Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

Bury College

November 2011

SR 015/11

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* (FHEQ), which includes descriptions of different higher education qualifications
- the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (*Code of practice*)
- 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 Bury College carried out in November 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 agreements, 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 agreements, for the quality of learning opportunities it offers. The team considers that reliance **can** be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Good practice

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

- the system for tracking the responses to issues raised by external examiners is effective in ensuring that actions are implemented quickly and reported to the appropriate committees
- the high quality of written and verbal feedback on assessed work enables students to prepare effectively for future assessments
- a high level of academic and pastoral support is provided from application to completion which facilitates student learning.

Recommendations

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

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

- ensure that there is appropriate prior approval for changes to programmes in operation and that such changes are reported through the College annual monitoring processes
- enhance the Higher Education Quality Assurance Manual to provide a more detailed and systematic consideration of the Academic Infrastructure and improved guidance on quality matters.

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

- plan staffing arrangements in order to ensure that students receive an experience in line with the published teaching schedule
- ensure that publicity material accurately identifies the modules running at the College so that prospective students are provided with a clear understanding of their programme.

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 Bury 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 Bolton (the University). The review was carried out by Dr Mark Atlay, Dr Elizabeth Briggs, Dr Patsy Campbell (reviewers), and Dr Peter Steer (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 review included documentation supplied by the College, separate meetings with staff including an awarding body representative and students, the student written submission, QAA review reports, and Ofsted reports. 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,* subject and award benchmark statements*,* the FHEQ, and programme specifications.

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

4   Bury College is a medium-sized tertiary College in Greater Manchester. It has 4,478 full-time students, aged 16-18 years old, on a range of programmes including GCE A-Levels, level 3 diplomas, level 2 and 1 qualifications and Foundation Degree programmes. There are 1,304 learners aged over 19 attending the College, of whom 641 are part-time. The College mission statement is 'Developing individual potential. Inspiring excellence. Promoting prosperity through knowledge.' The College attracts students from a wide geographical area including Bury, Rochdale, Bolton, Manchester and Lancashire. The College's curriculum portfolio includes all major curriculum areas, with the exception of motor vehicle and land-based provision. The College operates a 'best match for you' admissions policy that has the objective of welcoming students from all sections of the community through targeted, segmented provision. Higher education programmes are provided at College premises in the centre of Bury.

5   The College consists of 10 curriculum areas of which five provide higher education: Catering, Hair, Beauty and Complementary Therapies; Early Years; Humanities and Communication Studies; Management, Travel, Sport and Business; and Visual and Performing Arts. Curriculum areas are each managed by a curriculum director. In 2010-11, enrolment on the higher education provision comprised 65 full-time and 148 part-time students, making 139 full-time equivalents. For 2011-12 there are 62 full-time and 122 part-time students representing 137 full-time equivalents. All the provision is indirectly funded. The higher education provision offered by the College, with full-time equivalent student numbers in brackets, is as follows:

- FdA Business Management (26)
- FdA Complementary Therapies (12)
- FdA Early Years Childhood Studies (21)
- FdA Teaching Assistants (Primary) (9)

- HNC Business (13)
- HND Performing Arts (19)
- Professional Diploma in Education (17)
- Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (20).

Partnership agreements with the awarding body

6   The University of Bolton is the awarding body for all of the College's higher education provision. The partnership agreements are clear and cover all the current programmes. Student recruitment is a College responsibility. Responsibility for setting assessments and for moderation is shared with the University. College staff provide the feedback on student work. The production of programme and module materials is jointly undertaken by the College and the University. The University requires the College to provide suitable resources to support learning and provides student access to some of its facilities.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

7   Recent recruitment in terms of full-time equivalents has not altered significantly. The College is in the process of developing its estate with a £7 million investment in an extension to the Woodbury campus. The building will enhance the existing higher education facilities through the inclusion of a new learning resource centre, art studios, and improved information technology resources.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

8   Students on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the team and did so in August 2011. Fifteen students were involved in giving their opinions either in person or by email. The Higher Education Coordinator compiled the comments into the student written submission. Students also met the team during the review. The team found the students' contributions helpful in giving a student perspective on key issues.

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   There are detailed partnership agreements with the University for the awards offered by the College. These make clear that the University has overall responsibility for the academic management and control of the programmes and for the maintenance, monitoring and evaluation of academic standards and quality. Responsibility is exercised by the University through its relevant school or faculty and its Academic Board, guided by the University academic regulations. The management and operation of individual programmes is overseen by a University link tutor, who liaises and collaborates directly with the programme leader at the College.

10   Two committees at the College, both of which include senior managers, provide a generally effective oversight of the provision. The Higher Education Strategic Management and Quality Group, chaired by the Principal, directs the strategic development of the provision in accordance with the College mission statement. The Higher Education Coordinators Committee is dedicated to operational matters and implements policies and action plans formulated by the Higher Education Strategic Management and Quality Group. The six meetings, held by each committee every year, are scheduled so that operational matters can be discussed quickly after policy decisions are made. Executively, the Director of Higher Education and the Director of Quality lead the oversight of higher education in the College. They are supported by the Higher Education Coordinator and report to the Executive Director of Curriculum and then on to the Deputy Principal. The Director of Quality has a central role overseeing cross-college quality processes including the peer teaching and learning observation scheme and the tracking of external examiner reports.

11   Since the Developmental engagement, operating procedures and staff roles and responsibilities have been made more explicit. This has improved the effectiveness of the higher education committees and helped to embed reporting procedures within the wider framework of the College. These changes have proved beneficial in raising the profile of higher education, expediting business, and regulating, enhancing and integrating the management of the provision within the overarching context of College business. The College has responded appropriately to the recommendation of the Developmental engagement.

12   Overall, the College is diligent in meeting the requirements of the partnership agreements. However in 2010-11, due to staff shortage, changes were made to the validated arrangements for the FdA Business Management. The programme as approved by the University consists of 'core' and 'option' modules, but restrictions on module choice at the College means that all modules are compulsory. A level 5 option module, designed to follow the core modules in the second year, was taught to first-year students in the second semester. The missing level 4 option is to be taught to this cohort in the current academic year. There are no formal prerequisites for the level 5 module and student performance was satisfactory. An email was sent to the link tutor at the University in January 2011, two weeks before the start of the semester, but formal approval from the University was not received before teaching commenced. The team consider that the College should have obtained approval for the change from the University prior to the start of teaching or else delivered the programme as validated.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

13   Staff develop new programmes with direct reference to the Academic Infrastructure. For ensuring academic standards, the references include subject benchmark statements, the FHEQ and the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*. New proposals are subject to the University's procedures. The College has raised the awareness of the role of the Academic Infrastructure through specific staff development sessions.

14   The College has responded positively to the Developmental engagement recommendation that its Higher Education Quality Assurance Manual be developed into a more useful reference tool for staff on quality assurance and enhancement matters including the use of the Academic Infrastructure. The manual now contains additional information about the FHEQ, including descriptors for higher education qualifications at levels 4, 5 and 6, and reference to each section of the *Code of practice*. The College uses the manual to explain features of the Academic Infrastructure to staff who are new to higher education. Programme teams use it as a reference document. However, there is room for further development of the Higher Education Quality Assurance Manual to increase the level of detail and to make its guidance more directly relevant to staff activities. For example, advice

could be more closely related to the timing of staff activities during the year and provide more detailed and systematic guidance on the implications of the Academic Infrastructure, including the precepts of the *Code of practice* and the expectations of the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*. It is advisable that the College develops the Higher Education Quality Assurance Manual to provide a more detailed and systematic consideration of the Academic Infrastructure and improved guidance on quality matters.

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

15   Annual monitoring processes involve a number of different reports. The link tutor coordinates the production of an annual report to the University for each of its programmes which covers a number of quality indicators including external examiner reports, student responses, and data on retention and progression. The College produces an annual self-assessment report for each of its curriculum areas covering both further and higher education. It draws on data from a range of sources, including the annual reports to the University. A separate overarching self-assessment report for the higher education provision has been introduced recently to provide an overview of the provision. It is submitted by the Director of Higher Education to the Higher Education Strategic Management and Quality Group for consideration. Action plans based on the self-assessment reports are considered at the Higher Education Strategic Management and Quality Group and the Higher Education Coordinators Committee which oversee implementation by programme teams. Generally College self-assessment reports give due consideration to issues concerning higher education and provide the consistency of oversight recommended in the Developmental engagement. However, this is not always so; for example in the case of changes to the validated version of the FdA Business Management considered in paragraph 12. This was not included in the curriculum area self-assessment report. It is advisable to ensure that there is appropriate prior approval for changes to programmes in operation and that such changes are reported through the College annual monitoring processes.

16   The University appoints the external examiners, and their reports, including an action plan, form a crucial part of the College annual monitoring processes. External examiners report that the College quality monitoring processes are effective and that the moderation of assessments is robust. The College has instituted a system for recording the comments of external examiners and tracking the progress of the resultant action plans. It helps to ensure that the processes for assessment, progression and the determination of awards are conducted fairly, and that the College responds quickly to comments from external examiners. The tracking system ensures that the committees overseeing the provision are informed properly on the progress of actions resulting from external examiner comments. The relevant committee then takes action quickly where necessary. The system for tracking the responses to issues raised by external examiners is an area of good practice.

17   The Director of Higher Education is a member of a collaborative partnership sub-committee at the University. Programme staff attend a collaborative partners day at the University. These links allow useful discussions between College and University staff. Topics have included the quality of work placements and continuous professional development. The University representative confirmed that communication between collaborative partners is effective and that the University regards its relationship with the College as mature and valuable.

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

18   The College has a variety of useful mechanisms to ensure that staff receive appropriate continuous professional development. Every staff member is contractually entitled to five days of continuous professional development per year. There are also six College development days. The College has an induction for all new staff that covers the requirements of higher education and introduces staff to the Higher Education Quality Assurance Manual. New staff also receive a mentor to help them, for example, on assessment practice. Existing staff starting to teach higher education receive the same induction as new staff. The University provides a variety of useful staff development opportunities that have been taken up by College staff. Link tutors sometimes facilitate the running of programme-specific staff development by the University. The College keeps a clear record of the staff development undertaken by each member of staff and includes discussions on continuous professional development as part of annual appraisal.

19   The College ensures that the staff teaching the provision undertake suitable scholarly activity to support the delivery of its programmes. It prioritises activities with reference to current and planned programmes. The detailed continuous professional development records show that staff are undertaking a variety of relevant scholarly activities. For example, some staff are reading for master's or doctorate awards or studying entrepreneurship at levels 5 and 6. All new teaching staff either hold or are working towards a teaching qualification and normally have professional experience in their vocational area.

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

20   The management structures and reporting mechanisms described and evaluated in paragraphs 9 to 12 and 15 to 17 apply to the management of the quality of learning opportunities. The College implements its partnership agreements to ensure that the overall quality of the student learning experience is equivalent to that at the University. It is responsible for the quality of teaching and learning, student recruitment and induction, student support, library and learning resources, and accommodation, as well as arrangements for work-based learning.

21   The College has appropriate mechanisms for allocating resources to fulfil its obligations to the University. The Director of Higher Education holds an annual operating budget which services the needs of each programme, including the purchase of learning materials, and also coordinates bids for capital funding. This may be supplemented by funding from the Executive Director of Curriculum. Senior management use reviews of the College business plan to monitor and enhance student learning opportunities.

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

22   The College fulfils its obligations to the University for the quality of learning opportunities through procedures described in paragraphs 9 to 12, 15 to 17 and 20 to 21. Staff work closely with the University link tutors at programme level. The College gathers useful feedback from students on the quality of learning opportunities through module questionnaires and the Higher Education Survey. However, students met by the team suggested that the effectiveness of programme committees, which offer an additional opportunity to hear student views, is adversely affected by the failure to provide a clear agenda well in advance of the meetings.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

23   The College's use of the Academic Infrastructure is considered in paragraphs 13 and 14 above. The College is guided by the Academic Infrastructure in areas relevant to the quality of learning opportunities, although further detailed and systematic consideration would be beneficial, as evaluated in paragraph 14.

24   The College has used the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning* to provide suitable guidance for its relationship with employers. Work-based learning arrangements are informed by extensive employer involvement. Students on the education programmes, FdA Early Years Childhood Studies and FdA Complementary Therapies, benefit from the wide range of useful placements. These programmes have an employer forum to enhance the oversight of work-based learning, while other programmes have less formal arrangements. HND Performing Arts provides valuable work-related experience through local employer networks.

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

25   The College has effective policies for overseeing the quality of teaching and learning. It is responsible for ensuring that appropriately qualified teaching staff are appointed, subject to final approval by the University. Normally, staff have a level 6 qualification or above to deliver a level 4 or level 5 programme. Teaching staff are required to be members of the Institute for Learning. There is a lesson observation scheme, previously entirely based on further education criteria, which has been modified recently to include more elements that are relevant to higher education. The College has also introduced a peer review process, which provides staff with opportunities to share good teaching practice at levels 4 and 5. The outcomes of the process have received favourable comments from programme teams on such issues as the enhancement of teaching methods and learning materials.

26   Students report that tutors help them to work to a high standard and prepare them effectively for assessment tasks. Students who met the team gave positive views about programme content and the quality of their teaching and learning experiences. They commented favourably on the clarity of lesson objectives linked to their module guidelines. Students rated tutorials with staff as extremely beneficial to learning. There are consistently high levels of student satisfaction with the quality of teaching they receive from approachable and friendly tutors.

27   The College has built on the strengths in the area of written and verbal feedback to students identified in the Developmental engagement. Staff have used existing good practice

on the FdA Complementary Therapies and FdA Early Years Childhood Studies awards to improve written feedback on the business programmes. The external examiner for the business programmes commented in his 2010-11 report that the 'feedback reviewed strongly suggests this is a major strength of provision'. The external examiner for HND Performing Arts noted that 'feedback is targeted, clear, comprehensive, and provides clear roads forward for the student to improve'. Students report that they value the feedback they receive which helps them prepare effectively for their future assessments. Feedback is generally timely. On the FdA Early Years Childhood Studies students reported that the return of their work was sometimes delayed due to assessment procedures at the University, although provisional comments were available soon after their work was completed. The high quality of written and verbal feedback on assessed work constitutes good practice, enabling students to prepare effectively for future assessments.

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

28   The College is very responsive to the opinions of students, which are used to ensure a high level of support. For example, in 2010-11, students reported variations in practice over the support given to students with dyslexia. The College has responded by offering early diagnosis and testing at interview. All students who meet the criteria for a programme are interviewed. The College gives feedback to unsuccessful applicants and ensures that successful candidates are given comprehensive information about the requirements of their programme. This information includes an explanation of the workload, which is particularly helpful for part-time students. Students met by the team reported that they benefited considerably from this advice. There is also an informative induction programme where there is an opportunity for detailed discussions, for example on option choices.

29   All students have a personal tutor, for academic and pastoral support, who meets them on a regular basis and provides valuable support. The Additional Learning Support service provides personal and financial counselling, and careers and study skills support. The content of the virtual learning environment has improved considerably since the Developmental engagement and now includes materials to support learning across all programmes. Students value the high level of support they receive through the virtual learning environment, citing the ability to access materials off-campus, which is particularly valuable for part-time students. The College arrangements ensure a consistently high quality of academic and pastoral support for students, from application to completion. This facilitates student learning and is an area of good practice.

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

30   Arrangements for staff development are described in paragraphs 18 and 19. The College has clear procedures, including staff appraisal, to identify and provide for the needs of central support and technical staff.

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?

31   The initial validation process ensures that students have access to appropriate resources, including learning materials, computer hardware and software, and programme-specific facilities such as performance and treatment space. The feedback from students indicates a high level of satisfaction with College facilities. Students also have access to a range of University resources, if needed. The resources for FdA Complementary

Therapies are less comprehensive than for other programmes, although staff are working with the University to improve the library collections. The College recognises fully the needs of part-time students, providing good evening access to learning resources, including computer facilities.

32   Staffing issues, including long-term illness, have resulted in the need to adjust the approved timetables for students on the FdA Business Management, FdA Early Years Childhood Studies and the Professional Graduate Diploma in Education. On FdA Early Years Childhood Studies, and the Professional Graduate Diploma in Education this led to the cancellation or postponement of classes. Students reported that the changes to the teaching schedule had adversely affected their learning. On FdA Business Management, as reported in paragraph 12, a staffing shortage also resulted in changes to the structure of the programme for one student cohort. It is desirable to plan staffing arrangements in order to ensure that students receive an experience in line with the published teaching schedule.

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?

33   The College's responsibilities for publishing public information are clearly defined in the partnership agreements. It produces information locally which, in some cases, is combined with material developed as part of a consortium or directly by the University. The overall responsibility for the accuracy of all public information, publicity and promotional activity relating to the provision is the responsibility of the awarding body. Prior to its use, material is approved by the University according to agreed procedures.

34   The College promotes its higher education provision through its website, which has a dedicated section for University programmes, a prospectus specific to higher education, and programme leaflets. The College also uses direct marketing for its own level 3 students and open days that are specific to higher education.

35   The College provides students with programme handbooks in paper format and also online using the College's virtual learning environment. The requirements for the handbooks are set out in the College's Higher Education Quality Assurance Manual and include programme specifications, assessment schemes, reference to the relevant assessment regulations, supplementary information on timetables, staff names, and contact points. The handbooks also include extensive information about the procedures for complaints, appeals and suspected plagiarism, with links to University information and resources. Students receive module handbooks and can access the definitive module specifications through links from the College's virtual learning environment to the University's website. The College provides a range of appropriate information as part of its wider induction process.

36   The College's Employer Charter sets out expectations of both the College and employers in respect of a range of activities including work placements. This is supplemented by programme-specific material which establishes responsibilities, for example, in respect of mentoring. The majority of publicity materials and programme

handbooks for Foundation Degrees identify explicit progression routes in line with the expectations of the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*.

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?

37   A University 'Management of Collaborative Programmes' checklist, which is produced for each programme, identifies the responsibilities of named individuals at the College and University for public information. This provides a useful mechanism for the College to ensure that public information is checked for accuracy and completeness.

38   All copy for publicity material is produced by the programme leader and checked by the Director of Higher Education and the Executive Director of Curriculum before being sent to the University for approval. Programme handbooks have a consistent style using a template provided by the University to which staff add features specific to the College. Approval includes internal scrutiny by the Director of Higher Education and final sign-off by the University link tutor.

39   Across a number of programmes, the promotional information makes inconsistent reference to option modules. Despite the clear process for approval, some promotional material is inaccurate and includes option choices that are not running at the College. For some programmes, the names of options are included in the publicity material, while in others the range of options is unspecified. The College confirmed that limited student numbers often restricts its ability to offer the published options. While the validation procedures allow a student to undertake one or more options at a partner institution, there are no examples of College students doing so. It is desirable to ensure that publicity material accurately identifies the modules running at the College so that prospective students are provided with a clear understanding of their programme.

40   External examiner reports are available through the University's website in accordance with the HEFCE publication *Review of the Quality Assurance Framework: phase two outcomes*. This document expects that such reports are shared with students or their representatives. However, there is no routine reporting of this opportunity to students through, for example, handbooks or at programme committees. Students who met the team were unaware of the availability of external examiner reports.

41   The Developmental engagement recommended that the College ensure that all module guides for business programmes have the same level of detail as the best ones for other areas of the provision. The quality and consistency of the module guides on the business programmes has improved, thereby providing better assessment guidance for students.

42   The College gathers the views of students on the information they receive through the annual Higher Education Survey. This indicates that students are satisfied with the completeness, accuracy and usefulness of the published information they receive. This evaluation was confirmed by students during the visit and in the student written submission.

> **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

43   The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in October 2010. It addressed the following lines of enquiry agreed with the College:

Line of enquiry 1: The effectiveness of the processes and procedures for setting assessments and internal marking in maintaining academic standards.

Line of enquiry 2: The College processes for managing feedback on formative and summative assessment and the contribution of feedback to improving students' learning.

Line of enquiry 3: The accuracy and completeness of information on student assessment contained in the College's full range of publicity and promotional material, and the contribution of assessment information in supporting student learning.

44   The Developmental engagement identified a range of good practice relating to the assessment feedback given to students. This included the written feedback on FdSc Complementary Therapies and FdA Early Years Childhood Studies, and the verbal feedback given to students generally. It also highlighted the peer feedback on HNC Business Studies, FdA Early Years Childhood Studies, and HND Performing Arts, as well as the timely return of feedback to students and the formative feedback on academic writing provided by the Study Skills module on FdA Early Years Childhood Studies. The comprehensive range of student handbooks was also reported as good practice.

45   The Developmental engagement indicated that it was advisable to ensure that curriculum self-assessment reports cover all aspects of the provision in detail, and to ensure the terms of reference of the Higher Education Strategic Management and Quality Group and the Higher Education Coordinators Group are implemented. It also advised the need to improve the written feedback to students on the business programmes. The team considered it desirable to develop the content of the Higher Education Quality Assurance Manual and ensure its use by staff, and to enhance the level of detail in the module guides for business programmes.

D   Foundation Degrees

46   In 2011-12 the College is running four Foundation Degrees awarded by the University. In 2010-11, enrolment was 26 full-time and 57 part-time students representing 64 full-time equivalent students. For 2011-12, enrolment is 26 full-time and 62 part-time students giving a total of just over 67 full-time equivalent students. There are plans for a significant expansion of the Foundation Degree provision in the academic year 2012-13.

47   The College manages its Foundation Degrees in an effective manner as part of the oversight of all of its provision. The University provides access to some resources for students and extensive support for staff.

48   All the team's findings and conclusions listed below are relevant to the Foundation Degrees.

E   Conclusions and summary of judgements

49   The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Bury 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 Bolton.

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

- the system for tracking the responses to issues raised by external examiners is effective in ensuring that actions are implemented quickly and reported to the appropriate committees (paragraph 16)
- the high quality of written and verbal feedback on assessed work enables students to prepare effectively for future assessments (paragraph 27)
- a high level of academic and pastoral support is provided from application to completion which facilitates student learning (paragraphs 28 and 29).

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

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

- ensure that there is appropriate prior approval for changes to programmes in operation and that such changes are reported through the College annual monitoring processes (paragraphs 12 and 15)
- enhance the Higher Education Quality Assurance Manual to provide a more detailed and systematic consideration of the Academic Infrastructure and improved guidance on quality matters (paragraph 14).

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

- plan staffing arrangements in order to ensure that students receive an experience in line with the published teaching schedule (paragraph 32)
- ensure that publicity material accurately identifies the modules running at the College so that prospective students are provided with a clear understanding of their programme (paragraph 39).

53   Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, 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.

54   Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, 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.

55   Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, 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.

Bury College action plan relating to the Summative review: November 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 system for tracking the responses to issues raised by external examiners is effective in ensuring that actions are implemented quickly and reported to the appropriate committees (paragraph 16)	Continue with policy of tracking external examiner comments throughout the academic year through the committee structure; engage teaching staff involved in development of new higher education programmes to develop awareness of issues and resulting actions involved in delivering higher education	Review on regular basis through committee structures and continuous professional development; to be completed by July 2012	Director of Higher Education	Continued effective management of external examiner comments and actions and two continuous professional development sessions held	Higher Education Strategic Management and Quality Management group	Through external examiner comments, July 2012
• the high quality of written and verbal feedback on assessed work enables students to prepare effectively for future assessments	Continue with practice of regular reviewing of feedback sheets across the curriculum areas and disseminating good practice; continuous professional	Review on regular basis through committee structures and continuous professional development;	Director of Higher Education	Positive comments from external examiners	Higher Education Strategic Management and Quality Management group	Through external examiner comments, July 2012

(paragraph 27)	development sessions held for staff involved in new higher education developments	to be completed by July 2012				
• a high level of academic and pastoral support is provided from application to completion which facilitates student learning (paragraphs 28 and 29)	Peer review and lesson observation process to be rolled out to engage with all staff involved in higher education; staff involved in new higher education developments to observe existing programmes through the peer review process	Ongoing peer review and lesson observation throughout the academic year and all higher education programmes observed at least once by June 2012	Director of Higher Education to oversee peer review and lesson observation process; relevant curriculum director to complete lesson observations	Positive outcomes from staff involved in peer review and lesson observation process; positive student feedback from students in the annual Higher Education Survey	Higher Education Strategic Management and Quality Group	Peer review and lesson observation outcomes; annual Higher Education Survey
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:						
• ensure that there is appropriate prior approval for changes to programmes in operation and that such changes are reported through the College annual monitoring processes (paragraphs 12 and 15)	Each higher education programme to report any intended changes and reasons for change to the programme to the Higher Education Strategic Management and Quality Group. Permission from the Higher Education Strategic	January 2012	The Director of Higher Education and the Higher Education Strategic Management and Quality Group	All intended changes to programmes reported and tracked through the Higher Education Strategic Management and Quality Group and the annual Higher Education self-assessment review	Higher Education Strategic Management and Quality Group	Higher education annual self-assessment report

Integrated quality and enhancement review

	Management and Quality Group group must be sought prior to requesting approval from the higher education institution					
• enhance the Higher Education Quality Assurance Manual to provide a more detailed and systematic consideration of the Academic Infrastructure and improved guidance on quality matters (paragraph 14)	The Higher Education Quality Assurance Manual to be enhanced based on identified best practice; more detailed explanation of quality assurance procedures and timelines to be developed to facilitate new higher education programmes	March 2012	The Director of Higher Education and the Director of Quality	Expansion of the quality assurance manual with web links to relevant higher education institution policies	Higher Education Strategic Management and Quality Group	Continuous professional development sessions to be held with higher education delivery staff in order to update teams on the changes to the Quality Assurance Manual; feedback sought from staff regarding usefulness of manual during sessions and amendments made accordingly; ongoing review of quality assurance manual throughout academic year via established course committee structure

22

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:						
• plan staffing arrangements in order to ensure that students receive an experience in line with the published teaching schedule (paragraph 32)	Each higher education programme to report any intended changes and reasons for change to staffing to the Higher Education Strategic Management and Quality Group. Permission from the Higher Education Strategic Management and Quality Group group must be sought prior to requesting approval from the higher education institution	January 2012	The Director of Higher Education and the Higher Education Strategic Management and Quality Group	All intended changes to staffing reported and tracked through the Higher Education Strategic Management and Quality Group and the annual higher education self-assessment report	Higher Education Strategic Management and Quality Group	Higher education annual self-assessment report
• ensure that publicity material accurately identifies the modules running at the College so that prospective students are provided with a clear understanding of their programme (paragraph 39)	All marketing material to be approved by the Director of Higher Education prior to approval by the relevant higher education institution; all current marketing material to be checked for clarity	March 2012	The Director of Higher Education and the Higher Education Strategic Management and Quality Group	Positive feedback from students on the accuracy of course information	Higher Education Strategic Management and Quality Group	Annual higher education survey