Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

Bexley College

January 2011

SR 024/2010

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 Bexley College carried out in January 2011

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 agreement, for the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of its awarding body. The team also considers that there can be **confidence** in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreement, 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 timely intervention in support of students with identified learning needs
- the development of teaching and learning approaches which enhance students' employability and help them to develop as reflective practitioners
- the provision on the College intranet of a staff HE Handbook in a form which is easily maintained and readily accessible.

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:

- continue to develop the HE Forum to ensure it fully meets the requirements of the partnership arrangements and develop it and other mechanisms to ensure that issues and best practice are identified and considered across the range of higher education programmes
- continue to work with the University to utilise student feedback in the development of academic standards and to inform the Annual Monitoring Report
- continue to develop a strategic approach to support higher education focused staff development and encourage reflection on staff development needs
- work with the University to ensure that future students are clear about their intended programme of study, its location and the awarding body.

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

- work with the University to improve the identification of and response to issues arising from external examiner reports and to coordinate the identification of issues across the portfolio of higher education programmes
- develop a formal protocol for checking the accuracy and completeness of public information
- proceed with the revision of the Higher Education Strategy to ensure it meets the needs of the College and aids the monitoring of performance.

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 Bexley 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 Greenwich.
The review was carried out by Ms Maxina Butler-Holmes, Mr John Hawthorn, Professor Danny Morton (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* (the handbook), published by QAA. Evidence in support of the Summative review included documentation supplied by the College and awarding bodies, meetings with staff and students and representatives of the awarding body, telephone contact with employers, 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 (FD) awards, section D of this report summarises details of the FD programmes delivered at the College.

4   Bexley College is the only further education college situated in the London Borough of Bexley. The College was founded as a Technical Institute in 1907, and has been delivering higher education for over 70 years. The College is situated on two sites in the north of the Borough, with all of the higher education provision being delivered on the Tower Road site. Higher education is delivered within the Department of Higher and Professional Education, one of four departments in the College. Within a 10-mile radius there are four other colleges which have higher education provision.

5   The College has 4,000 students in total, with over 250 on higher education programmes. Of these, 22 part-time students on the Professional/Post Graduate Certificate of Education are directly funded by HEFCE and some 160 full-time and 70 part-time students are funded through the University. The University of Greenwich (the University) is the awarding body for all programmes, including the Higher National awards. Consistent terminology is used throughout the provision; the term 'course' refers to individual units or modules of study, while the term 'programme' is used for the totality of a student's study. This terminology is used throughout this report.

6   The College offers the following higher education programmes, with full-time equivalent student numbers shown in parentheses:

University of Greenwich

- FdSc Computing (full-time) (19)
- HND Business (full-time) (43)
- HND Tourism (full-time) (22)

- FdA Health & Social Care (Care) (full-time and part-time) (12)
- FdA Health & Social Care (Early Years) (full-time and part-time) (5)
- HND Building Studies (full-time) (51)
- HNC Building Studies (part-time) (38)
- FdA Salon Management (part-time)* (3.2)
- Professional/Post Graduate Certificate in Education (part-time) (11).

*The FdA Salon Management is no longer recruiting and at the time of the visit there were four students completing courses.

Partnership agreements with the awarding body

7   The College works with the University within a network of 11 partner colleges. The partnership agreement with the University sets out the obligations and responsibilities of each partner. It is renegotiated with the whole network of partner colleges on a five-yearly cycle and a meeting between the College and University takes place each year, during which a bilateral partnership statement is agreed. Responsibility for programmes rests with different schools within the University. These schools have different arrangements for the management of programmes; as a result, the relationship between the College and University is complex. Some programmes, for example the FdSc Computing, are franchised and College staff have very limited autonomy. Other programmes, for example the FdA Health & Social Care, have been developed by partner colleges, including Bexley College, and validated by the University. In these cases College staff have more input into the content, delivery and assessment of the programmes.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

8   A new Principal and Vice Principal have recently taken up their posts at the College. This has initiated a review of the College's higher education strategy, which was considered no longer appropriate given changes in the higher education environment. The College is commencing a process to develop a new strategy.

9   The FdA Salon Management has recruited low numbers of students and is no longer offered. The College had plans to develop a replacement programme, but this is on hold. A suite of Foundation Degrees in construction has been developed, but has not yet been offered, as employers are reported to prefer to stay with the Higher National programmes.

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, and one was produced for the commencement of the visit. Programme representatives had provided answers to set questions to reflect the opinion of students across the range of programmes. These had been summated by the Head of Department and then agreed by the representatives. The team also met with a representative group of students during the visit. The written submission and meeting helped to develop the agenda for the visit.

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   There are clear lines of responsibility. The Principal attends twice-yearly strategic planning meetings, which are chaired by the Vice Chancellor of the University. The Vice Principal (Curriculum and Quality) has senior management responsibility for higher education programmes, which are based in the Department of Higher and Professional Education. The Head of Department reports to the Vice Principal and attends the three Partnership Development Group meetings which are held each year. Programme leaders are responsible for the operational aspects of programme delivery and work closely with staff in the relevant schools of the University.

12   The programmes are integrated into the University's systems for the maintenance of academic standards, with varying degrees of responsibility devolved to College staff. This ranges from the FdSc Computing, which is a franchised programme with little devolved responsibility, to the Higher National programmes in building, where the College has considerable autonomy over areas such as assessment, teaching programmes and learning materials. Programme leaders attend the progression and awards boards, which are held at the University. This enables staff to maintain links and engage in some curricular and assessment-focused discussions. Each programme has a University link tutor, several of whom visit the College on a regular basis.

13   The College has acted upon the finding of the Developmental engagement team that the annual reporting process entailed duplication, as staff were required to complete different reports for the University and the College. In the current academic year the Programme Annual Monitoring Report, as required by the University, is the only document being completed. This is received by the relevant University school for consideration and informs the College Annual Institutional Review required under the partnership agreement. The draft review for 2009-10 seen by reviewers is rather descriptive in nature, with loosely defined actions and a lack of an evidence-based approach. The HE Forum, which considered the report, noted that the draft required updating; however, at the time of the review, there was no evidence of the actions having been updated or monitored.
The College needs to adopt a more rigorous approach towards the Annual Institutional Review. It should see this as an opportunity to critically reflect, identify and share good practice and construct coherent and integrated developmental actions across the higher education portfolio.

14   The College adopts a proactive approach to fulfilling its management responsibilities. In response to the Developmental engagement recommendation the College has introduced a new higher education quality cycle, reflecting the key stages in the academic year. This is accompanied by monthly reports by the Head of Department to the Senior Leadership Team, monthly business planning meetings and feedback from the HE Forum. The monthly reporting line to the Senior Leadership Team resulted from the College's decision to designate many programmes as under special measures, usually because of retention rates falling below a threshold level. The Head and Deputy Head of Department become directly involved with programme leaders and students to monitor causes for concern in these cases. Retention rates at the time of the review were showing an increase on the previous year, although it is not clear whether this is the direct result of

these additional interventions. Other performance indicators for the designated programmes, including external examiner comments, student perception and levels of achievement, are positive.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

15   The University produces documentation covering the approval of programmes, including the development of work-based learning, Foundation Degrees and their assessment and quality assurance. These ensure appropriate referencing to the FHEQ, *Code of practice*, and, where appropriate, subject benchmark statements. The Foundation Degree in computing was granted franchise re-approval during 2010, and this process enabled the Programme Leader to engage in a critical review of the programme in a paired relationship with a more experienced colleague. The College played a significant part in the development of a suite of Foundation Degrees in construction, taking a lead on the development of programme specifications. This presented the opportunity for staff to gain valuable experience of working with the component parts of the Academic Infrastructure.

16   Most staff are able to attend meetings and events organised by the University of Greenwich and have an understanding of aspects of the Academic Infrastructure in relation to their programmes. There remains, however, limited evidence of wider opportunities to share understanding of the Academic Infrastructure with colleagues, for example in the Wednesday afternoon time identified for staff development. Some sessions have brought staff together, for example in relation to marking at levels 4 and 5. The College should consider the most appropriate forum for the enhancement of shared understanding of the role and practical significance of the Academic Infrastructure.

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?

17   The new Senior Leadership Team has overseen the development of a Quality Improvement Strategy for higher education, and this is based on the key findings and recommendations of the Developmental engagement. The College Self Assessment Report states that the central values of the new team involve being self-critical and challenging marginal and unsatisfactory performance, with a pledge to review quality systems and make them less bureaucratic. The Quality Improvement Strategy for higher education also identifies as priorities the development of the student voice and the empowerment of the HE Forum, whose membership includes representation from the Senior Leadership Team, reflecting the Developmental engagement recommendations.

18   In response to a recommendation in the Developmental engagement the College has reviewed the quality assurance cycle. The documentation provided by the College and meetings held during the review demonstrated that progress has been made on many of the recommendations. The joint HE Forum, however, is yet to fulfil its full potential. The Forum is a requirement of the partnership agreement. Its primary purpose is to monitor the operational effectiveness of the programmes operating under the partnership agreement with the University. New terms of reference were agreed in December 2010 for the HE Forum, which now includes a member of the Senior Management Team. A subcommittee has been agreed, referred to as the College Practitioners' Group, which is intended to provide an internal focus for the development and sharing of good practice across the higher education community. There is currently no work plan for this group for the academic year. There is still a need for the College to develop the HE Forum further and ensure it and its subcommittee establish a clearer sense of purpose. Meetings with staff indicated that many of them are not convinced of the value of the Forum. More needs to be done to ensure that all staff are committed to the HE Forum as a vehicle for peer-based cross-discipline

consideration of higher education issues and the sharing of good practice. One of the strategic objectives of the new Senior Leadership Team is to empower the HE Forum.

19   Examination of programme files demonstrated some progress in relation to the Developmental engagement recommendation for clear and auditable action trails. For example, in health and social care, an analysis of the impact of actions taken is being undertaken. Many of the action plans seen in programme files, however, would benefit from clearer identification of indicators of success or shorter timescales.

20   External examiners are appointed by the University. They carry out the sampling of student work across the partnership and produce an annual report in line with the *Code of practice, Section 4: External examining*. The College has expressed some concern that external examiners do not routinely comment in their reports on specific College assessment and student performance. Nonetheless, there have been some specific comments relating to the provision at Bexley College. For example, the external examiner for the Higher National awards in building studies had visited the College and been impressed by the research undertaken and the professionalism shown by students in their presentations. Overall, external examiners' reports indicate that the College is applying appropriate academic standards. The College adopts a passive approach to external examiner comments. For example, a recommendation of one external examiner, which encourages all partners to observe aspects of good practice at another partner college, has yet to be acted on. The University pro forma for responses to external examiners contains a section for partner colleges to respond; however, the College has not done so. The team considers it desirable that the College work with the University to identify more clearly issues arising from external examiner reports and coordinate responses across the provision.

21   An advisable recommendation from the Developmental engagement was for the College to develop a more strategic approach towards the use of student feedback questionnaires. Course evaluation, using the University pro forma, usually takes place at the end of each course. These evaluations tend to stay with programme leaders and may inform annual reports, but there is no mechanism by which all evaluations are analysed across the higher education portfolio. The need to increase the response rate in the National Student Survey has been discussed by staff, but there is no evidence of a focused plan to achieve this. Students met by the review team felt little appetite to engage in the survey and did not appreciate the potential usefulness of such data. The Principal has identified the student voice as a strategic priority and students are provided with evidence of actions taken to address issues raised. However, these issues are often of a general nature, with little attention paid to obtaining feedback on the academic experience. The College is advised to continue to work with the University to utilise student feedback in the development of academic standards and to inform the annual monitoring reporting cycle.

22   The programme teams carry out marking, second marking and moderation activities in line with the University's assessment policy. The external examiner reports confirm effective arrangements. In some cases second marking takes place across the partner colleges, for example in business. Staff attend moderation events held at the University.

23   The Head of Department has recently initiated an audit of feedback provided to students, with the aim of sharing practice and to report to business planning meetings. This audit led to some helpful suggestions, but at the time of the review it remained unclear how these would translate into an action plan to promote the enhancement of assessment feedback. Furthermore, action plans from annual monitoring reports, the findings from external examiners' reports and student course evaluations are not summated into an overall development plan for higher education. There is a need for the development of mechanisms to ensure that issues and best practice are identified and considered across the range of higher education programmes.

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

24	The College encourages staff to attend various assessment meetings held at the University and to become collaboratively involved in curricular review. Invitations to attend staff development events are extended by the University. Much of this practice is located at the programme level, with few opportunities to share experiences across curricular areas. The College has begun to appreciate the value of arranging staff development opportunities with other partner colleges and there is evidence of an emerging collaborative staff development agenda, for example through respective HE coordinators. There have been some sessions focused on assessment practices held during the Wednesday afternoon times when most staff are not teaching; this should be further developed. The College is encouraged to continue to devise a strategic approach to support higher education staff development.

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

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?

25	There are clear lines of responsibility for managing the quality of learning opportunities, which mirror those for academic standards outlined in paragraphs 11 and 12. The Vice Principal (Curriculum and Quality) has responsibility for the overall quality of the provision in the College. He works with the Head of Department to oversee delivery of the programmes and leads on the implementation of quality systems. The Head and Deputy Head of Department are responsible for monitoring the quality assurance systems, negotiating over curriculum development, professional development of teams and the management of the programmes. This is formally monitored through the monthly reports, regular meetings with the Vice Principal and a monthly business planning meeting.

26	The role of programme leaders is clearly set out in the University's Partner College Guide. They are responsible for notifying the University of changes in the teaching team, producing a copy of the student handbook, and notifying the University of the dates of programme meetings. The programme leaders also have responsibility for managing the production of the Annual Monitoring Report and ensuring action is taken on issues raised in the report. These roles and responsibilities are well understood within the College.

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

27	The College has appropriate arrangements in place to ensure it fulfils its obligations at programme level. These mirror those for academic standards set out above. The day-to-day operation of the programmes is the responsibility of the programme leaders. They liaise effectively with the relevant University schools through link tutors and oversee the day-to-day programme delivery and management. The monthly reports from the Head of Department to the Vice Principal help to keep senior management aware of concerns and actions taken in relation to higher education provision.

28   The views of students are ascertained through the use of a proprietary survey. These are analysed and responses are published to the students. Reports confirm that responses have been made to issues arising through the implementation of action plans. The students are surveyed at the end of all the courses. Analyses of student survey responses have tended to be dealt with at course and programme level, with limited attempts to take an overview across all higher education provision.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

29   Staff generally have an appropriate understanding of the Academic Infrastructure, as a result of close working with the University. In line with the *Code of practice, Section 3: Disabled students*, all new students are assessed for special needs at enrolment. In the event of an identified need the College informs the University, which has ultimate responsibility for assessing needs and providing funding. However, the College recognises that this process takes time and can lead to delays. To overcome this, the College provides appropriate assistance before the University has confirmed the student's need and arranged for the provision of additional resources. This timely intervention to support students represents good practice.

30   Work-based learning is well integrated into programmes. Students involved in work-based learning are visited by College staff, who carefully record their findings. The College also provides a handbook for mentors. This meets the requirements of the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning.*

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

31   The College has put learning and teaching enhancement at the top of its priorities for 2010-11 and is developing its capacity to improve the quality of the learning experience. It is adapting further education-based processes for classroom observation and assessment of learning to make them more appropriate to higher education. The aim is to develop teaching and learning methods not only to facilitate the achievement of the award but also to facilitate transition into University education.

32   The College enhances the learning experience by including additional opportunities for students' individual development. The induction programme and full-time programmes contain additional courses for the skills and professional development of students. External examiner reports and discussions with students indicate that students develop high levels of employability skills through activities including work-related learning, the integration of theory and practice and a programme of workplace visits. Teaching and learning approaches help to develop students as reflective practitioners through the integration of theory and practice. They provide students with transferable skills in addition to those needed to complete the programmes. For example, students on Higher National programmes in building studies develop presentation skills and have the opportunity to display them to employers built into their assessments. Students on the FdA Health & Social Care find that theory sessions are clearly related to their experience in the workplace, and this enhances their ability to reflect on their practices. Visits, both in the UK and overseas, for whole groups or programmes enhance the theoretical teaching and add to the personal development of the students. This approach to teaching and learning represents good practice.

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

33   Student surveys are used to gauge student views on the effectiveness of support. Recruitment and enrolment are generally deemed to work well, with timely assessment of

any additional learning needs. The College and University recognise that a small number of students had been unaware that they would be studying at a college rather than the University. A survey of students' views on the induction process has just been carried out and a system is in place to analyse and respond to the concerns raised, as well as providing information on the areas for improvement and actions taken. Actions have also been taken, as part of special measures, to address progression issues through, for example, closer monitoring and following up of poor attendance.

34   The University's support materials are supplemented by programme teams to enhance the learning experience and provide additional opportunities to consolidate learning through formative assessment prior to the submission of work for summative assessment. The College provides a good level of support for students. It is able to take students with relatively low initial qualifications and, through the learning opportunities provided, enable them to achieve at Foundation Degree level and to progress to honours degree study.

35   Students receive a library induction in the first few weeks of starting their course. This includes an introduction to e-books, Athens (the resource access management system), online journals and the University of Greenwich portal. Later in the year there is another session to explain the resources again when students will have better identified their needs. Regular sessions are provided on a drop-in basis to allow students with problems in language or numeracy to obtain help.

36   All full-time students have a one-to-one interview to track their progress. Student tracking sheets are reviewed by the course team. This practice has been credited with ensuring the progression of 20 students from the first to the second year of the HND Building Studies programmes. Students from health and social care stated that weekly tutorials provide helpful feedback on progress to date and areas for improvement.

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

37   Many staff are undertaking scholarly research in their vocational area, but this has not yet been formally included in the appraisal system. Curricula vitae demonstrate that academic staff have an appropriate range of academic qualifications and professional memberships, indicating a pool of current knowledge and expertise.

38   The development plans for individual members of staff take into account the needs of the relevant programmes, the future needs of the department, and the specific needs of the individual. Wednesday afternoons are kept free for development, particularly when a need has been identified that involves a number of staff. The University of Greenwich offers reduced charges to College staff for higher degree programmes and free access to development sessions run for University staff. As indicated in paragraph 24, staff development has not been strategically managed to ensure that the particular needs of higher education across the College are being met.

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?

39   The College has appropriate mechanisms for obtaining student views on resources. These had previously identified problems with the availability of books in the College library. This has been addressed, with up to six copies of core texts in many cases. The learning resource centre provides appropriate access to computers, professional journals, and books, with increased availability of e-books. There is a good provision of quiet study areas within the library. Relevant materials are held for all programmes and the learning resource centre

works with individual course tutors to meet the needs of each course. Students also have full access to library facilities at the University, although some students find it difficult to travel there.

40   The College gives priority, where possible, to higher education programmes in the allocation of some resources. For example, teacher training students have a dedicated room with new technology resources. Provision has been enhanced for computing students following the recent revalidation event. A new computing room for higher education students has been developed to meet their specific needs.

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 body 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?

41   Under the partnership agreement with the University the College is responsible for advertising and recruiting to the programmes, with further supporting information provided directly by the University. The College publishes this information in its prospectus, website and individual programme leaflets. Students also have access to information on the College's virtual learning environment (SPARKS), which gives more detailed information about course provision and operation.

42   The University produces its own information about all partner course provision within its undergraduate prospectus and website. All students are required to enrol through the University, and in consequence it was not clear to some students that they were being enrolled on a programme of study at a separate partner college. The team considers it advisable that the College work with the University to ensure that future students are clear about their intended programme of study and its location. Programme specifications, produced in accordance with QAA guidelines, are available for all programmes. These specifications provide concise descriptions of the intended learning outcomes of the programme and give details of teaching, learning and assessment methods. The specifications are either produced directly by the University or by the University in conjunction with the partner college consortium.

43   Each programme has a student handbook, providing comprehensive information covering such matters as curriculum content, assessment and progression. In the case of franchised programmes the handbooks are produced by the University. In other cases they are produced by the College according to a format prescribed by the University, except in the case of programmes in the built environment, where the College produces the handbooks to its own design prior to approval by the University. In addition, the College provides a generic student handbook for all students at the College, giving general information about study, student support, and access to resources. Course handbooks provide specific course information and vary in their format. Overall, they adequately convey the necessary information, as was confirmed by samples seen and by students met during the review.

44   The College website has a separate higher education section. This gives information about all higher education programmes, including information about entrance requirements, content, assessment and progression. Such information is also included in the

College prospectus. It is not made clear in all cases, however, that the award being made is that of the University of Greenwich.

45   The College has developed a dedicated HE Handbook for all staff teaching on higher education programmes. It provides information about all programmes, including policy documents and regulatory documents provided by the University. It is provided on the College intranet using software which enables easy updating. As a result, the Handbook keeps staff informed of changes in a timely manner and provides access to the latest and most up to date issue of any documentation. The provision of the HE Handbook in this manner represents good practice.

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?

46   The partnership agreement with the University of Greenwich identifies the responsibility of both parties in respect of the use of each other's logos and copyright. The agreement also acknowledges the need for both parties to liaise in order to ensure the effective spread of information. While the College has no formal protocol for checking the accuracy and completeness of public information, programme leaders acknowledge that all material has to be approved by the College Marketing Department before publication. The Marketing Department liaises with the marketing department of the University to ensure consistency and accuracy of information. Students expressed their satisfaction with the accuracy and completeness of the information provided. Information seen by the team showed that it is generally accurate, complete and consistent. However, this would be better assured if formal protocols were developed, and the team regards this as desirable.

47   The College's virtual learning environment, although not used universally for all programmes, gives students access to learning materials, assignments and other material to support study outside of the classroom. It is the responsibility of each programme leader to oversee and review content for their study programmes. This process is not, however, formally acknowledged or documented within the College. Staff acknowledged that some of the material within the virtual learning environment is redundant and should be deleted. In consequence the College is looking at developing a protocol by which the environment can be formally reviewed and updated.

48   The Higher Education Strategy and College strategic plan identify a rationale for changes to programme provision, based on local information and potential external influences. However, it lacks quantifiable evidence, in particular key performance indicators by which future delivery of the plan could be monitored. It also lacks strong evidence of employer engagement and employability in relation to future course developments. The management team acknowledges the need to revise this and confirmed that the recently appointed Principal is initiating a review of the higher education strategy.

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

49   The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in February 2010 and involved a review of all of the College's higher education provision. The following lines of enquiry were agreed with the College.

Line of enquiry 1: The extent to which the methods of assessment meet the needs of the student and ensure academic standards.
Line of enquiry 2: The effectiveness of assessment of work-related learning in developing students' skills and knowledge.
Line of enquiry 3: The effectiveness of assessment information in supporting student learning.

50   The Developmental engagement team identified the range and variety of work-related learning assessments as good practice. These assessments reflect sector needs, enable students to link theory and practice and make a positive contribution to the student learning experience.

51   The Developmental engagement team made several recommendations. The team considered it advisable that action plans be formally monitored, rigorously implemented and recorded to provide clear audit trails, that the framework for the quality assurance and enhancement of the higher education provision be made explicit, and that a more strategic approach towards the use of student feedback questionnaires be adopted to inform development and planning. The team considered it desirable that the College develop the Higher Education Forum to enable it to promote the review of programmes and sharing of good practice, consider how staff development might assume a greater higher education focus, and develop strategies for monitoring the quality of written feedback to students.

D   Foundation Degrees

52   The College offers Foundation Degrees in computing, health and social care, and salon management; however, it has ceased recruiting to the latter programme. Foundation Degrees in construction have also been validated; however, employers have demonstrated a preference for the current Higher National programmes, and the College has decided to stay with these. Employers play a key role in the health and social care programmes, and there is an appropriate focus on work-based learning. In the case of computing, students are full-time and undertake simulated work-based learning tasks.

53   The good practice and recommendations below all relate to Foundation Degree provision. Particularly notable is the good practice in providing teaching, learning and assessment which develop employability skills and encourage reflective practice.

E   Conclusions and summary of judgements

54   The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Bexley 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 body. This was based upon discussion with staff and students and scrutiny of evidence provided by the College and its awarding body, the University of Greenwich.

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

- the timely intervention in support of students with identified learning needs (paragraph 29)
- the development of teaching and learning approaches which enhance students' employability and help them to develop as reflective practitioners (paragraph 32)
- the provision on the College intranet of a staff HE Handbook in a form which is easily maintained and readily accessible (paragraph 45).

56   The team also makes some recommendations for consideration by the College and its awarding body.

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

- continue to develop the HE Forum to ensure it fully meets the requirements of the partnership arrangements and develop it and other mechanisms to ensure that issues and best practice are identified and considered across the range of higher education programmes (paragraphs 13, 16, 18, 23)
- continue to work with the University to utilise student feedback in the development of academic standards and to inform the Annual Monitoring Report (paragraphs 21, 28)
- continue to develop a strategic approach to support higher education focused staff development and encourage reflection on staff development needs (paragraphs 24, 38)
- work with the University to ensure that future students are clear about their intended programme of study, its location and the awarding body (paragraphs 33, 42, 44).

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

- work with the University to improve the identification of and response to issues arising from external examiner reports and to coordinate the identification of issues across the portfolio of higher education programmes (paragraph 20)
- develop a formal protocol for checking the accuracy and completeness of public information (paragraphs 46, 47)
- proceed with the revision of the Higher Education Strategy to ensure it meets the needs of the College and aids the monitoring of performance (paragraph 48).

59   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 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 body.

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 that 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.

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 that, in the

context of this Summative review, 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.

Bexley College action plan relating to the Summative review: January 2011						
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 timely intervention in support of students with identified learning needs (paragraph 29)	All students to take diagnostic assessments during induction period	30/09/2011	Programme leaders	Diagnostic results received for all students and schedule of one-to-one arranged to discuss results with each individual student	Deputy Head of Department	Records of diagnostic testing and actions taken, SMART targets in ILPs
	Programme leaders use one-to-one during the first term to identify support needs and arrange for this to be in place	23/12/2011	Programme leaders	Additional learning support (ALS) being received by all identified learners in first term. In-year progression increased from 72.6 to 80 per cent	Deputy Head of Department & Learner Services Manager	ALS support report for HE shows timely interventions and identified students on track for success. In-year progression 80 per cent for each programme

• the development of teaching and learning approaches which enhance students' employability and help them to develop as reflective practitioners (paragraph 32)	Identification of employability and transferrable skills together with added value in Programme Annual Monitoring Report (PAMR)	28/10/2011	Programme leaders	Improved PAMR which contains in-depth analysis of skills provided and identifies good practice. Links to employability explicit in each PAMR	Head of Department	PAMR
	Dissemination of good practice through Practitioners' Group	23/12/2011	Curriculum Team Leader HE	Good practice disseminated through Practitioners' Group and reported to HE Forum	Head of Department	HE Forum
• the provision on the College intranet of a staff HE Handbook in a form which is easily maintained and readily accessible (paragraph 45).	Review HE Handbook on a yearly basis and ensure it contains accurate information	29/08/2011	Head of Department and Curriculum Team	HE Handbook fit for purpose Staff awareness of University regulations increased Each area maintains own section for school regulations	HE Forum	Annual Review

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						
• continue to develop the HE Forum to ensure it fully meets the requirements of the partnership arrangements and develop it and other mechanisms to ensure that issues and best practice are identified and considered across the range of higher education programmes (paragraphs 13, 16, 18, 23)	Introduce formal monitoring of PAMR process	31/07/2011	Head of Department	Improved evaluative PAMR with actions, measurable targets and impact assessments	Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality	PAMR
	Programme of staff development for good practice and developing understanding of Academic Infrastructure	30/09/2011	Head of Department	Scheduled training sessions included in Quality Improvement Schedule	Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality	Quality Improvement Schedule 2011/2012
	Review Terms of Reference for HE Forum and check against recommendations of Summative review	23/12/2011	HE Forum	HE Forum meets requirements of the University and is addressing recommendations from Summative review	Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality	HE Forum minutes
	Include audit of feedback in Annual Institutional Review together with a detailed action plan	31/01/2012	Head of Department	Improved Annual Institutional Review (AIR) with detailed action plan showing	Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality	HE Forum minutes AIR

				actions, measuring impact and effectively targeting improvement		
• continue to work with the University to utilise student feedback in the development of academic standards and to inform the Annual Monitoring Report (paragraphs 21, 28)	Develop cross-college electronic recording mechanism for analysing academic feedback across the range of HE programmes	31/10/2012	Curriculum Team Leader (HE) and programme leaders	Improved use of student feedback to improve quality of student experience Completion of National Student Survey increased from 48 to 65 per cent Electronic recording produces quantifiable report of percentage of student satisfaction with individual courses	Deputy Head of Department	PAMR AIR
• continue to develop a strategic approach to support higher education focused staff development and encourage reflection on staff	Ensure scholarly activity and HE needs are addressed in appraisal	31/07/2011	Head of Department	Identification of staff development needs for individuals and all HE staff	Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality	Appraisal records Training plans
	Programme of staff development addresses HE requirements	30/09/2011	Head of Department	Scheduled training sessions included in Quality	Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality	Quality Improvement Schedule 2011-2012

				Improvement Schedule		
development needs (paragraphs 24, 38)						
• work with the University to ensure that future students are clear about their intended programme of study, its location and the awarding body (paragraphs 33, 42, 44).	Institute review of student information prior to joining College	31/10/2011	Curriculum Team	Improved awareness of the College and its relationship with the University 100 per cent of students are aware that they are studying at Bexley College prior to starting their programme	Head of Department	Student feedback

Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team agreed the following areas where the College would be **desired** to take action						
• work with the University to improve the identification of and response to issues arising from external examiner reports and to coordinate the identification of issues across the portfolio of higher education programmes (paragraph 20)	HE Forum to continue to request more detailed external examiner reports Comments to be added by the College for each external examiner's report	31/07/2011 30/08/2011	HE Forum Programme leaders	Detailed external examiner reports that identify actions by individual colleges Improved communication with external examiners	Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality Deputy Head of Department	HE Forum minutes External examiner reports
• develop a formal protocol for checking the accuracy and completeness of public information (paragraphs 46, 47)	Review mechanisms for checking and signing off all documentation to ensure its accuracy	31/07/2011	Head of Department & Network Support/Marketing Manager	Formal protocol details checking process to ensure accurate and complete public information	Marketing Working Group	Marketing Working Group minutes

• proceed with the revision of the Higher Education Strategy to ensure it meets the needs of the College and aids the monitoring of performance (paragraph 48).	Revised HE Strategy	31/08/2011	Senior Leadership Team, Head of Department, HE Forum	HE Strategy in place that meets the needs of the College and assists in monitoring of performance	Governors	HE Forum Minutes Governors' Minutes HE Strategy