QAA

Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

May 2009

Lakes College West Cumbria

SR41/2009

Preface

The mission of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications and to inform and encourage continual improvement in the management of the quality of higher education.

As part of this mission, QAA undertakes reviews of higher education provision delivered in further education colleges. This process is known as Integrated quality and enhancement review (IQER).

Purpose of IQER

Higher education programmes delivered by further education colleges (colleges) lead to awards made by higher education institutions or Edexcel. The awarding bodies retain ultimate responsibility for maintaining the academic standards of their awards and assuring the quality of the students' learning opportunities. The purpose of IQER is, therefore, to safeguard the public interest in the academic standards and quality of higher education delivered in colleges. It achieves this by providing objective and independent information about the way in which colleges discharge their responsibilities within the context of their partnership agreements with awarding bodies. IQER focuses on three core themes: academic standards, quality of learning opportunities and public information.

The IQER process

IQER is a peer review process. It is divided into two complementary stages: Developmental engagement and Summative review. In accordance with the published method, colleges with less than 100 full-time equivalent students funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) may elect not to take part in Developmental engagements, but all HEFCE-funded colleges will take part in Summative review.

Developmental engagement

Developmental engagements explore in an open and collegial way the challenges colleges face in specific areas of higher education provision. Each college's first, and often their only, Developmental engagement focuses on student assessment.

The main elements of a Developmental engagement are:

- a self-evaluation by the college

- an optional written submission by the student body

- a preparatory meeting between the college and the IQER coordinator several weeks before the Developmental engagement visit

- the Developmental engagement visit, which normally lasts two days

- the evaluation of the extent to which the college manages effectively its responsibilities for the delivery of academic standards and the quality of its higher education provision, plus the arrangements for assuring the accuracy and completeness of public information it is responsible for publishing about its higher education

- the production of a written report of the team's findings.

To promote a collegial approach, Developmental engagement teams include up to two members of staff from the further education college under review. They are known as nominees for this process.

Summative review

Summative review addresses all aspects of a college's HEFCE-funded higher education provision and provides judgements on the management and delivery of this provision against core themes one and two, and a conclusion against core theme three.

Summative review shares the main elements of Developmental engagement described above. Summative review teams, however, are composed of the IQER coordinator and QAA reviewers. They do not include nominees.

Evidence

In order to obtain evidence for the review, IQER teams carry out a number of activities, including:

- reviewing the college's self-evaluation and its internal procedures and documents

- reviewing the optional written submission from students

- asking questions of relevant staff

- talking to students about their experiences.

IQER teams' expectations of colleges are guided by a nationally agreed set of reference points, known as the Academic Infrastructure. These are published by QAA and consist of:

- *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*, which includes descriptions of different higher education qualifications

- the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*

- subject benchmark statements, which describe the characteristics of degrees in different subjects

- *Guidelines for preparing programme specifications*, which are descriptions of what is on offer to students in individual programmes of study

- award benchmark statements, which describe the generic characteristics of an award, for example Foundation Degrees.

In addition, Developmental engagement teams gather evidence by focusing on particular aspects of the theme under review. These are known as 'lines of enquiry'.

Outcomes of IQER

Each Developmental engagement and Summative review results in a written report:

- Developmental engagement reports set out good practice and recommendations and implications for the college and its awarding bodies, but do not contain judgements. Recommendations will be at one of three levels - **essential, advisable** and **desirable**. To promote an open and collegial approach to Developmental engagements, the reports are not published.

- Summative review reports identify good practice and contain judgements about whether the college is discharging its responsibilities effectively against core themes one and two above. The judgements are **confidence, limited confidence** or **no confidence.** There is no judgement for the third core theme, instead the report will provide evaluation and a conclusion. Summative review reports are published.

Differentiated judgements can be made where a team judges a college's management of the standards and/or quality of the awards made by one awarding body to be different from those made by another.

Colleges are required to develop an action plan to address any recommendations arising from IQER. Progress against these action plans is monitored by QAA in conjunction with HEFCE and/or the college's awarding body(ies) as appropriate. The college's action plan in response to the conclusions of the Summative review will be published as part of the report.

Executive summary

The Summative review of Lakes College West Cumbria carried out in May and September 2009

Lakes College West Cumbria (the College) is a medium-sized college located on the west coast of Cumbria between Workington and Whitehaven. The College draws its students from a wide geographical area within Allerdale and Copeland. The College mission is to work in partnership to deliver high quality education and training, contributing to the local economy and to community development. The College has delivered higher education programmes since the 1970s, and the provision has developed from Higher National Certificates and Diplomas. Edexcel, the University of Central Lancashire, the University of Cumbria and the University of Lancaster validate the current provision. Future provision will be centred on the partnership with the University of Cumbria.

As a result of its investigations, the Summative review team (the team) considers that there can be **confidence** in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreements, for the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of its awarding bodies. The team also considers that there can be **confidence** in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreements, for the quality of learning opportunities it offers. The team considers that reliance **can** be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Good practice

The team has identified the following **good practice** for dissemination:

- the effective working relationship between course teams and link tutors that ensures the maintenance of academic standards

- the review and evaluation procedures at programme level that assure the quality of the provision

- the arrangements to support work-based learning activities for full-time students

- the student mentoring arrangements that enhance the provision for both first and second-year students

- the expansion of the designated study area for higher education students

- the comprehensive handbooks and clear fact sheets on education programmes

- the centralised system for tracking individual students on the virtual management environment.

Recommendations

The team has also identified a number of recommendations for the enhancement of the higher education provision.

The team considers that it is **advisable** for the College to:

- review the implementation of procedures to ensure the accuracy and completeness of public information and inform all students of their entitlements and responsibilities.

The team also considers that it is **desirable** for the College to:

- embed the revised internal quality management procedures and reporting arrangements at institutional level, to ensure its responsibilities for the management and delivery of standards are discharged fully, and can be audited

- monitor the development of the higher education forum that will inform the management of academic standards and promote good practice across the provision

- evaluate the new procedures for the conduct of assessment boards and the role of external examiners to ensure alignment with the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* and avoid possible conflicts of interest

- monitor the implementation of feedback systems to ensure students are informed of the actions taken by the College in response to issues they have raised

- evaluate the implementation of the revised tutorial system to ensure consistency across the provision

- ensure an appropriate virtual learning environment is available to all students and encourage all staff to engage fully with the new technology.

A Introduction and context

1   This report presents the findings of the Summative review of higher education funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) conducted at Lakes College West Cumbria (the College). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the College discharges its responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes which the College delivers on behalf of Edexcel, the University of Central Lancashire, the University of Cumbria and the University of Lancaster. The review was carried out by Ms Michelle Callanan, Ms Ann-Marie Colbert and Mr Clive Turner (reviewers), and Mr Nigel Hall (coordinator).

2   The Summative review team (the team) conducted the initial review in May 2009 and returned to the College for a second visit in September 2009. The team conducted the review in agreement with the College and in accordance with *The handbook for Integrated quality and enhancement review* (the handbook), published by QAA. Evidence in support of the Summative review included documentation supplied by the College and awarding bodies, meetings with staff, students, employers and partner institutions, reports of reviews by QAA and from inspections by Ofsted. In particular, the team drew on the findings and recommendations of the Developmental engagement in assessment. A summary of findings from this Developmental engagement is provided in Section C of this report. The review also considered the College's use of the Academic Infrastructure, developed by QAA on behalf of higher education providers, with reference to the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, subject and award benchmark statements, *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* and programme specifications.

3   In order to assist HEFCE to gain information to assist with the assessment of the impact of Foundation Degree (FD) awards, Section D of this report summarises details of the FD programmes delivered at the College.

4   The College is a medium-sized institution located on the west coast of Cumbria between Workington and Whitehaven. The College draws its students from a wide geographical area within Allerdale and Copeland. West Cumbria developed as a heavy industrial area with an economy originally based largely on coal, iron and steel making, and latterly on the nuclear industry. As these industries have declined, the area has struggled to find new inward investment and attempts to regenerate and diversify are continuing. The College mission is to work in partnership to deliver high quality education and training, contributing to the local economy and to community development. The College has delivered higher education programmes since the 1970s, and the provision has developed from Higher National Certificates and Diplomas (HNC/Ds) in engineering and business. In the academic year 2008-09 there were 1,359 full-time and 7,095 part-time student enrolments. Of these, there were 36 full-time and 287 part-time students enrolled on higher education programmes, representing 161 full-time equivalents. The programmes are taught by 22 full-time and seven part-time staff who teach on both higher and further education programmes. There are approximately 15 full-time equivalent staff teaching the higher education provision.

5   The higher education provision is organised into five sections: Business; Childhood Studies and Care; Engineering Construction and Science; Information and Communications Technology; and Teacher Education. Most higher education programmes are funded by HEFCE, but the College also has some indirectly funded provision through the University of

Central Lancashire and Cumbria Higher Learning. Provision at the time of the initial review was as follows:

Edexcel

- HNC/D Applied Chemistry
- HNC/D in Electrical Engineering
- HNC/D in Mechanical Engineering
- HNC/D in Operations Engineering
- HND in Instrumentation Engineering

University of Central Lancashire

- HNC Business
- FD Business
- FD Engineering
- FD Information and Communications Technology
- FD Integrated Education and Care of Children and Young People
- FD Nuclear Decommissioning
- Certificate in Preparation to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector
- Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector
- Certificate in Education
- Postgraduate Certificate in Education

University of Cumbria

- FD Physical Activity and Health

University of Lancaster

- BEng Mechanical Engineering
- BEng Electrical and Electronic Engineering.

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

6   Edexcel, the University of Central Lancashire, the University of Cumbria and the University of Lancaster validate the current provision. The College also works with the University of Cumbria and three further education colleges within Cumbria Higher Learning to develop its provision. Future growth of the provision will be funded through Cumbria Higher Learning and the University of Cumbria.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

7   There are plans to replace the current business provision that is validated by the University of Central Lancashire with an FD in Business and Management that will be validated by the University of Cumbria. The new programme will incorporate a number of specialist pathways that meet the needs of local employers. The College is also seeking validation with the University of Lancaster for a BEng (Hons) top-up degree, and is working with the University of Cumbria to develop FD engineering pathways, and an FD in Applied Science.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

8   Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a written submission to the team. The College supported the students in preparing their submission and valuable comments were received from all programme areas. A representative group of students met with the team during the Summative review and expanded on the comments in the written submission. They provided valuable evidence on the quality of the provision with examples of good practice cited in a number of areas.

B Evaluation of the management of HEFCE-funded higher education

Core theme 1: Academic standards

How are responsibilities for managing and delivering higher education standards delegated within the management structure and what reporting arrangements are in place?

9   Overall responsibility for the management of academic standards is vested in the College's Quality Improvement Committee which is chaired by the Deputy Principal for Curriculum, Quality and Partnerships. Procedures apply to both higher and further education provision and issues that the committee identifies are addressed across the whole provision. There are specific management arrangements that apply to collaborative programmes, and these are documented in individual agreements, such as the Memorandum of Co-operation with the University of Central Lancashire and the Collaboration Agreement with the University of Lancaster.

10   A standard set of reports informs the Quality Improvement Committee. These include reports from the Quality and Executive Support Manager and the Quality Improvement Officer on issues such as retention and achievement, but the focus for quality assurance and enhancement is centred at programme level. Annual monitoring and evaluation reports are aligned to the procedures of both the College and its awarding bodies. Programme teams compile these reports, and programme area managers oversee the process.

11   The position of Deputy Principal for Curriculum, Quality and Partnerships, was established in August 2009 and, following the initial review visit of May 2009, the terms of reference of the Quality Improvement Committee were revised. Formerly, the Committee met twice each term to scrutinise college-wide issues across both further and higher education. It now meets monthly, and higher education features as a specific item on each agenda. The title of higher education leader has changed to higher education coordinator, and the post holder is now a member of the Quality Improvement Committee. The College should now seek to embed the revised internal quality management procedures and

reporting arrangements at institutional level, to ensure its responsibilities for the management and delivery of standards are discharged fully, and can be audited.

12 Memoranda of agreement on collaborative arrangements are clear and explicit, and staff confirm their understanding of the awarding body requirements. Partner organisations reported that College procedures meet their requirements and students are able to achieve the appropriate standards.

13 A well-established relationship with the University of Central Lancashire is effective, and curriculum staff comment enthusiastically on the support they receive from the validating body. On programmes such as the FD Integrated Education and Care of Children and Young People, the College has had a significant influence on programme design. The curriculum is shared with all partner further education colleges, with one college taking responsibility for coordination of a module. On some programmes, such as the FD Information and Communications Technology, the College has adopted modules and assignments produced by the awarding body. The FD Nuclear Decommissioning is one example of a programme with extensive use of work-based learning that has been developed for a specific sector.

14 The relationship with the University of Cumbria is of recent origin, but there is clear evidence of effective working between College staff and University colleagues. The staff have a significant role in the design of programmes in general, and in assignment tasks in particular. This is evident on the FD Physical Activity and Health.

15 University of Lancaster degrees are designed by the College and then validated by the awarding body. In the case of the BEng, a partner further education college produced the initial model which was adopted by the College at the request of the employer. Substantial responsibility for maintenance of quality and standards resides with the College.

16 The College has operated Edexcel programmes for a number of years and carries full responsibility for the provision.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

17 Following the Developmental engagement, a forum for discussion about higher education issues was convened. This generated an increased level of understanding in areas such as the Academic Infrastructure, and made a positive impact within the College. The forum is open to all staff involved in the higher education provision and attendance at events is high. However, the forum did not have specific terms of reference or lines of reporting within the College. Outcomes of the meetings were not routinely reported to senior managers.

18 Following the initial visit of the Summative review team, it was recommended that the College consider formal arrangements to establish the forum with clear terms of reference and reporting lines that could inform the management of academic standards, and promote the sharing of good practice across the provision. There are now clear terms of reference and the revised membership includes a member of the College Executive. The forum is effectively designed to drive the quality improvement agenda for higher education.

How does the College assure itself that it is fulfilling its obligations to ensure that the standards of higher education provision meet the requirements of validating partners and awarding bodies?

19   In general, reports from external examiners demonstrate appropriate achievement in quality and standards across the provision. There is clear evidence that students achieve the intended learning outcomes and meet the appropriate benchmarks. For example, on education programmes the external examiner reported that students achieved genuine postgraduate standards, and that the tutorial process enhanced learning through relevant support for assessments. On the FD in Nuclear Decommissioning, the examiner reported that work-based learning met the needs of the industry without compromising academic rigour.

20   The team noted valuable comment in external examiners' reports that effectively informed the development of individual programmes and enhanced provision at this level. However, there was no evidence that such commentary informed quality and standards across the provision as a whole. There was no explicit system to ensure that issues of a generic nature that could enhance good practice were routinely identified and disseminated to programme teams. Programme managers reviewed reports in their area and took the appropriate action, and the Quality and Executive Support Manager commented on the reports in general, but there were no specific procedures for reporting the findings to the Quality Improvement Committee which carries responsibility for enhancing practice across the institution. Procedures for dealing with reports from external examiners were revised following the team's initial visit. There is now a higher education summative review process that considers reports and informs quality and standards across the provision through the Quality Improvement Committee. Generic issues that can enhance good practice are identified and disseminated to programme teams. The outcomes are audited by programme managers and are monitored by senior management. The team concluded that issues identified during the initial visit have now been effectively addressed.

21   An effective relationship exists between programme teams and link tutors from the University of Central Lancashire, with a developing relationship with tutors from the University of Cumbria which assures the maintenance of academic standards. Programme teams and link tutors meet regularly to discuss the design and moderation of assessment tasks, and to review and revise provision. Standard monitoring and evaluation reports inform these discussions and staff have familiarity with, and appreciation of, the systems. Student feedback is collected through a variety of methods including representation at committee meetings; student questionnaires; module questionnaires; and focus groups.

22   The self-evaluation recognised the need to realign College procedures more closely with those of its higher education partners but, during the initial visit, the team found no evidence that this was taking place. Responsibility for overseeing aspects of quality and standards rested with programme area managers. For example, in the conduct of assessment boards there was no system for ensuring objectivity and impartiality in assessment decisions as the chair of the board was normally the programme area manager. There is now a protocol for the conduct of assessment boards, and the revised arrangements are in accordance with the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*.

23   Furthermore, the team noted that on the BEng programme the external examiner had acted as an adviser to the programme team, with potential for a conflict of interest. The new protocol for the academic year 2009-10 prevents this. The team confirms that procedures now align with the principles of the *Code of practice, Section 4: External examining*, and note that the awarding body is also considering the need to clarify its procedures.

24 In general, at the programme level, there is a clear commitment to the process of quality and curriculum review. However, there was little evidence that existing procedures assured and enhanced academic standards across the whole institution. The College relied on compliance audits to check the effectiveness of actions, but the results of these audits were not clear. Following the initial visit and the appointment of the Deputy Principal, the revision of arrangements has strengthened audit procedures. Supported by the enhanced role of the higher education coordinator, the College can now demonstrate a robust approach to quality assurance.

25 The action plan produced by the College following the Developmental engagement was reported to senior management, but it was not clear how this was monitored, and whether the actions taken were effective. The College did not ensure systematically that matters relating to its higher education provision were specifically reported in quality and curriculum reviews, or in the business of the Quality Improvement Committee. There was a need for clear and explicit procedures for managing higher education provision that would appropriately inform the work of the Quality Improvement Committee. These issues are now addressed effectively.

What are the College's arrangements for staff development to support the achievement of appropriate academic standards?

26 A clear strategy for staff development includes a specific allocation of time for a range of activities to enhance academic qualifications and ensure staff remain conversant with current professional practice. A recording procedure ensures that all staff development activities are logged. This also identifies staff who have failed to take advantage of the opportunities available and action is taken by programme area managers.

27 Staff reported on annual meetings designed to support academic standards and enhance the provision at both the University of Central Lancashire and University of Cumbria. The meetings review progress during the current academic year and devise new learning strategies, materials and assessment tasks for the year ahead. This ensures the quality and relevance of programmes and provides a valuable opportunity to share good practice with their academic peers from other further education colleges and with the awarding body. It is reported to be of particular value to staff who are new to higher education.

28 Following the initial visit, the team concluded that the College should review and clarify internal quality management procedures and reporting arrangements at institutional level, to assure itself that the responsibilities for the management and delivery of the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of its awarding bodies are discharged fully, and can be appropriately audited. This College has now addressed these issues.

The team concludes that it has confidence in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreements, for the management and delivery of the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of its awarding bodies.

Core theme 2: Quality of learning opportunities

How are responsibilities for managing the quality of learning opportunities for higher education programmes delegated within the management structure, and what reporting arrangements are in place?

29 Responsibility for management of the quality of learning opportunities is lodged with the programme area managers and programme teams. There are regular meetings between programme area managers and heads of faculty to consider curriculum and resource issues. Faculty heads are also involved in the strategic leadership of the College with the Principal, Deputy Principal, Quality and Executive Support Manager, and other key staff to ensure appropriate consideration of teaching and learning matters. The Deputy Principal oversees the process effectively.

30 The recently redesignated Higher Education Coordinator works across all programmes to focus on developmental issues, and the enhancement of learning and teaching in general. The Coordinator advises programme staff on their action plans in order to ensure consistency across the provision, and is working on systems to improve the implementation of individual learning plans on all programmes. Following the recommendations of the Developmental engagement report, the Higher Education Coordinator also assumed the role of coordinator for the higher education forum to generate discussion on issues of common interest among programme teams. The forum includes all staff involved in the delivery of higher education and generates useful debate on quality issues. The Higher Education Coordinator also collates higher education information into a series of updates that inform programme teams of recent developments across the sector. The redefinition of the Coordinator role and formal establishment of the forum enhances the profile of higher education within the College.

How does the College assure itself that it is fulfilling its obligations to its awarding bodies to ensure that students receive appropriate learning opportunities?

31 Programme teams work with link tutors from the awarding body to ensure the provision operates in accordance with collaborative agreements. Link tutors are appointed at either module or programme level and, in some cases, at both levels. Curriculum staff and awarding bodies confirm that the process is effective and facilitates a rapid response to student and staff concerns. In general, students supported this view. However, they reported some instances where the return of students' assignments did not meet the College policy of return within 10 working days, or the somewhat longer time allowed by university partners.

32 The College recognises the need to provide appropriate support for work-based learning. This issue was raised in the Developmental engagement report and has been effectively addressed by the College. It offers some full-time students employment on a part-time basis within the College while they undertake work-based assignments. For example, staff and students on the FD Physical Activity and Health reported on developments in the College's Active Zone, which is open to the public, that provide effective work-based learning opportunities and avoid the difficulties of securing external placements.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

33 Foundation Degree provision is relatively new and is growing rapidly. To support such developments, higher education partners have provided staff development on aspects of the Academic Infrastructure. The need for further engagement with the Academic Infrastructure was highlighted during the Developmental engagement and is being

effectively addressed. For example, staff demonstrate appropriate awareness of benchmarks and external reference points in the delivery of their programmes. Support from the University of Cumbria has been especially helpful.

How does the College assure itself that the quality of teaching and learning is being maintained and enhanced?

34 Programme teams are responsible for the completion of annual monitoring and evaluation documentation. They also distribute student questionnaires at the end of each module, and at fixed points during the academic year, in order to collect feedback on teaching and learning. Programme review reports demonstrate appropriate reflection on the provision in general, and student feedback in particular. Review documents include action plans that are monitored at programme level and by awarding bodies. The introduction of higher education summative reviews strengthens the process of annual monitoring.

35 There is a lesson observation process with grade descriptors based on an Ofsted model. In the past two years all staff were graded as either good or outstanding. External examiners comment favourably on the quality of learning opportunities. They report that a number of candidates achieve high grades and there is clear evidence of progression to higher-level skills.

36 The students' written submission confirms general satisfaction with programme content and the willingness of tutors to listen to, and act on, any concerns that are raised. In particular, students appreciate the support from tutors in the transition period between further education studies and higher education programmes. The submission reported that some electrical engineering assignments had to be increased in difficulty to meet the requirements of the awarding body.

37 The self-evaluation states that the College has well developed mechanisms for obtaining student feedback, and students reported they received good feedback from their tutors, and were able to express their opinions about the provision through discussions in class. However, the team noted student attendance at meetings that consider the monitoring and evaluation of programmes was inconsistent across the provision. Similarly, there was no formal mechanism to report back to the students about College actions taken in response to matters raised by them. Feedback systems were informal and inconsistent, and needed to be addressed. Following the initial visit, the College has introduced a comprehensive system, with appropriate feedback mechanisms, for the active involvement of students in all aspects of the review process.

How does the College assure itself that students are supported effectively?

38 Students are enthusiastic about their overall learning experience at the College and the contribution made by academic and pastoral support staff. They comment favourably on the guidance and support provided by the College in general, and by programme teams in particular. For example, students reported that the caring approach adopted by their tutors aids their progression from further education programmes within the College.

39 A personal tutorial system entitles students on some programmes to a minimum of three tutorials each year in order to review their progress. The tutorial system is embedded into many programmes through formal tutorials, online mechanisms and through supportive informal systems. However, in some areas the formal tutorial system was not always implemented. Programme teams opted for a more informal approach to discuss student progress, and believed that their students preferred this model. However, the reliance on

informal systems resulted in inconsistencies with accessibility to staff and in the availability of information on student progression. The self-evaluation recognised the differences between programme areas and the need for greater consistency to ensure an equivalent experience for all students, but the issue was still to be addressed. The team recommends that the College implements measures to embed the tutorial system into all programmes to ensure consistency across the provision. For the academic year 2009-10 the College has introduced a formal tutorial system across all programmes and, for some part-time students, tutorials are located in the work place. The team concluded that the issues have now been addressed appropriately and evaluation of the revised tutorial system should continue.

40 Second-year students on education and care programmes act as mentors to first-year students. Both groups attest that this enhances their learning experience and the team noted that this good practice could be disseminated more widely across the provision.

What are the College's arrangements for staff development to maintain and enhance the quality of learning opportunities?

41 The Staff Development Plan 2008-09 identifies the establishment of nine new teaching and learning mentor posts across all curriculum areas. Mentors offer support to staff who have not taught higher education programmes in the past through peer observation and guidance on methods of delivery. Staff with experience of this commented favourably on the support they received and commended the process. There is a specific College commitment to assist staff to enhance their academic qualifications by reading for higher degrees. This supports the growth of graduate education. In addition, scholarly activity and industrial updating are strongly encouraged.

42 Staff development procedures are generally effective and the team noted course review documentation that referred to professional updating activities for programme teams in computing and nuclear decommissioning, and postgraduate study support for the course team on the FD Integrated Education and Care of Children and Young People. There is clear evidence of regular staff development events that focus on higher education, such as a training day on the use of student progress files. The involvement of full-time staff in developmental activities is commendable. The involvement of part-time staff is yet to reach the challenging participation target set by the College.

How does the College ensure the sufficiency and accessibility of the learning resources the students need to achieve the intended learning outcomes for their programmes?

43 The Developmental engagement team reported on the need to encourage students to engage with the full range of learning resources, including student handbooks and the College's virtual learning environment. The team noted that the virtual learning environment now provides an effective platform for many programmes with extensive use of discussion boards in childcare, education and information and communications technology. Staff in these areas are enthusiastic about development of the platform, and students confirmed the value of the virtual learning environment in enhancing their learning experience.

44 In some areas the virtual learning environment is less popular and less developed. For example, the course report on the FD Nuclear Decommissioning noted the need for further staff training, and some programme staff in engineering were less willing to engage with the new technology. As the College mission seeks to offer flexible and innovative approaches to the delivery of higher education and to develop world-class nuclear and related engineering provision, there is a need to encourage further engagement with the virtual learning environment on all such programmes.

45   Students registered with the University of Central Lancashire have access to the University's virtual learning environment and commented favourably on the value of this resource. However, students registered with the University of Cumbria and the University of Lancaster have no equivalent facility due to site licence restrictions. As the College plans significant growth in such provision this is likely to become more important. Discussions have taken place with the University of Cumbria and the matter is being addressed.

46   Students have a designated higher education study area based within the Learning Resources Centre. This offers additional open access computers, a small tutorial room and quiet study space. Students appreciate the facility and confirm that it enhances their learning experience. The study space is currently being expanded with space for the careers advice service. Students are consulted on the utilisation of the facility and on the learning resources to be located there.

47   Overall, the quality of learning opportunities available at programme level supports the students' learning experience and enables them to achieve the intended learning outcomes, but there is further scope for the sharing of good practice and enhancement of the provision at institutional level.

The team concludes that it has confidence in the College's management of its responsibilities for the quality of the learning opportunities, as required by the awarding bodies, to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Core theme 3: Public information

What information is the College responsible for publishing about its HEFCE-funded higher education?

48   The College is responsible for published information relating to Edexcel provision. In the case of University of Lancaster programmes the University devolves responsibility to the College through its partnership arrangements. Programmes that carry awards from both the University of Central Lancashire and the University of Cumbria are subject to a shared responsibility. In these cases, information comes directly from the relevant university, or it is produced by the College and scrutinised by the awarding body.

49   Information for potential students includes fact sheets that are printed on demand from the College website, an annual higher education prospectus, and a part-time prospectus that includes higher education provision. These are also available electronically.

50   Information for registered students includes a College handbook and student diary, which are available in hard copy; programme handbooks and assignment briefs. The Students' Charter, Employers' Charter, Parents' Charter and various policy and procedures documents, are provided electronically.

What arrangements does the College have in place to assure the accuracy and completeness of information the College has responsibility for publishing? How does the College know these arrangements are effective?

51   Where responsibility for published information is shared between the College and the awarding body, the collaborative arrangements ensure that the information is complete and accurate through checking procedures at the universities. Programme handbooks and professional profile documentation is detailed and comprehensive. In general, these are produced by the awarding body and are supplemented by College information. Students

confirm the value of the documentation in general, and the University of Central Lancashire handbooks in particular.

52   Where the College is responsible for the completeness and accuracy of published information, this task is delegated to programme area managers and their programme teams. In general, the programme team produces the documentation which is then approved by the programme area manager.

53   The students' written submission noted that pre course information was good in some areas, but not in others. During the initial visit, the team noted that the prospectus included information about the learning experience, but had no information about assessment. Some fact sheets contained assessment information, but this was not always consistent across the provision. Some documents mentioned the validating body, while others did not. The College has acted on the team's recommendations and there is now a clear procedure for the production of course fact sheets which identify responsibilities and timescales. Following a prompt from the Marketing and Public Relations Manager, the Programme Area Manager updates and approves the accuracy of information. Marketing staff check the completeness of information against a standard list of contents approved by the College. However, a number of anomalies remain and are currently being addressed.

54   The College adopted a suggested list of items as appropriate for inclusion in programme handbooks as a guide for programme teams. Following the initial visit, this guidance was strengthened through the clear identification of mandatory and optional elements. Compliance is checked through audit with feedback to the handbook author. However, a number of anomalies remain. For example, the Developmental engagement report noted that the HNC handbook in engineering failed to meet Edexcel requirements. The team found that subsequent actions proved ineffective and noted that the current handbook still does not meet all the College requirements. The College is advised to review the implementation of its procedures to ensure the accuracy and completeness of information, and to inform all students of their entitlements and responsibilities.

55   Students confirmed that the information prior to registration is generally sufficient, but that information for new provision is not always available. Information in handbooks, such as assessment documentation, is generally clear and user-friendly, and there is evidence of good practice on education programmes with comprehensive handbooks and clear fact sheets.

56   Those who access the information via the virtual learning environment confirm the effectiveness of this approach, but some areas have limited engagement with electronic sources. There is also a College virtual management environment facility, with an online student tracking and tutorial system. The system is still under development, and a student portal, which will offer greater guidance and support to students, is expected in the near future. This is expected to be particularly valuable for those following part-time routes. The centralised system provides ready access to valuable information on student progression that is readily available to staff. Staff who engage with the system attest to its value. The introduction of the student portal will make it more available for public information. This is a valuable enhancement of the provision and an example of good practice worthy of wide dissemination across the provision.

The team considers that reliance can be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

C Summary of findings from the Developmental engagement in assessment

57 The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in June 2008 and was structured around the following lines of enquiry which were agreed with the College:

- the relationship between intended learning outcomes, assessment design and assessment activities

- the effectiveness of assessment in indicating improvement opportunities for students and in meeting the required academic standards

- the extent to which students and staff receive comprehensive and timely information about the processes and outcomes of assessment.

58 In the course of the Developmental engagement, the team identified good practice that was worthy of wider dissemination in a number of areas. These included annual monitoring reports for the University of Central Lancashire; policies and procedures that reflected the Academic Infrastructure; assessment tools that offered valuable developmental opportunities, and reflected professional practice; comprehensive written feedback; peer review on teacher education programmes; formative developmental activities that prepare students for assessments; student reflection and the identification of personal development needs; a close relationship with employers; programme handbooks that provided relevant, accurate and user-friendly information; and assessment documentation that provided appropriate guidance and was clearly communicated to students.

59 The Developmental engagement team advised the College to establish a higher education forum for the wider dissemination of good practice and greater involvement with the Academic Infrastructure; ensure consistency across the provision in tutorial support for part-time students and in the use of informal feedback on work in progress; and ensure appropriate support for students undertaking work-based learning assignments who are not in employment. The team reported that it would be desirable for the College to ensure that assignments carried clear and comprehensive guidance on the arrangements for submission and return; encourage students to engage with the full range of learning resources including handbooks and the virtual learning environment; ensure consistency across the provision of the information on fact sheets and in the College prospectus; and to strengthen procedures that prepare students for independent learning.

D Foundation Degrees

60 In the academic year 2008-09 the College offered five Foundation Degrees validated by the University of Central Lancashire and one validated by the University of Cumbria. It plans to develop its future Foundation Degree provision with the University of Cumbria and has begun to replace some of its existing awards. The FD in Applied Chemistry; FD in Computing; FD in Health and Social Care; and FD in Salon Management have been validated and are expected to start in September 2009. A new FD in Business Management is on the validation schedule, and will have individual pathways designated as FD Project Management; FD Lean Management; FD Leadership; FD Environmental Management; and FD Not for Profit Sector Management. The validation schedule also includes the FD Hospitality and Tourism, and FD Teaching and Learning.

61 In 2008-09 there were 97 full and part-time students registered on FD programmes at the University of Central Lancashire, and four full-time students registered at the University of Cumbria. The provision has developed around specific subject areas to address local and regional needs and, in the case of the FD in Nuclear Decommissioning, to address the needs of a specific employer. The College has a clear strategy to enhance employer engagement.

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

62 The team has identified a number of features of good practice in the College's management of its responsibilities for academic standards, and for the quality of learning opportunities of the awards the College offers on behalf of its awarding bodies. This was based upon discussion with staff and students and scrutiny of evidence provided by the College and its awarding bodies, Edexcel, the University of Central Lancashire, the University of Cumbria and the University of Lancaster.

63 In the course of the review, the team identified the following areas of **good practice**:

- the review and evaluation procedures at programme level that assure the quality of the provision (paragraph 10)

- the effective working relationship between course teams and link tutors that ensures the maintenance of academic standards (paragraphs 13, 14, 21)

- the arrangements to support work-based learning activities for full-time students (paragraph 32)

- the student mentoring arrangements that enhance the provision for both first and second-year students (paragraph 40)

- the expansion of the designated study area for higher education students (paragraph 46)

- the comprehensive handbooks and clear fact sheets on education programmes (paragraph 55)

- the centralised system for tracking individual students on the virtual management environment (paragraph 56).

64 The team also makes some recommendations for consideration by the College and its awarding bodies.

The team agreed an area where the College is **advised** to take action:

- to review the implementation of procedures to ensure the accuracy and completeness of public information, and inform all students of their entitlements and responsibilities (paragraph 54).

The team also agreed the following areas where it would be **desirable** for the College to take action:

- to embed the revised internal quality management procedures and reporting arrangements at institutional level, to ensure its responsibilities for the management and delivery of standards are discharged fully, and can be audited (paragraph 11)

- to monitor the development of the higher education forum that will inform the management of academic standards and promote good practice across the provision (paragraph 18)

- to evaluate the new procedures for the conduct of assessment boards and the role of external examiners to ensure alignment with the *Code of practice* and avoid possible conflicts of interest (paragraphs 22, 23)

- to monitor the implementation of feedback systems to ensure students are informed of the actions taken by the College in response to issues they have raised (paragraph 37)

- to evaluate the implementation of the revised tutorial system to ensure consistency across the provision (paragraph 39)

- to ensure an appropriate virtual learning environment is available to all students and encourage all staff to engage fully with the new technology (paragraphs 44, 45).

65   Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation and other documentary evidence, and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes it has **confidence** that, in the context of this Summative review, the College discharges its responsibilities effectively, as set out in the relevant partnership agreement, for the management of the standards of the awards of its awarding bodies.

66   Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation and other documentary evidence, and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes it has **confidence** that, in the context of this Summative review, the College discharges its responsibilities effectively, as set out in the relevant partnership agreement, for the management of the quality of learning opportunities to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

67   Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation and other documentary evidence, and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that, in the context of this Summative review, reliance **can** be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Lakes College West Cumbria action plan relating to the Summative review, May 2009 and September 2009

Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
In the course of the Summative review the team identified the following areas of **good practice** that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
• the review and evaluation procedures at programme level that assure the quality of the provision (paragraph 10)	Monitor revised Quality cycle for HE to include:					
	• Quality Review meetings	3 times a year, Nov, Feb, May	Course Teams and Quality Officer	Quality Officer reports all reviews completed and to the required standard.	Strategic Team via relevant minutes and by Deputy Principal	Quality Reviews.
	• Curriculum Review					
	• QIC	QIC every month	Deputy Principal	Minutes of QIC		Minutes of QIC.
	• Summative review	September	Deputy Principal	Accepted by HEI		Minutes of Summative Review meetings for all HE courses.
	• Annual reports for HEIs					

Lakes College West Cumbria action plan relating to the Summative review, May 2009 and September 2009

Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
the effective working relationship between course teams and link tutors that ensures the maintenance of academic standards (paragraphs 13; 14; 21)	● Attend all Partnership meetings with HEIs	On-going	Higher Education Leader.	Attendance at all partnership meetings.	Higher Education Manager.	Formal minutes of all Partnership meetings.
	● Ensure course Leaders establish effective contacts with named Programme Leader at HEI	By Nov 2009 for all existing courses. On-going for new validations.	Course Leaders.	Contact listed in Quality Reviews and Course File.	Higher Education Leader.	Course Quality Review minutes.r
	● All HE staff to engage in training related to Academic Infrastructure. Two HE staff training days each academic year	Dec 2009 July 2010	All HE staff.	All HE staff have attended the training.	Higher Education Leader.	Staff training records and CPD records via IFL.
	● Individual targets set at performance reviews.	On-going	Programme Area Managers Personnel	All staff (including staff new to delivering HE	Higher Education Leader	Performance Reviews.

Lakes College West Cumbria action plan relating to the Summative review, May 2009 and September 2009

Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
• the arrangements to support work-based learning activities for full-time students (paragraph 32)	• Specific Handbooks to be available for all students engaging in work-based learning.	October 2009	Course Leaders	have or are working towards level 6 qualifications and update on a regular basis. Handbooks available and with students.	Quality Improvement Committee	Audit records as reported at QIC. QIC minutes.
	• Employers to be provided with details relating to work-based activities.	October 2009	Course Leaders.	Details with employer and recorded as being received.	Quality Improvement Committee	QIC minutes. Course Quality Reviews.
	• Employers events to be arranged in all areas delivering work-base activities.	January 2010	Course Leaders.	Employer event(s) occurred.	Quality Improvement Committee	QIC Minutes. Minutes and records of Employer events. Marketing records.

Lakes College West Cumbria action plan relating to the Summative review, May 2009 and September 2009

Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
	● Sharing of good practice at HE Forum - Engineering and CHS,	On-going - 3 times a year. Nov 2009 Feb 2010 July 2010	Higher Education Leader	Minutes of forum highlighting sharing of good practice.	Quality Improvement Committee	HE Forum minutes.
● the student mentoring arrangements that enhance the provision for both first and second-year students (paragraph 40)	● Recruitment of four Associate graduates to work with level 3 and identified HE learners.	Oct 2009	Higher Education Leader	Associates in place and working.	Quality Improvement Committee	HE Forum minutes. Course Quality Reviews.
	● Identified T&L Mentor to support HE students.	Dec 2009	Teaching and Learning Mentor	Mentor identified.	Quality Improvement Committee	T&L meeting minutes. QIC Minutes.
	● Sharing of good practice at HE Forum.	On-going - 3 times a year. Nov 2009 Feb 2010 July 2010	Higher Education Leader	Minutes of forum highlighting sharing of good practice.	Quality Improvement Committee	HE Forum minutes. Course Quality Reviews.

Lakes College West Cumbria action plan relating to the Summative review, May 2009 and September 2009

Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
● the expansion of the designated study area for higher education students (paragraph 46)	● HE students to be consulted re furnishing and layout of new HE study area.	October 2009	Higher Education Leader	Evidence of student consultation.	Higher Education Manager	Student feedback has been received. Room layout has been altered to meet some student requests. Students have had feedback on their requests. (HE Forum minutes)
	● Consider using Energus study facility for UoC students.	November 2009	Higher Education Leader	UoC students able to access Energus study centre.	Higher Education Manager	HE Forum minutes
	● Pursue an additional area to be used as HE common room for HE students.	March 2010	Higher Education Leader	Common room established, or reasons for not having a common room outlined to staff and students.	Higher Education Manager	HE Forum minutes

Lakes College West Cumbria action plan relating to the Summative review, May 2009 and September 2009

Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
• the comprehensive handbooks and clear fact sheets on education programmes (paragraph 55)	• Share good practice via HE Forum.	On-going - 3 times a year. Nov 2009 Feb 2010 July 2010	Higher Education Leader	Minutes of forum highlighting sharing of good practice.	Higher Education Manager	HE Forum minutes. Course Quality Reviews.
	• All Handbooks to be available on VLE.	October 2009	Quality Improvement Officer	Audit of HE indicates all handbooks on VLE.	Quality Improvement Committee	Audit records as reported at QIC. QIC minutes.
	• All Fact Sheets to be updated for 2010 intake and to indicate partner HEI.	January 2010	Quality Improvement Officer	Audit of HE indicates Factsheets upto date.	Quality Improvement Committee	Audit records as reported at QIC. QIC minutes. Marketing records.
• the centralised system for tracking individual students on the virtual management environment (paragraph 56).	• All courses to have student information on VITAL.	Nov 2009	Teaching Team	Audit of HE/VITAL indicates that VITAL is being used.	Quality Improvement Committee	Audit records as reported at QIC. QIC minutes.
	• HE tutors to track student progress using VITAL.	From Nov 2009	Teaching Team	Audit of HE/VITAL shows that student progress is tracked.	Quality Improvement Committee	Audit records as reported at QIC. QIC minutes.

Lakes College West Cumbria action plan relating to the Summative review, May 2009 and September 2009

Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team agreed an area where the College should be **advised** to take action:						
• to review the implementation of procedures to ensure the accuracy and completeness of public information, and to inform all students of their entitlements and responsibilities (paragraph 54).	• All Fact sheets for 2010 start to be checked for accuracy.	January 2010	Quality Improvement Officer	Audit of HE indicates Factsheets upto date.	Quality Improvement Committee	Audit records as reported at QIC. QIC minutes. Marketing records.
	• All students to have access to Programme handbook as well as course handbook.	October 2009	Quality Improvement Officer	Audit of HE indicates all handbooks on VLE.	Quality Improvement Committee	Audit records as reported at QIC. QIC minutes. Course Quality Review minutes.
	• All students to have access to module details relating to their course of study.	October 2009	Quality Improvement Officer	Audit of HE indicates all handbooks on VLE.	Quality Improvement Committee	Audit records as reported at QIC. QIC minutes. Course Quality Review minutes.

Lakes College West Cumbria action plan relating to the Summative review, May 2009 and September 2009						
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
	• All HE students to have an initial interview outlining the expectations of HE study and financial information.	On-going from Jan 2010 - in line with college policy.	Admission Officer	All students applying have an individual appointment with a relevant tutor.	Quality Improvement Committee	Interview Records from Student Services. QIC Minutes.
	• All students to attend general cross college induction session to receive information relating to independent study.	Feb 2010 June 2010 Sept 2010	Higher Education Leader	All accepted students have attended induction session (Sept 09).	Quality Improvement Committee	Induction check list records stored on VITAL.

Lakes College West Cumbria action plan relating to the Summative review, May 2009 and September 2009

Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team agreed the following areas where it would be **desired** to take action:						
● to embed the revised internal quality management procedures and reporting arrangements at institutional level, to ensure its responsibilities for the management and delivery of standards are discharged fully, and can be audited (paragraph 11)	Monitor revised Quality cycle for HE to include ● Quality Review meetings ● QIC ● Curriculum Review ● Summative review Annual reports for HEIs	Nov Feb June Sept	Quality Improvement Officer	Minutes of meetings. Audit reports.	Quality Improvement Committee.	Minutes from: ● Course Quality Reviews. ● QIC ● Curriculum Review. ● Summative Review meetings.
● to monitor the development of the higher education forum that will inform the management of academic standards and	● HE Forums planned into the college calendar.	Nov 2009 Feb 2010 July 2010	Higher Education Leader	Minutes of the forum indicate good practice is being shared.	Quality Improvement Committee.	Collage Calendar

Lakes College West Cumbria action plan relating to the Summative review, May 2009 and September 2009

Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
promote good practice across the provision (paragraph 18)	• Minutes of the HE Forum to be reviewed at QIC.			QIC minutes		QIC Minutes
	• Actions from HE Forum to be shared at Curriculum managers			Curriculum Managers minutes.		Curriculum Managers Minutes
	• Themes to be introduced at each HE Forum (to cover terms of reference)			List of themes covered.		HE Forum Agenda & Minutes
	• Business support teams to be invited to HE Forum meetings to foster 'whole college approach'.			Raising the profile of HE throughout college		HE Forum Minutes and attendance lists.

Lakes College West Cumbria action plan relating to the Summative review, May 2009 and September 2009

Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
• to evaluate the new procedures for the conduct of assessment boards and the role of external examiners to ensure alignment with the *Code of practice* and avoid possible conflicts of interest (paragraphs 22; 23)	• All teams to comply with protocol for assessment boards. • External representation to be present at each assessment board.	Feb 2010 July 2010	Course Leaders	Minutes of Board meetings indicate protocol is met. External/HOF attends relevant board.	Quality Improvement Committee	Minutes of assessment boards. QIC Minutes. Minutes of assessment boards. QIC Minutes.
• to monitor the implementation of feedback systems to ensure students are informed of the actions taken by the College in response to issues they have raised (paragraph 37)	• Implement system for feeding back to students any issues raised at each quality review. • HE develop separate HE representation across college and set up meetings	Audit January Dec 2009	Personal Tutors Student Services Leader	Learner voice protocol is met. Posters indicating feedback to students produced. HE Learner voice committee established.	Quality Improvement Committee Quality Improvement Committee	HE student forum minutes. Course Quality Review minutes HE student forum minutes. Course Quality Review minutes

Lakes College West Cumbria action plan relating to the Summative review, May 2009 and September 2009

Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
• to evaluate the implementation of the revised tutorial system to ensure consistency across the provision (paragraph 39)	• All HE students to receive minimum tutorial entitlement 3 x each year	From Oct 2009	Course Leaders	Tutorial is timetabled. Personal Academic Tutor allocated to each programme.	Quality Improvement Committee	Tutorial Records. Audit of Tutorial files.
	• At risk students to be identified and ILPs to be in place to support Learners.	Audit January 2010	Personal Academic Tutors	Retention rates at or above college benchmark across all HE programmes		Tutorial Records. Audit of Tutorial files.
• to ensure an appropriate virtual learning environment is available to all students and to encourage all staff to engage fully with the new technology (paragraphs 44; 45).	• All courses to have minimum requirement materials on VLE. • All staff to actively promote the use of VLE and all HE	Audit January	Course Leaders	Material is available via the VLE.	Quality Improvement Committee	Audit of VLE. QIC Minutes. Course Quality Review minutes. Audit of VLE and usage logs. Course Quality Review minutes.

Lakes College West Cumbria action plan relating to the Summative review, May 2009 and September 2009					
Desirable	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
	students to use VLE to access resources and course related materials.					