Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

Suffolk New College

February 2012

SR 035/12

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 Suffolk New 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 scrutiny of the programme self-assessment reports by an extensive network of stakeholders, including College governors, ensures that there is a wide-ranging review of the programmes and facilitates feedback to the highest level of management
- the mix of academic and industry specialists, including part-time lecturers currently employed in professional roles, provides a rich source of knowledge and experience which is up to date and contributes significantly to the quality of teaching and learning
- the analysis of teaching observations in the curriculum centre of automotive, construction and engineering provides a comprehensive record of the overall effectiveness of teaching and promotes action planning.

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:

- develop further and make more systematic its tutorial support for the part-time automotive, construction and engineering students to ensure that it engages fully with the requirements of University Campus Suffolk's Tutorial Policy
- record centrally and monitor scholarly activity by staff to secure more effective control and to encourage the dissemination of good practice.

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 Suffolk New College (the College). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the College discharges its responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes which the College delivers on behalf of the University of East Anglia and the University of Essex. The review was carried out by Mr Robert Mason, Ms Heather Miller, Ms Daphne Rowlands (reviewers) and Mr Robert Hodgkinson (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, the awarding bodies and University Campus Suffolk, meetings with staff and students, andreports of reviews by QAA and from inspections by Ofsted. In particular, the team drew on the findings and recommendations of the Developmental engagement in assessment. A summary of findings from this Developmental engagement is provided in Section C of this report. The review also considered the College's use of the Academic Infrastructure, developed by QAA on behalf of higher education providers, with reference to the *Code of practice,* 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   Suffolk New College is a large general further education college in Suffolk. It is located in Ipswich but also serves the wider catchment area of South Suffolk. Suffolk New College was formed in 2007 following the demerger of Suffolk College when the majority of higher education provision transferred to the new University Campus Suffolk (UCS). In 2009, the College moved into new accommodation. Its provision includes further education programmes for students aged from 16 to 18 years, of which there are 2,892. It also caters for 584 students over 19 years of age, offering further education and community learning programmes.

5   The higher education courses are offered in conjunction with University Campus Suffolk, established in September 2007, and are jointly validated by the University of East Anglia and the University of Essex. Suffolk New College is one of five satellite centres delivering higher education as part of the University Campus Suffolk network. Within the two curriculum centres of automotive, construction and engineering, and care, education and public services, there are 162 students, of whom 23 are full-time and 139 part-time, making approximately 106 full-time equivalents.

6   The current higher education awards, with the relevant awarding bodies and full-time equivalent student numbers in brackets, are as follows:

University of East Anglia and the University of Essex (joint)

- FdSc Architectural Technology (9.3)
- FdSc Construction Management (14.1)
- FdSc Civil Engineering (23.5)
- BSc (Hons) Construction Management (3.5)
- BSc (Hons) Civil Engineering (12)

- Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) (28)
- Certificate in Education (9.5)
- Certificate for Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (CTLLS) (3.4)
- Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTLLS) (2.4)

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

7   A University Campus Suffolk Framework Collaborative Agreement between the two awarding bodies, UCS and its five learning network centres defines the operational responsibilities of the College. These outline the structure and scope of the collaboration between the partners. The awarding bodies are responsible for programme approval and alignment with the Academic Infrastructure, validation, acceptance of applications, ensuring common standards, moderation, final assessment and award, regular meetings to monitor quality and the process of annual evaluation, and continual improvement of academic outcomes. The College is responsible for programme delivery, assessment and internal moderation, the quality of teaching and learning, application of the awarding bodies' standards, regular internal monitoring of quality, and compliance with awarding body requirements for annual evaluation and review.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

8   In 2011, the Joint Board of Moderators recommended that the FdSc Civil Engineering programme be accredited by the Institute of Civil Engineers, the Institute of Structural Engineers, the Charted Institution of Highways and Transportation, and the Institute of Highways Engineers as part of satisfying the academic base for an Incorporated Engineer. It also recommended that the BSc (Hons) Civil Engineering be provisionally accepted by the Institute of Civil Engineers, the Institute of Structural Engineers, the Charted Institution of Highways and Transportation, and the Institute of Highways Engineers as fully satisfying the academic base for an Incorporated Engineer. The latter is subject to a visit in 2012 to review the graduating cohort and its adherence to the requirement and recommendations.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

9   Students from the higher education provision were invited to present a written submission to the team. Two separate groups drawn from each curriculum centre compiled the student written submission over two sessions. They were aided by programme leaders and teaching staff. The first session was used to gather students' perceptions of the course with the outcome of discussions categorised under academic standards, quality of learning opportunities and public information. Each student had the opportunity to discuss and record their views. The majority of groups enjoyed the opportunity to share their experiences and the outcomes represented a consensus of their opinions. The facilitator used the second session to clarify the meaning of the students' written feedback. All submissions were recorded anonymously and used College statistics to inform the report. During the visit the students were given the opportunity to expand on some of the points that were made in the submission. Their evidence was of value to the review.

B Evaluation of the management of HEFCE-funded higher education

Core theme 1: Academic standards

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

10 A collaboration agreement between the awarding bodies, UCS and its five learning network centres defines clearly the operational responsibilities of the College for managing and delivering its higher education standards. These responsibilities prescribe each partner's role in a comprehensive range of processes and procedures that include quality assurance, programme management, student recruitment, admissions, and support.

11 Additional College responsibilities are prescribed in UCS policies, procedures and other documentation; for example, its assessment and moderation policies and teaching and learning strategies. These have been developed in conjunction with the awarding bodies and the network centres. They reflect appropriately the precepts of the *Code of practice*. The College and UCS's monitoring of the policies confirms that they are adhered to by College staff and, overall, are implemented consistently.

12 There are clear lines of responsibility for the management of academic standards at all levels. Overall, the Vice Principal for College Improvement discharges the strategic responsibility for the college-wide provision. The operational responsibility for the provision lies with the Assistant Principal. Centre heads have direct responsibility for the curriculum areas. At programme level, programme leaders are responsible for the management of their designated teaching teams for programme development and teaching, learning, and assessment.

13 Initial teacher education and automotive, construction and engineering programmes are aligned with external accrediting body requirements. The former programmes are endorsed by Standards Verification United Kingdom. The Joint Board of Moderators has recommended the FdSc Civil Engineering and the BSc (Hons) Civil Engineering for accreditation by relevant professional bodies. These alignments and recommendations confirm that the programmes are set to appropriate professional standards and levels.

14 The College's self-assessment review and evaluation process follows UCS guidelines and uses generic templates and formats. These allow staff to consider a range of evidence including external examiner reports, assessment outcomes, module evaluation forms, student feedback, and performance data. The process considers key aspects of the provision including curriculum, assessment, retention and achievement, the maintenance and enhancement of quality and standards, and the management of the quality of learning opportunities. Reports are, in the main, evaluative and reflective. The programme self-assessment reports are peer-reviewed at a supplementary Higher Education Strategic and Quality Enhancement Forum. In attendance are UCS staff, awarding body representatives, employers, students, and College governors. The presence of a College governor ensures that there is feedback to the highest level of management. This scrutiny of the programme self-assessment reports by an extensive network of stakeholders, including College governors, ensures that there is a wide-ranging review of the programmes and facilitates feedback to the highest level of management. It represents good practice. A college-wide self-assessment report is produced and collated from the individual programme reports. This is circulated for comment and forwarded to UCS. After its approval

and return to the College, regular monitoring and review takes place at programme and College level.

15 A revised version of the external examiner form has now been introduced for the learning network of centres which addresses the lack of identification of individual programme comments. However, the College and UCS have recognised that external examiners require more guidance on the completion of these forms to enable full and effective identification of College and programme-specific strengths and recommendations. There is a clear process for taking action on external examiners' recommendations whereby programme leaders respond and produce action plans for consideration at the Higher Education Strategic Quality and Enhancement Forum. External examiner reports also confirm that the standards achieved by students are comparable to those of other institutions.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

16 The College's engagement with the Academic Infrastructure is reflected in its use of UCS policies and procedures. The awarding bodies in conjunction with the College have developed these policies and procedures following their mapping to the *Code of practice* and alignment with the FHEQ and the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*. UCS committees, including its Policy and Procedures Working Group, which is a sub-group of its Joint Academic Committee, review these policies on a rolling basis. Their review ensures that documentation engages with the Academic Infrastructure and is current. The College is well represented by its staff membership on this and other committees, which serve to enhance the quality of communication between the College, UCS and other network colleges.

17 Course teams are informed of updates and changes to the *Code of practice* by a variety of formal and informal methods. As part of staff development these include annual briefings by UCS, an electronic UCS newsletter, frequent emails from UCS's Head of Academic Partnerships, and feedback by the College staff on UCS committees. Course teams are responsible for updating programme specifications and unit handbooks using the Academic Infrastructure as a valuable reference point. These methods provide an effective means by which the College's staff maintain their currency with the Academic Infrastructure and its precepts.

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?

18 The collaboration agreement and associated UCS documents make clear what the awarding bodies expect of the College in meeting their requirements. An effective committee structure ensures that academic standards are monitored and reviewed at strategic, curriculum and programme level. Central to this is the Higher Education Strategic and Quality Enhancement Forum that meets each term. Chaired by the Vice Principal for College Improvement, other members comprise UCS representatives and senior, curriculum and programme college staff. The minutes of its meetings indicate that it fulfils its terms of reference including its strategic oversight of its higher education quality assurance and management processes. The forum reports to the Colleges' senior management team and the Academic Standards Committee, a sub-group of the College Corporation. Communications between the awarding bodies, UCS and the College are effective. They ensure that all parties are aware of new policies, documentation and emerging issues. This is evidenced in the frequent and effective communications between the Assistant Principal and the UCS Head of Academic Partnerships, who attend many College and UCS committees and groups.

19   Chaired by the Assistant Principal, course leaders' meetings effectively monitor the implementation of UCS policies and procedures. Meetings consider reports from other groups on, for example, self-assessment and staff development. The circulation of minutes to the Senior Management Team and Centre Heads provides an additional layer of higher level monitoring and oversight of the management of academic standards.

20   The UCS Academic Board (its senior academic committee) monitors academic standards through its oversight of the self-assessment reporting and evaluation process, and through institutional reports. The Assistant Principal represents the College at these meetings which are held three times a year. Any issues are fed back to the programme leaders and higher education course leaders for action. Minutes of these meetings and discussions with UCS representatives confirm that the standards and quality of the provision is managed effectively. The College is also represented on the UCS Learning Teaching and Assessment Group, Student Experience Committee, and Partnership Quality Enhancement Group. These committees ensure that due regard is paid to the Academic Infrastructure, the FHEQ and subject and award benchmark statements.

21   To enhance the quality of the operational management of teacher education programmes, UCS has set up a learning network management group to oversee its Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills operations group. Quality managers drawn from each network college meet to effect common management processes for all the teacher education programmes. This initiative contributes effectively to the maintenance of academic standards on the teacher education programmes.

22   The Higher Education Strategic and Quality Enhancement Forum is charged with sharing good practice. Teaching staff use the Forum to share ideas informally, including techniques and strategies. For example, under the direction of UCS, effective collaboration in assessment has been undertaken with a partner network college.

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

23   The College has a staff development and training policy and a range of staff development activities that support the provision. These encompass induction training, teaching observation, and guidelines on continual professional development. The College's self-evaluation describes the training that has taken place during the year together with planned training for the following year. The current training plan stipulates the number of staff training days including those specific to higher education. The current focus of staff development is on teaching, learning and assessing and the use of the virtual learning environment. It engages with the precepts of the *Code of practice*, in particular *Section 6: Assessment of students*.

24   The staff maintain their own development logs that are subsequently discussed together with their training needs at annual appraisal meetings with their line manager. Programme leaders meet on a regular basis to identify training needs. Course leader meetings provide another forum for the discussion and planning of training requirements. The Human Resources Department records staff continuous professional development activity. Staff attendance at training events is recorded and checked by programme managers and absences monitored. UCS and the awarding bodies also provide staff development events to which College staff are invited. Part-time staff are encouraged to participate in staff development. These processes function effectively and underpin academic standards.

> **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?

25   The responsibilities for the management of the quality of learning opportunities and reporting arrangements are detailed in paragraphs 10 to 12 and 14. The validating universities' Joint Academic Committee monitors the quality of learning at the College. The Vice Principal for College Improvement or the Assistant Principal represents the College on this committee. Its outcomes are reported to the College's Higher Education Quality Enhancement and Strategic Forum. This in turn informs the higher education course leaders' meetings, and subsequently course meetings, about relevant matters. The College also has representation at UCS Learning, Teaching and Assessment Group meetings which discuss and make recommendations for the development of teaching and learning. These are disseminated to course teams at staff development events. The College makes reference to a number of UCS policies and guidelines to maintain and manage the quality of learning opportunities. These include, for example, a Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy, Validation Documents, and Policies for Tutorials, Management of Courses, Academic Appeals, Mitigating Circumstances, and Accreditation of Prior Learning. These structures and processes work well and aid the College in discharging its responsibilities.

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

26   The quality assurance arrangements described in paragraphs 18 to 22 are also used by the College to ensure the appropriateness of the learning opportunities. The College has a wide variety of mechanisms for maintaining an effective dialogue with UCS and its awarding bodies about students' learning opportunities. These include annual reviews and university committees with College staff membership. Regular communications take place at programme level, including cross-partner programme meetings, link tutor discussions, and cross-centre and staff development opportunities. Management information and student data are readily available, from both the College and UCS, and are used effectively for monitoring the quality of learning opportunities. This information is used, for example, in retention analysis, investigating trends for resource planning, the identification of 'at risk' students, and as a source of information for self-assessment reports. There is a thorough process for reviewing National Student Survey results which are discussed with students in workshops, tutorials and at programme meetings. Action plans are subsequently produced and monitored by programme leaders. The team's scrutiny of College and awarding bodies' reports, and discussion with representatives of the awarding bodies, confirms that the College effectively fulfils its obligations to the awarding bodies in respect of the maintenance and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

27   The College ensures that the Academic Infrastructure is given a high profile by staff delivering the provision. This is supported through staff development events to increase the awareness of its use and implementation. It is reinforced in UCS and College committee meetings and in the documentation used by tutors to inform learning opportunities. Reference to the Academic Infrastructure has been used to inform the College's review of the role of the employer as a partner in work-based learning. In responding to a recommendation in its Developmental engagement, the precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning* were reflected well in the new employer sponsor/work-based placement and mentor handbook. The team concludes that the College engages effectively with the Academic Infrastructure to enhance the quality of learning opportunities offered to students.

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

28   The College has applied a range of UCS policies and strategies to ensure a high quality learning experience for its students. These include a Teaching and Learning Strategy, an Assessment Strategy, and a Tutorial Policy. An Academic Handbook details the responsibilities of teaching staff and is available on the virtual learning environment. Staff confirm the value of these guidelines. Teaching staff are appropriately qualified. The mix of academic and industry specialists, including part-time lecturers currently employed in professional roles, provides a rich source of knowledge and experience which is up to date and contributes significantly to the quality of teaching and learning. It is highly valued by students and represents good practice.

29   Academic staff are required to gain a teaching qualification. Staff teaching on higher education programmes are encouraged to obtain a higher degree or professionally relevant qualification. The qualifications of teaching staff are scrutinised by UCS to ensure their suitability. Staff deemed not appropriately qualified may have the level at which they can teach capped and developmental support suggested. A monthly staffing report is sent from the College to the UCS Partnership Manager. This details sickness, turnover and new staff. These processes are robust.

30   The College has implemented a teaching observation scheme in which line managers observe all staff annually and any training requirements are recorded. Weaknesses are addressed by matching staff with less experience in one area with a member of staff identified as having a corresponding strength. The analysis of teaching observations in the curriculum centre of automotive, construction and engineering provides a comprehensive record of the overall effectiveness of teaching and promotes action planning. This individual initiative could be utilised by other programme leaders and represents good practice. New teaching staff are observed and feedback is obtained from students on their performance. The quality of teaching is analysed within the self-assessment report and planned actions are identified. External examiner reports indicate that teaching is at the appropriate level and that assignment briefs are well written. Students confirm that teaching and staff knowledge of their subject is generally good.

31   Initial Teacher Training programmes have well established and robust tutorial processes. In the automotive, construction and engineering curriculum centre academic, industry, module and group tutorials are used. The provision of tutorials is sometimes intermittent, being driven by part-time student needs. In some instances students were unclear of the purpose of tutorials and in their written submission recommended that more tutorial support in subject-specific areas could be offered. The team recommends that the College develops further and makes more systematic its tutorial support for the part-time

automotive, construction and engineering students to ensure that it engages fully with the requirements of University College Suffolk's Tutorial Policy.

32   UCS operates and manages a virtual learning environment which is used by the College and provides a useful repository for learning materials and course information. Students value the flexibility that the virtual learning environment provides in balancing work and study. Materials are regularly updated and the environment fosters an informal integrative learning approach. This responsive approach to student needs is supplemented by email communication and a reliable and supportive information technology learning environment.

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

33   A range of UCS and College policies and procedures support students throughout their learning. Clearly designed and effective recruitment procedures operate within well defined entry criteria and interview processes. Prospective students attend information events and email contact with course tutors is effective in answering queries. Diagnostic testing in numeracy and literacy is a positive feature of initial teacher training recruitment processes and enables timely support to be offered to students. On entry all students are surveyed to identify additional learning needs. UCS and the College offer a support network to students. Student support managers meet frequently to monitor the provision and complete an annual self-assessment report and action plan. Study support is provided through the College Learning Resource Centre and drop-in services are offered through the year. The College has introduced an enhanced induction for year one students that will be extended to include other years. An effective formal student monitoring system has also been developed to manage students considered at risk. These procedures provide a well considered framework for student support.

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

34   The arrangements for staff development, described in paragraphs 23 and 24, also apply to the College's maintenance and enhancement of the learning opportunities for its students. All new part-time and full-time staff undertake an induction from their curriculum head. Staff maintain their own continuous professional development records. They confirm that events are recorded and discussed with line managers. Individual records indicate their attendance at a variety of events. In recognition of their scholarly activity, all staff teaching on higher education programmes are entitled to a reduction in their annual teaching hours. However, the use of remitted hours for scholarly activity is not monitored or recorded other than at the individual's appraisal. It is recommended that the College records centrally and monitors scholarly activity by staff to secure more effective control and to encourage the dissemination of good practice.

How does the College ensure the sufficiency and accessibility of the learning resources the students need to achieve the intended learning outcomes for their programmes?

35   Higher education capital resource provision is managed through senior postholder meetings. The process is responsive and is informed by internal and external developments. These highlighted the need to develop a permanent material laboratory. While this facility has only recently been completed, students comment positively on its value in undertaking laboratory testing for their dissertations and projects. Curriculum Centre Heads and Senior Managers review the programme provision and staffing annually, in relation to curriculum development and growth in student numbers.

36   There is good provision of electronic resources throughout the College and UCS network. Staff and students are encouraged to adopt its 'paper-free' environment. The majority of public information is accessed through the UCS virtual learning environment. This, together with the website and an electronic applicant portal, directs students to sources of advice and guidance, interactive study material, and the Student Information Directory. Resources can be accessed remotely and this reflects the needs of part-time students.

37   UCS and the College are each expected to provide adequate library and information technology resources to deliver the validated curriculum. These resources include all recommended reading listed in validation documentation and desktop computers, printers and UCS-recommended specifications for hardware to support the student enrolment process.

> **The team concludes that it has confidence in the College's management of its responsibilities for the quality of the learning opportunities as required by the awarding bodies to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.**

Core theme 3: Public information

What information is the College responsible for publishing about its HEFCE-funded higher education?

38   The College's responsibilities for publishing public information are defined by the collaboration agreement. This is supplemented by a UCS publicity protocol which is closely aligned to the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning).* The College produces website content, programme handbooks, work-based and work-enhanced documentation, module handbooks, and programme specifications, all of which are the subject of approval by UCS. The students confirm that the handbooks are useful and available.

39   The main channel of communication for prospective students is the website, which is supplemented by a printed prospectus. As a response to the Developmental engagement the higher education information site has been redesigned to provide easier access to UCS higher education content. UCS manages this site and the College provides a link page through which prospective students can easily access comprehensive guidance. The website is attractive, user-friendly and easy to navigate. The students confirm that the information they receive prior to enrolment is helpful and accurate and reflects subsequent experiences on the course. Key information documents are available in printed form and other formats are available on request.

What arrangements does the College have in place to assure the accuracy and completeness of information the College has responsibility for publishing? How does the College know that these arrangements are effective?

40   Before their details can be published all new courses and their content undergo a thorough and comprehensive approval and validation process. The approval processes vary slightly according to the type of proposal. A series of programme approval forms are used to ensure that information is accurate and up to date before publication. The College uses standard templates and guidelines provided by UCS to develop a minimum content and structure for assessment briefs and feedback sheets, validation documents, course handbooks, and programme specifications. Marketing materials and programme documentation is carefully scrutinised by the College and awarding bodies prior to its issue. Awarding bodies work closely with the College at regular marketing meetings. Prior to

publication a guide and series of course approval forms are used to regulate the accuracy of the website and promotional information. The College Assistant Principal and Director of Communications approve all jointly published material before it is forwarded to the awarding bodies for final approval and publication. These processes and procedures ensure that the College considers carefully the range of documentation it publishes.

41   The College provides the course and college-specific information which undergoes a thorough checking process. Information from course teams is provided from a first draft which is approved by the Assistant Principal together with any suggested changes. This is then sent back to course teams for amendments and finally signed off by the Assistant Principal and Director of Communications and forwarded to UCS. The prospectus is web-based and information follows the same checking process. The procedures are transparent and well embedded. Where common documentation is used across a number of UCS network centre programmes, for example initial teacher training programmes, the consortium group is responsible for monitoring, checking and updating programme documentation. Checked versions are deposited in the UCS virtual learning environment. For programmes that run solely at Suffolk New College, tutors are expected to amend their own course documents on the UCS virtual learning environment. These processes are effective and allow the College to discharge its responsibilities.

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

42   The Developmental engagement in assessment for the College was undertaken in March 2011. There were three lines of enquiry as follows.

Line of enquiry 1: How effective are assessment processes and procedures in ensuring that academic standards are met consistently across programmes?

Line of enquiry 2: How effective are the range of assessment and feedback methods in supporting and enhancing learning and enabling achievement of learning outcomes?

Line of enquiry 3: To what extent is information on assessment for students accessible, accurate and complete?

43   The lines of enquiry focused on the structures, policies and procedures that underpin the assessment process including the documentation available to students. They covered the implementation of the awarding body regulations on assessment across the courses and the responsibilities of the College in these processes. The scope of the Developmental engagement in assessment covered all of the higher education courses offered by the College.

44   The Developmental engagement identified a number of areas of good practice. These include the guides for specific module assignments that provided an interpretation of the partner-issued briefs. In addition the use made of the UCS virtual learning environment to introduce focused student discussion forums, and the online submission of assignments, was cited as good practice. The opportunity for students to self-grade the delivery of their lessons was identified as good practice as were the strategies linking intended learning

outcomes to specific assignment tasks. The Developmental engagement identified a number of desirable recommendations. These include making the external examiner reports delivered at more than one centre more specific to the needs of the College's provision. In addition the College was recommended to review its website to ensure that information about its higher education provision was easier to locate and use. Finally, the College was expected to define more clearly the role of the employer as a partner in work-based learning.

D   Foundation Degrees

45   As of February 2011, the College delivers three Foundation Degrees, all in the automotive, construction and engineering curriculum centre. Enrolments represent 46.9 full-time equivalents, with the majority of students studying part-time. Two previous awards, in building control and building surveying, were phased out due to a lack of student numbers. The other awards are in architectural technology, civil engineering, and construction management. All of the Foundation Degrees were revalidated in March 2010.

46   The Foundation Degree courses are offered in conjunction with UCS, established in September 2007, and are jointly validated by the University of East Anglia and the University of Essex. Suffolk New College is one of five satellite centres delivering higher education as part of the UCS network. The self-assessment reports for the Foundation Degree programmes and the engagement in meetings of College representatives with the awarding bodies and network centres demonstrate the close working relationships and effective communication between the awarding bodies, University College Suffolk and College staff at all levels. UCS provides most of the key policies and procedures which the College is obliged to implement and to monitor their effectiveness. Key UCS committees both direct, provide oversight and encourage communication and enhancement of the provision.

47   All the conclusions in paragraphs 49 to 51 apply equally to the Foundation Degree provision.

E   Conclusions and summary of judgements

48   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, the University Campus Suffolk, and its awarding bodies, the University of East Anglia and the University of Sussex.

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

- the scrutiny of the programme self-assessment reports by an extensive network of stakeholders, including College governors, ensures that there is a wide-ranging review of the programmes and facilitates feedback to the highest level of management (paragraph 14)
- the mix of academic and industry specialists, including part-time lecturers currently employed in professional roles, provides a rich source of knowledge and experience which is up to date and contributes significantly to the quality of teaching and learning (paragraph 28)
- the analysis of teaching observations in the curriculum centre of automotive, construction and engineering provides a comprehensive record of the overall effectiveness of teaching and promotes action planning (paragraph 30).

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

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

- develop further and make more systematic its tutorial support for the part-time automotive, construction and engineering students to ensure that it engages fully with the requirements of University Campus Suffolk's Tutorial Policy (paragraph 31)
- record centrally and monitor scholarly activity by staff to secure more effective control and to encourage the dissemination of good practice (paragraph 34).

52   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.

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 quality of learning opportunities to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

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, 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.

Suffolk New College action plan relating to the Summative review: February 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 scrutiny of the programme self-assessment reports by an extensive network of stakeholders, including College governors, ensures that there is a wide-ranging review of the programmes and facilitates feedback to the highest level of management (paragraph 14)	Retain current methods for programme assessment and review and continue to monitor the effectiveness of the process	October 2012	Assistant Principal	Effective self-assessment and review of higher education with scrutiny by a range of stakeholders	Academic Standards Committee	Higher Education Quality Enhancement and Strategic Forum
• the mix of academic and industry specialists,	Continue to use a mix of academic, vocational and industry specialists to deliver	September 2012	Curriculum Centre Head with programme leader	Programmes appropriately staffed	Higher Education Quality Enhancement and Strategic Forum	Student feedback processes Employer Forum

including part-time lecturers currently employed in professional roles, provides a rich source of knowledge and experience which is up to date and contributes significantly to the quality of teaching and learning (paragraph 28)	the programme and review the effectiveness through the self-assessment process			Student feedback on quality of teaching and learning		minutes Course reports showing range and quality of input by industry specialists
• the analysis of teaching observations in the curriculum centre of automotive, construction and engineering provides a comprehensive record of the overall effectiveness of teaching and promotes action planning (paragraph 30).	Embed this area of good practice across the higher education provision	July 2012	Curriculum Centre Heads	Targeted staff development to improve quality of teaching and learning	Higher Education Quality Enhancement and Strategic Forum	Lesson observation reports Higher education staff development report Programme self-assessment and review reports

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:						
• develop further and make more systematic its tutorial support for the part-time automotive, construction and engineering students to ensure that it engages fully with the requirements of University Campus Suffolk's Tutorial Policy (paragraph 31)	Review current tutorial support arrangements on automotive, construction and engineering programmes and put in place systematic tutorial arrangements which are communicated effectively to students Staff development to communicate tutorial policy and to share good practice between teams	July 2012 July 2012	Programme Leader for automotive, construction and engineering Assistant Principal	Increased student satisfaction with tutorial support Increased uptake of personal tutorials by students Tutorial support fully meets requirements of University Campus Suffolk tutorial policy	Higher Education Quality Enhancement and Strategic Forum	Student feedback in National Student Survey and internal student surveys Tutorial plans and records
• record centrally and monitor scholarly activity by staff to secure more effective control and to encourage the dissemination of good practice (paragraph 34).	Utilise staff appraisal scheme to log scholarly activity undertaken by staff Analysis of range of activity undertaken to identify and disseminate good practice	April-September 2012	Curriculum Centre Heads and Programme Leaders Assistant Principal	Individual continuous professional development records discussed at appraisal and system in place to log scholarly activity undertaken Good practice	Higher Education Quality Enhancement and Strategic Forum	Continuous professional development and appraisal records Programme self-assessment reports Higher education self-assessment report

				identified and disseminated through higher education Course Leaders meetings and staff development programme		