



# **Integrated quality and enhancement review**

**Summative review**

**Uxbridge College**

**May 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* which includes descriptions of different higher education qualifications
- the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*
- subject benchmark statements, which describe the characteristics of degrees in different subjects
- guidelines for preparing programme specifications, which are descriptions of what is on offer to students in individual programmes of study
- award benchmark statements which describe the generic characteristics of an award, for example Foundation Degrees.

In addition, Developmental engagement teams gather evidence by focusing on particular aspects of the theme under review. These are known as 'lines of enquiry'.

## Outcomes of IQER

Each Developmental engagement and Summative review results in a written report:

- Developmental engagement reports set out good practice and recommendations and implications for the college and its awarding bodies, but do not contain judgements. Recommendations will be at one of three levels - **essential**, **advisable** and **desirable**. To promote an open and collegial approach to Developmental engagements, the reports are not published.
- Summative review reports identify good practice and contain judgements about whether the college is discharging its responsibilities effectively against core themes one and two above. The judgements are **confidence**, **limited confidence** or **no confidence**. There is no judgement for the third core theme, instead the report will provide evaluation and a conclusion. Summative review reports are published. Differentiated judgements can be made where a team judges a college's management of the standards and/or quality of the awards made by one awarding body to be different from those made by another.

Colleges are required to develop an action plan to address any recommendations arising from IQER. Progress against these action plans is monitored by QAA in conjunction with HEFCE and/or the college's awarding body(ies) as appropriate. The college's action plan in response to the conclusions of the Summative review will be published as part of the report.

## Executive summary

### The Summative review of Uxbridge College carried out in May 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/or 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 effective leadership and management provided by the College's senior management team for higher education fosters a culture of continuous improvement within relatively small higher education provision
- the effective embedding of the Academic Infrastructure into all aspects of the management of standards has led to robust and well conceived policies and practices
- the Health Checks provide a continuous and effective monitoring of standards throughout the year and ensure that any issues identified are acted upon swiftly
- the partnership work with awarding bodies and partner colleges as it ensures that issues of common significance are shared appropriately and acted upon effectively in accordance with requirements
- the integrated management information systems (Pellinore) which provide comprehensive data, includes the actions taken to address any issues, and enables all staff to drill down and investigate retention and progress information
- the regular, systematic and effective canvassing of student opinion
- the effective support given to higher education students through personal and academic tutorials and by the Information Advice and Guidance team
- the recruitment and support given to normally under-represented groups in higher education, and their achievement and progression in higher education programmes
- the Higher Education Staff Development programme is effective and leads to an enhancement of the student learning experience
- the strategic investment by the College management in higher education resources resulting in a high standard and quality of specialist learning and social space.

### 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:

- consider including clearer links to external sources of information on its website
- consider how to improve the consistency and thoroughness of the processes that check the accuracy and completeness of handbooks.

## 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 Uxbridge 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 Edexcel, Greenwich University and the University of Westminster. The review was carried out by Mr Fazal Dad and Mrs Sue Miller (reviewers) and Mr Alan Nisbett (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, reports 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 Uxbridge College, located in the London Borough of Hillingdon within Greater London and situated on two campuses, has been an established educational institution since 1965. The College is a General Further Education College that offers higher education provision in a limited number of curriculum areas. The College has grown steadily over the last ten years and currently houses over 4,000 students, of whom 183 (91.5 full-time equivalents) are studying on higher education programmes.

5 A key aim of the College is to increase participation and widen access to Higher Education. The College had been involved in Aim Higher initiatives and this has consolidated activities with partners and enhanced progression opportunities for learners with local and regional higher education institutions as well as the College's own higher education provision. The College intake from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups is approximately 70 per cent, as compared with 35 per cent in the West London region, and these higher than 'average' BME participation rates are also reflected in the College's higher education cohorts. Students from high index deprivation post codes and those who are 'first in family' to higher education are well represented. The following higher education programmes were offered at the College in 2010-11:

### Edexcel

- HNC Business Studies
- HNC Engineering
- HND Business
- HND Computing
- HND Interactive Media
- HND Engineering

### **University of Greenwich**

- Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (DTLLS) by distance learning

### **University of Westminster**

- Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (DTLLS) by attendance

## **Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies**

6 Uxbridge College is an approved Edexcel Centre. The Teacher Training programmes are accredited by the University of Westminster and the University of Greenwich. The College is an active participant in the partnership group professional development activities coordinated by the two universities.

## **Recent developments in higher education at the College**

7 There has been a strengthening of the College's higher education provision in engineering and computing in line with declared priorities both regionally and nationally. The HND in Interactive Media was successfully launched in 2009-10 with the first cohort completing in 2010-11. The programme was changed for 2011-12 enrolments to the HND in Computing with Media units being imported to create a Games Development pathway; this was made possible by the flexibilities contained within the new Qualifications & Credit Framework (QCF). This represents a creative initiative involving collaboration between two curriculum areas (Creative Studies & Computing) and local industries. The College has been keen to pursue such areas of niche interest.

8 An HND in Biomedical Science together with a re-launch of the HND in Travel and tourism management formed part of the application to HEFCE for additional higher education places. The outcomes are likely to allow a modest increase in higher education provision to be targeted in 2012-13, but the realisation of these target enrolments will be largely dependent on the impact of increased fees and associated student loans.

## **Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission**

9 Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the team. The student written submission was written during and following a process that involved a series of meetings coordinated by the College's Higher Education Coordinator and student representatives. The resulting submission was very informative and complemented the meeting held during the visit between the team and students.

## **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 The College takes a robust, strategic approach to the management of its higher education provision. The Vice Principal has overarching management responsibility for all of the higher education provision and is accountable to the College Principal. There is good evidence to support the self-evaluation statement that the academic standards of the higher education programmes are clearly managed by the College in line with the regulatory requirements of the awarding bodies. The College arrangements with its awarding bodies are clearly based on the relevant partnership agreements. Effective working relationships, facilitating the development of a shared understanding of partner responsibilities relating to the management of standards and quality, have been formed between the College and its awarding bodies. The team judged as good practice the effective leadership and management provided by the College's senior management team for higher education which fosters a culture of continuous improvement within relatively small higher education provision.

11 The College has comprehensively documented policies, including a Quality Policy, and quality assurance procedures. The quality monitoring process is facilitated centrally through the Academic Board, chaired by the College Principal, which is responsible for all academic affairs across the whole institution. There is regular and effective oversight of the development and quality monitoring of all higher education programmes at the Academic Board. The Higher Education Academic Standards sub-committee (HEASC), chaired by the Vice Principal, provides reports to the Academic Board on a termly basis relating to higher education matters. The HEASC is responsible for maintaining academic standards across all higher education programmes, including receiving proposals for new courses and all external examiners reports. It also monitors action taken by specific course representatives to address the issues raised in relevant reports and reviews overall performance of each course.

12 The College Higher Education Programmes Committee, chaired by the Director (Vocational), has overarching responsibility for the operational matters and considers issues arising from design, monitoring and review of programmes. Where required improvement strategies are identified and monitored on a termly basis. Key Performance Indicators are closely monitored by management, centrally by HEASC and at programme level. Arising issues are acted on by the College through a well-established system of Health Checks and an in-house data system (Pellinore), which is comprehensive in managing all aspects of the higher education provision. The team found the Health Checks to be an area of good practice as they provide a continuous and effective monitoring of standards throughout the year and ensure that any issues identified are acted upon swiftly and appropriately.

13 Assessment Boards for each school ratify all student grades and report to HEASC. At programme level, the College's Self-Evaluation Report (SER) for higher education within each school reflects on the academic standards and learner experience. Areas of improvement identified at programme level are recorded on the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). Termly review meetings are held to review actions and update the higher education tracking system. This is monitored at HEASC. The College Academic Standards Manager

and Officer provide very effective and comprehensive guidance and monitoring of all quality assurance for higher education.

14 The College's committee structure includes a range of strategic and quality assurance groups. The HEASC, which includes higher education programme leaders, takes an overall operational view of the quality assurance of the higher education programmes, systems and practices. The Group is also a forum for discussing a range of higher education issues and developments. The Group considers, for example, the annual monitoring reports, external examiner reports, outcomes of examination boards, issues arising from audit, and issues which students may bring to a College forum. This Group also provides reports to the Performance and Standards Committee of the Governing Body

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

15 The understanding and use of the Academic Infrastructure is widespread in the College and is, for example, consistently referred to in programme handbooks and policy documentation. The College is continuing to develop the systematic use and understanding of the Academic Infrastructure. Areas for development include staff development and quality processes. Course teams are guided by robust policies, procedures and systems drawn from the requirements set out in awarding body specifications and the Academic Infrastructure, particularly the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*. The College's policies relating to Teaching & Learning, Assessment and Student Submission of Work are developed with reference to the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students* to address expectations in relation to effective formative feedback of assessed work and are found to be robust. The team found that the effective embedding of the Academic Infrastructure into all aspects of the management of standards had led to robust and well conceived policies and practices.

### **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?**

16 The College operates its assessment against the regulations and operational guidance provided by each university awarding partner and Edexcel as appropriate. The partners appoint external examiners to assure themselves of the academic standards at programme level within the College. The College has effective and rigorous systems in place to ensure that external examiners' reports are responded to and acted on. HEASC review all external examiner reports and ensure appropriate action is taken to address any areas of improvement. All external examiner reports are uploaded on the quality tracking system (Pellinore). All action points are monitored by the Higher Education Committee on a termly basis and progress reports are provided to HEASC. Programme Leaders have responsibility for liaising with their external examiner, requesting new examiners as required, responding to reports and implementing any resulting actions. Individual programme reports are reviewed as part of annual monitoring processes by university partners. External examiners' reports then contribute to the College's own self evaluation process informing opportunities to share good practice or identify areas for improvement. Through the robust, collaborative processes and engagement with its Awarding Bodies, the College ensures the delivery of programme aims and the appropriate level of student outcomes, with reference to the FHEQ. The team found partnership work with awarding bodies and partner colleges in the area to be an area of good practice as it ensures that issues of common significance are shared appropriately and acted upon effectively in accordance with requirements.

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

17 College has comprehensive staff induction, mentoring, development, Continuing Professional Development and appraisal policies. While these policies are wider in remit than higher education staff, the College addresses the differing requirements of such staff development opportunities effectively. The College also actively encourages staff to become engaged in research and opportunities as presented by partner universities, from which several successful projects have resulted. Staff development needs are identified through a variety of means including the appraisal system and observation of teaching and learning and annual monitoring reports. Evidence of effective and development scholarly activities through research at master's and PhD level, together with a developing body of published material, indicates a positive culture across the College.

18 The College ensures through its recruitment processes that staff are appropriately qualified and experienced to teach on its programmes. Awarding body partners are notified upon appointment of a new member of staff, and the staff Curriculum Vitae is sent for approval to the link tutor or nominated person.

19 The annual Higher Education Training Day provides an opportunity for all higher education staff to meet and engage with external specialists, university colleagues and to share good practice internally. The College runs structured staff development days throughout the year and workshops are included that have a specific higher education focus. The Academic Standards Manager and Higher Education Coordinator works with university partners to provide higher education institution-led development sessions during the year at the College to ensure its staff are up to date with key systems and themes. Programme Leaders liaise directly with link tutors to organise any programme specific sessions as required. Staff development activities and feedback are recorded centrally and linked to each member of staff's individual record. Further opportunities for improving staff development include a more systematic approach to developing a structured plan for staff development each year which aligns more closely to College strategy, feedback from students and programme or university reviews, and action plans.

**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?**

20 The management of quality for the Edexcel HND and HNC programmes is delegated to the College with oversight by Edexcel through the External Examiner system. The Universities of Greenwich and Westminster maintain overall responsibility for the quality of their programmes while delegating operational responsibility to the College. Within the College the quality of learning is managed and reported using the same structure as that described in paragraphs 10 and 11 above for the management of academic standards. Quality management is thoroughly embedded in the operation of all programmes, and supported by a comprehensive suite of policies and procedures.

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

21 The College has full responsibility for all aspects of the student experience for the HND and HNC programmes. For the teacher education programmes the College is responsible for the recruitment, induction and support for students, for the delivery of the programme and for the first stage of any academic appeals or complaints. The universities maintain responsibility for the content of the programmes, and moderate the assessment.

22 In addition to the annual monitoring or self-assessment reports produced by all programmes, the College Academic Standards Officer undertakes a series of in-year Academic Health Checks using a range of criteria to ensure that programmes are compliant with quality criteria and that remedial measures are in place where necessary. The team noted as good practice the integrated management information systems (Pellinore) which provides comprehensive data, includes the actions taken to address any issues, and enables all staff to drill down and investigate retention and progress information including the tutorial support provided, actions or recommendations resulting from external examiner and liaison tutor reports. Programme self-assessment reports and Quality Improvement Plans are published and monitored through this suite of integrated information systems. At the termly meetings of the Higher Education Programmes Committee and the Higher Education Academic Standards committee information from the health checks and management information systems is scrutinised, discussed and remedial action identified where required. The team considers this to be an area of good practice.

23 Good practice is identified through the Higher Education Programmes Committee, who consider all reports and undertake a peer validation of the programme self-evaluations. Sharing of practice is carried out either through events during the College development days, or on a more localised basis. For example the good practice reflected in the assessment feedback sheets in Engineering and Computing was disseminated effectively to other groups in the College. Membership of a Peer Review and Development Group of colleges has further enhanced the sharing of good practice.

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

24 As noted above in paragraph 15, the College makes full use of the Academic Infrastructure. The Academic Infrastructure has been used to inform a range of changes including the content and consistency of handbooks, information advice and guidance in preparation and support for progression, and in the developments in equality and diversity and in widening participation. Preparations for the introduction of a new travel and tourism management programme have been informed by the Academic Infrastructure, in particular with reference to levels and articulation with the university programmes to ensure progression routes. The Academic Standards Officer makes available the specialist papers from Edexcel, many of which provide insight into the practical application of the Academic Infrastructure on HND programmes. The College has provided a response to the consultations on the Quality Code for Higher Education and has attended consultation events.

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

25 All staff are subject to regular observation. Those delivering predominantly on higher education programmes are observed in that role, those with a more mixed responsibility are observed alternately on further and higher education classes. Although based upon an Ofsted model, during observation of higher education teaching emphasis is

placed on the development of independent learning and research skills. The profile of observation grades for the staff delivering to higher education is strong, with 89 per cent good or outstanding. Support for staff to improve their teaching, either in general or to address a particular issue, is provided through a team of advanced practitioners and the use of targeted peer observation.

26 Staff are well qualified and most have significant vocational experience. Most also deliver at lower levels and are selected to join the higher level teams because of their specialist vocational knowledge and experience. Peer observation is carried out both formally and informally. In the fast developing fields of computing and media it is used as a way for staff to update their knowledge of new techniques as well as to share practice in teaching and learning. Students are complimentary of the standard of teaching and external examiner reports confirm the high standard of teaching and learning, and of the vocational currency of the provision. Students' views on teaching and learning and other aspects of their experience are collected through unit reviews, online questionnaires and regular well organised and reported higher education forum meetings, they confirmed that they were consulted and their views respected and acted upon. The team viewed this regular and effective canvassing of student opinion to be good practice. Comments reflect the responses gathered by the National Student Survey (NSS). Student representatives attend course committee meetings on the teacher education programmes and, along with representatives from the HND and HNC programmes, attend the higher education forum meetings.

27 The teaching and learning and assessment strategies are used effectively; graded and peer observation and the use of advance practitioners is firmly embedded. Assessment, internal verification and feedback to learners has been addressed; learners and external examiners confirm improvement and greater consistency as well as the innovative methods used by the interactive media staff for providing feedback. The use of e-learning, and its integration into the delivery, to provide a blended learning environment as well as academic support, is well established and supported. Good practice is identified and shared, and although programmes are not specifically work based, staff include external speakers, visits, live briefs and some placements to ensure vocational relevance.

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

28 Students comment very favourably on the support both pastoral and academic given by tutors. Formal identification of support needs is undertaken during recruitment and induction. As a high proportion of students progress from level 3 programmes within the College, their specific needs are already well understood, and where necessary help is given for students to complete the Disabled Students Award applications. The induction is comprehensive and well received by students. Cross-college aspects provide an opportunity to mix with those from other programmes and develop a higher education community. Tutorials are held weekly, and have a standard scheme of work, which includes the use of Individual Learning Plans. Based on those used elsewhere in the College, the higher education version has been developed as a result of consultation with the students, and provides more self-evaluation. Attendance and progress are monitored closely. The integrated management information system is used to identify students at risk, all of whom have been subject to a case conference so that additional support can be effectively targeted. Support for progression is good; the Information Advice and Guidance team are readily available to support progression, and to provide information on a wide range of welfare issues. The use of combined groups and lecture-style delivery has been used occasionally to prepare students for their university experience. Overall, the team judged the effective support given to higher education students through personal and academic tutorials and by the Integrated Advice and Guidance team, to be good practice.

29 The College has been remarkably successful in its widening participation strategies and policies, with over 70 per cent of its intake recruited from BME groups compared with a BME regional population of just over 30 per cent. This success is apparent in higher education recruitment and achievement, where the College has been extremely effective in recruiting students from previously under-represented groups in higher education and, through excellent support and guidance enabled them to achieve and progress in higher education programmes. The team judged this to represent good practice.

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

30 All staff take part in the annual appraisal process, where information from lesson observations, unit reviews and elsewhere is used and individual professional development plans are developed. College training days and school academic development meetings are held throughout the year, topics relating to teaching, learning, assessment and tutorial are prioritised. Plans for weekly staff development meetings targeting specific local issues are being finalised for the next academic year. Teacher training is available for all staff, and vocational updating and scholarly activity encouraged and supported. The Higher Education Staff Development programme is effective and leads to an enhancement of the student learning experience. The team found this to be an area 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?**

31 During programme approval and validation resources are checked and where necessary provided. Annual budget and capital bidding processes ensure these are maintained. External examiners and employers commented on the industry standard resources provided for engineering and in the computing and media workshops. Students using the engineering facilities commented on the high standard and modernity of equipment compared to other institutions. Students and staff commented on the responsive support they receive from the library and the introduction of 'e-brary' providing electronic access to books and journals. Students were particularly pleased with their dedicated work room within the library. Higher education students are able to access workshop facilities in the evenings and value the technician support available. The employers of part-time students and work placement providers confirm the currency of the resources and content of the programmes. Student comments on resources are acted upon, and changes have been made to 'out of hours' access and computer availability as a result. The e-learning portal is well used and supported by dedicated technical staff. Programme and College information as well as unit materials, assessments and additional resources are uploaded by staff, and students are able to use the forums and blogs for collaborative work and project logs. The strategic investment by the College management in higher education resources and the resulting high standard and quality of specialist learning and social space, is an example of good practice.

**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?

32 A full-time prospectus, Guide to Higher Education and Guide for International Students are published by the College, all of which detail the programmes and support available for higher education students. These and more detailed course information sheets are in hard copy and are available to download from the website. The comprehensive and easily navigated website contains additional information about the College, case studies of current students and details of facilities and fees. The website has links to the e-learning portal, and to its social media pages. Links to UCAS, the awarding universities and to Edexcel are not however clear or easily accessible. The team considers it desirable that the College considers including clearer links to external sources of information on its web site.

33 Programme handbooks are published for all the HND and HNC programmes. These follow a similar standard format, although the team identified a range of approaches to publishing assessment schedules. For the education programmes the handbooks are prepared by the awarding universities with some scope for local information to be added by the College. Posters are prominently displayed in the library and Information Centre signposting help and support. Staff have access to electronic versions of policies, strategies and procedures, which use clear document management to ensure currency.

### 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?

34 The College and its awarding bodies recognise the need to monitor the reliability of public information and have clear procedures to ensure regular reviews of relevant documentation. The information available to students and other stakeholders is produced in accordance with partnership agreements between the College and its awarding bodies, and reflects the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)*.

35 Information distributed by the College is agreed with awarding partners prior to publication. There are clear procedures for checking the reliability and accuracy of all publicity, marketing and student materials, such as online factsheets, and school handbooks. The College's marketing department is responsible for publishing information about the higher education provision at the College to potential students and produces key documents such as the Higher Education Guide and course fact sheets as well as the higher education-specific website. The marketing department has well-established procedures to ensure the accuracy, relevance and timeliness of the information published. Following proofreading and checking by the curriculum staff, the final sign-off for both paper and web-based information lies with the Heads of School.

36 Published data about programmes and students is assured for accuracy in accordance with the requirements of awarding partners through annual monitoring processes and the academic board. The College's own thorough monitoring processes help to ensure the accuracy of data as an ongoing process through the year. Student feedback is formally sought, with reference to public information through the internal Student Survey, higher education forum and unit reviews; as well as through their representatives within HEASC. Students confirmed during the review that the College provided accurate and complete information for their programme of study. However, reviewers noted that school handbooks for Engineering and Business departments were not accurate or complete. For example, the Engineering assessment schedule dates did not reflect dates on actual

assessment materials and the School of Business did not provide an assessment schedule as stated in the handbook. It is therefore desirable that the College considers how to improve the consistency and thoroughness of the processes that check the accuracy and completeness of handbooks.

37 As a result of the Developmental engagement, the College was advised to ensure information on the College website is up to date and accurate. The College marketing department now hold regular and formal communication between themselves and relevant departments to regularly review all information on the College website. The virtual learning environment is a standard repository for documentation and has been introduced to ensure that all students have access to authoritative information such as school handbooks and assessment materials.

**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**

38 The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in November 2010. The lines of enquiry were:

**Line of enquiry 1:** How effective is formative feedback to students in enhancing learning opportunities and supporting the achievement of intended learning objectives?

**Line of enquiry 2:** How do the internal and external verification and moderation processes contribute to the assurance of higher education academic standards?

**Line of enquiry 3:** To what extent is the information on assessment methodologies, criteria and grading that is given to students within the delivering Schools, clear and understood by students?

39 The Developmental engagement found a number of areas of good practice, including the College's development of an in-house data system (Pellinore) which was comprehensive in managing all aspects of the higher education provision; the comprehensive higher education management structure and operation ensures robust quality assurance arrangements; mature and proactive relationships with awarding bodies have led to positive collaborative activities that have impacted on the assurance of quality and standards; teacher training, which was an exemplar of good practice for its internal verification documentation and processes; comprehensive and well-written assessment documentation at programme level and the thorough and supportive feedback contributes positively to the quality of education.

40 Recommendations included advising that information on the College website was up-to-date and accurate, and suggesting as desirable the reviewing of the operation of College policies regarding deadlines for submissions; and promoting the sharing of good practice across all higher education provision.

## D Foundation Degrees

41 The College does not currently offer foundation degrees and there are no plans to do so.

## E Conclusions and summary of judgements

42 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Uxbridge 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.

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

- the effective leadership and management provided by the College's senior management team for higher education fosters a culture of continuous improvement within relatively small higher education provision (paragraph 10)
- the effective embedding of the Academic Infrastructure into all aspects of the management of standards has led to robust and well conceived policies and practices (paragraph 15)
- the Health Checks provide a continuous and effective monitoring of standards throughout the year and ensure that any issues identified are acted upon swiftly (paragraph 12)
- the partnership work with awarding bodies and partner colleges in the area [as it] ensures that issues of common significance are shared appropriately and acted upon effectively in accordance with requirements (paragraph 16)
- the integrated management information systems (Pellinore) which provide comprehensive data, including the actions taken to address any issues, and enables all staff to drill down and investigate retention and progress information (paragraph 22)
- the regular, systematic and effective canvassing of student opinion (paragraph 26)
- the effective support given to higher education students through personal and academic tutorials and by the Information Advice and Guidance team (paragraph 28)
- the recruitment and support given to normally under-represented groups in higher education, and their achievement and progression in higher education programmes (paragraph 29)
- the Higher Education Staff Development programme is effective and leads to an enhancement of the student learning experience (paragraph 30)
- the strategic investment by the College management in higher education resources resulting in a high standard and quality of specialist learning and social space (paragraph 31).

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

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

- consider including clearer links to external sources of information on its website (paragraph 32)

## Integrated quality and enhancement review

- consider how to improve the consistency and thoroughness of the processes that check the accuracy and completeness of handbooks (paragraph 36).

46 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, and other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that it has **confidence** that, in the context of this Summative review, the College discharges its responsibilities effectively, as set out in the relevant partnership agreement for the management of the standards of the awards of its awarding bodies.

47 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, and other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that it has **confidence** that, in the context of this Summative review, the College discharges its responsibilities effectively, as set out in the relevant partnership agreement for the management of the quality of learning opportunities to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

48 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, and other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that, in the context of this Summative review, reliance **can** be placed on the accuracy and/or completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

**Uxbridge College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 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 effective leadership and management provided by the College's senior management team for higher education fosters a culture of continuous improvement within relatively small higher education provision (paragraph 10)</li> </ul>	<p>Monitor the effectiveness of management and quality assurance structures and report on an annual basis to the Higher Education Academic Standards Committee and Academic Board</p>	<p>14 December 2012</p>	<p>Vice Principal, Academic Standards Office and Higher Education Coordinator</p>	<p>Positive External Examiner reports</p> <p>Minutes of Higher Education Academic Standards Committee and Academic Board meetings</p> <p>Annual Health Checks</p>	<p>Vice Principal; Higher Education Academic Standards Committee; Academic Board</p>	<p>Higher Education Self Evaluation 2011-12, 2012-13</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the effective embedding of the Academic Infrastructure into all aspects of the</li> </ul>	<p>Monitor the introduction of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and systematically map</p>	<p>Ongoing throughout 2012-13</p> <p>Review</p>	<p>Academic Standards Office, Higher Education Core Team, Senior</p>	<p>Robust and well-conceived policies and practices</p>	<p>Higher Education Academic Standards Committee, Senior Management</p>	<p>Higher Education Self Evaluation 2012-13</p>

management of standards has led to robust and well-conceived policies and practices (paragraph 15)	against College policies and procedures  Allocate Higher Education Core Team members to update as and when necessary	June 2013	Management Team/Governors to approve policies		Team, Academic Board	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the Health Checks provide a continuous and effective monitoring of standards throughout the year and ensure that any issues identified are acted upon swiftly (paragraph 12)</li> </ul>	Supply findings of Health Checks and present report to Higher Education Academic Standards Committee, evaluate Health Check criteria in light of Quality Code for Higher Education developments for 2012-13	29 June 2013	Academic Standards Office	Health check reports and associated action plan and Higher Education Academic Standards Committee minuted approval	Higher Education Academic Standards Committee	Higher Education Academic Standards Committee report; reference in Higher Education Self Evaluation 2011-12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the partnership work with awarding bodies and partner colleges in the area as it ensures that issues of common significance are shared appropriately and acted upon effectively in</li> </ul>	Evidence engagement and development activities with awarding bodies and external agencies	14 December 2012	Academic Standards Office; Head of Teacher Training	Attendance at Network and awarding body-led meetings  Circulation of awarding body updates  Higher Education Academic Standards Committee minutes	Higher Education Academic Standards Committee	External examiner reports  Higher Education Academic Standards Committee reports  Training and development activity reports

accordance with requirements (paragraph 16)				Partnership reports (confirming rigor of assessment)  Positive health check reports (confirming rigour of assessment)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the integrated management information systems (Pellinore) which provide comprehensive data, including the actions taken to address any issues, and enables all staff to drill down and investigate retention and progress information (paragraph 22)</li> </ul>	<p>Further develop systems based on feedback from staff, students, external shareholders.</p> <p>Further dissemination of relevant Higher Education Academic Standards Committee (Higher Education Academic Standards Committee)/ academic quality/ Pellinore reports and activities to students</p>	1 February 2013	Higher Education Coordinator in liaison with Deputy Management Information Systems Manager, Vice Principal, Academic Standards Office and Director-Vocational	<p>Positive student feedback</p> <p>Effective reporting minuted at Higher Education Academic Standards Committee</p> <p>Student achievement and effective action plans</p>	Higher Education Academic Standards Committee	<p>Comparison of Pellinore facilities with the recommendations carried forward by Higher Education Coordinator</p> <p>Higher Education Academic Standards Committee - effective quality assurance reporting</p> <p>Evaluation focus within Higher Education Self Assessment Report 2011-12</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the regular, systematic and effective canvassing of student opinion (paragraph 26)</li> </ul>	<p>Cross College Induction day</p> <p>Embed Unit Reviews into Quality Calendar</p> <p>Termly Higher</p>	28 September 2012; 1 December 2012	Higher Education Coordinator	<p>Development of awareness of course content and methodologies</p> <p>Broadened</p>	Higher Education Academic Standards Committee	Student written submission (Summer 13) and Higher Education Cross College SER 2011-12 and 2012-13

	<p>Education Forum meetings</p> <p>Monthly Higher Education Core Group meetings reporting directly to Higher Education Academic Standards Committee</p>			<p>student participation in Higher Education delivery</p> <p>Feedback on course content and delivery resulting in refining of courses to further meet students needs and expectations</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the effective support given to higher education students through personal and academic tutorials and by the Information Advice and Guidance team (paragraph 28)</li> </ul>	<p>HEILP programme rolled out</p> <p>Tutorial scheme of works refined and developed (utilising student voice)</p> <p>Information, advice and guidance termly sessions</p>	31 October 2012	Higher Education Coordinator/ Higher Education Programme Leaders/Head of Guidance and Information Systems	Improved support for students related specifically to Higher Education needs. Improved retention and progression	Cross College SER	Student written submission (Summer 13) and Higher Education Cross College SER 2011-12 & 2012-13
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the recruitment and support given to normally under-represented groups in higher education, and their achievement and progression in higher education programmes</li> </ul>	<p>Survey of student cohort with reference to under representation</p> <p>Focussed marketing of courses</p> <p>Tracking of achievement</p> <p>Allocation of support</p>	1 October 2012; 1 December 2012; 1 July 2013	Director-Vocational/Higher Education Coordinator/ Director of Student Services	<p>Improved support for any under-represented groups</p> <p>Improved retention and progression</p>	Higher Education Academic Standards Committee	<p>Higher Education Cross College SER 2011-12 and 2012-13</p> <p>Annual impact review of Higher Education bursary allocation</p>

(paragraph 29)	and effective use of bursaries					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the Higher Education Staff Development programme is effective and leads to an enhancement of the student learning experience (paragraph 30)</li> </ul>	<p>Increased Higher Education staff training budget</p> <p>Embed Higher Education Staff Training Day into Quality Calendar</p>	1 June 2012; 12 September 2012	Higher Education Coordinator/ Vice Principal- Curriculum and Standards/ Academic Standards Manager	<p>Development of scholarly activity</p> <p>Development of staff contemporaneous knowledge</p> <p>Maintenance of Academic Standards</p>	Higher Education Academic Standards Committee/HEPC/T and D Committee	Higher Education Cross College SER 2011-12 and 2012-13
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the strategic investment by the College management in higher education resources resulting in a high standard and quality of specialist learning and social space (paragraph 31).</li> </ul>	<p>Higher Education Study Room resourced with two hi-spec computers</p> <p>Higher Education Programme Committee to regularly monitor resource issues raised by Unit Reviews, Higher Education Core Forum meetings and respond accordingly</p> <p>HoS Higher Education Development Plans to incorporate resourcing proposals</p>	1 September 2012; 1 January 2013	Director-Vocational/ Information Technology Manager/Heads of School/Higher Education Programme Leaders	<p>Improvement of independent learning resources resulting in greater opportunities for learners to develop their higher level learning skills</p> <p>Improved achievement and preparation for Higher Education Institution progression</p>	Higher Education Academic Standards Committee	Higher Education Cross College SER 2011-12 and 2012-13
<b>Desirable</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>Target date</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Success indicators</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
The team considers						

that it is <b>desirable</b> for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>consider including clearer links to external sources of information on its website (paragraph 32)</li> </ul>	<p>Hyperlink all external sources</p> <p>Regular Agenda item in Core Forum group meetings</p>	1 June 2012	Head of Marketing/Higher Education Coordinator	<p>Hyperlinks working effectively</p> <p>Students more aware of options available</p>	Higher Education Academic Standards Committee	Student written submission (Summer 13) and Higher Education Cross College SER 2011-12 and 2012-13
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>consider how to improve the consistency and thoroughness of the processes that check the accuracy and completeness of handbooks (paragraph 36).</li> </ul>	Formalise the process for writing, updating and signing off handbooks	1 September 2012	Academic Standards Office, Higher Education Coordinator, Teams, Marketing	<p>Consistent, accurate handbooks</p> <p>Realistic and accurate assessment schedules</p>	Higher Education Academic Standards Committee	<p>Student opinions from forum meetings</p> <p>Health check criteria grading</p>

**RG 997 08/12**

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