QAA

Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

March 2010

Myerscough College

SR69/2009

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 Myerscough College carried out in March 2010

Brief contextual note

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 andcompleteness 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 management and dissemination of external examiners' reports and of the College's responses to them ensures that they are subject to wide and close consideration

- students' entrepreneurial awareness is well developed through employer engagement in curriculum development, review and assessment, and through student involvement in the College's commercial activities

- the involvement of many staff in research informs their teaching and imparts a research awareness to students

- the Learning Development Unit provides valuable assistance to staff in the development of online materials and e-tutoring skills

- the College's high-quality specialist commercial resources provide excellent support to the vocational curriculum.

Recommendations

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

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

- ensure that all staff provide individual feedback to students following assessment in good time for it to inform subsequent performance

- ensure that it continues to implement effective systems and data for the monitoring and improvement of retention

- align published information in the various media used by the College to ensure consistency

- ensure that information published for potential students provides them with clear guidance on the nature and demands of the programmes.

The team considers that it would be **desirable** for the College to:

- implement a more systematic process for monitoring and embedding the implementation of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic standards and quality in higher education*, published by QAA, across the College to ensure full alignment of any developments in its provision

- address the lack of an overview at senior level of scholarly activity among staff who are not research active.

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 Myerscough College (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 the University of Central Lancashire and the University of Salford. The review was carried out by Professor Ann Holmes, Ms Patricia Millner and Mr Glenn Barr (reviewers), and Mr Peter Clarke (Coordinator).

2   The Summative review team (the team) conducted the review in agreement with the College and in accordance with *The handbook for Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review*, 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* (FHEQ) and programme specifications.

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

4   The College specialises in the provision of further and higher education programmes for the land-based and sport industries. The College was established in 1894 and became Lancashire County Council's centre for agricultural training and education. It moved to its main campus, north of Preston, in 1969. The College's long-standing relationship with the University of Central Lancashire has led to significant growth in the provision of honours and Foundation Degrees in a range of specialisms relating to land-based industries and sport.

5   Seven of the College's nine Learning Areas have higher education programmes within their provision. There are some 670 full-time and 570 part-time students on higher education programmes; approximately 890 full-time equivalents. This represents 30 per cent of the College's total full-time equivalent funded students. Approximately 40 staff teach on higher education programmes.

6   The following shows the programmes offered by the College on behalf of its awarding bodies, with the full-time equivalent student numbers in brackets:

University of Central Lancashire

- Master of Science (MSc)/Postgraduate Diploma (PgDip) Arboriculture and Urban Forestry, full-time (5)

- MSc/PgDip Arboriculture and Urban Forestry, part-time (5)

- BSc (Hons) Agriculture, full-time (17)

- BSc (Hons) Clinical Veterinary Nursing (Top-up) (Blended Learning) (1)

- BSc (Hons) Veterinary Nursing, full-time (20)

- BSc (Hons) Farriery (Top-up), part-time (4)

- BSc (Hons) Animal Behaviour and Welfare, full-time (41)

- BSc (Hons) Equine Science and Management (Behaviour and Welfare), full-time (10)

- BSc (Hons) Equine Science and Management (Physiology), full-time (33)

- BA (Hons) Golf Management (Top-up), full-time (20)

- BA (Hons) Golf Coaching and Performance (Top-up), full-time (0)

- BSc (Hons) Arboriculture (final-year direct entry) (online) (11)

- BSc (Hons) Arboriculture, full-time (24)

- BSc (Hons) Horticulture (Top-up), full-time (0)

- BA (Hons) Garden Design (Top-up), full-time (no longer recruiting) (0)

- BA (Hons) Landscape Management, full-time (no longer recruiting) (3)

- BA (Hons) Landscape Management (online), part-time (no longer recruiting) (2)

- BA (Hons) Commercial Floral Design (Top-up), full-time (4)

- BA (Hons) Commercial Floral Design (Top-up), part-time (0)

- BSc (Hons) Motorsport Management and Logistics (Top-up), full-time (9)

- BSc (Hons) Machinery Management and Logistics (Top-up), full-time (4)

- BSc (Hons) Turfgrass Science (3)

- BSc (Hons) Turfgrass Science (final-year direct entry) (online) (3)

- BSc (Hons) Rural Resource Management (Top-up), full-time (0)

- BSc (Hons) Rural Resource Management (Top-up), part-time (0)

- BSc (Hons) Sportsturf and Golf Course Management (Top-up), full-time (3)

Foundation Degrees

- Foundation Degree (FdSc) Agriculture, full-time (13)

- FdSc Ecology and Conservation Management, full-time (9)

- FdSc Ecology and Conservation Management, part-time (13)

- FdSc Veterinary Nursing, full-time (27)

- FdSc Farriery (online), part-time (13)

- FdSc Welfare of Animals (Animal Collections), full-time (42)

- FdSc Welfare of Animals (Management), full-time (5)

- FdSc Welfare of Animals (Nursing), full-time (9)

- FdSc Canine Studies (Blended Learning) (9)

- FdA Equine Management, full-time (23)

- FdSc Equine Science, full-time (15)

- FdA Football Coaching, full-time (32)

- FdA Golf Coaching, full-time (15)

- FdA Golf Management, full-time (35)

- FdSc Golf Performance, full-time (10)

- FdA Health and Personal Training, full-time (15)

- FdA Sports Coaching, full-time (14)

- FdSc Sport and Exercise Science, full-time (20)

- FdSc Arboriculture, full-time (32)

- FdSc Arboriculture (online), part-time (54)

- FdSc Horticulture, full-time (21)

- FdA Garden Design, full-time (no longer recruiting) (3)

- FdA Commercial Floral Design, full-time (18)

- FdSc Motorsport Management and Logistics, full-time (49)

- FdSc Machinery Management and Logistics, full-time (7)

- FdSc Sportsturf (online), part-time (51)

- FdSc Sportsturf, full-time (21)

- FdSc Sportsturf and Golf Course Management, full-time (4)

- FdA Cricket Coaching (0)

- FdA Rugby Coaching (0)

Foundation Certificates

- Agriculture and Countryside (Blended Learning), part-time (0)

- Animal Studies, part-time (2)

- Equine Studies, part-time (0)

- Sports (Football) (Golf), part-time (0)

- Plant Studies (Blended Learning), part-time (5)

- Creative Design (Blended Learning), part-time (3)

Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE)

- DipHE Clinical Veterinary Nursing (Blended Learning), part-time (32)

Other

- Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), part-time (9)

- Certificate in Education, part-time (24)

- Continuing Professional Development in Education, part-time (0)

- Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector, part-time (0)

- Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector, part-time (3)

University of Salford

- FdSc Waste Management (7) (no longer recruiting and being run out).

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

7   The College has a partnership agreement with the University of Central Lancashire (the University). This takes the form of a five-year development plan. A new agreement is due to take effect from 2010 and was in the process of being negotiated at the time of the visit.

8   The College offers a wide range of higher education programmes awarded by the University. For most of these, the College has considerable autonomy in aspects of programme design, delivery and assessment. This is not the case for teacher education and some of the sports provision, where the College is a member of a consortium of colleges. The University takes overall responsibility for the standards and quality of the awards and works closely with College staff in this regard. This is also the case for the agreement with the University of Salford.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

9   The range of programmes offered is under constant review. Several programmes have been introduced in the past two years. The FdSc in Waste Management validated by the University of Salford is being phased out and was not offered for the 2009-10 academic year. College staff are currently working with the University of Central Lancashire to develop a replacement programme.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

10 Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the Summative review team. Such a submission was provided. It was drafted from views expressed at a meeting between course representatives and staff. It was submitted to the representatives and the Student President for checking before being submitted to the team. It made a valuable contribution to the team's agendas for meetings during the review. The team also met with students from a range of programmes during the visit. These meetings also made a valuable contribution to the focus of the review.

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?

11 Overall responsibility for quality and standards rests with the validating University. The College has an effective quality strategy, which is managed by the Deputy Principal for Quality and Development and reviewed and monitored annually by the Quality Strategy Group. The College also has a Quality Development Unit, which has operational responsibility for quality issues and takes the lead on quality development. Within the College, there are clear lines of responsibility for higher education. The College's Academic Board oversees the management of academic standards, although ultimate responsibility rests with the Quality and Standards Committee, a subcommittee of the Corporation. The Deputy Principal of Curriculum and the Director of Higher Education share day-to-day responsibility for the oversight and management of the quality and academic standards of the higher education programmes. The College follows the University's published protocols for the quality assurance of collaborative provision.

12 There are appropriate and effective arrangements at programme level. Learning managers have responsibility for quality assurance and improvement for all higher and further education programmes within their learning area. They line manage course tutors and module tutors, who are responsible for assuring standards at programme level. These tutors report through course team meetings, higher education tutor meetings and course committee meetings. The College's effective process for annual monitoring and improvement is well embedded across programmes and learning areas. Quality improvement plans are effectively and continuously reviewed to ensure that appropriate action has been taken. Internal audits are carried out annually by the Quality Development Unit to ensure compliance with the College's policies.

13 The College has its own policy for the internal verification of assessments. It recognises that, following the Developmental engagement in assessment. its procedures for verification and moderation of assessment could be improved to ensure greater consistency and is taking action to enable this.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

14 In most respects, the College takes due account of the Academic Infrastructure. The quality development handbook outlines the external quality requirements including reference to the FHEQ, benchmark statements, programme specifications and the *Code of practice*, published by QAA. The College uses University templates for programme specifications and module descriptors, which are included in course handbooks and module handbooks respectively. The College relies on the University to undertake mapping to QAA's *Code of practice*. Where College practice differs from that of the University, the College adds evidence of additional practice, for example student assessment. However, the team noted that the College does not monitor its own alignment with the Academic Infrastructure, including the *Code of practice,* except when required to do so for validation or review purposes. The team considered that it would be desirable for the College to have

a more systematic process for monitoring and embedding the implementation of the *Code of practice* across the College, to ensure that any developments in its provision are aligned fully with the *Code*.

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?

15 Each programme produces a detailed annual monitoring report using the University's template. The course report is forwarded to the Partnership Development Office at the University and disseminated to the University's relevant Head of Department. The action plan is reviewed within the College at the monthly course team meetings. In subsequent years, the University monitors progress on the implementation of identified actions when plans are updated. Within the College, the learning managers are responsible for ongoing monitoring of the action plans arising from annual course reviews.

16 External examiners are usually nominated by the College but are selected and approved by the University. External examiners complete the University's annual report form, which is submitted to the University for dissemination to course tutors via the College's Director of Higher Education. The report itself requires the external examiner to comment on academic standards, the learning experience, the assessment process and good practice.

17 External examiners' reports are considered by the course committee, at which student representatives are present, and inform the course annual monitoring report. The external examiner reports are also placed on the public server. The course tutor produces an action plan in response to any external examiner recommendations. This is sent to the relevant officer within the University, who responds directly to the external examiner. The course handbooks seen by the team contained actions taken in response to external examiners' reports. Missing external examiner reports are followed up by the University. The team found there to be widespread dissemination and consideration among staff and students of external examiners' reports and of the corresponding actions taken, and identified this as good practice.

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

18 The College has a continuing professional development policy. Individual staff needs are agreed with learning managers as part of staff review. The College also supports staff undertaking postgraduate qualifications. Higher education staff at the College have access to continuing professional development events delivered by the University's Learning Development Unit. Each curriculum area has its own development days twice each year as well as having a Learning and Teaching Champion.

19 The currency of programmes is aided by the College's strong commitment to research, with external research links to a number of institutions. The annual research report is published on the College website. The College also values and encourages research-informed teaching as part of curriculum development.

20 The College is committed to stakeholder engagement, both formal and informal. Technical advisory boards have been established in each discipline area to inform curriculum developments and ensure that programmes have currency. External members with relevant expertise sit on the advisory boards, which meet at least once each year. Employers are also involved in course approval events. In addition, there is a significant

level of external support in the delivery of the curriculum. For example, an equine breeding module is delivered, in part, at a commercial stud farm. The College carries out stakeholder perception surveys to inform strategic planning. Employer representatives who met with the team commented on the high level of engagement with the course teams and their satisfaction with both the students and the quality of the curriculum. Employers also support College staff who undertake training days with employers, for example in animal husbandry. There is clear evidence of a high level of engagement with employers, and that this informs the curriculum, contributes significantly to staff development and has a positive impact on the student experience. The team concludes that this represents good practice.

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?

21   The arrangements outlined in paragraphs 11 to 13 above are also relevant in supporting the College's management of the quality of learning opportunities. The University has ultimate responsibility for the quality of learning opportunities for higher education programmes at the College and the delegated responsibilities for quality assurance are clearly laid out by the University in the Collaborative Provision Quality Assurance Grid and Memorandum of Agreement. Within the College responsibility for managing the quality of learning opportunities lies with the Deputy Principal of Curriculum and the Director of Higher Education.

22   Course teams are directly responsible for delivering and managing the quality of their programmes on a day-to-day basis. Course committee meetings are held each semester, with membership including the Course Leader, module teaching staff and student representatives. Training is available for the latter role through a focused meeting or online programme. Meetings with students indicated that course committee meetings are effective in enabling students to raise concerns and, on some occasions, influence changes to programmes. However, on other occasions, students felt that, although staff were sympathetic to their ideas, they were not empowered to make changes.

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

23   The arrangements outlined in paragraphs 15 to 17 regarding the mechanisms by which the College assures itself about its obligations to its awarding bodies in respect of the standards of higher education apply also to the quality of learning opportunities. The delegated responsibilities of the College for quality assurance of learning opportunities are clearly laid out by the University in the Collaborative Provision Quality Assurance Grid.

24   A Periodic Review of Partnership Provision at Myerscough College was carried out in April 2008 by the University. The quality of liaison between the College and the University was highlighted as a positive feature. This was reiterated to the team by the University lead link who commented on the long-standing relationship between the institutions and the University's satisfaction with the College's compliance with its processes and procedures.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

25 The procedures used by the College to assure the quality of learning opportunities for students on higher education courses are determined by the University's Academic Regulations and quality assurance procedures, which are aligned with the Academic Infrastructure. Staff are made aware of the Academic Infrastructure through the teaching staff handbook and the quality development handbook which are also available on the staff intranet. An appropriate induction about academic standards, QAA guidelines and a mentoring system ensures that staff new to teaching higher education courses at the College are aware of the demands of the programmes and national quality procedures.

26 The College ensures that staff are kept abreast of quality requirements in several ways. Since the Developmental engagement, a number of higher education tutors' continuing professional development days and half days have addressed the Academic Infrastructure, particularly in the area of assessment. Regular monthly higher education tutors meetings are well attended and address the Academic Infrastructure in addition to discussing the University's quality processes.

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

27 Staff are expected to be qualified at or above the level at which they are teaching and, although it is not mandatory for these staff to have a teaching qualification, the majority are supported to undertake the PGCE, delivered at the College, or the University's teaching qualification. The College is committed to developing and maintaining appropriately highly qualified staff to deliver its higher education programmes and supports a number of staff each year to undertake technical updating and a range of higher qualifications such as master's degrees and doctorates.

28 Students benefit from the well-qualified staff, who undertake original research activities that underpin the curriculum delivery. Current and former students spoke enthusiastically about the opportunities afforded to them through the research interests of the staff, such as attendance at conferences, sharing research experience and support for their own project assignments. The students' learning is further enhanced by academic conferences at the College such as the annual Myerscough Research Conference and the biennial Equine Scientific Symposium, to which all higher education students and level 3 further education students are invited. This aspect is an area of strength of the College.

29 The professional qualifications and vocational experience of staff have a positive effect on the students' learning experience. Former students described a number of enhancement activities such as workplace visits, placements and guest speakers, all made possible through staff connections. The College's commercial ventures also provide unique added opportunities for students to become aware of, and develop, employability and entrepreneurial skills.

30 Class observation is a key process in the evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning. Processes are clearly laid out in the lesson observation handbook and explained also in the teaching staff handbook. They are based on the current inspection framework for further education and classes are graded according to published criteria on a four point scale. During 2008-09, 85 per cent of the observations of higher education sessions were graded outstanding or good. The standardisation of observation decisions with external partners provides the College with confidence in the judgements made by its trained observers. There is a reciprocal arrangement with another land-based college whereby joint

observations of sessions at each college are undertaken and the decisions on grades agreed. Where observations have been graded satisfactory or needing improvement, the tutor is supported by the College's Teacher Support Service and a newly appointed Learning and Teaching Coordinator. This service is open to all tutors, as is the Learning Development Unit, which provides staff with support to develop online and blended learning materials. These support services, along with learning and teaching champions in each curriculum area, provide a valuable package of opportunities for teachers to extend their skills and expertise to benefit students' learning.

31 Surveys show that students are very satisfied with the teaching they have received and their learning opportunities. In the College's Higher Education Completers Survey April 2009, 91 per cent indicated that overall the teaching on their course was good, while the National Student Survey 2008-09 shows that 89 per cent of students thought that staff were good at explaining things and 83 per cent that the course was intellectually stimulating.

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

32 Concerns raised by students in focus groups, as part of quality development reviews in 2008-09 about the lack of awareness of the Student Support Service, resulted in the relocation of the provision to a more central and accessible location on the campus. There is a comprehensive range of support and welfare services provided by specialist staff from the learning support team including counselling, health care, childcare, careers guidance and disabilities and learning support. These are made known to students in a range of publications, on the student intranet, at induction and during tutorials. Additional learning needs can be identified on application, at interview, at induction or on-course, and students are able to self-refer or be referred by teaching staff. Student support arrangements are monitored through student surveys. The College's Higher Education Completers Survey indicated that almost 90 per cent of students considered that they had received sufficient advice and support with their studies.

33 There is a clear and well-documented tutoring system. Higher education students have a group tutorial each week with their course leader during which study skills are addressed along with information, advice and guidance on progression and careers. A Tutors' Tool Kit, with schemes of work and other relevant teaching materials, is available on the staff intranet. In addition, each student has a personal tutor who conducts formal individual meetings at least three times each year. The personal tutorial focuses on academic progress, performance target setting and pastoral support. There is good support for personal tutors in terms of a handbook and training for the role. However, students reported varying experiences, with some not valuing the event and others describing meetings being carried out in open plan offices, which they found unacceptable. The electronic individual learning plans that have been rolled out across the whole College this year have also had variable uptake. The College is aware of this and is currently carrying out an audit of their use. Students were appreciative of the accessibility of staff and the open-door policy they operate. Distance-learning students are supported by e-tutors who engage in online training for the role, which carries with it a formal award. E-tutors are further supported by the Learning Development Unit, peer mentoring and an e-tutoring team to share good practice.

34 At student meetings, it was also reported that individual assessment feedback was sometimes delayed beyond the date when the subsequent piece of work was due to be submitted, so that students did not have the information to allow them to improve their

grades. Although this had been flagged in the Developmental engagement, the Higher Education Completers Survey and in some annual monitoring reports, the lateness of individual feedback continues to be an issue with students. Although generic feedback is generally given within 15 days, the team considers it advisable that the College takes action to address the delays in providing individual feedback.

35 Through its monitoring of data the College recognises that there is a retention issue on some programmes and has introduced a requirement for the monitoring of 'at risk' students, defined as those with poor attendance and/or poor performance. A weekly report on these students is made to the Learning Manager. The team recognises that the College has started to take a proactive approach to retention by reporting on 'at risk' students. The team recommends that the College continues this approach to ensure that it has effective systems and data for the continued monitoring and improvement of retention.

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

36 Staff training needs are identified through the annual staff review and development interviews. These take account of feedback from class observations and the strategic objectives of the College, which are to enhance learning and research-informed teaching, and develop a long-term record in research and scholarly activity. The College runs in-house events, including some relating directly to higher education such as on the Academic Infrastructure and teaching, learning and assessment. In addition, learning areas run their own staff development days twice each year and tutors have access to the University's Learning Development Unit continuing professional development (CPD) programme. As well as development in pedagogic matters, staff are encouraged and supported to engage academically in their own subject disciplines through a variety of means, such as attendance at conferences, vocational and technical updating and membership of professional bodies.

37 The College's CPD Coordinator collates staff development activity funded by the College. Staff are expected to update their own CPD logs. Records made available to the team indicate that there are 15 research-active staff and several undertaking higher degrees. However, systematic and clear records of all the scholarly activities undertaken are not readily available and so the College cannot be assured that individual staff who teach on higher education courses are taking up opportunities for updating subject knowledge and scholarship. The team considers it desirable that the College puts in place systems for making available to senior staff records of all such scholarly activity, to inform professional development planning.

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?

38 The University considers the availability and appropriateness of general learning resources and specialist equipment and the suitability of teaching staff as part of the validation process. College teams report to the University through annual review to identify any developments requiring additional resources and to identify any new staff teaching on the programmes.

39 The College has a well-managed library, which has systems to allow it to hear student views and be responsive to their needs. For example, adjustments have been made to the library opening hours as a response to student requests. Students value the service provided by the library, which is open seven days each week, provides them with help

with referencing and is able to obtain a wide variety of books and articles to support their studies. Students have user rights for the University library and online resources. This is valued by some college-based students, although the distance to the University is a barrier for others.

40 The virtual learning environment effectively supports distance and blended learning programmes through a range of videos and interactive activities and assessments produced with the help of the Learning Development Unit. This is a specialist team of technical staff who support academic staff in the production of high-quality online materials. This team is a valuable resource and a feature of good practice. The resources for online learning also enhance the experience of the students attending the College. The use of the virtual learning environment for college-based courses is inconsistent across and within programmes, but is particularly well developed for Equine Studies, Animal Behaviour and Welfare, Sports and Teacher Education.

41 General teaching facilities are of a good standard with a dedicated higher education building, which has wireless access, computer rooms, quiet study rooms and general classrooms, providing an appropriate higher education environment in support of student learning. The higher education centre is being extended to improve facilities, including the provision of private tutorial rooms. Although the College's National Student Survey results show relatively low satisfaction for access to specialist resources, current students confirm that they have access to sufficient resources to meet the intended learning outcomes of their programmes.

42 Commercial activities benefit students and help the College to fund a range of high-quality specialist resources to support learning opportunities. Notable examples are the international equine arena, a sports centre and golf course, an animal academy, and the motor sports vehicles and workshops. Access to specialist software is inconsistent, with problems accessing computer-aided design for Motor Sports and a simulation package for Sports Coaching. Students find difficulty accessing many websites useful for their studies because of blocking software designed to protect further education students.

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?

43 The College produces a significant range of materials relating to the marketing of the higher education portfolio in general, and materials specific to each programme. Materials include a higher education prospectus, course factsheets and booklets providing information for applicants on financial support. The prospectus provides outline information for both full and part-time students on all of the higher education programmes available. Details of part-time programmes are also included in the part-time and short course handbook alongside further education, leisure and skills training programmes.

44 Programme handbooks are produced to standard templates to ensure consistency and completeness. These are reviewed annually to ensure currency and include brief comments from external examiners' reports. Programme and module handbooks are available to students in printed and electronic form and are consistent and accurate. Guidance on

assessment regulations is provided at induction, in handbooks and online. Students find the induction helpful and informative and know where to access further information should they require it. Leaflets available in the College library provide useful supplementary guidance on referencing and avoiding plagiarism.

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 that these arrangements are effective?

45 The College's marketing team verifies publicity materials, which are then approved by the Learning Manager and the senior management team. The approval process is formally recorded. The University also checks the marketing materials for accuracy before they are published. The distribution of course publicity materials for open events and other information-giving events is controlled by the marketing team so as to ensure that only authorised versions are in circulation.

46 Course factsheets provide details for prospective students on the modules to be studied, entry requirements, assessments, placements and progression. While most information is clear and accurate, the team identified some inconsistencies and errors across the documentation. For example, the wrong awarding body is cited in the prospectus for the top-up BSc (Hons) Rural Resource Management, and the number of hours of industry experience offered on the FdSc Motorsport is incorrect in the factsheet. The team considers it advisable that action is taken to align published information in the various media used.

47 The prospectus is designed to attract students to the College courses. It describes many overseas travel and placement opportunities as well as a broad range of prominent placement employers, events and enrichment activities. Outline details of the programmes are described in the prospectus with further details available in the factsheets. Students on some programmes were unclear at the start of their studies about the level of academic challenge and commitment required. Such information is provided, but it is often not prominent. The team considers it advisable that the College ensures that information published for potential students provides them with clear and prominent guidance on the nature and demands of the programmes.

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

48 The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in November 2008. The lines of enquiry were:

- the extent to which assessment of distance/blended learning courses provides appropriate flexibility to meet the needs of these learners, while maintaining standards and quality

- the extent to which mechanisms for assuring the consistency and standards of assessment are effective and, where appropriate, enhanced by the College research strategy

- the extent to which assessments for Foundation Degrees are vocationally relevant and prepare students appropriately for employment.

49 The review team identified several areas of good practice. Online provision was supported by high-quality learning materials and was commendably flexible, enabling students to contextualise assignments to match their circumstances. Students had high levels of involvement in, and exposure to, research-enhanced assessment. Technical advisory boards and the College's commercial activities provided valuable contributions to ensuring the vocational relevance of assessment, while the assessment of the Work Skills Development module was mapped to national professional requirements.

50 The team also made several recommendations. They considered it advisable for the College to ensure that internal verification policies are applied consistently and are recorded fully. They also considered it advisable that all staff provide timely developmental and constructive feedback to students in line with best practice. The team felt it desirable that staff consider the deadlines for submission of work by online students so that they reflect each student's circumstances; that documentation differentiate between honours and Foundation Degrees with regard to the assessment of employability skills; and that staff ensure consistency in the development of assessment criteria and their use in feedback to students.

D Foundation Degrees

51 The College offers over 30 Foundation Degrees, all but one of them awarded by the University of Central Lancashire. The exception is the FdSc Waste Management awarded by the University of Salford. This is no longer recruiting and is being run out. The College currently has a replacement programme going through validation processes with the University of Central Lancashire.

52 The College's Foundation Degrees are offered in a wide range of subjects supporting the land-based and sport industries. The main subject areas are agriculture; arboriculture; horticulture; machinery management; ecology and conservation; veterinary nursing; animal welfare; equine studies; golf; sportsturf; and motorsport. The programmes are well supported by employers within the sectors and by specialist resources at the College. While most of the good practice and recommendations in the conclusions below apply to Foundation Degree programmes, the following are particularly pertinent.

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

- the high level of employer engagement in curriculum development, review and assessment, and the role of the College's commercial activities in raising students' entrepreneurial awareness (paragraphs 20, 29)

- the involvement of many staff in research informs their teaching and imparts a research awareness to students (paragraph 28)

- the College's high-quality specialist commercial resources which provide excellent support to the vocational curriculum (paragraph 42).

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

The team agreed two areas where the College is **advised** to take action:

- ensure that all staff provide individual feedback to students following assessment in good time for it to inform subsequent performance (paragraph 34)

- ensure that information published for potential students provides them with clear guidance on the nature and demands of the programmes (paragraph 47).

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

- address the lack of an overview at senior level of scholarly activity among staff who are not research active (paragraph 37).

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

56 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Myerscough 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, the University of Central Lancashire and the University of Salford.

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

- the effective manner in which the College manages and disseminates external examiners' reports and the College's responses to them (paragraph 17)

- the high level of employer engagement in curriculum development, review and assessment, and the role of the College's commercial activities in raising students' entrepreneurial awareness (paragraphs 20, 29)

- the involvement of many staff in research informs their teaching and imparts a research awareness to students (paragraph 28)

- the valuable role of the Learning Development Unit in assisting staff in the development of online materials and e-tutoring skills (paragraphs 30, 33, 40)

- the College's high-quality specialist commercial resources provide excellent support to the vocational curriculum (paragraph 42).

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

The team agreed a number of areas where the College is **advised** to take action:

- ensure that all staff provide individual feedback to students following assessment in good time for it to inform subsequent performance (paragraph 34)

- ensure that it continues to implement effective systems and data for the monitoring and improvement of retention (paragraph 35)

- align published information in the various media used by the College to ensure consistency (paragraph 46)

- ensure that information published for potential students provides them with clear guidance on the nature and demands of the programmes (paragraph 47).

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

- implement a more systematic process for monitoring and embedding the implementation of the *Code of practice*, published by QAA, across the College to ensure full alignment of any developments in its provision (paragraph 14)

- address the lack of an overview at senior level of scholarly activity among staff who are not research active (paragraph 37).

60 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.

61 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.

62 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.

Myerscough College action plan relating to the Summative review: March 2010

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 effective manner in which the College manages and disseminates external examiners' reports and the College's responses to them (paragraph 17)	Disseminate external examiner reports to students, staff and College management to promote effective action planning	Dec 2010	Director of HE Course Teams	Clear action plan produced and implemented for each external examiner report	Awarding HEI	Annual Monitoring process
• the high level of employer engagement in curriculum development, review and assessment, and the role of the College's commercial activities in raising students' entrepreneurial awareness (paragraphs 20, 29)	Promote the development of student employability and enterprise skills through case studies in published information	Oct 2010	Course Teams Marketing Team	One case study for each curriculum area	Director of HE	Annual review of published information

Myerscough College action plan relating to the Summative review: March 2010

Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
• the involvement of many staff in research which then informs their teaching and imparts a research awareness to students (paragraph 28)	Increase research publications by tutors to further enhance research informed teaching	Dec 2010	Deputy Principal for Higher Education	College Strategic Plan target met for research publications by tutors	Academic Board	Annual Research Report
• the valuable role of the Learning Development Unit in assisting staff in the development of online materials and e-tutoring skills (paragraphs 30, 33, 40)	Expand the use of the VLE by tutors to promote wider use of on-line materials and e-tutoring	Sept 2011	Learning Development Unit	Increased use of VLE at module level	Deputy Principal Quality Enhancement / Director of HE	Module evaluation questionnaires
• the College's high quality specialist commercial resources which provide excellent support to the vocational curriculum (paragraph 42)	Promote the access to the College specialist commercial resources in published information to students	Oct 2010	Marketing Team	Commercial resources promoted for each curriculum area	Senior Management Team	Annual review of published information

Myerscough College action plan relating to the Summative review: March 2010

Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team agreed a number of areas where the College should be **advised** to take action:						
• all staff should provide individual feedback to students following assessment in good time for it to inform subsequent performance (paragraph 34)	Strengthen guidance to tutors on provision of timely feedback.	Sept 2010	Director of HE	Improved student survey results in questions relating to this area	Academic Board	Audit of assessed work
	Monitor timely feedback through course team meetings, course committee meetings and audits of assessed work.	July 2011	Course Teams			Student feedback
• the College should ensure that it continues to implement effective systems and data for the monitoring and improvement. of retention (paragraph 35)	Monitor student attendance, module attendance and module performance	June 2011	Director of HE	College strategic Plan targets met for student retention	Academic Board	Retention data retrieved each semester
	Systematically monitor at risk students through course team meetings and audits or personal tutorials	June 2011	Course Teams		Quality and Standards Committee	
	Review poorly performing courses	Jan 2011	Senior Management Team			

Myerscough College action plan relating to the Summative review: March 2010					
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
• published information in the various media used by the college should be aligned to ensure consistency (paragraph 46)	Review the processes by which the accuracy and consistency of published information is checked to develop an improved document control procedure	Dec 2010	Marketing team Director of Corporate Services	Improved document control procedure in use	Director of HE	Annual review of published information
• the College should ensure that information published for potential students provides them with clear guidance on the nature and demands of the programmes (paragraph 47)	Include a review of published information by the course team as a standard agenda item in the annual course review process	July 2011	Course Teams	Improved student survey results in questions relating to this area	Director of HE	Annual Course Reports Student feedback

Myerscough College action plan relating to the Summative review: March 2010

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:						
• a more systematic process for monitoring and embedding the implementation of the Code of practice, published by QAA should be implemented across the College to ensure full alignment of any developments in its provision (paragraph 14)	Undertake a mapping process to embed the QAA Code of Practice within College policies and procedures	Dec 2010	Director of HE	QAA Code of Practice mapped within College policies and procedures	Deputy Principal Quality Enhancement	HE Annual Institutional Report
• the College should address the lack of an overview at senior level of scholarly activity amongst staff who are not research active (paragraph 37)	Review the process by which scholarly activity amongst staff is recorded and enhance the use made of resulting data in the further development of staff.	June 2011	Deputy Principal for Higher Education	Annual scholarly activity report produced	Senior Management Team	Review of scholarly activity and research via the staff review process