Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

January 2009

York College

SR17/2009

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 York College carried out in January 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 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 use of the assessment frameworks, which provide clear guidance to staff and students on College and awarding body regulations and procedures, enables the College to manage effectively the arrangements with multiple awarding bodies

- the Debbie Thornton Scholarship scheme enables a wide engagement of staff in research and scholarly activity to inform curriculum development and delivery

- the 'Raising the Standards' campaign, by laying down standards for teaching and learning, clarifies what is expected of staff in the continued provision of an outstanding learning environment

- staff participation in the Yorkshire Accord Mentoring Scheme enables York College staff to share and develop more effective working practices

- the style of language, layout and features of a range of documents for staff and students ensures they are accessible, professional and appropriate to the target audience.

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:

- clarify the terms of reference of the Quality Strategy Group and ensure appropriate consideration of higher education matters by the Group

- produce the Higher Education Annual Report, to provide a College overview of the annual monitoring cycle, as part of the higher education quality assurance process

- review the operation of internal boards to ensure College and awarding body procedures are consistently applied

- review the allocation process for training and development funding to ensure clarity in the prioritisation of higher education staff development opportunities

- monitor the content of the Higher Education Good Practice Repository to ensure its currency and integrity.

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 York 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 Edexcel, Leeds Metropolitan University, Sheffield Hallam University, University of Huddersfield, University of York and York St John University. The review was carried out by Ms Mary Blauciak, Mr Maldwyn Buckland, Professor Gillian Grant (reviewers) and Mrs Monica Owen (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 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.

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   York College was created in April 1999 following the merger of York College of Further and Higher Education with York Sixth Form College. From September 2008, the College has consolidated all activities in new buildings at its Sim Balk Lane site. The College's mission is 'to achieve excellence as a leading provider of education and training in the City of York and surrounding area'. The College is recognised as a centre of vocational excellence (CoVE) in a number of areas, including the rail industry, stonemasonry, hospitality and tourism. York College is a founder member of the Higher York Lifelong Learning Network.

5   The College has approximately 12,000 students enrolled. Of these, there are 239 full-time and 367 part-time students, a total of 396 full-time equivalent students, enrolled on higher education programmes. These are taught by 99 (23.14 full-time equivalent) staff. The College has higher education provision in 11 of its 18 divisions (previously curriculum areas).

6   Higher education at York College includes honours degrees, Foundation Degrees, extended degrees (Foundation year), the Professional Graduate Certificate and Certificate in Education and Edexcel Higher National awards. The HEFCE-funded higher education provision, together with the awarding bodies, comprises the following programmes:

Edexcel

- HNC Fine Arts

- HNC Art and Design (Graphic Design)

- HNC/D Sport and Exercise Science (Sports Therapy) (year two)

- HNC/D Construction

Leeds Metropolitan University

- FdA Health Administration

- FdA in Beauty, Holistic and Spa Treatments (year one)

- FdA Business Management

- Extended FdA Business Management

- FdA Community and Public Services (year one)

- FdSc Electrical/Electronic Engineering

- FdA Financial Services

- FdA Hospitality Management

- FdSc Manufacturing Engineering

- FdA Young Children's Learning and Development (years one and two)

- FdA Early Years (year three)

Sheffield Hallam University

- FdSc Internet and Business Technology

- FdSc Multimedia Technology

- Extended FD in Computing

University of Huddersfield

- Certificate in Education

- Professional Graduate Certificate in Education

University of York

- BA (Honours) Business Management (Top-up)

- BSc Extended Degree (Evidence-based Nursing Practice)

- Extended Degree (Applied Social Science and Social Policy)

- Extended Degree in Environmental Science, Environmental Geography, Environmental Economics and Environmental Management

York St John University

- BA (Honours) in Graphic Design

- FdA Fashion Design

- BA (Honours) in Contemporary 3D Crafts

- FdA Creative Digital Communications

- FdA Sports Therapy (year one)

- Extended FD in Creative Industries and Technologies

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

7   The College is a member of the Leeds Metropolitan University Regional University Network and the University of Huddersfield Consortium for Post-Compulsory Education and Training, and also offers programmes validated by Edexcel, Sheffield Hallam University, the University of York and York St John University. The partnership agreements or service level agreements with the universities clearly lay out the responsibilities of the College and the awarding bodies and the governance and financial arrangements of the partnerships. The College is an Edexcel-approved centre and delivers its Edexcel Higher National awards in line with Edexcel requirements. There have been a number of recent validation transfer agreements between validating partners, including the validation of the BA in Graphic Design and BA in Contemporary 3D Crafts, which has been transferred from the University of York to York St John University commencing 2007-08.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

8   York College has increased its higher education provision by over 120 full-time equivalent students over the period 2006-07 to 2008-09. This has been brought about by the validation of new FDs in Health Administration, Community and Public Services, Creative Digital Communications, Beauty Holistic and Spa Treatments, and the validation of extended pathways in Evidence-based Nursing Practice, Business Management, Internet and Business Technology and Multimedia Technology, Applied Social Science and Social Policy and Environmental Science pathways. A significant number of new higher education programmes will continue to be progressed in response to direct employer involvement and within specific vocational sector, where the College can demonstrate clear strengths to deliver quality provision.

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 Summative review team and did so after the following process. The Head of Learner Services and the Students' Union held meetings to agree the process. The Assistant Principal (Lifelong Learning and Higher Education) produced a draft document, which incorporated information from 2005-06 to 2007-08 annual student surveys, higher education focus group meetings and external examiner reports. A large number of students attended meetings to receive details of the IQER methodology and provide individual anonymous statements. The higher education students received a copy of the final version of the submission, incorporating the student statements from 123 completed responses. The student written submission summarised the students' views across the core themes, and indicated strengths and a few areas for improvement across the programmes. This, together with the reviewers' meeting with the students, provided a valuable basis for further enquiries

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 self-evaluation states 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 Senior Management Team delegates overall management responsibility for the College's higher education provision to the Assistant Principal (Lifelong Learning and Higher Education), who is supported by a head of studies. The Assistant Principal has both curricular line management and strategic responsibility across the College and includes the development of higher education strategies and action planning. The team recognises the importance of these roles as indicative of the College's commitment to the continued expansion and strategic management of its higher education provision. Heads of division and award and programme leaders have responsibility for quality assurance and management of programmes.

11 The College has comprehensively documented policies, including a Quality Policy, and quality assurance procedures. The Quality Manager, reporting to the Deputy Principal, Quality Assurance and Support, manages and supports these procedures. The Quality Assurance and Registry Team manages all awarding body regulatory requirements, including compliance with the approvals and validations of all awards, registrations and examinations. An internal audit sampling process confirms a rigorous approach to the monitoring of quality and standards of all higher education programmes. The team confirms the processes for managing academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities are effective.

12 The College has an overall assessment policy and a draft higher education learning, teaching and assessment strategy under consideration, and these reflect the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*, published by QAA. The College has developed assessment frameworks, which map its delegated assessment responsibilities onto the six awarding body regulations for the higher education programmes. The Developmental engagement in assessment report confirmed adherence to these frameworks, which were considered a particular strength of the provision. The team endorses this view. The team also considers the use of the assessment frameworks, which provide clear guidance to staff and students on college and awarding body regulations and procedures, enables the College to manage effectively the arrangements with multiple awarding bodies, and are good practice.

13 The College's committee structure includes a range of strategic and quality assurance groups. The Higher Education Quality Group, which includes all higher education programme leaders, takes overall responsibility for 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 it directly. The Higher Education Quality Group is effective in monitoring academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. This Group reports to the Quality Strategy Group, a result of a recent transfer and consolidation of the function of the Quality Improvement Group.

14   There are currently no explicit terms of reference for the Quality Strategy Group and this contributes to the lack of clarity between its responsibilities and those of the Higher Education Quality Group. Recent minutes of the Quality Strategy Group indicate no consideration of issues arising from the Higher Education Quality Group. In many cases the reporting of higher education matters from the Higher Education Quality Group is direct to the Senior Management Team. It is desirable that the College clarifies the terms of reference of the Quality Strategy Group and ensures appropriate consideration of higher education matters by the Group.

15   A Higher Education Practitioners' Forum provides opportunity for all higher education staff to disseminate good practice and scholarly activity, and discuss developments in higher education. The Developmental engagement desirable recommendation to develop the Forum further, to provide formalised approach to the sharing of good practice, has been undertaken. In December 2008, the Higher Education Quality Group approved the Forum's remit and terms of reference with clear reporting arrangements to the Higher Education Quality Group. An annual review to evaluate the impact of the Forum will take place in June 2009.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

16   At programme approvals and validations, awarding bodies require evidence to show the aims, intended learning outcomes, and teaching and learning assessment strategies are set within the context of the *Code of practice*, benchmark statements and that the programmes are aligned with the FHEQ. Programme development documentation indicates that the process is rigorous and in line with the *Code of practice, Section 7: Programme design, approval, monitoring and review.*

17   There is clear evidence in the definitive validation documents of the Foundation Degree programmes that the programmes are aligned to the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*. There is direct involvement of employers at validation and through the design, delivery and assessment of work-related experiences. Recently, the College has introduced higher education employer skills advisers to ensure all FDs have a direct contribution from employers. These advisers are expected to enhance the delivery, assessment and achievement of work-related skills, and overall academic standards.

18   The College and its awarding bodies provide staff development events for updating current knowledge of the Academic Infrastructure. The College's peer review programme has also provided a series of themed workshops for higher education staff addressing specific aspects of the Academic Infrastructure. In response to the Developmental engagement desirable recommendation to ensure the timeliness of assessment feedback to students, the attendees at a peer review event in December 2008, agreed standard documentation. This includes the dates for the issue of feedback on an assessment schedule template. Meetings with staff and minutes of meetings confirm at both senior and programme management level a considerable level of engagement with the Academic Infrastructure. The team considers the overall engagement with the Academic Infrastructure a strength of the provision.

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?

19   The self-evaluation indicates that robust systems and procedures are in place across all awards. Staff at award level are invited members of the relevant awarding bodies school or faculty committee meetings, or, in the case of Leeds Metropolitan University, participate in the Regional University Network meetings. Edexcel staff liaise regularly with the external

examiners. The College also has representation at management level on strategic groups of its partner universities.

20   The College reports that it is fulfilling its delegated responsibilities to each awarding body through annual programme review. Each programme team prepares thoroughly the annual monitoring reports, drawing on external examiners' reports, student feedback and performance data. The reports are evaluative, result in an action plan and each documents the response made to the previous year's report. The annual reports include areas for development that feed into the divisional development plan. Members of the Higher Education Quality Group consider these reports under the management and coordination of the Quality Assurance Manager. Annual programme review is a robust process to support the maintenance of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities.

21   The Higher Education Quality Group in 2008 approved the production of an overall Higher Education Annual Report, partly to inform the College's IQER self-evaluation. However, this report was not produced as a separate document to provide a clear overview of the outcomes of the annual programme reviews. It is desirable that, at the end of each annual review cycle, the College produces the Higher Education Annual Report to provide a college overview of the annual monitoring cycle, as part of the higher education quality assurance process.

22   External examiners are appointed in line with the external examining policies and procedures of the awarding bodies, which are clearly articulated in the College's assessment framework documents. The Edexcel external examiners monitor the Higher National programmes and produce detailed reports. Reports are considered independently and responded to by programme teams where procedures are clear and consistently applied. All programme reports indicate that programme teams consider and respond to external reports, and the Developmental engagement identified good practice on the BA Graphic Design programme.

23   Examination boards, aligned to awarding body regulations, are operated appropriately and are carried out with integrity. External examiner reports and examination board minutes confirm decisions are fair and accurately reflect awarding body standards. The Quality Assurance Manager normally chairs the College internal examination boards, but minutes from the internal boards confirm that, in some instances, programme team staff chair Edexcel examination boards. This is contrary to Edexcel guidance and may cause a conflict of interest. It is desirable that the College reviews the operation of internal boards to ensure College and awarding body procedures are consistently applied.

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

24   The College's Higher Education Strategy confirms a commitment to providing relevant and supportive internal training and development to meet the needs of higher education staff. Training and development events in 2008-09 are being focused on the sharing of good practice, particularly that identified during the Developmental engagement in assessment. Three of six workshops planned have taken place with representatives from the programme teams.

25   There is a wide range of continuing professional development and research opportunities for higher education teaching and support staff, including that offered by the awarding bodies. Recently, Leeds Metropolitan University delivered an event on assessment in higher education at the College for all higher education staff. Staff attend the Higher

Education Academy Subject Centres' workshops and presentations, and there is participation in the higher education in further education strand of the work of the Higher Education Academy.

26 Extensive collaboration with employers supports the updating of staff knowledge and skills. Members of staff undertake continuing professional development through their membership of professional bodies and through the Higher York Lifelong Learning Network. The Debbie Thornton Scholarships are a key college initiative to provide financial and other support for staff research and scholarly activity. The awards are granted on the basis of meeting clearly defined criteria linked to the College's strategic plan. The Scholarships enable the enrichment of the skills and knowledge of staff. The College Journal, the Higher Education Practitioners Forum and other networks share the findings across and beyond the College. The team considers the scheme, which enables a wide engagement of staff in research and scholarly activity to inform curriculum development and delivery, to be good practice. The College commitment to staff development contributes significantly to the effective management of academic standards.

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

Core theme 2: Quality of learning opportunities

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

27 Line management responsibility for the quality of learning opportunities is detailed in paragraphs 10 and 11. Heads of divisions are responsible for the management of all programmes at an operational level, and meet regularly with the Senior Management Team to review performance. Programme leaders are clear about their roles and responsibilities in respect of programme management and the provision and development of a high-quality learning environment.

28 The Higher Education Quality Group, described in paragraph 13, has overall oversight of the quality of learning opportunities and approves the annual monitoring reports before they are sent to the awarding bodies. The results of student surveys and student survey action plans are discussed, and decisions, such as the establishment of a common start of year for all higher education programmes, are discussed and agreed with the programme leaders at the Group.

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

29 The process by which the College assures itself that it is fulfilling its obligations to awarding bodies are detailed in paragraphs 19-21. There is extensive liaison between the College and the partner universities. At validation, the awarding body satisfies itself that the College is able to offer and support a range of student learning opportunities, including appropriate strategies for teaching and learning and an e-learning strategy.

30 The College reports to awarding bodies by means of the annual monitoring report, as described in paragraph 20. Annual monitoring is a key part of the programme leader's role. They are also responsible for the programme committees, which meet twice a year,

and include student, library and employer representatives and feed into the annual monitoring process. Programme leaders engage with employers to obtain feedback into programme design and delivery and this contributes to the effectiveness of the quality of the student learning experience in preparing students for employment.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

31   The College has considered the *Code of practice* in the development of its policies and procedures. This includes an Admissions Policy in line with the *Code of practice, Section 10: Admissions to higher education*, an Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning policy, and an Inclusive Learning Policy, in line with the *Code of practice, Section 3: Students with disabilities*. The Work Experience Policy has been recently developed, aligned to the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning*. There is a wide range of impartial career guidance and information available, in line with the College's Careers, Information, Advice and Guidance Policy, which has taken into consideration the *Code of practice, Section 8: Career education, information and guidance*.

32   The College Strategic Plan includes the College's 'Back to Basics' campaign, now renamed 'Raising the Standards', which highlights the expectations of staff in supporting the quality of learning opportunities and maximising achievement. One action associated with this strategy requires that all higher education programme reviews and developments reflect the Academic Infrastructure. The Higher Education Quality Group monitors this strategy.

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

33   The 'Raising the Standards', campaign lays down the standards for teaching and learning. It is the responsibility of the Assistant Principal to ensure the operation and delivery of the curriculum is effective, including all schedules and deadlines are met and feedback is given to students. Managers, tutors and support staff are briefed in the form of three leaflets which show how the 'Raising the Standards' campaign clarifies what is expected of staff in the continued provision of an outstanding learning environment. The campaign is an example of good practice.

34   The Information and Learning Technology Strategy is currently being updated. The Information and Learning Technology Divisional Plan 2008-09 shows continuing focus on the development of e-learning for curricular delivery, particularly through the virtual learning environment. The use and further developments of the virtual learning environment help to ensure that both full and part-time students are fully supported with the provision of appropriate learning opportunities.

35   The College has three schemes for observation of teaching and learning, including observations during specific reviews. Line management observations inform performance review, and peer observations share and promote good practice. All staff have individual quality improvement plans. Where staff are identified as having specific areas for improvement, support is put in place. The observations also inform the further development of effective learning and teaching strategies.

36   There are a number of mechanisms to gather feedback from students, including at course team meetings and course committees, at student focus groups as well as student perception of course surveys. Other methods of capturing student feedback include module evaluation, tutorials and the annual higher education survey. All students are aware of the channels of communication they may use and the students confirmed that issues raised are

actioned. The York College Students' Union has an elected higher education student officer who sits on the Student Council. The team concludes that the College has effective mechanisms in place to maintain and enhance teaching and learning.

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

37   Students are appreciative of the support they receive for both their learning in the College and on work placements. There is an admissions unit, which processes all applications in line with the Admissions Policy and the Universities and Colleges Admission Services' procedures. There are clearly outlined procedures for application and interview, including a student 'Rough Guide to your College Interview'. Student services, based in the 'InfoZone' provide a wide range of advice and guidance on areas such as careers, finance, accommodation and counselling services. Where appropriate, higher education students, regardless of programme, are assessed for the Disabled Students Allowance at York St John University assessment centre.

38   Students take part in an effective induction, and individual tutorials are held twice a term for guidance, feedback and support on academic work. Students on the Foundation Degrees complete a number of work-based modules and they are supported and guided prior to, and throughout, the work placement. Students confirmed that they were visited on work placement. The mentoring support provided by the National Health Service on the health-related programmes, where the role of the mentor is clearly described in a mentor handbook, is being rolled out across other higher education programmes, where the students are in employment and financial resources are available to support it.

39   Feedback mechanisms provide student, staff and employer views on the effectiveness of student support, which are considered through the normal reporting processes. Heads of division and the Senior Management Team closely monitor performance indicators, such as recruitment and student retention. Where a programme falls below acceptable standards, it is made the subject of an improvement action plan, which is further closely monitored. The team concludes that student support is comprehensive and is monitored and reviewed effectively.

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

40   York College is an 'Investor in People' accredited institution. A college-wide Training and Development Programme includes effective training in information and learning technology and a programme for higher education staff. All teaching staff are registered with the Institute for Learning and undertake continuing professional development. Financial support is available towards study for higher education and professional qualifications. The College's Human Resources Senior Adviser (Training and Development), after discussions with the applicant's managers, prioritises and agrees funding against set criteria. The process for deciding priorities both for higher education as whole and across curriculum areas is not clear. It is desirable that the College reviews the allocation process for training and development funding to ensure clarity in the prioritisation of higher education staff development opportunities.

41   The University of York and York St John University include mentoring of the College's teaching staff by university staff in the validation of programmes. In addition, all of the partner universities provide subject link staff. Staff have user rights at partner university libraries and enjoy Associate Staff status at Leeds Metropolitan University. There is a north Yorkshire-wide staff mentoring scheme, the Yorkshire Accord Mentoring Scheme. In this

scheme, staff may mentor, or be mentored by, college, university and other organisations' staff. The team concludes that staff participation in the Yorkshire Accord Mentoring Scheme, which enables York College staff to share and develop more effective working practices, is good practice.

42 The Higher Education Practitioners Forum provides a central focus for the dissemination of good practice. It also contributes to the effective induction of staff new to higher education teaching. The Higher Education Good Practice Repository, where staff can post materials informally on the College staff intranet, provides a further opportunity to disseminate good practice. These materials are not currently checked. It is desirable that the College monitors the content of the Repository to ensure its currency and integrity, particularly for the benefit of staff new to delivering higher education. The team concludes that these initiatives are making an effective contribution to creating a higher education community within the College and that there is effective staff development to enhance the quality of learning.

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?

43 The College's annual planning and budgetary process links resource allocation to the delivery of the College's Strategic Plan. The Senior Management Team agrees the staffing resource allocation after requests from heads of division through the Assistant Principal. Approximately 99 full and part-time academic staff teach on the higher education programmes, as well as undertaking further education teaching and other duties. The College currently operates on a student-staff ratio of 17:1 for its higher education programmes. Although this overall figure includes some small groups, the size of teaching groups is appropriate to maintain the quality of learning opportunities. Staff are allocated reduced class contact time, depending on their level of responsibilities, to support programme development and enhancement of learning opportunities.

44 The College has a high-quality learning environment, graded as 'outstanding' by Ofsted in 2008. A Yorkshire Forward Higher Education Capital grant for computing and digital technologies enables open-access and some specialist equipment for higher education students' dedicated use. There is an intention to provide a dedicated higher education student area. Some programmes continue to lack adequate space for specialist activities and the Senior Management Team review and action these areas. These actions are generally effective, although any provision of additional accommodation is not always in time for current students.

45 Students are made aware of their entitlement to access resources at partner universities and teacher education students use the materials available online through the University of Huddersfield's Consortium for Post Compulsory Education and Training. To meet the differing needs of part-time students, the Learning Centre and Reception Services have devised access strategies in relation to loan periods, computer use and reception opening hours. The team concludes that resources are managed effectively to meet the needs of the provision and support the quality of learning opportunities.

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?

46 The College is responsible for the publication of all college policies and procedures, meeting minutes, a range of student support materials, and the publication of assessment marks. The College is also responsible for the publication of student handbooks with the exception of University of Huddersfield programmes. The College publishes programme timetables and assessment schedules, except for those of Sheffield Hallam University and the University of Huddersfield. The College is responsible for the publication of assessment information on Edexcel programmes and the programmes of York St John, Leeds Metropolitan and Sheffield Hallam Universities. On Edexcel programmes, the College is also responsible for the preparation and publication of publicity materials, in addition to those produced by Edexcel. On the other programmes, while the College prepares and produces publicity material, the universities give final approval.

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?

47 Higher education programmes at the College are marketed under a defined higher education brand. Information is made available to students through a variety of media including the College website, Higher Education Prospectus, course information guides, programme specifications, module specifications, student handbooks, and general promotional literature. The style of language, layout and features of documents for staff and students, such as the 'Jargon Buster', 'Raising the Standards' and the 'Rough Guide to your College Interview' ensures they are accessible, professional and appropriate to the target audience, and are good practice.

48 The College's marketing team, curriculum managers and awarding bodies' staff check publicity material, and the information and learning technology team manages and monitors the website and virtual learning environment for completeness and accuracy. Examples where information was not accurate or consistent between media, identified in the Developmental engagement report, have been addressed through closer working between the Marketing Department, the Information and Learning Technology Department, and programme leaders. A new system is about to be implemented, which will ensure consistency across media and provide for more secure and robust management of information. The Teaching and Learning Administration Service will hold all higher education course information and be responsible for any changes to the information.

49 The 'InfoZone' staff produce a range of literature to support students, including course, financial and progression information, and they are directly responsible for the accuracy and consistency of the information provided. A variety of media is available, which is suitable to meet the needs of those with disabilities, including large print, Braille and audio. Students gave positive feedback on the quality and presentation of information available to prospective students and confirmed that pre-course and induction information, including the Learner Charter, reflected their experiences on the programmes.

50 Programme information is available in programme specifications and these meet the requirements of the awarding bodies. At the start of their programmes, students receive this information contained within programme and module handbooks, which are broadly comprehensive. Programme teams produce, update and check the accuracy of the

information available to students. Variations in student handbooks and assessment information, identified at the Developmental engagement, are being addressed and a staff development session in December 2008 disseminated the good practice identified. Some information is posted on the virtual learning environment, and heads of divisions and the quality assurance team undertake audits of this information.

51   The College has a wide range of procedures relating to academic regulations including plagiarism, complaints and academic appeals, which reflect both college and awarding body requirements. There is a high degree of consistency between published material seeking to bring College policies to the attention of students.

52   Information for the College's staff, and the associated College policies, is clear. The College has a comprehensive electronic repository for higher education information, which is available through the staff intranet or through a secure shared drive on the College's information technology network. Information is clearly arranged by awarding body and then by programme and is well used by staff.

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.

C   Summary of findings from the Developmental engagement in assessment

53   The Developmental engagement in Assessment was undertaken in June 2008. There were three lines of enquiry as follows.

- Are the York College Assessment Frameworks applied consistently across higher education awards?

- How does the assessment of work-related experiences enable the student to achieve the intended learning outcomes?

- Does the description of assessment practice contained within award programme specifications accurately reflect the assessment that students experience on their programme of study?

These covered the implementation of the awarding body regulations on assessment across the programmes and the responsibilities of the College in these processes.

54   The Developmental engagement identified a number of areas of good practice. These include the process for the implementation and recording of internal verification, the recording of response to external examiner reports, and assessment scheduling. Employer involvement in the design and delivery of assessment and the use of the virtual learning environment to support assessment were all highlighted as good practice.

55   Some student handbooks provided comprehensive assessment information for students. The report identified that it would be desirable to develop the Higher Education Practitioners Forum to disseminate good assessment practice, ensure timeliness of feedback to students and ensure the accuracy of assessment information between programme information media.

D Foundation Degrees

56 The growth in College higher education full-time equivalent students by over one-third since 2006 has largely been met by the development of Foundation Degrees (FDs). The FDs are a key part of the higher education strategy to progress new higher education programmes in response to student and employer needs, replacing Edexcel programmes with FDs where appropriate. The Strategic Plan also sees FDs as an important route to improve progression in the College from Level 3 programmes. The College currently enrols 274 students on 15 FDs, through three awarding bodies. Future developments of FDs under discussion include the Probation Service, construction and other service sector organisations. It is planned to offer one new programme, FD Media Make-Up validated by Leeds Metropolitan University, from September 2009.

57 The team confirms that the programmes are aligned to the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*. There is direct involvement of employers at validation and through the design, delivery and assessment of work-related experiences. The College has introduced recently higher education employer skills advisers to ensure all FDs have a direct contribution from employers to enhance work-related skills. Students confirmed that they are supported and guided prior to, and throughout, their work placements. The College has in place effective management of the academic standards and quality of learning opportunities of its FDs.

58 The team identifies a range of staff development opportunities and a campaign to raise the expectations of staff in providing an outstanding learning environment as good practice. The use of assessment frameworks to support effective management of the arrangements with multiple awarding bodies is also good practice. The team recommends it is desirable to take action on the operation of the Quality Strategy Group and the production of a higher education quality report to provide an overview of the annual reporting process. It is also desirable to provide greater clarity in the allocation of training and development funding and monitor the content of the Higher Education Good Practice Repository.

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

59 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in York College 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 Edexcel, Leeds Metropolitan University, Sheffield Hallam University, University of Huddersfield, University of York and York St John University.

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

- the use of the assessment frameworks, which provide clear guidance to staff and students on College and awarding body regulations and procedures, enables the College to manage effectively the arrangements with multiple awarding bodies (paragraph 12)

- the Debbie Thornton Scholarship scheme enables a wide engagement of staff in research and scholarly activity to inform curriculum development and delivery (paragraph 26)

- the 'Raising the Standards' campaign, by laying down standards for teaching and learning, clarifies what is expected of staff in the continued provision of an outstanding learning environment (paragraph 33)

- staff participation in the Yorkshire Accord Mentoring Scheme enables York College staff to share and develop more effective working practices (paragraph 41)

- the style of language, layout and features of a range of documents for staff and students ensures they are accessible, professional and appropriate to the target audience (paragraph 47).

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

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

- to clarify the terms of reference of the Quality Strategy Group and ensure appropriate consideration of higher education matters by the Group (paragraph 14)

- to produce the Higher Education Annual Report, to provide a College overview of the annual monitoring cycle, as part of the higher education quality assurance process (paragraph 21)

- to review the operation of internal boards, to ensure College and awarding body procedures are consistently applied (paragraph 23)

- to review the allocation process for training and development funding, to ensure clarity in the prioritisation of higher education staff development opportunities (paragraph 40)

- to monitor the content of the Higher Education Good Practice Repository, to ensure its currency and integrity (paragraph 42).

62 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.

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

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, 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.

York College action plan relating to the Summative review: January 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:			Post Holder highlighted in **bold** indicates lead			
● the use of the assessment frameworks, which provide clear guidance to staff and students on College and awarding body regulations and procedures, enables the College to manage effectively the arrangements with multiple awarding bodies (paragraph 12)	Extend use of assessment Frameworks to include Edexcel Higher National qualifications Monitor use of Assessment Frameworks across all awards	June 2009 July 2009	**Assessment and Validation Coordinator.** Quality Assurance Team	Document produced Consistent use of Frameworks by all assessors of university validated awards	HE Quality Group	IQER Tri-annual review report received by HE Quality Group to monitor progress and measure impact October 2009. February 2010. June 2010

York College action plan relating to the Summative review: January 2009						
Good practice	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
● the Debbie Thornton Scholarship scheme enables a wide engagement of staff in research and scholarly activity to inform curriculum development and delivery (paragraph 26)	Proposals for continuation of the scheme for 2009-10 to be presented to SMT, including costing. Dissemination plan for each project to be implemented	May 2009 October 2009	**Head of Division, Teacher Education and Learning Development.** Learning Development Unit Team	Agreement for 2009-10 scheme received from SMT. Launch of 2009-20 programme. Dissemination of 2008-09 projects completed	Learning & Development Advisory Group	IQER Tri-annual review report received by HE Quality Group to monitor progress and measure impact October 2009. February 2010. June 2010
● the 'Raising the Standards' campaign, by laying down standards for teaching and learning, clarifies what is expected of staff in the continued provision of an outstanding learning environment (paragraph 33)	Refreshed design and print leaflets. 'Raising the Standards' re-launched at College Managers Team and Staff Briefings. Review campaign prior to 09/10 academic year	June 2009 September 2009	**Assistant Principal (Lifelong Learning & Higher Education)** Heads of Study	Refreshed design and print run approved. All colleagues have copies of the Standards leaflets, and they understand the importance of these core standards. Review undertaken and report to SMT.	HE Quality Group	IQER Tri-annual review report received by HE Quality Group to monitor progress and measure impact October 2009. February 2010. June 2010

York College action plan relating to the Summative review: January 2009						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
• staff participation in the Yorkshire Accord Mentoring Scheme enables York College staff to share and develop more effective working practices (paragraph 41)	Continuation of participation in Yorkshire Mentoring Accord Scheme in 2009-10. To increase teaching & learning staff in the scheme. To actively promote through College communications systems	February 2010	**Human Resources Manager.** Division for Teacher Education and Learning Development Team	Continued staff engagement in the Scheme 2009-10. Increase in academic staff participating in the scheme	HE Quality Group	IQER Tri-annual review report received by HE Quality Group to monitor progress and measure impact

October 2009. February 2010. June 2010 |

York College action plan relating to the Summative review: January 2009						
Good practice	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
• the style of language, layout and features of a range of documents for staff and students ensures they are accessible, professional and appropriate to the target audience (paragraph 47).	Arrangements in place between Marketing and Student Services whereby all relevant documents relating to Student Services to be verified by Student Services Team prior to publication	July 2010	**Marketing Manager.** Student Services Team	Feedback from target markets using Facebook and focus groups for HE (Autumn term) concerning opinions on promotional information	HE Quality Group	IQER Tri-annual review report received by HE Quality Group to monitor progress and measure impact

October 2009. February 2010. June 2010 |

York College action plan relating to the Summative review: January 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 **desirable** for the College to take action:			Post Holder highlighted in **bold** indicates lead.			
● to clarify the terms of reference of the Quality Strategy Group and ensure appropriate consideration of higher education matters by the Group (paragraph 14)	To include, as standard agenda item, report from HE Quality Group and receive minutes from previous meetings. HE related quality activity to be reviewed as part of monitoring activity of Quality Assurance section of College Strategic Plan which is undertaken by the Quality Assurance Strategy Group	27 March meeting, and then all future meetings	**Deputy Principal, QA and Student Support.** Quality Strategy Group	Minutes from HE Quality Group to be a standing agenda item on all QA Strategy Group meetings	QA Strategy Group	Monitored within Quality Strategy Group meeting schedule

IQER Tri-annual review report received by HE Quality Group to monitor progress and measure impact

October 2009. February 2010. June 2010 |

York College action plan relating to the Summative review: January 2009						
Desirable	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
● to produce the Higher Education Annual Report, to provide a College overview of the annual monitoring cycle as part of the higher education quality assurance process (paragraph 21)	Plan Annual Programme Review writing day, 16 July 2009. APRs approval schedule for HE Quality Group to approve APRs prior to submission to Awarding Bodies agreed. HE Annual Report produced in line with IQER Self Evaluation format, and approved by HE quality Group autumn term 2009	July 2009 July 2009 October 2009	**Assistant Principal (Lifelong Learning & Higher Education)** HE Quality Group	APR workshop planned and delivered Approval schedule agreed by HE Quality Group HE Annual Report approved	HE Quality Group	IQER Tri-annual review report received by HE Quality Group to monitor progress and measure impact October 2009. February 2010. June 2010

York College action plan relating to the Summative review: January 2009						
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
• to review the operation of internal boards to ensure College and awarding body procedures are consistently applied (paragraph 23)	Independent chair appointed to Edexcel Higher National Boards of Examiners	May 2009	**Assessment & validation Coordinator.** Quality Assurance Team	Appointment accepted and recorded on HE schedule	HE Quality Group	IQER Tri-annual review report received by HE Quality Group to monitor progress and measure impact
	QA to coordinate and administer all college Assessment Boards, and track outcomes to comply with Awarding Body requirements	March 2009		Meetings attended		October 2009. February 2010. June 2010
	QA to continue to receive and process all minutes of Board of Examiner or Committee meetings, and distribute to Award members	October 2009		Documents received and saved to appropriate folders in X: HE Quality		

York College action plan relating to the Summative review: January 2009						
Desirable	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
	and publish in the designated HE Repository					
● to review the allocation process for training and development funding to ensure clarity in the prioritisation of higher education staff development opportunities (paragraph 40)	Create budget within Training & Development specifically for HE activity - approvals for expenditure to be made through the Assistant Principal (Lifelong Learning & Higher Education)	August 09	**Human Resources (Training & Development Advisor)** Senior Management Team	Budget level agreed and effectively utilised	HE Quality Group	IQER Tri-annual review report received by HE Quality Group to monitor progress and measure impact October 2009. February 2010. June 2010

York College action plan relating to the Summative review: January 2009						
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
• to monitor the content of the Higher Education Good Practice Repository to ensure its currency and integrity (paragraph 42).	Regular monthly checking taking place. External links to complementary Good Practice sites to be investigated and if appropriate to be incorporated into repository functions. Location being reviewed due to intranet being password protected	April 2010	**Quality Manager.** Quality Assurance Team	Produce termly report to go to HE Quality. Links to external good practice materials established, including Awarding Bodies	HE Quality Group	IQER Tri-annual review report received by HE Quality Group to monitor progress and measure impact October 2009. February 2010. June 2010