

Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

February 2009

Huntingdonshire Regional College

SR18/2009

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2009

ISBN 978 1 84482 938 5

All QAA's publications are available on our website www.qaa.ac.uk

Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

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

Summative review of Huntingdonshire Regional College carried out in February 2009

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 agreement, for the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of its awarding body. The team also considers that there can be **confidence** in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreement, 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 report on equality and diversity in the College higher education provision, which constitutes a model of direct reporting on higher education to the College's Senior Management Group
- full assessment feedback related to learning outcomes, which is given in the FdA Early Years Childcare and Education and in the BA in Creative and Expressive Arts in Counselling where it is additionally referenced to grading criteria
- robust and well-documented formal tutorial systems, which are provided for students undertaking most higher education programmes
- the College virtual learning environment, which provides effective e-learning solutions and reliable student information in a number of pathways.

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:

- introduce a clearer focus on managing higher education within college-wide strategy and planning systems, and a more direct system of reporting on higher education to the Senior Management Group
- strengthen overall College responsibility for compliance with the University's quality assurance systems through reporting to the College's Senior Management Group
- ensure that prospectus information is updated annually to reflect the pathways that are being offered.

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

- carry through the improvements, already identified as being necessary by the College, in tracking the progression of student cohorts in higher education from year to year
- evaluate the effectiveness of peer observation of teaching and learning in higher education, to ensure that there is a robust means of sharing identified good practice

Integrated quality and enhancement review

- consider whether it is possible to recognise the additional flexible and informal tutorial support given to higher education students more formally in teachers' duties and teaching commitments
- introduce a specific policy for staff development for higher education and a discrete system for reporting and evaluation.

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 Huntingdonshire Regional 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 Anglia Ruskin University (the University). The review was carried out by Mr Rob Mason, Ms Jenny Steer (reviewers) and Dr John Hurley (coordinator).

2 The Summative review team (the team) conducted the review in agreement with the College and in accordance with *The handbook for an 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 body, meetings with staff, students and reports from inspections by Ofsted. 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 for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, subject and award benchmark statements, *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and programme specifications. As the total full-time equivalent students funded by HEFCE at the College is less than 100, in accordance with the published review method, the College elected not to take part in a Developmental engagement.

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

4 The College is a relatively small general further education college serving the needs of a widely-dispersed population. The main catchment area is made up of small market towns and rural settlements. The College has sites situated in two of the market towns, Huntingdon, the main site, and St Neots. Redevelopment of the Huntingdon site is planned and is awaiting final approval.

5 Higher education in the College has been established for 15 years, initially offering progression from Access courses and providing a Diploma in Higher Education (DipHE) or Higher National Diploma and Certificate (HND/C) qualifications. More recently, the College has been encouraged to develop a range of Foundation Degrees with Anglia Ruskin University, which now validates all of the higher education provision. In 2007-08, the College enrolments included 843 full-time and 2,807 part-time students, of whom 91 were following higher education programmes. Programmes, awarded by Anglia Ruskin University, running in 2008-09 are as follows:

- DipHE History/English
- FdA Learning Support
- DipHE Computer Science
- FdA Professional Photography
- HNC/D Engineering

- FdA Early Years Childcare and Education (new pathway awaiting sector-endorsed status)
- BA (Hons) Creative and Expressive Arts in Counselling (new pathway).

Partnership agreements with the awarding body

6 All higher education programmes are awarded by the College's higher education partner, Anglia Ruskin University. Most programmes, called pathways, are also available at other partner colleges. All partner colleges follow a single, University-wide, quality assurance process. The major responsibility for curricula and standards rests with the University. Each curriculum area in the College aligns with a particular faculty in the University. The implementation of the University's quality assurance processes rests in practice with the College pathway leaders, who relate directly to their appropriate faculty link.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

7 Most higher education programmes in the College attract relatively small numbers of students. A number of programmes have closed as they did not recruit. Some of these have been replaced by new Foundation Degrees and this process is continuing into the current academic year. Two new pathways have been introduced, including a Foundation Degree in Early Years Childcare and Education. The other, which provides an honours degree top-up from a National Vocational Qualification level 4 counselling qualification, was initiated by the College, who are currently the sole provider.

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 Summative review team. Students took up this opportunity with the support of the College. Under the direction of two students, information was gathered by the College from questionnaires and through focus group meetings. This information was analysed and written up into a draft report by the students and was then submitted for comment and amendment to meetings of students in each pathway. The team also met students who were in College on the day of the visit, including both full and part-time students. The majority had participated in some respect in the formulation of the student submission. The submission constituted a well reasoned and informative resource for 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 self-evaluation states that the College overview of quality assurance is conducted through mechanisms that apply equally to further and higher education. Overall responsibility lies with the Vice-Principal (Curriculum), supported by the Quality Manager. There is, however, only slight reference to higher education in the College Self-Assessment Report, College Improvement Plan and College Strategic Plan. The self-evaluation also acknowledges that as all the higher education provision is in collaboration with Anglia Ruskin University, it is their quality systems that must be followed to assure standards.

10 The College is organised into a number of curriculum areas, each managed by a head. Each higher education pathway is managed by a pathway leader. Heads of curriculum areas report formally to the College Senior Management Group. The Higher Education Committee, composed of the pathway leaders, reports to the Academic Board. In practice, the pathway leaders are responsible for the day-to-day management of standards and programme development, and the primary line of reporting is to their colleagues in the University faculties. New courses are initiated by pathway leaders identifying progression needs from further education, with employer support and encouragement, in individual programme areas. The management undertaken by pathway leaders ensures that the College is able to implement its obligations under the partnership agreement and thus assure standards.

11 Scrutiny of the College self-assessment and planning documents shows that there is little specific focus on higher education. This is reviewed within the generality of further education provision within the curriculum areas. There is no evidence of a detailed strategy to ensure the sustainability of higher education for the future. The strategic plan does not contain any specific proposals for developing the portfolio of higher education courses in line with local and regional needs or by systematic reviews of the current provision. The College's reliance on students who have progressed either from further education courses at the College, or mature students, has resulted in low levels of recruitment in many areas. While there is some evidence of market research to identify areas for development, for example by canvassing interested parties at open evenings, using questionnaires and looking at sector demands, it is not clear how the College is managing its planning for higher education.

12 While the team are satisfied that the day-to-day management and delivery of academic standards is conducted appropriately by an enthusiastic and dedicated group of pathway leaders, it recommends that a clearer focus on managing higher education within college-wide strategy and planning systems is advisable. A more direct system of reporting on higher education to the Senior Management Group, possibly through the role of the Higher Education Coordinator, will help the College to plan more strategically to ensure the sustainability of higher education courses, and develop the portfolio appropriately.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

13 Staff demonstrate an adequate awareness of the Academic Infrastructure, but this is largely a result of using the University's systems. The use of the Academic Infrastructure is embedded in the design, validation, approval and delivery of higher education programmes, and the production of programme specifications and assignment briefs which are the responsibility of the University. Staff work confidently within this framework. Further reference is made to relevant national occupational standards such as those of the Sector Skills Council, Skills for Care and Development in the FdA Early Years Childcare and Education and BA Creative and Expressive Arts in Counselling documentation.

14 Students are clear about how learning outcomes and grading criteria are used within the assessment process. Pathway materials provided by the College show that assessment practices generally reflect the guidance in *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*. The design and delivery of the learning outcomes have produced work that challenges students at the appropriate higher education level, and builds on their previous knowledge effectively.

15 The design of Foundation Degrees reflects significant engagement with the precepts of the *Code of practice* and the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*. Employers are involved in both the development and work-based learning elements of Foundation Degrees, which reflects the qualification descriptor in the FHEQ. Students on Foundation Degrees choose a workplace mentor who is approved by their pathway leader. Mentors are prepared for their role, which is primarily advisory to the student, from information supplied by the College, usually with a letter and supporting documents. A risk assessment in each student's workplace is carried out either by the pathway team or by the services to business team before the placement commences. While the design characteristics of Foundation Degrees are clearly evident, there is some scope to develop employer engagement further.

16 The team concludes that the curricular and assessment frameworks developed by the University, the understanding of these frameworks by staff and students at the College and their effective implementation ensure adequate account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure.

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?

17 The partnership agreement includes a number of obligations that the College and the University jointly agree to. This includes quality assurance through the University's procedures. The College also follows the University's assessment process laid down in the Senate Code of Practice on The Assessment of Students, 2007-08.

18 The implementation of the University's procedures is managed effectively by pathway leaders. These staff have a multiplicity of roles including initial guidance and interviewing of prospective students, teaching, course management, course monitoring, review and development, and promotional activities. Each pathway produces an annual monitoring report, which is submitted to the appropriate University faculty. These are returned to pathway leaders with points to be implemented for improvement with their teams. While these reports are available within the College they are not integrated fully into quality management systems. The College is over-reliant on the University itself to ensure compliance with the required systems.

19 All assessments are set by the University. The College operates a systematic quality assurance process for marking assignments which includes either second-marking or joint-marking by other College staff. Marked assessments are then moderated by the University, to ensure that the marking process has been conducted properly, and to confirm that the standards achieved by students are appropriate. College staff participate in moderation and standardisation meetings, together with colleagues from the University and other colleges, which support generally consistent and appropriate marking standards. External examiners are appointed by the University and report at University faculty level across the whole of the University partnership. Their reports give little specific feedback to individual colleges.

20 While the University's processes are followed by the College, there is little evidence of them being used internally to improve quality, for example, by the effective use of annual monitoring reports in the College's own self-assessment. The self-assessment is mainly focused on the College's further education monitoring, review, development and improvement processes. This could be enhanced by adapting it to include more substantial sections with a specific higher education focus and by including aspects of higher education quality management and improvement drawn from the annual monitoring

reports. One good example of reporting directly to the College's Senior Management Group, is a report on diversity in the College higher education provision made by the learning support coordinator. This example could be used to review other aspects of higher education.

21 The team recommends that it is advisable for the College to develop formal mechanisms for the Senior Management Group to receive appropriate information to help them in the strategic enhancement of quality in the higher education provision. This will entail the College taking responsibility at a more senior level for compliance with the University's systems and a greater formal involvement of the College, through the Quality Manager, in the higher education specific quality assurance processes.

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

22 The College identifies four days each year for generic staff development. There is usually an opportunity for pathway teams to focus on matters specific to them. Support for assessment practice is given through the moderation and standardisation meetings for University and partner College staff. Evidence was available of individual professional development, including study for further qualifications and scholarly activity by members of pathway teams, particularly by pathway leaders. University discipline network groups provide valuable opportunities for subject development. The College and the University provide appropriate arrangements to support key staff delivering higher education to maintain academic standards.

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

Core theme 2: Quality of learning opportunities

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

23 Although the College has more direct responsibility for the quality of learning opportunities, the arrangements for management remain similar to those for academic standards, outlined in paragraph 10. Operational management of the quality of learning opportunities sits at pathway team level and reporting is through line management, of the curriculum area and faculty, to the Senior Management Group. College responsibility for staffing and resources lies at faculty level and above. The Higher Education Team on which pathway leaders sit is substantially concerned with the delivery of learning opportunities. Pathway leaders also sit on the University faculty boards and attend meetings of discipline network groups, which support their management of learning opportunities.

24 All pathway teams manage their responsibilities effectively. The responsibilities cover all the major aspects that contribute to the quality of learning opportunities. There are good examples of how these responsibilities are discharged. Proactive curricular development for the BA in The Creative and Expressive Arts in Counselling has created novel learning opportunities that allow progression from NVQ level 4. Imaginative approaches to teaching and learning are evident in the DipHE English/History, as are the use of cutting-edge professional techniques in the FdA Photography. The needs of employers are served

through sector-standard professional practice in the BA in Creative and Expressive Arts in Counselling and FdAs in Early Years Childcare and Education and Learning Support. These needs are also served by the industry-standard technology in Engineering. There is enthusiastic promotion of e-learning across the curricula using the College and University virtual learning environments.

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

25 The general arrangements arising from the partnership agreement are outlined in paragraph 17. In addition, there is evidence that the College meets the further obligations, in line with University's framework for managing the quality of learning opportunities. This includes evidence, discussed subsequently, that the College provides stimulating learning opportunities that challenge students, and a highly supportive and caring learning environment which is appreciated by students.

26 These activities are assured principally through effective pathway team leadership and the implementation of College procedures and policies across all curricular levels. The College could strengthen these procedures by bringing higher education more specifically into the self-assessment process and strengthening the framework in which it manages higher education.

27 In line with the recommendations of the University Audit of the College in 2008, the College has taken steps to address variable practice in the way it reviews and responds to matters raised by higher education students. The College encourages student representation in pathway teams and provides ample opportunities for the student voice to be heard. Formal methods include module evaluations, pathway reviews at the end of each semester, and a student perception survey. Students confirmed that their opinion was sought and were able to cite numerous instances where this had led to improvements.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

28 The University incorporates the guidance from the *Code of practice* into their framework for managing the quality of learning opportunities. College staff understand the significance of good-quality learning opportunities in higher education and the *Code of practice* and follow University procedures in line with the partnership agreement.

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

29 The College has a single system for assuring the quality of teaching and learning that applies to further and higher education as a whole. The self-assessment report reflects the Ofsted Common Inspection Framework rather than the Academic Infrastructure. In practice, there is only brief reporting on higher education at college level and not much detail in curriculum area reports. Written guidance for staff on the writing of self-assessments covers further and higher education, but is actually focused on further education. The reporting of higher education achievement in the self-assessment takes no account of cohort progression or withdrawal between years, and this makes evaluation and action planning less effective. The College acknowledges that this is an area for improvement.

30 The College has a system of classroom observation and grading performance, which is in practice confined to further education. Classroom Observation Forms include tick boxes for courses up to level 4 and 5 but the College self-assessment report 2007-08 reported no

observations at these levels. The meeting with staff confirmed that the process does not encompass higher education. The College has a system of peer observation, which is distinct from classroom observation. Peer observations do not grade performance and are not used in appraisal, but give developmental feedback. Evidence was seen of peer observation in the pathway files. The College would benefit from a systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of peer observation on teaching and learning in higher education. Evaluation by the College would provide evidence on whether peer observation identifies good practice and improves teaching standards. If so, it constitutes a valuable resource on which to build staff development, based on identified good practice.

31 Written feedback on assessment tasks varies across programmes. Good practice was seen in the FdA Early Years Childcare and Education, where full feedback was related to learning outcomes, and in BA Creative and Expressive Arts in Counselling, where it was also referenced to grading criteria. On other pathways, including FdA Professional Photography and FdA Learning Support, it was brief. In Photography, written feedback was not clearly referenced to outcomes or the grade awarded, although it was supplemented by generous and formative oral feedback in the studio. The process of University moderation can impose significant delays in confirming marks. Students receive feedback from staff in the College within 20 working days, but may not have notification of moderated marks for several weeks thereafter. The impact of delays was particularly serious for engineering students in 2007-08, where marks were delayed until the end of the year. Improved procedures for liaison with the University faculty were instituted in response.

32 The College has robust and well-documented formal tutorial systems that combine academic progress review with pastoral support. There is a high level of tutorial support that extends well beyond the scheduled meetings and this holistic approach is highly valued by students. Tutors take into account an individual student's learning needs and good examples were seen of English and history students with dyslexia being given tailored tutorial guidance and support.

33 Overall, the College has well-managed systems for ensuring the quality of student learning opportunities and developing student learning. In some areas, and in particular the peer observation of higher education teaching, a greater focus on the effectiveness of established systems is desirable. In others, such as the provision of feedback to students on assessed work, the sharing of good practice would benefit a more consistent experience for students.

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

34 The self-evaluation states that the College is an inclusive learning community. One purpose for the higher education programmes offered is to provide wider access to studies at this level. Staff and students confirmed that pathways offer progression from further education or Access programmes or to mature entrants in work. The self-evaluation states that some of these students have high support needs and the team can confirm that appropriate structures are in place to meet these needs.

35 Pathway leaders give pre-entry advice and guidance to applicants and a balance is evident in selection procedures between enabling students to access provision, and trying to ensure that they have the skills to succeed. Withdrawal data suggests that students need a clearer indication of the challenges of the pathways in order to ensure that they are able to progress to the end of the course.

36 College induction arrangements for higher education students are comprehensive, supportive and welcoming. This leads to an extended induction period which, in some cases includes visits to the University. The pathway-specific induction agenda in Photography, for example, demonstrated the care that staff clearly take in introducing new students to their studies.

37 Following University requirements, the College has a named student adviser, whose primary role is to administer student's submission of assessments and deal with extensions and mitigation. The student adviser operates from within Student Services and works closely with a member of the College finance department to ensure that information on fees, loans and student data are accurate and matters dealt with expeditiously. The adviser's role is clearly understood by staff and students, and brings about a rigour and consistency in the hand-in procedures and the granting of extensions.

38 The pathway leader for the FdA Learning Support carries an additional cross-college management role for additional learning support. There is ample evidence from example student files to demonstrate that students with learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported in the College. Informal support is available from teaching staff, which reflects the close relationships between staff and students in the College. Staff operate an open-door policy that extends to telephone calls, emails and text messages. While the closeness of the relationship between students and the teaching staff is valued highly by students, the team considers that this will not be sustainable if pathways recruit more successfully. It is desirable that the College should consider recognising this flexible and informal tutorial support role more formally in teachers' duties and contracted annual teaching hours.

39 Placements for students are risk-assessed by the College in advance, either by the pathway team or by the services-to-business team. Students are supported on placement by the teaching staff, but there is also some development of peer mentoring in FdA Learning Support and Early Years Childcare and Education, and HNC/D Electrical and Mechanical Engineering.

40 There is evidence to show that the College delivers its stated commitment to give effective support to higher education students.

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

41 The College facilitates the annual minimum of 30 hours continuing professional development for its staff, resulting from the national requirement for teaching staff to join the Institute for Learning. The teaching contract includes 10 professional days each year for individual study and professional updating, five of which may be taken in term-time by negotiation with the line manager. There is evidence of participation in training initiated by the College to develop teaching, learning and student support. One example is the use of the virtual learning environment to support e-learning. Little of this is specific to higher education. The College would benefit from a policy on higher education-specific staff development needs and a discrete system for reporting and evaluation. Other staff development is driven largely by individual preference, within the College's strategic objectives, or from the appraisal process. Remission from teaching below the normal 23 hours a week may also be negotiated but there is no systematic reduction for staff delivering higher education.

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?

42 As with other areas of management of higher education, responsibilities are devolved, exercised informally, and are secondary to the College's primary concern with further education. This does not imply that they are inadequate. For example, there is no separate library budget for higher education, but, in practice, there is no restriction on ordering what staff specify as necessary. Book holdings were judged to be adequate by the students. The team agree with the College's claim that library resources are sufficient. It provides appropriate specific workspaces and information technology facilities for the number of higher education students who had no problems accessing facilities.

43 The Anglia Ruskin University Audit of the College highlighted learning resources as a strength and the team agree with this judgement. Resources for FdA Professional Photography are particularly well provided, with state-of-the-art photographic, printing and digital resources. Resources for the engineering provision are also extensive with teaching areas that are well equipped and spacious, giving room for practical and theory-based activities. Higher education in both instances benefits from investment in further education.

44 Resources for computing are not as well developed for higher education purposes as other areas of the College. There is increasing pressure because of high use and rooms are heavily timetabled. There is no open-access to machines for higher education students and College staff conceded that this is becoming a problem. If higher education is to be sustained in this area, students will need access to advanced equipment that is accessible for private study.

45 The development of the College's virtual learning environment is led by computing staff. Higher education staff are enthusiastic about e-learning and make excellent use of the facility not only for their own teaching materials but also to add value to the resources available to staff and students on the University's environment and intranet. Students on the FdA Early Years Childcare and Education, for example, use the facility for interactive activities and further background reading. The HNC/D Engineering staff load their classroom notes, from an electronic whiteboard, into the resource area so that students can use them for further independent study. These facilities are appreciated by students, particularly by those on part-time courses who instanced the abundant resources and flexible access. The virtual learning environment is also a valuable resources for students who may have been absent from formal teaching sessions. The team consider that there is evidence of good practice in e-learning for dissemination in the College and beyond.

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

Core theme 3: Public information

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

46 The College states that it shares its responsibilities for public information with the University. In practice, this means that the University produces information to a standard format from which the College publishes a higher education prospectus and web pages. The University provides module handbooks that contain essential study and assessment information. The College provides pathway handbooks made up of College and University information. Published outcomes about assessment are the responsibility of the University.

47 All students receive two different student handbooks at the start of their course. One is a detailed module guide from the University. The second is produced by the appropriate Pathway leader and contains College and additional course information. Pathway leaders and the University update their handbooks annually. In addition, some courses produce other helpful information, for example, the BA History and English course provides a helpful and comprehensive study-skills guide, and the FdA Learning Support provides additional individual module guides that relate the information to the College facilities, resources and delivery.

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?

48 The College recognises the need to monitor the accuracy of public information that it is responsible for publishing. College procedures and practices ensure that paper-based and internet-based documentation are thoroughly reviewed and checked for accuracy, before their publication. College templates, which are completed by pathway leaders, help to ensure that there is a consistent approach to the publishing of information, and each part of the approval process is checked as it progresses.

49 The team can confirm that the pre-course information is informative and readily accessible. The information is designed for the needs of both full and part-time students. Attendance patterns are clearly explained in the course information, an important factor for part-time students when making course and institutional choices. As paragraph 35 indicates, there is scope to make the challenges posed by programmes, and the support available, clearer in College information, pre-course guidance and induction.

50 The College website is easy to navigate, helpful, informative, and accurate, and there are clear hyperlinks to the University website. Modifications to paper-based materials are available for students with specific requirements or disabilities, and text enlargement is possible on the website. The students commented positively on the pre-course information and felt that it helped them to make an informed choice for the appropriate course.

51 The College's printed prospectus is updated every two years. Any changes from one year to another are indicated by using addendum inserts into the prospectus. While this system is cost-efficient, it has the potential for prospective students to miss important information and details, or to receive incorrect or incomplete information. It is advisable for the College to ensure that prospectus information is updated annually to reflect changes in the pathways that are being offered.

52 The students stated that, in general, they are clear about the information contained in assessment schedules, assignments grading criteria. The latter are reproduced in course handbooks. In addition to these resources, the virtual learning environment also contains module and course information, and this is widely used and valued by the students.

53 In the course of the review, the team identified efficient management of the provision of public information including an effective system for managing the accuracy of information. In general, good-quality and helpful information is provided to students both pre-course and on-course. Good-quality accessible resources and materials are available on the College's virtual learning environment. The College is advised to ensure that the prospectus is up to date with information about the pathways being offered and that students are aware of the challenges of higher education study.

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

54 As the total full-time equivalent students funded by HEFCE at the College is less than 100, in accordance with the published review method, the College elected not to take part in a Developmental engagement.

D Foundation Degrees

55 There are three Foundation Degrees currently established, comprising the FdA Learning Support, FdA Professional Photography and FdA Early Years Childcare and Education, which is a new pathway awaiting sector-endorsed status. The College continues to be encouraged by Anglia Ruskin University to develop its Foundation Degree portfolio. New courses are initiated by pathway (course) leaders identifying progression needs from further education, in individual programme areas, rather than a developed process of strategic planning, although there is some evidence of market research to identify unmet needs.

56 The design of Foundation Degrees reflects significant engagement with the precepts of the *Code of practice* and the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*. Employers are involved in both the development and work-based learning elements of Foundation Degrees, which reflects the qualification descriptor in the FHEQ. Further reference is made to relevant national occupational standards, such as those of the Sector Skills Council, Skills for Care and Development in the FdA Early Years Childcare and Education documentation.

57 Students on Foundation Degrees choose a workplace mentor, who is approved by their pathway leader. Mentors are prepared for their role, which is primarily advisory to the student, from information supplied by the College, usually with a letter and supporting documents. A risk assessment in each student's workplace is carried out by the pathway leader before the placement commences. While the design characteristics of Foundation Degrees are clearly evident, there is some scope to develop employer engagement further.

58 Foundation Degrees benefit from the effective management by pathway leaders, within the framework of Anglia Ruskin University's procedures, which is common to all the College's higher education provisions. There are no areas of identified good practice or recommendations that relate only to Foundation Degrees. They share robust assessment procedures, effective student support systems and helpful e-learning initiatives with other higher education programmes. In common with those other programmes, they would benefit from stronger strategic management.

Conclusions and summary of judgements

59 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Huntingdonshire Regional College's management of its responsibilities for academic standards and for the quality of learning opportunities of the awards the College offers on behalf of its awarding body. This was based upon discussion with staff and students, and scrutiny of evidence provided by the College and its awarding body, Anglia Ruskin University.

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

- the report on equality and diversity in the College higher education provision constitutes a model of direct reporting on higher education to the College's Senior Management Group (paragraph 20)
- full assessment feedback related to learning outcomes is given in the FdA Early Years Childcare and Education, and in the BA Creative and Expressive Arts in Counselling, where it is additionally referenced to grading criteria (paragraph 31)
- robust and well-documented formal tutorial systems are provided for students undertaking most higher education programmes (paragraph 32)
- the College virtual learning environment provides effective e-learning solutions and reliable student information in a number of pathways (paragraphs 45, 52, 53).

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

The team agreed a number of areas where the College is **advised** to take action:

- to introduce a clearer focus on managing higher education within college-wide strategy and planning systems, and a more direct system of reporting on higher education to the Senior Management Group (paragraphs 11, 12, 26)
- to strengthen overall College responsibility for compliance with the University's quality assurance systems through reporting to the College Senior Management Group (paragraphs 18, 20, 21, 26)
- to ensure that prospectus information is updated annually to reflect the pathways that are being offered (paragraphs 51, 53).

62 The team also agreed the following areas where it would be **desirable** for the College to take action:

- to carry through the improvements, already identified as being necessary by the College, in tracking the progression of student cohorts in higher education from year to year (paragraph 29)
- to evaluate the effectiveness of peer observation on teaching and learning in higher education to ensure that there is a robust means of sharing identified good practice (paragraphs 30, 33)
- to consider whether it is possible to recognise the additional flexible and informal tutorial support role to higher education students more formally in teachers' duties and teaching commitment (paragraphs 32, 38)
- to introduce a specific policy on staff development for higher education and a discrete system for reporting and evaluation (paragraph 41).

63 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 body.

64 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.

65 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 completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Huntingdonshire Regional College action plan relating to the Summative review in February 2009						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
In the course of the Summative review the team identified the following areas of good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the report on equality and diversity in the college higher education provision constitutes a model of direct reporting on higher education to the College's Senior Management Group (paragraph 20) 	Replicate reporting action to report other HE issues, i.e., recruitment, progression and achievement to SMG. Add HE to Academic Board and Curriculum & Quality Committee as a standing item.	October 09	VP Curriculum Academic Board Secretary; Clerk to Corporation.	HE has higher profile in College strategic planning and monitoring. Improved marketing and recruitment.	SMG; Academic Board; C&Q Committee.	Evidence recorded in minutes of meetings. Specific paragraphs included in annual Strategic Plan.

Huntingdonshire Regional College action plan relating to the Summative review in February 2009						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● full assessment feedback related to learning outcomes is given in the FdA Early Years and in the BA Counselling, where it is additionally referenced to grading criteria (paragraph 31) 	Cross-Pathway standardisation meetings to be held on a regular basis (at least half-termly).	October 09	HE co-ordinator; PLs. Staff Development Committee.	All pathway leaders/module leaders attend standardisation meetings.	VP Curriculum	HE co-ordinator organises standardisation meetings; outcomes of meetings recorded; positive feedback from students in the Student Review Meetings.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● robust and well-documented formal tutorial systems are provided for students undertaking most higher education programmes (paragraph 32) 	Standardised to formal tutorial system to be incorporated into pathway leader timetables.	September 09	Faculty Directors	All tutorials timetabled.	VP Curriculum	Documentary evidence of timetabled tutorial programmes across all Pathways. Positive feedback from students' Review Meetings.

Huntingdonshire Regional College action plan relating to the Summative review in February 2009						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the College virtual learning environment provides effective e-learning solutions and reliable student information in a number of pathways (paragraphs 45, 52, 53) 	e-Diploma module on VLE to be organised for all HE staff. Sharing of good practice by experienced PLs to be delivered during Staff Development Days.	October 09	Staff Development Committee; AP ILT.	All HE staff populate and use Moodle on a regular basis.	Staff Development Committee.	All HE staff completed e-Diploma module on VLE. Increased resources on moodle; increased access by students.

Huntingdonshire Regional College action plan relating to the Summative review in February 2009						
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team agreed a number of areas where the College should be advised to take action:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to introduce a clearer focus on managing higher education within College-wide strategy and planning systems, and a more direct system of reporting on higher education to the Senior Management Group (paragraphs 11, 12, 26) 	HE to have a discrete section in the following documents: Strategic Plan Implementation Plan Curriculum SAR College SAR Reported to: C&Q Committee Academic Board SET SMG College Organisation Chart to clearly identify reporting chain. Job descriptions	October 09	SET Quality Manager Clerk to the Corporation Academic Board Secretary HR Manager	Increase in pathways offered and subsequent enrolments.	Governors; Anglia Ruskin University	HE has a higher profile within College, clearly identified in strategic documentation and reported at appropriate groups and committees.

Huntingdonshire Regional College action plan relating to the Summative review in February 2009						
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
	to be reviewed and updated as necessary.					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to strengthen overall College responsibility for compliance with the University's quality assurance systems through reporting to the College Senior Management Group (paragraphs 18, 20, 21, 26) 	Course Self Assessment Report (CSAR) to be completed by all pathways; to use student experience visits and Annual Monitoring Reports as a source of evidence.	June 09	HE Coordinator Quality Manager	CSAR written by all PLs. Improved outcomes (retention and achievement; student satisfaction)	VP Curriculum	HE reported under appropriate curriculum area and a specific section on HE included in the College SAR, uploaded to the LSC Gateway annually.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to ensure that prospectus information is updated annually to reflect the pathways that are being offered (paragraph 51) 	Publish updated HE prospectus annually, taking into consideration College Strategic Plan.	June 09	HE Coordinator PLs Marketing Coordinator	HE prospectus published annually. Increase in HE applications/enquiries.	VP Curriculum	HE to be included in annual curriculum planning cycle, following analysis of previous year achievement and enrolment results.

Huntingdonshire Regional College action plan relating to the Summative review in February 2009						
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team agreed the following areas where it would be desired to take action:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to carry through the improvements, already identified as being necessary by the college, in tracking the progression of student cohorts in higher education from year to year (paragraph 29) 	In addition to strengthening the overall College compliance with QA systems, success, retention and achievement data to be used as a source for CSARs and be reported by cohort.	June 09	HE Coordinator Quality Manager Pathway Leaders	CSAR written by all PLs. Cohort success rates reported and published.	VP Curriculum	HE reported under appropriate curriculum area and a specific section on HE to include breakdown of success, retention and achievement for each cohort, to be included in the College SAR, uploaded to the LSC Gateway annually.

Huntingdonshire Regional College action plan relating to the Summative review in February 2009						
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to evaluate the effectiveness of peer observation on teaching and learning in higher education to ensure that there is a robust means of sharing identified good practice (paragraphs 30, 33) 	To create an HE observation form against HE guidelines. All HE tutors to complete at least 1 HE peer observation annually.	September 09 (create form) July 10 (annual cycle completed)	HE Coordinator Staff Development Committee HR Manager	Good practice disseminated and adopted within and between pathways (recorded on peer review form). Student satisfaction with teaching and learning rises.	Staff Development Committee	Evidence of peer observation discussed with line managers during annual appraisal. Evidence uploaded on Reflect.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to consider whether it is possible to recognise the additional flexible and informal tutorial support role to higher education students more formally in teachers' duties and teaching commitment. (paragraphs 32, 38) 	All PLs to be given designated tutorial time and this to be allocated as contact time. Number of hours to be agreed between PL and Faculty Director.	September 09	Faculty Directors	All PLs have allocated contact time for tutorials.	VP Curriculum	Review of contact hours for individual HE staff following agreement with Faculty Director annually.

Huntingdonshire Regional College action plan relating to the Summative review in February 2009						
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to introduce a specific policy on staff development for higher education and a discrete system for reporting and evaluation (paragraph 41) 	<p>HE section to be included in staff development policy that will stipulate a minimum of 5 days to be spent by HE staff on scholarly activity. Examples of scholarly activity will be taken from the HEFCE good practice guidelines and included in the policy. Reporting to staff Development Committee and C&Q Committee on effectiveness of</p>	September 09	Staff Development Committee	HE staff development timetabled for all Staff Development Days.	C & Q Committee Academic Board	Evidence of scholarly activity discussed with line managers during annual appraisal. Evidence uploaded on Reflect and logged by HR.

Huntingdonshire Regional College action plan relating to the Summative review in February 2009						
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
	staff development. At all Staff Development Days, time allocated to HE for specific HE professional updating and sharing of good practice.					

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
Southgate House
Southgate Street
Gloucester
GL1 1UB

Tel 01452 557000
Fax 01452 557070
Email comms@qaa.ac.uk
Web www.qaa.ac.uk

RG 422 05/09