teacher education students have access to a good library collection. A computerised catalogue is not yet available; suitable equipment has been purchased and work has started in entering information. Some departments hold good stocks of books and related learning resources but there is no centralised record of these.

Accommodation

78   The design of the older buildings on the main site makes efficient use of space difficult. This is also true of the Padiham site. Signs around the sites and in buildings are of poor quality. There is a large maintenance backlog. One building was re-roofed recently because of its unsafe structure and other major structural problems are being addressed as finance permits. In the older buildings, rooms are of an inappropriate size, or are inconveniently located. The computer-aided technology centre and the newly-furnished science laboratories provide high-standard accommodation, but health care accommodation is bare, dispiriting and suffers from poor acoustics. Most classrooms and corridors have little in the way of display. The library does not provide a stimulating learning atmosphere. Communal areas such as the refectory and student common room are adequate. Much furniture is of poor quality.

79   Access for students with restricted mobility is generally poor, although the introduction of ramps has brought some improvement. One building has a suitable passenger lift, but first-floor access to other buildings by a linking bridge is denied to students. The new science laboratories have no access for wheelchair users. Similar limitations apply to the annexe buildings. Recent fire doors and some narrow corridors and doorways restrict access for students with restricted mobility.

80   There are computerised systems for tracking accommodation defects, and formal procedures for reporting these. The main site has been extensively surveyed. Action plans are being systematically implemented. A few areas have so far been fully refurbished and these provide accommodation of a high standard. Good use is being made of the opportunities which refurbishment offers to install computer network

cabling and to undertake related works. Although energy efficiencies are difficult to achieve, a longer-term view of energy conservation is being taken and savings are already being effected. The college tries to obtain value for money by maintaining an approved list of local contractors who work to well-defined performance criteria. Site security is effective.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

81   The college is making progress towards achieving its mission. Its strengths are:

- the wide range of courses and subjects and good opportunities for progression
- good links with schools, higher education and the community
- responsiveness to the needs of industry and commerce
- an energetic and effective governing body
- a well-established strategic planning cycle
- sound pastoral support and effective advice and guidance on careers
- enthusiastic, well-qualified staff, who have good working relationships with their students
- good GCE A level results in some subjects
- appropriate levels of general and specialist equipment.

82   In order to make further progress, the college should:

- develop further the accreditation of students' previous achievements on entry to the college
- undertake systematic diagnosis of students' abilities in literacy and numeracy
- improve retention rates
- raise levels of performance in GCSE examinations
- further develop the quality assurance system
- ensure that the course review and evaluation procedures are operated consistently
- continue to improve the quality of accommodation.

FIGURES

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

Figure 1

Burnley College: percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)

☐ Under 16
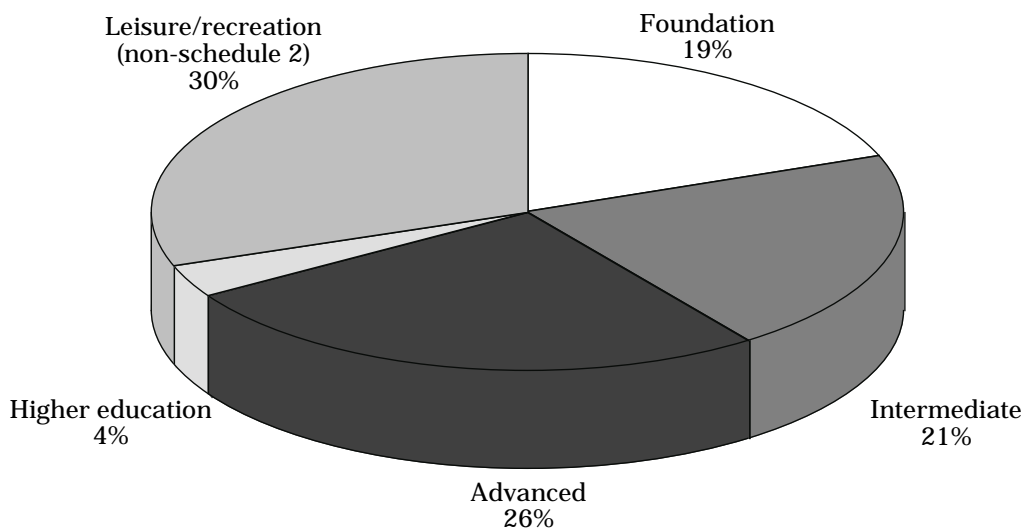
■ 16-18 years

■ 19-24 years

☐ 25+ years

■ Not known

2% 1%

19%

14%

64%
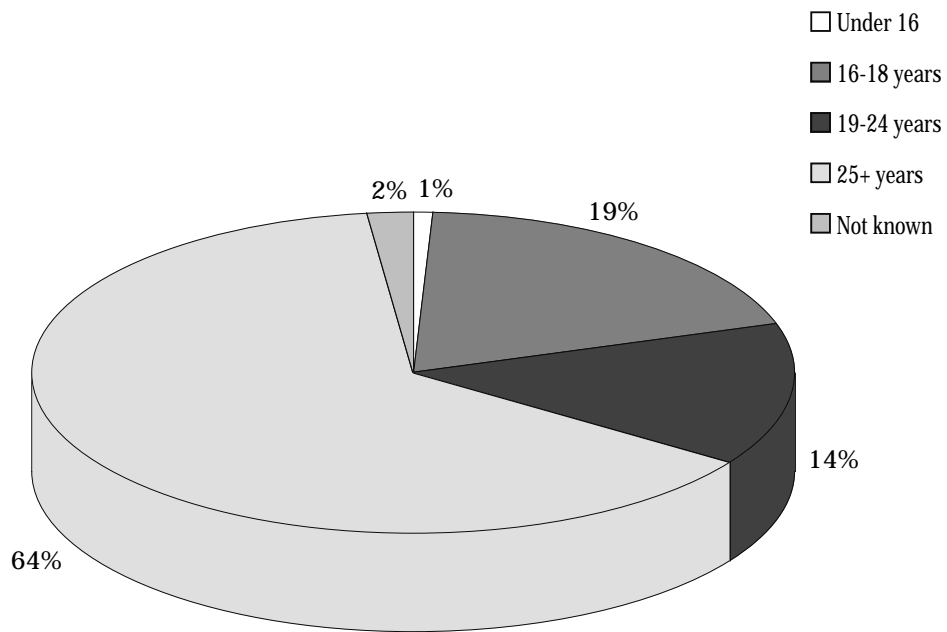
Enrolments: 9,013

Figure 2

Burnley College: percentage enrolments by level of study (1994-95)

Leisure/recreation
(non-schedule 2)
30%

Foundation
19%

Higher education
4%

Intermediate
21%

Advanced
26%

Enrolments: 9,013   ***Note:** this chart excludes 470 sub-foundation level students.*

Figure 3

Burnley College: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1994–95)
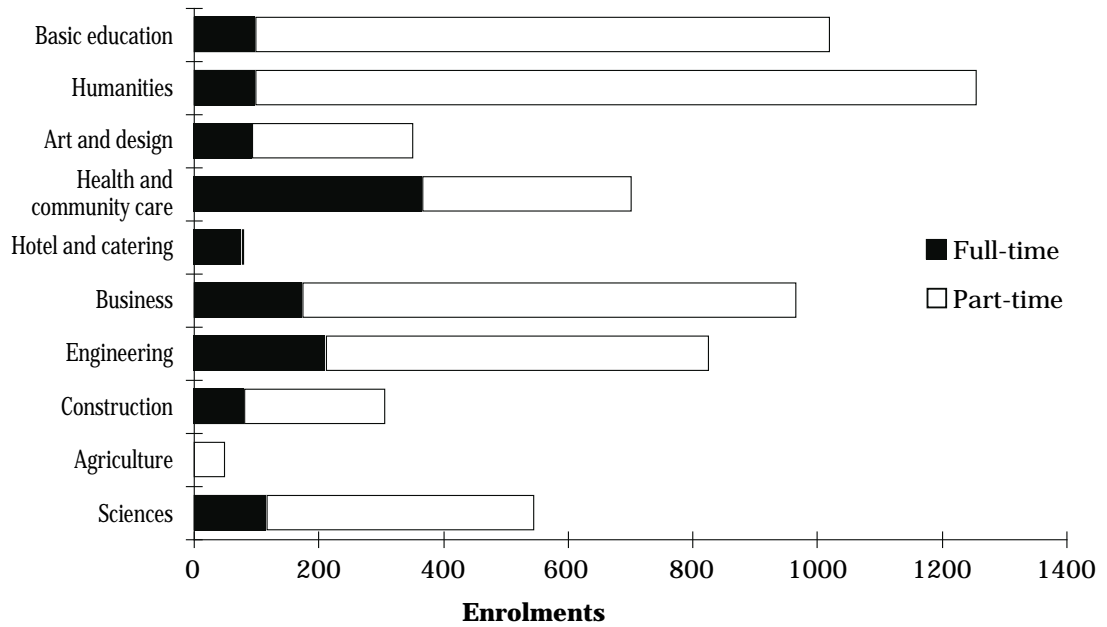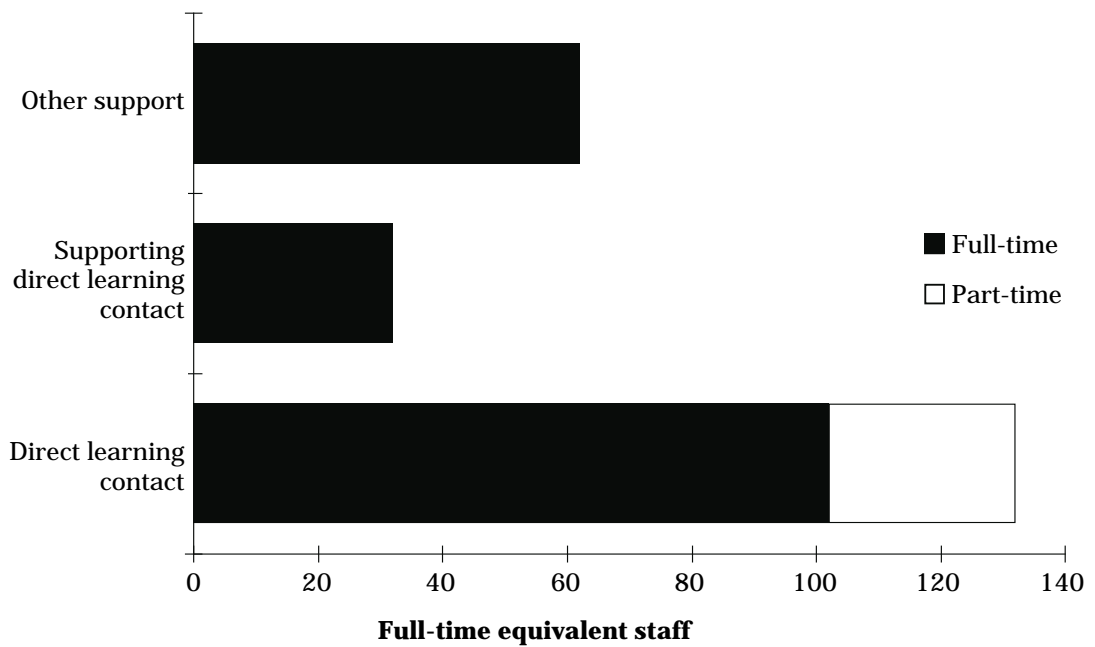

Enrolments: 9,013   *Note: this chart excludes 2,903 non-schedule 2 enrolments.*

Figure 4

Burnley College: staff profile - staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994–95)
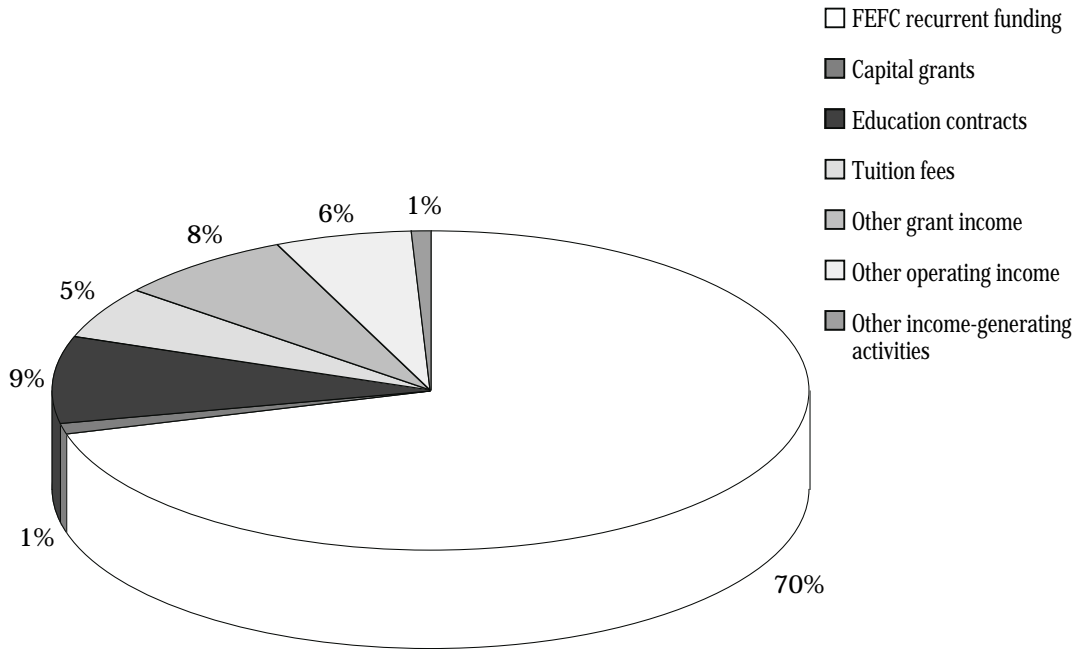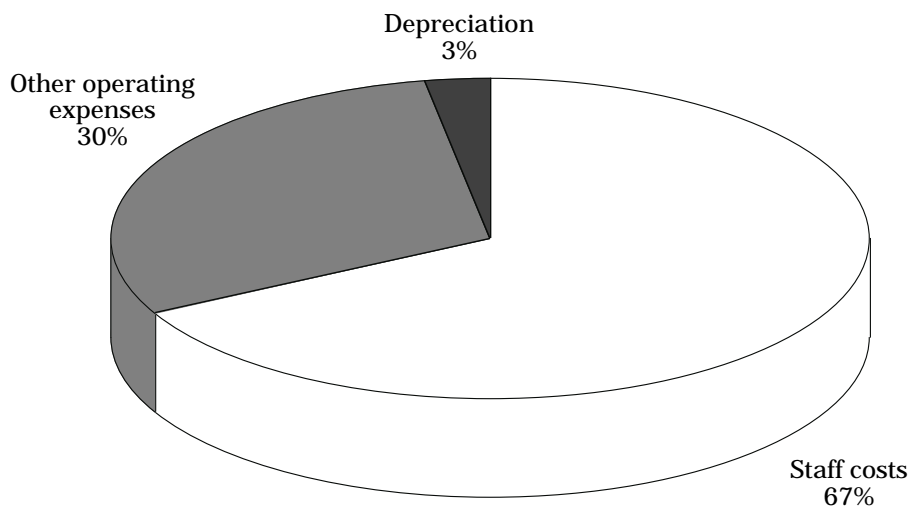

Full-time equivalent staff: 226

Figure 5

Burnley College: income (for 16 months to July 1994)

☐ FEFC recurrent funding

◩ Capital grants

■ Education contracts

☐ Tuition fees

◩ Other grant income

☐ Other operating income

◩ Other income-generating
activities

8%   6%   1%

5%

9%

1%

70%

Income: £8,974,000

Figure 6

Burnley College: expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)

Depreciation
3%

Other operating
expenses
30%

Staff costs
67%

Expenditure: £8,855,000