Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

K College

February 2012

SR 032/12

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 K College carried out in February 2012

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

Good practice

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

- the Course Review and Improvement Tracking meetings for obtaining student evaluation and involving teaching staff, and sometimes awarding body staff, in discussions about programmes, with the FdA Broadcast and Interactive Television using this process particularly well
- the manner in which the management and staff have used the merger to enhance the management structure and reporting processes for the delivery of higher education
- the interactive database of teaching resources for teaching staff is effective in facilitating the sharing of good practice across the provision
- the College's virtual learning environment provides extensive resources and learning opportunities, together with student evaluations through the Learner Voice Forum.

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 **desirable** for the College to:

- continue to enhance the College's links with employers by developing a work-based learning strategy
- complete its investigation of sound leakage in the accommodation for the popular music performance and broadcasting and interactive television programmes, and ensure that action is taken to resolve the problem.

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 K 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 Canterbury Christ Church University, the University of Kent, the University of Greenwich, and Edexcel. The review was carried out by Kevin Burnside, Mark Cooper, David Knowles (reviewers) and Philip Markey (coordinator).

2   The Summative review team (the team) conducted the review in agreement with the College and in accordance with *The handbook for Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review* (the handbook), published by QAA. Evidence in support of the Summative review included documentation supplied by the College and its awarding bodies, meetings with staff, students and partner institutions, and reports of reviews by QAA and from inspections by Ofsted. In particular, the team drew on the findings and recommendations of the two Developmental engagements conducted before and after the merger of South and West Kent Colleges. A summary of findings from these Developmental engagements 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 to help 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   South and West Kent College, trading as K College, is a general further education college. It is the main provider of full and part-time higher education in the South and West Kent region. In April 2010, South Kent and West Kent Colleges merged to form K College. There are five key campus locations within Kent at Ashford, Dover, Folkestone, Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells. The majority of the higher education programmes are delivered at the Tonbridge campus, while art and design, media, construction, and engineering are delivered at Ashford. The College's vision is to inspire its learners to realise their full potential and equip themselves with the skills and knowledge they need for a successful working life. The College provides learning opportunities to 25,000 individuals. There are 736 higher education students, of which 301 are part-time, making a total of 607 full-time equivalent students (FTEs).

5   The College offers the following programmes listed beneath their awarding bodies and with full-time equivalent numbers of students in brackets.

University of Greenwich

- BA Fine Art (top-up) (13.4)
- Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (DTLLS) (27)
- FdA Early Years (66)
- FdA Fine Art Practice (40.9)
- FdA Learning Support (13)
- FdA Performing Arts (20)
- FdA Supporting Teaching and Learning (11)

- FdSc Building Studies (pathways Architectural Design, Building Surveying, Construction Management and Quantity Surveying) (20)
- HNC Building Studies (pathways Architectural Design, Building Surveying, Construction Management and Quantity Surveying) (26)
- HND/BA Business with Marketing, Finance, Tourism (25)

University of Kent

- BA (top-up) Fashion and Textiles (20)
- BA (top-up) Fine Art (9)
- BA (top-up) Photography (14)
- BA (top-up) Graphic Design (16)
- BA Popular Music Performance (14)
- BA (top up) Visual Design (11)
- FdA Fashion and Textiles (26)
- FdA Textiles and Fashion (21)
- FdA Photography (20)
- HNC/D Engineering (Mechanical) (0)
- HNC/D Engineering (Electrical) (2.5)
- HNC, FdSc Construction Management (12)
- HND Fine Art (12)
- HND Graphic Design (38)
- HND Interactive Media (0)
- HND Photography (36)

Canterbury Christ Church University

- FdA Broadcast and Interactive Television (17)
- Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (DTLLS) (46.5)

Edexcel

- HNC Computing (4.5)

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

6   K College was one of the first further education colleges in the region to offer higher education programmes. The College has arrangements with Canterbury Christ Church University, the University of Greenwich, the University of Kent, and Edexcel. All the agreements and the Edexcel statement are signed and in place. Following the merger and the new student funding policy, the College is currently working with its awarding bodies to rationalise its provision.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

7   The most significant development is the merger between two colleges to form K College. The new building at Tonbridge opened in September 2011. There are plans to build a new campus at Ashford to open in September 2013. The new Higher Education Strategy takes account of the impact of higher fees, the new campus at Tonbridge, and plans to develop at Ashford. Consideration will also been given to the new UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) for 2012-13, and possible developments with new awarding bodies to increase the range of programmes. It is not possible to fully evaluate the impact of the merger, but the College has identified possible benefits such as the

rationalisation of programmes, wider staffing resource, and developments in a single higher education management system. The merger also provided the College with the opportunity to revise its management system for higher education.

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 team. The submission was developed through five focus groups with 35 students attending. The meetings were led by the Higher Education Quality and Partnership Manager. One student from each group acted as editor and amended the minutes from each meeting to ensure that the submission reflected the views of students. Most of the responses were positive about all aspects of the provision and, in particular, the quality of teaching and support, the use of visiting speakers, and the feedback received on assignments. There were concerns expressed about access to some facilities in performing arts, noise leaking between the TV studio and the music rehearsal rooms, limited space in Fine Art, and the high demand for the use of the dark room and printing facilities. The team had the opportunity to discuss these and other matters in its meeting with students during the visit.

B   Evaluation of the management of HEFCE-funded higher education

Core theme 1: Academic standards

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

9   Since the merger of South Kent and West Kent Colleges, K College has introduced a comprehensive structure for the management of higher education. In this structure, the Deputy Principal (Curriculum and Quality) has ultimate responsibility for the Higher Education Strategy across the College sites, supported by the Assistant Principal for Adult and Higher Education. This role is supported by the Assistant Principal for Quality and Performance and the Assistant Principal Adult Education who have senior management responsibility for quality assurance, student performance, and programme development. The Head of Higher Education is responsible for the management of higher education across the sites and the Head of Quality (14-19 and Higher Education) is responsible for day-to-day liaison with the awarding bodies, programme review, and in-house training and development. There are four Higher Education Learner Managers responsible for curriculum management and delivery, looking after clusters of provision at the two main college sites at Tonbridge and Ashford. Responsibility for the day-to-day running of the programmes lies with programme leaders who manage recruitment, assessment and internal moderation, and liaison with the link tutor from the relevant awarding body. This is a new system which the College intends to review.

10   The College has also developed a comprehensive system of meetings and reporting structures to support its provision. At senior management level, higher education features on the agendas of both the Senior Leadership Team and College Governance meetings. From here, there are four regular forums for discussing related issues and producing reports at institutional level. The termly Performance and Review Board considers quality issues and student retention and achievement. The monthly Higher Education Strategy meetings look at curriculum development and awarding body issues.

The monthly Higher Education Finance and Resource meetings consider funding and resourcing. The Heads of Curriculum also meet monthly to discuss the operation of their provision and any student-related matters. At an operational level, there are regular Learner Manager, Quality and Planning meetings and Higher Education Programme Leader meetings. The findings of these meetings are used to inform the annual monitoring and review reporting process. Students attend Course Review and Improvement Tracking (CRIT) meetings which involve programme team leaders, learner managers, and sometimes awarding body representatives. These work well and provide an effective forum for students to express their views. Any issues are highlighted in the meetings and minutes, and in the majority of instances immediate action is taken. The team considers that the CRIT meetings are good practice, especially in the FdA Television Broadcast and Interactive Television, because they provide an effective means of gathering student evaluations and evaluating the provision.

11   Programme leaders compile detailed, evaluative annual monitoring reports as part of the College's annual course review cycle. Evidence for the reports is gathered from sources such as student feedback, external examiner reports, student achievement data, and the minutes of operational meetings. The reports include updates from the previous year's action plan, sections on academic standards, curriculum development and resources, the effectiveness of collaboration with the awarding bodies, and staff development. Good practice and areas for development are also identified and lead to the production of an action plan for the following year. The findings from the annual monitoring reports are reviewed by staff from the relevant awarding body and fed into the College's departmental review, self-assessment, and quality improvement processes. Since the College merger, the planning, production and review of the annual monitoring report uses a more standardised and consistent process.

12   The merger provided some challenges to the College and its management of higher education. The team considers the manner in which the management and staff have used the merger to enhance the management structure and reporting processes for the delivery of higher education as good practice.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

13   The College has recently revised its Higher Education Strategy to give full consideration to issues such as the Quality Code, the impact of the higher tuition fees from 2012-13, internal College developments at the Ashford and Folkestone sites, and improved progression opportunities from level 3 into higher education. The strategy consists of seven key objectives relating to, for example, employer engagement, innovative practice in development and delivery, and providing a positive learning experience. Programme leaders have found that these developments have a very positive effect, particularly in relation to the harmonisation of practices relating to the management of the provision, stronger links with awarding bodies, and a clearer higher education identity for the College.

14   The key elements of the Academic Infrastructure are fully embedded into the College's provision. Programme validation and review are carried out with full consideration of the Academic Infrastructure. Staff involved in the delivery of the College's higher education programmes are fully aware of the need to follow the awarding bodies' academic regulations and ensure that all aspects of the Academic Infrastructure are considered. They receive specific higher education training from the awarding partners, including information on the various elements of the Academic Infrastructure. Opportunities are also taken to share good practice across higher education teams within the College in areas such as assessment, and to identify any areas for improvement.

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   All programmes are initially validated, reviewed and subsequently revalidated in line with the policy of the awarding bodies. The processes for validation and review ensure that all programmes are scrutinised by subject specialists. Any minor changes to modules also need to be approved by the awarding body. The College's quality cycle and policies are designed to complement the awarding bodies' quality processes. Course Review and Improvement Tracker meetings, for example, are now held for all programmes. This satisfies the monitoring needs of both the College and the awarding bodies and looks at all aspects of programme management and quality improvement, including recruitment, achievement and feedback, and action required from external examiner reports.

16   Student attainment, achievement and academic standards are monitored through the College's termly Curriculum Performance Review Board. The Board considers key performance indicators such as retention, achievement, and equality and diversity issues. Student performance is also monitored through the collection of key data which are tracked on both the College's and the awarding bodies' data management systems. The results are used to inform the annual monitoring and review process.

17   The College meets the requirements of its awarding bodies with reference to assessment. Student assignment briefs are written by the relevant module tutor and internally moderated by another designated member of the programme team who checks that the assignment tasks are set at an appropriate level to meet the relevant learning outcomes. The students find that the assignments are clear, sufficiently challenging and include a varied range of tasks and activities. All assignments are available in hard copy and on the College's virtual learning environment. The external examiner, appointed by the awarding bodies, scrutinises the assignments to ensure that they meet the necessary requirements. College staff have opportunities to share good practice in assignment writing during the weekly staff development sessions. One issue identified during the February 2011 Developmental engagement relating to the provision of clear and transparent assessment criteria on all assignments has now been addressed. The students have a clear understanding of the set criteria and the level of work required to achieve the necessary standard.

18   Students receive detailed feedback from their tutors. This is in the form of written feedback relating to their performance in their module assignments and through formative, verbal feedback provided during one-to-one tutorials. Assignment work submitted by the students is assessed promptly and returned within the College's specified timescale of two working weeks. The written feedback is adequately detailed and identifies clearly both the positive aspects of the work and where potential improvements could be made. The students speak positively about the quality of assessor feedback and the levels of guidance and support they receive. They are clearly satisfied with the overall assessment process. Much of the student work is subject to double marking and internal moderation to ensure that the appropriate standards are maintained. Practical work and student performances and presentations are subject to joint or panel observations to ensure the reliability and consistency of the assessor judgements.

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

19   The awarding bodies provide a wide range of higher education professional development opportunities for programme teams. These include sessions on, for example,

higher education teaching and learning strategies, the Academic Infrastructure, information and learning technologies, assessment, and providing feedback to students. This also provides the programme teams with opportunities to share ideas and good practice with staff from the awarding bodies. The take-up of these opportunities provided for College staff is generally high.

20   The College's own staff development programme includes specialist staff training. Weekly staff development sessions have been introduced during this academic year and have included sessions on, for example, equality and diversity, the use of the electronic individual learning plan, assessment standardisation, and subject updating. The College's staff development policy has recently been revised. The current staff development priorities include teacher training, professional updating, and peer work with awarding bodies.

21   Since the Developmental engagement, a range of harmonisation activities have taken place for staff, including the introduction of templates for handbooks, assignment briefs and assessment feedback forms, and revised guidance for staff on moderation and verification. Training has also been provided for staff on the College's higher education assessment policy. The College has developed a specialist resource bank for staff delivering programmes, including templates for assignment briefs and assessment feedback sheets, study skills resources, and direct links to websites, such as the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, the Higher Education Academy, and partner awarding bodies' websites. A 'teachers' toolkit' is included on the intranet.

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

Core theme 2: Quality of learning opportunities

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

22   The College's responsibilities for managing the quality of learning opportunities are the same as for managing academic standards as outlined in paragraphs 9 to 11. All the College's higher education quality groups and reports make extensive reference to the management of learning opportunities. There are thorough evaluations of learning and teaching, student support, learning resources, and staff development.

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

23   The College's responsibilities for managing the quality of learning opportunities and the reporting structure are the same as for that identified in paragraphs 15 to 17.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

24   How the College takes account of the Academic Infrastructure in relation to academic standards is outlined in paragraphs 13 and 14. It is generally well embedded in the management of the quality of learning opportunities, for example in learning and teaching, student support, and the evaluation of staff teaching. While students are generally positive

about the work-based and work-related learning experience, the College would benefit from a work-based learning policy reflecting the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning* (see paragraph 28).

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

25   The College recently drafted a clearly thought out Higher Education Strategy, but this does not include a Teaching and Learning Strategy for Higher Education. The College assures itself that the quality of teaching and learning is enhanced in a variety of ways. There is a rigorous and clearly defined higher education lesson observation and feedback process. Staff development is delivered and supported by experienced learning managers. There are weekly staff training sessions, and additional training materials specific to higher education are made available to staff on a dedicated area of the virtual learning environment. Staff are also encouraged to take up training offered by the awarding bodies

26   There is a range of interesting and challenging teaching and learning methods used. These are identified in a wide range of handbooks. Students are positive about their learning experiences, saying that class activities are challenging, interesting and informative. There is an emphasis on student-centred learning and developing independent learning. Programme teams have been successful in developing technology-based learning in specialist areas such as broadcasting, music, interactive media, and photography.

27   The College has recently launched an innovative interactive database of teaching resources, the K College Learning Improvement Centre, designed to disseminate and promote good practice in teaching and learning across the College. New and existing support materials are gradually being moved to this user-friendly learning improvement facility. The team considers that the interactive database of teaching resources is good practice because it facilitates the sharing of good practice across the provision.

28   The College has a strong relationship with a range of local employers who contribute to programme development and provide work-based learning and placement opportunities to students. Employers are involved in the programme delivery through guest presentations and also support assessment of presentations and project work. Through its contacts with employers, the College is able to offer students a wide range of relevant and challenging work placements and work-based learning opportunities, mainly in its Foundation Degree provision. These are appreciated by students because they enable them to relate theory to practice, and to develop work-related knowledge and skills. The organisation of this form of learning is the responsibility of programmes, rather than being based on a College process. This type of learning is available in a variety of forms, ranging from distinct work-based learning modules to short placements, work experience during vacations, and students taking up placements as they arise. These different modes are suited to each programme. While there are many positive aspects to this type of learning, the team considers that it is desirable that the College develops a work-based learning strategy. This would enable the College to highlight many of these positive aspects and to provide guidance for programme teams.

29   The College has a well organised process for the observation of teaching and learning. This is carried out throughout the year using specifically designed criteria and reports for higher education. The reports allow judgements to be made on session planning and the quality of teaching, learning, and attainment, as well as capturing feedback from learners. Very detailed and evaluative feedback is provided by the observer, highlighting both the positive aspects and areas for improvement arising from the session.

Developments have taken place since September 2011, including unannounced observations and mentoring for staff who receive a less than satisfactory grade.

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

30   The College's system for providing academic and personal support is well organised and much appreciated by students. Student support commences with pre-entry advice and interview, continues to the induction process, and then to personal and academic support during the period of the course through personal tutors. The College and awarding bodies provide a wide range of support services. Specialist advice and support in accessing these services is provided by two newly appointed personal tutors. The student submission and comments by students to the team demonstrate that there is a high level of accessibility and support provided for students by staff.

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

31   Staff development arrangements are identified in paragraphs 19 and 20. With reference to maintaining and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, the College has concentrated on the development of higher education skills and knowledge. This has mainly taken the form of staff taking up Continuous Professional Development activities with the awarding bodies. For example, Christ Church Canterbury University offers a 40 credit programme in higher education learning and teaching. The University of Greenwich offers a range of free short programmes, and the University of Kent offers a distance learning programme for the Post Graduate Certificate in Education. Staff development records indicate that College staff take up these offers and complete the programmes.

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?

32   Most of the higher education provision is located at the Tonbridge campus. There is a new, purpose-built facility with high specification information technology and specialist facilities especially to support the media and design programmes. Existing facilities have also been refurbished. Following the merger, a strategic property review was carried out which identified the potential for development of new facilities at the Ashford campus, and plans are well advanced for the relocation in 2013 to a new site and purpose-built building in the centre of the town.

33   The availability, quality and accessibility of facilities are of a high quality and appreciated by students. The quantity of books, journals, information technology, and specialist resources enable students to achieve the learning outcomes of their awards. The remote accessibility of learning resources on the internet through the virtual learning environment and the learning resource centre is particularly appreciated by part-time students. There are direct links from the virtual learning environment to the awarding bodies' websites. The team considers that the resources, interactivity and extensive opportunities to support student learning, including the innovative Learner Voice Forum provided by the College virtual learning environment, is good practice.

34   The student submission identified some concerns regarding sound leakage from the studio facilities at the Tonbridge campus. These were repeated by broadcasting and interactive television and popular music students in their meeting with the team. The College has been aware of this problem for some time and steps have been taken to address it,

for example, by reviewing the timetable. However, the problem has yet to be resolved. The team considers that it is desirable for the College to complete its investigation and ensure that action is taken to resolve the problem of sound leakage in the accommodation for the popular music performance and broadcasting and interactive television 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?

35   The College is clear about what it is responsible for publishing. It has an attractive user-friendly website with a section dedicated to higher education programmes. Programmes offered are clearly labelled and the College provides further details on the awarding bodies, programme content, fees, and other useful information for studying at higher education level. The website also has a direct link to an electronic University and Professional Course Guide which supports the content of the College's higher education prospectus. The Higher Education Prospectus is detailed, informative and covers the key information prospective students need to know about the programmes they intend to study. It clearly defines the level of study for each programme and progression opportunities following successful completion. Students find the information provided to be accurate and informative.

36   Students have access to either a printed or electronic copy of programme and module handbooks on the virtual learning environment. The handbooks are produced based on awarding body templates. Handbooks contain accurate and full information on modules, curricula, assessment, guidance, and services. They are a useful guide for the students on what to expect during their studies and the support available to them.

37   The College's virtual learning environment contains a range of online resources including Learning Resource Centre virtual resources, initial advice and guidance material, news and information, and College and University policies and procedures. These pages are well populated with information that is valuable to students and many have interactive activities available to them to extend learning. Students also have access to partner university virtual learning environments. To support this they can access an interactive page for their programme of study and also a generic higher education page for general information. This has hyperlinks to partner universities from the College's virtual learning environment. It is also possible to access an innovative Learner Voice Forum page where students can post questions and opinions on their experiences and receive responses from the College management team. Students commented that they use the College's virtual learning environment extensively and find the information accurate and complete.

38   The College produced a Higher Education Strategy in line with HEFCE's priorities and guidance. It sets out the vision for the provision, its market, potential curriculum development, and ambitious expansion plans. This is a well written public document which shows a clear direction for the higher education provision.

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?

39   The College's marketing team formally manages information placed on the website. Along with members of the applications team, the Head of Higher Education and programme leaders, the marketing team liaises directly with awarding bodies over website content in accordance with partnership agreements. This process works effectively to ensure information is in line with the awarding body agreements.

40   Copy for the prospectus and website is written by programme leaders and checked for quality and consistency by the Higher Education Quality and Partnership Manager and by the awarding bodies before going to print. Entries are updated annually, and in-year amendments are actioned through the Marketing Director after accuracy has been checked by the Quality and Partnership Manager. The website is the College's key marketing tool and has the most up to date information with students and enquirers directed to the relevant pages.

41   In order to ensure consistency across the provision, a programme handbook template has been developed by the College based on existing good practice. Handbook guidance sets out the additional information that programme leaders are expected to complete, and the process is fully audited. This means higher education managers can be assured about the level of information available to learners in handbooks. Students commented that their handbooks provide them with useful information to support their studies.

42   Programme leaders reflect on the quality of public information as part of the annual monitoring process. Programme teams also assess online information as part of Course Review Improvement Tracker meetings. These termly meetings have a set agenda which includes a discussion on the marketing and public information produced by the College.

43   There is a rigorous audit process for checking and signing off the College's virtual learning environment. The audit ensures key details are present including course-specific information, and teaching staff and awarding body contact details. The College strongly encourages programme teams to improve the interactivity and population of this electronic resource, and an incentive and rating scheme has been developed to further enhance its usefulness to students.

44   Overall, the public information for which the College is responsible is accurate and complete. There are processes in place to check that accuracy and completeness of public information are ensured.

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

45   Two Development engagements were carried out separately at West Kent College in October 2009 and at K College (Ashford Campus) in February 2011. The lines of enquiry agreed with the Colleges were:

West Kent College

Line of enquiry 1: How do the systems for managing assessment across a diverse range of programmes in partnership with different higher education institutions ensure academic standards?

Line of enquiry 2: How do assessment methods support students to become self-directed learners, thus enhancing their employability?

Line of enquiry 3: How does information given to students throughout the application process, during induction and on-programme ensure that students understand the assessment requirements?

South Kent College

Line of enquiry 1: Is the management of assessment across a diverse range of programmes on different sites effective in assuring academic standards?

Line of enquiry 2: How do assessment methods and feedback enhance employability skills?

Line of enquiry 3: How does the College ensure that information provided to students about assessment is complete accurate and timely?

46   The merged Colleges decided to put the action plans together to use the Developmental engagements as tools for quality enhancement. The teams identified good practices in a number of areas. The monthly higher education group meetings provide a valuable mechanism for sharing good practice. There is good staff development with those parts of the Academic Infrastructure relating to assessment, and the emerging use of quality assurance procedures to achieve consistency in ensuring academic standards in the higher education provision. There are strong links with local employers which give opportunities for assessment to be linked to employability and progression. In some subject areas, assessment methods clearly support self-directed learning and enhance progression opportunities. There is the provision of a single source of programme information through the virtual learning environment, which assures the accessibility of accurate and up to date assessment requirements.

47   There was one advisable recommendation regarding the need to provide clear and transparent assessment criteria for assignments on all programmes to ensure consistency of marking, increase students' understanding of their mark or grade, and enhance students' potential to improve their performance. The College has redesigned the assessment information to meet this recommendation.

48   There were seven desirable recommendations: to draw on opportunities available through partnerships with several higher education institutions; to share good practice in managing assessment; to build on the opportunities afforded by the strong employer links; to

ensure that the design of assessments is linked to employability; and to focus on developing documentation that enhances the rigour of the assessment procedures, with particular emphasis on assessment criteria. The College was also recommended to share the good practice in the format of feedback sheets that encourage students to develop further skills and knowledge; to ensure that written feedback is given to students that encourages them to improve their performance; to provide further support for students in acquiring writing and referencing skills; and to encourage students to read more widely. All these recommendations have been implemented.

D   Foundation Degrees

49   The College offers 10 Foundation Degrees in areas such as broadcasting and interactive television, early years, learning support, building studies, fine art, performing arts and interactive media. There are plans to develop new Foundation Degrees in business, health and care, illustration, and applied science.

50   Recruitment is strong with most programmes achieving 20 plus students. Completion rates are satisfactory. During validation, programmes received input from some employers and the College maintains extensive links with employers to provide placement opportunities for students.

51   The good practices and recommendations listed in paragraphs 53 to 56 also apply to the Foundation Degrees.

E   Conclusions and summary of judgements

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

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

- the Course Review and Improvement Tracking meetings for obtaining student evaluation and involving teaching staff, and sometimes awarding body staff, in discussions about programmes, with the FdA Broadcast and Interactive Television using this process particularly well (paragraph 10)
- the manner in which the management and staff have used the merger to enhance the management structure and reporting processes for the delivery of higher education (paragraph 12)
- the interactive database of teaching resources for teaching staff is effective in facilitating the sharing of good practice across the provision (paragraph 27)
- the College's virtual learning environment provides extensive resources and learning opportunities, together with student evaluations through the Learner Voice Forum (paragraph 33).

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

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

- continue to enhance the College's links with employers by developing a work-based learning strategy (paragraph 28)
- complete its investigation of sound leakage in the accommodation for the popular music performance and broadcasting and interactive television programmes, and ensure that action is taken to resolve the problem (paragraph 34).

56   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 bodies.

57   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.

58   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.

K College action plan relating to the Summative review: January 2012						
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 Course Review and Improvement Tracking meetings for obtaining student evaluation and involving teaching staff, and sometimes awarding body staff, in discussions about programmes, with the FdA Broadcast and Interactive Television using this process particularly well (paragraph 10)	Continue timetable of Course Review and Improvement Tracking and Programme Leaders' meetings and process Ensure continued participation of students, teaching staff and when possible awarding body staff Monitor evaluations and action as needed; Learner Managers to report on Course Review and Improvement Tracking in their areas at the higher education team meetings	Programme Course Review and Improvement Tracking timetable June 2012	Programme Leaders; Higher Education Learner Managers	Student dialogue in Course Review and Improvement Tracking monitoring of actions/views arising	Head of Higher Education Vice Principal Adult and Higher Education	College end of year reports produced for the College performance and standards review boards Annual Monitoring Reports and reports to awarding bodies

• the manner in which the management and staff have used the merger to enhance the management structure and reporting processes for the delivery of higher education (paragraph 12)	To continue to review management structure and higher education reporting processes in line with funding, validation, partnership changes across the College	September 2012	Programme leaders Higher Education Learner Managers Head of Higher Education Adult and Higher Education Assistant Principal Senior Management Team	Robust reporting and evaluating processes embedded in the College culture	Higher Education Learner Managers Head of Higher Education Adult and Higher Education Assistant Principal Senior Management Team	Main college reports Course Review and Improvement Tracking, Annual Monitoring Reports, Module Maintenance Annual Institutional Review Self-evaluation documents Standard review boards
• the interactive database of teaching resources for teaching staff is effective in facilitating the sharing of good practice across the provision (paragraph 27)	The continued development of K Learning Improvement Centre which is to include a higher education room To include regular review and updating of the content K Learning Improvement Centre audit of content use and satisfaction	May 2012 September 2012 December 2012	Higher Education Learner Managers	Evidence of shared good practice across the provision	Head of Higher Education	Lesson observation evaluations Feedback from Learner Manager Meetings

the College's virtual learning environment provides extensive resources and learning opportunities, together with student evaluations through the Learner Voice Forum (paragraph 33).	Audit and evaluate the quality, usage and accuracy of the resources posted on Moodle Marketing regularly respond to learner voice, passing onto Learner Managers and Head of Higher Education for response Evaluate learner voice on a regular basis; respond as necessary	July 2012 September 2012 December 2012 September 2013 New role for Higher Education planning and monitoring May 2012 onwards; monthly reporting to Head of Higher Education	Higher Education Learner Managers Information and Learning Technology team Head of Higher Education	Positive student/staff feedback Students who have responded in this way feel listened to	Programme Leaders; Teaching staff Learner Managers Head of Higher Education	Reports presented to Head of Higher Education to be incorporated into Higher Education and University reports Tracking of student voice
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:						
to continue to enhance the College's links with employers by developing a work-based learning	Develop a work-based learning strategy Consultation with employers, students and staff	July 2012	Higher Education Learner Managers Head of Higher Education	New work-based learning strategy adopted by College	Assistant Principal; Adult and Higher Education	Feedback from students, programme leaders and employers

strategy (paragraph 28)						
• complete its investigation of sound leakage in the accommodation for the popular music performance and broadcasting and interactive television programmes, and ensure that action is taken to resolve the problem (paragraph 34).	Review investigation into sound leakage Produce an agreed course of action and ensure action is taken to solve the problem	May 2012 July 2012 September 2012 to September 2013	Head of Higher Education Head of Faculty Arts, Media Performing Arts Senior Management Team Head of Estates	Level of sound leakage confirmed as appropriate by students, tutors and advisers	Head of Higher Education Faculty Head Arts, Media, Performing Arts Senior Management Team	Student groups and staff report positively during the Course Review and Improvement Tracking process