



Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

Weymouth College

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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 continuing 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 Weymouth 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 timely feedback on assessed work provides clear guidance on how to improve and effectively supports students in achieving their learning outcomes
- the support for students, which includes the role of the learning mentor, enhances the student experience and facilitates the achievement of learning outcomes
- the development of dedicated facilities and the higher education website promote a distinctive higher education learning environment and identity
- the rigour and effectiveness of the checking of marketing and publicity material ensures the accuracy and completeness of public information.

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:

- develop a more transparent process for the approval of scholarly activity applications and ensure that they are reviewed at the Higher Education Committee, in line with its terms of reference, to encourage scholarly activity, share best practice and enable the range and impact of such activities to be monitored
- continue to develop the higher education teaching observation scheme and review its effectiveness in enhancing the quality of teaching and learning and facilitating the achievement of learning at the appropriate level
- work with the awarding bodies to review the content and coverage of handbooks to minimise duplication and maximise usefulness.

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 Weymouth 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 Bath, Bournemouth University and the University of Plymouth. The review was carried out by Dr Philip Bentley, Mr Rob Mason and Mrs Sally Powell (reviewers) and Mrs Freda Richardson (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 partnership agreements, annual monitoring and external examiner reports, revalidation documentation and student feedback responses. In particular, the team drew on the findings and recommendations of the Developmental engagement in assessment. A summary of findings from this Developmental engagement is provided in section C of this report. The review also considered the College's use of the Academic Infrastructure, developed by QAA on behalf of higher education providers, with reference to the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, subject and award benchmark statements, *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and programme specifications.

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

4 Weymouth College is a medium-sized further education college in west Dorset. The main campus is located near to Weymouth town centre, and there is a smaller campus in Poundbury, where the Dorset Skills Centre is located. The College offers a wide curriculum at all levels including 14 to 19 provision, adult, work-based learning and higher education. There are currently 1,494 full-time students on further education courses and another 702 studying part-time. In 2010-11 the College enrolled 194 higher education students (162.1 full-time equivalent (FTE) students), the majority of whom are full-time.

5 Higher education provision at the College has grown organically over a number of years, driven by staff skills, availability and interest in developing higher-level provision. Most of the provision is validated by Bournemouth University, with smaller provision validated by the universities of Bath and Plymouth. The College has strong links with all three of its awarding bodies and offers a number of Foundation Degrees, a BA (honours) top-up that is in its final year of delivery, and a Higher National Certificate (HNC) that is validated under licence by the University of Plymouth.

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

6 The College works with its three awarding body universities to offer the following courses:

Bournemouth University

- FdA Commercial Video with Multimedia - year one cohort only (11 FTEs)

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- FdA Early Years, part-time (23.1 FTEs)
- FdA Music Technology - year two cohort only (8 FTEs)
- FdA Public Services (27 FTEs)
- FdA Video Production - year two cohort only (7 FTEs)
- FdSc Applied Architectural Stonework and Stone Conservation (17 FTEs)
- FdSc Forensic Science - year one cohort only (14 FTEs)
- BA (Hons) Media Production (top-up) (11 FTEs)

University of Bath

- FdSc Sport Health and Fitness (22 FTEs)

University of Plymouth

- Higher National Certificate in Business Management, part-time (6 FTEs)
- FdA Actor Training for Theatre and Media Performance (16 FTEs).

Recent developments in higher education at the College

7 The College serves a community that lacks direct access to higher education, and part of its mission is to improve the community's skill base, including at levels 4 to 6. Since the appointment of the Director of Higher Education, who now also has the role of Vice Principal: Director of Learning, the College has rationalised its higher education provision and consolidated its activities to focus more specifically on local employment priorities. The College's new strategic vision continues its commitment to higher education, with the stated aim 'to have a flexible and nationally recognised higher education offer, where courses reflect local needs'.

8 While numbers have decreased slightly over recent years, future plans include a focus on the expansion of part-time provision and continuing professional development, with a subject focus on engineering. This reflects the local importance of employment opportunities in precision engineering and follows significant investment in new facilities. With awarding body and business partners the College has successfully submitted a regional proposal for National HE STEM [Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths] Programme funding to investigate opportunities in engineering and marine engineering. The College has also recently reintroduced the Foundation Degree in Forensic Science, which has a focus on applied practical chemistry and biology, in line with a new College focus on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics subjects. To support this curriculum the College has a new science laboratory, which was financed by HEFCE capital funds from Bournemouth University.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

9 Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the Summative review team. The student submission was provided at the same time as the self-evaluation and was updated after the preparatory meeting to provide further context and include data from more student groups. The submission was developed by three higher education students and based on data provided by student surveys and focus groups carried out during March 2011. Seventy-four per cent of the total number of higher education students took part in the surveys and focus groups. The submission was helpful to the team as it provided quantitative data to support comments in the self-evaluation and is a robust source of evidence based on student views.

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 Partnership agreements confirm that awarding bodies have ultimate responsibility for academic standards and that the College operates under the requirements of the academic policies, regulations and procedures of the relevant awarding body. The partnership agreements are signed and up to date. They are complemented by checklists of responsibilities and by academic and related policies available to staff through the respective university intranets. Overall responsibility for the management of higher education within the College rests with the Vice Principal: Director of Learning. Programme area managers and programme team leaders have operational management responsibility for higher education programmes. University link tutors play an important role in providing support directly to programme team leaders on course management and the maintenance of academic standards, and in receiving feedback about the delivery of their awards.

11 The Vice Principal: Director of Learning and the Principal attend twice-yearly Partnership Boards with Bournemouth University and Joint Boards of Studies with the University of Plymouth, at which a range of key performance indicators relating to academic standards and the student experience are reviewed. For University of Bath provision regular updates are provided to the Vice Principal: Director of Learning by the partnership office, and detailed information is exchanged through the annual monitoring process.

12 The Higher Education Committee coordinates the College's work with its three awarding bodies. This committee covers all aspects of higher education provision. It is co-chaired by the Principal and the Vice Principal: Director of Learning and reports to the Development Committee of the Board of Governors. Thus, the Senior Leadership Team is directly involved in the management and delivery of higher education, including consideration of any significant actions raised through the annual monitoring processes and from student feedback. The terms of reference for the committee were revised in 2010, following a recommendation in the Developmental engagement. They cover a range of quality assurance and monitoring activities and responsibility for maintaining academic standards. They also include the consideration of proposals for the further development of higher education provision and scholarly activity. Two higher education programme team leaders represent operational curriculum management on a rotational basis. Staff confirmed the effectiveness of this system and the value of the committee in raising the profile of higher education in the College.

13 The strategy for higher education is primarily discussed at the Senior Leadership Team and the Governors' Forum, the Adult and HE Forum and the Development Committee of the Board of Governors. Students are represented on all key committees. Revisions to the strategic plan and proposed collaborative developments with other colleges in the region await the announcement of future government policy. The team found little evidence of current strategic review at the Higher Education Committee. Key targets are set and monitored at other meetings and strategic planning groups, for example at the Adult and HE Forum and Extended Curriculum Managers' Group meetings. There is currently no clear link between these strategic planning groups and the Higher Education Committee, although

membership overlaps. The strategic role of the Higher Education Committee will become more evident once external factors stabilise and strategic planning for higher education at the College can progress on a more certain foundation.

14 The Vice Principal: Director of Learning regularly meets programme team leaders to discuss key issues and best practice. In addition, programme teams meet regularly to review operational matters relating to each subject and discuss the contents of annual monitoring reports, including progression and achievement data and the comments of external examiner reports. These team meetings include students and link tutors. Action plans are reviewed to ensure continuing reflection on practice and the development of standards. Students causing concern are considered as part of the restricted agenda, and intervention strategies to support individual students are agreed.

15 The Vice Principal: Director of Learning is supported by the Senior Administrator for Higher Education, who has a wide-ranging remit. In addition to servicing committees and data collection and collation, this includes general student administration and support for programme team leaders, staff and students. The Senior Administrator for Higher Education also acts as higher education registrar, manages the admissions process, liaises with awarding bodies, disseminates information on policies and procedures and liaises with the marketing department regarding all aspects of public information. Administrative support for higher education in the College is effective and highly valued by staff and students.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

16 Staff are familiar with the Academic Infrastructure and are aware that it is embedded in the policies and regulations of awarding bodies. In particular, they are clear on its use in validation processes and confirmed that validation takes full account of subject benchmark statements, the FHEQ and the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*. Programme specifications are provided as part of the documentation for validation. For some programmes the full programme specification is supplied as part of the programme handbook, and in all cases the learning outcomes and assessment information included in the programme specification are made available to students. The use of personal development plans by students is encouraged in a variety of formats. Personal tutorials take place on all programmes.

17 The Senior Administrator for Higher Education is responsible for disseminating information on updates and changes to the Academic Infrastructure and to consequent awarding body regulations. These are also communicated to programme team leaders by link tutors. Staff confirmed that they are aware of the Academic Infrastructure, that compliance with awarding body regulations ensures that it is taken into account in the maintenance of standards and quality, and that they are fully informed of implications for their programme management and teaching, learning and assessment practice.

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?

18 Programme monitoring requires the production of annual reports that are informed by external examiner feedback. The College and Bournemouth University have a shared network drive that facilitates ready exchange of drafted information, data, external examiner reports and feedback, as well as minutes of relevant meetings. Staff appreciate the ease of contribution afforded by this facility. The annual monitoring processes of the University of Plymouth are similar. The subject-specialist link tutor is helpful in the process and provides feedback to the university Board of Studies on significant issues. All annual reports are

received by the Higher Education Committee to identify common themes or significant issues requiring action planning. They are reviewed by the Vice Principal: Director of Learning before submission to the awarding body.

19 External examiners are appointed by awarding bodies, following consultation with programme teams. They are fully engaged with assessment processes at the College, including, where possible, meeting with students. External examiner reports confirm the appropriateness and comparability of standards of the provision at the College. Where the external examiner reports cover a number of colleges validated by a partner university, reports adequately identify issues of relevance to Weymouth College. The College responds to the comments of external examiners, for example by modifying the involvement of employers in the assessment process for the FdA Actor Training for Theatre and Media Performance. The College contributes to responses made to external examiners by the awarding bodies, and these are incorporated in the annual monitoring processes.

20 With the exception of one programme, Foundation Degrees have designated progression routes to awarding body courses. One direct progression route has recently been withdrawn, and staff at the College have been successful in establishing an alternative route with another higher education provider. Students have been kept well informed. The College's careers advisor and university link tutors are involved in informing students about top-up opportunities and applying for study at level 6.

21 Assessment briefs are sent to the external examiner or the link tutor for approval prior to issue. There is both internal and external moderation of assessments with university partners and, as in the case of the FdA Early Years, with partner colleges for shared provision. In addition, there is a Weymouth College policy which aims to raise the quality of assessment and feedback, increasing consistency of approach across academic areas while respecting the diversity to approaches which reflects subject specialisms. Staff confirmed that programme teams adopt approaches to assessment and feedback that reflect their specialisms. Independent marking plans are established for each programme area.

22 In the Developmental engagement the College was advised to ensure clarity and the consistent application of all awarding body policies and procedures on academic appeals. The College has accordingly disseminated information to appropriate staff and ensured relevant discussion at meetings. Staff and students are now clear on the grounds for academic appeal and the procedure to be followed.

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

23 Staff involved in teaching higher education are appropriately qualified and have relevant industry or professional experience that supports students' achievement of academic and vocational skills. In addition, all college staff have an entitlement to five days industrial placement. New staff are well supported through the induction and probation process and through the mentorship provided by programme team leaders.

24 The College runs four development days a year, with a focus on a range of training needs that benefit higher education provision. One of these is devoted to higher education and focuses on key aspects of academic standards and the student experience. Higher education staff development activities have included moderation and the use of the new features of Bournemouth University's virtual learning environment. Awarding bodies support college staff development. For example, Bournemouth University has facilitated a college staff development day on an introduction to the Academic Infrastructure. There is a clearly

articulated staff development policy, which outlines the identification of staff development needs through annual review and appraisal.

25 Since the Developmental engagement the College has continued to support programme team leaders through remission of hours (45 for each cohort of higher education students) and continuing professional development opportunities. Staff are encouraged to participate in research projects, employer-based activities or university-based continuing professional development. Requests for scholarly activity time, such as support for higher degrees, may be made against an allocation of 500 teaching hours managed by the Vice Principal: Director of Learning and considered at the Higher Education Committee. There is, however, no clear indication of the criteria used to approve applications for scholarly activity and extended higher-level study. Staff stated that they were unaware of any applications being turned down and that the process was to request support directly with the Vice Principal: Director of Learning. There is no evidence of requests being formally considered at Higher Education Committee.

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?

26 The responsibility for managing the quality of learning opportunities is articulated in the partnership agreements and in the main is devolved to the College. The College management structures detailed in paragraphs 10 to 15 ensure appropriate delegation and clear reporting lines for managing quality. Programme team leaders have a pivotal role in managing the student learning experience. For example, they liaise with other partner colleges, work with university colleagues, support and mentor staff and develop new teaching materials.

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

27 Annual monitoring processes and in particular engagement with external examiners, as described in paragraphs 18 and 19, provide effective mechanisms to ensure that the College is fulfilling its obligations for ensuring the quality of learning opportunities.

28 All partner universities have a staff portal where key policy documents are accessible. Staff refer to these documents, which are regularly updated. The remission of hours allows programme team leaders to remain up to date with changes to the policies and procedures of awarding bodies. These are communicated by link tutors and the Senior Administrator for Higher Education, who attends the administrative meetings at all partner universities. The Senior Administrator for Higher Education monitors adherence to awarding body regulations to ensure compliance. Student feedback at programme team meetings, student focus groups, and student unit evaluations inform the review of the effectiveness of the quality processes.

29 The turnaround of student assessment is consistent with the requirements of all awarding body assessment policies. The University of Plymouth has an expectation of a 20 working day turnaround; however, staff and students confirmed that marked work is returned within 15 working days, which is the expectation of other awarding bodies. Compliance with the turnaround requirement is monitored by the Senior Administrator for Higher Education using a template developed with Bournemouth University. Any issues that affect compliance are recorded with appropriate comments. Students confirmed that staff consistently returned work within the prescribed timeframe with good-quality feedback that helps them understand how to improve. The timely feedback on assessed work is effective in supporting students in achieving their learning outcomes.

30 The College has a systematic process for gathering students' views on the quality of provision. Students are able to engage in both written and oral feedback. Mechanisms include those prescribed by awarding bodies, for example surveys of student experience and perception. They also include unit and module evaluations, focus groups and student representation at meetings. Where appropriate, students are informed of actions taken as a result of their feedback. Students confirmed that they participate in surveys and focus groups and that student representatives have opportunities to raise concerns, for example at the Higher Education forum.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

31 As explained in paragraphs 16 and 17, the use of relevant aspects of the Academic Infrastructure is embedded in awarding body policies, processes and regulations. These apply equally to the quality of learning opportunities.

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

32 The College operates a higher education teaching observation scheme that is similar to the one used for further education but with some subtle differences. The scheme was introduced in 2009-10 on a trial basis and is now used on all higher education provision. Lessons are graded on the basis of confidence, limited confidence or no confidence that effective learning has taken place. Staff are observed on a risk-based approach based on time and prior observations, and as part of any internal audits being conducted. So far, all teachers observed have achieved full confidence. Lesson observations identify strengths and areas of weakness and are an opportunity to reflect on the quality of student learning. Staff welcome the new scheme and appreciate the more collegial approach used for observations for higher education provision. The team found that the developing scheme has some strengths; for example, it encourages self-reflection and non-judgemental feedback. The specific advantages over existing lesson observation schemes for other provision are less clear. It is also unclear how the higher education scheme facilitates learning at the appropriate level and what impact it is having on improving the quality of teaching and learning.

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

33 Students undertake initial assessments of study skills, as well as a more specific diagnostic review of specialist support needs. The College has introduced a learning mentor role for higher education, with two part-time staff constituting one full-time post. Learning mentors provide support for individual study skills as well as specialist support, for example in helping students apply for a Disabled Students' Allowance. Initial qualitative evaluations of students' satisfaction are positive. Staff indicated that they are supportive of the scheme and students confirmed that learning mentor support, where provided, had been effective.

34 All students complete a work placement as part of their course, with the exception of the HNC Business students, who are already in work. Work placements are conducted effectively. Students confirmed that the work placement handbook gives them all of the information that they need for application and during their work placement. The small sample of students that the team met indicated that they felt well prepared and supported for work placements. Additional support for work placements can be provided by the College's careers and student support services, as well as by the tutor. Staff confirmed that they encourage students to take responsibility for finding and organising their work placement, as this helps develop their employability and personal development skills.

35 Students appreciate the small class sizes and opportunities to meet college staff on an individual basis. They also value the extra support provided through informal and formal meetings and emails from their tutors that help them improve their work. The submission confirms that for the majority of students studying at the College is a positive experience and that high-quality support is provided by tutors, learning mentors, library and other staff. Ninety per cent of students confirmed that know how to contact a member of staff if they need help. The Senior Administrator for Higher Education is based in the Degree Centre and provides direct and effective support to students on a range of issues. Students confirmed that staff are available to help them when required and provide high levels of support.

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

36 Paragraphs 23 to 25 cover the College's approach to staff development. The training and development needs of new staff are identified through the induction and probation processes. There is also a cross-college staff development programme that takes into account generic training and cross-college needs relating specifically to the quality of teaching and learning. New staff are mentored by programme leaders. Best practice is shared through the meetings of programme leaders, which have discussed, for example, innovative assessment strategies in the FdA Video Production and improved interviewing procedures in the FdSc Applied Architectural Stonework and Stone Conservation.

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?

37 There has been significant investment in physical resources for higher education students at the College. This includes a two-floor Degree Centre that provides a social and work environment and a new silent study area; access to loans of laptops; a new science laboratory for the FdSc Forensic Science; and new media equipment and facilities for the FdA Commercial Video with Multimedia. Students commented that the dedicated facilities provide a distinctive learning environment that is differentiated from the further education experience. Staff endorsed this view and consider that the facilities help foster a sense of community and identity for higher education students. This sense of identity is further reinforced by the dedicated higher education web presence (see paragraph 40). The student submission states that the College provides many students with a supported learning environment not always available on a large university campus.

38 The College has invested in library facilities and resources and, in particular, an expansion in the number of e-books available to higher education students. The College's virtual learning environment enables access to learning resources and course documentation. A learning technologist works closely with colleagues from the awarding bodies to manage use of and access to the virtual learning environments of the College and

the awarding bodies. The learning technologist also provides training to staff on how to access the virtual learning environments and utilise new systems such as ePortfolios and anti-plagiarism software. Students confirmed that the learning resources are sufficient to support higher education study. The business planning process enables course teams to monitor resources and resource needs, which are articulated through the annual monitoring report. There is a clear and established annual capital bidding process. The learning centre coordinator attends programme team meetings to determine programme area needs. Resource issues can also be raised from student feedback. Students have access to additional resources through the libraries and virtual resources of awarding bodies.

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?

39 The partnership agreements between the College and its three higher education partners identify the joint responsibilities for providing and ensuring the accuracy and completeness of published information for staff, students and the wider public. This includes information about awarding bodies; programmes and modules; and website, prospectus, marketing and publicity materials. In addition, the College publishes a number of generic documents on its website that apply to both higher and further education provision. These include an equality policy, disability statement, health and safety policy, and college charter.

40 The College provides public information in printed and web-based formats. The website has a recently developed section entitled Degree Centre Weymouth, which provides clear and comprehensive information about each higher education programme. Details are given for application and entry; programme content; assessment, career and progression opportunities; and awarding body links. There are also examples of student work. The design and visual appeal of these features ensure that higher education is a major focus of the College's provision. The web presence helps develop a sense of identity and branding for higher education at the College and supports the differentiated learning experience that students will receive. The College also publishes a Degree Centre Weymouth printed prospectus with similar content.

41 Much public information is located on the four virtual learning environments of Bournemouth University, the University of Plymouth, the University of Bath and Weymouth College. The University of Bath uses the same system for its virtual learning environment, but it is separate from the college system. This information includes course handbooks; module specifications; assessment details and regulations; policies and procedures relating to academic conduct; and learning resources. Staff and students confirm that access to the virtual learning environments is good.

42 Three handbooks are available for students in paper and electronic formats. The first, from each relevant awarding body, provides general information about its facilities; enrolment; support services; academic structure and assessment. A second higher education handbook is given at induction, one for full-time and a shorter version for part-time students. Each contains college details, contacts, financial guidance and information about

college life. A third handbook is also provided. It gives details about the student's programme, module specifications and assessment. There is some duplication of information in the three handbooks, for example in the details of support, facilities and policies. Although staff informed the team that students either receive a paper copy of each or are briefed on where to access them electronically, students showed some confusion when discussing handbook content with the team.

43 For programmes that require a period of work experience, typically Foundation Degrees, students are provided with a work placement handbook outlining their responsibilities, assessment and module requirements and health and safety policies. Relevant employers also receive a handbook outlining their roles and responsibilities. Content is checked at validation. Health and safety content is reviewed annually.

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

44 The College's Head of Marketing and Communications and the Senior Administrator for Higher Education are responsible for checking the accuracy and completeness of public information. Substantial annual publications, for example course brochures, are checked twice before publication. The content of course promotional literature, such as flyers, is updated before new print runs or after changes to programme content or entry requirements. Regular checks are made to ensure that departments use the latest versions. Email distributions and publicity material for the media and external bodies follow a common house style. The accuracy of college information provided by awarding bodies and UCAS is also monitored. The higher education content of the college website is informally reviewed approximately weekly, and there is a formal review twice a year. Material is added or updated when needed. Any errors or omissions are resolved by the College's marketing department within three working days. There are effective and thorough procedures to ensure that paper and web-based marketing and publicity information is accurate, complete and of high quality.

45 Awarding bodies also check college publicity before publication to ensure that it conforms to their guidelines for design and consistency. For Bournemouth University this takes place with all new material. Other partners conduct checks from time to time.

46 The College has made good progress in addressing the recommendations relating to public information identified at the Developmental engagement in 2010. Handbooks have been reviewed and updated and progression opportunities for students have been explained more fully.

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

C Summary of findings from the Developmental engagement in assessment

47 The Developmental engagement took place in April 2010. There were three lines of enquiry as follows:

Line of enquiry 1: How effective is internal moderation in monitoring and maintaining academic standards?

Line of enquiry 2: The use of formative and summative assessment feedback in allowing students to meet indicative learning outcomes.

Line of enquiry 3: How information about assessments is effectively communicated to current and prospective students.

48 The Developmental engagement team found the College's commitment to the management and development of its higher education provision and in particular to the pivotal role of programme team leaders to be good practice that provides effective support for the maintenance of academic standards. The team also considered the support tutors provide to students on assessment and the use of completed student work at open days and interview to be good practice.

49 The College was advised to ensure clarity and the consistent application of all awarding body policies and procedures on academic appeals. The team considered it desirable that the College extend the purpose of the Higher Education Committee to monitor the effectiveness of the College's management of standards and quality; ensure that indicative learning outcomes are consistently identified on assignment briefs and that feedback is mapped to the learning outcomes; and review and, where appropriate, enhance the level of support for students with non-specific learning needs. The team also considered it desirable that the College review all student handbooks to enhance their presentation and format and ensure that students receive clear, consistent and accurate information on the levels of achievement and performance required to progress.

D Foundation Degrees

50 The College offers nine Foundation Degrees, one BA (Hons) top-up and one HNC validated under license by the University of Plymouth. The majority of this report therefore refers to Foundation Degree provision and all the findings relate to Foundation Degree awards.

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

51 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Weymouth 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 Bath, Bournemouth University and the University of Plymouth.

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

- the timely feedback on assessed work provides clear guidance on how to improve and effectively supports students in achieving their learning outcomes (paragraph 29)
- the support for students, which includes the role of the learning mentor, enhances the student experience and facilitates the achievement of learning outcomes (paragraphs 33 and 35)
- the development of dedicated facilities and the higher education website promote a distinctive higher education learning environment and identity (paragraphs 37 and 40)
- the rigour and effectiveness of the checking of marketing and publicity material ensures the accuracy and completeness of public information (paragraph 44).

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

54 The team considers that it is **desirable** for the College to:

- develop a more transparent process for the approval of scholarly activity applications and ensure that they are reviewed at the Higher Education Committee, in line with its terms of reference, to encourage scholarly activity, share best practice and enable the range and impact of such activities to be monitored (paragraph 25)
- continue to develop the higher education teaching observation scheme and review its effectiveness in enhancing the quality of teaching and learning and facilitating the achievement of learning at the appropriate level (paragraph 32)
- work with the awarding bodies to review the content and coverage of handbooks to minimise duplication and maximise usefulness (paragraph 42).

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

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

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

Weymouth 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 timely feedback on assessed work provides clear guidance on how to improve and effectively supports students in achieving their learning outcomes (paragraph 29) 	Continue to monitor compliance with the independent marking plans that include the turnaround schedule for all feedback	June 2012	Director of Higher Education	Compliance with maintaining timely feedback to all students	Higher Education Committee	Compliance checks completed twice yearly with rapid intervention for non-compliance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the support for students, which includes the role of the learning mentor, enhances the student experience and facilitates the achievement of learning outcomes 	Maintain and enhance the role of the learning mentors in supporting higher education students and improve communication with programme team leaders and lecturing staff	June 2012	Tutorial and Student Services Manager	Students continue to report effective support in programme team leaders, focus groups and questionnaires and successful outcomes are maintained	Higher Education Committee	Programme team meeting student reports, focus groups and questionnaires show continued high level of satisfaction with support

(paragraphs 33 and 35)						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the development of dedicated facilities and the higher education website promote a distinctive higher education learning environment and identity (paragraphs 37 and 40) 	Regularly update the Degree Centre Weymouth website to further enhance the information available to prospective students and maintain investment in higher-education-specific facilities	September 2012	Marketing Officer/ Senior Administrator for Higher Education	Improved recruitment to provision and student satisfaction with their learning and social environment	Senior Leadership Team	Recruitment improves and students report continued satisfaction in programme team meeting student reports, focus groups and questionnaires
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the rigour and effectiveness of the checking of marketing and publicity material ensures the accuracy and completeness of public information (paragraph 44). 	The Marketing Officer and Senior Administrator for Higher Education continue to work effectively to ensure the accuracy and completeness of all published information	September 2012	Marketing Officer/ Senior Administrator for Higher Education	Annual review of materials shows no discrepancies or inaccuracies in information	Higher Education Committee	Positive outcomes in the annual review of marketing materials
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"> develop a more transparent process for the approval of scholarly activity applications and 	The Higher Education Committee to develop a clear policy relating to the application of scholarly activity support funding for	December 2011	Higher Education Committee	Improved evidence and output from scholarly activity by higher education	Senior Leadership Team	Mini-conference to showcase research output and dissemination beyond Weymouth College

ensure that they are reviewed at the Higher Education Committee, in line with its terms of reference, to encourage scholarly activity, share best practice and enable the range and impact of such activities to be monitored (paragraph 25)	approval by the senior leadership team and implementation in the 2011-12 academic year			lecturers		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> continue to develop the higher education teaching observation scheme and review its effectiveness in enhancing the quality of teaching and learning and facilitating the achievement of learning at the appropriate level (paragraph 32) 	Consult on, review and approve a revised higher education observation scheme that differentiates expected outcomes based on the level being taught	December 2011	Teaching and Learning Manager	Greater Senior Leadership Team assurance of teaching standards for higher education provision and improved focus on developing lecturer teaching practice	Professional Development Committee	Evidence of an impact of improved teaching reflected in student satisfaction and outcomes, as analysed by the quality department
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> work with the awarding bodies 	Discuss with awarding bodies the central core	September 2012	Senior Administrator for	Student handbooks are	Higher Education Committee	Student feedback associated with

to review the content and coverage of handbooks to minimise duplication and maximise usefulness (paragraph 42).	content required in each handbook and provide a more consistent Weymouth-College-specific section to improve consistency across all courses		Higher Education	clearer and consistent across provision, allowing students to access key information in a timely and simple manner		handbooks to help identify any further improvements that can be made
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