GUIDANCE FOR RECENT SCHOOL-LEAVERS IN NON-ADVANCED FURTHER EDUCATION

A REPORT TO THE SCOTTISH CONSUMER COUNCIL

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CHAIRMAN'S PREFACE

The Scottish Consumer Council’s decision to look at guidance in non-advanced further education arose because of my own experiences while serving on the Howie Committee. During the course of that Committee’s work, I visited two colleges and spoke to groups of students.

On a number of occasions I was struck by comments from students indicating that they felt they had not been advised properly on basic matters, such as which course to take, and I found myself wondering whether there was a problem with guidance for the modular system of non-advanced further education and, if so, how serious it was. Subsequently the SCC decided to look more closely at this area and commissioned the research on which this report is based.

The SCC has always believed that good advice is an essential part of life for the late twentieth century consumer: it enables people to make effective choices and to retain control over their own lives. This accords very well with the Inspectorate’s definition of guidance:

"One [purpose of guidance] is the offering of information, advice and support on curricular, vocational and personal matters, so as to enable the learner to make decisions about personal and career goals, select the most appropriate educational programme, cope with the process of learning itself and progress from the college to a desired destination. A second broad purpose is developmental. The process of guidance is a way of assisting the learner to become more autonomous and self-reliant."

Staying on Course: Student Guidance in Scottish Further Education Colleges. SOED, 1992

I believe the value of this report is two-fold: first, it looks at an area of guidance where there has been very little research and, second, it does so almost entirely from the perspective of the students themselves. The findings highlight a number of shortcomings in the system and demonstrate that many students are dissatisfied with the quality of advice they receive.

If students are to take the fullest advantage of the training that is offered by colleges, the issue of guidance and the extent to which it supports students in making the right choices is crucial. I hope that this report, together with others, will help to stimulate debate and encourage those responsible both in schools and colleges to take a fresh look at the advice and guidance they offer and see what they can learn from the comments made by the students in this report.
The most poignant comment came from one student who said:

"No one really helped. I just left the class"

I hope that this report will hasten the day when no student will feel compelled to make such a remark.

Deirdre Hutton  
CHAIRMAN  

February 1993
Acknowledgements

We would like to thank both the students and staff in the six colleges involved in this research for their help and co-operation.

The colleges concerned not only agreed to take part but responded in a very positive way to the idea of being involved in the study. They made the practical arrangements for the student groups and, in each college, several members of staff spent considerable time answering our questions about guidance provision and discussing students' guidance needs and how well they are being met.

The students' views are the heart of this report. There would obviously have been no study without the willingness of students to take part and to discuss their experiences with us. We are grateful that they were prepared to do so, even when, in some cases, it meant they had to give up some of their free time.

Cathy Howieson is a Research Fellow at the Centre for Educational Sociology, University of Edinburgh.

Sheila Semple is BP Exploration Fellow at Jordanhill College. Her involvement in this study was undertaken as part of her Fellowship work and was funded by BP Exploration.

The work was originally commissioned by Graham Atherton, then the Scottish Consumer Council's Senior Research Officer, and was overseen by the Social Affairs Committee. The members of the committee are Joan Aitken (Chairman), Pat Cooper, Kim Donald, Winnie Sherry and Deirdre Hutton (ex officio).

The text of the report was prepared for publication by the SCC's administrative staff.

The editing was done by Katie Carr and Sheila Fell.
SECTION 1: BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH METHODS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 Introduction

In recent years guidance has been given a higher place on the education and training agenda. The reform of non-advanced further education (NAFE) in Scotland through the introduction of the modular National Certificate increased the need for comprehensive information and guidance provision (SED, 1985) 1. Government thinking has been moving towards the principle of giving individuals more control over the form of their post-compulsory education and training as a vital element in improving participation rates. This thinking has recently been given concrete shape by the announcement of a system of training credits by 1996 for all 16- and 17-year-olds leaving full-time education. Guidance issues are also particularly relevant at a time when further education colleges are increasingly competing with each other for custom as they move out of local authority control to become self-governing.

The extent and quality of the information, advice and support that school-leavers receive is of key importance if young people are to make wise choices about their education and training and take advantage of the modular system of NAFE. Relatively little is known, however, about the nature and quality of the information, advice and support that school-leavers who enter NAFE receive. A recent report by HM Inspectorate (HMI) Staying on Course: Student Guidance in Scottish Further Education Colleges 2 describes and evaluates the effectiveness of guidance in further education (FE), drawing, among other data, on questionnaires completed by students. But it does not consider the particular experiences of school-leavers in FE or the guidance they received while still at school. The same is true of the other studies which have considered guidance in FE (Hart et al, 1987 3; SOED, 1991a 4). Research on guidance which does focus on school-leavers has tended to concentrate on guidance in relation to young people's occupational choice and entry to the labour market or entry into higher education. Yet other research has highlighted the need for a study of young people's guidance in relation to further education. For example, analysing data from the 1987 Scottish Young People's Survey, we found that just under a third of school-leavers who had not applied for full-time further education gave lack of knowledge about the courses available as a reason (Semple and Howieson, 1991a 5).

Against this background the SCC commissioned the Centre for Educational Sociology (CES) to carry out a study of the information, advice and support for recent school-leavers in non-advanced further education*. The objectives set by the SCC for the research were:

* The SOED has recently adopted the term "vocational further education" in place of "non-advanced further education" but we use the latter throughout the report.
"to report on the attitudes and experiences of school-leavers aged 16+ in their first or second year of college, particularly with reference to their satisfaction with curricular, personal and vocational guidance and various other aspects of their post-school destinations".

1.2 **Methodology**

The SCC suggested that the research should be based on discussion groups of school-leavers in colleges in different regions of Scotland. It was expected that each group would draw on a cross-section of recent school-leavers, including those on Youth Training (YT) Schemes, in full-time, part-time and day-release courses, and discussion would be based on a checklist of topics drawn up by the SCC (Appendix 1). The checklist included provision for students with special educational needs but we felt that it would not be possible in such a short project to tackle this issue adequately.

The funding available for the project from the SCC was insufficient to cover interviews with key staff in the selected colleges as well as the group discussions. Nevertheless, both the researchers and the SCC thought that such interviews would be extremely valuable in providing the contextual data about guidance provision and course structures in each college vital to understanding and interpreting the group discussions. Fortunately, since Sheila Semple's involvement in the research was to be undertaken as part of her work as BP Exploration Fellow in Vocational Education and Guidance, her time did not have to be costed into the project; this provided sufficient leeway to enable interviews with college staff to be built into the study.

The other main changes to the methodology initially put forward by the SCC were in the composition of the group discussions and in the range of activities involved.

We suggested that drawing together mixed groups of full-time, part-time and day-release students was perhaps not the best way to organise the groups. Firstly, based on what we already knew about guidance provision in further education (viz that the formal guidance system tends to focus on full-time students in the first instance), we thought that full-time and part-time students' experiences of the system were likely to be quite different. Secondly, the organisation of mixed groups would be complicated. While it is relatively easy to convene groups of full-time students, it is much more difficult to do so for part-time students. Many part-time students are only in college for a limited period; and if they are employed or on Youth Training, their employers or training providers are often reluctant that they should spend time on anything other than their college work. Overall, we thought separate groups of full-time and part-time students would be more productive. This was agreed with the SCC's Senior Research Officer.
We also discussed and agreed with him that we should include two other activities within the groups in addition to a plenary discussion: worksheets and a questionnaire (Appendix 2). The aim of the worksheets was twofold: to obtain some individual-level information before involving the students in a discussion which might inhibit or influence what they said; and to give students a chance to reflect on their experiences so that the following discussion would be more fruitful. The prompt questions in the worksheets were designed in an open-ended fashion to start participants thinking and help them focus their thoughts but at the same time were non-directive so that we were not deciding which issues should be covered. The questionnaire was designed to gather some background information on each student and to provide a further perspective on students' attitudes to the information, advice and support they had received.

1.2.1 The colleges involved

Six colleges were selected to give a spread in terms of geography, urban/rural catchment and size. They included two colleges in the west of Scotland, two in the east, one in the south-west and one in the north-east. Our selection of colleges was checked by one of the HMIs involved in the recent evaluation of guidance in FE colleges; he felt that they provided a good cross-section of guidance practice in further education colleges.

Letters were sent to the six college principals explaining the project and asking if they would be willing to take part. One college principal declined because of resource constraints; another college in the same region was invited to take part and agreed to do so. All of the colleges concerned were positive about being involved in the research and very co-operative in making the practical arrangements.

1.2.2. The staff interviews

The college principals were asked to identify an appropriate member of staff as our main contact. This was generally the person with a managerial responsibility for guidance below the level of assistant principal - for example, the guidance co-ordinator or the head of student services, depending on each college's guidance structure. We wanted to interview these individuals and also another member of staff with a day-to-day involvement in guidance. In view of the time available we intended to carry out two interviews in each college. We did so in four of the six colleges; in the other two we carried out additional interviews with the colleges' schools liaison officers, and in one the college careers officer was also involved.

These interviews had several purposes: to discuss how the student groups would be set up; to gather information about guidance provision in each college; and to explore staff's views on recent school-leavers' guidance needs, how well they thought these needs were being met and their assessment of the main issues.
The interviews provided a great deal of information about each college's guidance structure. Without this it would have been very difficult to appreciate some of the points made by participants in the student groups, to ask relevant questions or even to use the correct terms that the students would understand. For example, student tutors have a variety of titles across the different colleges. The interviews also meant that we could contrast staff and student perceptions of provision and needs.

1.2.3 The student groups

As explained earlier, we decided to hold separate groups for full-time and part-time students: four groups of part-time students and four of full-time students. We set certain criteria for the groups. We wanted participants who were volunteers; who had come to college straight from school, whether from fourth, fifth or sixth year; who were in the first year of a non-advanced vocational course (not taking SCEs/GCEs); and who were drawn from the main courses taken by school-leavers (studying part-time or full-time as appropriate). In the case of part-time students we specified that they should include both YT trainees and employed students and those on both day and block release. The composition of the groups was discussed with our main contact at each college who was given a written outline of the selection criteria. We also gave them a handout for students which explained the project and asked them to take part.

As expected, the part-time student groups were more difficult than the full-time ones for the colleges to organise for the reasons given earlier. In the case of one of the part-time student groups only two students out of an anticipated eight attended. This group was scheduled towards the end of the third term and it is likely that the time pressure on students to finish their module assessments is at least part of the explanation.

Overall 75 students were involved in the study, 42 on full-time courses and 33 on part-time ones. The part-time student groups were male-dominated - 22 boys and 11 girls, which reflects the general pattern of part-time college attendance for this age-group; for example, in 1989-90, around 64% of 16 - 18-year-olds in part-time FE were male (SOED, 1991b) 6. Twenty of the students in the part-time groups were on YT, 12 were employed, and one was unemployed and studying on an open learning basis. There were also slightly more boys than girls in the full-time student groups - 24 boys and 18 girls - which compares with an almost even split at the national level where, at least in the session 1989-90, 49% of full-time students were female and 51% male (SOED, 1991b) 6. A large majority were studying National Certificate modules. The bulk of the students had left school either at the end of fourth or fifth year (79%) with the remainder almost equally divided between fifth-year winter leavers and sixth-year leavers. Finally, they were drawn from a wide range of courses as Table 1.1 shows. We think that the students who attended provided a good cross-section of school leavers in further education.
Table 1.1*

Courses of student group participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business and administration</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computing</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media and related</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craft and design</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catering</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of students</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As described above we had decided to add worksheets and a questionnaire to supplement the group discussions**. Although there were 75 students involved in the study, not all of them filled in or completed the worksheets/questionnaire. In the event they provided valuable additions to the discussions. Students in the groups were generally strangers to each other and of varying levels of confidence in discussion. We were asking young people, at a sensitive stage of adolescence, to identify and discuss personal difficulties in addition to other guidance matters. Although relatively willing to talk generally about their course, few were prepared to discuss personal issues even when presented to them in a hypothetical manner. For example, when asked "What would happen if someone on your course had some sort of personal problem? Who would they go to? What would happen?", such an approach did not elicit any more of a response. It is perhaps expecting too much of students to discuss guidance issues relating to personal difficulties with strangers, in a group context.

The worksheets and questionnaire meant that we learned about the experiences and attitudes of all participants, not just those who felt most comfortable contributing to a group discussion. They also gave us extra information on topics only briefly discussed or not raised in the groups. They were particularly useful as a check on what we heard in the discussions. While we took every care to involve all group members as much as possible and to find out whether the views being expressed by one or two students reflected the general opinion, a danger of the group discussion format is that the views of certain participants predominate. The ability to check the group discussions against two other sources means we can have more confidence in our findings.

* Percentages in the Tables in this report do not always add up to 100% because of rounding up and rounding down.

** Although there were 75 students involved in the study, not all of them filled in or completed the worksheets/questionnaire.
For example, in the case of two of the eight student groups, the overall tone of the discussion was somewhat more negative than the remarks in the worksheets and the questionnaire responses, and we have been able to take this into account into our analysis.
CHAPTER 2: GUIDANCE PROVISION IN THE PARTICIPATING COLLEGES

It is very difficult to generalise about the guidance structure and provision across the six colleges. Not only did each college differ from the others but, in all six, provision varied within each college across departments*. In several cases, the variation within the college was relatively minor but in the other colleges there were major differences in structure and substantial variation in the provision that students could expect. For example, in three of the colleges, full-time students in some departments were assigned to a tutor as their main source of guidance but this did not happen in other departments. Four of the six colleges were in the throes of a major reorganisation of their guidance policy and practice. The structure that we heard about was in the process of change but in most cases staff were unsure about the exact nature and shape of the likely new arrangements.

In five of the six colleges there was a promoted member of staff with responsibility for guidance called, for example, the Guidance Co-ordinator or Head of Guidance/Student Services, the latter being at a more senior level. In several cases, these staff members had a direct role with students, especially those with particular problems, but more generally their role was to co-ordinate and manage guidance in the college. The extent to which they could innovate and manage depended on their position in the college hierarchy.

All of the colleges had nominated members of staff at the department level with a guidance responsibility. They might be called Senior Lecturers Guidance or Departmental Guidance Counsellors. Their role was generally to provide information and support to staff within the department on guidance matters and in some cases to see students referred on by staff. These staff might have remission of their teaching load but this varied across departments within each college and across the six colleges.

In all six of the colleges, at least in some of their departments, full-time students had a tutor. These tutors might be referred to as programme or personal or course tutors. The tutor was usually also one of the students' lecturers and was supposed to see his/her student group regularly. Participation in regular reviews seemed to be extremely variable. In some cases time for regular interviews or reviews was timetabled, in others it was not. For tutors to have a time allocation for their guidance duties seemed to have some bearing on whether or not students were seen regularly, but some tutors found the time to do so without a formal time allocation. It seems that some staff had a guidance role allocated to them; in some cases it came as part of the general duties of a senior lecturer post. For some this was likely to affect their commitment to carrying out non-timetabled guidance work. In most of the colleges, the guidance role of the classroom lecturer was recognised, with guidance being seen as an integral part of teaching and lecturers as being the first point of contact for students.

* Some of the colleges had different terms for "departments" but, for simplicity, in this report we use "department" for all the colleges.
Three of the colleges also had student support provision outwith the departmental structure. This was partly provided by teaching staff seconded for a certain proportion of time each week.

The extent to which the six colleges felt able and were prepared to offer counselling varied. Even in the three which did provide counselling, referral to outside, specialist agencies was the more common approach.

A variety of other individuals might be in post or available to students. Four of the colleges had a Schools Liaison Officer, while in the other two this function was carried out by either the Guidance Co-ordinator or Senior Lecturer Guidance. Where the college had a Schools Liaison Officer, in most cases this post was part of marketing. Most colleges also had a Marketing Officer responsible for such events as careers conventions. The relationship between guidance and marketing was one that concerned some of the staff we interviewed and will be returned to later.

Only one of the colleges had the equivalent of a full-time Careers Officer based at the college. In four of the other colleges, a Careers Officer from the local Careers Service came into college several times per week. The sixth college had no Careers Service involvement at the time of the research but had plans to appoint someone whose remit would include vocational guidance.

The formal guidance system in all the colleges was aimed primarily at full-time students. For example, it would be very unlikely for a part-time student to be assigned to a tutor. The main exception to this concerned colleges' own Youth Training students. Although part-time students could use the college student support services where these existed, they tended not to do so. All the colleges recognised that provision for part-time students was limited but they felt they did not have the resources to offer the same provision to them as for full-time students. The diversity of the part-time student body added to their difficulties. For example, part-time students can vary from someone coming into college to take one 40-hour module to someone attending for five mornings or afternoons each week. In the case of part-time students who are employed on Youth Training, the common view was that guidance is mainly a matter for their employer or training provider and the college's main responsibility lies with study problems. In general, for part-time students, the approach seemed to be to emphasise the guidance role of the class lecturer.
SECTION 2: PROJECT FINDINGS

CHAPTER 3: BRIEF INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

There are several general points that should be made before reporting students' responses. One obvious point is that the students we met were the winners or, at least, the survivors. They had succeeded in getting a college place or a job or YT scheme and in making it through most of the college year. We did not hear the views of those who did not manage to get to college in the first place or who had dropped out earlier in the academic year. Their experiences and opinions would be particularly interesting but they were not the focus of this study and the timing of the project also meant that discontinuers had left by the third term when we held the group discussions.

A second point is that we are very aware of the difficulties and pitfalls of trying to assess young people's satisfaction with guidance. One difficulty is that memory can be selective; individuals may well forget that they were indeed given information or advice about a topic, especially if it was at the wrong time for them. Satisfaction also depends on expectations; for example, if young people see the role of a Careers Officer as finding them a job and this does not happen, then satisfaction will be low. How young people conceptualise the usefulness or value of guidance is another issue. For example, one student rated the information and advice received before starting college "not very useful because it wasn't what I wanted to hear". The information and advice may have been relevant and appropriate but was rejected by this student because it did not support his ambitions. Another student remarked that "the information and advice was not very useful because I didn't take it". Again, the guidance might have been good but we cannot judge this from such a comment. Another difficulty is that guidance also happens in an informal, on-going way in class work and as such may well go unrecognised by young people.

We would also note that in this section which presents the findings of the student groups, for the most part we simply report students' comments in discussion, their statements in the worksheets and their questionnaire responses.

The range of issues which the SCC wished examined in the study cover educational, vocational and personal guidance at each stage of young people's FE experience: pre-entry, starting college, on-course and pre-exit. These were the four stages we used to structure the work with the student groups and we present the research findings within these headings.
CHAPTER 4: PRE-ENTRY GUIDANCE

In terms of pre-entry guidance, we were interested in finding out the sources, nature and usefulness of the information and advice that group participants had received about the educational options at 16+ and about their entry to FE. What sort of information and advice did they need? Who or what had helped them? Did they feel they had had enough information to make up their minds? Did they need any other guidance and, if so, what would they suggest?

There was a clear difference in the responses of full-time and part-time students. At the time of their decisions about what to do after leaving school, the focus of most of the part-time students was on finding employment rather than considering full-time further education as an option, although this was not universal. To some extent, their guidance needs and experiences were different from those of full-time students.

4.1 Part-time students

4.1.1 Varied needs, varied assistance

A large majority of part-time students said that they had spoken to guidance or other teachers at school and also to a careers officer. In some cases, other teachers were seen as more relevant to talk to than guidance staff because:

"they know you better than guidance teachers".

Only a minority mentioned regular timetabled personal and social development classes with guidance staff where educational and career options were explored.

On the whole, the part-time students were somewhat more positive about the help they had received from school and especially from careers officers than were the full-time students. This is not to say that they were all positive in their comments: opinion was fairly evenly divided. In some cases both school and the careers service had been of considerable help in providing information about different jobs, what they involved, entry qualifications and lists of possible employers to approach:

"Careers office was very useful, got me applications for jobs. Sent me information through the post".

"I needed advice on how to get in contact with certain companies ... the skills you needed to do a certain trade. I got all the advice I wanted by going to the school careers officer. I needed to know where the jobs were wanted by companies. I thought the advice was helpful for me to get the chance of three jobs".

Note: In general, students' original spelling, grammar and style have been retained in their quotes throughout the report.
Some students had practised writing application letters, filling out application forms and mock job interviews at school. These were judged useful:

"At school we were taught how to go for interviews and all that. How to express yourself".

However, some criticised the information they were given as too general and irrelevant to their interest:

"they just gave you a load of leaflets".

"it wasn't enough to cover what the job entailed, not really deep enough for you to say, well, that's what I really want to do".

"The information wasn't very good ... it wasn't clear enough to understand".

Help also seemed to be patchy. For example, in one group, one student had had practice making applications but had no interview practice while the reverse was true for another student.

"We got help in filling in application forms, but we never got advice on doing CVs or going for interviews. Just application forms".

There was a feeling among a relatively small number of the part-time students that their school had done very little for them in terms of guidance:

"I talked to Careers Office. Talked to Parent's. School did not say a thing to me about job's or anything".

They seemed to be rather bitter that their school had taken little interest in their future because they were not academic successes:

"school could have taken more of an interest, instead of leaving it up to Careers".

Although a number mentioned also talking to their parents, as well as to teachers and/or careers officers, it seemed that for most their parents had left the decision about what they should do up to them:

"They said it was mainly your decision, they said it's up to you".

Several had had more practical help from their parents and in two cases had been given a job by their father:

"School didn't give me any help at all ... my parents helped me most ... looking in the papers for jobs and that".
"... then after 8 months I wanted to be a painter and decorator so I asked my father to give me a job in his company, so there was no need to go to the careers office".

Although most of the part-time students had been thinking primarily about finding a job, a substantial minority commented that they would also have liked information about full-time further education and to have explored this option. There were various comments about this in response to questions about what other information and advice would have been helpful:

"the advice that could have helped me was how to further my education and do better for myself rather than leave school and [go] straight into a job".

"When I went to the careers people they were not very helpful. They did not tell me of any courses at college in Travel and Tourism, they just gave me the list of travel agents looking for new starts ... having been told about college courses would have helped".

"It would have helped if I'd been told if there was a bigger outlook on courses at college or YT".

The bulk of part-time students responded in the questionnaire that they had been told when they were offered their job or training place that they would be going to college (91%). In several cases, students already knew when they were still at school that they would have to attend college if they found a job or training place in the area they wanted. Others only discovered this when they started their job or scheme. A few did not find out until just before they had to start college.

Table 4.1 shows the extent to which part-time students felt they had had sufficient information and advice about various aspects of their course before they started college.
Table 4.1
Part-time students' satisfaction with pre-entry information and advice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Too much %</th>
<th>About right %</th>
<th>Not enough %</th>
<th>No of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Before you came to college, did**
| you get enough information and advice from your employer or training provider about ... |
| what you would study at college? | -          | 42            | 58           | (33)           |
| the qualifications you would get at the end of your course? | -          | 73            | 27           | (33)           |
| who to go to if you had any problems at college? | -          | 58            | 42           | (33)           |
| how you would be assessed?     | -          | 55            | 45           | (33)           |

The majority thought that they had had enough information about the qualifications they would gain; over half were satisfied with the information and advice they had received about how they would be assessed and who they should go to if they had problems at college. But more than half thought they had not been told enough about what they would study at college ie. course content.

4.1.2 Students' suggestions

When asked what other information and advice could have been helpful, the majority had suggestions to make. A considerable proportion of the suggestions concerned more information about college generally and about their course in particular:

"exactly what the course I was attending was about. Such as what modules I was sitting and the degree of difficulty".

"how long I would be in college for. How big the blocks were I was coming here for".

"How the day-release system works ie. my day at college is classed as a day off".
Several students suggested that they would have found it helpful to hear about their college course from someone who had been on the course:

"if someone who had already done the course came [to school] and said what it was about and if it was really worth doing the course or not".

Other students mentioned that they had found out something about their course from workmates:

"other apprentices at the college before me and had known and told me what to expect".

However workmates could also be negative about college:

"my boss didn't say anything, I was just told by guys at work that its a waste of time ... you'd learn more on the job".

The impression conveyed by a considerable proportion of the part-time students was that college attendance was not a matter of a great deal of discussion with their employer or training provider:

"We just got told we were going and that was it. They didn't [tell us what college would be like]. They said get the train to X and go to the college".

"I didn't know where the college was ... I was just told to go to X college".

The question of whether employers are well-informed enough to be able to give adequate information and advice is another issue. This was illustrated by the experience of a couple of students. In one instance neither the student nor her employer had understood the length of the course:

"When I came for my interview I was told it was two years and then I found out it was three. Any my employer didn't know either, so he is going to pay X amount for three years now instead of two".

In another case the choice of course by employer and student had been made without any help from the college and an inappropriate course chosen. The result was that:

"the things I have done on my course haven't applied to my job at all".

In this case, although the student had now identified a more relevant course, neither she nor her employer seemed to feel they were able to arrange a change of course for the following year.
4.2 Full-time students

4.2.1 Exploring all the options

The bulk of full-time students had decided to go to college as a way to gain the qualifications for their desired career - rather than look for a job at this stage - a finding which echoes other research on young people's motivation for further education (Ryrie 1983 7; Semple and Howieson, 1991b 8). Typical comments were:

"I needed information on computing courses as I had an idea that I would like to get a job to do with them".

"I knew I had to get further education to get the job I wanted".

For some, who recognised the need to gain qualifications but were disenchanted with school, college offered an alternative:

"I wasn't wanting to come to college to start with but just knew I couldn't stay on at school any longer but I couldn't just get a job because I'd just be in a dead-end job".

The large majority of full-time students had talked to guidance or other teachers and also to a careers officer. A number praised the help that they had received:

"I needed advice on what business studies course I should participate in if I was going to study travel and tourism. I talked to my guidance teacher and careers officer. I got a lot of advice about various colleges, college courses".

"I wanted to stay on at school because I didn't know what I wanted to do and my guidance teacher told me it wasn't the best option to take. We went through lots of careers books and he got me an appointment at the careers office who got me an interview at the college. It was very useful because otherwise I would still be at school and not in training".

Nevertheless, more full-time students had either negative or mixed opinions than were positive about the help they had received from their school and especially from the careers service:

"I needed help with the choice of course and college. I got help with the choice of what to do but not what I needed. I asked the careers officer, my guidance teacher and my year head ... it was not that good or useful. Only my parents were really helpful".
A common criticism was lack of information and advice about full-time further education and discussion of this as an alternative either to staying on at school or finding a job or YT scheme:

"I never got told about college ... when I went to my Careers Officer ... the only option they gave me was YTS or do your Highers and go to university".

"My guidance teacher told me nothing about further education because I told her I was not wanting to continue in school but I knew I needed more qualifications. She just told me I would be wasting my life if I left and that I should take my highers. I was a good pupil. The careers person told me to take my highers then go to university. She never told me I could do it any other way".

The lack of advice about further education is particularly relevant in relation to the current increase in the proportion of young people staying on at school beyond the statutory leaving age. In recent years, British participation rates in education have been compared, usually unfavourably, to other countries and any increases in levels of participation are usually viewed as beneficial for both the individual and for society, and also the economy. Yet further education could well be a better option than school, especially for those of middling academic ability, and this decision should be made on the basis of the individual’s best interests and not in response to any institutional or sectoral pressures (Semple and Howieson, 1991b)\(^8\). As noted in the introduction, in previous research we found that a third of leavers who had not applied to further education gave lack of knowledge about further education as one of the reasons (Semple and Howieson, 1991a)\(^9\).

School staff, in particular, were sometimes seen as more interested in those going on to university than thinking about college:

"I just found out about the course myself and came up myself, sent in the application form myself ... . They [teachers] are just interested in people that wanted to go to University ... normal people who wanted to go to college they weren’t interested in at all".

A lot of students' suggestions about improving guidance centred round the need for more information, advice and discussion about the full-time FE route:

"I could have been told by them [guidance teacher and careers officer] that college was an option open to me and explained to me exactly how the system worked".

"being told about the types of courses available at the different colleges".

"other courses along the same lines as what I was interested in".
As well as more information about different courses and course content, students also wanted more advice and guidance about going to college and college life:

"giving better direction as to what the course would lead to. Also further training after the course. What the courses I was interested in actually involved so I would be able to decide".

"Someone's opinion on how well I would cope with a course would have been useful".

"Advice on the fact that college was much more different from school".

A number would have found more information and advice on finance helpful:

"how and where to apply for a bursary".

"advice on financial problems would have helped me".

Careers officers tended to be perceived as pushing jobs and especially YT rather than discussing full-time FE:

"the whole school had about three appointments with her [careers officer] ... and she gave you quite a lot of help ... but she never mentioned anything about going to college, she was just on about jobs and things".

"they [careers officer] tried to make me get a job rather than try and get more education ... they try and palm you off with anything ... lifting boxes and stuff ... peeling tatties for £29 ... its Youth Training if you could call it that".

"I wanted to go to college and didn't want to do a YTS. The Careers Officer was trying to get me to do a YTS ... they were really annoyed that I didn't want to do one".

"talked to school teacher and careers officer. Got information on colleges but told to do a YT job".

Another related criticism was that careers officers were directive, especially if the young person's career ideas were unusual or perceived as difficult:

"When I went to the careers office ... I was interested really then in drama or arts and design ... they sort of avoided that and says maybe heavy wood would be better for you ... They tried to talk me into being in the building trade for some reason".

"For anyone who wanted to try something that wasn't considered a 'normal job' they [careers officer] tried to dissuade them".
"I saw the local authority careers officer; they weren’t helpful at all. The kept trying to push me one way and I wanted to go another".

However, some of the students’ criticisms that careers officers tried to dissuade them from their own ideas may not be wholly justified. Careers officers are usually concerned to help young people avoid narrow choices; and what, in some cases, may have been an attempt by the careers officer to encourage them to keep their options open may well have been construed as an attempt to change their minds.

In earlier research, we found that while a quarter of students in higher education said that non-guidance teachers had been helpful when discussing their choices, less than a tenth of those who had subsequently entered further education thought that non-guidance teachers had been helpful (Semple and Howieson, 1991b). It appears that the link between school subject and higher education is clear, but not the link between subject and non-advanced further education. For example, a chemistry teacher is more likely to be viewed as helpful by a pupil considering a chemistry degree than by one considering a non-advanced course in science and technology.

Full-time students’ questionnaire responses give the same picture of lack of information and advice about further education. Table 4.2 shows that a substantial majority were not satisfied with the information and advice received at the pre-entry stage about the courses available at college or the courses for which they were qualified.

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<tr>
<th>Table 4.2</th>
<th>Full-time students’ satisfaction with pre-entry information and advice</th>
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<td>the courses available at college?</td>
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<td>the courses you were qualified for?</td>
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Another point about pre-entry guidance made by a few students which echoed the concern of some guidance staff in the colleges was whether guidance teachers in school and careers officers really explore and challenge young people’s ideas, especially if they seem to know what they want to do:

"I needed plenty of options, a constructed framework ... not just a two minute talk with the careers man and then goodbye".
"the careers officer which came into the school, when I said I was doing this, 'oh that's fine', and that was it. I was in there for about five minutes and other people were in there for twenty minutes".

This contrasts with the comment from another student:

"I didn't want much guidance because I thought I knew what I wanted to do in life but the guidance I did get was very useful in that I changed my mind about my career and chose something entirely different".

4.2.2 First-hand experience

From our interviews with college staff it was clear that they worked hard at developing school links but nevertheless were sometimes critical of their own practice and were looking for different approaches to take to meet young people's needs. In several cases, however, school-college initiatives set up by the college had not been taken up, or only in a limited way, by local schools. But in another instance a successful access initiative for school pupils to college modules had resulted in a higher proportion of young people in the college. College staff identified contact with fifth- and sixth-year pupils as a particular problem as some schools were reluctant to involve these pupils, especially the more academic, in visits or taster days.

However, contact with college prior to applying via open days, career conventions, visits to school by college staff and taster days at college was generally viewed as helpful. Students from two colleges in particular mentioned such contact more than the other students did. This may well reflect these colleges' schools liaison programmes:

"I needed advice about the course I wanted to do. So I came to the college open day and talked to one of the senior lecturers about what I wanted to do and she suggested the course I am doing now. I was told what exam passes I needed and what college was about ... the information was very useful ... it told me all I needed to know about the course".

"Our school got X college ... they came to our school and gave us all a talk about all the different courses and if we were interested we could get leaflets on the courses".

A few had been to college on taster courses:

"We were given a week to come up to college ... and we were only allowed to choose two different things you wanted to go to ... when I went to carpentry I kind of made a mess of my fingers ... but I preferred coming up and finding out about it first then I knew exactly what I was getting into".
Students who had not had direct school-college contact thought this would have been useful:

"a visit to the college or someone from the college would have helped me to decide what to do".

"if they had had someone to come and talk about courses at college also a video thing to show us what college was about and could offer".

However, a number of those who had attended college presentations at school felt that they still had not learned enough about provision:

"I went when the college was in school ... but they never really explained the course well enough. Its really different the course I'm on from what they explained to me, it never really gave enough detail".

It also seemed to be the case that some schools focused on higher rather than further education, or indeed, vice versa.

"we got the option of going to visit some universities but not colleges".

but

"we never got anything about universities, it was just colleges".

Another issue that came up was that colleges seem to concentrate on their local schools. Although this may well be a reasonable approach given their general student catchment, it could mean that some individuals lost out:

"the college does open days and stuff but living in a different area of X [named the region], I didn't know ... I'd never heard of this college".

4.2.3 Second-hand experience

Friends were an important source of information on full-time FE. For a number of students a friend was their initial contact with college and provided information:

"I decided I quite liked the hairdressing because I had come up with my friend to be her model and I liked what they did so she got prospectus and a sheet to fill in to send back".

"One of my friends was at college last year so I got the address off her and wrote to that college and they told me about other colleges".
In other cases, school friends shared information:

"I never went [to the open evening]. I got the leaflet about the course I'm on now from a friend who went".

Parents were also mentioned by some students as a source of advice and, in particular, of encouragement and support in finding out and applying to college:

"that was the best help, my mum and dad, they really helped me more than anyone else, they really left it up to me to choose what I wanted to do but they encouraged me and said if you want to go for it ... and why don't you go up to this open day and that open day".

"I came up to the college open day ... with my mum, cause she just saw it and so she took me up".

Other parents were more directive:

"When I left school ... well I was told not to come back because I failed all my exams ... I was going to get a job but mum said 'no, you're going to college instead' ... she made me go".

However, several students had come to college against the wishes of their parents or family; they had either wanted them to stay at school or had disapproved of their choice of course, as in the case of a drama student:

"I've got six brothers ... the whole six of them thought that drama was for poofs and stuff ... I got very discouraged with my family".

Several had found out more about the industry they were interested in on a work experience placement and this had helped them decide what they wanted to do:

"on work experience I was told by other men in the industry about being a builder which made the choice a lot easier".

Nevertheless, quite a few students who had had work experience did not think it had helped them to decide; instead work experience had been:

"just a good laugh".

Several complained about health and safety aspects of their work experience:

"I was in a building pulling roofs down ... we had no safety masks ... my lungs were filthy".
4.2.4 Pre-course interviews

In three of the full-time student groups most students had had an interview at college at the pre-entry stage; in the fourth group only a few students had been interviewed. Although they had been told a little about their course, the general feeling was that the interview was largely for selection purposes and had not given them enough information about the course or other areas such as finance:

"the interview seemed to be more about the qualifications you had to come to college than about the college".

"they told you some things, basically what you'd be doing - in the kitchen, waitressing - but they never went into it in depth, I mean, how many times you'd be in the kitchen, what you would need, what you'd be going, the stuff you'd be taught in the kitchen".

Another student had left her interview still with a mistaken idea of the length of her course:

"I signed for a 2 year course and didn't know that ... I thought it was just a year course and I was quite glad when I found out I was on a two year course and I was quite shocked as well".

In several groups, there was some resentment at not being told certain important pieces of information or being given what was perceived as misleading information about their course:

"you've got to pass all 21 basic modules ... if you don't you can't take your second year but I never got explained that at the interview ... its no right".

"they give you the sheet at the beginning when you're applying and its got a list of all the modules and has so many options but most you don't have a choice of doing ... they don't run in the college".

One student believed she had been misled at interview that her course would be accepted by universities for entry:

"I was told the course I'm doing would get me into a university course ... but when I wrote to the universities they didn't accept it as qualifications".

This student was adamant that she had made her university intentions clear at interview.

The majority of full-time students felt that they did not have enough information about college or their course:
"I didn't know what I was in for when I came here".

"More in-depth descriptions about college courses".

"If they had said what all the modules were going to be".

Their questionnaire responses tell a similar tale (Table 4.3). While over half were satisfied that before coming to college they had had enough information and advice about the courses they could go on to later, they were more negative about the other items. Four-fifths responded that they did not get enough information and advice about what student life would be like; around two-thirds were dissatisfied with respect to information about their job prospects at the end of their course and what they would study on their course; and over a half thought they had not been told enough about how much work their course would involve.

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<th>Table 4.3</th>
<th>Full-time students' satisfaction with pre-entry information and advice</th>
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<td>what student life would be like?</td>
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<td>what you would study on the course?</td>
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<td>how much work the course would involve?</td>
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<td>your job prospects at the end of your course?</td>
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<td>the courses you could go on to later?</td>
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A number of the guidance staff we interviewed recognised the potential tension between good pre-entry guidance and the marketing of courses, acknowledging that departments' impartiality when interviewing candidates was a continuing issue. The extent to which pre-entry guidance is genuinely client-centred is identified in the HMI report on guidance in further education as perhaps the most significant issue in pre-entry guidance (SOED, 1992)². The report notes
that much of colleges' activity directed at potential students had as much of a marketing as a guidance purpose and that pre-entry interviews might not allow potential students to clarify their own goals and to receive accurate and comprehensive information about the range of opportunities in the college and elsewhere. In one of the colleges involved in this project, the existing pre-entry course information system was being replaced by a new admissions provision which would come under the college's guidance rather than marketing function. Staff hoped that this would reinforce the guidance aspect.

We wondered what effect the re-organisation of further education might have on pre-entry guidance and especially the issue of marketing and client-centred guidance. On the one hand, colleges are being encouraged to give more attention to marketing and, as self-governing institutions, are in more direct competition with each other. On the other, more emphasis is also being placed on performance indicators such as course completion rates and post-course destinations. In discussing the impact of the re-organisation with some staff, several felt that more attention to such performance indicators might well have a positive effect on pre-entry guidance by encouraging selectors not to oversell their course to inappropriate candidates who might later drop out. Whether or not this happens may depend on whether student drop-out is linked to loss of fees; this is not presently the case. But a possible danger is that selectors might go to the opposite extreme and select only those sure of completing the course.
CHAPTER 5: STARTING COLLEGE

In this chapter, to avoid repetition, we combine the views of part-time and full-time students because, in many respects, we found they made similar comments. Where there are differences, we discuss these in the text. At this "starting college" stage we wanted to find out students' experiences in their first few weeks of college. Had it been what they expected? What was different? What, if anything, did they find difficult at first? What did the college do to help them settle in and to explain about college life, their course and what was expected of them? Would anything else have been helpful?

5.1 Differing expectations

A majority of both full-time and part-time students found various aspects of college different from their expectations although a number also noted that they did not know what to expect:

"No, I didn't know what to expect because I wasn't told anything about the college".

One of the most common comments related to the more relaxed college atmosphere and college staff's attitude to them, especially in contrast to their school experience:

"It's different from school, more relaxing and you could still do work at the same time. I thought it would be like school but harder but it is more relaxed and there isn't any pressure".

"I thought it would have been like school but it wasn't, it was more of an adult environment, no teachers on your back telling you what to do".

"College was a lot more laid back and easy going than I expected".

"More people treated you like an adult, more say in what you were doing".

On the other hand, several expressed a more negative view of the informal atmosphere:

"The classes were different [from school] ... they were less disciplined and a lot less organised".

In one college, in particular, students were also more negative about staff:

"The lecturers' attitude to us new students was very much like school, rules and formality".
Some students were surprised about the number of older students in college or on their course:

"I expected more people my age (17) but I was in along with people a bit older".

"Most people were older than I thought they would be".

5.2 Induction

In FE fewer part-time than full-time students receive a formal induction and if they do so it will usually be a shortened version. This is reflected in the comments and responses of the students in the different groups. Although most of the part-time students seemed to have had some sort of induction it had been variable in extent, and quite a few were hazy about what had been involved. In one college it seemed to consist of completing enrolment forms and being given a handbook. The latter was not rated highly:

"We were given a booklet which explained about the college ... wasn't much use".

Part-time students from the other colleges spoke of staff telling them about college and their course, and generally helping them to settle in. But the amount of information and advice they received was variable:

"We did spend a little time going through certain aspects [of the course] but not really enough".

"The lecturers talked to us quite a lot about what we were expected to do, to know about the qualifications that we were achieving for".

"The lecturers were really nice and made you more comfortable".

In contrast with those on part-time courses, the full-time students generally had had longer and more structured induction programmes. They also seemed more likely to be told about guidance provision:

"They told us we had a tutor to go to if we ever needed help and that there was various counsellors who could help with private or financial problems. Also explained what subjects we would be getting and what they involved".

"We had three induction days. This consisted in inrolling into the college. Getting shown round about the college and some teachers were introduced. A couple of talks about the course it's self. Aids talk. Grant talk and guidance available talk. And on the third day we all went out of college to a chosen place. I went ten pin bowling".
A number of their comments also convey the impression that staff were friendly and helpful:

"... the lecturers were excellent and made it really easy to know where you stood".

"the college lecturers made you feel secure about the college and the course. If you needed help or someone to discuss problems with there was always someone to talk to".

Although most of the full-time students seemed to find their induction useful, some had reservations:

"They gave us a pack of information and a booklet all about college, maps etc. It didn't really help me to know what to expect so I was kind of lost".

"... there was a three day induction which was really helpful but most people thought it dragged on, two days would have been better".

Full-time students who had done the National Certificate induction module seemed, perhaps, to have a rather ambivalent attitude to it:

"There was an induction module in which you had to talk to other people in the class, this helped break the ice".

But they also questioned its worth because they did not think that it would be valued by employers:

"It wasn't any use because you've got a module on your sheet saying module induction, it is going to do you no good at all if you're going for a job or something".

For some students, their first few weeks at college were not at all difficult:

"I didn't really find anything difficult in my first two weeks it was all explained to us".

The majority of full-time and part-time students identified some aspect of their initial college experience that they had found difficult but most did not give the impression that these were major problems. One of the most common remarks from both groups was about meeting and getting to know other people:

"Just getting to know the class ... there is nothing worse than sitting not talking to anyone".

"I found it difficult to co-operate with people in my class because I am a talkative person but people in my class were shy: I suppose I was shy too but if they spoke I would have too".
"It was difficult becoming accustomed to meeting so many people and introducing myself in class".

Although some students, particularly those on full-time courses, noted that staff had sometimes encouraged them to get to know each other, this was not necessarily enough:

"They introduced us to each other but I think they could have helped you to get to know people better".

The majority of students had few suggestions to make about what else their college could have done to help them settle; of those made, most concerned more help in getting to know people:

"They actually bring the class closer in some way to let people get to know each other better".

Several students who had commented on the difficulty of getting to know others in their class reflected on later events that had helped the class to 'gel':

"No-one in our class talked to each other for the first month - it took till a drama course before everyone started talking to each other and that was near Christmas time".

"recently we had a game of football and we all worked as a team, I think something like that might have helped".

Nevertheless, some students in one college where a social event was included as part of their induction saw this as irrelevant:

"On the third day you went somewhere ... that's not telling you much about your course".

This reaction might be because they had not had enough information about their course but it does indicate that any activity to help students get to know each other needs to be organised and purposeful.

Some students found it difficult initially to adjust to a more adult environment:

"Calling lecturers by first name and getting treated as an equal".

"The transition from a school kid to being treated as an adult with my own mind and point of view".
Several also mentioned having to adjust to a different sort of timetable from school:

"Getting used to 3 hours of one subject at a time".

"... I found difficult in the first two weeks not getting out until 4.30pm".

Some part-time students commented that it had been difficult to get back to studying:

"getting back to the routine like you had at school".

"having to go back to studying and writing notes".

A number of students, especially those on part-time courses, mentioned the practical problem of getting to college and finding their way round:

"Finding transport that would get me in on time".

"finding my way around college...finding classes".

Unsurprisingly, part-time students were particularly likely to suggest a tour round college since they were less likely to have had one as part of their induction:

"Spending a little more time going round the college to get to know the place".

This difference between full-time and part-time students is also evident in their questionnaire responses (Table 5.1). Nearly two-thirds of full-time students thought that they had had enough information when they started college about finding their way around whereas about the same proportion of part-time students responded they had not had enough information. Otherwise their responses are very similar. A fairly large majority of both full-time and part-time students thought that they had been told enough about what was expected of them as a student. Over half felt they had been given enough information about who to go to for help. Study skills information and advice was judged to be lacking by both groups; only around a third thought they had had enough on this area. Full-time students were also asked about information and advice about budgeting; the overwhelming majority were dissatisfied with the extent of information and advice in this area.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finding your way round college?</th>
<th>Too much %</th>
<th>About right %</th>
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<th>What would be expected of you as a student?</th>
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<th>Who to go to for help if you needed it?</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How to study effectively?</th>
<th>Too much %</th>
<th>About right %</th>
<th>Not enough %</th>
<th>No of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FT students</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>(40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PT students</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>58</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>How to budget?**</th>
<th>Too much %</th>
<th>About right %</th>
<th>Not enough %</th>
<th>No of students</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FT students</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>(40)</td>
</tr>
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Note: * the wording was slightly different for part-time students to distinguish between support from college and from their employer/training provider.

** only full-time students were asked this question.
CHAPTER 6: ON COURSE

We had a range of issues to explore with students about their on-course experience at college. These included educational aspects such as adjustment to different teaching styles, support in carrying out course work and the quality of college facilities; advice and help with practical matters including travel and finance; and advice and support with any personal problems. But, as discussed in chapter 1, few were prepared to talk about personal difficulties.

6.1 Part-time students

6.1.1 Just part of the job

In general we found that those on part-time courses had a different attitude to their college attendance and quite different expectations of guidance from college staff than full-time students. With one exception, the part-time students in the groups were either employed or on YT, and college attendance was necessary for their job or scheme; they had had little choice about it and did not seem to expect any. They were somewhat perplexed that we wanted to talk about the guidance and support they had received at college as they did not perceive themselves to be students and had little expectation of guidance and support from college staff. Their attitude seemed to be that you attended college because you had to, did what you were told to do, kept your head down and got on with it - and if you had problems then it was too bad. One participant summed this up:

"these questions do not apply because we go in and do the work and get it marked and then leave ... which I do not find very good".

This is the context of their comments and responses on guidance provision at their college. Their low expectations about guidance and lack of reflection about college and their course made discussion difficult in these groups. They had relatively little to say to questions relating to, for example, the college environment, teaching and learning styles, review of progress and the types of support that they might want or need.

Looking back on their time at college, the students varied in their opinions on whether their course had been what they had expected. For quite a number it had been better, although sometimes harder, than anticipated:

"There were more subjects in my course than what I thought there would be, but most of them have been quite interesting and I think I've learned quite a lot".

"Most aspects of the course I expected to cover. Their were also the other things which were challenging but enjoyable".
Some other comments, from one group in particular, were more negative:

"No [not what expected] I was told I'd be given a new placement after I month if I was unhappy with it. I have now been there 9 months and have had no other options" [student on college YT scheme].

"Partly [what expected] ... but the modules we are doing some of them are not what I thought I'd be doing".

"The course was different than expected ... I thought it would involve using engineering instruments instead of being all written work with a small amount of instrument work in my second year".

Several commented on receiving less help from lecturers with their course work than they had expected:

"Yes, but shorthand was really difficult. Not much help given. You're just really expected to get on with it".

Apart from the student studying on an open learning basis, none of the others had had any choice about which modules they would take:

"it is set out for you".

However, most did not seem to be concerned about the issue of choice other than having to do modules they thought were irrelevant to their job or scheme. For example, several students on a craft and design YT scheme did not see the point of a woodworking module:

"it hasn't anything to do with the placement ... he [the lecturer] said it might help me designing shelves".

Other students had similar complaints:

"I was sent here, no choice about it ... I'm servicing commercial vehicles ... they're mainly all diesels now and we're not being taught anything about diesels yet ...".

On balance, most seemed to think that their course was fairly relevant and helpful. In the questionnaire, around two-thirds responded that their college course fitted either "a lot" or "a bit/somewhat" with what they were doing at work (Table 6.1). For some, their course helped them to understand the principles behind tasks at work:

"Some things I am doing on site I don't quite understand what I am doing but then I come to college and I see something happening and I am taught like basic technology and you understand why they are doing it".
But another contrasted the scale of operations at work and college:

"Only certain things [fit in]. I mean we are only cooking for 4 people and when I go into work I am cooking for maybe 120 if there is a function, that's two different levels".

Table 6.1
Part-time students' opinion of the link between college and work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A lot</th>
<th>A bit/</th>
<th>A little/</th>
<th>Not at</th>
<th>No of</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>somewhat</td>
<td>not much</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>students</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>How well does your college course fit in with what you're doing at work?</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much do your supervisors at work know about what you study at college?</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much do your lecturers know about what you do at work?</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the questionnaire, under two-thirds of students responded that their supervisor at work knew "a lot" or "a bit/somewhat" about what they were studying at college and that lecturers knew "a lot" or "a bit/somewhat" about what they did at work (Table 6.1). In discussion, it seemed that contact between college and employer/training provider was most likely to occur if there were problems:

"I was doing shorthand and it was too hard so I contacted personnel and she phoned them [college] up and told them".

In another case where students had not been handing in work, this had led to more contact:

"they [employers] never used to know but they know now, they get a report sent every week".

There was some discussion, particularly in one group, about the difficulty of working and studying, especially if on day-release:

"The teachers say to us you should be doing at least an hour a week ... but I've not done any at all. I just can't get my mind to do it".

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"I haven't go the time either, I mean if you are working the rest of the week and maybe the weekends as well, when you get home, the last thing you want to do is to get the books out and start studying".

No-one in any of the groups mentioned any specific study skill help or advice about time management. In their questionnaire, around two-thirds thought that they had not had enough advice about how to study effectively (Table 6.2).

Table 6.2

Part-time students' satisfaction with on-course information and advice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Too much</th>
<th>About right</th>
<th>Not enough</th>
<th>No of students</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
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<tr>
<td>While you've been on your course,</td>
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<tr>
<td>have you had enough information and advice from college staff about ...</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>.. how well you've been doing?</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td>(33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.. how to cope with difficult parts of your course?</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
<td>(33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.. how to study more effectively?</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>(33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.. any personal problems?</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>58</td>
<td></td>
<td>(33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.. any money problems?</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td>(33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.. what to do after your course this year?</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
<td>(33)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most identified their lecturer as the person at college to go to if they ran into difficulties with their course:

"just go to your teacher and they will help you".

But a number felt that they would go to someone at work, and indeed this was seen as the expectation of staff at one college:

"If I was really stuck about the course I'd probably see the superintendent boys back at work".

"Usually if you go to staff, they just say contact the boss of your company".

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On the whole, most were positive about their relationship with lecturers and how they were treated:

"They treat you better [than teachers] ... It depends on how you treat your lecturers ... if you act your age, they'll treat you like adults, if you don't then they'll treat you like children ... At school, they treat you like children".

"You get on with lecturers like your pals or that where as you couldn't do that with teachers ... you can talk away to them [lecturers] no bother".

The more relaxed atmosphere was identified by students in one group as related to a different style of learning:

"It gets left up to you whether you want to do the work or not, they don't pressure you into doing it".

These students thought such an approach worked for them although students in other groups had little to say on this.

6.1.2 Information and advice

When we raised the general topic of any information and advice they had needed while at college and who had helped in the case of difficulty, a number of the students commented that they had not required any information or advice. Nevertheless, the strong impression we received was that some of them were not prepared to admit to having needed any help, especially if it was of a personal nature. One student who had used her college's specialist guidance provision commented:

"... not many use it, some freak out at student guidance, they think if I go in there someone will probably see me ... the problem is that some students find a lot of pride in it".

When the issue of personal problems and support was raised a student from another college remarked:

"you would just get a slagging in our class. And the teacher would slag them as well".

Nevertheless, more than half of the part-time students responded in the questionnaire that they had not had enough information and advice from college staff about any personal problems (Table 6.2).
Those who did mention receiving help with course work had had help from their lecturers and also from their workmates or supervisors:

"If I was having problems with a particular subject I just asked the lecturer that was teaching it".

"The engineers on site helped me with work I found difficult".

On the other hand, there were also comments about lack of help:

"No one really [helped]. I just left the class".

In addition to the information or help with course work, some students had needed information and advice about conditions of employment and travel and finance:

"How much money I am entitled to and when I am due holidays etc".

"I have needed info on the money I am supposed to get for travelling for there has been some confusion over it".

The question of travelling expenses for those on YT raised some discussion, especially in the group where some participants had to come into college from some distance:

"The long distance which I have to travel to get to college causes financial difficulty due to the low income I receive".

This group also complained about the cost of buying equipment and tools:

"you've got to buy it yourself apart from safety equipment and clothes ... you don't get enough money as it is".

Few of the part-time students used their college's library facilities. Perhaps predictably, there was criticism of canteen facilities:

"The canteen's no good. Have you tasted their hamburgers!".

In one college, female students complained about poor changing facilities:

"I felt degraded having to get changed in a room where all the boys on the stairs could stand and look through the windows into the changing room".

In another college, students mentioned that they were able to use the gym at lunchtime.
6.2 Full-time students

6.2.1 Hard work

On the whole, most had found their course somewhat different from their expectations. In some cases this was because the course content had been different:

"I expected work in the kitchen but I didn't expect other modules like computing, french, communications to be involved".

"No, the course content doesn't really seem to go with the description of the course. I am doing a computing course and we have been subjected to statistics which has absolutely no bearing whatsoever".

But the most common response was that the course had been more demanding and pressurised than expected:

"It has been a lot harder than I had expected. A lot of hard exams, and the closer it gets to the end of the course the harder it gets, trying to fit all of the subjects in".

"No I didn't get told how much the course entailed".

A number of full-time students spoke about the pressure of course work, assessments and exams:

"they give you too many subjects for the one week, you're trying to juggle a lot of homework"

"there's so much crammed into one year, it's not real, you've just got to rush through everything".

"As the course has went on it has got harder and harder, we have got nine exams in one week coming up".

"As it is I am supposed to be doing an exam tomorrow afternoon and we got told this morning, by the way 'you are doing it this afternoon', then they change it all to 'you're doing it tomorrow afternoon and nobody has studied for it and we're all going 'oh my God, I can't do it this afternoon'".

Although some others had been given more notice about assessments and exams, they would still have appreciated more information and advice at the beginning of their course about the scheduling of assessments and exams:

"We have been told about a month in advance but if we were told right at the beginning of the course what was expected of use then I think it would be a lot better".
Others spoke of a continual rush to get through their modular assessments. (National Certificate modules are based on continuous assessment.) Some felt that they were having to take their assessments before they had properly understood what they were supposed to have learned:

"you get a couple of sheets, it gives you all the theory, you get 5 or 6 exercises and that’s you ready for you’re assessment ... you’ve got to keep going ... there’s no space for sitting down, reading it, thinking about it again before doing the assessments".

Although several thought there were too many modules in their course, others felt the problem was the number of assessments.

"The amount of modules we get, that’s alright, it’s the amount of assessments, cut back the number of assessments".

Over-assessment is a recognised danger of modular systems. The integration of several modules and/or of assessments was recommended in a recent HMI report on the national certificate (SOED, 1991a)⁴. However, this is not a widespread practice (Black et al, 1991)⁹. Only one student in this study had experienced such an approach.

6.2.2 Taking responsibility

Although many thought that their course was pressurised they also felt that they were treated in a more adult way, and had more relaxed relationships with staff. They were expected to take more responsibility for their own learning and staff were less likely than their school teachers to chase them up about attendance or their work:

"you can talk to your lecturer ... I mean they talk to you about there weekend and all this, they are easy to talk to".

"if you’re at school, people are on your back, the staff here are different from teachers ... a lot more sympathetic".

"there is a lot more freedom [than at school] and you’re treated like an adult ... here you are an equal".

"But if you don’t do like ... homework ... he’ll [the lecturer] not say nothing ... it’s up to you ... if you’re a cowboy ... that’s it".

Some of the full-time students also spoke about more individualised teaching at college compared with school:

"... you feel the lecturers are teaching you as well as everyone else ... in school they’re just telling you, they’re not giving you any individual help ... here some of the lecturers come round".

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However, some mentioned that other students had had problems coping with greater responsibility:

"People who are so used to having things done for them at school, you were told to do it, so you had no argument, so now they just sit and they can't relate to doing that so they just sit back and muck around".

One student had been asked to leave for poor attendance:

"... in block 2 I never came in ... I got kicked out. I begged to get back for a second chance and I got back ... that was because you have more freedom ... like at school the attendance boy is coming to your door and chasing you back to school. There's nothing like that here".

Nevertheless, the general feeling amongst full-time students was that college staff were right to expect them to take responsibility for their own actions:

"Once you've left school ... once you're at FE you're supposed to be treated like an adult and that's the way you're supposed to handle the course".

"there's no point coming to college if you're wanting people to nag you all the time ... the choice is yours to come so if you don't do the work ... its on your own back".

Although the majority felt that, by and large, most of their lecturers treated them like adults, they contrasted lecturers' approach to them with their attitude to students on higher level courses (Higher National Certificate/Diploma (HNC/D)):

"students who are doing higher courses get more respect".

"I'm getting more attention now that I'm going to do an HNC than I ever had before".

While most full-time students thought that their lecturers did not "nag" them, some lecturers were seen to be helpful if they had problems with their course work although this could vary depending on the lecturer:

"the teacher sees who's not very bright and he'll go and give them extra help".

"if it's one of the good lecturers you'd go to them but some ... are pretty useless".

"it depends on the tutor ... some of them will help you but one tutor we had, if you were stuck, that was that, other tutors were brilliant".
"The lecturers I've had are alright ... if you need help you can go to the lecturer and he'll say there's a computer free in my room on Friday and you can come in and catch up".

The general issue of how well younger students cope with taking responsibility for their activities was one which figured in our discussions with college staff. Organising their study time, handing work in on time, timekeeping and attendance were mentioned specifically. Staff thought they faced something of a dilemma. On the one hand, colleges emphasise student independence and responsibility and indeed this is one reason why it is attractive to young students but, on the other, staff are concerned that students do not fail or drop out. The question of how far they should push younger students about their assignments and attendance was something that a number of staff said was a continual difficulty.

Nevertheless, a point which came out in the student groups and in the interviews with staff was that the level of course, that is National Certificate of Higher National Certificate/Diploma, could make a difference to staff's approach.

The student view was that those on Higher National courses got "more respect" from lecturers, as did some of the older students. In several colleges staff commented that the level of course made a difference to how it was delivered.

Table 6.3 shows students' responses to various aspects of on-course guidance. Just over half of the full-time students thought they had not had enough information and advice about how to cope with difficult parts of their course.
Table 6.3
Full-time students' satisfaction with on-course information and advice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Too much %</th>
<th>About right %</th>
<th>Not enough %</th>
<th>No of students</th>
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<tr>
<td>While you've been on your course, have you had enough information and advice from college staff about ...</td>
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<td>.. how well you've been doing?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>65</td>
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<td>(40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.. how to cope with difficult parts of your course?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>(40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.. how to study more effectively?</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>(40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.. any personal problems?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>(40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.. any money problems?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>(40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.. what to do after your course this year?</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>(40)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.2.3 Study skills

In one college full-time students were supposed to have a study skills module but this was not working well, particularly in terms of timing. Some students had completed it five months into their course while others, one month before the end of their course, had yet to start:

"what was quite stupid was that we got the learning and study skills just after Christmas".

"We have still to get ours. We will get ours at the end of the year".

Another student complained that he and others had had to take the study skills module although they had recently gone through the work at school but it had not been certificated:

"we had just come from school and we had all done this but didn't get the module, they had just gone through it at school, but we were told we had to do it".
In other groups, some students mentioned study skills as an area that they had needed more help on but this had not been forthcoming:

"I could have done with some help on how to study. I'm not very good at remembering a lot of formulas etc".

"I could have done with more advice on studying but when you ask all you get told is that there is a college library".

Two colleges had well-developed open learning provision, but not all students were aware of it. Those who were aware appreciated the flexibility it offered:

"this college is quite good for flexible learning ... you can use the X centre and there's computer rooms and you can come in at night and sign in and work on the computers".

"I failed a module and I enquired about re-sitting it and I got into an open learning class and got it that way".

"I'd done some modules at school ... everyone was doing the module but I'd done it at school so I just done a course at open learning".

6.2.4 Older students

As noted earlier, some students were surprised at the number of older people in college or on their course. Some students felt that they got on well:

"Like from the youngest up to the oldest, I was surprised at how well everyone got on".

However, others complained that staff gave the older students more attention, for various reasons:

"In all the classes we've been in, the older people really really stick in, we stick in but not like that".

"they [lecturers] say, the younger ones, they've just been in school, they should know what they're doing ... so you don't get any attention".

6.2.5 Choice of course

Only a few students thought that they had had much choice of which modules to study, and there was certainly less choice than some of them had expected. Even where there was some apparent choice, timetabling restrictions or other problems in operating the elective system frequently limited it in practice:
"Our course is quite good actually, we got a choice every block ... we haven't always got our first but we had three choices".

"If there's another module going ... they can't always fit you in because in the time slot there's another class going".

"The way our electives worked out there was computing and a few others. The computing was full and I got hit with robotics. I didn't see the use in that".

Some would have appreciated a greater degree of choice:

"It [more choice] would be better ... you would probably work better at it because you picked it because you wanted to do it".

But what seemed to annoy most was not so much limited choice of modules, but being told that there were optional modules and this promised choice failing to happen in practice. This was part of a more general feeling among students that they were treated in somewhat arbitrary manner on their course and misled at the beginning about what they would be doing:

"Well, we were told which modules we'd be doing but they're changed them all in the third block".

"We're just getting stuff like comics instead of photography like they said".

"Yes, we had that [elective modules] but it didn't really turn out, because our first block we had computing and we got shoved around ... because our lecturer was off ... so we had four Thursday afternoons off in a row. Then we got another teacher and we had three weeks left of the block and she expected us to do all this work and there was no way we could have done it".

6.2.6 Resolving difficulties

All but two of the students said they had a course or guidance tutor although some did not seem to have had much contact with them, at least in their role as tutor. In practice, students used a variety of sources of help:

"Senior Lecturer of course".

"My tutor and the Head of Department. Very helpful"

"Other people in my class. Very rarely other lecturers".

"One of my lecturers who I got on with quite well but not the people who were supposed to help".

"The lecturers helped and also other people in the class".
The range of staff whom students had used reflects colleges' view that students should talk to the person(s) they feel to be the most appropriate for them:

"We have a class tutor so if you have any problems with the course or anything like that you can go and see him. Or we can talk to any other lecturers or any people in our class."

Two factors seemed to be important in influencing students' decisions to go to staff with any difficulties. The first was the nature of the problem:

"I'd go if was having problems with college but nothing else ... nothing personal".

"It depends on the problem ... if its financial I'd go to see them, if its not, I wouldn't."

Students could see advantages in having someone outside the department to go to in the case of personal problems but felt this would be less useful for course difficulties:

"If there was someone separate from the course it would be an advantage if it was a personal problem but if it was related to the course it probably wouldn't be because you'd need someone who knew the course."

The second factor influencing students' likelihood of going to staff with a problem was the quality of their relationship with the particular member of staff:

"It depends on how well you know them whether you'd go [with a personal problem]."

"If they still treat you like kids ... you're not inclined to go up to someone like that and tell them all your problems."

"I'd go [to tutor], she's understanding, quite a liberal minded woman so she'll understand your problems."

"If your tutors were more friendly towards you instead of 'here's your work, do it', then you're more likely to talk to them if you've problems."

Several also seemed to feel that although support existed, they would be imposing on staff:

"I just had to sort things out for myself but I know my course tutor was their but I didn't think she would want to hear my problems."
Only some students in one college had regular timetabled sessions with their guidance tutor. Where regular sessions had been promised to other students in this college but had failed to happen, they were dismissive:

"You're assigned to one lecturer [as tutor] ... she was always going to have us every second week to have a discussion to make sure everyone was alright and there were no questions ... we seen her the first twice and never seen her since ... its just 'come to see me if you've got a problem' and that's it".

Nevertheless, those who had regular sessions did not seem to find them worthwhile:

"We see ours [tutor] once a week but we really don't have that much problems ... so she just sits and rattles off our attendance and asks if we've any questions and everyone just piles out off the room".

Even when the review session was more structured, it failed to be meaningful for the students. Indeed, in their view, it was counterproductive since it prevented the tutor dealing with students' problems:

"We've got something called profiling ... she has a few sheets and you're to fill them in, how you're getting on, what modules, how they're going, how you think you could improve on them, what problems you're having ... and that's it really. But when you've got a problem, she's got no time for you because she's profiling other people. Profiling takes that long she doesn't have time for real problems that could be happening at the time".

For others, contact was less formal and not timetabled. In some cases this worked well:

"We just have the head of department and we would just need to go to him if we had any problems and we usually get him twice a week or something for a class, so we can just speak to him then".

But access was a problem for some who did not have a timetabled slot with their tutor. This was most likely to be an issue if the students' course tutor was not also one of their lecturers:

"When you go and see them, it's 'come and see me tomorrow' ... we go and see our course tutor but he's always tutoring another class so you're interrupting him".

In three of the four colleges where we held full-time students groups, college staff outwith the departmental structure also provided guidance. In one of the colleges not all students were aware of this provision. Generally students were reluctant to talk about whether they had had any personal problems or whether
they had used the external student services. In one college several students who had wanted to see the college guidance co-ordinator complained about the difficulty of seeing her and the need for more staff:

"The woman at reception kept telling me to come back ... that X would be back at such and such a time but whenever I came back she wasn't there, this went on for about one month".

"She's always dead busy ... she's also the only person you can go and see ... there's no-one else apart from someone inside your course ... they should have more than one person outside the course".

Most of the college staff we spoke to commented that younger students are much less likely than older students to come forward if they are having any problems. While some older students may actually have more problems, they felt that younger students often fail to recognise that they are beginning to get into difficulty and are also reluctant to admit to any problems. They felt that younger students often view guidance in a policing rather than a pastoral role and, as one guidance tutor said, they expect "to get into a row". Some guidance staff also thought that students' awareness of guidance provision and willingness to use it was linked to their lecturers' knowledge of and attitude to guidance, especially specialist provision.

An issue that came up in interviews with college staff was that of lack of information from school about students. Staff felt that in some cases where students had experienced difficulty on their course, prior information would have been helpful. This issue only came up in one discussion group but the students generally felt that unless there was a clear problem, for example dyslexia, lecturers should not be advised of difficulties from school:

"I think lecturers and students shouldn't know anything about each other ... they should get to know them from scratch and make their own judgement on them".

6.2.7 Money matters

Finance was a topic that aroused considerable feeling. It was an area about which a number of students had needed information and advice but in some cases this had been inadequate or too late:

"I needed advice on student grants and loans".

"Information on grants and benefits would have helped earlier in the course".
"When I started the course I knew about bursaries but they never gave me enough information so I applied late which left me in a lot of debt ... then after Christmas they said you can get an Access Fund as well. So I went to see about an Access fund and I was too late ... when you go at the start of the course they should say there is a bursary, this is how you do it and this is how you get it and this is who apply to. They never did anything like that".

Finance was a general problem:

"I don’t mean to sound greedy but a bit more money would have helped".

"I’ve needed advice on how to manage on a bursary of £75.79 a month".

Several were not going on with the second year of their course because of this:

"I’m leaving to find a job ... I’m a bit fed up with the course but its really financial problems ... I’m better off finding a job".

The cost of books and other course equipment was a sore point, especially for some who felt the cost had not been made clear at the start of their course:

"At interview we were told you need a couple of books but when you came to the course they hand you out a big list of books ... what we really did need ... the total came to £120 ... and they just keep piling it on ... and especially physiology books are really steep. If they could tell you just at the start you could start saving for it".

The other aspect of bursaries that aroused strong feeling was eligibility criteria for awards, in particular those relating to age and parental income. Students felt that differential awards in relation to age were unfair and arbitrary, as their course and living expenses were no less when they were under eighteen.

"I was only 17 and only got £45 but if I had been 18 I would have got about £800 then".

"I was getting £48 a month to live on when I was 17 but when I turned 18 I got £220 just because I’m a year older ... its stupid the way they do it".

They felt that their parents should not be expected to support them at this stage:
"... I don't think they should take [account off] your parents wage. You need yourself, you can't rely on your parents because I have an older brother and sister and a younger sister and my mum is keeping all of us now. My bursary isn't even covering my travelling expenses so mum is having to fork out for me but I have got myself a part-time job which helps".

A number mentioned part-time jobs which in several cases had been acquired through their lecturers' contacts. A part-time job helped out financially and for some provided useful experience, but it also added pressure on top of a demanding course:

"I got a part-time job through the college ... it is pretty good wages so that covers you for a while".

"I think its pretty bad because I am at college 5 days a week ... and then I've got to go out on Saturday and work eight hours".

Only a very few mentioned receiving advice on budgeting. In their questionnaire responses, over four-fifths thought that they had not had enough information and advice about money problems (Table 6.3).

Comments about travel to college mainly concerned needing advice about travelling expenses or help in sorting out problems with bus passes:

"Advice on who to see about travelling expenses"

"I needed information about travelling as I wasn't getting on some buses with my pass".

6.2.8 College facilities

In relation to facilities there were complaints in two of the colleges about canteen facilities:

"The canteen's manky".

In one college, while there was support for extending no smoking rules in the canteens, the point was also made that there was nowhere for smokers to go:

"It is really *** trying to hid your fag under the table and this smoke is spilling out because you can't go anywhere for a fag without being uncomfortable, sitting out in the corner there when it is raining".

With the exception of one college, students thought that their library and computing facilities were good. Some students in one college complained that they had to go to another building for computing facilities:
"We have to go four miles across x if we want to use the computer".

Students also remarked on the easy access most of them had to computing facilities:

"It is a lot more freer than school if you want to use the equipment ... in my school if I needed a computer, they wouldn't let me use it because I wasn't in the computer class. But here I just go down to the computer class and say can I use the machine".

Students in one college complained about lack of access to sports facilities and in particular that the information in the prospectus about these facilities was misleading:

"... in the prospectus it says the sports hall is available at any time but if you go down it's all booked out ... usually by the PE students ... and it doesn't tell you in the prospectus that you have to pay for it".
CHAPTER 7: PRE-EXIT GUIDANCE

Within pre-exit guidance, the questions we wanted to ask concerned whether students had received any guidance about the next stage for them - whether this was continuing with their course, moving on to another course or looking for employment. What sort of information, advice and support did they need and what had they received? Had they had enough help to make appropriate decisions?

7.1 Part-time students

7.1.1 Part of the natural progression

As far as the large majority of part-time students was concerned pre-exit guidance was not an issue. Over four-fifths intended to continue with their job or YT scheme and, therefore, with their course. For most, the progression into the next stage of their course seemed to be automatic.

"We are going on to our second year because we have to. It's part of the course".

"I will continue working at my placement and return to college next year".

A few mentioned that they had talked about their plans with their employer and lecturer:

"I am going to further my subject by doing an additional year, this has been discussed with my boss and teacher".

But the majority did not seem to have discussed what the next part of their course would involve. Some were unconcerned about this:

"We'll take it as it comes".

but others would have liked more information:

"Just if they explained the subjects and what is going to be involved and what they are like and things like that".

Most of the minority (14%) who thought they might not continue at college were on YT and had either found a job or were looking for one:

"Stay on [at college] until my YTS is finished but leave if I get a job before".

One student who had applied for a photography course at another college commented on the help he had received from college:
"My college placement manager gave me a reference for that application and was a great help to encourage me".

But none of the others who were either unsure or not returning to college mentioned any help from college staff.

Overall, nearly two-thirds of part-time students responded in the questionnaire that they had had enough information and advice from college staff about what to do after their course this year (Table 6.2). This response seems to reflect as much their attitude to progression into the next stage of their course as the extent of information and advice they received.

7.2 Full-time students

7.2.1 What now?

In terms of pre-exit guidance the full-time students had different needs and experience from those on part-time courses. Most were coming to the end of their course, with just under a fifth continuing on to the next stage (18%). The majority, around three-fifths, were hoping to go on to a higher level course (61%) and the remaining fifth were looking for employment (20%). The extent and quality of pre-exit guidance that the students had received was variable within and, especially, across colleges. But even in the college where students were somewhat more positive, most did not feel they had had enough help about what to do after their present course. In their questionnaire responses, almost two-thirds were dissatisfied with the extent of information and advice from college staff about what to do after their course (Table 6.3).

Some students had discussed their plans with staff. This was most likely in two colleges in particular:

"I have talked to my lecturers about going on to X college and I need to pass some more modules to get there".

"I'm going on to do an HNC in Stage Management ... and Jack and Mark [lecturers] together went through it, where was the best and where would I get money for it and everything like that. They helped me a lot".

"Yes, I know what I'm doing next. I've talked to guidance tutor and lecturers about the course that I will choose to do".

Nevertheless, other students, and especially those in the other two colleges, had not spoken to staff about what they would be doing after their course:

"I think I will be going on another college course. There has been no-one to talk to about my plans".
"The college has offered absolutely no advice at all about course choices open to me at the end of the course. I feel disappointed at this ridiculous attitude towards new younger students".

"I need a great deal of help to get into a good job. I haven't talked about it much, although I would like too".

A number of students had made their decisions through talking to friends or parents:

"I'm going to do HNC Accounting. My friend and I decided together what I could do with this course".

"I want to do a higher course in Hotel Catering but I haven't discussed it at college. I have just discussed it with my parents. They have been helpful".

But while discussions with parents and friends were helpful, their advice could be limited:

"I'm going onto do an HNC or HND, just talked to other classmates ... I need someone to tell me what the workload is like".

Even where students were going on to another course at the same college, some felt they had not been given enough information about the course:

"The leaflets, that's basically what you've got ... they don't really tell you about the course ... only tells you what subjects ... it doesn't explain the subjects you'll be taking ... how much work".

Where students were in contact with those on the higher level course at their college, this was a useful source of information:

"... I'm hoping to do the music course next year or the tech course and because we work with the music people and the techs ... we get to know them well so it is quite easy to ask".

As well as course information, finance and grants was an area about which students wanted advice. The latter was clearly necessary in view of some of their comments which demonstrated their ignorance of the grant system. For example, several had decided to do an HND at the same college rather than apply to other institutions because they felt that, having sorted out bursary problems, to go elsewhere would risk upsetting this:

"There's no point applying elsewhere, we've had heaps of hassle getting a bursary ... so it seems if you apply to go elsewhere you'd just have a lot more hassle getting one".
Such considerations are, in fact, irrelevant since the Scottish Office Education Department is the awarding body for HNDs and not the local authority to whom they would have applied for a bursary for their present course.

A large proportion of full-time students were hoping to go on to a higher level course. For some this seemed to be a definite decision. For others, however, particularly those going on to a course at the same college, the strong impression they conveyed was of drifting, without adequate guidance, into another course because it was there. But even if a student's choice to go on to a higher course was a positive one, lack of any proper discussion could result in a poor decision:

"I decided to go on to do another year. No one spoke to me and so I chose a course myself. After getting a conditional acceptance I changed my mind and wanted to do something else. Maybe if someone had talked to me I wouldn't have chosen the wrong course".

Some students remarked that their college tended to give advice only on higher courses available at that college:

"We just got guidance and she told us to come back to X college".

"Guidance was basically, we do the higher course, come back here next year. Not like what other colleges do the same course".

For some the decision to go on to another course was influenced by the likely difficulty of getting a job. But while returning to college might be an alternative to trying to find a job in a poor employment market, it was not necessarily the answer for everyone:

"The teachers say you might get a job and you might not and then he is talking about bringing us back to do a higher course and I don't think myself I'm really up to doing a higher grade than this because this course has been hard enough".

While the careers service has a statutory responsibility to provide vocational guidance to those leaving further education courses, this service is patchy, largely due to resource difficulties, which means that it is not well publicised and young people lack awareness of it. Relatively few had spoken to a careers officer although careers officers were available at three of the four colleges, at least on a part-time basis.

"I only found out because I went to the Careers Office in X [names town] and they told me he comes in here every Tuesday ... but nobody knew".

Those students who did see a careers officer tended to be the ones who were leaving and looking for a job:

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"I am going to try and get a job. I have been spoken to by the careers advisor and told where to look for a job and talked about what kind of job I would like to do".

Where students are part of initiatives such as Training Credits and Compacts, those entering the labour market will attend careers interviews organised for them, while those not covered by these initiatives will have no such provision. This gap will be filled as the training credits initiative is extended nationwide but not for those progressing to other courses as opposed to entering the labour market.

Several expressed the same sort of criticism of the careers officer as made at the pre-entry stage, that is complaints about directive guidance:

"It was the same again, trying to push you in the opposite direction you want to go".

One student described his frustration at his careers interview and in the process identified a need for careers guidance on a more on-going basis rather than an interview at the end of a course:

"she'll [the careers officer] give me three different things to think about. I've only gone to get one specific bit of information and I've gone away even more confused than when I went in".

He felt that while it might be a good idea for the careers officer to encourage him to think more widely about possible jobs, this needed to be done over time:

"Yes, but maybe if you could make a series of appointments, do it over a space of time rather than say, one week".

No-one seemed to have taken any of the National Certificate guidance modules such as "Job Seeking Skills" or "Pre-Exit Guidance". Some of those who were trying to find a job wanted help in exploring their options and practical advice about finding work:

"I need advice on what sorts of jobs I could get with the qualifications I picked up at school and college".

"I need help in finding important workplaces to write to".

"I now need to know about how to write application letters".

A number of students, particularly in one college, felt that some of their lecturers paid less attention to those who were leaving than to students planning to continue on to a higher course:

"There's four or five of them who want to stay on and they're showing them this and that and we're just left".
"One of our lecturers actually made everyone who's not staying-on to drop the accounting module 'there's no chance you can get all these learning outcomes before you finish, you may as well leave' ... that's not the right attitude, she could encourage them to get more learning outcomes to get on their certificate".

A point that was made by students in one college concerned the relative status of the vocational qualifications they were studying for and academic qualifications. They felt that while their National Certificate courses were just as demanding as Highers, if not more so, they were less well regarded:

"I'm doing a National Certificate in computing and from what I can tell from friends still at school, my National Certificate's more difficult than their Highers"

"But Highers are recognised so much more than NC courses".
SECTION 3: CONCLUSION

CHAPTER 8: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Pre-entry Guidance

8.1.1 Part-time students

Information and advice from school and the careers service
The majority of young people on part-time courses had wanted employment-related guidance at the point they were deciding what to do after leaving school. Although few had had regular timetabled careers education, a large majority had spoken to guidance teachers or other staff at school and to a careers officer. While part-time students were more positive than full-time students about this help, especially from the careers service, opinion was mixed. Help in searching for jobs was patchy and some school leavers thought the information they had received had been too general to enable them to make an informed decision. While employment had been uppermost in most part-time students' minds, a substantial minority would also have liked to have explored the option of full-time further education but this had not been raised with them.

Information and advice from employers and training providers
The bulk of part-time students had been told in advance by their employer or training provider that they would be going to college as part of their job or scheme. While the majority were satisfied with how much they had been told about the qualifications they were studying for, over a half thought they had not been told enough about what they would study. Input from current students would have been welcomed.

For a considerable number, it seemed that college was not a matter of a great deal of discussion with their employer or training provider. In several cases, employers were ill-informed about college provision and not in a position to give adequate guidance to their employees or trainees.

8.1.2 Full-time students

Information and advice from school and the careers service
The large majority of full-time students had decided to go to college as a way to gain the qualifications they required, and had talked to guidance and other teachers at school and to a careers officer. While a number praised the information and advice given, more had either negative or mixed views. A common criticism was lack of information and discussion about full-time further education as an alternative either to staying on at school or to finding a job or YT place. Schools tended to be viewed as focusing on university rather than further education, while careers officers were perceived as pushing jobs and, especially, YT. Earlier research by Ryrie also concluded that leavers (in this
case, fourth-year leavers) were not told about further education (Ryrie, 1983). Those with low academic attainment were most likely to think that there was no appropriate provision for them in further education.

The lack of adequate destination statistics for many non-advanced courses, commented on in several official reports, may be a factor influencing some careers officers' advice (SOED, 1991a; SOED, 1992). Lack of comprehensive post-course destination information means that careers officers cannot judge the relative merits of the full-time further education route against the YT or job combined with part-time training route. Careers officers are likely to know what happened to young people who have previously gone into a particular YT scheme, to know which are "good" schemes, and to be able to judge and give advice to young people accordingly. But they do not have enough systematic information about the likely prospects for young people who take certain full-time FE courses. Nevertheless, it still seems that, at least in some cases, the full-time further education option is being missed out by careers officers. Overall a substantial majority of full-time students were not satisfied that they had received enough information and advice about the courses available at college (60%).

Several staff expressed concern that sometimes students' choices are too readily accepted by guidance staff in school and careers officers. They felt that as a result some students drop out because they have taken the wrong course or come to college for the wrong reason.

School-college links
Contact with college prior to applying - such as visits by college staff, open days and careers conventions - was welcomed by students. However, the extent of this contact was variable, and some students felt that the information provided was inadequate, especially on course content. Again, some students' schools had concentrated on liaison with higher rather than further education.

Other sources of information and advice
Friends and parents were important sources of information, encouragement and support regarding college: staff in one college felt that more attention should be paid to parents of school-leavers. School-based work experience was also deemed useful by several students in confirming their career ideas, although it must be of some concern that safety provision was lacking in several cases.

Pre-course interviews
Most students had had a pre-course interview at college, though in one college this was true for only a few students. The general opinion was that these interviews had been largely for selection purposes. Most students felt that the information gained was inadequate, especially regarding finance; several others felt the information incorrect, and one felt it was positively misleading. Although several colleges had checklists of what should be covered by staff at this interview (including information about finance), such checklists were not necessarily followed.
Overall, most students were dissatisfied with the amount of information and advice that they had received beforehand on future job prospects, what they would study in their course, and how much work their course would involve.

8.1.3 Recommendations

1. All young people's options at 16-plus, including full-time further education, should be covered in careers education and guidance provision. This requires that:

   a) more teachers become better informed about further education generally;
   b) subject teachers understand the link between their subject and further education courses, and emphasise it by increasing contact with college departments;
   c) careers officers and others receive adequate post-course destination statistics.

2. Careers education and guidance should encourage young people to take a wider view of possible options and challenge assumptions, even of those who have apparently made their decision.

3. Better information about jobs and training should be provided to enable young people to make well-informed decisions. Some specific ideas include:

   a) more detailed and accurate information about course content and workload;
   b) the opportunity to hear at first hand from those in relevant employment and current students about different jobs and courses;
   c) the use of informative rather than marketing-style videos and the development of alternative prospectuses;
   d) the setting up of access courses which give a "taste" of college life;
   e) the development of peer tutoring schemes between FE colleges and schools to raise awareness of FE as an option and provide a role model of an FE student.
4. **Pre-course interviews should serve the needs of both the college and the applicant.**

This might be achieved by:

a) better training of college staff;

b) an input by college guidance staff, particularly in relation to finance;

c) interview practice for pupils in school to make sure they can ask for and receive the information they need, even if the interviewer fails to cover a topic.

5. **Improved links between the college and employer or training provider should be developed to ensure the appropriate part-time course is chosen.**

8.2 **Starting College**

As indicated in chapter 5, part-time and full-time students are considered together under this heading.

A majority of both full-time and part-time students found college different from their expectations; they were surprised in particular by the more informal, adult atmosphere and relaxed relationship with staff. This was welcomed by most but not all. Some were also surprised by the number of older students in college.

**Induction**

Part-time students were less likely to have had a structured induction programme than those on full-time courses. College staff pointed out that employers are often reluctant to pay for time spent on induction. While most of the full-time students seemed to find their induction useful, some expressed reservations about the value of the information pack, the length of induction (three days) and the National Certificate induction module. In our discussions with college staff, several commented on the difficulty of getting over a lot of information in a meaningful way in a short time and of avoiding over-long inductions when students wanted to get started on their course work. One college was planning to spread its induction programme over four or five weeks. The students' comments on the NC induction module add another perspective to the comments in the HMI evaluation of guidance. It was praised for providing a valuable stimulus to the induction process and ensuring students were better informed. Nevertheless, some students in the discussion groups could not see the point in doing a certificated module in induction because it would not be recognised by employers. They had a strictly utilitarian view of their course work.
Initial difficulties
Although most students had found some initial difficulties when starting college, these did not seem to be major. It should be remembered, however, that the students in this study are the ones who had "survived" at college; those who had had major problems may well have dropped out. Difficulty in meeting and getting to know new people was the common theme of comments. Some also found it difficult to adjust to a more adult environment and a different timetable from school. Some part-time students commented on difficulty in getting back to studying, and they were also more likely to have experienced problems with travel and finding their way round college. Both full-time and part-time students thought they had not had enough advice about study skills. A large majority of full-time students were dissatisfied with the amount of advice about budgeting they had received when starting college.

8.2.1 Recommendations

1. Some ice-breaking and team-building activities should be provided, both initially and later, in view of students' difficulties in meeting and getting to know new people. Students must perceive these activities as not only valuable in their own right, but also relevant to their course content.

2. Induction should include a tour of college for all students, especially part-time students.

3. Study skills should be covered early in students' college life, through, for example, the NC study skills module or by integrating the development of effective study strategies into course work.

4. Accurate and timely information on bursaries, budgeting and other financial matters should be provided.

8.3 On-course Guidance

8.3.1 Part-time students

Attitudes to guidance
Those on part-time courses had a different attitude to their college attendance and different expectations of guidance from full-time students. Part-time students had generally been sent to college by their employer or YT training provider; they attended, did their work and that was that. They had little expectation of guidance and support from college staff. In our interviews, guidance staff told us that part-time students made much less use of the student support services.

Reactions to their course
While some students had found their course better than anticipated, others were less positive. On the whole, most students liked the more adult relationship with staff and the more relaxed teaching style compared with their school experience.
Course choice and relevance
One of the principles behind the reform of non-advanced further education in Scotland in 1984, with the introduction of the modular National Certificate, was to increase opportunities for students to select their own programmes of study (SED, 1983). Several studies, including this one, have shown that in practice, choice is limited, especially for part-time students (discussed in Howieson, 1992). Most of the students in this study seemed unconcerned about their lack of choice other than when it meant having to take what they considered as irrelevant modules. However, most students thought that their course was fairly relevant and helpful to them in their job or scheme. Most also felt that their supervisor knew at least "a bit" about what they were studying at college, and most college staff were also aware of what they did at work.

Guidance issues
Most students thought they had not had enough advice about how to study effectively. Several commented on the difficulty of working and also studying.

The majority identified their lecturer as the person to go to if they had difficulties with their course and a number had had help from staff, but workmates and supervisors were also sources of help with college work. Nevertheless, some had been left to cope with their course without any help.

Although a number of part-time students commented that they had not required any particular information or advice while on their course, it seemed that some of them were simply not prepared to admit to having needed help, especially about anything personal. Judging from other comments, it may be that there is a stigma attached to the use of guidance and especially specialist provision. It may also be the case that particularly in traditionally "male departments", the culture is such that it discourages any admission or discussion of personal problems. More than half of the part-time students responded in the questionnaire that they had not had enough information and advice from staff about personal problems.

The question of travel costs for those on YT caused some complaints, as did the cost of buying tools and equipment. Finance, including travelling expenses, was an area some students had needed information about.

They had little to say about college facilities. Few used their college library; and most comments about facilities concerned poor food in the canteen.

8.3.2 Full-time students

Course pressures
Most had found their course different from their expectations, in as much as it had been more demanding and pressurised than they had envisaged. Lack of advance notice and last minute re-scheduling of assessments and exams sometimes added to the pressure. Others spoke of a continual rush to get through their National Certificate modular assessments and felt that they were sometimes
taking assessments before they had digested what they were supposed to have covered. The key issue seemed to be too many assessments rather than the overall number of modules.

**Relationships with staff**
Like the part-time students, most on full-time courses had been pleasantly surprised by the more adult relationship with staff and the relaxed college environment. They also noted that they were generally expected to take more responsibility for their work and attendance than they had had at school. They approved of this sort of approach, although they knew that some students had had problems coping with the greater freedom at college. It should again be noted that the students in this study were the ones who were "surviving".

**Study skills**
Just over half of the students thought that they had not had enough information and advice about how to cope with difficult parts of their course, and less than a third were satisfied with the extent of information and advice about how to study effectively. In one college, the study skills module was not operating smoothly and generally study advice was identified as a need that had not been met.

Two of the colleges had well-developed open learning facilities but not all students were aware of them. Those who were appreciated the flexibility it offered.

**Course choice**
Only a few students thought they had much choice of which modules to study and had expected more. Even where there was some apparent choice, problems such as timetabling restrictions frequently limited students' choice in practice. It was this promise of choice which failed to materialise in practice that seemed to cause most frustration, rather than limited choice in itself. This frustration was part of a more general feeling among some that at interview and induction they had been misled about their course and that, during it, the college acted in an arbitrary way by, for example, changing some of the modules they were to study.

**Sources of guidance**
Virtually all of the students had a guidance tutor, although some had had little contact with him/her. In practice, if students had difficulties they varied as to which member of staff they went to, and some consulted their peers as well as, or instead of, college staff. Generally, the college took the line that students should talk to the member of staff they feel is most appropriate. Two factors influenced students' decisions to consult staff: the nature of the problem and the quality of their relationship, especially the nature of their everyday contact. But there was also a feeling that to go to guidance staff with problems would be imposing on them. A minority of students had regular timetabled sessions with their guidance tutor but even those who had did not find the process worthwhile. Less formal contacts sometimes worked well, but in other cases time constraints on tutor's availability presented problems.
In three of the four colleges where group discussions were held with full-time students, there was guidance provision out with the departmental structure. However, in one of these colleges some students were not aware of these facilities and in another students complained about the difficulty of seeing the guidance co-ordinator because of her workload.

Finance
The topic of finance aroused considerable feeling. It was an area about which a number of students had wanted information and advice but this had sometimes been inadequate or too late. Finance was a problem for most and several were not able to continue with their second year. Students complained about the cost of books and equipment especially where they felt the cost had not been made clear to them at the start.

Students felt strongly about bursary regulations relating to age and parental income: that differential awards to under and over 18-year-olds were arbitrary and unfair; and that their parents should not be expected to support them. In interview, some staff expressed concern about the impact of government policy on financial support for 16 - 18-year-olds. It causes particular difficulties where young people have disagreements or problems with their parents and cannot or will not live at home. A number of students supplemented their income through part-time work but this also added pressure on top of a demanding course. Only a very few mentioned receiving advice on budgeting and the large majority thought that they had not enough information and advice about money problems.

Facilities
Students in two colleges criticised the canteen and in one also complained about restricted access to sports facilities. Generally, library and computing provision was praised and students appreciated the easy access that most of them had to computers.

8.3.3 Recommendations

1. The efforts of employers and colleges should be co-ordinated to provide more efficient guidance procedures.

2. Elective systems should operate smoothly, maximising whatever element of choice is possible.

3. Study skill support and advice, including time management, should be provided on a continuous basis. A classroom lecturer should take this on board having received the appropriate staff development training.

4. Timetabled guidance should be built into students' programmes emphasising a flexible approach and ensuring that it does not become a mechanistic exercise.
5. Students should receive information on bursaries, access funds and other relevant financial information in good time, including advice on budgeting.

6. All staff, including part-time and short-term staff, should be trained in guidance, both in initial training and during staff development training.

8.4 Pre-exit Guidance

8.4.1 Part-time students

The large majority of part-time students did not perceive the need for any pre-exit guidance. Most were continuing with their job or scheme, so that progression into the next stage of their course was viewed as automatic and most had not discussed it with college staff or their employer. However, some students’ experiences indicated a need for colleges to review part-time students’ progress, especially when they finish one part of their course. Few students had been briefed about what the next part of their course would involve. While some were unconcerned, others would have welcomed more information. The majority of those not continuing were on YT and had found or were looking for a job and, therefore, did not plan to continue with college. Few mentioned receiving help with their job search from college staff or from the careers services.

8.4.2 Full-time students

Most were finishing their present course and were mainly planning to go on to a higher level course rather than look for employment. The amount and quality of guidance they had had had varied considerably across the colleges concerned. But while some had received more help than others, most felt they had not had enough help about what to do after their present course. Students in two of the colleges were more likely than in the other colleges to have discussed their plans with staff. Some students had talked over their intentions with their parents or friends but their advice had its limitations. For several, students on a higher level course at the same college had been a useful source of information but others going on to another course at the same college complained about inadequate course information. As well as more information about course content, advice about finance and grants was also wanted. The latter would appear to be necessary in view of some students’ comments that demonstrated their ignorance of the grants system.

Some of those hoping to go on to a higher course were influenced in their decision by the likely difficulty of finding a job, but continuing in full-time FE was not necessarily the most appropriate choice for everyone. Several recognised this and questioned whether they could cope with a higher-level course.
While the intention to go on to further study seemed to be a definite decision for some, others were apparently drifting into another course without adequate guidance. This was particularly so for those planning to continue at the same college. Even where guidance was given, it could be inadequate: some students remarked that their college tended to give advice only about the college's own higher courses.

Relatively few of those intending to go on to another course had spoken to a careers officer although one was available at three of the four colleges. Most students in one college were unaware of this. Students who were looking for employment were more likely to have seen the careers officer. Several were critical about what they saw as the careers officer's directive guidance and identified the need for on-going careers guidance rather than a single interview to explore their options. Others wanted practical advice about finding a job. No-one seemed to have taken any of the relevant NC guidance modules, such "Job Seeking Skills" and "Pre-Exit Guidance", as part of their course.

8.4.3 Recommendations

1. All students, both those entering the labour market, and those considering higher level courses, should be offered pre-exit guidance, to ensure that all options are considered thoroughly.

2. Colleges should give more attention to vocational guidance, promoting careers education and the careers services as an on-going issue. This is likely to necessitate appropriate staff development training.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX I

SCC CHECKLIST OF TOPICS FOR GROUP DISCUSSIONS
1. Source, nature and usefulness of advice and information about:

   Educational options at 16+ from school, career service, family and other contacts.

   Entry to further education and selecting a course/college (including considerations affecting choice)

2. Reasons for following particular course and satisfaction with and expectations concerning:

   Course choices and options available

   Course content

   Teaching/tuition (inc. staff-student relations)

   Academic progress

3. Satisfaction with and expectations concerning support or guidance from college staff concerning:

   Adjustment to different teaching styles and learning environment

   Carrying out day-to-day coursework, inc. study difficulties

   Working out future educational options/course choices

   Reviewing/assessing progress

   Provision for students with special educational needs

   Choosing or preparing for a career

   Dealing with personal problems/difficulties

   Mechanisms for feeding back concerns to college staff/administration

   Dealing with practical problems inc. finance, accommodation.
4. Satisfaction with and expectations concerning availability of:

Lecture halls/classrooms seating, heating, lighting

Books/libraries

Equipment, eg computers

Laboratories/workshops

Catering/refreshment facilities

Transport to and from college

Access facilities for students with disabilities.
APPENDIX 2

WORKSHEETS AND QUESTIONNAIRES
Guidance for School Leavers in Further Education

Before College

Think back to when you were at school and wondering what you might do when you left school. What sort of information and advice did you need? What information and advice did you get? Who did you talk to?

How useful was the information and advice you got?

What other information and advice could have helped you?

First Name:
Guidance for School Leavers in Further Education

Starting College

Think back to your first week or so at college. Was it what you expected? What was different?

What did the college do to help you settle in and help you know what to expect?

What did you find difficult in your first two weeks?

What else could have been done to help you settle in?

First Name:
(Completed by FULL-TIME students)
Guidance for School Leavers in Further Education

On Your Course

It's now almost a year since you started college. Has your course been what you expected?

What kinds of information and advice have you needed? (This could be about studying or money or personal problems)

When things got difficult, who or what helped?

Now that you've almost finished your course, do you know what you're going to do next? Who have you talked to about your plans? What help do you need now?

First Name:
(Completed by PART-TIME students)
Guidance for School Leavers in Further Education

On Your Course

It's now almost a year since you started college. Has your course been what you expected?

What kinds of information and advice have you needed? (This could be about studying or money or personal problems)

When things got difficult, who or what helped?

Now that you've almost finished your course, do you know what you're going to do next? Who have you talked to about your plans? What help do you need now?

First Name:
(Completed by FULL-TIME students)
Guidance for School Leavers in Further Education

1. First Name ______________________ 2. Age ____ 3. Male ___ Female ____

4. Did you leave school
   ... at the end of fourth year? ____
   ... at the winter of fifth year? ____
   ... at the end of fifth year? ____
   ... at the end of sixth year? ____

5. What course are you on?
   __________________________________________

6. What qualifications are you studying for?
   __________________________________________

7. How long does your course last?
   __________________________________________

8. What qualifications did you get at school?  
   __________________________________________
   Number of passes
   O/Standard Grade _______
   Highers _______
   Scotvec Modules _______
   Others (please say what) _______

9. What do you plan to do after this year's course?
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

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10. **Before** you came to college, did you get enough information and advice about ...

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<td>the courses you were qualified for?</td>
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<td>what student life would be like?</td>
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<td>what you would study on the course?</td>
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<td>your job prospects at the end of your course?</td>
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<td>the courses you could go on to later?</td>
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11. When you **started** college, did you get enough information and advice about ...

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<td>who to go to for help if you needed it?</td>
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<td>the options you could choose?</td>
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<td>who would be teaching you?</td>
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<td>how to study effectively?</td>
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<td>how to budget?</td>
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12. While you’ve **been** on your course, have you had enough information and advice about ...

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<td>how to study more effectively?</td>
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<td>any personal problems?</td>
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<td>what to do at the end of your course?</td>
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</table>
(Completed by PART-TIME students)
Guidance for School Leavers in Further Education

1. First Name ____________________ 2. Age ____ 3. Male ____ Female ____

4. Did you leave school
   ... at the end of fourth year? ____
   ... at the winter of fifth year? ____
   ... at the end of fifth year? ____
   ... at the end of sixth year? ____

5. What course are you on?


6. What qualifications are you studying for?


7. How long does your course last?


8. Are you on Youth Training? Yes ____ No ____

9. If you are employed or on Youth Training ...
   what sort of business do you work in? (eg hotel, building firm)
   what is the name of the job you are being trained for? (eg cook, joiner)

10. What qualifications did you get at school? Number of passes
    O/Standard Grade ________
    Highers ________
    Scotvec Modules ________
    Others (please say what) ________

11. What do you plan to do after this year's course?


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12. When you were offered your job or training place, were you told that you would be going to college?  
   Yes ___  No ___  Not sure ___  

13. **Before** you came to college, did you get enough information and advice from your employer or managing agent about ...  
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<td>the qualifications you would get at the end of your course?</td>
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<td>who to go to if you had any problems at college?</td>
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<td>how you would be assessed?</td>
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14. When you **started** college, did you get enough information and advice from the **college staff** about ...  
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<td>who to go to if you had problems at college?</td>
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<td>how to study effectively?</td>
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15. While you've been **on** your course, have you had enough information and advice from **college staff** about ...  
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<td>any personal problems?</td>
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<td>any money problems?</td>
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<tr>
<td>what to do at after your course this year?</td>
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</table>
16. How well does your college course fit in with what you're doing at work?

very much
a bit
a little
not at all

17. How much do your supervisors at work know about what you study at college?

a lot
a bit
a little
not at all

18. How much do your lecturers know about what you do at work?

a lot
a bit
a little
not at all