Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

Easton College

March 2011

SR 43/2010

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 Easton College carried out in March 2011

As a result of its investigations, the Summative review 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 strategic development of higher education, in line with employer and community needs and supported by robust management structures and clear reporting lines developed in conjunction with the University, leads to highly relevant vocational curriculum development
- the availability of excellent vocational and practical resources, combined with staff expertise and partnerships with employers and other community groups, enhances the student learning experience
- the timely responses to external examiner reports are used to support the management of standards
- the College's commitment to staff development, and especially the support for higher level qualifications, underpins subject updating effectively
- the systematic way in which student views are collected, responded to and used to enhance learning opportunities
- the management of information through the use of the web content and document management system ensures standardisation and currency of documentation
- the development of a grading system that monitors the access and availability of information on the staff and student portals and drives improvements in the use of electronic resources.

Recommendations

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

- make programme learning outcomes, as articulated in programme specifications, accessible to students to ensure they are clear on the overall expectations of their programme of study.

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

- continue to develop module evaluation processes to inform annual monitoring and ensure that actions at module level are implemented and monitored
- continue the close monitoring of the return of marked work to ensure it consistently meets the required timeframe
- ensure the accuracy and completeness of information published on the website.

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 Easton 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 East Anglia. The review was carried out by Mr Chris Davies, Mr Gary Hargreaves and Dr Hayley Randle (reviewers), and Mrs Freda Richardson (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 the partnership agreement, revalidation reports and the institutional review reports conducted by the awarding body and the Norfolk Regulatory Framework. 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   Easton College is a specialist land-based college with a mixed economy of further and higher education courses and 14 to 16 provision. It is located on a 240-hectare site to the east of Norwich and includes a working farm and trial plots for crop research projects. The population of around 1,500 full and significant part-time students includes 110 higher education students. Courses are offered at a range of levels in agriculture, floristry, land-based technology and service engineering, foundation learning, countryside management, garden design, public services, horticulture, arboriculture, equestrian, sport, animal management, veterinary nursing and Access to Higher Education.

5   The College's vision is to be a specialist college of which students, staff and community can be proud and to give the best experience to all students. To this end the College has developed its curriculum to offer higher education pathways and progression otherwise not available in the local area. The College believes higher education is important for internal progression as well as offering opportunities to external candidates.

6   All higher education provision at the College is validated by the University of East Anglia and comprises the following seven Foundation Degrees:

- FdSc Agricultural Management (11 FTE)
- FdSc Animal Science and Welfare (21 FTE)
- FdSc Ecology and Conservation Management (21 FTE)
- FdSc Equine Management (5.5 FTE)
- FdSc Landscape and Amenity Management (3 FTE)
- FdSc Sports Coaching (46 FTE)
- FdSc Sustainable Engineering (2.5 FTE).

Recent developments in higher education at the College

7   Recent major capital investments totalling over £21 million have included the development of an animal science and welfare centre, equestrian centre and tennis centre. In addition, the new Jubilee Building has doubled teaching and learning resource areas and includes a major student social and study space. The College offers specialist sports academies such as football, rugby, swimming, tennis, cricket, golf, and personal physical performance training. It has also invested in a new full-sized external pitch. Residential accommodation is available for 122 students, including a new 22 en-suite rooms residential block.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

8   Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the Summative review team. Students from across the programme areas, years and modes of study were involved in developing the written submission which was submitted with the self-evaluation. Discussions focused on the core themes and the process was supported by the Higher Education Coordinator. Where needed, students referred to student feedback documents such as the induction and study skills survey results. The submission helped develop the team's understanding, supported the evidence provided in the self-evaluation portfolio and was developed by a rigorous process involving students from a range of higher education programmes.

B   Evaluation of the management of HEFCE-funded higher education

Core theme 1: Academic standards

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

9   The collaborative relationship between the College and the University of East Anglia (the University), based on an agreed set of management responsibilities, assures the quality of the higher education provision. The College's quality assurance procedures clearly align with those of the University, and the College maintains academic standards through coherent assessment of programmes under the Norfolk Regulatory Framework. This framework was originally developed by the University and its partner colleges to support collaborative provision offered in local further education colleges and validated by the University. Easton College has recently developed its own version of this framework which covers all academic regulations for higher education programmes.

10   The University undertook an institutional review in November 2009 designed to 'protect standards'. Following this, the College revised its higher education management processes and structures in order to further develop and quality assure its higher education provision. The higher education organisational structure supports effective communication between module leaders, programme leaders, programme area managers, heads of faculty and vice principals at curriculum level. In addition, there are clear cross-college links between faculty heads, the Higher Education Programme Area Manager, the Assistant Principal (Higher Education), the Quality and ILT (information learning technology) Development Manager and a newly appointed Head of Faculty Higher Education

Partnerships, Development and Research, all of whom ultimately (directly or indirectly) report to the Vice Principal (Curriculum). The reporting lines are clearly understood and used effectively by staff.

11   A hierarchy of higher education meetings ensures that the quality assurance procedures are operating effectively. The higher education team meeting deals with operational matters and reports through the Teaching and Learning Committee, Academic Management Team and Quality Standards Group, to the Senior Management Team. It also reports through the Teaching and Learning Committee to the University's Joint Board of Study for Easton College. Higher education team meetings are attended by all staff involved in the delivery and management of higher education. These meetings enable effective standardisation, sharing of good practice and curriculum development. They are also informed by the Student Council and the Higher Education Student Forum.

12   The Teaching and Learning Committee reports on the performance and development of the higher education provision. It comprises senior managers with responsibility for higher education at the College, all Foundation Degree programme leaders, academic links from the University and a representative from the University's Partnerships Office. It is responsible for overseeing annual monitoring and reports developments and proposed changes to the Joint Board of Study (chaired by the University). It successfully brings together matters dealt with at higher education team meetings and reports to the appropriate channel both internally and externally.

13   Regular higher education review meetings involving staff from the College and University resumed this academic year to enhance communications and partnership working. Matters from the higher education team and review meetings, and the College's Teaching and Learning Committee, are forwarded to the Joint Board of Study and the University's Learning and Teaching Committee. The Joint Board of Study is responsible for the overview, monitoring and enhancement of academic standards. It is attended by College staff responsible for higher education management, a student representative, University academic links and a City College Norwich representative. Programmes are subject to regular revalidation and scrutiny at the Joint Board of Study.

14   Quality calendars assist in the timely completion of quality assurance activities. The self-assessment review timeline at programme level follows the student timetable. Surveys and quality monitoring occur at critical points in the academic year, for example, at the start of the year and at the end of each semester. Regular scrutiny and monitoring of quality improvement plans take place at least once a month at Academic Management Team and issues are referred to the Senior Management Team as required. Monitoring is also conducted at termly teaching and learning committees chaired by programme leaders and attended by university academic links. Evidence is considered from a range of sources.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

15   Use of the University's validation templates and adherence to the Norfolk Regulatory Framework facilitates effective College engagement with the Academic Infrastructure. Faculty heads, programme area managers and programme leaders demonstrate a good understanding of the Academic Infrastructure and ensure that it is embedded into teaching and learning and assessment practice. The College ensures that staff are aware of changes to elements of the Academic Infrastructure and that they are taken into account in processes and practice. For example, the Norfolk Regulatory Framework was updated following changes to the *Code of Practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)*. The College has developed an external examiner code of practice which all higher education staff are aware of. This helps to ensure that higher education student achievement accords with the

expectations of the Academic Infrastructure and that standards are maintained. External examiner reports confirm that the assessments set by programme staff reflect current subject benchmark statements.

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 the validating partner and awarding body?

16   The College has a clear strategic vision for the development of its specialised and vocational higher education portfolio. It has close links with local employers and community groups. For example, Active Norfolk, a county sports partnership created by Sport England, is based on the College campus and students are able to take advantage of the learning opportunities this affords. Agricultural engineering has been identified as a local and regional employment skills deficit and the College is successfully developing a range of curriculum offers to address this, including investment in new physical resources. The College is also in the process of developing the Centre for Contemporary Agriculture in partnership with the University and including a number of specialised industry links, such as the John Innes Centre, the National Institute of Agricultural Botany and the Institute of Food Research. It is expected that this development will lead to growth in higher education at the College, including level 6 and master's programmes. The Head of Faculty Higher Education Partnerships, Development and Research is a joint appointment between the College and the University to support this initiative. The team considers that the strategic development of higher education, in line with employer and community needs and supported by robust management structures and clear reporting lines developed in conjunction with the University, leads to highly relevant vocational curriculum development and is good practice.

17   The College uses the University's monitoring procedures for its higher education provision. Self Assessment Review and Evaluations for each programme are prepared by the programme leader. These are thoroughly completed which indicate a strong commitment to the process. The evidence bases include external examiner reports, student surveys and student performance data. Action plans are developed, implemented and monitored at programme level. Self Assessment Review and Evaluations are discussed at programme meetings together with operational issues. A student representative is normally present. The Self Assessment Review and Evaluations are signed off at the Joint Board of Study.

18   Following the module and final award boards, programme leaders receive external examiners' reports. These are used with meeting minutes and student feedback to inform the Self Assessment Review and Evaluation process and a college-wide Self Assessment Review and Evaluation for higher education. Staff confirmed that they receive external examiners' reports directly and act upon them as soon as they are received. For example, the external examiner for the FdSc Ecology and Conservation Management requested a change in assessment modes, and as a result, more time-constrained assignments were included. University representatives stated that they only receive the external examiner reports once the College has received them and dealt with actions arising. This demonstrates ownership of the process by the College. The team considers that the timely responses to external examiner reports that are used to support the management of standards are good practice.

19   External examiners confirm that students attain appropriate academic standards which are comparable to those at other higher education institutions. They report that assessment activities reflect current standards within industry. For example, the national coaching qualification is embedded in the FdSc Sports Coaching. External examiner reports confirm that internal verification processes are thorough, robust and that previous comments have been responded to appropriately.

20   Following the IQER Developmental engagement (March 2010), the College has put in place a comprehensive and clear system of assessment verification and moderation. This allows the maintenance of academic standards based on clear review, monitoring and auditing processes while complying with the assessment moderation processes outlined in the Norfolk Regulatory Framework. Standard assessment templates now exist which are subject to effective annual document control. The assessment process is commended by external examiners who consider it to be thorough, professional and robust. A Developmental engagement advisable recommendation has led to a review of the quality assurance systems at module level. This has resulted in a redesign of the module evaluation form. Students complete a module evaluation which is then considered by the module tutor and informs the overall module evaluation. Mid-year module evaluation forms have been robustly completed with action plans and these will be used to inform the end-of-year Self Assessment Review and Evaluations. Due to the timing of the review the team saw no evidence of module evaluation action plans being monitored and implemented mid-year. The team considers it desirable that the College continues to develop module evaluation processes to inform annual monitoring and ensure that actions at module level are implemented and monitored.

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

21   The College reviewed the focus of its staff development policy for higher education following the University's institutional review in 2009. This facilitated further engagement with the Academic Infrastructure and support for the maintenance of academic standards. College staff are supported to undertake higher qualifications. Staff confirmed that they are able to apply for master's level courses at the University and further afield. They stated that full financial support is available and that time can also be provided by the College. College mangers confirmed that requests for continual professional development and higher level study are given serious consideration and that they were not aware of any being rejected in the past two years. Eleven per cent of staff with a degree are working towards their master's. There is an extensive and appropriate range of continual professional development events specific to higher education, covering aspects of the Academic Infrastructure and including research seminars. Some College tutors have taught on University programmes.

22   The University representatives confirmed that staff development at the University is available to College staff. For example, a recent session on graduate employment opportunities had been offered to staff and students at the College. Staff are encouraged to engage in professional updating and participate in conference activities; for example, one member of staff presented at the Eastern Network Sports and Active Leisure conference. Additionally, staff have the opportunity to engage in research, to deliver to students and to attend lectures at the University. The recent revalidation of the FdSc Animal Science and Welfare commended the continual professional development undertaken by staff and the College's generous financial support for staff development. Cross-college staff development needs are identified through the Self Assessment Review and Evaluation process. Students confirm that staff have good vocational and industrial knowledge which is freely shared and helps them plan for future careers and to find suitable work placements. The team considers that the College's commitment to staff development, and especially the support for higher level qualifications, underpins subject updating effectively and is good practice.

> **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?

23   The quality of learning opportunities is managed by robust management structures with clear reporting lines as explained in paragraphs 10 to 13. The Higher Education Programme Area Manager has overall operational responsibility for managing the student learning experience. Higher education programme leaders manage programmes on a day-to-day basis supported by academic links at the University.

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

24   Monitoring and self-assessment procedures follow University requirements, as explained in paragraphs 17 and 18, to manage academic standards. These also assure the quality of the student learning experience. Robust management and committee structures and clear reporting lines ensure that the quality of learning opportunities is effectively monitored and actions identified and implemented. Committees include appropriate University representation. The joint appointment of the Head of Faculty Higher Education Partnerships, Development and Research supports effective partnership working to ensure that students receive appropriate learning opportunities.

25   The College has provided a comprehensive response to the IQER Development engagement action plan. While significant progress has been made against most recommendations, the College acknowledges that the full impact of some changes cannot be assessed until the end of this academic year and that further work is required against most of the actions. For example, following the Developmental engagement the College undertook a review of the content, delivery and assessment of all cross-college modules. This resulted in wide-ranging changes for 2010, including the incorporation of the assessment of vocational skills, knowledge and understanding gained in subject specialist modules. Feedback from students indicates that they still have considerable concerns with some of these modules, for example the employability module which some students fail to see the relevance of. The College acknowledges that there are still some issues with student perceptions of these modules and continues to monitor their effectiveness and relevance to the vocational curriculum. Employers, however, recognise the value of employability skills developed in cross-college modules.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

26   As stated in paragraph 15, use of the Norfolk Regulatory Framework and the College's engagement with it ensure effective account is taken of all aspects of the Academic Infrastructure in managing the quality of learning opportunities. Module leader training covers the use of the Academic Infrastructure in supporting the student learning experience. Mentoring and coaching procedures for staff new to higher education ensure all staff are aware of its importance.

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

27   The same policies and procedures are used in higher education as in further education for the observation of teaching and learning. They are effective in identifying ways in which teaching and learning can be improved. For 2010-11, any tutor achieving 'satisfactory' or below has an action plan and mentoring to ensure that they are supported to improve. Lesson observation performance is monitored through the Quality Standards Group and the Curriculum and Standards (Governors) Committee. Staff confirm that their development needs are identified through lesson observations and lead to action plans that are followed up in appraisal meetings. The College's requirement that staff commence a teacher training qualification within two years of appointment further supports the quality of teaching and learning.

28   The College regularly surveys student views of teaching and learning using well focused quantitative and qualitative instruments, for example student perception surveys and focus groups. These indicate that student relationships with teaching and support staff are very positive and conducive to learning. Students provide detailed feedback on each module focusing on teaching and learning, including the use of the virtual learning environment, module relevance, assessment and resources. A benchmark of 75 per cent satisfaction is set by the College. Virtually all the vocational modules exceed the benchmark, but several of the cross-college modules fall well short of it. Module evaluations conducted by staff use the University's template and include consideration of student performance data, student feedback, external examiner comments and use of the virtual learning environment. This results in the identification of strengths, areas for improvement and an action plan. They provide a sound basis to feed into future Self Assessment Review and Evaluations.

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

29   Students new to higher education are interviewed and complete an induction and study skills programme at the start of the course, which includes an initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills. These programmes are very successful in ensuring that students become familiar with the requirements of Foundation Degree studies. They also introduce students to the use of the virtual learning environment and the electronic opportunities available to support their studies. The College relies largely on self disclosure to identify specific learning needs, although initial diagnostics can help with this. Opportunities to access additional support are made clear and students requiring this are allocated a mentor.

30   Student surveys indicate that course organisation has improved significantly from a low base. In some courses bunching of assignments occurs. Students confirm that access to and support from tutors are very good. Student access to lecturers has been commended in re-validations and many students cited very helpful staff as the best feature of their studies at the College. Regular timetabled tutorials take place. An electronic booking system for additional tutorials is being piloted on the virtual learning environment by some programmes and some module leaders. Students consider that this offers more flexibility and convenience.

31   External examiners report that feedback to students is, almost without exception, helpful, constructive, evaluative and supportive of further learning. However, student perceptions on the quality of feedback and the fairness of marking indicate an improving situation but with significant scope for further improvements. The College has set challenging targets for the return of marked work, however achievement of these targets varies in both vocational and cross-college modules. The Developmental engagement

recommended that the College introduces a procedure to monitor the return of marked work to students to ensure they receive timely feedback in line with College and awarding body policy. An assessment feedback form that records timely delivery of feedback to students has been piloted. This has led to the review and amendment of the higher education assessment cover sheet that records the date feedback is returned to students and is signed by them. However, students confirmed that feedback is not always provided within the college deadline and that this is an issue particularly on cross-college modules and in the second semester. Programme leaders are responsible for monitoring compliance with the college policy and this results in variability of practice. The team considers it desirable that the College continues the close monitoring of the return of marked work to ensure it consistently meets the required timeframe.

32   Student views are collected by a number of well developed mechanisms. These focus on induction, study skills, first impressions of the College, individual module and course organisation and support. Qualitative data is collected in programme team meetings, regular higher education student representatives meetings and at the Student Council. These meetings are also used to feed back the results of the student perception surveys and the actions taken in response to student comments. In addition, the higher education learner voice email address allows students to provide anonymous feedback. Unresolved quality issues raised by students are forwarded to both higher education team meetings and programme committee meetings. The College has introduced changes of a significant nature at least partly in response to student feedback. These include a higher education study centre, a new study skills module and revisions to course content. Students confirm that the new study centre greatly improves facilities available to higher education students. The College received some poor scores in the National Student Survey; it has responded positively, systematically and promptly to address the issues raised. Action plans have been developed and are reviewed and monitored at academic and senior management team meetings. The team considers that the systematic way in which student views are collected, responded to and used to enhance learning opportunities is good practice.

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

33   Staff curriculum vitae and continual professional development records confirm that staff are well qualified in their specialist subject areas, have considerable vocational experience and undertake subject-specific staff development that supports the currency and relevance of their subject knowledge. Higher education teaching staff have considerable subject expertise. The team recognises the positive impact this has on student performance, which is confirmed by external examiners, employers and students. Staff expertise supports the good practice in resourcing the vocational Foundation Degrees at the College.

34   All College staff are approved by the University and gain Associate Teacher status prior to commencing teaching on higher education programmes. This affords them some access to University-based resources and training opportunities. All staff are provided with informative induction training, for example module leader training, which familiarises them with the Norfolk Regulatory Framework and the Academic Infrastructure. Specific staff training needs are identified through the annual appraisal process, lesson observations and from student feedback. Identified training needs are met on an individual basis.

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?

35   Specialist vocational subject areas are supported by new state-of-the-art facilities**.** These are commended by external examiners, and in course revalidations. The wider learning environment, for example the availability of communal work and social areas, enhances the student learning experience. Programme teams make extensive use of external resources which are used very effectively to support student learning. Students have the benefit of attending activities, seminars and industry focus groups both on and off campus. For example, agricultural management students attended a soil management seminar which gave them the opportunity to link with industry professionals, and animal science and welfare students visited London Zoo to study species linked to current assessments. The use of external speakers to supplement teaching was commended during the revalidation of the FdSc Agricultural Management. As stated in paragraph 16, community groups and employers are engaged in joint use of facilities on and off campus that significantly enhances learning opportunities. The team considers that the availability of excellent vocational and practical resources, combined with staff expertise and partnerships with employers and other community groups, enhances the student learning experience and is good practice.

36   The Learning Resource Centre is well equipped and staff are very knowledgeable and approachable should students require assistance. There is a strong College focus on the use of information and learning technology to support teaching and learning. The virtual learning environment is well used by staff and students and students are aware that it is a key resource to support their studies. It contains a wide range of appropriate course-related materials, including staff contact details, handbooks and assessment information. Students have some access to learning resources at the University, but this varies across programmes.

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?

37   The focus of the College's published information is on marketing materials, pre-enrolment information, the student experience, supporting processes, documents for staff, and information for employers. A range of information is also published on the website, including governance, polices, strategies, financial information and details on freedom of information.

38   Information provided to higher education students includes a College and higher education prospectus, a student handbook and programme handbooks. Students are provided with schemes of work, assessment planners and resources to support study skills. Information is published in a number of ways, for example on the College website, staff and student portals, and in print. There is also limited student access to some University electronic resources.

39 The College printed prospectus (also available in audio and in Braille) provides general information about higher education provision with more detailed information in a printed higher education prospectus detailing course-specific information. The information contained in the prospectus is available on the College website, though in a different format. The prospectus and the website information is derived from validation documents and checked by the College marketing team in consultation with programme leaders.

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?

40 The Assistant Principal Higher Education and the Head of Student Services, together with the marketing and admissions/student services centre, are responsible for public information. This enables the College to manage the consistency and accuracy of the college prospectus, handbook, information on safeguarding for visitors, and information about residential accommodation. The marketing calendar outlines clear strategies for marketing of programmes. College documents and student-centred information, including on-course and financial support and assessment, are monitored by the Higher Education Programme Area Manager. This enables a single point of control that ensures clarity, consistency and review of all internally published information.

41 The information on courses in the higher education prospectus is monitored and checked by the Client Liaison Office in liaison with programme areas to ensure accuracy and consistency in published formats. The University also audits marketing and pre-enrolment published information. The close working relationship between the College and University ensures accurate and reliable published information and fast turnaround in the approval of materials.

42 The student perception surveys illustrate the value placed by the majority of students on pre-enrolment information. Students confirmed that information provided by the College was useful before they started the course, at induction and on course. Student surveys indicate that the course lecturers give students clear information about their course. The student handbook provides a useful guide to College facilities, library services, food and drink, and personal support, with some information on assessment, appeals, tutorials, enrichment and learning support.

43 Programme handbooks are published in print and on the virtual learning environment and follow University guidelines. At the students' request, programme handbooks are now more concise with more detailed information accessible on the virtual learning environment. The content of programme specifications is outlined to students during enrolment, induction, and throughout the course. Full versions of the validated programme specifications are not currently available to students. A very brief summary from the programme specification is available on the course virtual learning environment page. This does not however provide students with information on programme learning outcomes. Students are therefore not aware of what they are expected to achieve in terms of knowledge, skills and understanding at the end of their course and how the achievement of module learning outcomes contributes to this. The team considers it advisable that programme learning outcomes, as articulated in programme specifications, are made accessible to students to ensure they are clear on the overall expectations of their programme of study.

44 The institutional review in November 2009 noted that public information is high on the College's quality assurance agenda. A cross-college review of publicity materials, course documents and the 2011 prospectus considered the clarity of opportunity for students'

progression to Foundation Degrees, honours degrees and alternative progression routes, as well as career-specific needs for future qualifications at all levels. The process of revising public information is well established. It uses a web content and document management system that provides reliable and accurate public information on the virtual learning environment.

45   Since the Developmental engagement there has been a further systematic overhaul of all higher education published documentation. The College is committed to continuing to improve public information, recognising it as an important vehicle for sharing good practice. Course and quality documents on the staff portal originate using the secure content management system. Templates are authored, checked, edited and then uploaded by the Higher Education Programme Area Manager. Using these templates, staff upload materials such as assessment plans, assignments, programme handbooks and committee meeting minutes to the student virtual learning environment. Student information on the virtual learning environment is defined at course team level and monitored by the programme leader. The content management system acts as a conduit for sharing good practice, for example by enabling staff to review each other's assessment instruments, and ensures document and policy consistency and reliability. The team considers that the management of information through the use of the web content and document management system ensures standardisation and currency of documentation and is good practice.

46   There is a clear code of practice for managing information on the virtual learning environment. Monitoring is well advanced with substantive, detailed and systematic auditing of public information relating to the higher education provision. Such monitoring includes a progressive grading system that indicates the extent to which programme areas are using the portal to support students. The team found examples of substantial improvement, such as the FdSc Equine Management. In 2009-10, 96 per cent of student accounts were active on the virtual learning environment and 29 per cent of transactions were outside the normal teaching day. While some students stated that accessing the portal from home can be slow, it is clear that the monitoring of the staff and student portals is instrumental in driving improvements in the provision of information and enhances the student learning experience. The College is providing peer support to another college in developing more effective use of their virtual learning environment. The team considers that the development of a grading system to monitor the access and availability of information on the staff and student portals drives improvements in the use of electronic resources and is good practice.

47   While there is a code of practice and auditing process for the virtual learning environment, it is less clear that there are effective and systematic policies and procedures for managing the completeness and accuracy of other published information. Employer feedback on the usefulness of the current website was poor and governance records have not been updated for some considerable time. A new College website is currently under construction. However, there is no formal policy and procedures to ensure systematic checking of information on the website takes place and to ensure it is updated for completeness and accuracy. In addition, programme leaders have considerable responsibility for checking public information in their programme areas without formal internal monitoring processes to support this. The team considers it desirable that the College ensures the accuracy and completeness of information published on the website.

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 was undertaken in March 2010. There were three lines of enquiry: assessment and feedback are appropriate and enable achievement of the learning outcomes for level 1 and level 2 modules; information to applicants and students on assessment is complete and accurate especially on cross-college modules; work placements enhance the quality of learning opportunities and public information supports the relationships between organisations and students.

49 The Developmental engagement identified good practice in the use of excellent vocational and practical resources offered by the College, the commitment and enthusiasm of staff and their vocational experience and specialist knowledge, the induction and study skills programmes and the monitoring of the development and use of the virtual learning environment.

50 The College was advised to implement procedures to ensure effective monitoring of module evaluation forms that informs annual monitoring and drives enhancement in assessment processes. The Developmental engagement team considered it desirable that the College review the operation of the higher education internal verification procedure, introduce a procedure to monitor the return of marked work to students, incorporate the assessment of vocational skills, knowledge and understanding gained in subject specialist modules into cross-college modules, develop robust policies and procedures to ensure that all forms of information provided to students on assessment are consistent and accurate and provide clear information to employers about the expectations of work placements and the work placement project. The College has made good progress against most of the recommendations. The full impact of the enhancements has yet to be assessed and further work is required in some areas.

D Foundation Degrees

51 All higher education provision at Easton College is University of East Anglia-validated Foundation Degrees, thus all sections in the main report and all the findings relate to these awards.

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

52 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Easton 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 body the University of East Anglia.

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

- the strategic development of higher education, in line with employer and community needs and supported by robust management structures and clear reporting lines developed in conjunction with the University, leads to highly relevant vocational curriculum development (paragraphs 10 to 13, 16)
- the availability of excellent vocational and practical resources, combined with staff expertise and partnerships with employers and other community groups, enhances the student learning experience (paragraphs 16, 35, 36)

- the timely responses to external examiner reports are used to support the management of standards (paragraph 18)
- the College's commitment to staff development, and especially the support for higher level qualifications, underpins subject updating effectively (paragraphs 21, 22)
- the systematic way in which student views are collected, responded to and used to enhance learning opportunities (paragraphs 28, 30, 32)
- the management of information through the use of the web content and document management system ensures standardisation and currency of documentation (paragraphs 44, 45)
- the development of a grading system that monitors the access and availability of information on the staff and student portals and drives improvements in the use of electronic resources (paragraph 46).

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

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

- make programme learning outcomes, as articulated in programme specifications, accessible to students to ensure they are clear on the overall expectations of their programme of study (paragraph 43).

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

- continue to develop module evaluation to inform annual monitoring and ensure that actions at module level are implemented and monitored (paragraph 20)
- continue the close monitoring of the return of marked work to ensure it consistently meets the required timeframe (paragraph 31)
- ensure the accuracy and completeness of information published on the website (paragraph 47).

57   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.

58   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.

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, 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.

Easton College action plan relating to the Summative review: March 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 strategic development of higher education, in line with employer and community needs and supported by robust management structures and clear reporting lines developed in conjunction with the University, leads to highly relevant vocational curriculum development (paragraphs 10 to 13, 16)	Liaise with community and further develop employer forum for higher education programmes and contribute to overall Foundation Degree forum with response to demand and direction for higher education Monitor effective and robust management structures and reporting lines through current procedures Review effectiveness annually	First forum September 2011 Planned programme for all FdSc and BSc Joint forum December 2011/ July 2012 External examiner reports and module evaluation forms July 2011 Joint Boards of Study (JBOS), Teaching and Learning Committee (T&LC) and Self Assessment Review and	Programme Area Manager Higher Education Programme leaders Module leaders Assistant Principal Higher Education	Attendance at each forum Interaction and collaboration with/by employers on programme content and development of employer forum Clear and robust lines of communication Move to University of East Anglia (UEA) quality assurance from Norfolk Regulatory Framework (NRF) Positive reports from JBOS,	Academic Management Team (AMT) via Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) Senior Management Team (SMT) Higher Education Team JBOS T&LC	Summary Report to HE Team and TL&C (end of Semester 1 and Semester 2) External examiner reports and SAREs reported at JBOS and received as final

		Evaluations (SAREs) September 2011		external examiners and SAREs		
• the availability of excellent vocational and practical resources, combined with staff expertise and partnerships with employers and other community groups, enhances the student learning experience (paragraphs 16, 35, 36)	Developing employer partnerships, off site delivery and enhanced learning through use of real work time/work placement assessments Development of curriculum areas and programmes which utilise all practical elements of the College and continue capital investment programmes	First forum September 2011 Planned programme for all FdSc and BSc Joint forum December 2011/ July 2012 External examiner reports and module evaluation forms, July 2011 JBOS, T&LC, SARE September 2011	Programme Area Manager Higher Education Programme leaders Module leaders Assistant Principal Higher Education	Employer attendance and responses relating to programmes Offsite location and delivery of programme modules identified with more employer locations available and appropriate contribution by employer feedback and student module evaluation forms	Higher Education Team T&LC JBOS	Summary Report to Higher Education Team and TL&C (end of Semester 1 and Semester 2) Reports and SAREs reported at JBOS
• the timely responses to external examiner reports are used to support the management of standards (paragraph 18)	Monitor each programme to ensure timely responses to external examiner and annual SARE process - reviewed through clear reporting lines	August 2011 for external examiner response to all reports September 2011 for inclusion in SARE moderation	Programme Area Manager Higher Education Programme leaders Module leaders	External examiners' report are responded to by programme and module leaders and completed in a timely and appropriate manner in order for finalised external examiner report to be included in SARE process and its	AMT via QIP Higher Education Team JBOS	Completed and moderated SAREs September 2011 Completion of external examiner report action plan and College responses on all external examiner reports and prior to distribution via meetings and virtual

				time frame		learning environment
				Assessment briefs and exam papers to external examiners during second week of September 2011		All assessments seen and returned by external examiners prior to issue
• the College's commitment to staff development, and especially the support for higher level qualifications, underpins subject updating effectively (paragraphs 21, 22)	Identify effective appropriate continual professional development and scholarly activity support and offer to all higher education team	October 2011	Programme Area Manager Higher Education Head of Faculty	Continual professional development plan for 2011-12 (for internal and external activity) and registers of attendance	JBOS T&LC	Higher Education Review Meetings (EC and UEA) October 2011 February 2012 June 2012
• the systematic way in which student views are collected, responded to and used to enhance learning opportunities (paragraphs 28, 30, 32)	Use formal and informal means of liaising with, responding to and reporting back student views via annual SARE, college surveys, higher education student rep meetings and semester module evaluation forms procedure for Semesters 1 and 2	Induction and study skills survey, September 2011 Student Perception of Course surveys complete, November 2011 Module evaluation forms, Semester 1, January 2012 National Student Survey, February 2012	Programme Area Manager Higher Education Programme leaders Module leaders	Minimum of 75 per cent satisfaction rate 75 per cent attendance at student representative meetings	Higher Education Team, T&LC JBOS	SAREs Student written submission, end of Semester 1

		Student Satisfaction Survey for all College students, April 2012

Module evaluation forms, Semester 2, June 2012

Student representative meetings (two per term) | | | | |
| • the management of information through the use of the web content and document management system ensures standardisation and currency of documentation (paragraph 44, 45) | High level of management and quality monitoring through College document management system that enables version control of document at point sourced by tutors/staff and placement onto the College virtual learning environment - managed through the policy for public information | September 2011 | Programme leaders

Assistant Principal Higher Education

Quality and ILT Development Manager | Public information policy | JBOS
SMT
Policy Group | Induction survey to students

Module evaluation forms

Applicant survey

Summary report end of Semesters 1 and 2 |
| • the development of a grading system that monitors the access and availability of information on the staff and student | Identified internal grading of level 3 on virtual learning environment is achieved by end of December 2011 across all programmes and | December 2011 | Programme Area Manager Higher Education

Programme leaders and | Virtual learning environment audits completed and signed by Quality and ILT Development Manager as | ILT Strategy Higher Education Team

T&LC | Completed virtual learning environment audits and SAREs |

portals and drives improvements in the use of electronic resources (paragraph 46).	continue to update and maintain level 3 as a minimum		Module leaders Quality and ILT Development Manager	required by college quality calendar		
Advisable	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
The team considers that it is **advisable** for the College to:						
• make programme learning outcomes, as articulated in programme specifications, accessible to students to ensure they are clear on the overall expectations of their programme of study (paragraph 43).	Ensure programme learning outcomes are: • on virtual learning environment • on website • signposted to virtual learning environment from student handbooks • available at interview • identified and reviewed in Induction and study skills sessions at start 2011	September 2011	Programme Area Manager Higher Education Programme leaders Quality and ILT Development Manager	Programme specifications available for employers, current students, applicants for 2011 entry onwards and staff at the College and the University	AMT via QIP JBOS Higher Education Team	Induction survey to students Public information policy
Desirable	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
The team considers that it is **desirable** for the College to:						
• continue to develop module evaluation processes to inform annual monitoring	Monitor effectiveness and appropriateness of module evaluation forms (MEF) actions and	July 2011 February 2012	Programme Area Manager Higher Education	Module evaluation forms presented at college higher education Board of	JBOS	SAREs and QIP agreed and approved October 2011

and ensure that actions at module level are implemented and monitored (paragraph 20)	inclusion in SAREs and outcomes/completions monitored within the QIP Introduction of a College 'Board of Study' (BoS) for higher education (at the time of all other college BoS) in order to monitor MEFs process	July 2012	Programme leaders Module leaders	Study in July 2011 Continued reporting in Semester 1 and Semester 2 of 2011-12		QIP monitoring during 2011-12
• continue the close monitoring of the return of marked work to ensure it consistently meets the required timeframe (paragraph 31)	Pilot of electronic submission and feedback Set achievable target for return of grades and feedback of 15 working days Deliver continual professional development session for all higher education staff Modify staff module evaluation form to record time of feedback to students	May/June 2011 January/ February 2012 July 2012 August 2011 June 2011	Programme Area Manager Higher Education Programme leaders Module leaders	Marked work and feedback returned to student within 15 working days applied to both semesters - including internal moderation undertaken with feedback Outcomes achieved and reported through SARE Student rep meeting feedback	Module evaluation forms Higher Education Board of Study Higher Education Team	SAREs reported to JBOS Student written submission, end of Semester 1
• ensure the accuracy and completeness of information published on the website (paragraph 47).	Policy for College information management with version control for all documentation through centralised location prior to placement on internal	September 2011 February 2012	Programme Area Manager Higher Education Assistant Principal Higher	Public information policy W3C compliance checks to DDA	JBOS Marketing	Summary report of public information policy Induction survey to students

	virtual learning environment and website - including World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) compliance checks to Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requirements undertaken once per semester		Education Quality and ILT Development Manager			