

Institute of **Physics**

**UK University  
Physics Departments**

A Financial Survey

Standing Conference of  
Physics Professors  
November 1997

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Policy Paper 972

# **UK University Physics Departments**

## **A Financial Survey**

### **Standing Conference of Physics Professors**

**November 1997**

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### **III. Data analysis and key observations**

The Institute is conscious that in collating this information it is essential to respect the confidentiality of the information provided by the individual physics departments. For this reason sub-groupings of the data are limited in order to prevent identification of specific departments.

The data analysis presented here does not address the full range of questions raised in the survey but centres on those issues related to budgetary concerns. The intention of this analysis is to facilitate observation of any interdependencies and correlations that might relate apparently diverse aspects of a department's position.

Several observations are made of the dependence of budget and other parameters on departmental size. In this report departmental size has been estimated from information submitted by each department to the 1996 RAE. It is always difficult to accurately assess departmental size and the Institute was concerned that this parameter should be determined with as little possible subjective assessment on the part of the individual universities. It was felt that the recent RAE exercise was the most closely defined exercise which addressed this matter.

### **IV. Figures**

Figures 1 and 2 introduce the budgets of the individual departments as a function of departmental size. It should be noted that in most cases at the time of the survey the 1996/97 budget represents an actual working figure whereas the 1997/98 data represent a forward-looking estimate. The Institute notes a correlation between larger per-capita deficits and smaller departmental size.

Figures 3 and 4 illustrate that the proportion of research technicians who are grant funded and the proportion of students opting for the MSci programme are both independent of the size of the department. A possible exception to this could be in the case of MSci popularity in the larger departments. It should be expected that the student numbers are only likely to be statistically meaningful in those larger departments. Excluding departments with fewer than 70 staff it is perhaps possible to infer that MSci popularity scales with departmental size.

Figures 5 and 6 examine possible dependencies of research technician support and MSci popularity on departmental budget levels. It would appear that in each case there is no observable correlation.

Figures 7 and 8 return to the issues raised in figures 1 and 2 but in this case explicitly consider any correlation with the department's 1996 RAE score. The RAE scores shown do not subdivide into 3a and 3b or 5 and 5\* classifications in order to maintain departmental anonymity. The Institute notes that those departments with the greatest per-capita deficits are not those with the lowest RAE scores. The principal correlation is with departmental size rather than research quality.

Figure 9 addresses the consistency of the 1996/97 data with the statement that UK physics departments tend to be in deficit by £300k irrespective of departmental size.

Figure 1

Departmental Finances 1996/97

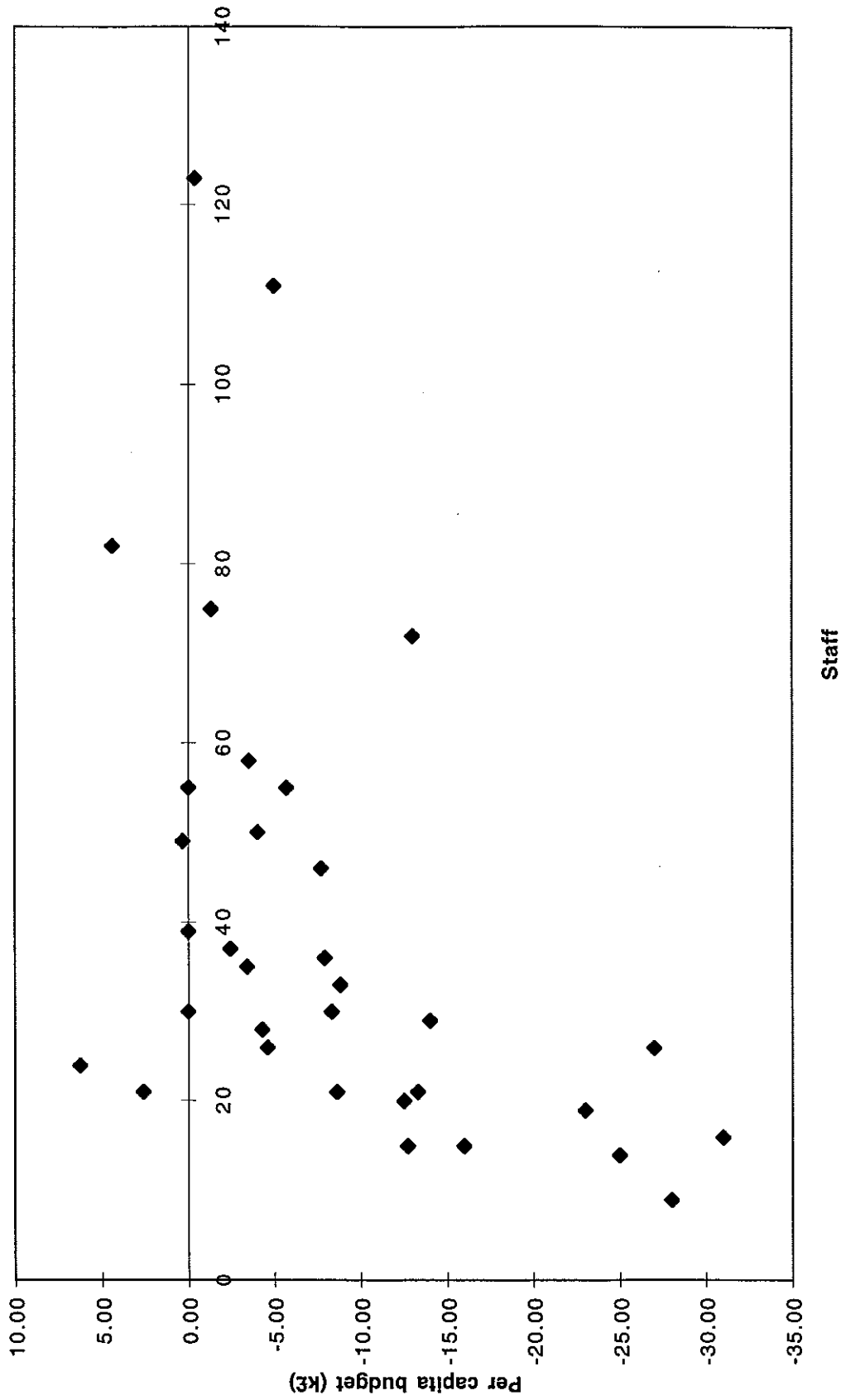
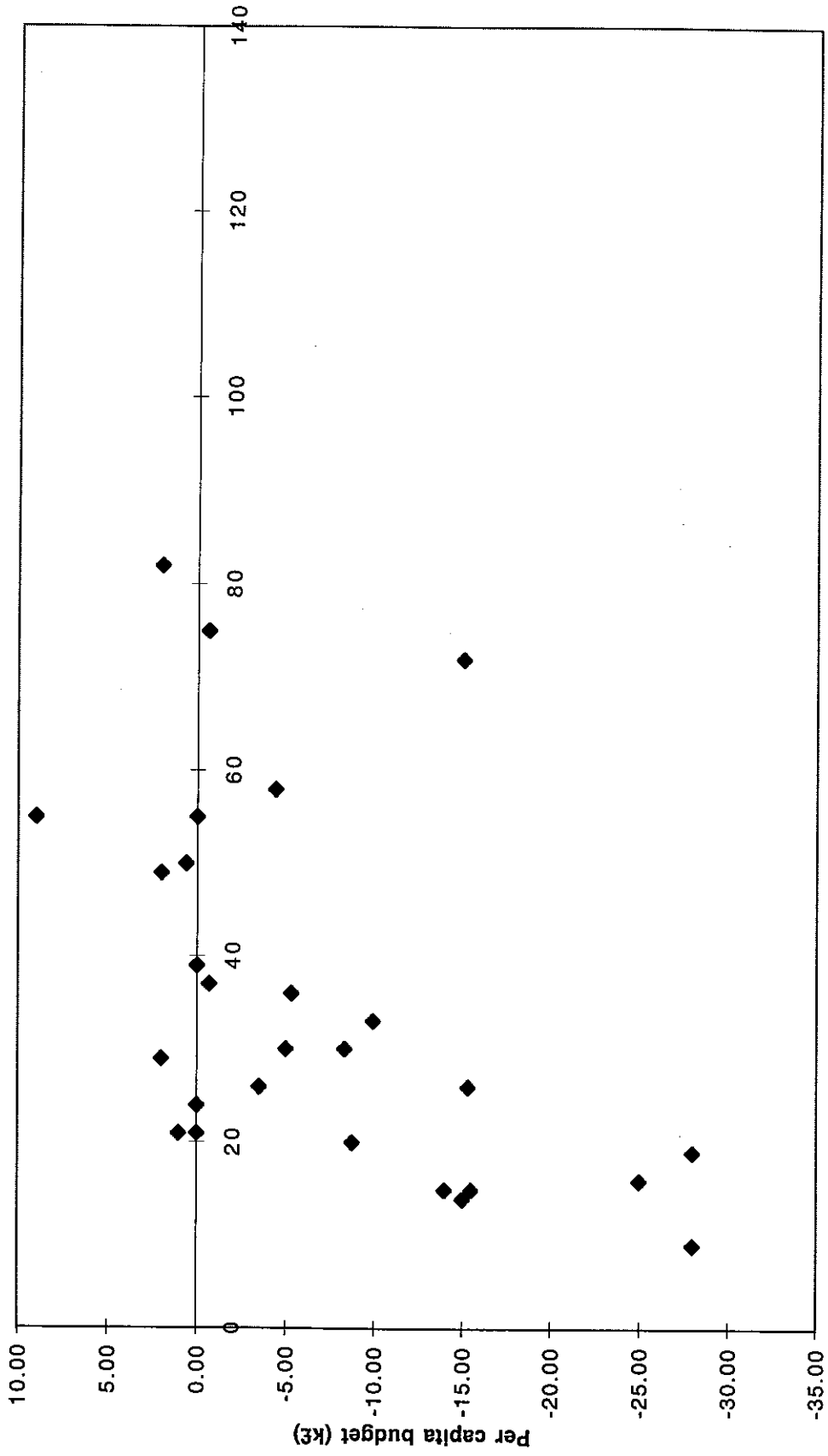


Figure 2

Departmental Finances 1997/98



Staff

Figure 3

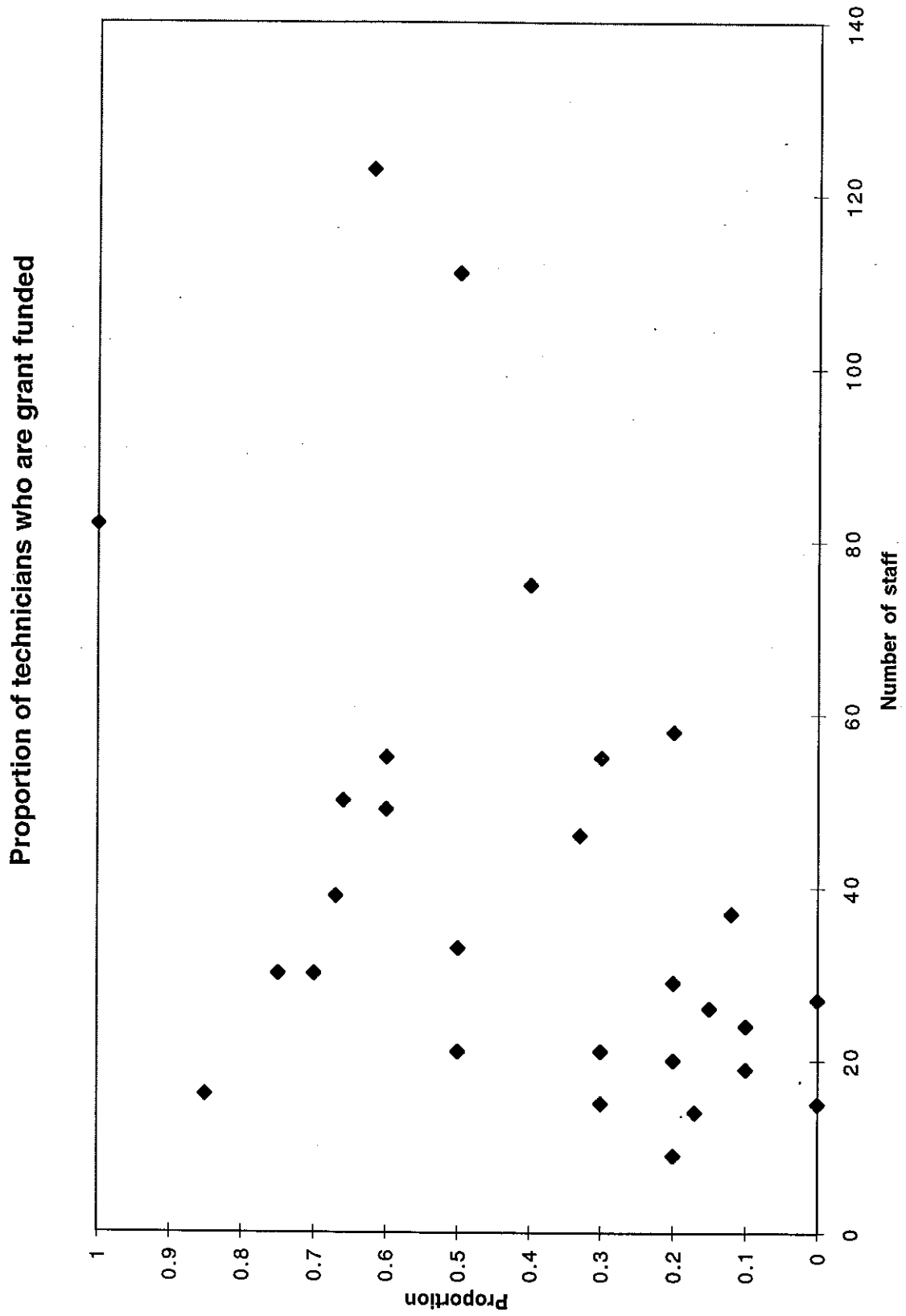


Figure 4

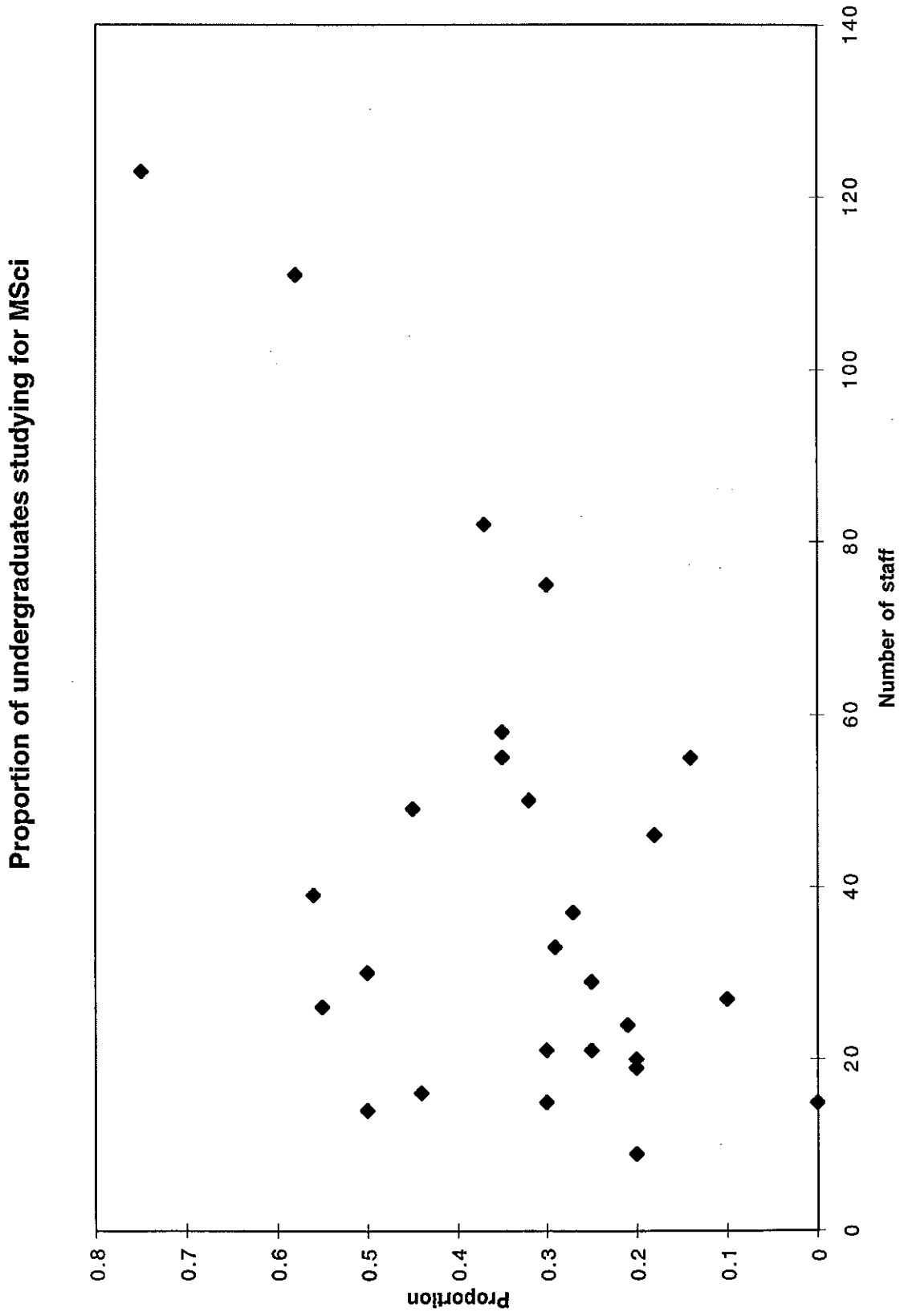


Figure 5

Proportion of technicians who are grant funded versus departmental budget 1996/97

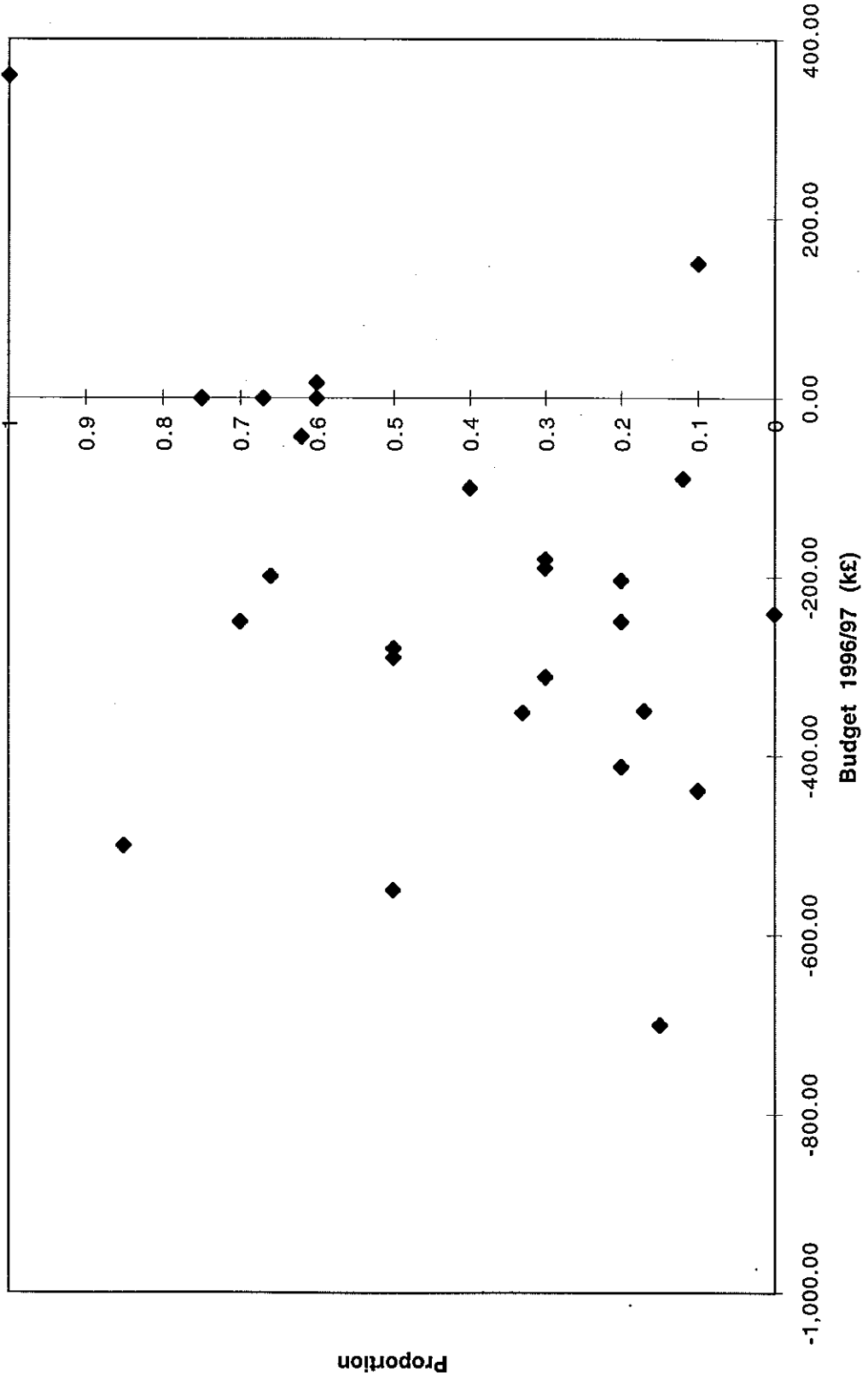


Figure 6

Proportion of MSci students versus 1996/97 Budget

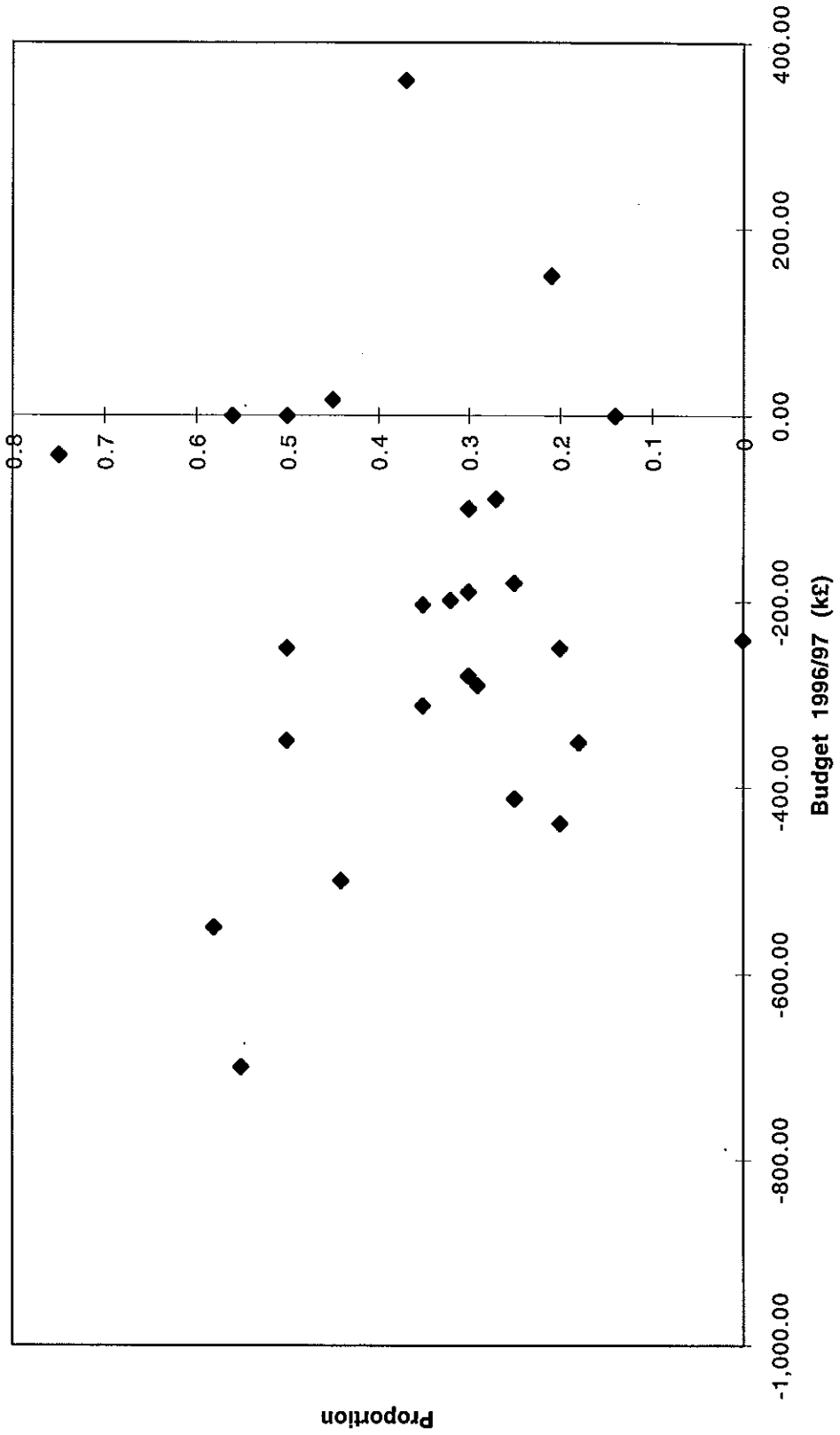


Figure 7

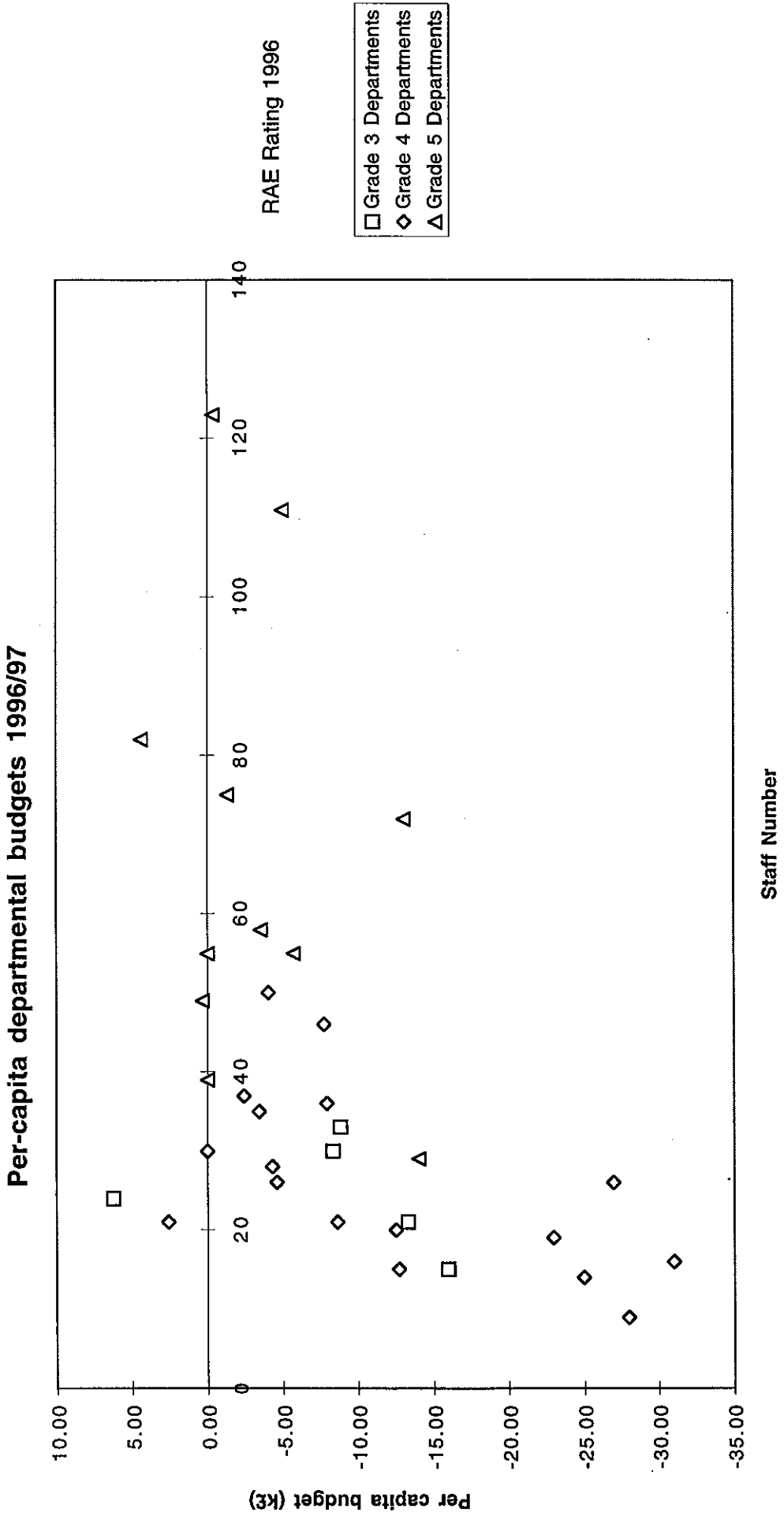
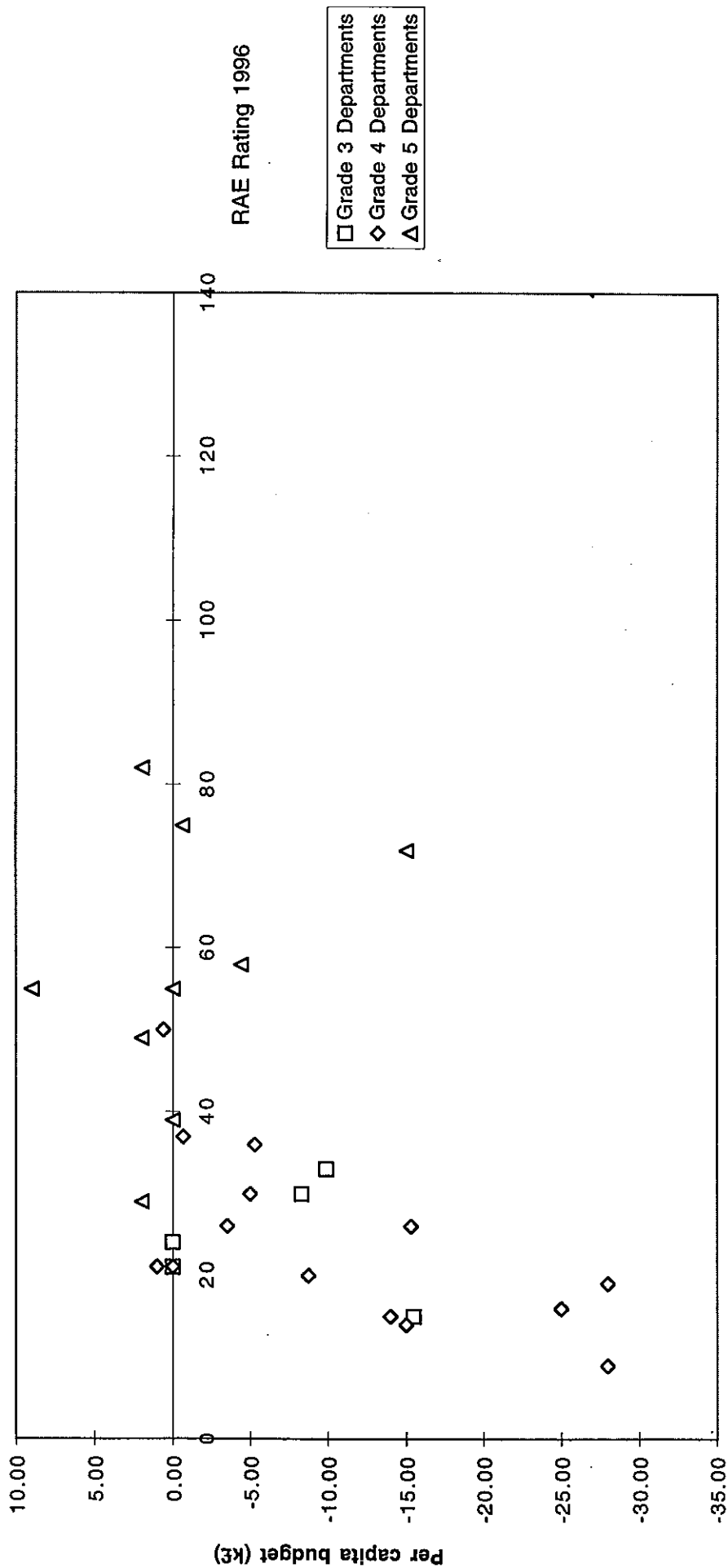


Figure 8

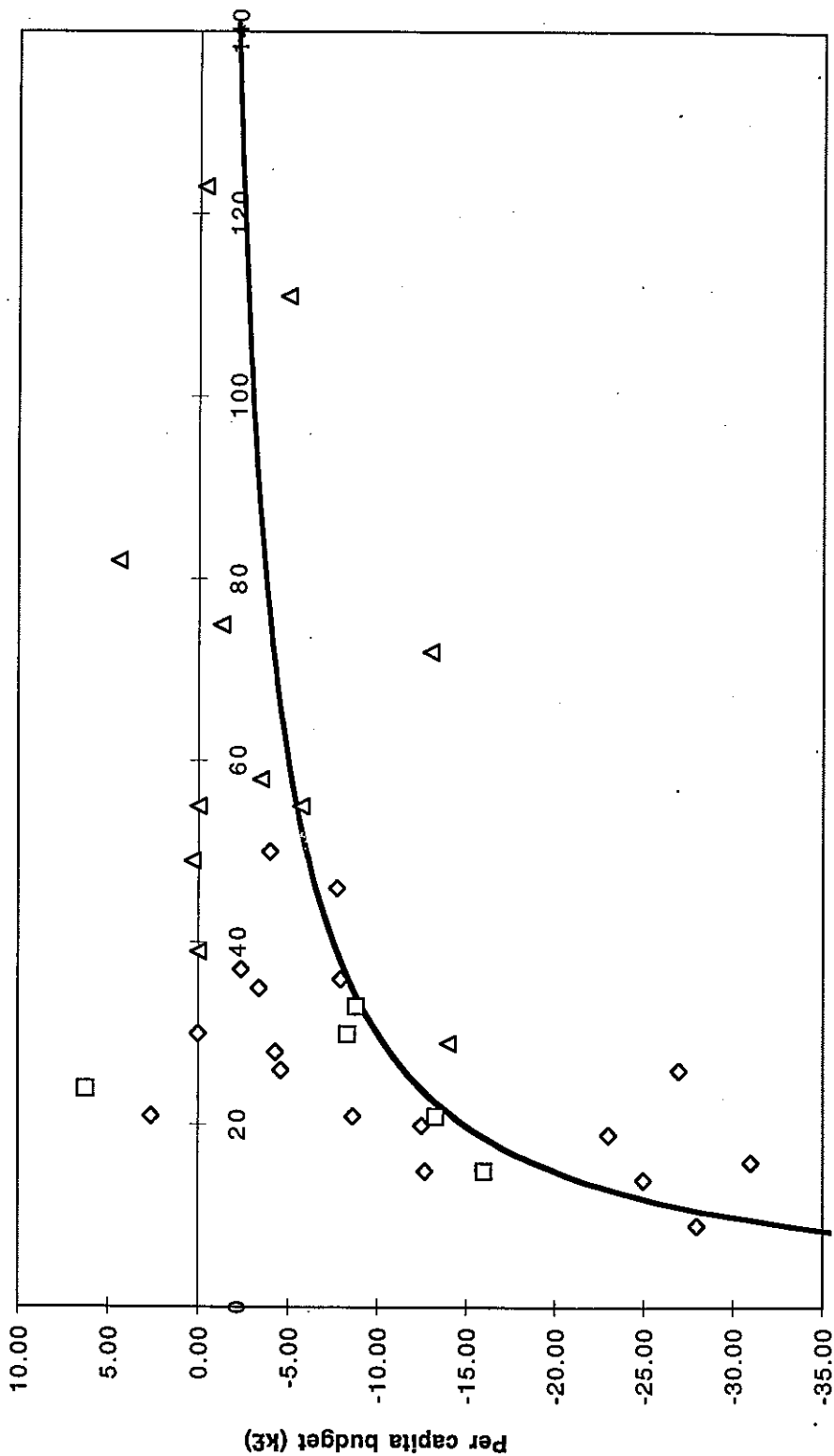
Per-capita departmental budgets 1997/98



Staff Number

Figure 9

Per-capita departmental budgets 1996/97



Staff Number

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