

Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

April 2010

North West Kent College

SR77/2009

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2010

ISBN 978 1 84979 151 9

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 North West Kent College carried out in April 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 has developed innovative programmes that build on specialist strengths and are not otherwise available locally.
- The College effectively coordinates its internal school quality processes with those of the University of Greenwich in order to maintain standards and enhance quality.
- There is an excellent tutorial support system, tailored to meet the needs of individual students, that builds on an effective induction programme designed to support the transition from further education to higher education.
- The student handbook is a comprehensive, attractive and user-friendly document.
- Staff in engineering and business have embraced the virtual learning environment with enthusiasm to enhance teaching and learning through the use of an online forum and the sharing of teaching materials.

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:

- continue to work with the University of Greenwich in establishing effective systems through which all staff at the College have the opportunity to receive timely qualitative feedback from external examiners
- ensure that up-to-date reading lists are consistently provided to the library.

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

- review the policy for work-based learning to ensure that consistent arrangements are in place for providing guidance and support for students and mentors
- ensure that existing mechanisms for checking the accuracy, completeness and helpfulness of public information are supplemented by wider discussion, scrutiny and structured dissemination of good practice.

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 North West Kent College (the College). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the College discharges its responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes which the College delivers on behalf of Edexcel and the University of Greenwich. The review was carried out by Mr Paul Chamberlain, Mr Seth Crofts and Ms Ruth Stoker (reviewer), and Mr Robert Jones (coordinator).

2 The Summative review team (the team) conducted the review in agreement with the College and in accordance with *The handbook for Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review* (the handbook), published by QAA. Evidence in support of the Summative review included documentation supplied by the College and awarding bodies, meetings with staff, students 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 situated on three sites in Dartford and Gravesham. There are two main sites and a third site on the bank of the River Thames with specialist maritime facilities. The College mission statement is 'to provide high-quality education, learning and training which, through partnership working, offers young people and adults the opportunity to achieve their potential and contribute to the success of the community'. There are approximately 11,000 students enrolled at the College, 364 (305 full-time equivalents) of whom are higher education students. The number of higher education students at the College has grown steadily in most areas. This is particularly evident in Foundation Degrees, where there has been an increase from 27 students in 2005 to 210 in 2009-10, following a movement away from HNDs to FDs.

5 The higher education programmes at the College funded by HEFCE are listed below, under the awarding body and with the full-time equivalent students.

Edexcel

- HNC Electronic Engineering (12.5)

University of Greenwich

- HND and BA (Hons) (first two years only) Business with Human Resources/Finance/Marketing (49)
- Initial Teacher Education (PCET/PGCE) (25)

- FdA Education Administration (5)
- FdA Learning Support (18)
- FdSc Computer Systems and Networking (9)
- FdSc Computing (4)
- FdA Early Years (32)
- FdA Health and Social Care (Care) (7)
- FdSc Multimedia Technology (10)
- FdA Photography (30)
- BA (Hons) Photography (Top up) (5)
- FdA Professional Writing (20)
- FdSc Electrical and Electronic Engineering (Top up) (6.75)
- FdSc Sports Science (13)
- HND Sports Science (6)
- FdA Sports Studies (53).

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

6 The College has worked with the University of Greenwich and Edexcel over many years to meet the needs of its local community for higher education opportunities. HNC programmes validated by Edexcel have been offered by the College since the 1980s. Programmes validated by the University of Greenwich have been offered since 1991.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

7 The full-time post of Higher Education Manager has recently been created to work closely with the Associate Director of Quality and based within the Quality Support Unit, reporting to the Director of Quality, Curriculum and Human Resources in the senior management team. The College is undertaking a major building programme that will enable important improvements in learning facilities for higher education students to be realised. This includes a dedicated higher education study area.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

8 Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the Summative review team. Following extensive consultation and with support from non-teaching members of staff, a submission was written that provided useful evidence for the team. During the review the team also held a productive meeting with representative students.

B Evaluation of the management of HEFCE-funded higher education

Core theme 1: Academic standards

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

9 Arrangements for managing higher education are clearly set out in the formal memorandum of agreement between the College and the University of Greenwich. The University is the validating body for all the higher education provision, with the exception of one Edexcel HNC programme. Within the College, the Director of Curriculum, Quality and Human Resources is responsible for the management and development of the higher education curriculum. Joint responsibility for higher education quality systems within the College is held by the Associate Director of Quality and Standards, who has overall responsibility for the strategic management of quality assurance including the administration and management of feedback from external examiners, and the Higher Education Manager, who has overall responsibility for curriculum and programme review. The team found that these responsibilities are well understood and operationally effective.

10 The College has clear aims for its higher education provision, described in the Higher Education Strategic Plan. They are incorporated in the overall College Strategic Plan 2009-13 and the associated Operational Plan 2009-10. Higher education planning is strategically integrated within the wider college mission and there are moves to centralise elements of the management of higher education so as to ensure effective oversight of the activity of college schools. This provides a strategy and management structure fit-for-purpose for current arrangements and for likely future initiatives.

11 The directors of faculties and heads of school work in collaboration with the Higher Education Manager to oversee the management of programmes. They are responsible for programme delivery, internal monitoring and assessment of student work, induction, the employment of appropriate staff, day-to-day quality assurance, and the viability of the programme offer. The day-to-day management of individual programmes is the responsibility of programme managers working with designated staff teams and programme committees, which include student representatives.

12 Joint issues with the University are considered through the firmly established partnership structures within which representatives from both institutions monitor the progress, standards and quality of programmes. Within the University, quality structures are managed by schools, each of which has its own set of assessment policies and procedures. Although variations in these arrangements have caused some complications at college level, the devolved nature of the University structure brings the advantages of diverse approaches to higher education to the College. The key element in the operational relationship between individual programmes and the University is the strongly established role of the link tutors, who provide advice to College programme managers and attend programme meetings. Staff acknowledge the support and guidance provided by link tutors.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

13 There is a strong awareness across the College that the Academic Infrastructure is integral to the development of programme documentation. Staff recognise that its use underpins the standards expected of students, as well as the publicly available information for students and other stakeholders. As a result of the College's recent replacement of HND programmes with FDs, linked to specific progression routes within the University, a wide range of staff have familiarised themselves with the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark* and the details of the FHEQ. University templates that are used for validation documents include prompts that draw attention to the Academic Infrastructure. Approval documents reflect a clear engagement with the Infrastructure, including a rigorous application of the precepts of the *Code of practice*. The College has taken the initiative in developing new programmes that would not otherwise be available locally. The FDs in Photography and Professional Writing build on specialist strengths at the College and include notable innovations that have taken account of the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students* and *Section 9: Work-based and placement learning*. These innovative practices include the creative alliance of theory and practice, and bold and imaginative approaches to audio feedback and workplace assignments. Staff involved in the revalidation of provision more widely available across the university partnership were also able to demonstrate their proactive engagement with the Academic Infrastructure, both through planning and with students.

14 The College acknowledges that not all teaching staff fully understand the Academic Infrastructure and that staff development activity will need to continue in this area. Students provided evidence, through the written submission and at the meeting with the team, that assessment is aligned with the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*. In particular, marking criteria are clearly defined in advance and feedback is meaningful and constructive.

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?

15 All of the College's higher education provision is subject to annual monitoring, which is fully integrated with the University's processes. Programme managers prepare an annual programme monitoring report, which is analysed internally by the Higher Education Manager and the Associate Director of Quality and Standards before being submitted to the University link tutor, the University partnership unit and the University School Quality Manager. It forms a standing item on the learning and quality committee of the relevant University school. Where programmes are also offered by other partner colleges, there is a cross-moderation process before grades are submitted to a progression and award board. In addition, the College is required to submit an annual institutional review focusing on the cross-college issues affecting the standards and quality of programmes. Together, these arrangements provide a robust and comprehensive quality model.

16 Programme monitoring reports address a range of issues including staffing, resources, curriculum development, commenting on and responding to external examiners' reports and providing an action plan for the coming year. The reports are thorough and clearly presented. Several are limited, however, by the lack of availability of external examiner reports within an appropriate timescale, or a lack of specificity in reports concerning provision that is also delivered elsewhere. Programmes delivered only at the College, for example in photography and professional writing, have received considered and helpful

feedback. For shared provision, the report for FdA Accounting and Finance, a programme subsequently withdrawn, provided a rare example of feedback that was specific to the College. Even within this example, the external examiner was not always sure to which college the scripts related. This issue was raised at the Developmental engagement and the College has been working with the University regarding the format, content and timeliness of external examiner feedback. The University has issued appropriate guidance on this point, but it has not yet been fully translated into practice. The team shares the view expressed both by management and staff at the College that urgent action is required in order to achieve a more reliable and effective process of reporting by external examiners to the College.

17 In parallel with the process described above, the higher education provision is considered within the College's own school quality structures that deal with all of each school's provision, comprising both further and higher education. The College's school quality review process ensures a detailed review of each curriculum area. The Higher Education Manager contributes to this process by submitting an analysis of higher education provision. This process enables schools and programme managers to take ownership of the data relating to their programmes and address problems in a timely way. The Edexcel provision is managed within this school process. Staff are able to articulate a strong awareness of the characteristics of the two processes and their part in them. The Director of Curriculum, Quality and Human Resources submits a termly report to the Governors, which includes commentary and proposed action on student recruitment, retention and achievement, and monitoring of the Higher Education Strategy. Although rather complex at first sight, this structure is robust and fit-for-purpose in distinguishing between further and higher education provision and providing effective integration with the University school quality structures.

18 The programme management structure is enhanced by the work of the long established College higher education forum. The forum provides opportunities to disseminate good practice, review student progress, receive programme self-assessments, engage in dialogue with university representatives and monitor learning resources and programme information. In addition, programme committees, which include student representatives, meet twice a term. Student input is also obtained through student surveys, focus groups and the Higher Education Student Committee.

19 The Developmental engagement confirmed that College assessment procedures take proper account of the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*. Feedback to students was commended at the Developmental engagement and the team confirms the College's view that student feedback and, where identifiable, feedback from external examiners, indicate that progress is being consolidated. Arrangements for double-marking and internal moderation are in place to meet the assessment policies of individual university schools. The Developmental engagement also identified variation in the format used for assignment briefs. A common format is being introduced, subject to variations required by the University schools.

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

20 The College has a proactive approach to higher education staff development, which includes a recent initiative to further encourage scholarly activity. The College staff development policy defines a cycle of activity in which an analysis of training needs is undertaken by schools on an annual basis. The Higher Education Manager holds a budget

to support curriculum development at level 4 and above. Host schools at the University organise programmes of staff development, which are formally notified to programme managers. The Higher Education Manager and a member of the information services have recently attended training in order to enhance their ability to compare University and partner college data.

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?

21 The responsibilities for managing the quality of learning opportunities and the consequent quality assurance processes reflect those for managing academic standards as described in paragraphs 9 to 12. The team is satisfied that these responsibilities are being appropriately discharged and that learning opportunities are being managed effectively by the College.

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

22 The processes by which the College assures itself that it is fulfilling its obligations to its awarding bodies are described in paragraphs 15 to 18. Programme self-assessment reviews consider the effectiveness of learning opportunities.

23 The College has well-established processes for gathering student feedback on the quality of the learning opportunities provided, which is used to monitor the effectiveness of its academic delivery. Students are very positive about their engagement with the academic staff, including the opportunities for them to provide feedback about all aspects of their experience and consequently influence their programme. Students praised the support provided by academic staff, with whom they have a productive relationship, and felt that their feedback was taken seriously.

24 There is a positive relationship between academic staff at the College and the University. The two staff groups are cooperating to enhance the learning opportunities for students. This is evident, for example, in business, sport and health and social care.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

25 As described in paragraph 13, programmes are aligned with the Academic Infrastructure at the time of validation, and the programme documentation developed in partnership with the University of Greenwich is underpinned by the principles set out in the Academic Infrastructure. However, there is scope for further development of staff awareness of certain precepts of the *Code of practice*. A specific example involves *Section 9: Work-based and placement learning*. Some staff have a limited knowledge of the provisions of this section and there is variability in the adherence to its precepts concerning the arrangements for supporting work placements and mentors.

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

26 The College has a well-established system for the peer review of teaching which is carefully monitored. Each member of academic staff is observed on an annual basis and a post-observation interview is used to identify good practice and developmental needs. The College is working towards sharing best practice in learning and teaching by making exemplars of good practice available on a staff portal, in the form of video clips. This work is at an early stage, but if developed further it will provide a useful resource for staff, in particular new members of teams and part-time staff.

27 The College provides well-planned teaching support for new academic staff. A comprehensive induction programme gives a detailed insight into the College and covers basic issues in relation to the academic role. New staff have individual guidance in relation to learning and teaching tasks, such as lesson planning, student tutorials and student assessment. Although new staff have a comprehensive package of support, they do not always recognise this as a formal mentorship programme. It would be valuable for the College to formalise the excellent arrangements that it has in place for the support of new academic staff by identifying a specific mentorship programme.

28 The College is in the process of completing a review of its learning and teaching strategy. The revised strategy will make specific reference to the needs of higher education students. The College is also revising the tutorial arrangements for students, with a view to making recommendations for the level of entitlement for all students so as to ensure clarity and consistency.

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

29 The College provides excellent and highly valued tutorial support to students throughout their programmes. Students believe that the academic staff are very accessible and that the support provided is tailored to meet their specific needs. This support is reviewed systematically at the College's higher education forum where staff can analyse the links between effective student support and student progression, and make recommendations to enhance the support provided.

30 There are well-developed systems to facilitate student induction, with special reference to the transition from further to higher education. For example, specific preparation is provided to help students acquire academic writing skills. A college-wide procedure gives detailed guidance in relation to all aspects of student induction. Students reported that they are well supported in progressing from further to higher education programmes.

31 Students receive detailed and comprehensive feedback on their assignments both orally and in writing. This includes individual guidance that assists them to develop their academic skills and improve their level of achievement. The feedback arrangements are underpinned by regular individual tutorials.

32 The provision involves significant placement experience. While there are examples of innovative practice in the approach to work-based learning (see paragraph 13), the team found that there is variance in the level of support for students and mentors. The diversity of practice in work-based learning presents particular challenges and the head of work-based learning at the University is currently setting up working groups to support programme managers. Some work has taken place to spread best practice across the College and the programme staff were able to provide a clear rationale for variations in practice between the

different subject areas. However, the College should provide closer oversight of work-based learning and ensure that it is aligned to the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning*. In particular, it should ensure that students in different subject areas are not disadvantaged as a consequence of a diversity of approaches.

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

33 The College has a well-established and detailed staff development strategy, which is strongly linked to its Higher Education Strategy. Staff development is well integrated into the performance review process. Staff are required to complete formal teaching qualifications. In addition, support is provided to obtain taught master's and research degrees. The University of Greenwich provides additional support for staff from partner colleges to study for higher qualifications, allowing them to enhance their subject knowledge. The College also provides in-house staff development to enhance practice in learning and teaching.

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

34 The College is undertaking a major building programme, which has the objective of transforming the accommodation provided for students. The team found that there are some challenges faced by the staff in relation to finding appropriate accommodation for all of the higher education provision. However, these are being managed effectively overall. The students are anxious to acquire a dedicated space for the higher education provision, which would provide student IT facilities and social learning space. There is a welcome proposal to develop a temporary higher education area as a transitional arrangement prior to the commissioning of the new building. This has the potential to provide a major improvement in the experience of the higher education students.

35 There is a clear strategy for providing learning resources for the higher education provision. These resources are frequently reviewed at the higher education forum and action is taken if there are issues in this area. The students expressed a high level of satisfaction with online resources, particularly online access to journals. A significant budget is provided to support the provision of updating written texts within the library. However, there is considerable variability in the engagement of academic staff across different subject areas in checking reading lists so as to ensure that the library is provided with lists containing up-to-date texts. This issue is of considerable concern to students on some programmes, who believe that their education suffers from the fact that key texts are not in the library or are only available in out-of-date editions.

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?

36 The College publishes details about its higher education programmes in a separate prospectus. The College has previously revised the prospectus on a two-yearly basis, but this is currently under review and the intention is to publish a new prospectus annually to be distributed in good time prior to the year of admission. As an interim measure, the College released the prospectus for October 2010 admission in April 2010. While the staff team acknowledges that this was late in the admissions cycle, they supplement prospectus information with programme information leaflets which are updated more frequently to ensure that applicants receive accurate and current programme details. These leaflets are reviewed annually by the relevant Programme Manager and Head of School, the Director of Student Services and the Publicity and Promotions Manager.

37 Students seeking information about programmes are also directed to the College website where both the prospectus and programme information leaflets are available electronically. Key information is also provided through programme information web pages. The College marketing team is able to respond quickly to changes in programme information requested by staff and updates the web pages on a regular basis as required. There is programme information on the website that can be accessed by applicants with visual impairment using a screenreader.

38 When students begin their programmes of study at the College they are given programme-specific handbooks and a generic student handbook. The generic student handbook is an attractive and user-friendly brochure that is given to all College students, both in further and higher education. It gives a comprehensive guide to facilities at the College, key policies and procedures, and mechanisms for collecting student opinion. It also introduces students to key personnel in student support.

39 Programme handbooks follow a recently-developed template designed to ensure the inclusion of all key policies, procedures and regulations that apply to all higher education programmes at the College. A separate section of the handbook is devoted to programme-specific information, which should include detailed information about programme content on a module by module basis, and key assessment information. However, while good practice is noted in some academic areas, in other areas key programme information, such as module detail, assignment information and assessment dates, is missing. Much of this detail is available in other documents, but the College was advised at the Developmental engagement to develop a system to ensure that teaching and learning information given to students is complete and correct. The handbook template is an attempt to achieve this and its use needs to become more securely embedded across the College.

40 The presentation of detailed assessment information varies from one academic area to another. In some areas detailed written assignments are available, in others the written assignment instructions are merely an outline and the detail is given to students orally in class. This is an issue where there are large classes, when students find it difficult to fully grasp what is required of them in assignments.

41 While the College has a virtual learning environment that enables students to access programme information electronically, its effectiveness as an information tool is varied. Some areas are populated with student handbooks and teaching materials, but others are not. Students on some programmes are aware of the facility and are enthusiastic users,

while others do not know how to access it. A number of students reported frustration about a delay in gaining access to the virtual learning environment at the start of the academic year. Staff are aware of this and are putting measures in place to ensure that students are given more timely access on enrolment in subsequent years.

42 It is recognised that the virtual learning environment is a recent innovation at the College and is still in its developmental phase. The College's e-learning policy includes a clear commitment to the wider use of its virtual learning environment to support teaching and learning.

43 Good practice in the use of the virtual learning environment is evident in some pioneering departments who have already embraced the technology. For example, the engineering staff have set up an online forum for students to log discussions towards the development of a group project. The business staff have developed their area on the virtual learning environment in conjunction with other partner colleges delivering business programmes to ensure that they all share appropriate teaching and learning information with each other and with students. Student feedback from those who have been actively encouraged to use the virtual learning environment is very positive.

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 responsibility for checking programme information currently lies within programme areas before it is sent to the Director of Student Services for initial approval. Drafts are sent to the University marketing department for scrutiny prior to final approval by the College Director of Student Services who then authorises publication.

45 There are inconsistencies in the information produced by the College, in respect of printed and online materials, which makes it desirable to introduce a wider college-wide scrutiny of public information. For example, some programmes explicitly state in the prospectus and programme information leaflets the duration of their programmes and progression routes from Foundation Degrees to honours programmes. For others, this information is missing or is unclear. In addition, some programme information leaflets have not been reviewed since May 2009. There is a particular problem concerning programme information for the BA Business programmes, two years of which are spent at the College, with progression to the third year at the University of Greenwich. There needs to be some indication that the fee for the third year will almost certainly differ from those for the portion of the programme studied at the College.

46 The College has allocated a dedicated member of staff to the virtual learning environment since January 2010, with a role to ensure that all information deposited in programme areas is valid and current. The role is expected to develop as the virtual learning environment becomes more widely used across the College. The development of the virtual learning environment, underpinned by the clear commitment to ensure that the information deposited is current, complete and valid is commendable.

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

C Summary of findings from the Developmental engagement in assessment

47 The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in November 2008. There were three lines of enquiry as follows: within the context of the assessment strategy for the programme, ascertain whether the timeliness and content of feedback to students is supportive of their learning and is consistent with publicly available information; to what extent does the assessment of the work-based learning component enable students to achieve the necessary learning outcomes and enhance their employability; and to what extent does the range of assessment mechanisms confirm the learning outcomes.

48 The Developmental engagement team identified a number of areas of good practice. These included the wide range of assessment methods, focused on learning outcomes and clearly understood by students. In some areas of the provision, the team reported exceptionally detailed internal verification. Both formative and summative assessment help the development of students; and effective collaboration with industry together with work-based projects ensure currency and enable students to follow their individual interests within an academic framework.

49 The team also made a number of recommendations. It recommended that the College should approach the University of Greenwich concerning the focus and timeliness of external examiners' reports. It should also ensure close links between feedback on assessed work and learning outcomes; and it should develop a college-wide system of ensuring that all students are given complete and accurate information about assessment. In addition, the team recommended that it would be helpful to foster the dissemination of good practice in assessment, and ensure that work placement mentors were encouraged and enabled to provide effective support to students.

D Foundation Degrees

50 Current Foundation Degree provision at the College has developed from existing HND programmes and when opportunities for new curriculum development have presented themselves, based on existing curriculum strengths at the College. Recent developments include the redesign of the HND Sports Development programme into the FdA Sports Studies, which has resulted in a strong increase in recruitment. The development of the FdA in Early Years, incorporating management standards to meet the government agenda, has also recruited well. The development of the BA Photography progression pathway for the FdA Photography has also provided a clear route and brought about a strong increase in applications for the programme. The opportunities for development of HEFCE-funded places are limited in most curriculum areas. The College plans to cooperate with the University of Greenwich on the following: working through co-funded students in the areas of sustainable construction and engineering; participating in a science, technology, engineering and mathematics bid with the University for 2011 entry; and developing the curriculum in areas where smaller units of study, building through time to full awards, are likely to prove attractive for people already working in industry.

51 The Foundation Degrees offered by the College cover the following awards: Education Administration; Learning Support; Computer Systems and Networking; Computing; Early Years; Health and Social Care (Care); Multimedia Technology; Photography; Professional Writing; Electrical and Electronic Engineering (Top up); Sports Science; and Sports Studies. This provision is closely integrated with the other higher

education programmes by means of a common quality assurance process and the areas of good practice and recommendations listed below apply equally to the Foundation Degrees. However, the following recommendation applies to Foundation Degrees especially, namely that it would be desirable for the College to take action to review the policy for work-based learning to ensure that consistent arrangements are in place for providing guidance and support for students and mentors (paragraphs 25, 32).

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

52 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in North West Kent College's management of its responsibilities for academic standards and for the quality of learning opportunities of the awards that the College offers on behalf of its awarding bodies. This was based upon discussion with staff and students and scrutiny of evidence provided by the College and its awarding bodies, Edexcel and the University of Greenwich.

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

- the College has developed innovative programmes that build on specialist strengths and are not otherwise available locally (paragraph 13)
- the College effectively coordinates its internal school quality processes with those of the University of Greenwich in order to maintain standards and enhance quality (paragraphs 15, 17)
- there is an excellent tutorial support system, tailored to meet the needs of individual students, that builds on an effective induction programme designed to support the transition from further education to higher education (paragraphs 29, 30)
- the student handbook is a comprehensive, attractive and user-friendly document (paragraph 38)
- staff in engineering and business have embraced the virtual learning environment with enthusiasm to enhance teaching and learning through the use of an online forum and the sharing of teaching materials (paragraph 43).

53 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 to:

- continue to work with the University of Greenwich in establishing effective systems through which all staff at the College have the opportunity to receive timely qualitative feedback from external examiners (paragraph 16)
- ensure that up-to-date reading lists are consistently provided to the library (paragraph 35).

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

- review the policy for work-based learning to ensure that consistent arrangements are in place for providing guidance and support for students and mentors (paragraphs 25, 32)
- ensure that existing mechanisms for checking the accuracy, completeness and helpfulness of public information are supplemented by wider discussion, scrutiny and structured dissemination of good practice (paragraphs 39, 40, 44, 45).

54 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, and other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that it has **confidence** that, in the context of this Summative review, the College discharges its responsibilities effectively, as set out in the relevant partnership agreement for the management of the standards of the awards of its awarding bodies.

55 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, and other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that it has **confidence** that, in the context of this Summative review, the College discharges its responsibilities effectively, as set out in the relevant partnership agreement for the management of the quality of learning opportunities to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

56 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, and other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes 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.

North West Kent College action plan relating to the Summative review: April 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 has developed innovative programmes that build on specialist strengths and are not otherwise available locally (paragraph 13) 	<p>Prepare strategy document from consultation with employers.</p> <p>Collaborate with UoG on co-funding bid.</p> <p>To develop co-funded curriculum development in the areas of sustainable construction and engineering.</p>	<p>November 2010</p> <p>December 2010</p> <p>May 2011</p>	<p>Lead – curriculum HoS's and HE Manager</p> <p>Working with: HoS's and curriculum teams</p> <p>HE Manager, UoG Partnership Unit, Schools and WBL Unit.</p>	<p>Successful co-funding bid and/or employer sponsored provision approved</p>	<p>Director of Enterprise SMT</p>	<p>Scrutiny at Standards Committee and through UoG SLQCs</p>

North West Kent College action plan relating to the Summative review: April 2010						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the College effectively coordinates its internal school quality processes with those of the University of Greenwich in order to maintain standards and enhance quality (paragraphs 15, 17) 	<p>Revise college quality procedure that establishes common standards and meets requirements of university schools quality documentation.</p>	<p>November 2010</p>	<p>Lead - ADQS HE Manager Programme Managers UoG school quality managers</p>	<p>HE quality procedures approved by ADQS and</p>	<p>DCQHR</p>	<p>A report to the Annual Quality Team Review of processes and procedures.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> there is an excellent tutorial support system, tailored to meet the needs of individual students, that builds on an effective induction programme designed to support the transition from further education to higher education (paragraphs 29, 30) 	<p>Undertake staff development events to share good practice.</p> <p>Define the critical elements for effective tutorial support for higher</p>	<p>April 2011</p> <p>December 2010</p>	<p>Lead - HE Manager Programme managers and personal tutors Student Services Manager</p>	<p>Higher education tutorial support has specific section as part of the developing college tutorial policy. Positive feedback from staff development events from teaching staff.</p>	<p>DCQHR</p>	<p>Through Student Survey 2, Student Voice Forum 2010 and school curriculum reviews.</p>

North West Kent College action plan relating to the Summative review: April 2010						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
	education students through focussed discussion at Student Voice forum to determine the most important elements for ensuring student success on programme.			Feedback from Student Surveys and Student Voice forum indicates consistent provision of tutorial support across the HE provision.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the student handbook is a comprehensive, attractive and user-friendly document (paragraph 38) 	<p>Review contents of handbooks. Add additional materials on student support, reading lists, VLE and study skills.</p> <p>Update content relating to university regulations.</p>	August 2010	<p>Lead – HE manager</p> <p>Programme Managers</p> <p>Learning Resources Manager</p> <p>Student Services Manager.</p>	<p>Student handbooks are available on the college VLE by beginning October 2010.</p>		<p>Student feedback on handbooks and their usefulness in Student Survey 1 October 2010.</p>

North West Kent College action plan relating to the Summative review: April 2010						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● staff in engineering and business have embraced the virtual learning environment with enthusiasm to enhance teaching and learning through the use of an online forum and the sharing of teaching materials (paragraph 43) 	<p>Establish minimum standards for HE programmes for engagement with VLE .</p> <p>Undertake specific initiatives as part of an agreed action plan for each HE programme.</p> <p>Engage HE teaching staff in development activities that share best practice across the HE provision in the college.</p>	<p>September 2010</p> <p>Action plan in place November 2010.</p> <p>Completed initiatives May 2011</p>	<p>Lead – HE Manager with eLearning Co-ordinator.</p> <p>Lead – HE manager with eLearning Co-ordinator and HE programme managers.</p> <p>eLearning Co-ordinator with HE programme managers</p>	<p>Minimum standards agreed and published.</p> <p>Programme specific action plans in place and completed.</p> <p>Development activities completed and agreed changes to curriculum practice – to feed into action plan for following year.</p>	<p>ADQS</p> <p>ADQS</p> <p>SMT</p>	<p>Review of performance at the end of the year June 2011</p> <p>Monitoring and reporting of VLE use.</p> <p>Review of performance at the end of the year June 2011.</p>

North West Kent College action plan relating to the Summative review: April 2010						
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<p>The team agreed a number of areas where the College should be advised to take action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> continue to work with the University of Greenwich in establishing effective systems through which all staff at the College have the opportunity to receive timely qualitative feedback from external examiners (paragraph 16) 	<p>Work with UoG to provide support for external examiners on Subject Assessment Panels on programmes offered at a number of partner colleges.</p> <p>Undertake robust analysis on external examiner reports and feedback actions to UoG schools</p>	<p>July 2010</p> <p>November 2010</p>	<p>Lead - Programme Managers UoG Partnership and UoG quality units.</p> <p>Lead – ADQS HE Manager, Programme Managers, UoG Partnership Unit and UoG SLQC</p>	<p>External examiners enabled to comment on specific provision.</p> <p>External examiner quality report and action plan completed.</p>	<p>HE Manager</p> <p>DCQHR UoG Partnership Unit</p>	<p>Through college Annual Institutional Review to UoG with further actions identified as appropriate.</p>

North West Kent College action plan relating to the Summative review: April 2010						
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ensure that up-to-date reading lists are consistently provided to the library (paragraph 35) 	<p>Programme managers to review current resources and request updated learning materials annually.</p>	<p>September 2010</p>	<p>Programme managers and Learning Resources Manager</p>	<p>Improved student feedback at Student Voice forum and on student surveys.</p>	<p>HE Manager to confirm through Learning Resources Manager.</p>	<p>Programme Monitoring Reports and Student Voice Forum.</p>

North West Kent College action plan relating to the Summative review: April 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"> review the policy for work-based learning to ensure that consistent arrangements are in place for providing guidance and support for students and mentors (paragraphs 25, 32) 	<p>Work Based Learning recording documentation to be in use.</p> <p>HE manager to review programme by programme, with support of Work based Learning Unit at University of Greenwich, the provision for Work-Based learning on Foundation degrees and develop systems to</p>	<p>October 2010</p> <p>March 2011</p>	<p>Lead - HE Manager Programme managers.</p> <p>Lead - HE Manager Programme managers and UoG WBL Unit</p>	<p>Support documentation in place and confirmed for each programme.</p> <p>Support time for assessors and mentors is indicated on curriculum plan or timetables for programmes.</p>	<p>ADQS</p> <p>ADQS</p>	<p>Student feedback on work based learning through Student Voice Forum.</p> <p>Programme Monitoring Reports and Annual Institutional Review.</p>

North West Kent College action plan relating to the Summative review: April 2010						
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that existing mechanisms for checking the accuracy, completeness and helpfulness of public information are supplemented by wider discussion, scrutiny and structured dissemination of good practice (paragraphs 39, 40, 44, 45) 	<p>ensure consistent support for students and workplace mentors.</p> <p>Develop a flow chart for public information on HE programmes including a 'signing off' process, showing responsibilities for accurate information.</p> <p>Establish a sub-committee of Higher Education Forum with responsibility for reporting on, and supporting the</p>	<p>December 2010</p> <p>October 2010</p>	<p>Lead - HE Manager Publicity and Promotions Manager Programme Managers</p> <p>UoG Marketing Unit HE Manager</p>	<p>Monitoring and confirmation of accuracy completed.</p> <p>Progress on development of public information reported.</p>	<p>DCQHR</p> <p>HE Forum</p>	<p>Curriculum Review process HE Forum minutes Programme Monitoring Reports Annual Institutional Report</p>

North West Kent College action plan relating to the Summative review: April 2010						
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
	<p>development of, public information</p> <p>Liaise with UoG to ensure clarity of roles and responsibilities with regard to public information.</p>	March 2011	HE Manager and UoG Marketing Unit	Agreement of the public information flow diagram.	DCQHR	

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