



# **Integrated quality and enhancement review**

**Summative review**

**Cornwall College**

**March 2012**

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## 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 Cornwall College carried out in March 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 robust management structure for higher education provides effective support for the maintenance of academic standards, in the context of a large provision across several sites
- the multilayered quality assurance system is well matched to the complexity of the institution
- the College has a well established and collaborative working relationship with its awarding bodies
- the College's support for scholarly activity by a large number of staff results in an impressive output of research
- the annual monitoring process ensures staff at all levels engage in an evaluative and self-critical review of the quality of learning opportunities
- the College takes a systematic and thorough account of the *Code of practice* in discharging its responsibilities towards the quality of learning opportunities
- the strong and productive links with employers across many programmes facilitate the acquisition by students of work-based and work-related skills and knowledge
- the College has responded creatively to student feedback on the design and content of the prospectus.

### Recommendations

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

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

- establish an overarching protocol for checking the content of the website and virtual learning environment.

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

- review the Teaching, Training and Learning Strategy to articulate a specific focus on higher education

- strengthen its observation policy to ensure that staff are observed annually on their delivery of higher education
- review how it communicates to students the role of the programme committee and its importance as a key component in the College's deliberative structure.

## 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 Cornwall 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 Coventry University and the University of Plymouth. The review was carried out by Mr Jonathan Baker, Dr Elaine Crosthwaite, Dr Colin Fryer (reviewers), and Dr Marion Shaw (coordinator).

2 The Summative review team (the team) conducted the review in agreement with the College and in accordance with *The handbook for Integrated quality and enhancement review* (the handbook), published by QAA. Evidence in support of the Summative review included documentation supplied by the College and awarding bodies, meetings with staff, students, employers 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 Developmental engagements in assessment and in work-based learning. 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 Cornwall College is one of the largest colleges in the country, delivering education to local students since 1929. The College's mission is to 'provide learners with a high quality experience, celebrated through academic and vocational achievement, personal development and employability'. It is located in a county with high levels of economic deprivation, a largely rural population and historically low participation in higher education. The College is a member of the 157 Group, an organisation which represents 27 large, regionally influential further education colleges in England.

5 The College has included higher education provision since the late 1960s, with a significant increase in the 1990s. There are currently 35,000 student enrolments, including 1,853 (1,749 full-time equivalent) students studying for higher education qualifications. There are 158.7 full-time equivalent staff engaged in the delivery of higher education. Provision is spread over seven sites, all of which offer higher education opportunities.

### Higher education provision at the College

In 2011-12, the College is offering the following higher education programmes funded by HEFCE, with full-time equivalent student numbers given in brackets.

#### Coventry University

- MA Management (5)

## **University of Plymouth - under site allocation**

### **Camborne**

- BSc (Hons) Environmental Resource Management (top-up) (37)
- FdA Animation (8)
- FdA Contemporary Creative Practice (32.66)
- FdA Fine Art Practice (8.8)
- FdA Fine Art Textiles (5.56)
- FdA Furniture Design and Make (5.12)
- FdA Graphic and Communication Design (9)
- FdA Newspaper and Magazine Journalism (19)
- FdSc Forensic Science (41.78)
- FdSc Renewable Energy Technologies (27.78)
- BA (Hons) Business Enterprise (top-up) (26)
- FdA Business (38.4)
- FdA E-Business Management (3)
- FdSc Computer Networking (16)
- FdSc Information Technology (16)
- BA (Hons) Counselling Studies (top-up) (18.5)
- BSc (Hons) Combined Social Science (47)
- BSc (Hons) Combined Social Science (top-up) (14)
- BSc (Hons) Health and Social Care (top-up) (17)
- BSc Sport Performance and Coaching (top-up) (11.5)
- Certificate in Advanced Counselling Studies (20.52)
- Diploma in Person-Centred Counselling and Therapy (28.8)
- FdA Children and Young People's Workforce (16.78)
- FdA Health and Community Studies (31.2)
- FdSc Complementary Health Therapies (16.78)
- FdSc Healthcare Practice (34)
- FdSc Sport, Health and Fitness (26)
- HNC Health and Community (8)
- FdA Event Management (22)
- FdA Hospitality Management (16.78)
- FdA Tourism Management (12)
- FdSc Engineering (15.5)
- FdSc Sustainable Construction (16.25)
- HNC Engineering (9.9)

### **Centre for Housing Support Worcester**

- FdA Housing with Support (9.32)

### **Duchy Rosewarne**

- BSc (Hons) Horticulture (7)
- Cert HE Biological Recording (0.66)
- FdSc Conservation and Countryside Management (23.78)
- FdSc Horticulture (31.28)
- FdSc Veterinary Nursing (29)
- HNC Horticulture (2.5)

### **Duchy Stoke Climsland**

- BSc (Hons) Equitation (top-up) (14)
- BSc (Hons) Rural Business Management (top-up) (14.5)
- FdSc Adventure Sports Coaching (23)
- FdSc Agriculture (24.78)
- FdSc Equine Behaviour and Training (12)
- FdSc Equine Sports Performance and Coaching (19)
- FdSc Food Studies (14.03)
- FdSc Golf Operations Management (11)
- FdSc Police Studies (38.78)
- FdSc Rescue and Emergency Management (40)
- FdSc Rural Business Management (5)
- FdSc Rural Environmental Management (15)
- FdSc Sports Development and Coaching (7)
- FdSc Tournament Golf (35)
- ResM (8.5)

### **Falmouth Marine School**

- FdSc Marine Science (57.78)
- FdSc Marine Sports Science (27)
- FdSc Operational Yacht Science (0.56)

### **Newquay**

- BSc (Hons) Applied Zoology (12.5)
- FdSc Animal Behaviour and Psychology (27)
- FdSc Animal Husbandry and Welfare (16)
- FdSc Animal Science (13)
- FdSc Applied Ecology (18)
- FdSc Marine Conservation (78.36)
- FdSc Surf Science and Technology (30)
- FdSc Wildlife Education and Media (38.55)
- FdSc Zoological Conservation (77)

### **Saltash**

- Diploma in Person-Centred Counselling (2.4)
- FdA Early Childhood Studies (22)

### **School of Education and Training**

- Certificate in Education (58)
- Certificate of Professional Development - Literacy (10.12)
- Certificate of Professional Development - Numeracy (8.74)
- FdA Education and Training in the LL Sector (7.2)
- Postgraduate Certificate in Education (58)

## St Austell

- FdSc Sports Development & Coaching\* (33)

\*same programme as running at Duchy Stoke Climsland

## Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

6 The College has one main validating body, Plymouth University. There is one master's programme validated through Coventry University. The majority of the College's programmes are validated and quality assured through the University of Plymouth Colleges Faculty but there are direct relationships with the University's faculty of Health, Education and Society and the Business School. The Duchy College Stoke Climsland has just become an approved Postgraduate Node of the University and has enrolled a small cohort of level 7 students on a ResM programme. The College relinquished its direct funding in 2007-08 but has recently succeeded in its bid to HEFCE for core-margin students, with an award of 232 full-time equivalent student places. The College's relationship with both awarding bodies is long-standing and based on clear partnership agreements, the Academic Agreement with the University of Plymouth, and the Collaborative Agreement with Coventry University. Both agreements cover responsibilities for the admission of students, programme staffing, liaison arrangements, teaching and assessment, intellectual property, and documentary requirements. The agreement with Plymouth University was due for renewal in 2010; this has been delayed due to changes in funding but is now nearing completion.

## Recent developments in higher education at the College

7 The College has recently rationalised its higher education portfolio to bring separate awards in some subject areas into one overarching Foundation Degree. This has occurred in the areas of hospitality, engineering, and sport and tourism. Recently the College has appointed a Director of Curriculum and Quality for Higher Education. Oversight of higher education is carried out by the Deputy Chief Executive Officer. Credit reduction by Plymouth University from 380 to 360 in 2008-09 has resulted in a two-phase credit reduction at the College, which took the decision to remove the 20-credit work-based unit and replace it with the embedding of work-based learning in the remainder of each programme. This was accompanied by the replacement of a number of personal/professional developmental modules with a Personal and Employability Skills Development module.

## 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. A submission was prepared by the Student Union President, using the research gathered in a college-wide survey and subsequent focus groups. The submission covered the three core themes of academic standards, quality of learning opportunities, and public information. The return on the questionnaires used in the survey varied between 33 per cent and 66 per cent, depending on the site, but with a small site making a nil return. Students met the coordinator and the review support officer at the preparatory meeting and the review team during the visit. The submission and the meetings were informative and of great assistance to the team.

## **B Evaluation of the management of HEFCE-funded higher education**

### **Core theme 1: Academic standards**

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

9 The College's aim to offer high quality education is supported by the key objectives of encouraging participation in learning, delivering outstanding teaching, and promoting quality of learning opportunities, self-respect and respect for others. In support of its aim, the College has developed a comprehensive quality assurance system and has established a committee structure dedicated to higher education that has clear oversight of the provision.

10 The programme team is responsible for the day-to-day running of each programme and the assurance of standards. Overall management responsibility rests with the Higher Education Management Committee, which involves corporate curriculum leaders who have responsibility for all programmes in their areas. This committee is central to the enhancement of the provision and is supported by the Higher Education Coordinators group. This group, which comprises higher education managers and site coordinators, plays a key role in reviewing the higher education strategy, and identifying good practice and areas for improvement. Recently a centralised Higher Education Operations team was established. Members include the higher education Director of Curriculum and Quality, the Deputy Chief Executive Officer and other senior staff. This important team meets weekly with the aim of improving efficiency and communication across all areas of higher education. It reports to the Corporate Management Team, which is chaired by the Chief Executive Officer. The robust management structure for higher education and its effective support of the maintenance of academic standards in the context of a large provision across several sites is an area of good practice.

#### **What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?**

11 The College has mapped its management of higher education against the relevant sections of the *Code of practice*. Programme documentation demonstrates adherence to the FHEQ. Programme level is established at validation. Once approved, continuing maintenance is assured by internal moderation of assessment briefs and completed assignments and by external examiners. New staff are supported by the Higher Education Operations team which advises on how the Academic Infrastructure is embedded in programmes.

12 Reference to the appropriate benchmarks is found in the programme specifications contained in each student programme handbook. Foundation Degree programmes place emphasis on the role of employers and the development, delivery and assessment of employability, career development and industry-related skills. The College has a good working relationship with employers, who are involved in programme development and content, module reviews, assessment of work practice and, in some programmes, for example FdSc Rescue and Emergency Management, for delivery of parts of modules.

### **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?**

13 The College ensures that its higher education self-assessment process is developed in line with University of Plymouth regulations. Programme teams produce an annual programme monitoring report and action plan in the autumn term. Each Curriculum Area Manager draws on these reports to produce an evaluative higher education summary report and quality improvement plan for their area. These reports and plans are reviewed at a special Higher Education Management Committee held in November and are key documents in the College's self-assessment process. They are received and validated by the Corporate Management Team. Joint Boards of Study deal with quality and management issues related to the delivery of programmes. The Coventry University programme provides a similar annual quality monitoring report and an overview of the provision from the university link tutor. The multilayered quality assurance system is well matched to the complexity of the institution, ensures a rigorous approach to the maintenance of academic standards, and is an example of good practice.

14 The College has an overarching assessment policy, covering further and higher education, which is supplemented by a higher education assessment procedure and guidelines that refer to, and interpret, the awarding bodies' policies and regulatory frameworks. The awarding bodies' academic regulations are used in full but the policies and procedures are those of the College. Programme teams nominate external examiners, with appointments confirmed by the awarding bodies. External examiners' reports are discussed at each annual programme monitoring committee, together with the programme manager's formal written response to the report. The College has mapped the management processes for assessment against the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*. External examiner reports indicate that there are no problems with the assessment process and that assessment is at the appropriate level. Students reported that they understood the standard of work required of them, and that they were clear about the assessment process and how it linked to learning outcomes at the appropriate level.

15 The University of Plymouth undertakes a periodic review every five years of all its programmes in partner colleges. In 2010-11 a review of five subject-based clusters took place: Land-based, Science, Health and Education, Arts, and Business. A written report is produced for each subject cluster, noting conclusions on innovation and good practice, quality and standards, and on whether the programmes remain current in the light of developing knowledge. In addition, reports note developments in teaching and learning, recommendations for actions to remedy any identified shortcomings, and for further enhancement of quality and standards. The University of Plymouth has an academic liaison person for each subject area who acts as a point of contact with and support for the College on new programme development and approvals, and generally maintains regular contact with staff in a partner college. Coventry University has a link tutor who carries out similar functions. This interaction engenders confidence that the partnerships are effective at institutional and programme levels and ensures the maintenance and enhancement of academic standards. The College's well established and close working relationship with its awarding bodies constitutes good practice.

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

16 A teaching qualification is required for all staff. Teaching staff delivering both further and higher education must be members of the Institute for Learning. Where staff deliver only on higher education programmes they are permitted to opt out of this but encouraged to

work towards Higher Education Academy accreditation. They may also take an accredited programme, such as the University of Plymouth's Higher Education in Further Education Contexts module, which carries with it associate member status of the Higher Education Academy, or they may take the full Integrated Master's Programme.

17 The College provides a comprehensive range of development opportunities and events specific to higher education. In 2011-12 these include sessions on updated policies and procedures, and research days and workshops held at each site. There is also an annual research and training programme available on the University's portal. Staff are encouraged through the College performance management process to undertake relevant research and/or scholarly activity appropriate to the delivery level in their curriculum area. The College provides funding for staff to undertake these activities and there is also some remission of teaching. The College publishes a report detailing the range of scholarly activity and staff development that has occurred over the past academic year. The College's support for scholarly activity for a large number of staff, results in an impressive output of research and constitutes good practice.

**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?**

18 The College's mission to offer high quality education for all students is supported by a committee structure that has clear oversight of the provision. Further information on the management structure, the quality assurance system and reporting arrangements is contained in paragraphs 9, 10 and 13. Within these structures and systems, the programme managers, programme teams, Curriculum Area Managers and Higher Education Coordinators all have clearly designated roles for the management of the quality of learning opportunities for the students, and are effective in their roles.

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

19 The partnership agreements with both awarding bodies specify particular expectations of the College in terms of the admissions of students, programme staffing, and teaching and assessment. The College works closely with its two awarding bodies to ensure that their policies and academic regulations are followed. The strength of the College's relationship with the University of Plymouth is cited in one of the university's Institutional Review meetings as robust, forthright and valued by all concerned.

20 The College operates an effective annual monitoring process that requires explicit evaluation of the quality of learning opportunities. Detailed reports are produced at each level of the reporting structure. Each curriculum area is required to produce an evaluative higher education summary report and quality improvement plan drawing on issues arising in the appropriate programme reports. These are considered at a special meeting of the Higher Education Management Committee, and together with other quality indicators inform the

preparation of the College Higher Education Self-Assessment Report. Action planning is a key feature of the process ensuring a systematic approach to the monitoring of progress against actions. The annual monitoring process successfully requires staff at all levels to engage with an evaluative and self-critical review of the quality of learning opportunities, and constitutes good practice.

### **What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?**

21 Information on the College's use of the Academic Infrastructure is contained in paragraphs 11 and 12. The College has rigorously mapped its management processes against the relevant sections of the *Code of practice*. The mapping clearly shows the relative responsibilities of the College and the awarding body. Policies and procedures relating to the College's higher education are available to staff on the College intranet, as are the *Code of practice* mapping documents.

22 Programme specifications are clearly aligned with the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark* and student handbooks refer to the relevant subject benchmark statements. Through the Personal and Employability Skills Development module, common to each of the Foundation Degree programmes, attention has been paid to the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning*. The learning outcomes for the module are identified; they contribute effectively to the characteristics of and the requirements for Foundation Degrees, and the work is assessed appropriately. Students reported that their learning is shaped and enhanced by the work-based tasks and assessments, which clearly link theory with practice. The systematic and thorough approach taken by the College in considering all the implications of the *Code of practice* on its responsibilities for the quality of learning opportunities constitutes good practice.

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

23 The Teaching, Training and Learning Strategy aims to foster an enriching learning experience for students. This is assured by means of the College's Higher Education Self-Assessment Report, the Quality Improvement Plan, the lesson observation programme, student feedback, and the review of assessment data. However, the strategy is predicated on alignment with further education frameworks and no reference is made to comparable higher education networks and agencies. The team considers it desirable for the College to review the Teaching, Training and Learning Strategy to articulate a specific higher education focus. This would provide key points of reference for staff, students and other stakeholders in situating the particular experience of its higher education students within relevant sections of the *Code of practice*.

24 The quality of teaching and learning is monitored comprehensively and enhanced effectively through the College's Performance Management Appraisal Scheme, which involves external examiner reporting, some feedback from employers and, significantly, student feedback. All staff are observed annually by a trained observer. The observations are thorough and offer effective feedback to staff on good practice and areas for improvement. Individual higher education graded observations feed into a Higher Education Teaching Observation Report. The report is considered by the Higher Education Management Committee and is an important piece of evidence used in the preparation of the College's Higher Education Self-Evaluation Report. Staff delivering both higher and further education may, however, have their higher education teaching observed only once every two years. It is desirable that the College strengthen its observation policy to ensure that staff are observed annually in their delivery of higher education.

25 The College evaluates the quality of teaching and learning through various channels of communication with students. These include the National Student Survey and the University of Plymouth's Student Perception Questionnaire. Students are represented formally on their relevant programme committees and Joint Boards of Studies. These are important conduits for linking staff and students, and issues on quality can be promptly and appropriately addressed. However, students are unclear about the function of the programme committee structure and its relationship with student review meetings, both of which operate as student feedback mechanisms. The student programme handbook does not provide a clear exposition of the purpose of the two forums. Reference is made to the programme committee, but its terms of reference and composition are not stated, either explicitly or by a link to the University of Plymouth's intranet. It would be desirable for the College to review how it communicates to students the role of the programme committee and its importance as a key component in the College's deliberative structure.

26 Staff are appropriately qualified to ensure the professional currency of programmes and their relevance in the workplace. Many members of staff practice in the industry in which their programme is situated, and are also members of learned societies and hold senior positions within them. Generally, students report that the quality of teaching is good or better. Students commented enthusiastically on the accessibility of all staff and how they value the prompt responses to their questions and concerns. This accords with the high level of student satisfaction expressed in the Student Perception Questionnaire and the National Student Survey.

27 The Developmental engagement cited as good practice the strong employer links with the College. The University of Plymouth Institutional Review, held in May 2011, reinforced this statement. A wide variety of work-based and work-related opportunities are used. Employers who met the team confirmed the effectiveness of the links with the College. Students likewise commented on their usefulness in enhancing their employability. Examples of good practice include retail experience, marine rescue training and veterinary work. The productive links with employers across many programmes facilitate the acquisition by students of work-based and work-related skills and knowledge, and is an area of good practice.

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

28 All students have a well planned and comprehensive induction programme. They undertake initial assessment to identify whether they need support in literacy, numeracy and information technology. The results are recorded by the programme manager and any additional needs are identified and appropriate support provided.

29 All students are entitled to academic tutoring. This is clearly identified in the student programme handbooks. The role includes monitoring student progress to identify areas for further development, including at least one individual tutorial each term. Any concerns are followed up and appropriate action taken. Wherever a situation falls outside the tutor's own area of expertise, for example counselling or careers guidance, the student is referred to specialist staff or services. Where particular health or personal issues are identified, individual student case conferences are convened, involving the student.

30 Data on retention and achievement is considered formally at the annual monitoring programme committee meeting. The key performance indicators of individual programme in-year retention and achievement, and end-of-year success rates, are monitored closely by the Director of Curriculum and Quality and the Deputy Chief Executive Officer. Where indicators dip below target, appropriate measures are taken. Data is reported on a regular basis throughout the year to the Corporate Management Team and the Board of Governors Quality and Human Resource Committee.

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

31 Information on the College's staff development procedures is contained in paragraphs 16 and 17. Following the advisable recommendation in the Developmental engagement that the College should further clarify its approach to work-related learning, the College has revised the Higher Education Work-Based and Work-Related Learning Policy to differentiate clearly between the requirements for Foundation Degrees and other higher education programmes. Staff engagement with the policy has been supported through staff development sessions. Programme teams are required to provide evidence of how work-based or work-related learning is embedded in the modules.

### **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 Provision of resources is ensured at the point of validation as identified in the partnership agreements. The approval process requires that resources are scrutinised at each stage of approval, from planning stage to approval documentation, and finally the validation meeting. Thereafter, the College monitors the sufficiency and adequacy of learning resources as part of the annual Curriculum and Operational Planning process.

33 Resources are allocated through a college-wide process arising from discussions at programme committees, the annual monitoring cycle and student feedback. The reports from each subject cluster are considered in the development of the College's action plan. The higher education programme teams identify resource needs, directing these through the programme managers to the Curriculum Area Manager, who is the budget holder for higher education resources.

34 The College's virtual learning environment is generally effective in supporting teaching and learning. Although students confirmed their overall satisfaction with resources, information posted is variable in the quality and range available in different subject areas and modules. The Personal and Employability Skills Development modules are particularly well developed, as are those for the education programmes. This quality is not consistent across all programmes and the College recognises the need for improvement. Achieving consistency across all areas remains on action plans at programme and College level.

**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?**

35 The College produces a range of information including a higher education prospectus with course profiles, course leaflets, student programme handbooks, module descriptors, and module handbooks. The student handbooks and module handbooks follow standard templates and are contextualised for each site. Module handbooks are comprehensive, and contain information about the teaching team, academic and tutorial

support, and assessment. The prospectus is an attractive and well presented publication. The College undertook a detailed survey of students' views of the prospectus and the content has been developed to address their needs and knowledge. The College's creative responsiveness to student feedback on the content of the prospectus is good practice.

36 Prospective students obtain information about study opportunities primarily from the College website. On making an enquiry to the programme leader, they are provided with an electronic copy of the student handbook, as well sample timetables. Students confirmed that prior to enrolment they were able to obtain accurate information about their proposed course and fees, and that they were clear about the assessment load.

37 On induction, students receive detailed information about their programme and instructions on how to access the College virtual learning environment. A detailed assessment schedule for each stage of study is also provided. There is a clear link from the handbooks to the academic regulations of the awarding body. Module handbooks contain detailed assessment briefs which clearly indicate the link to learning outcomes and assessment criteria, as well as dates for submission and when feedback should be received. Most students are satisfied with the information that they receive about their programme.

38 The College virtual learning environment has a dedicated area for higher education study. It provides students with easy access, both on and off site, to a range of course and support materials, links to the virtual learning environment of the relevant validating university, and to College learning resources. Each programme area contains useful documents such as student handbooks, module and assessment information, and lecture notes. Currently the site is used mainly as a depository for teaching materials but staff are being encouraged to develop interactive materials. There is no uniform use of the site by subject areas, with sites adopting different styles. This variability will be addressed in the next stage of virtual learning development.

39 Staff members obtain up to date information through the higher education staff area on the virtual learning environment. This holds an extensive range of information on College policies and arrangements, including the College Higher Education Staff Handbook which outlines the division of roles and responsibilities for programme management in the College, and Plymouth University procedures and requirements. The handbook is a good resource for both new and established staff.

40 The College has addressed the Developmental engagement recommendation to ensure that employers involved with work-related learning receive the Employers' Guide to Higher Education Work-based Learning. The Guide is sent out by a member of the programme team to those employers who provide student placements, usually via email at the start of the academic year, together with health and safety guidelines and a mentors' guide. Employers confirmed that they receive appropriate information on the College's expectations and guidance on their responsibilities to students.

**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?**

41 For both universities, information to be included in programme student handbooks is agreed during validation. The University of Plymouth procedure for partner colleges sets out the faculty and university-level contacts for approval of different types of promotional material including news releases, advertising materials and web pages, and prospectuses. The University of Coventry procedure requires the link tutor to conduct a check of the accuracy of the student handbook and course information on the College website and promotional

materials as part of the Annual Quality Monitoring process. Awarding bodies confirmed that the College complies with the checks required for the accuracy of published information.

42 The College has established an effective procedure for the publication of information on higher education at programme, site and corporate level. This procedure states the responsibilities of staff members at all levels. The programme manager has the prime responsibility for annual updating of information for the prospectus and UCAS profile, the student handbook and website. Successive members of the management team undertake checks to ensure that the arrangements are effective, and the Higher Education Operations Team provides an official sign-off of all published information.

43 The team identified an inaccuracy in a website statement which referred to all programmes being approved by the University of Plymouth, as well as minor typographical errors in programme information uploaded onto the virtual learning environment. The current arrangements for checking the accuracy and completeness of information are generally effective at site level, but there is no designated responsibility for an overall check at College level. The College is advised to establish an overarching protocol for checking the content of the website and virtual learning environment.

**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 engagements**

### **Developmental engagement in assessment**

44 The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in March 2010. The team identified 10 areas of good practice. These included a bespoke committee structure for higher education that has clear oversight of assessment practice, with a quality assurance system that is robust and is well matched to the complexity of the institution. There is an effective higher education strategy. The use of module boxes has promoted a systematic college-wide process which enhances the management and organisation of assessment. The internal moderation process provides effective opportunities for staff to enhance their understanding of assessment and makes a significant contribution towards consistency of practice. A robust annual monitoring process successfully ensures that staff at all levels in the institution engage with an evaluative and self-critical review of assessment practice to identify areas for improvement. Recent staff development has stimulated all staff to reflect on new ways of providing feedback to students and a number of initiatives are being trialled. The quality of feedback provided to students on the MA Management, the Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector, and the FdA Tourism makes a particularly positive contribution to promoting student learning. The clear management processes and lines of communication ensure that information on assessment is transmitted effectively to students at all stages of their study, from application to completion. The College has, with the University of Plymouth, engaged in projects to exploit further the virtual learning environment which is already used extensively by staff and students; such use of the virtual learning environment makes a significant contribution to the preparation and support of students when undertaking assignments.

45 The Developmental engagement team made three desirable recommendations. The College should continue its efforts to achieve consistency in the application of

assessment procedures across the provision. It should develop further processes formally to capture good practice in assessment and identify actions to be taken to disseminate this across the provision. Finally, the College should further utilise existing opportunities to disseminate, across the provision, identified good practice in providing feedback on student work.

## **Developmental engagement in work-related learning**

46 The Developmental engagement in work-related learning took place in March 2011. The team identified four areas of good practice. The College has introduced regularly audited work-based learning evidence boxes as a means of identifying and sharing good practice. Students are given opportunities to gain additional work-related experience during their academic studies and so develop further the integration of academic and vocational knowledge. There are strong employer links that promote learning in the workplace. The College's series of annual events for employers and members of the public to showcase aspects of work-related learning provides an outward-facing engagement with potential and existing students.

47 The team made two advisable recommendations. The College should further clarify its approach to work-related learning to ensure that it is fully understood by all staff and that it continues to meet the requirements of its higher education provision. It should also ensure that all employers involved in work-based learning receive the College's Employers' Guide to Higher Education Work-Based Learning. The team also made two desirable recommendations. The College should disseminate the good practice in the use of established employer forums across the provision, and it should ensure that the College's staff development programme is enhanced to include sessions on the key aspects of work-related learning.

## **D Foundation Degrees**

48 The College has offered Foundation Degrees since 2001. It currently provides 63 Foundation Degrees across seven sites and over a large range of subject areas. These degrees are validated and quality assured by the College's main validating body, the University of Plymouth, through the University of Plymouth Colleges Faculty, but there are also direct relationships with the university's faculty of Health, Education and Society and the Business School.

49 All features of good practice and recommendations listed below apply to Foundation Degrees.

## **E Conclusions and summary of judgements**

50 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, the University of Plymouth and the University of Coventry.

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

- the robust management structure for higher education provides effective support for the maintenance of academic standards, in the context of a large provision across several sites (paragraph 10)
- the multilayered quality assurance system is well matched to the complexity of the institution (paragraph 13)
- the College has a well established and collaborative working relationship with its awarding bodies (paragraphs 15 and 19)
- the College's support for scholarly activity by a large number of staff results in an impressive output of research (paragraph 17)
- the annual monitoring process ensures staff at all levels engage in an evaluative and self-critical review of the quality of learning opportunities (paragraph 20)
- the College takes a systematic and thorough account of the *Code of practice* in discharging its responsibilities towards the quality of learning opportunities (paragraph 22)
- the strong and productive links with employers across many programmes facilitate the acquisition by students of work-based and work-related skills and knowledge (paragraph 27)
- the College has responded creatively to student feedback on the design and content of the prospectus (paragraph 35).

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

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

- establish an overarching protocol for checking the content of the website and virtual learning environment (paragraph 43).

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

- review the Teaching, Training and Learning Strategy to articulate a specific focus on higher education (paragraph 23)
- strengthen its observation policy to ensure that staff are observed annually on their delivery of higher education (paragraph 24)
- review how it communicates to students the role of the programme committee and its importance as a key component in the College's deliberative structure (paragraph 25).

55 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that 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.

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

## Integrated quality and enhancement review

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, 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.

**Cornwall College action plan relating to the Summative review: March 2012**

Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<p>In the course of the Summative review the team identified the following areas of <b>good practice</b> that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:</p>						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the robust management structure for higher education provides effective support for the maintenance of academic standards, in the context of a large provision across several sites (paragraph 10)</li> </ul>	<p>Maintain the higher education management structure and ensure it continues to provide effective support for the maintenance of academic standards across the provision</p>	<p>December 2013</p>	<p>Director of Curriculum &amp; Quality (Higher Education) and Deputy Chief Executive Officer</p>	<p>Annual programme monitoring, including external examiner reports and student feedback</p>	<p>Higher Education Management Committee; Corporate Management Team; College Board of Governors</p>	<p>Annual Higher Education Self-Assessment Report and Action Plan</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the multilayered quality assurance system is well matched to the complexity of the institution (paragraph 13)</li> </ul>	<p>Ensure that the current quality assurance system is maintained and ensure it remains fit for purpose by means of regular evaluation</p>	<p>December 2013</p>	<p>Director of Curriculum &amp; Quality (Higher Education), Director of Curriculum &amp; Quality (14-19) and Deputy Chief Executive Officer</p>	<p>Positive module box audit reports; evaluative Curriculum Area Manager and Corporate Curriculum Lead reports feeding into annual programme monitoring</p>	<p>Higher Education Management Committee; Joint Boards of Study</p>	<p>Annual Higher Education Self-Assessment Report and Action Plan</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the College has a well established and collaborative working relationship with its awarding bodies (paragraphs 15 and 19)</li> </ul>	Maintain the good relationships with both awarding bodies	December 2013	Director of Curriculum & Quality (Higher Education), Principal/Chief Executive Officer and Deputy Chief Executive Officer	Continued engagement at appropriate levels of the College and the awarding bodies	Corporate Management Team; Higher Education Management Committee; Joint Boards of Study	Feedback from the awarding bodies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the College's support for scholarly activity by a large number of staff results in an impressive output of research (paragraph 17)</li> </ul>	Continue to encourage relevant staff development and scholarship appropriate to the staff role, and continue to monitor through the performance management/appraisal process	December 2013	Director of Curriculum & Quality (Higher Education); higher education staff line management	Continued engagement of staff delivering higher education with scholarly activity	Higher Education Management Committee	Higher Education Self-Assessment Report and Action Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the annual monitoring process successfully requires staff at all levels to engage with an evaluative and self-critical review of the quality of learning opportunities (paragraph 20)</li> </ul>	Continue the thorough and effective annual monitoring process whereby detailed reports and action plans are produced at each level of the reporting structure	December 2013	Director of Curriculum & Quality (Higher Education); higher education staff line management	Evaluative and thorough reports and action plans feeding into the annual HE Self Assessment Report.	Higher Education Management Committee; Corporate Management Team; College Board of Governors	Higher Education Self-Assessment Report and Action Plan; minutes of Joint Boards of Study
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the College takes a systematic and thorough approach to the</li> </ul>	Maintain the thorough and systematic approach to the <i>Code of practice</i> , and, in due	December 2013	Director of Curriculum & Quality (Higher Education)	Mapping against the <i>Code of practice</i> and the Quality Code;	Higher Education Management Committee; Corporate	Higher Education Self-Assessment Report and Action Plan

implementation of the Code of practice in discharging its responsibilities towards the quality of learning opportunities (paragraph 22)	course, the Quality Code			evidence of management processes in place across the levels of higher education	Management Team; College Board of Governors	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the strong and productive links with employers across many programmes facilitate the acquisition by students of work-based and work-related skills and knowledge (paragraph 27)</li> </ul>	Maintain, and develop further, the strong employer links which inform programme development and review and facilitate work-based and work-related learning.	December 2013	Director of Curriculum & Quality (Higher Education); programme teams	Evidence of engagement with employers; mentor reports; student feedback; reports in work-based learning evidence boxes	Higher Education Management Committee	Audit reports of work-based learning evidence boxes; feedback from employers at employer forums; student feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the College has responded creatively to student feedback on the design and content of the prospectus (paragraph 35).</li> </ul>	Continue to utilise student feedback in prospectus design and development	December 2013	Head of Marketing	Student feedback	Higher Education Management Committee	Student feedback

Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is <b>advisable</b> for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>establish an overarching protocol for checking the content of the website and virtual learning environment (paragraph 43).</li> </ul>	Develop a protocol for checking website and virtual learning environment content	December 2012	Director of Curriculum & Quality (Higher Education); Head of Marketing; Head of the School of Education & Training	Elimination of inaccuracies and typographical errors on the website and virtual learning environment	Higher Education Management Committee	Evidence of adherence to the protocol
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is <b>desirable</b> for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>review the Teaching, Training and Learning Strategy to articulate a specific focus on higher education (paragraph 23)</li> </ul>	Review the Teaching, Training and Learning Strategy to refer more explicitly to higher education frameworks and agencies	September 2012	Director of Curriculum & Quality (Higher Education); Head of the School of Education & Training; Director of Curriculum & Quality (14-19)	Revised Teaching, Training and Learning Strategy widely recognised and utilised by higher education staff	Higher Education Management Committee; Corporate Management Team	Feedback from staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>strengthen its observation policy to ensure that staff are observed</li> </ul>	Review the College policy for the observation of learning and teaching with a	September 2012	Director of Curriculum & Quality (Higher Education); Head	Revised policy in action for the observation of higher education	Higher Education Management Committee; Corporate	Higher Education Observation Reports

annually on their delivery of higher education (paragraph 24)	view to making a recommendation to central management team on annual observations of staff delivering higher education		of the School of Education & Training	learning and teaching	Management Team	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>review how it communicates to students the role of the programme committee and its importance as a key component in the College's deliberative structure (paragraph 25).</li> </ul>	Ensure that the role of the programme committee and its terms of reference are communicated to students	September 2012	Director of Curriculum & Quality (Higher Education); Higher Education Operations Team; programme managers	Student feedback and attendance and input at programme committees	Higher Education Management Committee	Student feedback; programme committee minutes

**RG 909 06/12**

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