



QAA

Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

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Dearne Valley College

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Preface

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

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

Purpose of IQER

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

The IQER process

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

Developmental engagement

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

The main elements of a Developmental engagement are:

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

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

Summative review

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

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

Evidence

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

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

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

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

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

Outcomes of IQER

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

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

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

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

Executive summary

The Summative review of Dearne Valley College carried out in March 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 College is a tightly-knit community bound together by a clearly defined commitment to widening participation in an area of low participation in higher education, and this common commitment is reflected in the high levels of tutorial guidance and study skills support that students receive
- the impact of the Foundation Degree in Early Years in attracting a high level of support from local employers and raising aspirations in an area of low participation in higher education
- the close collaboration with employers in the design and development of the Foundation Degrees in Public Services and Business Management that has resulted in the embedding of industry standards in the programmes
- the use of an Enhanced Lecturer to support both the College's strategic migration to Foundation Degrees and the dissemination of good practice across the provision.

Recommendations

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

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

- build upon the recent establishment of the Higher Education Strategy Group in order to ensure a more coherent management of the higher education provision through streamlined reporting structures
- secure best practice of Foundation Degree provision, as reflected in the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*, its relationship with employers across the higher education provision in order to use employer views systematically in the development and delivery of the curriculum and in the evaluation and review of programmes.

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

- revise the self-assessment review procedure to include an explicit focus on the higher education provision, including, for example, the formal consideration of external examiners' reports

- develop the observation of classroom practice to reflect the requirements of higher education programmes
- ensure that access and availability of computer resources continues to match the planned increased reliance on the use of information technology in the delivery of its higher education
- continue the development of the virtual learning environment beyond its present major use as a repository of information
- adopt and implement a procedure to monitor the currency of its links to the websites of its awarding bodies.

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 Dearne Valley 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, the University of Huddersfield, Sheffield Hallam University and Leeds Metropolitan University. The review was carried out by Mr David Fallows, Mr John Skinner and Mrs Trudy Stiles (reviewers), and Professor Clive Behagg (review 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, employers and partner institutions, reports of reviews by QAA and from inspections by Ofsted. In particular, the team drew on the findings and recommendations of the Developmental engagement in assessment. A summary of findings from this Developmental engagement is provided in Section C of this report. The review also considered the College's use of the Academic Infrastructure, developed by QAA on behalf of higher education providers, with reference to the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, subject and award benchmark statements, *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and programme specifications.

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

4 The College is a general further education college which first opened in 1976 as the Rockingham Further Education College. It became known under its current name in 1996 with the opening of a new £7.5 million campus on the site of the former Manvers Colliery in South Yorkshire, in the area between Rotherham, Doncaster and Barnsley. The College draws on a population base of around 85,000 from an immediate locality that evidences high levels of deprivation and social disadvantage. The College is committed to a portfolio of vocational programmes that will raise aspirations and widen participation by meeting the needs of the local community by providing progression opportunities in vocational areas. Currently, programmes range from pre-entry to Higher National Certificate/Diplomas (HNC/Ds), Foundation Degrees and the Certificate in Education/Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). The College has over 1,500 full-time students and around 2,000 part-time students. It secured HEFCE funding to run higher education programmes in 1999. In the academic year 2009-10 there are 158 directly funded full-time equivalent students enrolled at the College plus 17 consortium-funded numbers through a consortium with the University of Huddersfield. These comprise 122 full-time and 81 part-time students.

5 The College is a strategic partner within South Yorkshire Lifelong Learning Network, an associate college of Sheffield Hallam University, a partner college of the University of Huddersfield and a member of the Leeds Metropolitan University Regional University Network. All of these organisations offer staff development to support higher education, to which College staff are invited. More recently, QAA has scrutinised the College's

University-validated collaborative provision as part of audits, with 'broad confidence' outcomes for Sheffield Hallam University and the University of Huddersfield.

6 The College has undertaken the development of a range of Foundation Degrees since 2008 and has adopted a strategy of replacing its Higher National provision entirely with Foundation Degrees by 2012.

7 The College's Mission Statement is 'To offer the community the highest quality learning opportunities which promote and enhance confidence and develop personal achievement and enterprise'. It seeks to promote widening participation in higher education, by providing opportunities for non-traditional entrants who face significant access barriers and have little or no history of higher education. The College offers the following HEFCE-funded higher education programmes (full-time equivalent student numbers are in brackets):

Edexcel

- HNC Business and Management (part-time) (6)
- HND Business and Management (7)
- HND Public Services (17)
- HND Travel and Tourism Management (10)

Sheffield Hallam University

- Foundation Degree (FdA) Early Years (part-time) (28)

Leeds Metropolitan University

- FdA Sport Coaching (Performance and Participation) (68)
- FdA Travel and Tourism (20)

University of Huddersfield

- In Service Certificate in Education (part-time) (11)
- In Service Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (part-time) (11).

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

8 The higher education provision at the College is delivered through partnership agreements with the University of Huddersfield, Sheffield Hallam University, Leeds Metropolitan University and Edexcel. In the case of the partnership agreements with the three universities, the programmes are subject to the quality assurance procedures of the respective university. In each case, link tutors are appointed to maintain liaison and ensure effective management of quality and academic standards by the College.

9 The agreement with the University of Huddersfield, to deliver two teacher education programmes, has recently been subject to a successful five-year review. The College is one of 27 colleges that are full members of the Huddersfield University Distributed Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training and it benefits from staff development opportunities that come with membership of this consortium. The course agreement between the College and Sheffield Hallam, signed in 2009, clearly defines the College's responsibility for delivering

the course according to the specifications of the Course Definitive Document agreed at validation. It is also committed to managing the course and the day-to-day assurance of academic quality and maintaining the academic standards of the course as specified in the Course Definitive Document.

10 By a Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2008, the College is an associate college of Leeds Metropolitan University. The partnership agreement enables the College to engage in 'the design, development and implementation of awards by the College using its own HEFCE-funded student numbers under arrangements whereby the University assumes responsibility for the quality and standards of the awards'.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

11 At the time of the review only four of the programmes in transition had complete cohorts for all years of study (HND Public Services, FdA in Sports Coaching (Performance and Participation) and HNC Business). Two programmes within the scope of the review were phasing out with a final-year group (HND Travel and Tourism Management, HND Business), one was phasing in with a first-year group only (FdA Travel and Tourism Management) and one with a recently started second intake (FdA Early Years), while three programmes were in process of being validated (FdSc Business Information Technology, FdA Business Management, and FdA Public Services). An earlier strategy intended to significantly increase higher education provision through partnerships with local universities has been amended in light of the changes in the national funding arrangements.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

12 Students from the higher education provision at the College were invited to present a submission to the team. In response, a student programme representative devised and administered a questionnaire for all higher education students at the College and held a feedback meeting with students. Additional meetings were held with four of the programmes. This process was supported by the College, mainly through the Higher Education Coordinator, who was able to give administrative support and to brief students on the nature of the Summative review and its purpose. From this, the students produced a helpful report which provided student views on a range of relevant issues. The team also met a group of students during the review and discussions at that meeting form part of the evidence base used for this report.

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?

13 The responsibilities delegated to the College are set out in institutional and programme-level agreements with each of the awarding bodies. Academic standards are set by the awarding bodies through their programme approval and assessment procedures.

14 Overall College responsibility for the maintenance of standards lies with the Vice-Principal (Curriculum and Standards). The College curriculum management is conducted

through three divisions, each managed by a Head of Division. Higher education is delivered in the Division of Leisure and Public Services and the Division of Professional Services. Each higher education programme is managed by a Programme Manager, who reports to a Head of Division. The Head of Division and the Head of Standards and Development report to the Vice Principal (Curriculum and Standards). The operational management of the higher education provision is shared between the Academic Partnerships Manager, who reports to the Director of Business Services, and the Head of Standards and Development who reports to the Vice Principal (Curriculum and Standards). Staff stated that in a small community much of the operational management is conducted through informal contact and effectively supports the formal systems. Nevertheless, the team considered this to be a complex formal structure to support a small provision. Responsibilities are dispersed across the senior team and there is a potential for unnecessary duplication.

15 The recently formed Higher Education Strategy Group, chaired by the Director of Business and External Relations, draws together all managers with responsibility for standards and quality in higher education. Its membership consists of the Principal, the Vice-Principal (Curriculum and Standards), the Director of Finance and Resources, the Academic Partnerships Manager, the Head of Standards and Development, and two heads of division. The Group has been established to take an overview of higher education provision and to enable the College to respond swiftly to matters raised by the Higher Education Student Council and meetings of higher education tutors. However, the terms of reference for the Group have not yet been agreed. In the team's meeting with the Higher Education Strategy Group, the College confirmed its intention to develop the Group's responsibility for the strategic direction and operation of higher education provision in order to ensure coordinated and effective procedures and practices. It is advisable for the College to build upon the recent establishment of the Higher Education Strategy Group in order to ensure a more coherent management of the higher education provision through streamlined reporting structures.

16 Programme area managers are responsible for the day-to-day management of academic standards and quality. Their primary line of reporting for academic standards is to the committees and boards of the awarding bodies, in the case of the universities, and to external examiners and Edexcel processes for the Higher National awards. The team found that programme managers are fully aware of their responsibilities under the partnership agreements for assuring academic standards.

17 Programme leaders reported strong support from their awarding bodies and awarding body representatives confirmed their confidence in College staff. Apart from the teacher education programmes from Huddersfield University, relationships with the other awarding universities are too recent to have required any institutional reviews.

18 The team confirmed that the issues raised by the Developmental engagement have been addressed. For example, students reported successful strategies to develop their growing autonomy as independent learners as they progressed from level 3 through to levels 4 and 5 of their programmes. They also reported effective use of formative assessment strategies to clarify expectations in assessment requirements. In addition, clearer information now available to students on Higher National programmes on assessment tariffs and the assessment regulations of the awarding bodies is now readily accessible to Foundation Degree students.

19 Heads of division, programme managers and other staff responsible for higher education are well supported in their roles by the recently appointed Enhanced Lecturer

for Higher Education and a Higher Education Coordinator. The Enhanced Lecturer has 100 hours a year to support the development and delivery of Foundation Degrees, ensuring, for example, that the programmes are designed with a significant input from employers. The post-holder worked with higher education programmes to support them in implementing the action plan on assessment, following the Developmental engagement. The Enhanced Lecturer also works with each programme to ensure an understanding of the implications of the Academic Infrastructure on standards.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

20 The programme development process involves close liaison with awarding bodies, including advice on aligning learning outcomes with the FHEQ and the setting of assessments. Programme specifications show that programme intended learning outcomes are aligned with the relevant subject benchmark statements and the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark* statement where relevant. Recently written programme specifications for the Edexcel qualifications meet requirements and are subject to sign-off by the Academic Partnerships Manager.

21 The Tutor Handbook clearly provides guidance on the articulation between the Academic Infrastructure and academic standards. Quality assurance procedures are brought together in the College's online quality framework. This helpful set of documents on working practices is available online to all staff. These include one on assessment that aligns well with the precepts of the *Code of practice*. The Head of Standards and Development is currently working on a paper that maps practice at the College against the *Code*.

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?

22 The College has an extensive system of programme monitoring and review in place, which is managed by the Head of Standards and Development, together with the Strategies for Success group. The programme teams are responsible, with support from the Head of Standards and Development, for producing an annual programme review. These are appraised within programme review forums which involve both peer and management review and either the Head of Standards and Development or the Vice Principal (Curriculum and Standards). The Programme Area Manager combines the programme reviews into a self-assessment review that takes account of student feedback, external examiners' reports, the university moderator's reports and student data. This report is discussed in a variety of meetings, including Strategies for Success, Curriculum and Standards and Academic Board. Each module is evaluated through the use of module evaluation forms and these are taken into account in the annual review process.

23 The role of the programme managers includes the initial guidance and interview of students; teaching; and programme management, monitoring, review and reports. Annual reports are submitted to the relevant university faculty and through College systems.

24 The annual process of self-evaluation and review is well established and generally thorough. Action planning takes place at both programme and curriculum level, with an annual report from the Head of Standards and Development going to the Strategies for Success Group, the Academic Board and a Committee of Governors. However, scrutiny of self-assessment documents and improvement plans shows that while the process is itself carried out thoroughly, there is little explicit focus on higher education in the evaluation

and reporting procedure. In addition, there is no formal procedure for responding directly to external examiner reports. The team considers it desirable that the College revise the self-assessment review procedure to reflect more fully the higher education context in which these programmes operate.

25 The College has a Higher Education Strategy that places at its heart a commitment to widening participation in an area of low aspiration. Although in its early stages, there are some signs that this is having a positive impact. For example, a representative of Rotherham Borough Council reported that the FdA in Early Years is extensively supported by early years managers in the area. The programme has been particularly successful in raising aspirations in an area of low participation in higher education.

26 The team saw a number of examples of close collaboration with employers in the design and development of programmes. In the case of the new Foundation Degrees in Public Services and Business Management, employers had been extensively involved in setting the industry standards for the programmes. However, the use of employers for the development, delivery and review of higher education programmes is almost entirely programme-focused and, at this level, is largely dependent on personal networking by programme leaders and staff. As a result, employer input is uneven across the provision and often informal in its nature.

27 The team recommends that support from employers is captured through a more systematic engagement process with clearly identified and recorded outcomes. Given the importance of the development of higher skills in the College's strategy, and the need to secure the best practice of Foundation Degree provision, as reflected in the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*, the College is advised to formalise its relationship with employers across the higher education provision in the development and delivery of the curriculum and the evaluation and review of programmes.

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

28 The College's Higher Education Strategy clearly outlines the contribution that staff development makes to the assurance of standards. All staff participate in the annual cycle of appraisal and professional development which informs college-wide and individual staff development needs. Staff reported that they find this system supports their needs. The team noted the intention of the College to develop a higher education dimension to the College's standard teaching observation pro forma through the work of a Learning and Teaching Strategy Group. Higher education staff development days have been effectively employed to share understanding of the Academic Infrastructure, achieve consistency of expectations and support the design of new programmes.

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?

29 The management of the delivery of higher education provision has been described in paragraphs 14 to 15 above. In practice, this involves a collaborative working relationship between the programme leaders, reporting to the heads of division, and the Academic Partnerships Manager (reporting to Director of Business Services) and the Head of Standards and Development (reporting to the Vice Principal Curriculum and Standards). The day-to-day delivery of higher education generally works effectively, as it is supported by a high level of both formal and informal contact between managers in a small college.

30 The process from the self-evaluation review operates through this overlapping series of reporting lines. The Academic Partnerships Manager reviews the improvement plans, as monitored by the Higher Education Tutors' Group, together with learner feedback and makes a periodic report to the Academic Board. The Head of Standards and Development also reviews programme improvement plans, together with external examiners' reports and Teaching and Learning observations and produces reports for the Academic Board, the Strategies for Success Group and Heads of Division. The Strategies for Success Group analyses the curriculum report, learner survey and the resulting action plan to produce quality assurance reports for the Academic Board and governors. The Customer Focus Group, chaired by the Head of Standards and Development, analyses learner feedback and learner surveys to report curriculum issues to the programme area managers and the relevant cross-college groups.

31 The strong informal links between managers enable this complex structure to work. However, the team considers that operational responsibility should be reconsidered since the spread of operational responsibility for higher education across the senior team carries a potential for duplication of roles and a lack of clarity in reporting lines. The staff team identified the meetings of the Higher Education Strategy Group as the key not only to strategic leadership but also to a comprehensive operational overview of the higher education provision, since it contains all senior managers with responsibility for higher education.

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

32 Programme teams are responsible for monitoring and reviewing the progress of their improvement plans and acting on learner feedback. Students are represented on the Higher Education Student Council and the Customer Focus Group as well as at programme level through student representatives, module evaluations and more informally through direct communication with their tutors. Students report that issues they have raised have been acted upon swiftly, tutors are receptive to feedback from students and the system of student representation works particularly well at programme level.

33 The involvement of employers in some areas supports the work-based learning requirement of the Foundation Degrees and employers spoke favourably about the programmes at the College. Links with employers have resulted in some notable examples of the enrichment of the curriculum for students. For example, Barnsley Football club have recently provided an opportunity for four Foundation Degree students to monitor, analyse

and film player performance levels using specialist sports software. An army outreach officer provides career advice and opportunities for personal development and leadership for students through one and five day programmes, including formative feedback. However, this contact with employers to support delivery relies on programme-level links which remain informal in nature.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

34 The use of the Academic Infrastructure has been detailed in paragraphs 20 to 21 above. In the delivery of the higher education programmes, the team are satisfied that the programme teams are aware of the Academic Infrastructure and are endeavouring to follow the guidance provided. The recently appointed Enhanced Lecturer works with teaching teams on the new Foundation Degrees as they are introduced, the *Code of practice* is a standing agenda item for the Higher Education Tutor Group and this has also been a focus for staff development sessions to support new programmes.

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

35 Teaching observations are coordinated by the Teaching and Learning Strategy Group working with the Head of Standards and Development. The Head of Programme Area receives a copy of the observation. Tutors identified as good practitioners are used as exemplars, particularly for tutors new to the delivery of higher education. The system for classroom observation is well embedded in the College. Staff are observed at least once a year and they consider it an important support for their practice. However, the template used to evaluate classroom performance is focused on further education standards. The College should consider adopting a bespoke template for classroom observation of higher education that reflects the requirements of the FHEQ and the good practice identified in the *Code of practice*.

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

36 Through its self-assessment review process, the College has identified retention of students on higher education programmes as an issue to be addressed. This has led to an enhanced induction process. Since most of the students taking higher education programmes progress from within the College, induction arrangements begin in level three. Sessions are provided to explain the increased demands of level four, awarding body expectations, the nature of assessment and the approach to study at the higher level. Students progressing from within the College reported that this induction had given them a greater awareness of the demands that would be placed on them. Students entering the higher education provision from outside the College confirmed that induction arrangements also worked well for them.

37 The students report that they have an excellent network of tutorial and study skills support within the College, primarily from programme tutors. This view is shared by the team. The staff share a commitment to widening participation and to adopt patterns of close tutorial support and study skills guidance that reflect this mission. In particular, feedback to students on assessment is timely and generally helpful. The Foundation Degrees with Leeds Metropolitan University include a module on Personal and Professional Development. Second-year students report confidence in the progression in their academic writing skills and their time management as a result of additional tutorial support introduced at this level. Full-time students have timetabled group tutorials that include

study skills. The College librarian provides bespoke study skills sessions to all students. The College is taking tutorial support further its further education in-house development and planning tool, to apply to higher education students.

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

38 The Head of Standards and Development plans and manages the ongoing and varied staff development activities that support higher education tutors. The activities are tailored to meet the needs identified in the periodic and annual monitoring reports. The recently appointed Enhanced Lecturer is being used effectively to cascade good practice from the successful development and delivery of the FdA in Sport Coaching. The team found evidence that the Enhanced Lecturer is proactive in supporting tutors through various one-to-one and group staff development activities, relating in particular to developing new Foundation Degrees using staff with experience in Higher National provision.

39 Staff teaching on higher education programmes have seven professional development days and 54 hours allocated for programme leadership. Individual development plans are agreed with programme area managers, with the Head of Standards and Development providing central coordination. Programmes receive good support from the awarding bodies and currently four individual members of staff are being facilitated to gain master's-level qualifications.

40 Inter-college activities provide further staff development opportunities. A joint event with Chesterfield College shared good practice on core elements of the Leeds Metropolitan Foundation Degrees, notably personal and professional development and work-based learning. The University of Huddersfield consortium provides various staff development activities including new tutor inductions, regular network tutor meetings and an annual conference. The University reports a high level of attendance at these events from College staff. Tutors on the FdA in Early Years have been able to share good practice, subject knowledge and higher-level teaching skills through development opportunities with other associate colleges at Sheffield Hallam University.

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?

41 Under its partnership agreements, the College is responsible for the provision, support and maintenance of learning resources. For all but the Edexcel provision, these learning resources were included in the validation and annual reporting process to the relevant university. The Director of Business Services and External Relations has responsibility for resources. Other members of the Senior Management Team, the Vice-Principal (Curriculum and Standards) and the Director of Finance and Resources share this responsibility, which is increasingly exercised, in practice, through the Higher Education Strategy Group, of which they are members. The Academic Partnerships Manager, supported by curriculum areas in the two relevant divisions, reports on self-assessment and curriculum areas report on higher education planning through the College's Business Improvement Process. The Higher Education Strategy recognises that a greater alignment is required to ensure that resources required for the delivery of the higher education ambitions of the College. Nevertheless, scrutiny of programme evaluation and self-assessment reports indicates that resources are adequate and this is confirmed by students.

42 The College's self-assessment review mechanisms are at the centre of ensuring the sufficiency and accessibility of learning resources. These reporting mechanisms are further informed by the student voice through the Higher Education Student Council and allocated places for higher education student representation on the Academic Board.

43 The Higher Education Strategy Group in conjunction with the College's Information Technology Strategy Group oversees the development of computing resources for higher education, notably the development of the College's virtual learning environment. The migration to the current virtual learning environment in the summer of 2009 has led to a greatly increased usage of the facility. Software is in place to monitor the usage metrics. The College considers the development of this virtual learning environment alongside other proposed initiatives in mobile phone and e-learning resources as strategically and operationally important for the current and future delivery of higher education programmes.

44 The College is the coordinating institution for the 'rEalising Potential' project, which involves the development of an e-learning hub for the Dearne Valley. This project has funding from the European Regional Development Fund, part of which has enabled remote access to the virtual learning environment to be put in place. Further developments are planned which will provide the students with wireless connection. This may alleviate the current pressure of student demand for computers within the higher education common room and in the Learning Resources Centre. However, the team recommends that the College takes steps to ensure that access and availability of computer resources continues to match the planned increased reliance on the use of information technology in the delivery of its higher education.

45 The College has recently introduced a system for ensuring more effective use of existing computers in an immediate response to problems which occur at periods of peak demand.

46 Currently, the virtual learning environment is used primarily as a static notice board and repository of learning materials, powerpoints, lecture notes, journals, assessment materials, course and programme specifications. There are also links to information and learning resources provided by the awarding bodies. The College intends to extend this facility to support its widening participation mission through e-learning and extranet accessibility. The team encourages the College to continue with these developments which are, as yet, in their early stages.

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

Core theme 3: Public information

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

47 The College publishes a range of publicity and marketing information about its higher education courses including a higher education prospectus, part-time guide, programme leaflets and general information for employers and students. This is supplemented with a range of programme specifications, programme guides and student handbooks. The information published is comprehensive, with student handbooks typically containing programme aims and structures, teaching and learning strategies, assessment briefs, details

on the submission of assignments and requirements for progression, the College Calendar, sections on student entitlements, information on the library and the virtual learning environment and details of the arrangements with the relevant awarding body.

48 The partnership agreements with awarding bodies set out clearly the nature of the shared responsibility for publishing information. Where the higher education provision is validated by a university, there are specific branding and information protocols that are complied with, which are checked by the universities prior to publication.

49 The College's website has a dedicated higher education section, which is updated regularly and is easy to navigate, including the facility to increase font sizes. This provides links to programme information in the form of programme specifications. The production and use of other programme-specific information requires the endorsement of the link tutor at the appropriate university. For the Certificate of Education and PGCE awarded by the University of Huddersfield, the College publishes the programme specifications as provided by the University. For Foundation Degrees awarded by Sheffield Hallam University and Leeds Metropolitan University, this information is contained within agreed templates and the content is approved by the awarding bodies. Programme specifications for the Higher National programmes awarded by Edexcel are also provided using the same format. These have been designed since the Developmental engagement and meet the *Guidelines for preparing programme specifications*, published by QAA.

50 The College provides comprehensive programme information on the website in an accessible format. The virtual learning environment provides access to programme handbooks and other programme information and where applicable there are links to the awarding bodies to provide students with the details of the regulations and rules of assessment that apply specifically to their programme of study. In addition to publishing programme handbooks online, hard copies are available. During induction, students are also supplied with a computer disc that contains full details of their programme of study.

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?

51 The College works closely with the awarding bodies to ensure the accuracy of the public information relating to the higher education programmes that it offers. It does this both at the institutional and programme level. The final approval for public information relating to higher education programmes at the College lies with the Academic Partnerships Manager, who is responsible for ensuring not just the accuracy of the information but that it meets the varied requirements of the awarding institution's information protocols and branding requirements.

52 Operationally, the responsibility for producing curriculum information rests with the programme team and in particular the programme leaders. The improvement plans show that the Enhanced Lecturer has assisted the delivery of greater consistency of information across the provision, particularly with regard to programme handbooks, module-level information and the structure and content of programme specifications.

53 The programme teams are also responsible for ensuring the accuracy and currency of links from the College's website to those of the awarding universities, containing, for example, programme-specific regulations. However, the team identified a number of instances where updating was required and it is desirable that the College adopt and implement a procedure to monitor the currency of its links to the websites of awarding bodies.

54 Students at the College stated that they were well informed prior to starting their programmes and that their experience on the programme had matched expectations. External entrants also reported that information had been easy to access and clear advice and guidance made available. These views are also supported by the College's evaluation of its 2008 induction process, which suggested that 86 per cent of students agreed that publicity brochures, leaflets and the website had provided helpful and accurate information.

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

C Summary of findings from the Developmental engagement in assessment

55 A Developmental engagement in assessment took place at the College in November 2008. The scope of the engagement included all higher education programmes then operating. These were provided in partnership with Edexcel, the University of Huddersfield and Leeds Metropolitan University. The lines of enquiry were:

- How does the College assure itself that the College assessment strategy and the curricular design reflect appropriate academic standards, including the use made of verification and external examining?
- How does the College assure itself that assessment methods and feedback promote high-quality learning and achievement?
- How does the College assure itself that reliance can be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about assessment?

56 The Developmental engagement team identified a number of areas of good practice for dissemination in the context of the College's management of assessment in its higher education provision. There was a well-developed awareness, among both tutors and students, of the progression necessary from level 3 to level 4, this awareness being reflected in the design of assessment. Assessment was well supported by the College's Quality Framework, with strong moderation processes for Higher National awards. A wide variety of formative and summative assessments was used and students were involved in the development of assessment design through consultation and feedback. Staff were grouped into 'learning sets' to support staff development and there was a well-established culture for sharing assessment design and practice across programme teams. The virtual learning environment was used well to provide students with information on assessment.

57 Some recommendations were also made. These focused mainly on continuing to review and develop effective processes that were already in place, such as the approach taken to formative assessment for script-based assessments and the consistency of feedback on assessment to students to ensure it relates to assessment criteria and the development of skills. The team recommended that information given to students could be enhanced by extending the scope of the sections on assessment in the programme specifications and by mediating more clearly the assessment regulations of the awarding bodies for students on Foundation Degrees. The College was also encouraged to develop its staff development programme to support the migration from Higher National provision to Foundation Degrees.

D Foundation Degrees

58 With the exception of its education provision with the University of Huddersfield, the College is committed by its Higher Education Strategy to migrating its higher education provision from Higher National programmes to Foundation Degrees by the end of 2012.

This process is at an advanced stage.

59 Since January 2009 the College has delivered a part-time FdA in Early Years with Sheffield Hallam University. Employers report that this has made a significant, positive impact in raising the aspirations of the workforce in the nursery sector in the area. From September 2008, a full-time FdA in Sports Coaching has been delivered in partnership with Leeds Metropolitan University. This has recruited well, with 36 and 32 students enrolled on years one and two respectively. Also with Leeds Metropolitan University, an FdA in Travel and Tourism Management was launched in September 2009 and recruited 20 students. The College is also well advanced with validation through Leeds Metropolitan University for Foundation Degrees in Business Information Technology, Business Management, and Public Services. These were all intended for a September 2010 start, but a decision has been taken to delay further the introduction of the Foundation Degree in Public Services due to the unavailability of funded numbers.

60 The team identified the following good practice in relation to Foundation Degrees:

- the College is a tightly-knit community bound together by a clearly defined commitment to widening participation in an area of low participation in higher education, and this common commitment is reflected in the high levels of tutorial guidance and study skills support that students receive (paragraphs 14, 31, and 37)
- the impact of the FdA in Early Years in attracting a high levels of support from local employers and raising aspirations in an area of low participation in higher education (paragraph 25)
- the close collaboration with employers in the design and development of the Foundation Degrees in Public Services and Business Management that has resulted in the embedding of industry standards in the programmes (paragraph 26)
- the use of an Enhanced Lecturer to support both the College's strategic migration to Foundation Degrees and the dissemination of good practice across the provision (paragraphs 19, 34, 38 and 52).

61 The team agreed upon one area where it would be **advisable** for the College to take action:

- secure the best practice of Foundation Degree provision, as reflected in the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*, to now formalise its relationship with employers across the higher education provision in order to use employer views systematically in the development and delivery of the curriculum and in the evaluation and review of programmes (paragraphs 26, 27 and 33).

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

62 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Dearne Valley College's management of its responsibilities for academic standards and for the quality of learning opportunities of the awards the College offers on behalf of its

awarding bodies. This was based upon discussion with staff and students and scrutiny of evidence provided by the College and its awarding bodies Edexcel, the University of Huddersfield, Sheffield Hallam University and Leeds Metropolitan University.

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

- the College is a tightly-knit community bound together by a clearly defined commitment to widening participation in an area of low participation in higher education, and this common commitment is reflected in the high levels of tutorial guidance and study skills support that students receive (paragraphs 14, 31 and 37)
- the impact of the FdA in Early Years in attracting a high level of support from local employers and raising aspirations in an area of low participation in higher education (paragraph 25)
- the close collaboration with employers in the design and development of the Foundation Degrees in Public Services and Business Management that has resulted in the embedding of industry standards in the programmes (paragraph 26)
- the use of an Enhanced Lecturer to support both the College's strategic migration to Foundation Degrees and the dissemination of good practice across the provision (paragraphs 19, 34, 38 and 52).

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

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

- build upon the recent establishment of the Higher Education Strategy Group in order to ensure a more coherent management of the higher education provision through streamlined reporting structures (paragraphs 14, 15, and 31)
- secure the best practice of Foundation Degree provision, as reflected in the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*, to now formalise its relationship with employers across the higher education provision in order to use employer views systematically in the development and delivery of the curriculum and in the evaluation and review of programmes (paragraphs 26, 27 and 33).

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

- revise the self-assessment review procedure to include an explicit focus on the higher education provision, including, for example, the formal consideration of external examiners' reports (paragraph 24)
- develop the observation of classroom practice to reflect the requirements of higher education programmes (paragraph 35)
- ensure that access and availability of computer resources continues to match the planned increased reliance on the use of information technology in the delivery of its higher education (paragraph 44)
- continue the development of the virtual learning environment beyond its present major use as a repository of information (paragraph 46)
- adopt and implement a procedure to monitor the currency of its links to the websites of its awarding bodies (paragraph 53).

66 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.

67 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.

68 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation and other documentary evidence, and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that, in the context of this Summative review, reliance **can** be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Dearne Valley College action plan relating to the Summative review: March 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 College is a tightly-knit community bound together by a clearly defined commitment to widening participation in an area of low participation in higher education, and this common commitment is reflected in the high levels of tutorial guidance and study skills support that students receive (paragraphs 14, 31 and 37) 	Further develop study skills in Personal and Professional Development modules on FDs Enhance and extend tutorial materials on Moodle for HE students	Sept 10 Dec 10	Personal and Professional Development Module tutors LSM Tutorials, HE Enhanced Lecturer	Improved standard of work (consistently higher %) Feedback on assessment indicating improved academic skills	Academic Partnerships Manager, Head of Standards and Development Exam Boards, programme team meetings, annual planning – data and feedback on student performance

Dearne Valley College action plan relating to the Summative review: March 2010						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
• the impact of the FdA in Early Years in attracting a high level of support from local employers and raising aspirations in an area of low participation in higher education (paragraph 25)	<p>Continue links with local employers and partnerships</p> <p>Share employer engagement strategies across College</p> <p>Employer forum</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Sept 10 onwards</p>	<p>FdA Early Years Programme Leader</p> <p>HE Tutors Group Business Development Team</p>	<p>Continued high levels of interest/recruitment</p> <p>Higher numbers of employer links</p>	DER, Academic Partnerships Manager	<p>Programme annual reports – will contain recruitment data and evaluation of employer activities</p>
• the close collaboration with employers in the design and development of the Foundation Degrees in Public Services and Business Management that has resulted in the embedding of industry standards in the programmes (paragraph 26)	<p>Enhance relationships with employers so as to maintain currency, facilitate placement and recruit part-time students</p> <p>Develop clear lines of communication with employers to avoid duplication of conversations and contact</p>	Ongoing	Programme and module tutors	<p>Recruitment, placements and positive employer feedback</p> <p>The uptake of modular delivery at level 4 and 5 (both accredited and general CPD) for local employers</p>	<p>Academic Partnerships Manager, Business Development Team</p>	<p>Annual planning day, Employer Forum – these will include evaluation of employer feedback on placements and recruitment activities/figures</p>

Dearne Valley College action plan relating to the Summative review: March 2010						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
• the appointment of an Enhanced Lecturer to support both the College's strategic migration to Foundation Degrees and the dissemination of good practice across the provision (paragraphs 19, 34, 38 and 52).	Continue staff development on Academic Infrastructure Completion of HE Tutor Handbook	Ongoing July 10	HE Enhanced Lecturer, HE Enhanced Lecturer, LSM A & V	Up to date knowledge and understanding of the Academic Infrastructure Accurate annual reporting and quality improvement processes	Head of Standards and Development, Academic Partnerships Manager Academic Partnerships Manager	Staff development evaluations and report – contains feedback on sessions Annual planning day – review of handbook

Dearne Valley College action plan relating to the Summative review: March 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"> • build upon the recent establishment of the Higher Education Strategy Group in order to ensure a more coherent management of the higher education provision through streamlined reporting structures (paragraphs 14, 15, and 31) 	Set terms of reference for HE Strategy Group/set meeting programme	July 10	DER and HE Strategy Group	Clarity of reporting	Senior Management Team
		Review information flows for HE reports	Sep 10	Head of Standards and Development	New innovative practices being implemented	HE Strategy Group HE Tutors' group
		Evolve the terms of reference for the HE Tutors' Group to create a community of practice which can develop new ideas/ share good practice	July 10	Academic Partnerships Manager, HE Enhanced Lecturer		HE Strategy Group
						Annual Planning – will include evaluation of events so far and plan future activities

Dearne Valley College action plan relating to the Summative review: March 2010						
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
• secure the best practice of Foundation Degree provision, as reflected in the Foundation Degree qualification benchmark, to now formalise its relationship with employers across the higher education provision in order to use employer views systematically in the development and delivery of the curriculum and in the evaluation and review of programmes (paragraphs 26, 27 and 33).	Establish an employers' forum	Dec 10	Academic Partnerships Manager, Business Development Manager	Employer attendance at forum	DER	E Strategy group – will receive report on employer feedback

Dearne Valley College action plan relating to the Summative review: March 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"> revise the self-assessment review procedure to include an explicit focus on the higher education provision, including, for example, the formal consideration of external examiners' reports (paragraph 24) 	July 10	Head of Standards and Development	Timely and accurate annual reports that include relevant performance indicators	HE Strategy Group HE Tutors Group Strategies for Success Group	HE self-assessment report Standardisation – will include feedback on new pro forma
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop the observation of classroom practice to reflect the requirements of higher education programmes (paragraph 35) 	Sep 10	Head of Standards and Development	Relevance of feedback to tutors	HE Tutors' Group	Teaching and learning report 2010/11 – contains detailed summary of enhancement of classroom practice specifically in HE provision See staff development report

Dearne Valley College action plan relating to the Summative review: March 2010						
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
• ensure that access and availability of computer resources continues to match the planned increased reliance on the use of information technology in the delivery of its higher education (paragraph 44)	<p>Continued roll out of MoLeNet resources to provide alternative methods of accessing resources</p> <p>Review HE timetables to allow access to computers at off-peak times</p> <p>Develop assessment to embrace latest digital technology</p> <p>Continued use of HE204</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Sep 10</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>LSM Tutorials</p> <p>Programme area managers of areas with HE programme leaders</p> <p>Academic Partnerships Manager</p>	<p>Improved student performance</p> <p>Student feedback</p>	<p>Academic Partnerships Manager, Head of Standards and Development, IT Strategy Group</p> <p>HE Strategy Group, HE Tutors' Group</p>	<p>Information learning technology report 2010/11 – review of MoLeNet activities</p> <p>HE programme self-assessment reports 2011 – review of teaching and learning including information learning technology</p> <p>Programme team meeting, HE Student Council – analysis of student feedback</p>

Dearne Valley College action plan relating to the Summative review: March 2010						
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
• continue the development of the virtual learning environment beyond its present major use as a repository of information (paragraph 46)	<p>Continued staff development for HE tutors</p> <p>Continued MUG membership to identify and share good practice/ideas</p> <p>Pilot verbal recorded feedback to learners via podcasts</p> <p>• adopt and implement a procedure to monitor the currency of its links to the websites of its awarding bodies (paragraph 53).</p>	Ongoing	HE Co-ordinator	Increased activity	Head of Standards and Development, IT Strategy Group	<p>Moodle Management group, information learning technology report 2010/11, HE and programme self-assessment reports 2011 – all will make reference to the use of Moodle</p> <p>Annual Planning – will include unit evaluations</p>

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