



QAA

Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

February 2010

Dudley College of Technology

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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 Dudley College carried out in February 2010

As a result of its investigations, the Summative review team (the team) considers that there can be **confidence** in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreements, for the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of its awarding bodies. The team also considers that there can be **confidence** in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreements, for the quality of learning opportunities it offers. The team considers that reliance **can** be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Good practice

The team has identified the following good practice for dissemination:

- the establishment of the Higher Education Board of Studies as the focus of all matters concerned with higher education
- the process of collaboration with partners in the Performance Industries Pathway Scheme in the development of the Foundation Degree in Musical Theatre
- the strength and rigour of the internal verification procedures and the standardisation of assignment briefs
- the process of teaching observation using advanced practitioners and the resulting Teaching, Learning and Performance Centre reports, together with the Principal's newsletter on good practice.

Recommendations

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

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

- bring all external examiners' reports, and the details of both good practice and recommendations, to a meeting of the Higher Education Board of Studies to ensure full college-wide discussion and dissemination
- produce a written policy regarding the production of public information in alternative formats
- institute a formal mechanism for monitoring the content of the website to ensure that material is appropriate, accurate and current.

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

- develop a cross-college forum to enable staff studying for higher degrees to share their knowledge and experience
- negotiate with the University to ensure that explicit progression arrangements for the Foundation Degree in Musical Theatre and future Foundation Degrees are identified in handbooks and prospectuses.

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 Dudley 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 and the University of Wolverhampton. The review was carried out by Mr Jonathan Doney, Professor Christopher Gale and Ms Ruth Stoker (reviewers), and Mr Martin Hill (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*, published by QAA. Evidence in support of the Summative review included documentation supplied by the College and awarding bodies, meetings with staff, students 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 and the Developmental engagement in admissions. A summary of findings from the two Developmental engagements is provided in Section C of this report. The review also considered the College's use of the Academic Infrastructure, developed by QAA on behalf of higher education providers, with reference to the *Code of practice 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*, and programme specifications.

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

4 The College is a large general further education college situated in the metropolitan borough of Dudley in the Black Country. The borough of Dudley has higher than the national average of working-age population without qualifications (17 per cent as opposed to 13 per cent nationally). About 9 per cent of the local population are from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. The College operates on four main campuses in Dudley: The Broadway; Mons Hill Centre; Castle View; and Wolverhampton Street. The administrative site is at The Broadway. The College's mission statement is: 'Outstanding learning which develops skills, raises aspirations and changes lives'.

5 In the academic year 2009-10 the College had 26,049 enrolments. Of these, 16,024 were adult enrolments, 36 per cent of whom were female, and 25 per cent were from minority ethnic groups. There are 84 full-time and 450 part-time students enrolled on higher education programmes. They are taught by 40 staff, 27 of whom hold full-time appointments. The higher education awards that are funded by HEFCE are listed below.

Edexcel

- Higher National Certificate/Diploma (HNC/D) Mechanical Engineering (full and part-time) (26 students or 18 full-time equivalents)
- HNC/D Electrical and Electronic Engineering (full and part-time) (42 students or 25 full-time equivalents)

- HNC/D Manufacturing Engineering (full and part-time) (4 students or 3 full-time equivalents)
- HNC/D Construction (full and part-time) (43 students or 27 full-time equivalents)
- HNC/D Computing (full and part-time) (36 students or 30 full-time equivalents)
- HND Fashion and Textiles (full and part-time) (12 students or 12 full-time equivalents)
- HNC/D Business (full and part-time) (71 students or 53 full-time equivalents)

University of Wolverhampton

- Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (part-time) (163 students or 22 full-time equivalents)
- Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (part-time) (66 students or 9 full-time equivalents)
- Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (part-time) (60 students or 30 full-time equivalents)
- Foundation Degree (FD) in Musical Theatre (full and part-time) (11 students or 11 full-time equivalents)

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

6 The College offers a variety of HNC/D programmes on behalf of Edexcel. The portfolio of programmes in education is operated under a Memorandum of Cooperation with the University of Wolverhampton covering the period 2008 to 2012. The College has a new partnership agreement with the University, within the Performance Industries Pathway Scheme, to deliver the FD in Musical Theatre. Both agreements identify operational procedures and monitoring and review arrangements.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

7 In 2008 the senior management structure of the College was reorganised. The newly appointed Director of Learning now takes strategic responsibility for the higher education provision. The recently formed Higher Education Board of Studies has representation from the heads of the five centres in the College, the curriculum managers and programme tutors. The College has plans to build a new higher education centre in central Dudley, which it is hoped will be jointly operated with the University of Wolverhampton.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

8 Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the team. The student submission was compiled by the Students' Union Support Officer, a staff member of the College, who was previously the Students' Union President. The document was assembled following discussions with higher education students who were asked about their experiences of their programmes. Fifty-six full and part-time students took part in the evaluation. The team found the document helpful in identifying the comments and concerns of students and was able to pursue some of these in a meeting with a representative sample of students.

B Evaluation of the management of HEFCE-funded higher education

Core theme 1: Academic standards

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

9 The College has a clear management structure for higher education, and higher education is well embedded in all curriculum areas across the College. The Director of Learning oversees the operational management of all higher education programmes. Each programme has a tutor with direct management responsibility. The programme tutors report to the relevant curriculum managers who, in turn, report to the heads of centre for the relevant subject areas. The heads of centre report to the Director of Learning and then to the Standards and Diversity Committee of the College Corporation (the Governing body). Staff are aware of the lines of management for higher education and are clear about who takes management responsibility.

10 Following a recommendation in the Developmental engagement in assessment, the College has established a Higher Education Board of Studies chaired by the Director of Learning, with a remit for monitoring all higher education issues. It meets each term and reports to the meeting of the Directorate, which in turn reports to the College Corporation. Membership of the Higher Education Board of Studies includes the Director of Learning, the Standards and Performance Manager, relevant heads of centre, higher education academic staff and student representatives. Examination boards, to confirm student achievement on HNC/D programmes, are held at subject area level and they report to the Higher Education Board of Studies. There is a parallel system in place for the University programmes offered at the College. The team concluded that, while the Higher Education Board of Studies has been recently formed and has not yet been able to accomplish much so far, it has the potential to undertake more detailed scrutiny of higher education practices within the College. However, in the context of the College, the establishment of the Higher Education Board of Studies as the focus of all matters concerned with higher education is regarded as good practice.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

11 The College has policy documents for admissions, assessment, student conduct and plagiarism. They are referenced in the college-wide student handbook, which is given to all students during the College's induction process, together with the terms of references of the Higher Education Board of Studies. The student handbook signposts students to full versions of the policy documents on the student section of the College website. The College also has clear procedural documents covering appeals, absence reporting, and mitigating circumstances, which are also identified on the College website.

12 The College takes appropriate note of the Academic Infrastructure in the management of academic standards. In particular, the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark* and the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning* have been considered fully in the development of the first Foundation Degree. Employer engagement in the design of programmes is evidenced through the development of a second Foundation Degree, in glass production and design, which is still at an early stage of planning. The minutes of

meetings of the Glass Stakeholders Group reflect the fact that industry representatives are a key part of the programme development process in accordance with the *Code of practice*.

How does the College assure itself that it is fulfilling its obligations to ensure that the standards of higher education provision meet the requirements of validating partners and awarding bodies?

13 The College currently delivers four programmes validated by the University of Wolverhampton, namely a suite of related teacher training programmes and the newly launched FD in Musical Theatre. The latter was validated by the University as part of the Performance Industries Pathway Scheme. Memoranda of cooperation between the University and the College exist for these programmes. The validation document for the FD in Musical Theatre was drawn up as a collaborative venture between the University and four partner colleges. The minutes of the discussions regarding the development of the programme clearly indicate that staff were taking due note of the Academic Infrastructure. Relevant benchmark statements including the *Foundation Degree benchmark statement* were discussed at the programme design stage. The team considers that the process of collaboration with partners in the development of the FD in Musical Theatre is an example of good practice.

14 Representatives of the student cohort on the first year of the FD Musical Theatre told the team that they did not know what study routes they could follow into year three of an honours degree programme. The team noted that, at validation, it was minuted that students could progress to existing performing arts degree provision at the University of Wolverhampton. The validation document also stated that a more appropriate top-up year would be a newly written programme to be validated prior to September 2010. The team was told that this is currently being designed. The team recommends that the College negotiate with the University to ensure that explicit progression arrangements for the FD in Musical Theatre and future Foundation Degrees are identified in handbooks and prospectuses.

15 There were problems enrolling students to the new FD in Musical Theatre in autumn 2009 at the University. This was a newly validated programme with the University. Unfortunately, the surge in applications to courses combined with the constrained number of places available for full-time students, resulting from funding council decisions, precluded a number of students from completing their enrolment. Consequently, half of those students who had been given places on the programme by the College were not able to be enrolled. However, they were given access to College facilities, and enrolled by the University at the start of semester two in February 2010. Credit for their work during semester one is to be given using the College and University's accreditation of prior learning policy to enable students to complete their awards.

16 The University appoints external examiners for the programmes it validates, in consultation with the College. They visit the College to ensure that the provision meets the University's requirements. Their reports are sent to the University and to the College for consideration. The Director of Learning receives the reports and grades them from one to four, with one being excellent, and four requiring a detailed action plan to be followed. The reports are forwarded to a Standards Assurance Coordinator who has responsibility for logging all issues onto a database, disseminating issues for action to the relevant curriculum managers, and checking that issues have been dealt with. Staff from the College and the University confirmed that the College writes to the University of Wolverhampton detailing its response to any issues. The University considers the College's response to external

examiners' reports at the relevant School Quality and Enhancement Committee, which then replies to the external examiners concerned. For all HNC/D programmes external examiners are appointed by Edexcel. They visit programme areas annually and present reports to Edexcel and the College through the Director of Learning. A similar process of reporting within the College is followed for Edexcel programmes to monitor issues and ensure that all actions are followed through.

17 External examiners' reports are also discussed in the annual Curriculum Performance Review and Evaluation documents for each programme. These also cover enrolment, achievement and progression statistics. The Curriculum Performance Review and Evaluation documents are compiled by programme leaders and considered by the relevant curriculum managers before being sent to the Director of Standards and Performance.

18 While the College believes that this is an effective monitoring system, external examiners' reports do not benefit from wider consideration. There is no college-wide forum to which these reports are brought. Major issues, and only a summary of external examiners' reports, are reported to the Higher Education Board of Studies. Detailed examples of good practice and issues for attention are not separately monitored at this level and do not benefit from wider discussion. As a result, the overview of quality matters from higher education programmes across the College sits solely with the Director of Learning. The responsibility for monitoring quality at the strategic level is not currently shared. The team recommends that all external examiners' reports, and the details of both good practice and recommendations, are brought to a meeting of the Higher Education Board of Studies to ensure full college-wide discussion and dissemination.

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

19 As recommended in the Developmental engagement in admissions, a cross-college higher education event focusing on key higher education issues took place in June 2009. It was attended by all academic staff who teach on higher education programmes as well as support staff from admissions and the website designer. The College intends that this should be run annually to ensure that higher education-related developments, such as the operation of policies and procedures for assessment and admissions, are considered.

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

Core theme 2: Quality of learning opportunities

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

20 The Higher Education Board of Studies and the Director of Learning have responsibilities for monitoring the quality of the student learning experience, as described in paragraphs 9 and 10. The quality of teaching and learning are considered formally at the Higher Education Board of Studies, which also reviews all higher education policies and procedures.

21 College staff attend University quality and standardisation meetings to ensure that the College follows University regulations. A link tutor is nominated by the University and represents the formal route for communications between College programmes and the University. The University also reviews standards and quality across partner institutions in an annual monitoring process, and feedback to the College is through the Higher Education Board of Studies. The College takes part in the Edexcel standardisation exercise for assignments. Edexcel also conducts an annual risk assessment of the College, which confirms the College's capacity to run HNC/D programmes and reports to the Director of Learning.

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

22 The College has a robust assessment policy and set of procedures. Staff demonstrated a clear understanding of good practice in assessment. All assessment tasks are approved by curriculum managers and internal verifiers before being sent to external examiners for consideration. Only when they have been approved by external examiners are they given to students. This process is followed on the Edexcel programmes and those validated by the University. Assessment tasks are set using a standard pro forma where it is made clear to students what is expected of them and how to achieve high grades. Students said that they were made fully aware of assessment activity, and are offered appropriate support if there was something they did not understand fully.

23 The College has clear internal verification procedures and staff demonstrated a good understanding of the process on both Edexcel and University programmes. Standardisation meetings, relating to assessment and internal verification processes, are held at programme level. These include staff from a different curriculum area, which helps ensure consistency of the process across the College. These discussions are reported to the curriculum management meetings. Following recommendations in the Developmental engagement in assessment, the format of assignment documentation for HNC/D programmes has recently been standardised. It now uses standard formats from the Foundation Degree programme. The team considers the strength and rigour of the internal verification procedures and the standardisation of assignment briefs as good practice

24 The College has unified the procedures and timescales for the late submission of assessed work across higher education programmes. The team heard that different local practices exist with regard to submission of assignments. This provides a flexibility that is of particular benefit to part-time students. There are assignment schedules for all programmes, which are given out to students at induction. A feedback deadline of 21 days was confirmed by staff and students and is largely adhered to. A coherent College policy on the resubmission of assessed work in higher education programmes has been adopted.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

25 The Higher Education Board of Studies is responsible for considering all relevant aspects of the Academic Infrastructure concerned with the quality of learning opportunities, as noted in paragraph 12. Any changes to the *Code of practice* are discussed and action determined and disseminated to staff by the Higher Education Board of Studies. The team concludes that the College demonstrates an appropriate awareness of the Academic Infrastructure.

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

26 A range of effective procedures supports the assurance of the quality of learning opportunities. A key aspect is the College peer observation procedure, undertaken through a team of advanced practitioners. The overall responsibility for the process rests with the Director of Standards and Performance, who delegates responsibility for the observations to the Standards and Performance Manager. The observations are thorough, recorded and may lead to the dissemination of good practice or to the identification of additional teaching support needs. They are undertaken for both full and part-time staff. Staff receive feedback and an action plan is drawn up by the observer Curriculum Manager, who also identifies any training needs. The records of observations are monitored during performance reviews with curriculum managers, with the objective of planning staff development provision. Dissemination of good practice also occurs in the Teaching, Learning and Performance reports prepared for each centre. Teaching observation is undertaken by advanced practitioners from outside the subject areas and the resulting reports for the centre are published. The Principal's newsletter, which draws from these reports, identifies good practice. The team concludes that this process is an example of good practice.

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

27 The Student Services Manager is responsible for the services that support students and their learning experience. The College has a dedicated student support service that operates through an area called the Hub, where students can access academic support appropriate to their level of study. Students are aware of this service and said that support was good. During weekdays, higher education support tutors are available both in the daytime and in the evening. There is no weekend opening.

28 It is College policy to have a group tutorial system on all programmes. Individually recorded one-to-one tutorials occur three times a year. In some programmes they run during a dedicated tutorial week. Once a term pastoral tutorials are held between staff and their tutorial group. Staff are available outside these times by appointment and students can be referred to the College counselling team for further support. Students on the University programmes have access to the University student support unit.

29 Students on the University programmes are subject to University procedures regarding extenuating circumstances and appeals. They receive details of appeals procedures at induction and in the student diary. Further discussion of these procedures can be sought from programme tutors.

30 The College has a sophisticated mechanism for collecting student opinion through its Learner Voice policy. Each programme has an elected student representative who is invited to attend a special training programme run by the Students' Union. Student representatives are invited to attend Learner Voice meetings each term, both within their curriculum area and at college level. However, the student representatives met by the team were not aware of the invitation to attend the Higher Education Board of Studies. Awareness of the existence and purpose of the Higher Education Board of Studies was very weak.

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

31 The external examiner for the HNC/D Business noted that students are offered a broad range of subject knowledge and experience from the higher education staff. Staff in engineering were commended by the external examiner for their subject knowledge. All newly appointed academic staff are required to obtain a teaching qualification, which is supported by the College. In addition, from the current academic year all teaching staff are expected to spend three days each year on industrial, commercial and academic updating in their subject area.

32 Staff development opportunities are numerous and are open to full and part-time staff. They include a pathways agreement with the University, which enables staff to access University programmes free of charge. Three of the staff delivering teacher training programmes are studying for master's awards in education. One of the team delivering the FD in Music Theatre is part way through an MPhil in Music Research. Currently, there is no formal opportunity for staff on advanced study programmes to share their experiences. Discussions regarding subject development and teaching practice take place only at subject level. The team recommends that the College should develop a cross-college forum to enable staff studying for higher degrees to share their knowledge and experience.

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?

33 External examiners' reports indicate that the College resources are judged to be at least good and, for the HNC/D Mechanical Engineering, the resources are judged to be very good. The external examiner for the HNC/D Business noted that all rooms contain interactive whiteboards, the library is well stocked and the virtual learning environment is well used. For the HNC/D Electrical/Electronic Engineering the resources, both for independent study and for ongoing coursework, were considered to be of a very high standard.

34 The College has a range of high-technology equipment in engineering, the latest computer software, specialist networking facilities and a newly formed large dance and performance studio. All students have access to the College virtual learning environment with a dedicated email address and a generous storage allowance. Students commented that recent changes to the virtual learning environment had caused login difficulties. This situation was overcome by students being given notice of the changes in classes and being directed to a help-desk. A separate virtual learning environment is available for students on the University programmes.

35 Each curriculum area produces an annual Curriculum Performance Review and Evaluation report, which informs the business planning and budgetary allocation process of the College. A recent example of achievement through this was the requirement for investment in an expanded dance and performance studio to run the FD in Musical Theatre, which was undertaken.

36 Students have a high opinion of the resources available, including the higher education room, which is only accessible by them. The College has a rating of well above average for access to information technology, specialised facilities and the library in the National Student Survey. Students on University programmes have full access to library facilities at the University and avail themselves of them.

The team concludes that it has confidence in the College's management of its responsibilities for of 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?

37 The marketing strategy is part of the College Strategic Plan and its implementation is the responsibility of the Marketing Manager. The responsibility for publishing information about the full and part-time higher education programmes lies with the College. Details of all higher education programmes can be found in the annual full and part-time programme prospectuses. As a result of a recommendation from the Developmental engagement in admissions, a dedicated Higher Education Programme Guide has been launched for the 2010-11 academic year. This provides prospective students with detailed information regarding College services and facilities, financial guidance, application processes and programme-specific information. The content is prepared by programme teams and is checked for accuracy by the respective heads of centre, who then forward it to the Marketing Manager for inclusion in the finished document.

38 The College has an effective procedure for personally guiding and advising applicants with special needs who visit the College. However, the team noted the poor provision of published information for people who have problems accessing normal formats. There is no clear College policy regarding the presentation of information in alternative formats. The team recommends that the College produces, a written policy regarding the production of public information in alternative formats.

39 The University also publishes information about the programmes available at the College in its Foundation Degree Prospectus. This is prepared by the University and the relevant content checked by the College before publication. As noted in paragraph 14, the FD in Musical Theatre does not have a clearly articulated progression route, and an appropriate top-up degree is being prepared. Consequently, the prospectus documents from the College and the University do not give clear information in this respect.

40 The College website provides detailed programme information. The responsibility for maintaining the website lies with the Marketing Manager, who depends on the contributions from heads of centres, student services staff and curriculum leaders. The College is confident that its website complies with current practice regarding accessibility standards. The content management system, currently used to support the website, is now considered to be inadequate and is due for replacement. The website has been recently reviewed and further developments are planned to enhance its content. College policies are posted on the website when approved by the Corporation, but procedures relevant to students are not. Students commented on inaccuracies and the lack of clarity of some of the information. The team concludes that there is not an appropriate system for monitoring the content or consistency of the website. It is recommended that the College institutes a formal mechanism for monitoring the content of the website to ensure that material is appropriate, accurate and current.

41 At induction student handbooks, programme handbooks and programme specifications are provided by the College to students on both Edexcel and University-validated programmes. They are made available to students both in printed form and electronically

on the College's virtual learning environment. Students also receive a diary which containing key dates, not only for their programme, but also in the College calendar. Students confirmed that they had received these and were aware of their presence on the intranet. They also confirmed that they found these documents useful in accessing important information.

42 The College's virtual learning environment provides a platform for staff to post programme and general information, as well as assignment and assessment material. Consistency is monitored by the Learning Resource Manager. The virtual learning environment is populated by programme teams in a variety of formats. This allows staff the freedom to develop their own subject areas to best suit their students' needs. With the exception of the website, students generally found published information for the College clear and complete.

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?

43 A number of procedures operate for different sets of published information. In most cases, the head of centre for the subject area is responsible for checking the accuracy and completeness of programme material. Where necessary, Support Services may be asked for input and comment on accuracy. Drafts of all documents for publication are circulated to the Director of Learning and the College Directorate for final approval. For Foundation Degree programmes, the University quality monitoring procedures are used.

44 For programme handbooks, a generic component has been agreed, which was approved by the Director of Learning in consultation with all staff teaching on higher education programmes. Additional programme-specific content is written by the course tutors and checked by the curriculum managers. There are guidelines for consistent content, but the style can be adapted to suit a particular subject area. All material is passed to the Director of Learning for approval. It is clear that the College is making progress in this area to achieve a consistent approach.

45 All material for publication on the College website is approved by the Director of Learning and passed to the Marketing Manager. However, there are inconsistencies in the presentation of this material, especially regarding programme specifications. The current University policy is not to post programme specifications on the website but to have programme guides, which are considered to be more useful to the students. For HND/Cs programme specifications follow Edexcel templates and guidelines and most are posted to the website.

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

C Summary of findings from the Developmental engagements

46 The Developmental engagement in assessment in May 2008 considered three lines of enquiry, agreed with the College in advance. These were:

- all programmes provide appropriate and timely feedback to students on assessed work in a way that promotes learning and facilitates improvement
- students on all programmes adopt good academic conduct in respect of assessment, in particular the use of strong academic referencing
- the programmes at the College have fair mechanisms for marking and moderation of assessment.

47 The Developmental engagement team highlighted several areas of good practice. These included the wide range of feedback mechanisms used particularly for part-time students, often through the virtual learning environment. Student support and guidance on academic skills and good practice was available through the Hub. Procedures and policies for plagiarism were made clear and assessment criteria were helpfully included in many assignment briefs, which illustrated the strength and rigour of the College's internal verification procedures.

48 Recommendations from the Developmental engagement team included the establishment of a Higher Education Board of Studies, the standardisation of assignment briefs, and the adoption of a common structure for student handbooks for higher education programmes. All of these recommendations have now been implemented by the College.

49 The Developmental engagement in admissions in May 2009 considered three lines of enquiry, agreed with the College in advance. These were:

- How are the College's decisions on admissions made, and are they in line with the widening participation agenda? Are staff equipped to make the required judgements and competent to undertake their roles and responsibilities?
- Are the College's promotional materials and activities accurate, relevant, current and accessible, and do they provide information that will enable applicants to make informed decisions on their options?
- Does the College conduct admissions processes efficiently, effectively and courteously, according to fully documented operational procedures that are readily accessible to all those involved in the admissions process, both within and without the College, applicants and their advisers?

50 The Developmental engagement team highlighted several areas of good practice. These were evident in the clear and comprehensive admissions policy and admissions checklist for students applying to teacher training programmes. The close working partnership with the University of Wolverhampton to ensure that appropriate admission decisions are made was noted. The team commended the open days which provided advice and guidance, and followed the overall interview process. The initial assessment of skills in order to identify any needs for additional support was also considered good practice.

51 Recommendations from the Developmental engagement team included the development of a specific higher education admissions policy and regular monitoring of policies and procedures for higher education admissions. It was recommended that the College's website should have a dedicated higher education section, which should include accurate information about current and future higher education programmes. It was also recommended that the College should integrate all higher education programmes into one printed prospectus. The majority of these recommendations have been implemented.

D Foundation Degrees

52 The College offers one FD in Musical Theatre as part of the Performance Industries Pathway Scheme with the University of Wolverhampton. There are 11 full-time students on the programme. From September 2010 the College hopes to offer a Foundation Degree in art and design, also in collaboration with the University of Wolverhampton. This initiative has developed from collaborative discussions between the College and the University regarding the provision of specialist glass programmes. There is the possibility of a Foundation Degree in engineering, also with the University of Wolverhampton, starting in September 2011.

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

53 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Dudley College's management of its responsibilities for academic standards and for the quality of the 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 and the University of Wolverhampton.

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

- the establishment of the Higher Education Board of Studies as the focus of all matters concerned with higher education (paragraph 10)
- the process of collaboration with partners in the Performance Industries Pathway Scheme in the development of the FD in Musical Theatre (paragraph 13)
- the strength and rigour of the internal verification procedures and the standardisation of assignment briefs (paragraph 23)
- the process of teaching observation using advanced practitioners and the resulting Teaching, Learning and Performance Centre reports, together with the Principal's newsletter on good practice (paragraph 26).

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

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

- bring all external examiners' reports, and the details of both good practice and recommendations, to a meeting of the Higher Education Board of Studies to ensure full college-wide discussion and dissemination (paragraph 18)
- produce a written policy regarding the production of public information in alternative formats (paragraph 38)

- institute a formal mechanism for monitoring the content of the website to ensure that material is appropriate, accurate and current (paragraph 40).

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

- develop a cross-college forum to enable staff studying for higher degrees to share their knowledge and experience (paragraph 32)
- negotiate with the University to ensure that explicit progression arrangements for the FD in Musical Theatre and future Foundation Degrees are identified in handbooks and prospectuses (paragraph 14).

56 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 bodies.

57 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.

58 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.

Dudley College action plan relating to the Summative review: February 2010						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
In the course of the Summative review the team identified the following areas of good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the establishment of the Higher Education Board of Studies as the focus of all matters concerned with higher education (paragraph 10) 	Establish HE Board of Studies in each academic centre once per term	Oct 2010	Director of Learning Head of Centre	Improved quality of course monitoring and review	Directorate Standards Committee of Corporation	Annual review and self-assessment; feedback from learners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the process of collaboration with partners in the Performance Industries Pathway Scheme in the development of the FD in Musical Theatre (paragraph 13) 	Share good practice with those planning new Foundation Degrees	July 2010	Course Leader, Foundation Degree in Musical Theatre Director of Learning	New Foundation Degrees embed partnership into proposals	HE Board of Studies Directorate	Successful validation with university; employer engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the strength and rigour of the internal verification procedures and the standardisation of assignment briefs (paragraph 23) 	Cross-verification in all HNC/D courses	June 2011	Director of Learning; HE Board of Studies	Greater consistency across programmes; sharing of good practice in	HE Board of Studies	External examiner reports

Dudley College action plan relating to the Summative review: February 2010						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the process of teaching observation using Advanced Practitioners and the resulting Teaching, Learning and Performance Centre reports, together with the Principal's newsletter on good practice (paragraph 26). 	Increase collaboration across centres to share good practice	Dec 2010	Standards & Performance Manager	Greater cross-college support and internal sharing of good practice	Standards Committee	Centre action plans and Operational Development plans

Dudley College action plan relating to the Summative review: February 2010							
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation	
The team agreed a number of areas where the College should be advised to take action:							
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> bring all external examiners, reports, and the details of both good practice and recommendations, to a meeting of the Higher Education Board of Studies to ensure full College-wide discussion and dissemination (paragraph 18) 	Focus for HE Board of Studies meeting	Sept 2010	Director of Learning Standards Assurance Co-ordinator	Increased collaboration across HE programmes results in improved HE experience	HE Board of Studies Directorate	External examiner reports	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> produce a written policy regarding the production of public information in alternative formats (paragraph 38) 	Convene working party to produce policy	June 2010	Director for Student Support; Head of Student Services Marketing Manager	Policy in place that enables greater access to HE information	Directorate governors	Student Diaries; Student Services	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> institute a formal mechanism for monitoring the content of the web site to 	Establish agreed procedure	July 2010	Director of Learning Learning	Formal Procedure agreed leading to accurate	Learning Management Team Directorate	Website prospectuses	

Dudley College action plan relating to the Summative review: February 2010						
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
ensure that material is appropriate, accurate and current (paragraph 40).			Management Team Head of Student Services Marketing Manager Website designer	up-to-date website material		

Dudley College action plan relating to the Summative review: February 2010							
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"> develop a cross-College forum to enable staff studying for higher degrees to share their knowledge and experience (paragraph 32) 	Establish a Scholarly Activity sub-committee of the HE Board of Studies	June 2010	Director of Learning Standards & Performance Manager	Research shared by all those on Master's-level qualifications	HE Board of Studies	Abstracts available on VLE in HE staff room folder	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> negotiate with the University to ensure that explicit progression arrangements for the FD in Musical Theatre and future Foundation Degrees are identified in handbooks and prospectuses (paragraph 39). 	Indicate progression routes in handbooks and prospectuses	Dec 2010	Director of Learning University validation panel Head of Student Services Marketing Manager	Progression routes agreed and published from the onset	University Partnerships Manager HE Board of Studies Directorate Head of Student Services Marketing Manager	Website prospectuses handbooks	

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