Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

Bracknell and Wokingham College

November 2010

SR 010

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 Bracknell and Wokingham College carried out in November 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:

- programme staff enjoy close and effective working relationships with the awarding bodies, including sharing staff development events in the College and in the universities and joint teaching observations
- staff are highly committed to supporting students' learning and provide effective academic and pastoral support, including lifestyle issues and help for mature students returning to education, which is highly valued by students
- the programmes are supported by effective employer involvement, particularly through the mentoring system.

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:

- take the initiative in introducing a college-based plagiarism detection system
- provide higher education-focused staff development to encourage the sharing of good practice across programmes and provide a forum for the discussion of matters common to both programmes
- provide a mentors' forum to facilitate two-way communication between employers and the College
- improve communications with flexible learners to ensure that they are better aware of opportunities to access College learning resources
- undertake a mapping of transferable skills at College-level across higher education programmes
- develop a higher education ethos and culture within the College, including the provision of a dedicated higher education study area
- rationalise the role of the College virtual learning environments in supporting students' learning, and to communicate this clearly to students.

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 Bracknell and Wokingham College (the College). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the College discharges its responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes which the College delivers on behalf of the University of Greenwich and the University of Reading. The review was carried out by Ms Mary Blauciak and Professor David Eastwood (reviewers) and Mr Jeffery Butel (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, employers and partner institutions, reports of reviews by QAA and from inspections by Ofsted. In particular, the team drew on the findings and recommendations of the Developmental engagement in assessment. A summary of findings from this Developmental engagement is provided in section C of this report. The review also considered the College's use of the Academic Infrastructure, developed by QAA on behalf of higher education providers, with reference to the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice),* subject and award benchmark statements*, The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and programme specifications.

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

4   Bracknell and Wokingham College is a general further education college, with around 900 full-time and 14,000 part-time students. The College defines its mission as 'to provide the education and training that individuals, organisations and employers need to enable them to achieve their full potential'. In September 2009, the College moved to new purpose-built premises in Bracknell where it now delivers most of its education for 16-19 year-olds and all its higher education provision. The College also has an Adult and Community Education Centre at Woodley, near Reading and a small vocational centre at Wick Hill, Bracknell. The College employs 306 staff, representing 229 full-time equivalents (FTEs), and 395 sessional staff.

Higher education provision at the College

5   There are 127 students, representing 63.5 full-time equivalents, enrolled on higher education programmes for the academic year 2010-11. The higher education provision is delivered by 4.3 FTE staff. The Foundation Degree in Early Years Development and Learning is delivered by two staff, a programme manager and a lecturer, who together represent 1.1 FTEs. The Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector, including the three Additional Diplomas, is delivered by 3.2 FTE staff.

6   The College's higher education provision is as follows, with FTE student numbers in parentheses.

University of Greenwich

- Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector - including Additional Diplomas for ESOL Specialists; for Literacy Specialist Teachers; and in Teaching Mathematics (48)

University of Reading

- Foundation Degree in Early Years Development and Learning (15.5)

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

7   The College has formal agreements with the University of Greenwich and University of Reading. These agreements set out the respective responsibilities of the College and universities very clearly. The oversight and maintenance of the academic standards for each of the programmes rests with the awarding university and is subject to its academic regulations. Quality assurance procedures, including internal verification, assessment boards and external examination processes are also overseen by the awarding bodies. University-based boards of study include representation from the College and other further education providers of the programmes. In both cases, the College is responsible for advertising and recruiting to the programme, providing appropriately qualified staff, student support, library and IT facilities.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

8   The College's move to the new building is now complete and represents a considerable improvement in the learning environment for higher education students. Since the Developmental engagement, programme leaders for the Foundation Degree in Early Years Development and Learning and the Diploma in Teaching for the Lifelong Learning Sector have left the College. They have been replaced by experienced staff. Failure to recruit sufficient numbers of students for the Foundation Degree in Management validated by the University of Winchester has led to the programme being discontinued.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

9   Students on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the Summative review team. Due to the part-time nature of the provision, the College was unable to provide a student written submission. However, feedback was obtained from students on both programmes and submitted in advance of the review. The student feedback was extremely helpful to the team, as were meetings with current and former students from both programmes.

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?

10   The arrangements with partner universities and colleges are effective in facilitating the sharing of good practice and moderation of standards within each programme. There are close and effective working relationships between the College and awarding bodies in which College responsibilities and reporting arrangements are clearly delineated.

11   The College appoints a programme manager for each programme and module leaders for each module. Coordination of the College's higher education provision rests with the Head of the Department of Professional Studies and Higher Education. He reports to the Deputy Principal (Curriculum) who in turn reports to the College Principal. The Director of Quality and Standards has responsibility for the implementation of the College's quality assurance systems and reports to the Principal. Since the Developmental engagement, the College has produced a Higher Education Strategy (2009-12) which makes clear its intention to consolidate rather than expand its higher education provision.

12   The team was provided with an organisational chart outlining the College's committee structure. The terms of reference and recent minutes of the various committees show that, at programme level, course team meetings provide a forum to debate operational matters relating to academic standards. Meetings of the Higher Education Professional Studies and Adult Curriculum Board offer opportunities to review performance at a strategic level. There has been some progress since the Developmental engagement in increasing the dissemination and sharing of information across the College's higher education provision, although often at an informal level.

13   Programme performance is reported to the College's Higher Education Professional and Adult Curriculum Board, which reports to the College's Academic Board, which in turn reports to the Curriculum and Quality Committee of the Corporation. The College has made progress since the Developmental engagement in strengthening its management of higher education curriculum activity. The Higher Education Professional and Adult Curriculum Board has recently been extended to include all higher education programme managers. The College's systems for managing its higher education provision have been strengthened through, for example, the development of an overarching Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy for Higher Education in line with the *Code of practice*. The strategy has also been mapped to requirements of relevant vocational sectors. External examiner reports for each programme confirm that College assessment processes are robust.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

14   The Developmental engagement team recommended that an understanding of the Academic Infrastructure be promoted through staff development. During the Summative review, staff demonstrated a general awareness of the Academic Infrastructure but, in some cases, limited understanding of its practical application to the management and enhancement of academic standards. Programme staff work closely with awarding bodies to ensure alignment of programmes with appropriate standards.

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   Programme staff are clear about their responsibilities for managing and delivering academic standards. The self-assessment states that Foundation Degree programme teams were involved fully in the planning stages of the design of the awards against the FHEQ, the subject benchmark statements, the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*, and the university guidelines. This was confirmed in meetings with representatives from validating partners. The College is meeting the requirements of its awarding bodies and in the process ensuring that practice is aligned with the Academic Infrastructure.

16   The cross-college quality assurance system includes processes for monitoring academic standards through internal verification, assessment boards and external examination processes. External examiners report that they are, in the main, content that the College is fulfilling the academic standards expected by the awarding bodies. However, an external examiner has highighted the potential for plagiarism. Although no instances have been identified in the College, the team considers that the nature of many of the set assignments leave them vulnerable to plagiarism and it is desirable that the College addresses the potential impact of this on the maintenance of academic standards. The quality assurance processes inform the College's annual self-assessment reports and the resulting development plans for each higher education programme. Action plans for development and improvement are placed on the College staff portal for monitoring by management and academic staff and are updated termly. Programme performance is monitored and reviewed utilising the results of key performance indicators as part of performance management review meetings with the senior management team. The College management information system reports on its higher education provision as a separate self-assessment category. Procedures are aligned with the *Code of practice, Section 7: Programme design, approval, monitoring and review*. The awarding bodies require the College to submit a response to the external examiner reports. These are comprehensive and help assure the College, and the awarding bodies, that it is meeting the requirements of the awarding bodies.

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

17   Staff have the opportunity to attend a range of staff development events organised by the awarding bodies. There is also an extensive and structured college-wide schedule of learning and development opportunities linked to an annual cycle of staff appraisal and review. However, the College acknowledges there is a lack of focus on higher education issues in College staff development sessions, evidenced by the agendas for these sessions. The team considers it to be desirable that the College provides higher education-focused staff development opportunities to encourage and facilitate the sharing of good practice across programmes and provide a forum for the discussion of matters common to both programmes. Staff confirm the College's commitment to their development and there is clear evidence of pedagogical review and development. This includes supporting staff in scholarly activity related to teaching, learning and assessment. New staff are teamed with established, experienced staff to provide informal mentoring. Training for work-based mentors is offered by the College although variable attendance levels render this less effective than it could be.

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?

18   Responsibilities for managing the quality of learning opportunities reflect those for managing academic standards, as described in paragraph 10. These responsibilities are discharged at programme level and aimed, primarily, at satisfying the awarding bodies' requirements. There is a limited College overview of this process.

19   The College has a separate and regularly updated Higher Education Strategy (2009-12) which details the aims, objectives and provision of higher education within the College. It reflects a realistic vision of limited future higher education provision.

20   There is a clear cascade structure for the management of the College's provision of higher education learning opportunities. The College Deputy Principal for Curriculum has overall responsibility for appropriate resource provision; specific responsibility for the quality and development of higher education programmes rests with the Head of Department of Professional Studies and Higher Education, reporting through the College's Higher Education, Professional and Adult Curriculum Board to the College's Academic Board. Membership of the Higher Education, Professional and Adult Curriculum Board has recently been strengthened in line with the recommendations of the Developmental engagement.

21   At programme level, higher education programmes are led by course managers, responsible for the coordination of module tutor inputs and assessment strategies. The management structure is well understood by College staff and students, and functions efficiently. Much of the management at programme level is undertaken directly with the awarding bodies.

22   Responsibility for the monitoring of the quality of the College's provision of higher education learning opportunities operates through the Director of Quality and Standards, the Curriculum and Quality Group and the Higher Education, Professional and Adult Curriculum Board. The Curriculum and Quality Group monitors higher education recruitment, progression and student views throughout the year. The Higher Education, Professional and Adult Curriculum Board meets termly to review student recruitment, progression and to confirm new course proposals. Evidence from the review visit confirms that this dual management structure dovetails efficiently and effectively.

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

23   Formal partnership arrangements for managing the quality of learning opportunities reflect those for managing academic standards as described in paragraphs 10 to 14. The College undergoes a process of annual academic review and six-year validation review with the awarding bodies, both of whom allocate staff to link with and support the College in meeting their requirements.

24   The College views its relationships with its awarding bodies as 'excellent'. In the Developmental engagement the diligence and effective engagement of College tutors with the universities was highlighted as an area of good practice. Evidence from the awarding bodies' representatives at the review visit supports this conclusion. The close working

relationship between College programme staff and the universities, including shared staff development events and joint observations of teaching, assures the College that it is meeting its obligations to the awarding bodies.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

25   As noted in paragraph 14, the College is made aware of the requirements of the Academic Infrastructure through its awarding bodies who provide advice and guidance to ensure that programme management engages with it. Although there is a general understanding of the Academic Infrastructure, there is scope for ensuring that staff understand its direct relevance to the day-to-day operation of programmes.

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

26   Reports from external examiners and the awarding bodies are extremely positive in terms of teaching and learning and associated assessment practices, commenting specifically on 'innovative assessment practices' and an 'impressive dedicated team'. Programme teams are in close contact with their awarding bodies and seek to ensure that their practices are in line with expectations.

27   The quality of teaching and learning is monitored by the College's Quality and Standards Directorate through a robust process of joint teaching observations and peer reviews with the awarding bodies. Academic staff confirm both the effectiveness and usefulness of this collaboration. Formal feedback on curriculum content, delivery and assessment is obtained from employer representatives through surveys and review events, such as awarding bodies' management steering groups, and informally during tutor visits to student placements.

28   The College canvasses students' views in a number of ways. Written feedback from students is collected for each module and collated by the Quality Directorate for discussion at Annual Course Review. Feedback from, and to, students is through student representation on programme committees and at Annual Course Review. In meetings with reviewers, students confirmed the effectiveness of both the collection of student opinion and the provision of feedback to them. Given the small class sizes, informal feedback from students, which is encouraged by course tutors, provides further valuable evidence of the quality of teaching and learning.

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

29   Although the College does not operate a formal 'open door' policy, it provides effective support through a combination of personal tutors and course-based tutorials. There is some variation between programmes in the frequency of weekly or fortnightly tutorials with course tutors, but support is supplemented by additional meetings with personal tutors designed to monitor progression and identify and address pastoral issues. Regular courses dealing with lifestyle issues are available and students have access to College and external counsellors. Additional specialist student support, for example for students with disabilities or mature students returning to education, is available at college level, including out-of-hours and travelling support. Staff are highly committed to supporting students' learning and students are appreciative of the availability of substantial academic and pastoral support. The support system is designed to accommodate the demands of part-time students, including those following the flexible (distance) learning mode. In meetings, students confirmed its overall effectiveness.

30   Students are also supported by a system of work-based mentors. Mentor training is given by the College and the awarding bodies. Although some inconsistencies were noted in the Developmental engagement, generally, students are well-supported by their work-based mentors. The provision of in-college training for mentors was also cited in the Developmental engagement as good practice, and this was confirmed in a meeting with employers. Mentors appreciated the policy of having a tutor sit in with them when they first observed students. However, there is little evidence of employers' being able to inform the development of the mentoring scheme. In meetings with the team, employers expressed a desire for a mentors' forum to facilitate a two-way exchange of information, experiences and ideas. The wealth of ideas provided by the employers lead the team to consider that the provision of an employers' forum would be desirable.

31   The College operates an optional distance learning 'flexible learning mode'. Students following this path are, in general, adequately supported by comprehensive study guides and extensive online library resources. However, distance learning students and their tutors were unaware of the possibilities of reserving texts in advance by telephone for collection when they attend College. The team considers it desirable that the College improves communications with flexible learners to ensure that they are better aware of opportunities to access College learning resources.

32   Programme performance indicators, including student progression and achievement, are monitored through annual course review and evaluation meetings and assessed in
self-assessment reviews. Overall data on student achievement shows that the College's higher education students are performing at least in line with other network partners and sector benchmarks.

33   College-wide careers guidance is informed by strong links with external organisations. Advice is available from tutors and college-wide human resources and careers advice staff. In practice, students on the two programmes usually have very clear career ambitions and are often sponsored by their employer.

34   The College Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy states that '...higher education programmes are designed to encourage students to develop their own skills and to access online materials and other opportunities.' Subject-specific, academic and transferable skills are developed within the two programmes. However, there is no clear evidence of any overall College strategy for transferable skills mapping, or personal development planning for its higher education students. The team considers it to be desirable that the College undertakes a mapping of transferable skills at College-level across higher education programmes.

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

35   The College works effectively with its awarding bodies, both of whom offer staff development activities. These are well attended and staff stated that outcomes are subsequently cascaded informally within the College to programme colleagues. As a result, programme staff feel well-supported, directly and indirectly, by the awarding bodies. However, there is little cross-programme sharing of experiences.

36   The College is committed to developing its staff as effective and well-qualified teachers and provides support for them to gain higher level qualifications, including master's degrees. The College operates three employee development days, but these operate on a cross-college basis and have no specific higher education focus. A 'learning coach initiative'

is also available but, again, only on a cross-college basis. New staff take part in a College-wide induction programme and are mentored and 'buddied' by a colleague. They are required to undertake a one-year probationary period which includes three review interviews with the Head of Department. Staff consider these activities to be supportive of their development.

37   The College provides development opportunities for mentors and employers involved in higher education programmes. The provision of in-college training days for mentors was cited as an example of good practice in the Developmental engagement. The employers who met the team were extremely positive about the value of this exercise. Additional mentor training support for the FD Early Years Development and Learning programme is given by the University of Reading.

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?

38   The College's new premises have modern resources, good provision of reading materials and appropriate facilities for private study. Although none of these resources is specific to higher education as they are 'shared' with the further education provision, the College states in its self-evaluation that there are no discernable tensions arising out of this sharing. However, some students, in pre-review interviews and in meetings with the team, felt that there were insufficient multiple copies of core texts. In the meeting with current students it was apparent that some flexible learners were unaware of opportunities to reserve texts in the library for collection when attending College. The team considers it desirable that communications with flexible learners are improved to ensure that they are better aware of opportunities to access College learning resources. Given the small numbers of higher education students enrolled, all of whom are studying part-time, the College experiences significant difficulty in creating any distinct higher education ethos and culture. Students feel that they would benefit from a dedicated higher education study area. The library is shared with younger, further education students and the team observed that it can be noisy and not conducive to quiet study. The team considers it to be desirable that the College provides a dedicated higher education study area for quiet study and seeks to develop a higher education ethos within the College.

39   The Developmental engagement report noted as good practice the developing use of the College's virtual learning environment in enhancing accessibility of information to students. Additionally, students can access the respective university's virtual learning environment, and avail themselves of associated support. However, during this review, students expressed some reservations concerning the relevance, accuracy and currency of the information available to them on the College virtual learning environment and noted some confusion concerning its relationship with the universities' virtual learning environments.

40   The higher education provision is delivered by 4.3 full-time equivalent staff, giving a student to staff ratio of 14.8. Staff resources are therefore relatively generous and, with small class sizes facilitating student involvement, the quality of the teaching and learning environment is good. This is reflected in high retention and progression rates.

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?

41   Responsibility for course-related information such as programme specifications, programme and student handbooks, module specifications, assignment briefs, assessment regulations and procedures rests with awarding bodies. Some additional information relating to, for instance, marketing materials and supplementary course information is published by the College, primarily in brochures and on the College website. The self-evaluation states that staff are able to influence the content and style of some of this information, for example College student handbooks. This was confirmed by college staff.

42   Module specifications include detailed assessment criteria, rationales, and intended learning outcomes. Programme handbooks also contain information on appeals and complaints procedures and students were clear how to make an appeal. Mentor handbooks and programme handbooks, also produced by the awarding bodies, are provided to mentors and employers. Mentors in particular find this information helpful.

What arrangements does the College have in place to assure the accuracy and completeness of information the College has responsibility for publishing? How does the College know that these arrangements are effective?

43   The College's marketing department has implemented improved quality assurance procedures for managing the publication of the prospectus, leaflets and website materials. The process includes timelines and a final sign-off by the College's Marketing Manager, Head of Department and programme managers who are responsible for checking the accuracy of published course information in the College prospectus and website. The Head of Department and course managers have met formally this year to ensure that timely checking of published information occurs prior to publication deadlines and that it is in line with awarding bodies' requirements.

44   The Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector programme team has, in response to student feedback and the Developmental engagement, revised and simplified the programme handbook for 2010-11 to address inconsistencies in course information and terminology. Students have access to the College and to the relevant university's virtual learning environments where they may access course-related information. Staff and students agree that there has been increased accessibility to information in the current year. Students welcome these developments, although there remains some confusion about the role of the College virtual learning environment in relation to that provided by the awarding bodies. The team considers it desirable that the role of the College virtual learning environment in supporting student learning is clarified and communicated to students.

45   The Developmental engagement identified variations in the perception of employers about the usefulness of information provided by the College. As a result, the College has produced generic guidelines supplemented by an employers'/mentors' newsletter. While this is considered useful, the team concurs with the mentors who indicated that an opportunity to feed back to the College, through a mentors' forum, would be helpful. The team regards the establishment of a mentors' forum to be a desirable development.

46   In order to ensure equal access to information for all students, the College seeks to meet the requirements of those with specific needs. For example, students with dyslexia receive assessment materials printed on suitably coloured paper. However, provision for visually-impaired students is variable, especially where web-based provision is involved.

47   The College has responded positively to the recommendations of the Developmental engagement. Although implementation of the resultant action plan is as yet incomplete, students interviewed during the review confirmed recent improvements, such as greater clarity of information in programme handbooks. The team concludes that the College is making good progress in formalising the procedures for ensuring the accuracy and completeness of the public information that it is responsible for publishing.

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

48   The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in September 2009. The three lines of enquiry, agreed with the College in advance, are set out below. The lines of enquiry reflect a broad range of assessment issues.

Line of enquiry 1: How does the College assure itself that its assessment strategies and procedures maintain academic standards and assessment procedures are clearly communicated to staff and students?

Line of enquiry 2: How effective are academic teams, mentors and workplace line managers in supporting students in preparation for assessment and in giving appropriate advice and feedback so that students achieve intended learning outcomes?

Line of enquiry 3: How does the College ensure the accuracy, completeness and accessibility of published information on assessment to students and other stakeholders?

49   The Developmental engagement team identified a range of good practice. This included the additional assessment guidance provided by College tutors, the effective use of personal development portfolios in encouraging and supporting students' self-assessment and reflective practice, the high quality of tutor feedback on student-assessed work and the provision of in-college training days for mentors and the developing use of the virtual learning environment to enhance accessibility of assessment information to students.

50   The Developmental engagement report also made a number of recommendations. These included improving the monitoring of the accuracy, completeness and accessibility of higher education assessment information provided to stakeholders, developing a College teaching, learning and assessment strategy for its higher education provision, and clarifying the College committee structure for reporting on outcomes of assessment on higher education programmes. The report also encouraged the College to provide higher education staff development activities to foster and facilitate the sharing of good practice, to develop a College policy on the use of mentors in the workplace, and to review the usefulness of the information the College provides to employers on the assessment of students on its higher education programmes.

D   Foundation Degrees

51   At the time of the Developmental engagement, the College offered two Foundation Degrees, an FD in Early Years Development and Learning, in partnership with the University of Reading, and an FD in Management, in partnership with the University of Winchester.

The College was involved at the design and validation stage for both programmes which were mapped against the Foundation Degree award descriptors.

52   The FD Early Years Development and Learning was established in 2005. It is well supported by local employers and the University of Reading maintains regular contact with the employer-lead body, the Children's Workforce Development Council. Two other local further education colleges also deliver the programme and there is close collaboration between centres. Work-based learning modules are integrated across the programme and supported by mentors and link tutors. The completion rate for the programme is high.

53   The FD in Management was established in 2007 and the completion rate for the first cohort was high. However, the programme did not recruit a viable first-year cohort for 2009-10. In consequence, it was agreed with the University of Winchester that the programme would no longer be offered and the agreement with the University terminated. Nine second-year students enrolled for the academic year 2009-10 completed their studies successfully in June 2010. The conclusions below relating to good practice and recommendations apply equally to Foundation Degrees.

E   Conclusions and summary of judgements

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

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

*   programme staff enjoy close and effective working relationships with the awarding bodies, including sharing staff development events in the College and in the universities and joint teaching observations (paragraphs 10, 24, 26, 27, 35)
*   staff are highly committed to supporting students' learning and provide effective academic and pastoral support, including lifestyle issues and help for mature students returning to education, which is highly valued by students (paragraph 29)
*   the programmes are supported by effective employer involvement, particularly through the mentoring system (paragraph 30).

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

*   take the initiative in introducing a college-based plagiarism detection system (paragraph 16)
*   provide higher education-focused staff development to encourage the sharing of good practice across programmes and provide a forum for the discussion of matters common to both programmes (paragraphs 17, 35)
*   provide a mentors' forum to facilitate two-way communication between employers and the College (paragraphs 30, 45)
*   improve communications with flexible learners to ensure that they are better aware of opportunities to access College learning resources (paragraphs 31, 38)
*   undertake a mapping of transferable skills at College-level across higher education programmes (paragraph 34)

- develop a higher education ethos and culture within the College, including the provision of a dedicated higher education study area (paragraph 38)
- rationalise the role of the College virtual learning environment in supporting students' learning, and to communicate this clearly to students (paragraph 44).

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

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

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, 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.

Bracknell and Wokingham College action plan relating to the Summative review: November 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:						
• programme staff enjoy close and effective working relationships with the awarding bodies, including sharing staff development events in the College and in the universities and joint teaching observations (paragraphs 10, 24, 26, 27, 35)	Maintain levels of engagement with HEIs Hold regular meetings of all HE team to disseminate good practice Further develop specific HE staff development	30 June 2011	Programme managers; Head of HE	Regular cascading of good practice; regular CPD events held	Higher Education Professional and Adult Curriculum Board (HEPAC); Deputy Principal (Curriculum)	Staff feedback; staff Institute for Learning returns; programme self-assessments
• staff are highly committed to supporting students' learning and provide effective academic and pastoral support, including lifestyle issues and help for mature students returning to education, which is highly valued by students (paragraph 29)	Maintain existing practice; consider ways to disseminate good practice across College (for example, through teacher training)	30 April 2011	Programme managers; Head of HE	Effective dissemination of practice	Deputy Principal (Curriculum)	Staff feedback; programme self-assessments

• the programmes are supported by effective employer involvement, particularly through the mentoring system (paragraph 30).	Establish a forum for mentors and employers across HE provision to increase input from external stakeholders	30 April 2011	Head of HE; programme managers	Receive regular feedback from mentors and employers	Deputy Principal Curriculum; HEPAC Board	Course review and evaluation process
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:						
• take the initiative in introducing a college-based plagiarism detection system (paragraph 16)	Strengthen induction procedures and training to improve student awareness of academic requirements and to emphasise the College's vigilance in monitoring academic standards in HE Assess costs and benefits of providing College-based software to counter plagiarism Explore possibility of sharing online resources with the HEIs	30 June 2011	Head of HE; programme managers; Deputy Principal (Curriculum)	Improved training for HE students in referencing and academic practice Improved processes for detecting plagiarism	Deputy Principal (Curriculum); HEPAC Board	Annual programme reviews; annual self-assessment reports; external examiner reports

• provide higher education-focused staff development to encourage the sharing of good practice across programmes and provide a forum for the discussion of matters common to both programmes (paragraphs 17, 35)	Head of Department to liaise with HE tutors and the Employee Development Manager to provide termly College-based HE training events (matched to planned Employee Development Days) both to supplement HEI events and to provide a College forum for the sharing of good practice in our HE work	31 March 2011	Head of HE; programme managers	Effective HE staff development events and sharing of good practice	Employee Development Manager; HEI programme directors	Staff evaluations and feedback from employee development events
• provide a mentors' forum to facilitate two-way communication between employers and the College (paragraphs 30, 45)	Establish a forum for mentors and employers across HE provision to provide a means of gathering regular input from external stakeholders	30 April 2011	Head of HE; programme managers	Receive regular feedback from mentors and employers	Deputy Principal (Curriculum); HEPAC Board	Course review and evaluation process
• improve communications with flexible learners to ensure that they are better aware of opportunities to access College learning resources (paragraphs 31, 38)	Strengthen induction and tutorial processes for learners on flexible/distance learning (Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector - DTLLS) with increased emphasis on study resources available	30 June 2011	DTLLS Programme Manager	Improved awareness of resource availability evidenced from student evaluations of HE programmes	Head of HE	Student evaluations

• undertake a mapping of transferable skills at College-level across higher education programmes (paragraph 34)	Undertake a mapping of transferable skills to establish similarities in requirements between FD and DTLLS programmes Produce a College-wide strategy for transferable skills development on HE programmes	30 June 2011	Head of HE; programme managers	College-wide strategy for transferable skills development in place	Deputy Principal (Curriculum)	Annual programme reviews; annual self-assessment reports
• develop a higher education ethos and culture within the College, including the provision of a dedicated higher education study area (paragraph 38)	Continue to explore opportunities to provide an HE study area in new building (for example, adjacent to HE teaching rooms 6th floor)	31 July 2011	Head of HE; College Management Team	Positive feedback from HE students in course evaluations	Deputy Principal (Curriculum)	Student evaluations; course review and evaluation process
• rationalise the role of the College virtual learning environment in supporting students' learning, and to communicate this clearly to students (paragraph 44).	Programme teams and Head of HE to re-evaluate the effectiveness of VLE systems in supporting students' learning (in particular to avoid duplication of information and materials on more than one IT platform) Improve induction procedures to clarify the purpose of VLE in supporting students' learning	30 June 2011 30 June 2011	Programme teams; Head of HE Programme teams; Head of HE	Increased use and improved effectiveness of VLE in supporting students' learning	Deputy Principal (Curriculum); HEPAC Board	Course review and evaluation process