



QAA

Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

December 2009

Birkenhead Sixth Form College

SR51/2009

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2010

ISBN 978 1 84979 072 7

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

Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Preface

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

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

Purpose of IQER

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

The IQER process

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

Developmental engagement

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

The main elements of a Developmental engagement are:

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

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

Summative review

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

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

Evidence

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

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

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

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

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

Outcomes of IQER

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

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

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

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

Executive summary

The Summative review of Birkenhead Sixth Form College carried out in December 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 the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programme it delivers.

Good practice

The team has identified the following **good practice** for dissemination:

- the close and regular engagements between key staff in the College and with the local University-led partnership enable collective and consistent assurance of both standards and quality of provision
- the positive and prompt reaction of College staff to student feedback leads to enhancement of the student learning experience as evidenced specifically in the provision of clinically relevant examples in the mathematics subject area
- the provision of a well-formed and dedicated base room for higher education students within the College, with computers, study space, refreshment facilities and an adjacent dedicated lecture room, greatly enhance the overall student learning experience
- the initiative taken by the College in leading the development and provision of alternative delivery approaches to assist students elsewhere in the partnership during a time of staff shortage in one partner, has led to an established practice that can be utilised to enhance the student learning experience in similar situations.

Recommendations

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

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

- offer staff involved in the design, delivery, assessment and monitoring of the programme, specific higher education focused staff development that covers matters related to the maintenance and assurance of academic standards, the use of the Academic Infrastructure and enhancing student learning opportunities
- include specific and explicit reference to the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education, Section 3: Students with disabilities*, in its Learning Support Policy to ensure that the learning experience for such students is covered by formal processes
- provide public information about flexible learning progression opportunities for the higher education students as alternatives to the current explicit route onto the University's provision in health studies degrees.

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

- explore the staff development opportunities offered under the terms of the existing partnership agreement, particularly in the area of study for higher degrees, to enhance further approaches to the maintenance of academic standards
- develop the College's existing process for peer observation of teaching to ensure that all staff teaching on the higher education programme are observed in a higher education learning context in line with current practice in the University.

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 Birkenhead Sixth Form 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 the University of Liverpool (the University). The review was carried out by Professor Gillian Grant and Mr Nicholas Wiseman (reviewers), and Dr David Ross (coordinator).

2 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 including a self-evaluation, a meeting with students, the College's Foundation to Health Studies programme coordinator (the College Lead), and the partner institution. There was no Developmental engagement of the College and the review was conducted through a desk-based study. 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. There are no Foundation Degree awards on offer at the College.

3 The College was established in 1988. Most of its provision is on a single site about one mile from the centre of Birkenhead. The College provides courses for adults at 18 centres in the community. In 2008-09 the College enrolled 1,225 full-time learners aged 16 to 19 years and 2,000 part-time adult learners. The majority of the College's funding (90 per cent) comes from the population of 16 to 19 year-old learners.

4 The College offers one HEFCE-funded programme, validated by the University (the awarding body):

- Foundation to Health Studies.

The programme is a year 0 course (AZ00) and is a level 3 provision under the terms of the FHEQ. It is an Access programme that guarantees students admission to University degrees in Allied Health Professions and Nursing, provided they meet progression criteria. The programme was developed as part of collaborative provision under the Greater Merseyside and West Lancashire Lifelong Learning Network, and the College is one of three partner institutions with the University in this venture.

5 The programme has been running for three years, starting in September 2006. Staffing has been stable, with only one change of personnel in that time. Students are registered as University students from the time they start the College programme. The programme is entirely taught at the College apart from four 'taster' days at the University that are designed to allow the students to sample university life. The total number of students is capped by the terms of the widening participation agreement between the University and the Greater Merseyside and West Lancashire Lifelong Learning Network. The programme is located outside the College's normal delivery structures and is the only full-time adult course run during the daytime. The bulk of full-time, day learners at the College are 16 to 18 year-olds following GCE A-Level programmes.

6 Enrolment and progression numbers for the duration of the programme are as follows.

Year	Started programme	Completed programme	Progressed to university
2006-07	12	11	9
2007-08	11	11	11
2008-09	15	13	13
2009-10	15	N/A	N/A

Partnership agreement with the awarding body

7 The College has a formal partnership agreement with the University which has been unaltered since the development of the programme. Under the terms, the University is ultimately responsible for assuring and monitoring academic standards, including the arrangements for management, moderation, monitoring and reviewing. The College has delegated responsibility for the delivery of the programme, as well as quality assurance and monitoring, under the overall academic and quality assurance oversight of the School of Health Sciences within the Faculty of Medicine at the University.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

8 Students studying on the higher education programme at the College attended a meeting with the coordinator during the preparatory visit to the College. Findings from the meeting were included in the evidence for the Summative review. The students did not present a formal submission to the team.

B Evaluation of the management of HEFCE-funded higher education

Core theme 1: Academic standards

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

9 The College's mission is to offer high quality education for all students, supported by key values such as encouraging participation in learning; delivering high quality teaching and learning, enabling all learners and staff to achieve their full potential; and promoting equality of opportunity, self respect and respect for others. The College's quality assurance procedures incorporate the higher education provision within the usual annual quality assurance cycle. The College Lead is also the Director of Learning and Achievement who reports to the Deputy Principal (Curriculum) who has overall responsibility in the College for quality assurance. There is regular and effective communication on quality matters within the College's committee structures.

10 In managing its higher education provision, the College adheres to the framework established by the University in the partnership agreement, where the University clearly sets out the roles and delegated responsibilities for managing academic standards. These are appropriately understood and correctly interpreted by the College. Within the College, direct responsibility for development, maintenance and assurance of standards is exercised

by the College Lead who reports to the collective programme management committee, which meets under the auspices of the University, and is chaired by the University programme leader who is also the designated link tutor for the College. Teaching staff for each module within the College liaise regularly with the module leaders who are located within the University.

11 The team was reassured to note that the College Lead, teaching staff, module leaders and the Director of Studies within the University all work effectively together to assure standards, through a process of regular formal and informal contact. This enables effective collective management and assurance of academic standards. The nature and effectiveness of the close and regular engagements with the relevant staff make a significant contribution to this area.

12 Within the College, in terms of local quality assurance protocols, programme subject material is reviewed as part of the College's Quality Assurance Policy via the subject self-assessment report. The subject report then forms part of the whole College self-assessment report that is thoroughly reviewed by senior management and the Governors as part of the Annual Quality Cycle. This is an effective process that links the higher education programme into the overall management of academic standards within the College.

13 The partnership agreement states clearly that the College has its own responsibilities with respect to the management of academic standards. The team found evidence of many areas in which these responsibilities are fulfilled by the College; for example, engaging with students via the Staff-Student Liaison Committee and participating in the Module Review Board of Examiners that meets in each of the two semesters, and in the Associate Colleges Liaison Committee, of which the College Principal is a member.

14 The programme team at the College produces an annual report on developments within the programme and submits it to the overall University Annual Programme Monitoring and Review process. This is considered along with other partner college equivalents at the Board of Studies.

15 The team noted that the Lifelong Learning Network evaluation report confirms the high standards operating in the College which ensure that students meet the progression requirements expected by the University. The example moderator's report further endorses the conclusion that appropriate standards are being achieved by the College.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

16 Within the self-evaluation there is little explicit reference to the Academic Infrastructure. The University takes a strong lead in the management of the programme delivered at the College, particularly with reference to meeting the precepts of the *Code of practice*, published by QAA. The programme specification is aligned with the appropriate level descriptors of the FHEQ. Under the existing partnership agreement there is engagement with the Academic Infrastructure through the University.

17 The College was involved in applying the Academic Infrastructure through participation in the initial programme development and validation where, for example, reference is made to the *Subject benchmark statement* for health studies and, more recently, through meetings between the consortium members in Programme Management Team meetings and module review committees. The team noted evidence that the College takes the lead in setting some of the programme assessments within the consortium, for example in the Mathematics module.

18 The College is also involved in applying the principles of the Academic Infrastructure in reviewing the module specifications at the University's annual evaluation day, in preparing assessment instruments for discussion with the other partner colleges and the University, and in discussing and amending other institutions' assessment proposals.

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

19 College staff meet regularly with their counterparts in the consortium and the module leaders based in the University to review and moderate assessment instruments. These meetings also take cognisance of students' views on assessment and their performance levels. This is an effective process that benefits the overall assurance of academic standards.

20 Module leaders mentor College lecturers by means of regular and effective contact. They also are responsible for monitoring and assuring the quality and rigour of the assessment process by acting as external moderators in a transparent process that assures standards are upheld at the College.

21 The team noted that the College is involved in a number of robust formal activities with the University and local area initiatives that also help to assure standards are maintained and enhanced. These include the participation of the College Principal in the Associate College's Liaison Committee, the membership of the College Principal on the Greater Merseyside and West Lancashire Lifelong Learning Network and the College Lead's involvement in the University Board of Studies and Programme Management Group. In all of these situations, appropriate summary reports from the College are accepted and discussed.

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

22 There is a strong and active overall programme of staff development linked to a continuing professional development framework within the College. This includes a rigorous teaching observation regime with a formalised set of protocols to ensure that good practice is captured and areas of weakness recorded for further development. However, this process is not linked specifically to the higher education process, and staff teaching on the programme are not necessarily observed during a higher education teaching activity.

23 The University has its own protocols for teaching observation, with appropriate feedback mechanisms in place. The team encourages the College to utilise the strengths of their own college-wide system of peer observation, in conjunction with that used in the University, to ensure that College staff teaching on the higher education programme can benefit fully from this process.

24 Under the terms of the partnership agreement, the University currently offers partner College staff the opportunity to study for higher degree awards, for example master's programmes, through a generous fee waiver. However, this offer has yet to be taken up by College staff and this should be investigated further to ensure the maximum flexibility of opportunities for staff.

25 The consortium meetings to design the programme in the first place, and to develop assessments and module revisions, constitute staff development activities and the College frees staff from other duties so that these important meetings can be attended. However, the team considers it is advisable for the College to introduce a programme of staff

development specifically focused on higher education areas, including the use of the Academic Infrastructure and enhancing student learning opportunities. This will strengthen the overall approach to the maintenance and assurance of academic standards.

The team concludes that it has confidence in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreement, for the management and delivery of the standards of the award 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?

26 There are effective College processes for delegating responsibilities for the management of the quality of learning opportunities and for reporting on these operating in parallel with those for the maintenance of standards. These have already been outlined in paragraphs 9 to 15.

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

27 The College has a number of means of assuring itself that it is fulfilling its obligations to the University in respect of appropriate student learning opportunities. In addition to those mentioned in paragraphs 19 to 21, there are regular internal reviews of module content and delivery to ensure that the requirements specified by the University in the partnership agreement concerning student learning opportunities are met.

28 At a strategic level, there are regular meetings of the Associated Colleges' Liaison Committee, attended by representatives from all colleges in the consortium and the University. These meetings consider, among other things, capital investment to support the colleges' learning environments, as well as plans for the future development and support of higher education. These are effective processes, fit for purpose, and help to assure both the College and the University of the quality of the teaching and learning experience.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

29 There is little explicit reference to the Academic Infrastructure in the College's self-evaluation. In addition to the points raised in paragraphs 16 to 18, the team noted that the precepts in the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*, are clearly taken into account in module handbooks. Although they are written by the University, they have been developed with considerable and effective input from the College, for example in the design, conduct and moderation of student assessment.

30 However, in the College Learning Support Policy, no explicit mention is made of the *Code of practice, Section 3: Students with disabilities*, particularly with respect to Precept 11, on the fitness for purpose protocols for student placements on health-related programmes. Operationally within the programme, support for learners with disabilities is identified and delivered at interview and induction by the University in liaison with College staff. After assessment, measures are put in place by the College to meet their needs. The College is advised to include specific and explicit reference to the *Code of practice, Section 3: Students with disabilities* in its Learning Support Policy to ensure that the operationally effective learning experience for such students is covered by formal processes.

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

31 Students receive good quality feedback on their assignments and this is supported by detailed formative feedback on their work at all stages. This clearly supports their learning and enables them to reach the intended learning outcomes for their programme. In the early stages of their programme, diagnostic assessment is supported by a variety of study skills activities and contributes effectively to student learning opportunities.

32 Feedback from students is received in a number of effective ways. Students have the opportunity to comment on all aspects of provision through end-of-module reviews and the Staff-Student Liaison Committee which is held twice each semester. Minutes of the Committee are taken forward to the Academic Board and students receive written feedback on any issues they have raised. Informal comments made by students at weekly tutorials can also be dealt with further as necessary because of the small number of students involved. The College uses all these views as a source of evaluation. The team found evidence of student opinion influencing the development of the programme over the three years of its existence. For example, both the Foundations of Professional Studies module (HEAL 005) and the Health and Social Care module (HEAL 007) have undergone a number of changes. Both sets of changes are, in part, the result of student views.

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

33 Students on the programme come from varied starting points and with different levels of confidence. The University offers the students the 'Skills for Success' induction conference which is aimed at mature students starting degrees. The College Lead acts as admissions tutor for the College and jointly interviews potential students with the Director of Studies and admissions tutors at the University. Students are provided with study skills guidance at the start of the programme. As College staff have developed their experience of delivering the programme, they have introduced effective measures to support less confident students and stretch the more confident so that all achieve their potential. This has been achieved, for example, through the use of differentiated tutorial and teaching materials.

34 Support offered by the College is outlined clearly in the Learner Support Policy. Students are appreciative of the help given to them on a daily basis by the College Lead who is the personal tutor to all students on the programme. They are aware of how to gain help and are of the view that they could approach the College Lead as the first source for pastoral support, and their individual module teachers for academic support. Students are also aware of how to get extra academic support if required and of how to approach the University for help on other matters. The University link tutor also sees students on a regular basis. Students know how to get support with study skills and are aware of relevant websites that offer guidance in this area. As the students progress through the programme, they are increasingly encouraged to find out more for themselves and to become independent learners.

35 Former students who have progressed to the honours degree programme of their choice at the University also give support to students on the College programme by participating in the system of 'taster' days organised by the University. At these, they act as hosts and outline their experiences of the programme and what the students can expect when they progress to the University.

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

36 The College has a strong focus on teaching and learning which covers all aspects of its provision. In support of this it has a strong programme of staff development, for example through College INSET days. These are set aside for the sharing of ideas on teaching and learning and there is a strong link between lesson observation, performance management and continuing professional development. As outlined in paragraphs 22 to 25, much of the staff development at higher education level is informal and happens principally through team meetings and meetings of the consortium under the guidance of the University. One example of a more formal approach was noted by the team regarding an annual programme monitoring initiated continuing professional development event for all colleges offering the programme in the area on assessment criteria. As with matters related to academic standards and application of the Academic Infrastructure, staff development opportunities focused on higher education aspects of the student learning experience would be beneficial for the College.

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?

37 Appropriately qualified members of College teaching staff are allocated to module delivery as part of their contracted workload. All such staff are designated as having Associated Teaching Status with the University which is defined as 'those who have a continuous commitment to teaching undergraduate or postgraduate students during the academic year but not to the extent of a Clinical Lecturer'. This designation confers access to University buildings, the library, computing and sports facilities, and the receipt of University publications and invitations to degree ceremonies.

38 Module leaders within the University are responsible for effective communication with College staff as required. They also feed back issues to the programme director including those raised through a review of student module evaluations and other student views taken, for example from the student survey. The Programme Monitoring Group, on which the College is represented, takes a collective oversight of such issues and plans for change. The team noted that on one such issue, to do with College students being unsure of the relevance of mathematics to the clinical aspects of the programme, the College itself took the initiative to solve this and now provides students with clinically relevant examples of mathematics supplied by the University. This initiative ably demonstrates the way in which College staff react positively and promptly to student feedback leading to enhancement of the student learning experience and is an example of good practice.

39 The College has a well-formed resource policy which governs the allocation of appropriate resources to the programme. Extensive use is made by students of the College's virtual learning environment to support learning. College staff populate the online environment with an appropriate range of teaching materials, including specific learning materials for each module, revision and formative assessment materials and appropriate feedback. This exercise is carried out in close liaison with the module leaders. The College Lead liaises regularly with the University's link tutor to ensure that students have access to appropriate learning resources at the University.

40 The higher education students at the College have exclusive access to their own excellent base room with a classroom and separate social area. These rooms are equipped with computers, study space and refreshment facilities, and are an impressive resource for supporting the enhancement of the student learning experience.

41 In the first year of operation of the programme, one of the colleges in the consortium was unable to deliver the programme because of a staff shortage. The College took the lead in taking over responsibility for the students concerned and offering them appropriate alternative teaching facilities. This has been accepted by the University as an approved change in the model for the student learning experience and is a notable example of good practice.

The team concludes that it has confidence in the College's management of its responsibilities for the quality of the learning opportunities, as required by the awarding 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?

42 The bulk of the public information is developed and assured by the University for the benefit of the consortium. The College's responsibility is limited to brief publicity for the programme on its website and in its prospectus. This gives a succinct overview of the programme and case studies of successful students. This information directs applicants to the University admissions procedures. Responsibility to develop a radio advertisement to publicise the programme was recently devolved to the College. The College's website has been redesigned with an area created specifically for higher education students and this contains appropriate links to the Health Sciences pages at the University.

43 The University is responsible for publishing all handbooks for the programme. However, these are developed with significant input from the College. The programme is represented appropriately at the College's open evenings and the College attends the University open days in order to promote the programme, using materials which were created by the University's marketing team.

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?

44 The University Programme Management Committee hosts appropriate discussions to ensure accuracy of public information across the consortium. The College has significant input to these discussions. The University is ultimately responsible for the accuracy and completeness of all public information.

45 The team confirmed that there is no public information available to inform students what, if any, progression options are open to them if they are successful on the programme, other than those at the School of Health Sciences of the University. There is also no information about how to change specific health routes during or after the programme. The College is confident the programme would give access to University programmes other than those which are health related. However, public information specific to other flexible learning progression opportunities for the College's higher education students should be provided as alternatives to the current explicit route onto the University's provision in health studies degrees.

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 programme it delivers.

C Summary of findings from the Developmental engagement in assessment

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

D Foundation Degrees

47 The College does not offer Foundation Degrees.

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

48 The team has identified a number of features of good practice in the 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 the University. This was based upon discussion with the College Lead and students, and the scrutiny of evidence provided by the College and the University.

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

- the close and regular engagements between key staff in the College and with the local University-led partnership enables collective and consistent assurance of both standards and quality of provision (paragraph 11)
- the way in which College staff react positively and promptly to student feedback leading to enhancement of the student learning experience, as evidenced specifically in the provision of clinically relevant examples in the mathematics subject area (paragraph 38)
- the provision of a well-formed and dedicated base room for higher education students within the College, with computers, study space, and refreshment facilities and an adjacent, dedicated lecture room which greatly enhances the overall student learning experience (paragraph 40)
- the initiative taken by the College in leading the development and provision of alternative delivery approaches to assist students elsewhere in the partnership during a time of staff shortage in one partner, has led to an established practice that can be utilised to enhance the student learning experience in similar situations (paragraph 41).

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

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

- College staff involved in design, delivery, assessment and monitoring of the programme should be offered specific higher education related staff development that covers matters related to maintenance and assurance of academic standards, the use of the Academic Infrastructure and enhancing student learning opportunities (paragraph 25)
- the College should include specific and explicit reference to the *Code of practice, Section 3: Students with disabilities* in its Learning Support Policy to ensure that the learning experience for such students is covered by formal processes (paragraph 30)

- public information specific to all possible flexible learning progression opportunities for the College higher education students should be provided by the College as alternatives to the current explicit route onto the University's provision in health studies degrees (paragraph 45).

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

- the College's existing process for peer observation of teaching should be developed to ensure that all staff teaching on the higher education programme are observed in a higher education learning context in line with practice existing in the University (paragraph 23)
- explore the staff development opportunities offered under the terms of the existing partnership agreement, particularly in the area of study for higher degrees, to enhance further approaches to development, maintenance and enhancement of academic standards (paragraph 24).

50 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.

51 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.

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

Birkenhead Sixth Form College action plan relating to the Summative review: December 2009						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
In the course of the Summative review the team identified the following areas of good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination within the college:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the close and regular engagements between the key staff in the College and with the local University – led partnership enable collective and consistent assurance of both standards and quality of provision (paragraph 11) 	Establish schedule of joint meetings in advance in order to ensure staff can attend	Schedule in place for start of academic year 2010/11	UOL Programme Management Group and module leads	Meetings take place according to schedule with full attendance of relevant staff	College lead	Review of programme at end of academic year
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the way in which College staff react positively and promptly to student feedback leading to enhancement of the student learning experience, as evidenced specifically in the provision of clinically 	Review student response to introduction of clinically relevant examples via staff-student liaison committee	May 2010	College lead	Positive feedback from students	Teaching team and Programme Management Group at UOL	Student end of module reviews

Birkenhead Sixth Form College action plan relating to the Summative review: December 2009						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<p>relevant examples in the mathematics subject area (paragraph 38)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the provision of a well-formed and dedicated base room for higher education students within the College, with computers, study space, refreshment facilities and an adjacent, dedicated lecture room, which greatly enhances the overall student learning experience (paragraph 40) 	<p>Review equipment available at annual review of programme to establish any needs</p>	<p>June 2010</p>	<p>College lead</p>	<p>Recommendations from review acted on and new/replacement in equipment in place for start of next academic year</p>	<p>Deputy Principal</p>	<p>Positive feedback from student reviews and in annual report</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the initiative taken by the College in leading the development and provision of alternative delivery approaches to assist students elsewhere in the partnership during a time of staff shortage in one partner has lead to established practice that can be 	<p>Produce policy outlining formal procedures for provision of alternative approaches</p>	<p>July 2010</p>	<p>College Lead with UOL Programme Director</p>	<p>Policy in place</p>	<p>Deputy Principal</p>	<p>Policy reviewed as part of annual report</p>

Birkenhead Sixth Form College action plan relating to the Summative review: December 2009						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
utilised to enhance the student learning experience in similar situations (paragraph 41)						

Birkenhead Sixth Form College action plan relating to the Summative review: December 2009						
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team agreed a number of areas where the College should be advised to take action						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> College staff involved in the design, delivery, assessment and monitoring of the programme should be offered specific higher education related staff development that covers matters related to maintenance and assurance of academic standards, the use of the Academic Infrastructure and enhancing student learning opportunities (paragraph 25) 	<p>Carry out review of staff needs</p> <p>Bring to Programme management group at UOL for discussion of potential opportunities</p>	<p>April 2010</p> <p>June 2010</p>	<p>College lead</p> <p>College lead</p>	<p>Report and recommendations to CPD manager</p> <p>Opportunities available to staff</p>	<p>CPD manager</p> <p>CPD manager</p>	<p>Staff feedback forms</p> <p>Programme management group annual review</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the College should include specific and explicit reference to the Code of practice, Section 3: Students with disabilities in its Learning Support policy to ensure 	<p>Learning support policy amended to include reference to the relevant code of practice</p>	<p>In place for Sept 2010 intake</p>	<p>College lead</p>	<p>Amended policy in place</p>	<p>Deputy Principal</p>	<p>Item on staff student liaison committee agenda to check student awareness</p>

Birkenhead Sixth Form College action plan relating to the Summative review: December 2009						
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<p>that the learning experience for such students is covered by formal processes (paragraph 30)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> public information specific to all possible flexible learning progression opportunities for the College higher education students should be provided by the College as alternatives to the current explicit route onto the University's provision in health studies degrees (paragraph 45) 	<p>Policy outlined to students during induction</p> <p>Ensure contextual information for the course contains reference to alternative progression routes</p> <p>All students receive information at induction</p>	<p>July 2010</p>	<p>College lead with UOL</p>	<p>Amended course materials in place</p>	<p>Deputy Principal</p>	<p>Annual review</p>

Birkenhead Sixth Form College action plan relating to the Summative review: December 2009						
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<p>The team agreed the following areas where it would be desirable to take action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the College's existing process for peer observation of teaching should be developed to ensure that all staff teaching on the higher education programme are observed in a higher education learning context in line with practice existing in the University (paragraph 23) 	<p>Year 0 staff to be observed delivering a session to the cohort either as part of the formal observation process or by a peer</p>	<p>May 2010</p>	<p>Allocated observer or appropriate colleague</p>	<p>Record of feedback and any associated action</p>	<p>College lead</p>	<p>Annual review</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore the staff development opportunities under the terms of the existing partnership agreement, particularly in the area of study for higher degrees, to enhance further approaches to development, 	<p>Establish available provision and application procedures</p> <p>Guidelines produced for staff</p>	<p>June 2010</p>	<p>College lead</p>	<p>Guidelines circulated to staff</p>	<p>CPD manager</p>	<p>Annual report</p> <p>Discussion at Programme management meeting</p>

Birkenhead Sixth Form College action plan relating to the Summative review: December 2009						
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
	maintenance and enhancement of academic standards (paragraph 24)					

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

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

RG 564 02/10