



Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

North Nottinghamshire College

June 2011

SR 76/2010

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ISBN 978 1 84979 392 6

All QAA's publications are available on our website www.qaa.ac.uk

Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Preface

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

Purpose of IQER

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

The IQER process

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

Developmental engagement

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

The main elements of a Developmental engagement are:

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

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

Summative review

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

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

Evidence

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

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

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

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

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

Outcomes of IQER

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

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

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

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

Executive summary

The Summative review of North Nottinghamshire College carried out in June 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 course journals are an effective mechanism for the regular monitoring of data and action plans, thus enhancing both academic standards and learning opportunities
- the College uses internal and external audit rigorously within its quality assurance processes and this results in close monitoring and effective management of higher education
- the College requires one member of staff from the very small staff teams to attend each Edexcel training event and University partner college meeting and disseminate the outcomes
- the involvement in learner reviews of programme area managers from different subject areas brings in an element of openness, independent scrutiny and a further opportunity to share good practice
- the extensive nature of support for students, which the students greatly appreciate and enables them to succeed
- the design and development of the website demonstrates the College's commitment to making information accessible and improves the quality of learning opportunities.

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:

- continue to monitor the new committee arrangements and assess their impact on the higher education provision
- continue to monitor the application of the Academic Infrastructure across its higher education courses and introduce any missing elements
- further develop scholarship and research activity in support of its higher education courses.

A Introduction and context

1 This report presents the findings of the Summative review of higher education funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) conducted at North Nottinghamshire College (the College). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the College discharges its responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes which the College delivers on behalf of Edexcel and Sheffield Hallam University. The review was carried out by Mr Jonathan Doney and Professor Keith Johnson (reviewers) and Ms Penny Blackie (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; a meeting with staff and one awarding body, and one with students; and reports of inspections by Ofsted. There was no Developmental engagement and the review was conducted by a desk-based study. 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 North Nottinghamshire College is a medium-sized general further education college. It serves a community of approximately one tenth of the population of the county living across one third of Nottinghamshire. The College mission statement is 'to create a college which is central to the lives of our communities, and is respected as a great place to learn and grow; a community which inspires, challenges and supports every individual to be their best. The partner of choice for training in our community and in our specialist fields.' Key features of the community include high employment rates in low-paid, low-skills occupations in food manufacturing, logistics and public services, an ageing workforce and an older population. The main College campus is situated in Worksop, with some off-site provision delivered in Retford, including Idle Valley, the College's environmental campus. The higher education initial teacher training courses are held at Idle Valley, with the Edexcel programmes at Worksop. In 2010-11, the College has enrolled 5,454 students, with 63 part-time higher education students, amounting to 36 full-time equivalents. Six members of staff teach on higher education programmes.

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

Edexcel

- HNC Business (5)
- HND Business (5)
- HNC Advanced Practice in Work with Children and Families (15)
- HND Advanced Practice in Work with Children and Families (3)

Sheffield Hallam University

- Postgraduate Certificate in Education: Learning and Skills (2)
- Certificate in Education: Learning and Skills (6).

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

5 The College has well established partnerships with Edexcel and Sheffield Hallam University. The Associate School and College Partnership Agreement with Sheffield Hallam University facilitates the delivery of the initial teacher training. Due to funding changes following the Browne review, and declining recruitment as a consequence of cuts to student finance for initial teacher training, this programme will no longer be delivered at the College from 2011-12. The longstanding Edexcel HNC and HND courses are offered in two subject areas, business and childcare. Delivery models for these courses are currently being reviewed for 2011-12 due to the future funding and Qualification Curriculum Framework changes.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

6 In recent years the College has reduced staff and management numbers through a series of restructures designed to make the management more efficient. The meeting and committee structure has been reviewed and revised to provide reporting to the Principal and senior leadership team. There have been some staffing changes within the business programmes, and a new course tutor was appointed in 2009-10. Edexcel external examiner reports acknowledge the positive impact of this appointment. Reports for the Postgraduate Certificate of Education also show positive progress in response to recent development. The College's strategy for higher education states that 'The scope for expanding the offer, even in a limited way, is constrained.'

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

7 Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the Summative review team, which they did. The Director of Quality and Funding briefed the students, and the student written submission was based on information from a survey of all students. A group of students met with the IQER coordinator at the preparatory meeting, and the team found the results of that meeting and the submission to be helpful to the review.

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?

8 The College has an effective management and reporting structure. The higher education provision operates within an overarching quality system for further and higher education. A recent restructure, driven by changes in further education funding, has resulted in a senior leadership team reduced in size; it now comprises the Principal, Assistant Principal, Director of Quality and Funding and two curriculum directors. The College considers this to be a tighter, more responsive grouping. The responsibility for higher education is shared between the Assistant Principal and the Director of Quality and Funding.

9 The day-to-day operation of higher education courses is the responsibility of curriculum area course teams, which report to programme managers and then to the Curriculum Director responsible for the higher education provision. During 2010-11, two higher education course teams for business and childcare have been combined to make one more efficient team. The integrated team includes academic, administrative and support staff and meets every six to eight weeks with the Director of Quality and Funding. This offers more potential for sharing good practice.

10 The revised committee structure includes the Quality Management Group, chaired by the Assistant Principal with support from the Director of Quality and Funding. It is responsible for reviewing policy and practice and for monitoring the College's quality assurance processes. This group, whose membership includes curriculum directors and other senior staff, reports to the senior leadership team. The management of higher education courses is now coordinated by the Higher Education Strategy Group, which meets once a term. This group is jointly chaired by the Director of Quality and Funding, who leads on matters of compliance, and the Assistant Principal, who leads on the curriculum. It includes the Curriculum Director responsible for higher education courses. The reviewers recommend that, given that the changes to the committee structure are relatively recent, it is desirable for the College to continue to monitor the new committee arrangements and assess their impact on the higher education provision.

11 Course teams produce and update course journals throughout the year, usually on a monthly basis. These are spreadsheets that summarise meeting outcomes and action plans, monitoring data and surveys. They lead to the end-of-year course self-assessment report, which then contributes to the programme area self-assessment and finally the college-wide self-assessment report. Action plans arising from self-assessment are agreed and tracked through course committees. The journals are an effective management tool that brings together a variety of disparate information, such as recruitment and retention data, timetabling and staffing arrangements and student views. They create a comprehensive data source for monitoring purposes and as the basis of enhancement decisions. The team found the course journals to be an effective mechanism for the regular monitoring of data and action plans, thus enhancing both academic standards and learning opportunities. They are an example of good practice.

12 The College Quality Unit carries out independent audits of the higher education provision. The comprehensive outcomes are reported to the Quality Management Group and then to the College governors at the Corporation's Audit Committee. The Quality Unit also audits the higher education course journals, which form a significant part of the evidence base for such audits, again illustrating their value to the College. College provision is also audited by Edexcel and Ofsted. The team acknowledges as good practice the fact that the College uses internal and external audit rigorously within its quality assurance processes and this results in close monitoring and effective management of higher education.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

13 The partnership agreement with Sheffield Hallam University clearly details the College's responsibilities for ensuring that the Academic Infrastructure is embedded in the management of academic standards across all courses offered in its collaborative provision. The Academic Infrastructure is also used to guide College policies where it can. Edexcel courses are nationally accredited, so the College has less opportunity to align those courses with the Academic Infrastructure. The College recognises that such alignment is an area for improvement, and has introduced an Academic Board to ensure that this happens. The relevant sections of the *Code of practice* have been used to develop assessment regulations, although other sections are less clearly applied. The revision to the College structure has resulted in the Academic Infrastructure being a standing agenda item for the

Higher Education Strategy Group. Changes and updates to elements of the Academic Infrastructure are thus reviewed and disseminated to key college staff. The team considers it desirable that the College continue to monitor the application of the Academic Infrastructure across its higher education courses and introduce any missing elements.

14 The College has a clear generic assessment and internal verification strategy which, in accordance with University assessment procedures and regulations, it has adapted to the needs of its university courses. A robust and standardised assessment policy for Edexcel courses meets the precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*. The use of the Academic Infrastructure focuses largely on the *Code of practice* and programme specifications. The College has access to the University's guidance on the Academic Infrastructure and on assessment guidelines.

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 The agreements with the College's awarding bodies clearly set out the responsibilities of the College and the partner. The Director of Quality and Funding has responsibility for liaising with and reporting to the University on higher education quality matters through membership of the Strategic Management Group, which meets termly. The University undertakes an annual review of the College through its programme committee, which is responsible for the management, annual monitoring and ongoing review of initial teacher training courses. The committee membership includes the College's Link Tutor, the University Programme Leader and student representatives. The College tutors attend joint programme committee meetings, which are hosted in rotation by each college and offer a form of staff development. Employers comment where relevant. It then reports to the College and the University's Academic Board. The Director of Quality and Funding is also the College Link Tutor and works in consultation with the College's course teams. They produce an annual monitoring review, from which action plans are compiled and progress tracked through the College's course committees. The Director of Quality and Funding monitors action plans arising from University courses, and programme managers perform that function for Edexcel courses. The Quality Unit provides further monitoring. The College sees the link tutor role as valuable in liaising between the University and partner colleges.

16 External examiners are appointed by the awarding bodies. The initial teacher training reports are first submitted to the University and then circulated to the College. The University responds to them on behalf of the partner colleges, following consultation over specific points. The responsibility for replying to Edexcel external examiner reports lies with the College programme managers. All reports are monitored by the College's Quality Unit, which tracks any actions arising from them.

17 In 2010-11 the College established its own Assessment Board, chaired by the Director of Quality and Funding. The Board meets three times a year. The college-wide lead verifier for Edexcel programmes has responsibility for ensuring that the courses consistently follow standard procedures. The February 2010 Edexcel Quality Review and Development report commended the College's quality assurance procedures for the Higher National courses as 'very good'. The College meets the requirements of Edexcel's quality procedures. A member of the University's Central Quality Unit chairs the Assessment Board, which College tutors and the Director of Quality and Funding attend. Overall, this provides an effective and coherent system for ensuring that the College is fulfilling its obligations to its awarding bodies.

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

18 All staff teaching on higher education courses are expected to attend regular continuing professional development events, internally and externally. These primarily focus on further education topics and contractual obligations, although some events which higher education staff attend are held by Sheffield Hallam University and Edexcel. As a result of annual staff appraisals carried out by line managers, each curriculum area develops individual staff development plans, which help to support staff development applications and continuing professional development. Applications for staff development activities and events are considered by the Staff Development Review Group, which meets fortnightly and is chaired by the Director of Human Resources. The College acknowledges that it does not have a specific policy to support research and scholarship updating for higher education staff. The Higher Education Strategy states that additional resources would be needed to enhance this aspect. The College sets aside five days a year for staff to work on quality and curriculum development.

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?

19 The management and reporting arrangements for higher education are described in paragraphs 8 to 11. The course journals described in paragraph 11 form a significant part of the evidence base for internal and external audits, illustrating their value to the College in terms of the quality of 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?

20 Higher education provision is modelled on the awarding body systems. Course tutors use programme specifications to devise schemes of work that identify appropriate learning opportunities. Established links with Edexcel and Sheffield Hallam University ensure that all obligations are met. Tutors have links with the University's other partner colleges, and this helps to produce consistent interpretation of the University's systems. The College requires one member of staff from the very small staff teams to attend each Edexcel training event and University partner college meetings and disseminate the outcomes. Given the demands that this places on the academic staff, the team considers that such involvement is good practice.

21 External examiners have the opportunity to meet with students and report on the quality of the student experience. The Edexcel external examiner report form specifically seeks information regarding tutorial and pastoral support, as well as physical resources and learning support. Completed reports confirm that the College provides adequate opportunities and support in all of these areas. The College responds efficiently to these external reports. For example, in June 2010 the Edexcel external examiner requested that

the policy on plagiarism be included in the course handbook. The handbooks for 2011-12 now contains this information.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

22 Formerly, the College has relied heavily on the University's interpretation and operation of the Academic Infrastructure, particularly with regard to assessment practice. Programme specifications feature prominently in the higher education course handbooks. The College uses the FHEQ to illustrate the level and positioning of the Higher National courses to prospective students and their parents in pre-enrolment advice and guidance sessions. The College intranet stores relevant documents from the Academic Infrastructure and links to appropriate websites to enable staff to have ready access. All senior staff with higher education responsibilities subscribe to HEFCE and higher education institution web alerts to receive updated information. The team welcomes the College's efforts to adopt more independence from the University with regard to use of the Academic Infrastructure.

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

23 Observation of teaching, learning and attainment is well developed within the College. Although the formal policy and procedures are derived from further education requirements, the observation process is very detailed and takes account of higher education demands. The team confirms the College's assertion that lesson observations are fit for purpose for higher education as well. At one of the rotating programme committee meetings of the partner colleges, College staff delivered a session on lesson observations at the end of the meeting to share good practice and reflect College expertise in this area. The continuing professional development sessions delivered at the end of the meetings enable these gatherings to perform a dual function. This innovative feature benefits the College and the other partners.

24 Learner course reviews take place three times a year. Programme area managers meet with students from a different subject area to talk about a range of issues. The outcomes are passed on to assessment boards and course team meetings and are reported in the relevant course journal. Students confirmed that they had taken part in this process, which they found helpful. The student written submission gives examples of actions taken to remedy perceived deficiencies. For example, students raised queries about the learning outcomes, which were amended as a result of these processes. The team confirms that this process covers all aspects of the student experience and results in corrective actions. The involvement of programme area managers from different subject areas in learner reviews brings in an element of openness, independent scrutiny and a further opportunity to share good practice. The team considers this to be good practice.

25 The student written submission gives evidence of two separate instances where the College has enhanced the students' learning experience. Where joint teaching has taken place on HNC/HND programmes because of small cohort sizes, the students stated that their negative comments led to tutors quickly resolving the initial problems and confusion. Similarly, the College has taken action to address a particular instance affecting the quality of teaching. Students reported that the overall quality of teaching is generally very good.

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

26 The College Tutorial and Induction System Policy aims to provide effective support for students and thereby improve retention and raise achievement. The Quality Management Group monitors the policy's effectiveness. The student written submission was unanimous in

its endorsement of the success of this policy and agreed that tutors provide excellent pastoral and academic support to enable students to achieve. Examples of pastoral care received included support during family bereavement, pregnancy and following the birth of children or grandchildren. The initial teacher training courses were transferred to facilities away from the main site following incidents where students on the course, who are members of College staff, had their learning interrupted to deal with issues arising within their own teaching department. This is a good example of the responsiveness of the College, both in terms of listening to the student voice and acting as an employer. The induction process was also positively endorsed by students, who indicated that it covered both academic and practical matters. All students receive one-to-one reviews of their performance and progress. During these reviews they receive advice and guidance regarding workload priorities and the completion of assignments. Students regard these sessions as excellent in helping to meet assignment deadlines.

27 During induction, students are informed of the available student services, which include careers guidance and counselling. Students confirmed that they had been made aware of the progression routes available on completion of their courses. The counselling service produces monthly statistics regarding the uptake of its services. Students cite the quality of the overall support they receive as one of the best features of the College.

28 Students are asked to declare requests for additional support on their enrolment forms. The additional learning support team then arranges for diagnostic testing and identifies the most appropriate support. This is encapsulated in an individual learning contract, a copy of which is distributed to all relevant tutors. In addition to student self-reporting, tutors can also refer students to the additional learning support team at any time in the academic year. Students in receipt of additional support can be identified in the monitoring data and their progression and retention rates compare favourably with those of the other students. This justifies the College's efforts to support such students. The team considers as good practice the extensive nature of the support for students, which the students greatly appreciate and which enables them to succeed.

29 For the initial teacher training courses, the College's Human Resource Department is seen as the employer. That Department checks on student progress and puts support mechanisms in place, for example childcare arrangements for part-time staff. The childcare courses contain professional practice units, necessitating employer involvement for placement opportunities. Students on the business courses are mainly independent students rather than employer-sponsored, so this area, in comparison, has less employer involvement. The team concluded that the varied levels of employer engagement provide appropriate opportunities for students.

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

30 The teaching teams for the higher education courses are well established, with very few staff introduced to higher education teaching in recent years. New members of staff receive an induction to the College in general and then a specific programme area induction. An advanced practitioner mentors all new College staff and works in tandem with the relevant programme area to facilitate the induction. This results in a ten-week programme for pre-qualified staff. Unqualified staff enrol on a Certificate of Education. Part-time staff are paid at a special rate to encourage them to attend development events. Lesson observations result in the identification of development needs, which are addressed by the College's continuing professional development programme.

31 The continuing professional development programme covers conference attendance, vocational updating, teaching and pedagogic development, as well as requests for qualification enhancement, such as undertaking a master's programme. Higher education staff are subject to the same timetabling requirements as their further education counterparts. Most higher education staff also teach on further education courses. However, since higher education courses normally follow a shorter teaching year, this gives higher education staff some opportunity to engage in scholarship and other forms of updating activities. The College Higher Education Strategy acknowledges that this area could be further developed, so the team considers it desirable that the College should further develop scholarship and research activity in support of its higher education courses.

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?

32 The Learning Resource Centre information pack details the resources available to students, and this is reinforced in their induction process. Each higher education course has an introductory guide to resources. To support this information and build upon the induction the College runs a series of information skills workshops. These equip students to access all the internal resources, including the College virtual learning environment and relevant external websites. The Learning Resource Centre opening times have been extended on Tuesdays and Thursdays to cater particularly for part-time students and higher education students, all of whom are part-time. The students greatly appreciate this change.

33 Some students claimed that it is difficult to work in the Learning Resource Centre during the day due to noise levels, although this is not a problem for part-time students coming into College in the evening. Students commented that the Learning Resource Centre is well stocked. This is a result of academic staff requesting new material within their book lists, attached to schemes of work, and also proactive ordering by the library support staff. The College is seeking to make greater use of online material. Library staff are ensuring that this development moves forward across all areas of the College.

34 Students confirmed that course materials are available through the virtual learning environment and they are actively encouraged to use them. Course documents, templates, articles, lesson notes, and grading criteria for assignments were identified as being particularly useful. The childcare and initial teacher training students also use the electronic chat and discussion option, but some business students were not aware of this.

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?

35 The College is responsible for publishing all information on its higher education provision that appears in marketing and course promotion materials. The College produces an attractive general prospectus, which contains details of higher education courses. The Management Information Unit and course teams provide course information for the prospectus. At their meeting, students said that the information they received from the

College prior to enrolment was helpful and accurate and that it was consistent with on-course details.

36 Course teams write the Edexcel course handbooks in a collaborative process and the appropriate programme area manager checks and signs them off. Handbooks are available in hard copy and electronically from the College's virtual learning environment which students confirmed is easily accessible from home. The handbooks are well presented and contain a variety of information, including assessment; the complaints procedure; details of student support; how to reference; recommended websites; grading criteria; Edexcel details; and a list of tutors. Students confirmed that they receive a handbook and that they find them useful. Students also have access to online information from Sheffield Hallam University.

37 Information about the College's higher education courses is also available on the website through a direct link from the homepage. The website, which is attractive and easy to navigate, has recently won an award for its overall accessibility to a large range of groups, including those with disabilities. It is currently in the preliminary stages of being updated. The website is managed by the Marketing Department and the content approved by a programme area manager, before final approval by the Principal. Course leaflets, which appear on the website, are subject to the same approval process. A number of students commented that they had found out about College programmes from the website and that they used the information to help them decide which course to apply for.

**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?**

38 In accordance with the partnership agreement with Sheffield Hallam University, all material intended for publication which carries the University's name, crest or corporate logo must be approved by the University's Academic Board prior to publication. Edexcel devolves responsibility to the College. Information for the prospectus and course leaflets is taken from the College Management Information Unit. It is entered into a template and then given to course teams for modification and checking. Course teams often add, for example, information about optional modules. The material then passes to the programme manager, the curriculum directors, the senior leadership team and ultimately to the Principal, who approves and signs off all external material. In addition to hard copy, the same process also applies to material available for download from the College website.

39 The College website is currently being redesigned to make information more accessible and navigation more intuitive, even though current students asserted that the available information was already very good. Since the College recruits only 40 to 50 part-time higher education students, there is limited information available on the Unistats website. The College has contracted a software specialist to develop a dedicated multi-platform mobile phone application that can be downloaded from the website. The application will provide up-to-date course information to staff taken directly from the College Management Information Unit system. A survey of the effectiveness of these developments is planned for June 2011 when the current students have completed their courses. The College is able to supply information in alternative forms such as Braille, large text and other languages, largely Polish, and requests for these alternative formats can be made via the College website. It is also able to provide appropriate overlays to aid dyslexic students. The team considers that the design and development of the website demonstrates the College's commitment to making information accessible and improves the quality of learning opportunities. It is an example of good practice.

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

40 As the total full-time equivalent students funded by HEFCE at the College is less than 100, in accordance with the published review method, the College elected not to take part in a Developmental engagement.

D Foundation Degrees

41 The College does not offer any Foundation Degrees programmes.

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

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

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

- the course journals are an effective mechanism for the regular monitoring of data and action plans, thus enhancing both academic standards and learning opportunities (paragraph 11)
- the College uses internal and external audit rigorously within its quality assurance processes and this results in close monitoring and effective management of higher education (paragraph 12)
- the College requires one member of staff from the very small staff teams to attend each Edexcel training event and University partner college meeting and disseminate the outcomes (paragraph 20)
- the involvement in learner reviews of programme area managers from different subject areas brings in an element of openness, independent scrutiny and a further opportunity to share good practice (paragraph 24)
- the extensive nature of support for students, which the students greatly appreciate and enables them to succeed (paragraphs 26 to 29)
- the design and development of the website demonstrates the College's commitment to making information accessible and improves the quality of learning opportunities (paragraph 39).

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

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

- continue to monitor the new committee arrangements and assess their impact on the higher education provision (paragraph 10)
- continue to monitor the application of the Academic Infrastructure across its higher education courses and introduce any missing elements (paragraph 13)
- further develop scholarship and research activity in support of its higher education courses (paragraph 31).

46 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.

47 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.

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

| North Nottinghamshire College action plan relating to the Summative review: June 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 course journals are an effective mechanism for the regular monitoring of data and action plans, thus enhancing both academic standards and learning opportunities (paragraph 11) | Carry out planned regular independent audit of journals | Jan/June annually | Director of Quality and Funding | Improved retention and learner engagement | Quality Management Group | HE course team self-assessment report |
| | Carry out planned training sessions on completing journal through the College continuing professional development programme | Programme advertised each term through 2011-12 | Director of Quality and Funding | Consistent reporting in journals | HE Strategy Group | |
| | Embed higher education (HE) course team and encourage sharing of good practice | Ongoing | Assistant Principal | Consistent approach across all HE provision validated by internal audit and external examiners | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the College uses internal and external audit rigorously within its quality | Plan a combination of internal and external audits | Annual programme Sept 2011 | Assistant Principal | Regular monitoring reports to support management of HE | Quality Management Group | Review by Quality Unit |

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| assurance processes and this results in close monitoring and effective management of higher education (paragraph 12) | | | | All documentation accurate and consistent | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the College requires one member of staff from the very small staff teams to attend each Edexcel training event and University partner college meeting and disseminate the outcomes (paragraph 20) | Provide support for HE staff through Staff Development Review Group (SRDG) - HE to become a priority category | Ongoing through 2011-12 | Human Resources (HR) Director | <p>Regular updating of HE staff (increase in numbers)</p> <p>Improved learning opportunities for students</p> <p>Accurate information provided by all staff</p> | Quality Management Group | <p>HR Director annual report</p> <p>HE self-assessment report</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the involvement in learner reviews of programme area managers from different subject areas brings in an element of openness, independent scrutiny and a further opportunity to share good | Timetable independent reviews across curriculum areas and promote sharing of good practice | Sept 2011 onwards | Director of Quality and Funding; Assistant Principal | Positive learner engagement | Quality Management Group | Self-assessment reports |

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| practice (paragraph 24) | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the extensive nature of support for students, which the students greatly appreciate and enables them to succeed (paragraphs 26 to 29) | <p>Review and update tutorial activity</p> <p>HE support identified and reported by Student Services</p> | <p>Sept 2011</p> <p>Sept 2011</p> | <p>Curriculum Director</p> <p>Head of Student Services</p> | <p>Improved retention and student satisfaction</p> <p>Positive learner feedback and evaluations</p> | Quality Management Group | Annual monitoring reports |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the design and development of the website demonstrates the College's commitment to making information accessible and improves the quality of learning opportunities (paragraph 39). | Further develop website content to increase the profile of HE courses | Sept 2011 | Principal; marketing team | <p>Increased information available for prospective HE learners</p> <p>Positive response from online survey</p> | HE Strategy Group | College Self Assessment Report |
| Desirable | Action to be taken | Target date | Action by | Success indicators | Reported to | Evaluation |
| The team considers that it is desirable for the College to: | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> continue to monitor the new committee | Evaluative review to be undertaken end of year | July 2012 | Senior Leadership Team | Improved internal structures leading to improved | Principal | Internal review |

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| arrangements and assess their impact on the higher education provision (paragraph 10) | Monitor in year | Oct/Jan/Apr | Assistant Principal/Director of Quality and Funding | evidence of management of academic standards | Senior Leadership Team | College Self Assessment Report |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> continue to monitor the application of the Academic Infrastructure across its higher education courses and introduce any missing elements (paragraph 13) | <p>Ensure HE Strategy Group monitor in-year work with course teams to share good practice</p> <p>Continue to develop programme specifications</p> | Sept/Jan/May | Assistant Principal/Director of Quality and Funding | <p>Improved internal structures leading to improved evidence of engagement with the Academic Infrastructure</p> <p>Positive feedback from learners in course reviews</p> | Quality Management Group | HE course self-assessment report |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> further develop scholarship and research activity in support of its higher education courses (paragraph 31). | HE research and scholarship to be a priority area for HE staff development; SDRG to increase financial support for HE staff applying for Higher-level awards to 50 per cent | Sept 2011 | Assistant Principal HR Director | <p>Increase in HE staff development applications</p> <p>Improved quality of teaching and learning</p> <p>Positive feedback from learners</p> | <p>Quality Management Group</p> <p>Senior Leadership Team</p> | Annual HR report |

RG 808 09/11

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