



Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

Barking & Dagenham College

February 2011

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Preface

The mission of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications and to inform and encourage continual improvement in the management of the quality of higher education. As part of this mission, QAA undertakes reviews of higher education provision delivered in further education colleges. This process is known as Integrated quality and enhancement review (IQER).

Purpose of IQER

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

The IQER process

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

Developmental engagement

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

The main elements of a Developmental engagement are:

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

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

Summative review

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

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

Evidence

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

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

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

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

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

Outcomes of IQER

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

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

management of the standards and/or quality of the awards made by one awarding body to be different from those made by another.

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

Executive summary

The Summative review of Barking & Dagenham College carried out in February 2011

As a result of its investigations, the Summative review team (the team) considers that there can be **confidence** in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreements, for the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of its awarding bodies. The team also considers that there can be **confidence** in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreements, for the quality of learning opportunities it offers. The team considers that reliance **can** be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Good practice

The team has identified the following good practice for dissemination:

- the designation of champions, which has ensured that staff have a clear understanding of, and are fully engaged with, the expectations of the Academic Infrastructure
- the Higher Education Operational Group successfully manages, monitors and promotes engagement with the Academic Infrastructure
- the External Examiner Tracker process contributes to the effective management and oversight of external examiner reports and ensures that appropriate action is taken
- the active encouragement of the student voice and student participation in the Student Forum.

Recommendations

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

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

- review its higher education assessment strategy to clarify assessment and moderation procedures at both programme and college level.

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

- review the terms of reference of both the Higher Education Strategy Group and the Higher Education Operational Group to ensure that each committee has a clear focus, understands its role, and that their activities are not duplicated
- review the process by which data is provided to ensure teams are given robust course cohort data that is clear and understandable
- consider reviewing and strengthening the procedural guidance on the use and analysis of data in Annual Course Review, to improve the quality of programmes
- provide a detailed record of meetings to ensure more rigorous oversight of the outcomes of the discussion and actions taken
- consider how the new Teaching and Learning Strategy could include a focus on higher education, to support staff working on all higher-level programmes

- develop a formal tutorial policy for higher education students which clearly identifies student entitlement
- review its information on higher education programmes to ensure that full information on fees and financial support for prospective students is provided in printed and electronic form.

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 Barking & Dagenham 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 East London, the University for the Creative Arts, the University of Northampton, and Edexcel. The review was carried out by Mr Maldwyn Buckland, Ms Ruth Stoker, Mr Millard Parkinson (reviewers) and Mr Simon Ives (coordinator).

2 The Summative review team (the team) conducted the review in agreement with the College and in accordance with *The handbook for Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review* (the handbook), published by QAA. Evidence in support of the Summative review included documentation supplied by the College and awarding bodies; meetings with staff, students, and partner institutions; reports of reviews by QAA and from inspections by Ofsted. In particular, the team drew on the findings and recommendations of the Developmental engagement in assessment. A summary of findings from this Developmental engagement is provided in section C of this report. The review also considered the College's use of the Academic Infrastructure, developed by QAA on behalf of higher education providers, with reference to the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, subject and award benchmark statements, *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and programme specifications.

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

4 Barking & Dagenham College is a large general further education institution that provides education and training for more than 7,500 students, of which 4,000 study full-time. Programmes are mostly located on the College's main Rush Green Campus, between Romford and Dagenham, and the School of Performing Arts based at the Broadway Theatre, Barking. In February 2010, the College was renamed Barking & Dagenham College, which the College believes better reflects its geographical location and the community it serves.

5 The College has offered a range of higher education programmes since the 1990s. There are currently three Foundation Degrees and a Certificate in Education offered in partnership with the University of East London. A Foundation Degree in Graphic Design validated by the University for the Creative Arts commenced in 2009. As part of a new partnership with the University of Northampton, the MBA Business commenced in January 2011, and a BA (Hons) Business Management has been validated to start in September 2011. The College continues to offer a range of HNC and HND programmes in partnership with Edexcel. There are currently 293 students (233 full-time equivalent (FTE) students) studying on higher education programmes at the College, taught by 26 staff.

6 The higher education awards funded by HEFCE are listed below, beneath their awarding bodies and with full-time equivalent numbers of students for 2010-11 in brackets:

University of East London

- FD Animation and Creative Video Production (22)
- FD 3-Dimensional Design (15)

- FD Photography (32)
- Post Compulsory Certificate in Education (23.5)

University for the Creative Arts

- FD Graphic Design (46)

University of Northampton

- MBA Business (2)

Edexcel

- HND Computing (6)
- HND Fine Art (9)
- HND Business Studies (22)
- HND 3D (Automotive Design) (6)
- HNC Computing (7)
- HNC Photography (9.5)
- HNC Performing Arts (15)
- HNC Construction (18).

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

7 College responsibilities for the delivery and management of its higher education provision are clearly set out in its partnership agreements. The collaborative agreement with the University of East London sets out clear responsibilities for validation and quality management of programmes. A memorandum of cooperation with the University for the Creative Arts provides clear responsibilities for the validation and approval of the Foundation Degree in Graphic Design. The College has recently entered into a partnership with the University of Northampton for the delivery of an MBA Business and four students were enrolled in January 2011. A BA (Hons) Business Management programme is validated to run from September 2011. For its higher national awards, the College follows the Edexcel standard agreement. The College has a partnership and contract manager who is responsible for monitoring, negotiating and reviewing all contracts.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

8 The Principal and Strategic Management Team have continued the review of College systems and structures and a number of job roles have been revised. The post of Deputy Principal Curriculum and Skills and Learner Experience has been changed to Deputy Principal Planning & Performance, retaining overall responsibility for higher education. The post of Higher Education Coordinator has been changed to Head of Higher Education, and a new post of Higher Education Administrator has been created to facilitate the running of the higher education office. The College's higher education curriculum offer has been revised to reflect the funding council's restrictions on student recruitment.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

9 Higher education students were invited to present a submission to the Summative review team. Their written submission was based on the input of student representatives

from across all curriculum areas following meetings facilitated by the Head of Higher Education. During the review, the team held a productive meeting with students from a wide range of 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 Arrangements for managing higher education standards within the College are in keeping with the regulatory frameworks of the awarding bodies and the responsibilities set out in associated partnership agreements. The self-evaluation states that the College has undertaken a review of its management systems and structures, resulting in the revision of a number of key roles and responsibilities. The Deputy Principal Planning & Performance has executive responsibility for the strategic management of the higher education provision and for ensuring that the policies and procedures of the awarding bodies are implemented.

11 The new post of Head of Higher Education has operational responsibility for leading and coordinating the College's higher education and higher-level skills provision. The Head of Higher Education leads on the development and delivery of higher education curriculum and quality enhancement procedures, and is responsible, together with awarding bodies, for ensuring that external examiners are in place at the beginning of the academic year. These changes, and the addition of the new posts of Higher Education Admissions Officer and Higher Education Administrator, created to facilitate the running of the higher education office, reflect the College's commitment to the continued quality assurance and development of its higher education portfolio.

12 Higher education is arranged and managed across four sectors: Creative Industries and Service sector; Motor Sport; Business Management & Information Technology; and Teacher Training. Overall management of higher education standards in each sector is undertaken by assistant directors and heads of sector. Reporting to heads of sectors, curriculum team leaders undertake a strategic development role and line manage higher education programme leaders who undertake day-to-day management of individual programmes.

13 At programme level, strong collaborative links formed between College programme leaders and link tutors within the faculties of the University of East London and the University for the Creative Arts clearly demonstrate a shared understanding of institutional obligations and responsibilities. Staff confirmed that they welcomed the active role taken by university link tutors and that their provision of formal and informal advice is highly valued. Validating partners ensure that staff are provided with appropriate training into new course developments. They are also invited to conferences for collaborative partners and the universities arrange bespoke staff development as required. The Head of Higher Education regularly attends collaborations monitoring subcommittees of both the University of East London and the University for the Creative Arts. There is substantial evidence of the effectiveness of the supportive and productive collaboration between tutors from the validating universities and College staff. This positive relationship ensures that procedures for higher education quality assurance and enhancement are matched to awarding body requirements and is a clear strength.

14 The Deputy Principal confirmed that the College, in further increasing the number of its awarding body partners and expanding its higher education provision, is in the process of reviewing its higher education strategy. Initial consultation at senior management level, undertaken by the Deputy Principal and Head of Higher Education, is in progress. The draft higher education strategy document will be taken for consultation at the Higher Education Strategy Group and Higher Education Operational Group prior to approval by the Senior Management Team and College Corporation.

15 The College operates a clear and coherent management and monitoring structure for the oversight of higher education matters, with an effective quality assurance procedure for the continuous improvement of teaching, learning and assessment and assuring standards. The Higher Education Calendar provides a clear and helpful annual framework supporting the quality assurance cycle. Dates for key quality assurance activities are set out, including meetings of examination boards, Higher Education Strategy Group, Higher Education Operational Group and staff development days.

16 The committee structure comprises Performance and Standards Committee, Academic Board, Higher Education Strategy Group and Higher Education Operational Group. The Higher Education Strategy Group is chaired by the Deputy Principal Planning & Performance. Important issues arising from the Higher Education Strategy Group that warrant immediate action are taken direct to the Senior Management Team and Corporation. Its minutes confirm its function in leading and monitoring higher education strategy and curriculum development, and receiving reports from the Higher Education Operational Group which is chaired by the Head of Higher Education. Academic staff are enthusiastic in their support of the function of the Higher Educational Operational Group, confirming its effectiveness in genuinely enriching the higher education ethos among members. It provides a valuable forum for identifying and sharing good practice.

17 However, the terms of reference for both these groups are too extensive, resulting in a degree of overlap and a lack of focus. Both groups, for example, currently have responsibility for reviewing standards and planning and implementing strategy. The team considers that it is desirable for the College to review the terms of reference of both the Higher Education Strategy Group and the Higher Education Operational Group to ensure that each committee has a clear focus, understands its role, and that their activities are not duplicated.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

18 Academic standards are set and maintained through engagement with all aspects of the Academic Infrastructure. The College and its university partners implement rigorous validation processes to ensure that programmes meet the expectation of the FHEQ, the precepts of the *Code of practice*, the subject benchmark statements, and the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*.

19 The College has responded positively to the advisable recommendation following the Developmental engagement. This advised the College to introduce systematic procedures and continued staff development to ensure full engagement with all aspects of the Academic Infrastructure. This has now become fully integrated into the College's working practices. The Academic Infrastructure has been embedded as a standing item on the agenda for the Higher Education Operational Group. Individual higher education staff, designated as Academic Infrastructure champions, have been allocated responsibility for each section of the *Code of practice*. A series of staff development presentations have been made at the Higher Education Operational Group. These have included discussion of the FHEQ, and the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning); Section 3: Disabled students; Section 4: External*

examining; Section 5: Academic appeals and student complaints on academic matters; Section 6: Assessment of students; Section 7: Programme design, approval, monitoring and review; Section 10: Admissions to higher education. In addition, contributions from staff at the validating universities have provided mentoring and support to activities relating to the design of programmes, assessment and the setting of standards. There is good practice in the designation of champions, which has ensured that staff have a clear understanding of, and are fully engaged with, the expectations of the Academic Infrastructure. The Higher Education Operational Group successfully manages, monitors and promotes engagement with the Academic Infrastructure.

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?

20 The College's higher education Annual Course Review process is well established and effectively managed by programme leaders. The Higher Education Staff Development Handbook confirms that programme leaders write an annual review, which is then collated by heads of sector and incorporated into sector reviews. These feed into a College Self Assessment Quality Improvement Plan. The team was impressed with the understanding the staff displayed in their knowledge and commitment to the Annual Course Review process. However, the team found that there were inconsistencies in the data provided by the College's Information Service and there was little analysis of data in programme reviews. For example, the HNC Photography report, while confirming that retention rates for the previous year stood at 58 per cent (a loss of five students) offered no analysis of why this had occurred, and what measures the College had undertaken to ensure improved retention. It is desirable for the College to review the process by which data is provided to ensure teams are given robust course cohort data that is clear and understandable. To improve the quality of programmes, the College should also consider reviewing and strengthening the procedural guidance on the use and analysis of data in Annual Course Review.

21 The College confirmed that for 2009-10 the cross-college Annual Higher Education Self Evaluation Report had been replaced by the self-evaluation produced for the Summative review. The team expressed concern over this, confirming that the self-evaluation document submitted for the Summative review was an overarching document and did not adequately address many of the key evaluative functions undertaken by the annual report. The College is encouraged to consider producing an Annual Higher Education Self Evaluation Report for 2009-10 to supplement the information and analysis provided in the self-evaluation for the Summative review.

22 External examiners appointed by the universities and Edexcel report on the academic standards of the programmes. They consistently confirm that standards of assessment and student achievement are appropriate to the level of study. The external examiner for the Foundation Degree in Graphic Design oversees standards of delivery at both the College and at the University for the Creative Arts. This shared oversight has assisted in producing a coherent approach to course development and review. It has also assisted in ensuring that College students are supported and prepared for potential progression to honours degree programmes at the University.

23 The College has implemented an effective External Examiner Tracker process. This uses a traffic light system for identifying the status of examiners' comments and actions required. For example, the external examiner report for 2009-10 on one programme noted that the internal verification of assignment briefs had been omitted for that year. It recommended that the process be reinstated. Clear action was taken to rectify this. External examiners' reports are circulated to the centre nominee, heads of sector, Strategic

Management Team and the Head of Higher Education. Actions, comments and recommendations identified in the External Examiner Tracker are followed up at annual performance review meetings and through annual course reviews. Awarding body partners have formal procedures requiring responses to external examiners' comments. There is good practice in the External Examiner Tracker process which contributes to the effective management and oversight of external examiner reports and ensures that appropriate action is taken.

24 The Self Evaluation states that in 2009-10 a single college-wide Higher Education Examination Board, chaired by the Head of Higher Education, replaced subject-specific programme examination boards. The College's stated aim for the Examination Board is to identify and share good practice, and ensure accurate and comprehensive recording of assessment decisions. However, no terms of reference exist for the Board and, during dialogue with academic staff, the team found difficulty in clarifying its objectives. Minutes from the Examination Board show that it receives assessment transcripts from individual programmes. While the concept of a college-wide board is potentially a good initiative, there needs to be clarification of its role and responsibilities.

25 External examiners confirm that assessment and moderation processes for all programmes are fair. However, for assessment boards for Edexcel programmes, the College has no explicit terms of reference, constitution or membership. Staff stated that assessment decisions are sometimes taken by programme teams without an external examiner, or independent representative, being present. There is a lack of clarity about how Edexcel requirements for assessment boards, and the expectations of the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*, are being met. It is advisable for the College to review its higher education assessment strategy to clarify assessment and moderation procedures at both programme and college level.

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

26 The College has a comprehensive system for supporting staff working on higher education programmes. All staff are made aware of this entitlement through the Staff Learning and Development Policy, which sets out the College's commitment to staff development. All staff undertake a formal induction programme and are allocated a mentor from their programme area. There is a Higher Education Staff Handbook which is a comprehensive document dealing with all aspects of higher education provision at the College.

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?

27 The responsibilities for managing the quality of learning opportunities, and the consequent quality assurance and enhancement processes, reflect those for managing academic standards. These are described in paragraphs 10 to 17. There is a clear management structure for higher education. Roles and responsibilities are understood by staff and are effective in ensuring that learning opportunities are well managed. There is an emerging role for the Higher Education Strategy Group and the Higher Education Operations Group as the key committees engaged with reviewing and enhancing higher education learning opportunities.

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

28 The processes by which the College assures itself that it is fulfilling its obligations to its awarding bodies are described in paragraphs 20 to 25. External examiners comment favourably on the learning opportunities provided for students. The Annual Course Review process also provides a robust mechanism for ensuring that aspects of learning opportunities are addressed. However, a review of student retention and achievement forms part of the programme review process. While achievement overall is good, two programmes, BTEC HNC Photography and BTEC HND Graphic Design, showed disappointing retention rates in 2009-10. The Higher Education Operational Group minutes show that these concerns were raised as part of the quality review process, but there are no explicit actions to address these. The team considers that it is desirable for the College to provide a detailed record of meetings to ensure more rigorous oversight of the outcomes of the discussion and actions taken.

29 Assessment criteria and processes are clear and well understood by students, who feel they are fair. Assessment methodology is good, and a broad range of assessment tasks are used across all programmes. The tasks set are appropriate, varied, and enable the learners to achieve at the correct level. Students report that feedback on their assignments is helpful, exceeding the national average in the National Student Survey results for 2010 for both quality and timeliness.

30 In response to the recommendation following the Developmental engagement in assessment, the College has developed an Internal Moderation Policy including a robust internal verification system. This is applied to all higher education programmes, and relates to the verification of assignment briefs, and to the internal moderation of student work. These procedures are tracked by curriculum team leaders whose responsibilities are clearly set out. The external examiner report for 2009-10 on one programme noted that the internal verification of assignment briefs had been omitted for that year, and recommended that the process be reinstated. Appropriate action has been taken. Staff at the College take part in moderation meetings with staff at its partner universities prior to exam boards where results are moderated and confirmed.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

31 Programmes are aligned with the Academic Infrastructure at the time of validation and institutional approval. The College engagement is regularly checked through the internal

and external reviews undertaken. The College has reviewed its alignment with subject benchmarks and the *Code of practice* and courses review these on a regular basis. External examiners' reports confirm that the quality of learning opportunities is informed by an understanding by teams of the expectations of the requirements of the Academic Infrastructure. Following the Developmental engagement, staff development has focused on the Academic Infrastructure. The College has reviewed its alignment with subject benchmarks and the *Code of practice*, and courses review these on a regular basis. Staff report that they found this approach helpful in developing programme management and encouraging good practice. The outcomes of this process include changes to mitigating circumstances procedures, and assignment submission requirements.

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

32 The College is currently developing a Teaching and Learning Strategy which is now in its first working draft. This will be presented to the Higher Education Operational Group in spring 2011 for consultation. The College states that it intends the strategy to be developed further to ensure that it addresses teaching and learning approaches appropriate to delivery at FHEQ level 4 and above. It is desirable for the College to consider how the new Teaching and Learning Strategy could include a focus on higher education to support staff working on all higher-level programmes.

33 Programme validation events consider the qualifications and experience of prospective staff and give approval to teach on programmes of study. Changes of staff are notified to the relevant university which approves their suitability on an annual basis. The College produces a comprehensive Higher Education Staff Handbook. This provides essential information for staff teaching on higher education programmes, including reporting systems, responsibilities, quality assurance systems and the Academic Infrastructure. The College also produces a Higher Education Academic Precepts booklet which contains all sections of the *Code of practice*. These documents are particularly useful for staff new to teaching higher education within the College, familiarising them with the Academic Infrastructure.

34 A number of staff hold postgraduate qualifications appropriate to their area of teaching. Several are working towards higher degrees, with the College contributing to their course fees. All contracted members of staff hold teaching qualifications. Staff said that they felt well supported through professional development related to teaching and learning. Staff teaching on university-validated programmes are actively encouraged to engage in the wide-ranging continuing professional development activities they offer.

35 The College conducts annual lesson observations using Ofsted grading criteria to provide an indication of teaching quality. Higher education lessons are all internally graded satisfactory and above, with a large majority good or very good. The College has recognised, however, that it needs a specific higher education lesson observation system and is developing a Higher Education Peer Observation Procedure which is to be considered by the Higher Education Operational Group in spring 2011.

36 The College has a well-established Student Forum which meets each fortnight. This is a key means of obtaining student opinion on the quality of teaching and learning and aspects of higher education provision. The Head of Higher Education chairs the Forum and student representatives from all programmes are invited to attend. Issues raised are taken to the Higher Education Strategy Group and Higher Education Operational Group for discussion and action. The timing of the Student Forum is an issue for part-time students who find it difficult to attend. Minutes of the Student Forum are made available to all students

through the College's virtual learning environment. Alternative methods for gathering student feedback are in place, such as module level and college-wide questionnaires in line with the National Student Survey. Students said they are fully informed of actions emanating from the Student Forum, questionnaires and programme review processes. Explanations are given where issues were not fully resolved, and they considered the process to be highly effective. The active encouragement of the student voice and student participation in the Student Forum is considered good practice.

37 Work-based learning is embedded in a number of higher education programmes in line with the broad precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning*. Modes of engagement with employers vary across programmes, and there is evidence of valuable integration with industry. Examples include students on industrial placements with engineering and graphic design companies. Others are in employment, studying on a day-release basis, and some working on a contract basis to create 'live' briefs set by external agencies. Students unable to obtain placements work on simulated industrial projects set by staff at the College. Employers involved in HNC Construction hold meetings with the staff team on a termly basis to discuss student progress. Students felt that assessment criteria for work-based learning, where it is assessed, are clear and applied evenly whether they are working on external or internally set projects. Art and design students said that they welcomed the College's promotion of student work at Free Range, a graduate exhibition in central London, as they felt this was a valuable opportunity for students working on creative programmes to have their work considered in the professional environment.

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

38 In response to the recommendation of the Developmental engagement in assessment that the College review its processes for student induction, a single induction day for higher education students was introduced in September 2010. This included the distribution of the revised BTEC Edexcel Student Guide to Assessment, which provides full information on assessment, mitigation and student appeals process. Student feedback suggests that the induction process now provides clear and helpful information for students.

39 Study skills are well supported by the College, either through a specific academic skills module on a number of programmes, or through the Learning Centre's higher education support workshops and the Higher Education Study Skills Guide. Several external examiners have commented favourably on the study skills support and on the use of academic referencing.

40 Student surveys indicate that students feel that staff are good at explaining things to them. Higher education programmes at the College have an established informal tutorial support system, and students can also be referred to the Learner Help Centre for pastoral guidance. Students said that there was no formal tutorial system, but that they felt well supported and staff are helpful and accessible. The College acknowledges that it does not have a formal tutorial policy for higher education students, and that it needs to formalise the current system so that students better understand the tutorial process. It is desirable that a formal tutorial policy for higher education students be developed which clearly identifies student entitlement.

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

41 The College's arrangements for staff development to maintain and enhance quality of learning opportunities are outlined in paragraph 26. The Staff Learning and Development

Policy includes a commitment to continuing professional development as an investment in staff. There is an annual staff appraisal system. The College dedicates five staff training days a year to higher education-specific development, and there is a stated intent to allow staff to apply for a further two days study leave for personal development and training related to higher education in 2010-11. The ongoing activities at the Higher Education Operational Group further support staff development and updating on teaching and learning matters.

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?

42 The College has an annual business planning cycle that identifies and allocates resources based on the plans of each sector, and the outcomes of the programme annual review process. Additionally, the Higher Education Strategy Group allocates specific resources based on identified need. As part of the validation process at institutional and programme level, staffing, accommodation and equipment resources are highlighted.

43 Students report that the library resources at the College are sufficient, with a helpful staff team. They also said that they could access library services at the University of East London and the University for the Creative Arts, and they find this valuable. Students stated that the College is well resourced, and that much of the equipment they have access to is of a professional standard. Specialist software is up to date and they feel that they have good access to equipment. Recently, students were frustrated by the unreliability of the wireless internet access, and this is being addressed. Students feel that when resource issues are raised, the College tries to deal with them promptly, or explains why this is not possible. Performing arts students based off the main campus at the Barking Theatre state that the theatre resources are good and that they have access to suitable library resources.

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 The College publishes a range of information for applicants. The main information is provided through an annual Course Guide. This includes information on all the College's further and higher education provision. The specific information on higher education programmes in the general College Course Guide is limited. Programmes of study are listed together with awarding bodies, but there are no details of entry requirements, content, assessment, work-based learning, fees or progression opportunities. The Guide is divided into subject areas with all levels of provision included together. While this provides little information about higher education programmes, it does identify progression routes through further education to higher education. A separate higher education specific prospectus is planned as a supplement to the Course Guide. This is in draft form and is intended to be produced in time for 2011 entry and should provide fuller information for prospective students.

45 Some creative arts programmes produce additional marketing leaflets. These are produced by programme teams and monitored for accuracy and appropriateness by the Head of Higher Education. These include specific examples of students' work and are effective in the promotion of individual programmes.

46 The College website has been re-designed and now links to an e-Campus section. This is separated into sections accessible to staff and to students. Students indicated that the College website has been improved, is easier to navigate, and now includes a specific higher education section. The website provides links to an HE Campus section which identifies all higher education programmes and has links via curriculum areas to each programme's virtual learning environment. The HE Campus section has links to awarding body sites for access to regulations and other information. Students stated that they found this helpful. The HE Campus section also has links to the College UCAS site.

47 The HE Campus section of the site includes a link to fees and funding, but this does not include details of higher education fees for full or part-time students, financial support or bursaries. The sections are the same as those on the College website and are primarily about further education. Students are instructed to contact the College by telephone for information on fees. This could be inconvenient for potential part-time students in employment unable to do this during office hours and does not provide essential information on fees without additional effort. As fees are agreed well in advance of the academic year, they could be included in the website which can be easily updated. It is desirable for the College to review its information on higher education programmes to ensure that full information on fees and financial support for prospective students is provided in printed and electronic form.

48 The virtual learning environment for each programme serves largely as a repository for teaching and research material. Some programme folders contain comprehensive material which students found useful. Students on part-time programmes in construction said that they found the virtual learning environment helpful and supportive, particularly as they only attended the College on a day-release basis. Information on the virtual learning environment is provided by the programme team. The College has initiated a bronze, silver and gold medal award system for grading the quality of each programme's virtual learning environment. This is useful in informing programme teams how they are placed within the College. The programme performance review process establishes an action plan for improvement. Staff are encouraged to be innovative in their use of the virtual learning environment through an incentive system, and some areas, for example the FdA Photography, now include a gallery of student work, blogs and video tutorials.

49 All higher education students receive programme handbooks. These contain general course information. Programme handbooks are produced to common formats for each awarding body. These are comprehensive documents containing all relevant information and are customised for individual programmes. Handbooks are distributed to students electronically through the virtual learning environment and in hard copy at induction. Students report that the handbooks give them relevant information about teaching, learning and assessment, and that they find them clear and helpful. The handbooks are also supported by module documents which set out detailed assessment information. Handbooks for programmes validated by partner universities are produced by them and amended by the College to include specific information for its students. Handbooks for Edexcel-validated programmes are produced by the College and have full information for students.

50 The College publishes a Higher Education Study Skills Guide. This provides comprehensive information about study skills and presenting work. The inclusion of this

study guide in most of the programme handbooks reminds students regularly of the most effective ways to study and of the academic standards required in higher education.

51 E-Prospectus files on the College website are a useful means of providing additional programme information for staff. These include all aspects of course information including programme specifications, subject benchmark statements, UCAS entry profiles and class registers.

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?

52 The student written submission indicates that the College has made positive improvements to its public information, with 91 per cent of student respondents stating that information provided is accurate. Students confirm that the pre-entry information provided by the College is accurate, all relevant information is provided, and the programmes live up to their expectations. However, the student written submission requests that further improvements should be made, especially to information provided on student support.

53 The procedure for gathering information for the prospectus is clear. Information from programme teams is submitted to the College's Marketing Unit which produces a draft and returns it to programme teams to check for accuracy. For validated programmes, published information is approved by the awarding body. For the University of East London and the University for the Creative Arts, checks for accuracy are undertaken by link tutors. The draft prospectus is checked by the Communications and Marketing Officer and is finally signed off for publication by the Principal. The same procedure is used for the College website. Information on the UCAS site is monitored and approved by the Head of Higher Education. This process provides an effective means of monitoring accuracy and currency of published information. The UCAS entry profiles have been revised and approved by awarding bodies. However, these contain little information other than what is available in programme specifications.

54 Programme specifications are produced by the College to awarding body guidelines and are tailored to provide specific information pertinent to delivery at the College, and are in line with QAA requirements. These are reviewed annually by programme teams to ensure they are accurate and complete.

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

55 The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in January 2010. There were three lines of enquiry: assessment is carefully managed on all programmes to ensure awarding body regulations are fully met, and College processes are effective in ensuring parity of student experience; students are aware of the relevant policies and procedures relating to assessment and this has a positive impact on achievement on all courses; the College supports higher education learner performance through effective

formative and summative feedback within considered timeframes, which has a positive impact on learner success.

56 The Developmental engagement team identified a number of areas of good practice. The annual process of higher education course review and the production of a discrete higher education self-evaluation and quality improvement plan; the dedicated and well attended programme of higher education staff development related to assessment; the formal procedures for the submission of student assignments; the extensive involvement of employers in formative feedback with students; and the broad range of formative feedback across all programmes, and the accessibility of staff.

57 The team also made a number of recommendations. It considered that it would be advisable for the College to introduce systematic procedures and continued staff development to ensure full engagement with all aspects of the Academic Infrastructure. The team felt it desirable for the College to implement a standardised approach to the internal verification processes and systems; develop a programme handbook template including a minimum requirement for information on assessment policies and procedures; and introduce a college-wide framework for higher education student induction to include clear guidance on assessment policies and practice.

D Foundation Degrees

58 The College offers a range of full-time Foundation Degrees. It considers that they form an integral part of the curriculum pathways that enable progression from further to higher education studies in vocational areas. It is identifying new vocational routes and meeting the needs of higher-level apprenticeships, employees and those currently under-represented. The team confirms that the processes for the approval of new Foundation Degrees, including the involvement of employers, aligns clearly with the advice in the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*.

59 The Foundation Degrees offered by the College cover the following subjects: animation and creative video production; 3-dimensional design; photography; and graphic design. This provision is closely integrated with the other higher education programmes by means of a common quality assurance process, and the areas of good practice and recommendations apply equally to the Foundation Degrees. There are 115 full-time students enrolled on Foundation Degrees.

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

60 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Barking & Dagenham 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 East London, the University for the Creative Arts, the University of Northampton and Edexcel.

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

- the designation of champions has ensured that staff have a clear understanding of, and are fully engaged with, the expectations of the Academic Infrastructure (paragraphs 18, 19)

- the Higher Education Operational Group successfully manages, monitors and promotes engagement with the Academic Infrastructure (paragraph 19)
- the External Examiner Tracker process contributes to the effective management and oversight of external examiner reports and ensures that appropriate action is taken (paragraph 23)
- there is active encouragement of the student voice and student participation in the Student Forum (paragraph 36).

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

63 The team agreed one area where the College is **advised** to take action:

- review its higher education assessment strategy to clarify assessment and moderation procedures at both programme and college level (paragraph 25).

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

- review the terms of reference of both the Higher Education Strategy Group and the Higher Education Operational Group to ensure that each committee has a clear focus, understands its role, and that their activities are not duplicated (paragraph 17)
- review the process by which data is provided to ensure teams are given robust course cohort data that is clear and understandable (paragraph 20)
- consider reviewing and strengthening the procedural guidance on the use and analysis of data in Annual Course Review, to improve the quality of programmes (paragraph 20)
- provide a detailed record of meetings to ensure more rigorous oversight of the outcomes of the discussion and actions taken (paragraph 28)
- consider how the new Teaching and Learning Strategy could include a focus on higher education, to support staff working on all higher-level programmes (paragraph 32)
- develop a formal tutorial policy for higher education students which clearly identifies student entitlement (paragraph 40)
- review its information on higher education programmes to ensure that full information on fees and financial support for prospective students is provided in printed and electronic form (paragraph 47).

65 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.

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

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

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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.

Barking & Dagenham College action plan relating to the Summative review: February 2011						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
In the course of the Summative review the team identified the following areas of good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the designation of champions has ensured that staff have a clear understanding of, and are fully engaged with, the expectations of the Academic Infrastructure (paragraphs 18, 19) 	Continue to use the rolling programme of review of the <i>Code of practice</i> and other aspects of the Academic Infrastructure to ensure the College continues to maintain its practice and remains fully engaged with the expectations of the Academic Infrastructure	September 2011	Head of Higher Education Programme leaders	Full engagement with the Academic Infrastructure, ensuring staff are aware of changes to the Academic Infrastructure New policies and procedures are checked against the relevant <i>Code of practice</i>	Higher Education Strategy Group Higher Education Operational Group	Records of each presentation by the relevant champion Evaluation in HE Self Evaluation document
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Higher Education Operational Group successfully manages, monitors and promotes engagement with 	Ensuring that the HEOPs group continue to receive the presentations on the Academic Infrastructure, discussing current levels of engagement and ways of further	September 2011	Head of HE Programme leaders	Full engagement with the Academic Infrastructure, ensuring staff are aware of changes to the Academic Infrastructure New policies and	HE Strategy Group HE Operational Group	Agendas, minutes and each presentation held on the HE Campus

the Academic Infrastructure (paragraph 19)	improving engagement			procedures are checked against the relevant <i>Code of practice</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the External Examiner Tracker process contributes to the effective management and oversight of external examiner reports and ensures that appropriate action is taken (paragraph 23) 	Ensure that the External Examiner Tracker process is maintained and that periodic review is planned on HE Calendar and delivered through the performance review process	September 2011	Head of HE	Continued action planning and action in response to external examiners' comments to ensure that all actions are addressed in a timely and professional manner	HE Strategy Group HE performance reviews HE Operational Group	Sharing of good practice and shared procedures to ensure risk is minimised Annual Higher Education Self Evaluation HE Strategy Group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> there is active encouragement of the student voice and student participation in the Student Forum (paragraph 36). 	Continue the practice of seeking regular feedback from students to ensure their concerns and ideas are received formally and records kept of the comments, issues and action taken	September 2011	Head of HE	Continued engagement from students on HE programmes, improved satisfaction of HE students Further developed HE ethos	HE Student Forum Publication of minutes on the HE Campus HE Operational Group HE Strategy Group	Minutes of the HE Student Forum Higher Education Operational Group HE Strategy Group

Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team agreed one area where the College should be advised to take action:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> review its higher education assessment strategy to clarify assessment and moderation procedures at both programme and college level (paragraph 25). 	<p>To ensure that Edexcel courses operate course assessment boards, and that records of assessment decisions are recorded prior to the cross college examination board in July</p> <p>Appoint an external chair for the end of year examination board</p>	June 2011	Vice Principal Head of HE	Revised assessment strategy for Edexcel courses to ensure that assessment and decisions for individual students are moderated prior to presentation at the end of year examination board	Examination Board Mitigating Circumstances Boards HE Strategy Group Academic Board	<p>Complete and concise records for each student, detailed minutes from course assessment boards</p> <p>Increased confidence in the integrity of the assessment and moderation process for Edexcel courses</p>
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team agreed the following areas where it would be desired to take action:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> review the terms of reference of both the Higher Education Strategy Group 	Review the terms of reference to ensure each committee has distinct and clear terms of reference that clearly	May 2011	Head of HE	<p>Revised terms of reference and committee map</p> <p>Detailed terms of</p>	<p>Academic Board</p> <p>HE Strategy Group</p> <p>HE Operational</p>	Clear and effective terms of reference and academic calendar of

and the Higher Education Operational Group to ensure that each committee has a clear focus, understands its role, and that their activities are not duplicated (paragraph 17)	articulate their purpose and jurisdiction			reference for each committee	Group	scheduled business for each committee
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> review the process by which data is provided to ensure teams are given robust course cohort data that is clear and understandable (paragraph 20) 	To develop a course data system that clearly identifies course data relating to recruitment, retention, achievement and success	June 2011	Head of HE HEOPs members Head of College Information Services	Clear and usable data that can be used in course team meetings, performance reviews and for annual course reviews	HE Strategy Group HE Operational Group Performance & Standards and Academic Board	Clear reference made to course data in all monitoring forums
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> consider reviewing and strengthening the procedural guidance on the use and analysis of data in Annual Course Review, to improve quality of programmes (paragraph 20) 	To review the guidance provided for Annual Course Review to ensure reference is made to course data To ensure target setting and action planning is used to improve quality in successive years	June 2011	Head of HE HEOPs members Head of College Information Services	Critical analysis of course data and action planning and monitoring to ensure retention, achievement and success is continually improved	HE Strategy Group HE Operational Group Performance & Standards and Academic Board	Annual course reviews respond to course data and national benchmarks, including analysis in quality improvement plans to ensure continual improvement

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide a detailed record of meetings to ensure more rigorous oversight of the outcomes of the discussion and actions taken (paragraph 28) 	<p>To develop a standardised template and agenda for all meetings and to provide staff development on recording the outcomes and actions resulting</p>	May 2011	<p>Head of HE</p> <p>Heads of sectors</p> <p>Assistant directors</p> <p>Programme leaders</p> <p>CTLs</p>	<p>Clear and accurate minutes of meetings that follow a standardised agenda, clearly identified issues and actions that can easily be interpreted by a third party</p>	<p>Head of HE</p> <p>HE Strategy Group</p> <p>HE Operational Group</p>	<p>Improved minutes that detail the discussions had, outcomes and action required</p> <p>Minutes that follow a standardised format and agreed agenda</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> consider how the new Teaching and Learning Strategy could include a focus on higher education, to support staff working on all higher-level programmes (paragraph 32) 	<p>To ensure the Teaching and Learning Strategy is reviewed to ensure it reflects the needs of staff teaching on higher level programmes</p> <p>If required the development of a bespoke HE Teaching and Learning Strategy</p>	May 2011	<p>Head of HE</p> <p>Head of Transforming Learning</p>	<p>A Teaching and Learning Strategy that clearly reflects the needs of those teaching at higher levels</p>	<p>HOS</p> <p>Assistant directors</p> <p>HE Strategy Group</p> <p>HE Operational Group</p> <p>Academic Board</p>	<p>A Teaching and Learning Strategy that clearly addresses the needs of teaching and learning for staff and students working at higher levels</p> <p>A strategy that inspires and supports the highest levels of teaching</p> <p>A peer review system that develops higher level teaching skills and shares good practice</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop a formal tutorial policy for higher education students which clearly identifies student entitlement (paragraph 40) 	<p>To develop a formal tutorial policy for higher education that identifies the minimum entitlement for HE students</p> <p>To ensure that tutorials are identified on timetables and that there is a consistent approach and access to tutorial support</p>	May 2011	<p>Head of HE</p> <p>CTLs</p> <p>Heads of sectors</p> <p>Assistant directors</p> <p>College Information Services</p>	<p>A formal policy for HE tutorials, a clear statement on entitlement</p> <p>Further information on requesting tutorials and the range of tutorials used including group tutorials</p> <p>Students' understanding of their entitlement and the range of tutorials available</p>	<p>HOS</p> <p>Assistant directors</p> <p>HE Strategy Group</p> <p>HE Operational Group</p>	<p>A formal policy statement that clearly identifies the tutorial policy</p> <p>A clearly identified timetable for individual and group tutorials for each course</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> review its information on higher education programmes to ensure that full information on fees and financial support for prospective students is provided in printed and electronic form (paragraph 47). 	<p>To review the fees policy approval process to ensure that information on fees is published prior to the annual application process</p>	December 2011	<p>Vice Principal Corporate Services</p> <p>Head of Finance</p> <p>Head of HE</p> <p>Head of Marketing</p>	<p>Clear and informative information for applicants on course fees and the financial support application procedures</p>	<p>Communications and Marketing Strategy Group</p> <p>HE Strategy Group</p>	<p>Clear and accurate information on course fees and financial support process is published by December each year</p>

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