



QAA

Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

November 2009

Derwentside College

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Preface

The mission of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications and to inform and encourage continual improvement in the management of the quality of higher education.

As part of this mission, QAA undertakes reviews of higher education provision delivered in further education colleges. This process is known as Integrated quality and enhancement review (IQER).

Purpose of IQER

Higher education programmes delivered by further education colleges (colleges) lead to awards made by higher education institutions or Edexcel. The awarding bodies retain ultimate responsibility for maintaining the academic standards of their awards and assuring the quality of the students' learning opportunities. The purpose of IQER is, therefore, to safeguard the public interest in the academic standards and quality of higher education delivered in colleges. It achieves this by providing objective and independent information about the way in which colleges discharge their responsibilities within the context of their partnership agreements with awarding bodies. IQER focuses on three core themes: academic standards, quality of learning opportunities and public information.

The IQER process

IQER is a peer review process. It is divided into two complementary stages: Developmental engagement and Summative review. In accordance with the published method, colleges with less than 100 full-time equivalent students funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) may elect not to take part in Developmental engagements, but all HEFCE-funded colleges will take part in Summative review.

Developmental engagement

Developmental engagements explore in an open and collegial way the challenges colleges face in specific areas of higher education provision. Each college's first, and often their only, Developmental engagement focuses on student assessment.

The main elements of a Developmental engagement are:

- a self-evaluation by the college
- an optional written submission by the student body
- a preparatory meeting between the college and the IQER coordinator several weeks before the Developmental engagement visit
- the Developmental engagement visit, which normally lasts two days
- the evaluation of the extent to which the college manages effectively its responsibilities for the delivery of academic standards and the quality of its higher education provision, plus the arrangements for assuring the accuracy and completeness of public information it is responsible for publishing about its higher education
- the production of a written report of the team's findings.

To promote a collegial approach, Developmental engagement teams include up to two members of staff from the further education college under review. They are known as nominees for this process.

Summative review

Summative review addresses all aspects of a college's HEFCE-funded higher education provision and provides judgements on the management and delivery of this provision against core themes one and two, and a conclusion against core theme three.

Summative review shares the main elements of Developmental engagement described above. Summative review teams, however, are composed of the IQER coordinator and QAA reviewers. They do not include nominees.

Evidence

In order to obtain evidence for the review, IQER teams carry out a number of activities, including:

- reviewing the college's self-evaluation and its internal procedures and documents
- reviewing the optional written submission from students
- asking questions of relevant staff
- talking to students about their experiences.

IQER teams' expectations of colleges are guided by a nationally agreed set of reference points, known as the Academic Infrastructure. These are published by QAA and consist of:

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

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

Outcomes of IQER

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

- Developmental engagement reports set out good practice and recommendations and implications for the college and its awarding bodies, but do not contain judgements. Recommendations will be at one of three levels - **essential**, **advisable** and **desirable**. To promote an open and collegial approach to Developmental engagements, the reports are not published.
- Summative review reports identify good practice and contain judgements about whether the college is discharging its responsibilities effectively against core themes one and two above. The judgements are **confidence**, **limited confidence** or **no confidence**. There is no judgement for the third core theme, instead the report will provide evaluation and a conclusion. Summative review reports are published.

Differentiated judgements can be made where a team judges a college's management of the standards and/or quality of the awards made by one awarding body to be different from those made by another.

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

Executive summary

The Summative review of Derwentside College was carried out in November 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 award 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 variety of vocationally relevant teaching and learning opportunities provided by the course tutors that enhance the quality of students' learning; for example, microteaching, case studies and the structure of support given by mentors.

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:

- engage in dialogue with the awarding body and collaborative partners to simplify and clarify the wording of some course documents; in particular, the module descriptor handbooks.

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

- review the College's policies and procedures to ensure that they engage with the Academic Infrastructure and are consistent with the awarding body's regulations and policies; for example, the College's assessment appeals procedures
- review the College's procedures for offering information and guidance to its higher education students on the opportunities for progression to other programmes, and engage further with the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education, Section 8: Career education, information and guidance*
- encourage the course tutor for the Jewish Agudist Women's Information Technology and Tele-working Group to engage in the staff development opportunities provided by the awarding body, rather than relying on feedback from the Assistant Programme Leader.

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 Derwentside 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 that the College delivers on behalf of the University of Sunderland (the University). The review was carried out by Mrs Mary Blauciak and Professor Reginald Davis (reviewers), and Mr Robert Hodgkinson (coordinator).

2 The Summative review team (the team) conducted the review in agreement with the College and in accordance with *The handbook for Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review* (the handbook), published by QAA. Evidence in support of the Summative review included documentation supplied by the College and awarding body, meetings with staff, students, employers and the partner institution, reports of reviews by QAA and from inspections by Ofsted. As the total full-time equivalent students funded by HEFCE at the College is less than 50, the review was conducted by a desk-based study in accordance with the published review method. 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 The College is a tertiary college based in the district of Derwentside in north-west Durham. It delivers its provision at two campuses. At Consett it offers mainly vocational programmes. The second College campus is a sixth-form centre in Lanchester, which offers academic and vocational provision to 16 to 18-year old learners and Access to Higher Education courses for part-time adult learners. The College also delivers the course at a separate campus for the Jewish Agudist Women's Information Technology and Tele-working Group community. The College mission is to 'provide the best possible education and training opportunities to enable all of our learners to reach their full potential'.

4 In the academic year 2008-09, the College educated approximately 600 full-time and 500 part-time College-based students; 53 part-time students are enrolled on the course. Two full and one part-time member of staff teach them. Of these, one part-time member of staff teaches the Agudist Women's Information Technology and Tele-working Group community course. The College delivers its courses in four curriculum areas. Within the General Education curriculum area the College offers the following higher education course:

- Certificate and Postgraduate Certificate in Post Compulsory Education and Training (part-time).

Partnership agreements with the awarding body

5 The College has a formal partnership agreement with the University of Sunderland for higher education provision. The University is responsible for programme design and alignment with the Academic Infrastructure; validation; acceptance of applications; ensuring common standards; moderation; final assessment and award; regular meetings to monitor quality; and the process of annual evaluation and continual improvement of academic outcomes. The College is responsible for programme implementation; recruitment; assessment and internal moderation; quality of teaching and learning; application of the

University's standards; regular internal monitoring of quality; and complying with the University's requirements for annual evaluation and review.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

6 The overall scheme, of which this programme is a part, was last subjected to University periodic review in 2005. In 2008 the University decided to separate partner and programme review and, with effect from 2009, all partners will undergo review every six years and engage in an interim (due diligence) review. The next programme review will take place in 2010-11 and the next partner review of the College will be in 2013. A revised Memorandum of Agreement was issued in 2008 and will remain in place until 2013.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

7 Students studying on higher education programmes at the College presented a submission to the team, and the coordinator met with a representative group of students at the preparatory meeting and recorded their comments on their education. In addition, the team interviewed a representative group of students during the review. Their feedback proved to be a valuable and effective reference.

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?

8 The quality of higher education provision is managed as specified by the awarding institution. The University's joint model of collaboration and Memorandum of Association confirm its overall responsibility for the quality assurance of its awards.

The quality assurance structure and procedures, as specified by the University in its partnership agreement and featured in the staff handbook, are well embedded in the College's systems and procedures. Curriculum development and enhancement is a joint responsibility shared between the University and 14 other partner colleges. The partnership arrangements confirm that ultimate responsibility for the award rests with the University which delegates the responsibility for programme delivery and management, but assures the standards of student work.

9 Responsibility for the higher education provision is clearly delineated. Since there is only one higher education course that is operated by the College, the role of Higher Education Director is taken by the College's Director of Curriculum and Quality, a member of the Senior Management Team who assumes strategic responsibility. The latter is represented on the University's Higher Education in Further Education Practitioner Group and by the General Education Curriculum Manager who acts as the deputy to the Higher Education Director. The College's Assistant Programme Leader has operational responsibility for the course, its delivery and the admission of students, and represents the College on the University's Faculty Programme Studies and Assessment Board. The course team meets regularly on an informal basis and the Assistant Programme Leader provides regular feedback on the collaborative provision from the University.

10 To enable it to assure the quality of student learning experiences across the provision, the University issues guidelines for the production of a course annual monitoring report by each college. The course Assistant Programme Leader is responsible for producing this report. This is scrutinised and approved by the College before it is forwarded to the University. The outcome of scrutiny by the University informs an overarching report for the partnership. The College is a member of the University Programme Studies and Assessment Board for the scheme which receives the report. The action plans arising from this inform the College's action plan for the course. The University requires the College to state how actions arising from the report have been addressed within their next annual report. The team concludes that the annual report process and responses to action plans are central to meeting the expectations set out in the partnership agreement and that they operate effectively.

11 Teaching is suspended for two separate days during the academic year to enable staff to conduct the self-assessment review processes required by the College. The Assistant Programme Leader is expected to complete a data sheet for the course, produce review documentation and a development plan. The review is informed by student surveys, by retention, achievement and success data and by the external examiners' reports. As part of this process, the College provides staff with a step-by-step procedure for the consideration of external examiners' reports. The review documentation, together with staff development and resource requests, are sent to the Curriculum Area Manager for consideration. The documents are forwarded to the senior managers responsible for these areas. The Curriculum Area Manager's consideration of the review documents forms part of the self-assessment review and the development plan produced for the curriculum area. This enumerates areas of strength and weakness and those capable of improvement. The curriculum area is graded and the review documentation is validated and approved by a College board. The Curriculum Area Report is, in turn, incorporated into the overall College review. This is considered by the College's Senior Management Team and the Board of Governors. It is then deposited on a web-based internet portal that supports quality assurance, improvement and inspection across the sector. The development plan for the programme is monitored by the Assistant Programme Leader on a monthly basis and informs the agendas of the review days. The team concludes that the self-assessment review processes are clearly structured and aid the delivery of higher education standards for the College and are a strength of the provision.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

12 The course is devised and validated by the University in accordance with the *Code of practice* and other requirements of the Academic Infrastructure and reflects the relevant subject benchmark statement. Programme specifications reflect the level descriptors contained in the FHEQ. The University provides the course's teaching staff with a comprehensive staff handbook and copies of all relevant University documentation. College staff have access to the staff development opportunities provided by the University that include consideration of the Academic Infrastructure. As a result of this, the Assistant Programme Leader has become conversant with the Academic Infrastructure and takes responsibility for cascading this knowledge to other College staff. Currently, the College has no formal mechanism for ensuring that its generic policies, procedures and activities relating to this course, for which it takes responsibility, including first-marking of assignments; feedback to students on assignments; recruitment and selection; engage with the Academic Infrastructure, in particular, the sections of the *Code of practice*. The team concludes that it is desirable to establish such a mechanism.

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 partner and awarding body?

13 The College fulfils its obligations for ensuring standards in a number of ways. Of primary importance is the attention paid to external examiners' reports. External examiners are appointed by the University to monitor the whole scheme. Each examiner provides a single report to the University covering the whole scheme. Where necessary, the examiners make reference to issues arising in individual colleges. The University forwards the reports to each college. The College is required to consider the external examiners' reports as part of the annual monitoring process and address any general and college-specific issues when preparing its annual report. Following the preparation and acceptance of the annual report for the scheme by the University, each college is required to address any action points that arise. In some cases, the College has found it difficult to respond to the generic issues raised by external examiners as they are not specific to the course. The University is currently establishing revised procedures whereby a University programme leader for the scheme visits the College annually. The Programme Leader undertakes moderation of student work, holds discussion with staff and students, and provides oral and written feedback on the course. The outcome of these discussions is reported to the University and the College. These processes are clear and operate well.

14 The College's policies and procedures, contained within its Quality Policy Statement, apply equally to its higher and further education courses. The Quality Policy Statement includes sections that refer to admissions, learning support, standards for teaching and learning and a learning policy. Adherence to these policies is monitored as part of the College's annual review process and through teaching observation and performance management of teaching staff. The University confirms that, in adhering to the Memorandum of Agreement, the College is expected to check its policies and procedures to ensure that they align and are consistent with the University's regulations and procedures. For the higher education course, the latter take precedence over the College's policies and procedures. There is no evidence to indicate these policies are systematically checked to ensure their alignment with the University regulations that apply to the course. The team concludes it is desirable for the College to establish a transparent mechanism whereby it can demonstrate that its regulations, policies and procedures are consistent with the University's policies and regulations governing the course.

15 The team confirms that assessment processes and practices are rigorous and fair. The external examiner, who has also highlighted the quality of the supporting moderation processes, supports this. The staff handbook includes standard procedures and pro formas that also support this conclusion. All assignments are produced and moderated by the University. First-marking is carried out by College tutors and internal moderation by second-marking of a sample of students' work. The University also arranges cross-scheme moderation meetings involving staff from all partner colleges. At these events, the standardisation of marking is also undertaken.

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

16 The College's annual self-assessment process identifies staff development needs. Teaching staff are expected to undergo teaching observation at least once each year. Following this, an action plan is drawn up to reflect staff development needs that impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Performance management reviews of staff are

conducted twice each year, at which their staff development needs are identified and reviewed. The performance management review for the part-time tutor delivering the course for the Agudist Women's Information Technology and Tele-working Group community has not been the subject of regular review. The College is encouraged to rectify this to ensure that it is done on a more consistent basis, as the outcomes feed into staff development plans.

17 The University undertakes a regular needs analysis of staff development for those staff in colleges delivering the provision. Staff development opportunities include two full-day development events. For example, these have covered the implications of the introduction of new Ofsted requirements, drafting action plans arising from the outcomes of programme boards of study and external examiners' reports, and the sharing of good practice. The Assistant Programme Leader communicates staff development activities to College staff. Staff also benefit from College-based staff development activities which include, for example, diversity training and child protection. Overall, these systems and opportunities for staff development, in the main, support the achievement of appropriate 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?

18 The arrangements described in paragraphs 8 and 9 also apply in supporting the quality of learning opportunities. The framework and documentation for discharging the College's responsibilities for all aspects of the quality of learning opportunities is detailed in the staff handbook and related documentation provided by the University. It forms a coherent and clear framework for managing the quality of learning opportunities, ensuring that similar practices are being followed within the partnership. The teaching staff demonstrate that this prescriptive documentation is clearly understood by them. The University is responsible for appointing external examiners, moderating assessments and holding assessment boards. The University and partner colleges are jointly responsible for academic support and approving, setting and marking of assessments. The College also provides generic policies that encompass additional learning support, standards for teaching and learning and a learning policy contained within its Quality Policy Handbook. This framework offers a tightly controlled environment, clearly delineating the management activities of College staff.

19 The University monitors the delivery of each programme through its programme studies and assessment boards. The course's Assistant Programme Leader produces annual monitoring reports as described in paragraph 10. This includes a review of student surveys, student representatives' and external examiner's comments. The Director of Curriculum and Quality includes this report in the College's self-assessment report. This report is considered at senior management team-level, ensuring the coherent joint management of learning opportunities by both the College and awarding body.

20 The learning opportunities are managed effectively by the Assistant Programme Leader who reports to the Curriculum Manager, General Education. In turn, the latter is responsible to the Director of Curriculum and Quality who is a member of the College Curriculum Management Team. The Curriculum Manager is responsible for the operational management of the course and reports on its performance at regular performance management review meetings with the College's Senior Management Team. The Assistant Programme Leader is clear of the role and responsibilities and ensures that an appropriate learning environment is provided. The team concludes that the College, within a tightly structured framework, manages the quality of the higher education provision effectively. The documentation supplied by the University encourages tutors to reflect on the quality of learning opportunities afforded by the course.

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

21 The University's joint model of collaboration clearly defines the expectations for the quality of learning opportunities for the course. There is extensive liaison between the College and the partner University at course level. The processes by which the College assures itself that it is fulfilling its obligations to the awarding body have been described in paragraph 10 and support the quality of learning opportunities. Overall, this system is effective and underpins the delivery of an appropriate learning experience for the students. Annual monitoring is a key part of the Assistant Programme Leader's role as well as attending designated University board activities which operate in conjunction with key assessment dates during the academic year.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

22 The framework described in paragraph 12 supports the quality of learning opportunities and engagement with the Academic Infrastructure. As part of this process, teachers have attended staff development organised by the University to raise awareness of the Academic Infrastructure and to encourage them to embed its precepts into their practices. Although the College has demonstrated some engagement with the *Code of practice*, by being familiar with the staff handbook and other documents provided by the University, the recommendation made in paragraph 12 applies. The College needs to review all those areas designated as the full responsibility of the College to check their alignment with the *Code of practice*. These include, for example, liaison with and involvement of employers, *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning*; first-marking of student assignments, *Section 6: Assessment of students*; and an admissions policy that engages with *Section 10: Admissions to higher education*.

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

23 The University is expected to approve all new staff teaching on the course and all undertake the College staff induction process. As part of its generic Quality Policy Statement, the College provides basic policies that prescribe standards for teaching and learning and a learning policy. The latter sets out its commitment to high quality teaching. The documentation supplied by the University, including the staff handbook, details the operational procedures that underpin the maintenance, delivery and enhancement of teaching and learning. The regular meeting of the Assistant Programme Leader with partner colleges and the University provides an appropriate environment for feeding back good practice and identifying enhancement opportunities to maintain the quality of teaching and learning.

24 Observation of teaching by workplace mentors is an integral feature and this contributes to the effectiveness of the quality of the student learning experience and prepares students for employment. Each student has a workplace mentor who is an experienced teacher in the student's subject area. As well as providing advice and guidance to the student, the mentor plays a part in the formative and summative assessment of the student's teaching practice. Mentors are provided with a handbook by the University. When engaged in summative assessment of a teaching practice session, the mentor uses a structured pro forma to assess subject knowledge, teaching skills and learners' experience. The evaluation of the session identifies points for the development of student's skills and leads to a Pass/Refer/Fail grading. All comments and the grading are shared with the student. The Assistant Programme Leader also carries out a summative assessment of a separate teaching practice session for each student. Past mentor feedback has been too generic; Consequently, exemplar materials and guidelines have been developed and provide more subject-specific guidance. Students spoke highly of the structure of support and guidance received from mentors, which the team considers to represent good practice.

25 The students welcome the opportunities offered by the teaching and learning methods that they experience on the course. Vocationally relevant opportunities provided by the course tutors include microteaching; presentations; case studies; video demonstrations and team working. These learning experiences are of professional relevance to teacher training, enhance the quality of student experience, demonstrate good practice and are welcomed by students.

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

26 The College supports students in a number of ways. Personal development planning is well embedded and is a key process by which students develop skills of self-evaluation and can reflect on, and monitor, their progress through the course and during teaching observation. This takes place as part of the tutorial process and, in future, will be linked to recently piloted Ofsted-graded teaching observation processes. The students are supportive of the new and existing processes. Students also confirm that the tutorial process works well and that, in addition to regular formal tutorials, it is supplemented by flexible access to staff to obtain academic and pastoral support. The College learner support system provides effective support for students with disabilities; for example, there are facilities to magnify text, provide voice recognition software and convert text into Braille.

27 Students participate in an effective induction process which includes an initial diagnostic test for literacy and numeracy. The induction is comprehensive and includes reference to University and College procedures. Students indicate that, although very helpful, it is delivered over too long a period of time. The students expressed appreciation of the induction on access to information technology facilities introduced early in the course.

28 Students feel that progression opportunities for gaining admission to other courses are not fully explained by staff. They are unclear about the range of opportunities and there is no written direction. The College indicates that its information and guidance unit is available to help students. Students also suggest that the inclusion of representatives from the University in briefing sessions would help to clarify their options. The team concludes that it is desirable that the College's procedures for offering information and guidance to its higher education students on the opportunities for progression to other programmes should be reviewed, and ensure that it engages fully with the *Code of practice, Section 8: Career education, information and guidance*.

29 There are a number of mechanisms to gather feedback from students. These include programme team meetings, student representation at the Programme Management Board, tutorials and student programme surveys. All students are aware of these channels of communication and confirm that the Assistant Programme Leader responds to issues raised by them. The processes work effectively.

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

30 The arrangements described in paragraphs 16 and 17 also apply in supporting the quality of learning opportunities. The College has a staff development policy that outlines the basic entitlements of staff and the procedures to be followed when seeking approval. The Assistant Programme Manager accesses the University's Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training, which offers both in-house and College-based development, for example in mentor training and critical thinking techniques. Much of the content of the College's further education staff development programme is of relevance in maintaining the currency of programme content; for example, child protection and drug awareness. In addition, staff development aimed at promoting good practice in teaching and learning is disseminated within the College. The part-time tutor for the Agudist Women's Information Technology and Tele-working Group course is reliant on feedback on the content of staff development activities from the Assistant Programme Leader and has not attended many staff development opportunities, particularly at the University. The College confirms that there are resources to allow the tutor's attendance. The team concludes that it would be desirable for the tutor to engage in the staff development opportunities provided by the awarding body. This would benefit the tutor's professional development and ensure greater parity of the learning opportunities for the students with their counterparts on the main College campus.

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

31 The Memorandum of Agreement and the staff handbook specify what is required of the College with respect to resource provision. They confirm the right of access by College students to the University's library resources. However, some students indicate that this facility is little used by them. The College has a high quality learning environment, with its specialist resources being maintained at an appropriate level to support the size of the course. A recent Ofsted monitoring visit confirms that the College has modern, state-of-the-art facilities including information technology. This provides students with an environment that is conducive to learning. The latest teaching aides and the well-equipped classrooms enhance the quality of students' learning experience. Students confirm their satisfaction with accommodation and resources. Recommended texts are reviewed annually to maintain their currency and relevance. All relevant texts are available within the Consett learning resources centre and at the Agudist Women's Information Technology and Tele-working Group outreach facility. The ability to access course materials electronically through the College's virtual learning environment enhances flexibility and supports the learning of part-time students. Introducing more opportunities for interactive electronic learning between staff and students could enhance further the quality of learning opportunities. Following the feedback from part-time students regarding access, the College has secured evening access to the library and encourages students to telephone it in advance to check that the requisite texts are available for collection.

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?

32 The partnership agreement with the awarding body sets out the College's responsibility to secure approval from the University for the information it publishes about the course it delivers in collaboration with partners. The College's higher education publications use information provided by the University that is already approved by them, supplemented by information regarding College facilities, such as the learning resources centre. The entry in the University's part-time prospectus is duplicated on the College website. The course brochure is concise and is updated annually by the College.

33 At induction the College provides students with details of its key policies and procedures including those that relate to student support. The content and accuracy of information is checked by the curriculum managers. Students report that this information is useful and accurate. The University student handbook contains information about the programme specifications and the expected learning outcomes. Students are given clear and detailed assessment criteria. They are also provided with a chart which maps individual learning outcomes and assessment criteria against the module in which each outcome will be achieved and assessed. All students receive a comprehensive practical teaching and professional development programme handbook from the awarding body and module handbooks. The handbooks include programme and module specifications, attendance regulations, guidance on effective academic practice, and advice on referencing and the avoidance of plagiarism. Student feedback on published information is monitored, evaluated and approved through the relevant programme board and fed into the programme review process. A learner response survey and course representatives also provide feedback on the induction material. The team concludes that the College provides its higher education students with accurate College-related information.

34 Students indicate that the wording used in the handbooks and module descriptors is difficult to understand, lacking in transparency, too technical and abstruse. It is in frequent need of interpretation by the tutor. The College is aware that the wording of the documents supplied by the University could be made more transparent for the students, but is unable to implement changes unilaterally without the consensus of its partners. Significant changes would need to be approved and included in revised documentation submitted at the next course revalidation in 2010. Given the need to ensure that the wording of course documentation is unambiguous, the team concludes that it is advisable for the College to engage in dialogue with the awarding body and collaborative partners, to simplify and clarify the wording of some course documents, in particular, the module descriptor handbooks.

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?

35 The majority of documentation for the course is supplied and approved by the University. The College adheres to the guidelines for publications that are identified in the Memorandum of Agreement between the University and the College. The Assistant Programme Leader drafts the course leaflet and also takes responsibility for its annual revision. The Curriculum Area Manager approves the draft. The text of the entry in the part-time prospectus is agreed by the Assistant Programme Leader and the Curriculum Area Manager and submitted to the College's marketing team. The marketing team is responsible for ensuring that the University logo and the text are approved by the University prior to their publication. Students confirm that they find this information accurately describes their course.

36 The College maintains a publication scheme that complies with the *Freedom of Information Act 2000*. This scheme is approved by the Board of Governors of the College and is reviewed annually by the Director of Finance. Any amendments require the approval of the Board of Governors and are highlighted in the scheme on the College website. The marketing team's activities are subject to an annual review by the College. Staff are clear about the framework and procedures for ensuring the accuracy of the information that they are responsible for publishing.

The team considers that reliance can be placed on the accuracy and/or completeness of the information the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

C Summary of findings from the Developmental engagement in assessment

37 As the total full-time equivalent students funded by HEFCE at the College is less than 50, in accordance with the published review method, the College elected not to take part in a Developmental engagement and a desk-based Summative review was conducted.

D Foundation Degrees

38 The College does not offer Foundation Degrees, and confirms that it will continue to offer one course in teacher education.

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

39 The Summative review team has identified a feature of good practice in Derwentside 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, the University of Sunderland.

40 In the course of the review, the team identified the following area of **good practice**:

- the variety of vocationally relevant teaching and learning opportunities provided by the course tutors that enhance the quality of students' learning; for example, microteaching, case studies and the structure of support given by mentors (paragraphs 24, 25).

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

The team also agreed an area where the College is **advised** to take action:

- to engage in dialogue with the awarding body and collaborative partners to simplify and clarify the wording of some course documents, in particular, the module descriptor handbooks (paragraph 34).

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

- to review the College's policies and procedures to ensure that they engage with the Academic Infrastructure and are consistent with the awarding body's regulations and policies; for example, the College's assessment appeals procedures (paragraphs 8, 9, 12, 14, 22)
- to review the Colleges' procedures for offering information and guidance to its higher education students on the opportunities for progression to other programmes, and engage further with the *Code of practice, Section 8: Career education, information and guidance* (paragraph 28)
- to encourage the course tutor for the Agudist Women's Information Technology and Tele-working Group to engage in the staff development opportunities provided by the awarding body, rather than relying on feedback from the Assistant Programme Leader (paragraphs 16, 30).

42 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 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.

43 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 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.

44 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 the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Derwentside College action plan relating to the Summative review: November 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 area of good practice that is worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the variety of vocationally relevant teaching and learning opportunities provided by the course tutors that enhance the quality of students' learning; for example, microteaching, case studies and the structure of support given by mentors (paragraphs 24, 25). 	Further development of the mentor structure will improve the Good Practice in this area	July 2010	Assistant Programme Leader	Increased number of mentors involved	Curriculum Manager General Education	Scrutiny of student and employer feedback

Derwentside College action plan relating to the Summative review: November 2009						
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<p>The team agreed an area where the College should be advised to take action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to engage in dialogue with the awarding body and collaborative partners to simplify and clarify the wording of some course documents, in particular, the module descriptor handbooks (paragraph 34). 	<p>To raise at FE in HE meetings</p> <p>To raise at the Programme Board</p>	<p>April 2010</p>	<p>Curriculum Manager General Education</p> <p>Assistant Programme Leader</p>	<p>Changes to module descriptor handbooks</p> <p>Improved student evaluations</p>	<p>Higher Education Director</p>	<p>Student course evaluations</p> <p>Student feedback at Programme Board</p>

Derwentside College action plan relating to the Summative review: November 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 review the College's policies and procedures to ensure that they engage with the Academic Infrastructure and are consistent with the awarding body's regulations and policies; for example, the College's assessment appeals procedures (paragraphs 12, 14, 22) 	To discuss the implications of this action with the college Senior Management Team	End of January 2010	Curriculum Manager General Education/ Higher Education Director	Decision on action	Higher Education Director/ Awarding Body	Examine the effectiveness of any programme of implementation which is identified	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to review the Colleges' procedures for offering information and guidance to its higher education students on the opportunities for progression to other programmes, and engage further with the <i>Code of practice, Section</i> 	To provide further Information, Advice and Guidance support by timetabling specific Information, Advice and	End of March 2010	Assistant Programme Leader/College Information, Advice and Guidance Team	Student evaluation reported to Curriculum Manager General Education	Course Review – consideration of student satisfaction.	Review the effectiveness of the advice and guidance events introduced into the course in improving/ clarifying progression	

Derwentside College action plan relating to the Summative review: November 2009						
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
8: <i>Career education, information and guidance</i> (paragraph 28)	Guidance events into course scheme					opportunities through staff and student feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to encourage the course tutor for the Agudist Women's Information Technology and Tele-working Group to engage in the staff development opportunities provided by the awarding body, rather than relying on feedback from the Assistant Programme Leader (paragraphs 16, 30). 	Course tutor to be directed to attend awarding body staff development opportunities	July 2010	Curriculum Manager General Education	Course tutor's attendance at awarding staff development opportunities	Director of Higher Education	Performance Management of course tutor

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