



# **Integrated quality and enhancement review**

**Summative review**

**Leeds College of Building**

**June 2010**

**SR99**

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2010

ISBN 978-1-84979-193-9

All QAA's publications are available on our website [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://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 Leeds College of Building carried out in June 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 agreement, 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 strength and effectiveness of the links between the College and Leeds Metropolitan University
- the process for developing the student written submission which is now embedded in the higher education quality cycle
- the proactive involvement of the College senior management team in establishing and maintaining strong and effective links with employers which have led to staff placements and continuing recruitment to programmes
- the effective management of the curriculum and the learning and teaching experience provided by higher education staff demonstrated by the established record of a significant number of prizes and scholarships (from professional and other bodies) being awarded to its students
- the additional opportunity for higher education staff to develop and enhance their teaching and learning skills through the reciprocal teaching observation process being trialled with staff from a college in a nearby town
- the use of the virtual learning environment to support and enhance the student learning experience.

### 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 **desirable** for the College to:

- consider reviewing the rationale and terms of reference of both the Higher Education Practitioners' Forum and the Higher Education Strategic Forum with a view to enhancing their effectiveness
- introduce a mechanism to ensure that any draft assessment task provided to students prior to verification is clearly identified as being subject to verification and that students fully understand the implications of this
- consider developing and including a version control mechanism on published higher education admissions and performance data prior to internal dissemination
- consider developing and publishing a definitive record of higher education policies and procedures as a means of facilitating the induction of new staff and the systematic implementation of higher education policies and procedures.

## 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 Leeds College of Building (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 Leeds Metropolitan University and Edexcel. The review was carried out by Mr Maldwyn Buckland, Mr Russell Kinman (reviewers), and Mr Grant Horsburgh (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, current students, former students and employers, 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 Leeds College of Building is a medium-sized further education college offering a wide range of provision to approximately 8,000 students including further education programmes for 14-19 year olds, adults, on-site assessment and training, full cost recovery employer engagement and projects, and a comparatively small amount of higher education. The College's mission statement is: 'Leeds College of Building delivers a comprehensive range of high quality learning opportunities related to construction and the built environment'. The College is the lead partner in the construction and the built environment sector group for the West Yorkshire Lifelong Learning Network managed by the University of Huddersfield. It is from the Lifelong Learning Network that the College attained additional student numbers which allowed the development and delivery of Edexcel higher education provision. Increased employer demand for student numbers in building services engineering and civil engineering that could not be supported through either Leeds Metropolitan University or the West Yorkshire Lifelong Learning Network led the College to apply for and receive additional funding in the current academic year from the Train To Gain Enhancement Fund. The College serves the Leeds City area and surrounding regions and attracts students from areas of substantial economic and social deprivation. It offers opportunities for students to get their foot on the first rung of the learning ladder with summer school or foundation tier curriculum through to Foundation Degree and bachelor's degree with honours levels.

5 At the time of the review the College has 190 higher education students (127 full-time equivalent (FTE) students) studying higher education programmes in a variety of modes including part-time study, block release, day release and distance learning. The College offers the following programmes in partnership with the awarding bodies listed:

### **Leeds Metropolitan University**

- BSc (Hons) Fire Safety: 6 students (3 FTE)

## Integrated quality and enhancement review

- FdSc Facilities Management: 8 students (6 FTE)
- FdSc Quantity Surveying Studies: 4 students (2 FTE)
- HND Building Services Engineering Studies: 64 students (40 FTE)
- HNC Construction Studies: 35 students (22 FTE).

### **Edexcel**

- HNC Building Services Engineering: 28 students (26 FTE)
- HNC Civil Engineering: 45 students (28 FTE).

## **Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies**

6 The College is an Edexcel approved centre. The arrangements with Edexcel involve agreement to run programmes using standardised units. Edexcel monitors the quality of programmes and adherence to standards through external examiners. Support is provided through a BTEC Regional Quality Manager.

7 The partnership agreement with Leeds Metropolitan University confirms that the University takes responsibility for the academic standard of their awards, including programme approval and monitoring. The College has responsibility for course delivery, student support and administration, student information and teaching staff appointments. Course teams work closely with link tutors from the University in the operational management of the programmes. Appropriate articulation agreements are in place for the progression of Foundation Degree students to relevant bachelor's degrees with honours. Leeds Metropolitan University representatives participated fully in the development of the self-evaluation and during the review visit and provided evidence to indicate that they value their partnership with the College.

8 Staff indicated that consultation occurred on a regular basis, confirming strong and effective links had been formed between College and University staff at all levels. The team found substantial evidence of supportive and productive collaboration between link tutors and College staff, which has facilitated the development of a shared understanding of partner responsibilities. The open, transparent and equal relationship between the College and the University is an example of good collaborative practice which has made a significant contribution to the enhancement of the higher education provision.

## **Recent developments in higher education at the College**

9 Following the Developmental engagement, the College has continued to review and implement its higher education strategy in collaboration with its awarding partners. Higher education is one of the College's five key priorities set out in strategic documents. The College has been innovative in its approach to securing various funding solutions through the West Yorkshire Lifelong Learning Network and the Train to Gain Enhancement Fund together with the long-standing higher education provision with its principal awarding body, Leeds Metropolitan University. Student progression opportunities have been supported by a number of formal College-to-University progression agreements in association with the West Yorkshire Lifelong Learning Network. Strategic employer engagement and collaboration has further enabled the expansion of a number of Higher National programmes and a top-up programme leading to the award of bachelor's degrees in conjunction with Leeds Metropolitan University.

## **Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission**

10 Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the Summative review team and a written submission was included

as part of the self-evaluation package. The written submission was created through a series of information sessions, questionnaires and student forum meetings facilitated by College staff. During the process, ownership of the sessions transferred from staff to students. Students confirmed that the final submission was a true and accurate representation of their views without undue influence from staff and that the methodology adopted enabled day and block-release students to contribute fully. Students who had contributed to the development of the written submission for the Developmental engagement in their first year of study participated in this process as second-year students.

11 The usefulness of developing a student written submission has been recognised by the College to the extent that the process has been embedded into the annual quality cycle as an effective means of gathering student comment and tracking progress in addressing matters raised. The written submission proved helpful to reviewers who found that the views expressed were consistent with those obtained in their meeting with current and former students.

## **B Evaluation of the management of HEFCE-funded higher education**

### **Core theme 1: Academic standards**

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

12 Overall responsibility for the management of higher education standards and quality lies with the Deputy Principal and Executive Director for Curriculum and Quality supported by the Quality Manager. Management of higher education teaching and delivery is undertaken by the Faculty Director for Higher Education and Construction Management (the Faculty Director) in conjunction with two assistant faculty managers. The Faculty Director chairs the Faculty Management Team, Higher Education Strategic Forum and the Higher Education Practitioners' Forum. The Deputy Principal directly line manages the Quality Manager and the Faculty Director to assure the quality and standards of all higher education programmes. Higher education provision is organised within the Faculty of Higher Education and Construction Management across six curriculum teams and managed by course team managers. Responsibility for quality assurance and management in curriculum areas resides with the Faculty Director, assistant faculty managers and course team managers, ensuring ownership at both programme and management level.

13 The College has a range of strategic, operational and quality improvement groups and committees which undertake the role of monitoring both higher and further education provision. These include the College Management Team, the Faculty Management Team and the Senior Management Team. In the absence of an Academic Board, the College Quality Committee takes overall responsibility for receiving and considering higher education matters, reporting to the Senior Management Team and the Board of Governors, facilitating communications from course delivery teams through to all levels of management within the College. Membership of this group includes the Principal, Quality Manager and a Governor, with attendance by the Deputy Principal and Clerk to the Corporation.

14 The Higher Education Strategic Forum and the Higher Education Practitioners' Forum provide additional opportunity for relevant staff to participate and contribute to the identification and dissemination of matters relating to higher education. However, terms of reference for both of these groups indicate a considerable overlap of their rationales and functions in a number of key areas, for example, monitoring and review of higher education documents and action plans and the promotion of employer feedback. There is a robust and

## Integrated quality and enhancement review

effective mechanism for assuring the quality and standards of higher education provision but both groups could have the opportunity to operate in a more effective and efficient manner if each had a clear and distinctive remit. The team consider it desirable for the College to consider reviewing the rationale and terms of reference of both the Higher Education Practitioners' Forum and the Higher Education Strategic Forum with a view to enhancing their effectiveness.

### **What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?**

15 Staff demonstrated a clear understanding of the key features of the Academic Infrastructure and its application in support of the setting, approval and maintenance of the quality, standards and development of higher education provision. Staff confirmed that the current Foundation Degree provision had been designed, developed and implemented in alignment with the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*. There is clear evidence of extensive engagement with employers who, in meetings with the review team, confirmed their individual involvement in the design, delivery and validation of new awards. Employers confirmed the College is proactive in engaging them in a range of enhancement activities including contributions to formative feedback of student work and submission of student employees to regional and national competitions.

16 Staff were unanimous in articulating their understanding of the management process operating within the College to deal with changes to the *Code of practice*. The Faculty Director has direct responsibility for ensuring there is a clear procedure in place which ensures timely distribution of information to higher education course team managers. Course team managers confirmed they were required to sign to confirm receipt of information relating to changes to the *Code of practice*. Changes are discussed at the Higher Education Strategic Forum and Faculty Management Group meetings, often involving the appropriate cross-college managers. Discussion at the Higher Education Strategic Forum ensures a shared understanding of the implications of changes in processes. The College's Equality and Diversity Representative gave a thorough and comprehensive overview of the College's response to recent changes to the *Code of practice, Section 3: Disabled students*, confirming the production and college-wide distribution of visual aids in support of information sharing.

### **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?**

17 The College demonstrates its ability to manage and maintain the consistency of quality and standards of its higher education provision through the implementation of a thorough, robust and comprehensive annual monitoring process. This includes the production of biannual quality course reviews and biannual programme reviews. The process is well established and effectively managed. Annual monitoring review reports are well prepared by curriculum teams, utilising and considering a range of data in the production of evaluative overviews of the provision, resulting in action planning for its continuous improvement. Responses to matters raised by both staff and students as a result of module monitoring reports, key issues resulting from the last review, comments from external examiners, and responses and comments from employers contribute to the overall report. In addition, reflection on assessment, teaching and learning and resources and the identification of good practice inform action planning and target setting. Further to this, staff undertake the additional preparation of a programme review report on behalf of Leeds Metropolitan University.

18 The Faculty Director prepares an overarching report of all higher education reviews and action points. The College, in response to the Developmental engagement recommendation to align the management of all external examiner reports, confirms that the Quality Manager undertakes a parallel process of evaluating outcomes of reports, further

strengthening the effective internal verification system. Both reports are discussed and considered by the Quality Committee and the Senior Management Team.

19 Assessment of programmes is carried out in accordance with the requirements of the awarding bodies. Following a recommendation from the Developmental engagement, a revised internal verification procedure has been instituted. This now requires four timetabled annual meetings of course teams to undertake both formative and summative verification of assessment instruments and marking and grading. For all programmes, a tracking system is administered by assistant faculty managers to ensure satisfactory operation of the internal verification process within the assessment cycle. The samples of relevant documentation seen by the team indicate that this process is rigorously and conscientiously applied. Assessment instruments provided to students are thoroughly and carefully documented, and students assert that they are clear about assessment requirements. However, a small number of students commented that delays inherent in the internal verification process have encouraged staff to issue provisional drafts of assessments which were subsequently changed, resulting in an unsettling change in focus, and sometimes in unnecessary preparatory work. Discussion with staff revealed that in such cases students are fully informed that assessment tasks are subject to change through the verification process and believe that the majority of students value early receipt of their assessment tasks. However, it would be desirable for the College to introduce a mechanism to ensure that any draft assessment task provided to students prior to verification is clearly identified as being subject to verification and that students fully understand the implications of this.

20 Staff benefit from access to dedicated software, through the College intranet, enabling them to evaluate current quality improvement reports, updated on a monthly basis, on retention and achievement in support of preparations for the programme review process. An unintended consequence of the dynamic nature of this process, relating to the publication of higher education data, has resulted in conflicting presentations of admissions and performance data. In reviewing documentary evidence prior and during the review the team found instances of variations in data, for instance in the higher education strategy, the self-evaluation and Appendix A of progression data. The Faculty Director indicated that due to the innovative curriculum development of tri-semesterised programmes, students are enrolled at three distinct points in the academic calendar giving rise to the discrepancies in data reporting. As a means of helping to ensure that student performance data is accurately presented it would be desirable for the College to consider developing and including a version control mechanism on published higher education admissions and performance data prior to internal dissemination.

21 The Developmental engagement report confirmed that the higher education quality assurance processes benefit from the College's long-established quality systems. However, in light of the increase of new higher education staff and the College's aspiration to continue to expand its higher education provision, the team found that it would be helpful to develop a common reference source for higher education policies and procedures to support their systematic implementation. As a means of facilitating the induction of new staff and the systematic implementation of higher education policies and procedures it would be desirable for the College to consider developing and publishing a definitive record of higher education policies and procedures.

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

22 Staff confirmed that the College provides adequate resources in support of higher education continuing professional development which contributes to the mandatory 30 hours annual requirement. The College is currently providing financial resources to a number of staff in the acquisition of higher level qualifications, further strengthening the continued enhancement of academic and subject-specific knowledge. The self-evaluation highlighted

## Integrated quality and enhancement review

the excellent range of staff development carried out by higher education staff who enthusiastically attend events and feedback to a wider audience through the Higher Education Forum.

23 College-wide staff training days provide support for continued professional development activities for higher education staff. Tutors confirmed they had attended training sessions with a specific focus on aspects of the Academic Infrastructure, including the *Code of practice* and the FHEQ. In addition to college-led activities, staff participated in external personal and professional development events hosted by Leeds Metropolitan University covering benchmarking academic standards. Staff teaching on the Higher National Certificate in Construction confirmed they attended a workshop on contractual procedures relating to assessment.

**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?**

24 Responsibilities for managing the quality of learning opportunities are discussed in paragraphs 12 to 14. Annual self-assessment reports led by the Deputy Principal and monitored by the Senior Management Team are seen by the College as an important means to assure itself of the quality of the learning opportunities for students. A detailed faculty self-evaluation is prepared annually for onward transmission through the quality assurance processes. The content of this report is developed in consultation with course team managers, making use of their biannual monitoring reports. A range of other data sources is drawn upon, including programme unit evaluation reports; other student voice data; reports of classroom observations; external examiner reports; and admission, progression and achievement statistics.

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

25 The programmes leading to University awards are monitored as reported in paragraphs 17 to 20. A close working relationship is maintained between University staff and their counterparts at the College through regular formal and informal meetings. A member of University staff chairs biannual assessment review boards held at the College, and a University representative attends mitigation and appeals meetings. A comprehensive annual report is provided to the University and this forms the basis for a subsequent review meeting held at the College. Minutes of the latest of these meetings suggest a detailed focus upon key aspects of the provision and its enhancement. The strength and effectiveness of the links between the College and Leeds Metropolitan University represent good practice.

**What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?**

26 Mechanisms in place to ensure that account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure are discussed in paragraphs 15 and 16. Responsibility for dissemination of information about the Academic Infrastructure rests with the Higher Education Strategic Forum. There is

evidence from the minutes of that body that this matter is given regular and full attention, not least through focused staff development activities.

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

27 The College adheres to an assessment, learning and teaching strategy provided for its partner colleges by Leeds Metropolitan University, as part of the University's support for regional colleges. A range of discussion forums and developmental activities for staff is provided under the aegis of the University, and also through the West Yorkshire Lifelong Learning Network. Evidence from the notes of these meetings suggests that considerable benefit is achieved in the development and sharing of good delivery practice.

28 The College has robust systems for monitoring achievement and progression of its students. A range of progression agreements with local universities is in place. The College has an established record of a significant number of prizes and scholarships (from professional and other bodies) being awarded to its students. The team found a significant volume of evidence to indicate that students' achievements demonstrated by their success in such competitions can be attributed to the effective management of the curriculum and the learning and teaching experience provided by higher education staff and that this is a feature of good practice.

29 The programmes under review are delivered by well-qualified academic staff; there have been a number of recent additions to the teaching team which has broadened the range of expertise and level of qualification. All staff teaching on the higher education programmes hold graduate or postgraduate subject qualifications, as well as teaching qualifications and membership of the Institute for Learning. The College provides encouragement and support to staff to enable them to undertake higher-level study. Reduced teaching commitments are granted for those with significant engagement with higher education development or delivery. There is a well-regarded mentoring scheme for all new teaching staff.

30 For all teaching staff, lesson observation is undertaken annually, by trained peers from other faculties. In the current year, a dual, reciprocal observation process is being trialled with staff from a college in a nearby town. The outcomes of this process, together with a reflective journal and notes of other development activities, feed into an annual staff performance review. The reciprocal observation process provides higher education staff with an additional opportunity to develop and enhance their teaching and learning skills and is a feature of good practice.

31 It was evident from meetings with employer representatives, with students, and with College staff that there exist close and effective relationships between staff and many of the employers of part-time students. A number of employers continue to recommend their staff to attend programmes at the College, and provide financial support as well as weekly release from work duties. Members of the teaching team are encouraged to undertake industrial placements, and three have recently done so. Discussions with representatives of employer organisations met by the team suggest that these placements have provided significant mutual benefit. The proactive involvement of the College Senior Management Team in establishing and maintaining strong and effective links with employers is a feature of good practice.

32 A number of different mechanisms are used to assess student opinion of the quality of their learning opportunities: annual questionnaires are delivered and analysed at programme level; student focus groups are held by staff from Leeds Metropolitan University twice every year; there is a College-wide student forum. The process developed to assist and support students in preparing the student written submission was commended in the Developmental engagement, and the College has elected to continue to use and develop this

process as part of the annual monitoring cycle. The team found the College's process for developing the student written submission, which is now embedded in the higher education quality cycle, to be a feature of good practice.

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

33 Admissions to the programmes under review are made in accordance with the requirements of the relevant awarding body. Many students join their programmes following advice and guidance provided by their employers. Applicants are invited to extensive and well-designed open-day programmes, and to interview before enrolment is confirmed. As many students have been recruited from feeder programmes offered by the College, presentations and careers advice provided by the College have been the primary sources of information about available programmes. Students whose first experience of the College was through an open day noted that they found the processes well-organised and helpful. All students undertake an induction programme, designed to provide detail of the curriculum and the expectations placed upon them. For students on programmes validated by Leeds Metropolitan University, part of this induction takes place at the University. Students expressed their satisfaction with their induction experiences.

34 Care is taken by the College to give ample and suitable advice and guidance to students. One-to-one tutorials are provided to all students on a regular, timetabled basis; in order to offer students greater freedom of expression in tutorial dialogue, staffing of these is by staff from other faculties in the College. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning, and to develop a structured personal learning strategy; the use of tutorial progress files is currently being piloted. Students are extremely complimentary about the friendliness and accessibility of their tutors. Being able to engage in tutorial discussions by means of email or through the virtual learning environment was seen to be particularly useful for part-time students.

35 In order to ensure that there is effective liaison between central college student support services and faculty staff, there is representation on the Higher Education Strategic Forum from all central services, including staff from learning resources, information technology, advice and guidance, and learning support. Students met by the team commended the support and encouragement provided in preparing them for progression to further higher education study. Regular careers and progression advice sessions are provided by staff from the Matrix-accredited Advice and Guidance Unit. A number of staff delivering the higher education programmes are also associate lecturers at local universities; this experience assists them in delivering the curriculum in a manner that will begin to match the style of delivery to be expected by students joining university programmes.

36 A recent improvement in both the utility and timeliness of feedback provided to them on assessed work has been noted by students. This matter was the subject of a recommendation in the Developmental engagement, and the College has invested considerable staff development effort to ensure that existing good practice is more widely shared. External examiner reports support the view that there has been a significant improvement.

37 Students enrolled on the distance learning Foundation Degree in Facilities Management praised the comprehensive and user-friendly website developed by the College to support their learning. Perusal of this website by the team confirmed the impression of high-quality learning materials.

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

38 The College was commended on its staff development provision in the Developmental engagement, and the good practice inherent in staff development activities has continued. As noted in paragraphs 22 and 23, a wide range of development opportunities is offered, and funding is provided for industrial updating and postgraduate training. Participation in professional updating, research and other developmental activities is monitored at faculty level, and also centrally in order to ensure appropriate and sufficient uptake. The records of the activities recently undertaken evidence extensive engagement in training and development by staff delivering the higher education provision.

**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?**

39 Resource provision for the programmes under review is overseen by the Higher Education Strategic Forum, making use of the wide range of indicators provided to it about the provision. Library provision is seen to be satisfactory by stakeholders. No concerns about the resources are expressed by representatives of the awarding bodies. Students noted occasional difficulties in obtaining access to course texts, and with peripheral noise in the library, but otherwise found the physical and electronic resources to be appropriate to their needs. The College is making growing use of e-books as a more effective way of meeting students' requirements; part-time students see these as particularly useful.

40 All students enrolled on the programmes under review have access to the Leeds Metropolitan University library resources. Those enrolled on the programmes validated by the University are also entitled to undertake information skills training provided by the University's library. However, students met by the team noted that they found little need to make use of university resources, as those provided by the College met their needs.

41 The College is continuing to develop its virtual learning environment for use by staff and students. At the time of the Developmental engagement, the College was in the process of expanding the virtual learning environment with plans that all higher education units and modules should make use of it. Progress has been considerable and each programme unit now has a set minimum presence, including all learning materials, as well as full details of the assessment instruments to be used. In some cases, interactive engagement between staff and students on discussion boards is prolific. The students met by the team recognised considerable benefit in the ability to access programme materials from home, and to interact online with tutors and staff.

42 Access to the course materials provided by the virtual learning environment is made by means of an intranet site specifically for higher education students. A thoughtfully designed menu provides entry to a wide range of other resources, including induction materials; short video presentations about the College and its higher education provision; information on student services; maps and floor plans; and access to the range of forms that students may need. Also offered are portals to local learning resources and those of Leeds Metropolitan University, to the websites of all the relevant professional bodies, and to extensive learning support materials provided by the Open University. The team found that the use of the virtual learning environment to support and enhance the student learning experience is a feature of good practice.

43 Physical and computing equipment and software to support the higher education provision is seen by students, staff and employers to be of a suitable standard and in some cases exceptional. College staff are particularly proud of the provision of solar panels and associated hardware and software to showcase technological advances in renewable

energy. This growing development is used by students for project work, but is also being made available to industry for research purposes.

**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?**

44 An annually updated higher education prospectus provides the primary source of public information about the College's higher education provision. Similar information is available electronically on the College's website. The prospectus and its electronic counterpart are attractively produced, readable and informative. Information about programmes is presented in simple and clear format, with adequate detail to facilitate selection of a programme for which an applicant is qualified. Students met by the team confirmed that the information provided to them was suitable to inform their choices.

45 Programme handbooks are provided for all the higher education programmes, both in printed form and online. Students undertaking programmes validated by Leeds Metropolitan University are provided with handbooks prepared by the University but adapted for College purposes. These are comprehensive and informative about the content and structure of the programmes, and include relevant policies relating to assessment, academic misconduct, mitigating circumstances, appeals and other regulatory matters. At the Developmental engagement, the handbooks for programmes other than those validated by the University were criticised for poor presentation and limited content. The College has subsequently developed a standard template for handbooks, and all now provide appropriate content. Students expressed mixed feelings about the utility of handbooks but agreed that all the necessary information was provided. A centrally provided diary given to all students contains details of the range of central College services and other general information.

46 Systems are in place to provide employers with information to support their engagement with students of the College. Comprehensive information packs are made available to inform employers of the programmes and services available from the College, and handbooks are provided to assist them in managing the relationship with the College and their employee students. The College sends standard reports to employers on each sponsored student every 12 weeks, and if necessary engages in discussion with managers of the students concerned.

#### **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?**

47 Responsibility for information the College publishes about its higher education provision lies with the College's Senior Management Team which approves all material prepared at faculty-level before publication. During the preparation of information faculty staff take care to ensure that College and employer information needs are taken into account as appropriate. The College also invites student focus group discussions on draft designs of prospectus and website materials. A central marketing calendar is maintained to ensure that publication deadlines are met. All materials that carry the logo of the partner university are sent to that institution for checking before publication.

48 Responsibility for the content of the annually revised programme handbooks and programme specification documents rests with course teams; a system of reciprocal review

is used by which course team managers check and edit each others' drafts of these documents. Drafts are also reviewed at course team meetings and at a specially convened annual meeting which considers all curriculum changes and the related documentation. These processes are overseen effectively by the Higher Education Strategic Forum, which body includes in its membership the College's Marketing Manager, and managers responsible for electronically published resources, including virtual learning environment content.

**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**

49 The lines of enquiry for the first Developmental engagement agreed with the College in advance of the team's visit were:

**Line of enquiry 1:** How is the College assured that its assessment design, criteria and processes reflect appropriate academic standards and professional practice?

**Line of enquiry 2:** Does the higher education assessment cycle, including tutorial processes and feedback, offer appropriate learning opportunities and facilitate student achievement of the intended learning outcomes?

**Line of enquiry 3:** How effective are the College systems in maintaining accuracy of published information about assessment?

50 In the course of the Developmental engagement, the team identified several areas of **good practice**: the comprehensive range of assessment-related staff development activities available to higher education staff, including a recent emphasis on assessment design and internal moderation procedures, the widespread uptake of such activities and the outcomes of the effective annual observation of the teaching and learning process make a significant contribution to the maintenance and enhancement of academic standards; the methodology used by the College to engage students in the IQER process and the intention to embed this within the annual higher education quality cycle; the timetabled research and assessment classes; and the wide range of learning, teaching and assessment activities provided to students and the embedded relationship between theoretical and practical aspects.

51 The College was **advised** to take action on two points: to continue with its development work to align the management of all higher education external examiner reports and ensure that its internal verification procedure is consistently applied to all aspects of its higher education provision, as a means to ensure consistent practice under Core theme 1; and to continue with its development work to provide students with a consistent standard of written feedback on their assignments and give account to the existing good practice demonstrated by the FdSc Quantity Surveying, HNC Civil Engineering and HNC Construction Studies course teams.

52 It was **desirable** for the College to take action on two points: to work with its awarding partners to review the quality assurance systems applied to the production of course handbooks to ensure that relevant and clear information about assessment is provided consistently to all students; and to continue to develop the virtual learning environment as a means of supporting the assessment process and the quality of learning opportunities offered to higher education students.

## D Foundation Degrees

53 As noted in paragraph 5, two of the seven programmes included within the scope of this Summative review are Foundation Degrees. At the time of the review the College has 12 students studying on programmes leading to the award of a Foundation Degree. Foundation Degrees are awarded in partnership with Leeds Metropolitan University in Facilities Management and Quantity Surveying Studies. The College has worked closely with its awarding partner to develop the programmes and ensure that appropriate progression routes to further higher education study are available. The validation process of all Foundation Degrees has ensured that full account has been given to Academic Infrastructure and *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark* requirements.

## E Conclusions and summary of judgements

54 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Leeds College of Building'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.

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

- the strength and effectiveness of the links between the College and Leeds Metropolitan University (paragraphs 7, 8, 25)
- the process for developing the student written submission which is now embedded in the higher education quality cycle (paragraphs 10, 11, 32)
- the proactive involvement of the College Senior Management Team in establishing and maintaining strong and effective links with employers which have led to staff placements and continuing recruitment to programmes (paragraphs 15, 31, 46)
- the effective management of the curriculum and the learning and teaching experience provided by higher education staff demonstrated by the established record of a significant number of prizes and scholarships (from professional and other bodies) being awarded to its students (paragraph 28)
- the additional opportunity for higher education staff to develop and enhance their teaching and learning skills through the reciprocal teaching observation process being trialled with staff from a college in a nearby town (paragraph 30)
- the use of the virtual learning environment to support and enhance the student learning experience (paragraph 42).

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

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

- consider reviewing the rationale and terms of reference of both the Higher Education Practitioners' Forum and the Higher Education Strategic Forum with a view to enhancing their effectiveness (paragraph 14)
- introduce a mechanism to ensure that any draft assessment task provided to students prior to verification is clearly identified as being subject to verification and that students fully understand the implications of this (paragraph 19)
- consider developing and including a version control mechanism on published higher education admissions and performance data prior to internal dissemination (paragraph 20)

- consider developing and publishing a definitive record of higher education policies and procedures as a means of facilitating the induction of new staff and the systematic implementation of higher education policies and procedures (paragraph 21).

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

59 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 agreements for the management of the quality of learning opportunities to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

60 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.

Leeds College of Building action plan relating to the Summative review: June 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 <b>good practice</b> that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the strength and effectiveness of the links between the College and Leeds Metropolitan University (paragraphs 7, 8, 25)</li> </ul>	Continue the strategic partnership and teamworking through effective communications within agreed contract and parameters of the HE calendar	July 2011	Faculty Director HECM	Continued positive external examiner feedback as well as completion of meetings linked to the HE calendar and maintain the progression of students to higher level courses	Deputy Principal	Review and evaluate as part of the annual review process (November 2010 and May 2011)  Leeds Metropolitan University Annual Report
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the process for developing the student written submission which is now embedded in the higher education quality cycle (paragraphs 10, 11, 32)</li> </ul>	Embed the student written submission process in the HE calendar for all courses to build upon the value of the 2009/10 input from learners and staff teams	July 2011	HECM Assistant Faculty Manager	Continued completion of the student written submission with input from students representing all programmes across HE	Faculty Director HECM	Clear analysis and evaluation as part of the Quality Course Review process (January 2011 and July 2011) and at the annual planning event (July 2011)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the proactive involvement of the College Senior Management Team (SMT) in establishing and maintaining strong</li> </ul>	Progress work with employers through placements, recruitment and bespoke programmes	July 2011	Senior Management Team	Network Forum meetings to continue key account management of companies by SMT	Deputy Principal	College Self-Assessment Report  Principal's Termly Reports

	and effective links with employers which have led to staff placements and continuing recruitment to programmes (paragraphs 15, 31, 46)				Development of sector network  Maintain high employer satisfaction rates  Continued development of CRM system via Business Development Manager  Viable group sizes through employer commitment to programmes		Employer newsletters
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the effective management of the curriculum and the learning and teaching experience provided by higher education staff demonstrated by the established record of a significant number of prizes and scholarships (from professional and other bodies) being awarded to its students (paragraph 28)</li> </ul>	Maintain promotion of entry of HE students for a range of awards, prizes and scholarships	March 2011	Course tutors/ assistant faculty managers HECM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opportunities promoted, eg: CIOB, CIBSE, ICE</li> <li>Regional and national award ceremonies</li> <li>College/University graduation and awards</li> </ul>	Faculty Director HECM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Faculty SAR</li> <li>Principal's Termly Reports</li> <li>Employer newsletters</li> <li>Quality Course Review</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the additional opportunity for higher education staff to develop and enhance their teaching and learning skills through</li> </ul>	Continue to develop the OTL process and system to include neutrality in the grading process and utilise external	June 2011	Quality Improvement Manager	Joint provider OTL to take place annually	Faculty Director HECM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Summary OTL Report</li> <li>Faculty SAR/OTL Report</li> </ul>

the reciprocal teaching observation process being trialled with staff from a college in a nearby town (paragraph 30)	partner input					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the use of the virtual learning environment (VLE) to support and enhance the student learning experience (paragraph 42).</li> </ul>	Build upon good promotion of VLE developments across HE programmes	February 2011	Course team managers/ CoVE Team	<p>Ensure all programmes are accounted for on the VLE</p> <p>Promote usage of VLE as part of induction process</p> <p>Monitor access of the VLE by students/staff</p>	Assistant Faculty Managers HECM	Student written submission (SWS) and VLE - access data reports for logins to the system
<b>Desirable</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>Target date</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Success indicators</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
The team agreed the following areas where it would be <b>desired</b> to take action to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>consider reviewing the rationale and terms of reference of both the Higher Education Practitioners' Forum and the Higher Education Strategic Forum with a view to enhancing their effectiveness (paragraph 14)</li> </ul>	Clear review of the rationale and terms of reference of both the Higher Education Practitioners' Forum and the Higher Education Strategic Forum liaising with the group representatives to maximise effectiveness	July 2011	Faculty Director HECM	Rationale and terms of reference updated in format to match other College committees to enable clarity (minimal overlap) of the roles of the two forum groups with specific input to HE programmes, cross-college matters, resourcing and reviews	Deputy Principal	Review and evaluate as part of the annual review process (November 2010 and May 2011) and at the annual planning event (July 2011)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>introduce a mechanism to ensure that any draft</li> </ul>	Ensure timely completion of the	November 2010	Assistant Faculty	Completed formative IV process in line with	Faculty Director	Clear analysis and evaluation

assessment task provided to students prior to verification is clearly identified as being subject to verification and that students fully understand the implications of this (paragraph 19)	formative internal verification (IV) process to ensure no assessment activities are handed out prior to verification in line with the College's HE Assessment Cycle		Manager HECM	the programme assessment calendar and the College's HE Assessment Cycle  Feedback from SWS, IV and external examiner processes	HECM	as part of the Learner Perception of Course (LPOC) Quality Course Review process (January 2011 and July 11) and at the annual planning event (July 2011)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>consider developing and including a version control mechanism on published higher education admissions and performance data prior to internal dissemination (paragraph 20)</li> </ul>	Ensure dates and referencing form part of the data set as handed out from Prosolution systems throughout the academic year	July 2011	Faculty Director HECM	Clear data sets with version control and dates identified as the year progresses  Accurate (time-related) data sets included in Quality Course Reviews and SARs	Deputy Principal	Review and evaluate as part of the Faculty Director meetings (termly) and at the annual planning event (July 2011)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>consider developing and publishing a definitive record of higher education policies and procedures as a means of facilitating the induction of new staff and the systematic implementation of higher education policies and procedures (paragraph 21).</li> </ul>	Develop a contents list of all appropriate policies and procedures related to HE management and delivery for staff	October 2010	Quality Improvement Manager	Contents list produced with identified documentation for all HE delivery/support staff  Contents list promoted through HE Practitioners' Forums/new staff inductions	Faculty Director HECM	HE Practitioners' Forum minutes

RG 658 09/10

---

**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](mailto:comms@qaa.ac.uk)  
Web [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)