



# **Integrated quality and enhancement review**

**Summative review**

**Hartpury College**

**October 2011**

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## Preface

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

## Purpose of IQER

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

## The IQER process

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

## Developmental engagement

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

The main elements of a Developmental engagement are:

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

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

## Summative review

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

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

## Evidence

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

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

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

- *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)*, which includes descriptions of different higher education qualifications
- the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*
- 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 Hartpury College carried out in October 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 agreement, for the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of its awarding body. The team also considers that there can be **confidence** in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreement, 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 high level of engagement with and effective implementation of the Academic Infrastructure
- staff development for higher education staff is well developed and highly effective
- the strong institutional commitment to research and scholarship in support of academic standards
- the teaching buddy scheme provides a particularly useful and supportive means of sharing good practice and developing new members of staff
- the Graduate Development Programme is well embedded and contextualised across all academic disciplines and students are very positive about the opportunities that it provides
- the vocational relevance of programmes and potential employability of graduates is supported by outstanding facilities and enhanced through the close association with commercial, professional and regulatory bodies
- the involvement of the student voice and resulting user-friendly format and detailed content of the higher education programme handbooks.

### 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:

- monitor the implementation of the changes to the University's quality assurance procedures planned for 2012 to ensure protection of the College's academic standards
- ensure that all programmes meet the defined standards for content on the virtual learning environment and continue to monitor staff and student usage.

## 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 Hartpury 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 the West of England. The review was carried out by Mr Peter Cutting, Professor Keith Johnson, Ms Elisabeth Downs (reviewers), and Dr Mark Mabey (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 extensive documentation supplied by the College and awarding body, meetings with staff, students, employers and the partner institution, reports of reviews by QAA, and from inspections by Ofsted. In particular, the team drew on the findings and recommendations of the Developmental engagement in assessment. A summary of findings from this Developmental engagement is provided in Section C of this report. The review also considered the College's use of the Academic Infrastructure, developed by QAA on behalf of higher education providers, with reference to the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, subject and award benchmark statements, *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and programme specifications.

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

4 Hartpury College offers higher education programmes of study in a wide range of land-based and sports subjects. These are supported by an extensive estate and range of specialist facilities, including a working farm, an equine centre of international standard, sports conditioning gymnasias, a rehabilitation centre, an animal unit, and sports pitches. The facilities are run on a commercial basis, helping to support the College and the education of students. The work-based learning opportunities provided by these facilities are a particular strength of the higher education provision at Hartpury. All programmes delivered by the College lead to an award from the University of the West of England. The College was designated an Associate faculty of the University in 1997. The Hartpury higher education provision was subject to a detailed University-led review during the academic year 2008-09. A positive outcome resulted in a new academic agreement. This reflects the desire of both parties to continue the development of a strategically important, open, collegiate and mutually beneficial relationship. At the start of the academic year 2011-12, the College had some 1,275 full-time equivalent students (FTEs) enrolled across 35 programmes, including Foundation Degrees, honours, and four master's degrees.

5 The College offers a diverse range of foundation and honours degrees in coaching studies and equine and animal science, including veterinary nursing and, to a lesser extent, agriculture and countryside management, as well as offering master's degrees in key subjects. The provision is centred on the vocational application of either scientific or management principles and employer links are a key aspect. This forms an important element of a programme and subject review.

6 The following programmes are offered by the College, with the full-time equivalent numbers of students (FTEs) in brackets:

- MA Sports Coaching (9)
- MSc Coaching Science (8.34)
- MSc Equine Science (7.34)
- MSc Veterinary Physiotherapy (14.5)
- BA (Hons) Agricultural Business Management (7)
- BA (Hons) Amenity Horticultural Management (0.33)
- BA (Hons) Equine Business Management (72.33)
- BA (Hons) Sport and Exercise Management (2)
- BA (Hons) Sports Business Management (71.33)
- BSc (Hons) Animal Behaviour and Welfare (52.99)
- BSc (Hons) Animal Management (11)
- BSc (Hons) Animal Science (59)
- BSc (Hons) Bioveterinary Science (88)
- BSc (Hons) Conservation and Countryside Management (7)
- BSc (Hons) Equine Dental Science (27.33)
- BSc (Hons) Equine Management (7.33)
- BSc (Hons) Equine Science (122)
- BSc (Hons) Equine Sports Science (71)
- BSc (Hons) Sports Coaching (125.66)
- BSc (Hons) Sports Studies (35)
- BSc (Hons) Sports Therapy and Rehabilitation (13)
- BSc (Hons) Veterinary Nursing Science (52)
- FdA Agricultural Business Management (10)
- FdA Sports Business Management (44.33)
- FdSc Animal Behaviour and Welfare (39.33)
- FdSc Animal Science (1)
- FdSc Conservation and Countryside Management (8.33)
- FdSc Equine Dental Studies (7.5)
- FdSc Equine Performance (13)
- FdSc Equine Science (15)
- FdSc Equine Science and Management (21.66)
- FdSc Equine Sports Science (1)
- FdSc Sports Coaching (110.33)
- FdSc Sports Performance (41)
- FdSc Veterinary Nursing Science (35.33).

## **Partnership agreements with the awarding body**

7 Hartpury College, as an associate faculty of the University, is responsible for managing all of its higher education programmes in line with University academic regulations and procedures. The University Academic Board has the ultimate responsibility for standards. The relationship between the partners was last reviewed in March 2009. The panel was 'impressed with the College's adherence to the University's academic regulations and procedures'. Nevertheless, the review led to a series of recommendations for both institutions. The resulting action plan was revisited in June 2011 and all matters relating to the management and delivery of standards were reported as complete. The University review contributed to the establishment of a new 10-year Academic Agreement which took effect from August 2009. It identifies their respective responsibilities with regard to academic quality management and enhancement. Liaison points at board of governor and senior management level are outlined in this agreement. Further liaison points occur at other levels within the structure. For example, the Director of Higher Education represents the College on the University Collaborative Provision and Partnerships Management Committee.



## Recent developments in higher education at the College

8 In September 2011 the College opened the Centre for Higher Education which provides accommodation for academic staff and houses the Associate Faculty Academic Systems office as well as a range of study facilities for higher education students including information technology rooms, tutorial rooms, and a flexible study area. These resources are available to students outside the usual academic day. Students have been, and continue to be, actively involved in the development and management of these resources. The Centre provides a 'one stop shop' for students and clear focus for higher education in the centre of the College campus.

9 The higher education provision at the College is characterised by its focus on vocationally relevant programmes. To support graduate employability, a recent development has been that all programmes at the College incorporate opportunities for students to obtain vocational qualifications during their academic studies. The Associate Faculty has introduced a Graduate Internship programme to help graduates gain additional training and workplace experience.

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

10 Students studying at the College are members of the University of the West of England Students' Union who, independently of the College, produced the students' written submission. The Students' Union helped to coordinate student representation at the planning meeting and had disseminated information on IQER to the student body prior to this event.

## 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?

11 Within the College, the Academic Standards and Quality Committee has the overriding responsibility for academic standards and is chaired by the Vice Principal (higher education). The Committee reports to the University Academic Board and, for audit purposes, the College Further and Higher Education Quality and Standards Committee. With the exception of veterinary nursing science and some general coordinating oversight, higher education is managed separately from further education. The higher education staff participation and representation on University committees parallels that of any other faculty within the University. This gives a clear focus to higher education delivery. Part of the Director of Higher Education's role is to ensure operational consistency of higher education provision across the College. The College's committee structures are closely modelled on those of the University, with slight modifications to committee size, representation and the frequency of some meetings, in order to reflect the different contexts of the College and University. There is student representation on all of the academic and standards committees. This provides a coherent system which the College, the University and the team regard as being highly effective. However, changes are planned to the University's quality assurance procedures which will take effect from January 2012. The College has been

involved in the dialogue leading to these developments. The team recommends that it is desirable for the College to monitor the implementation of the changes to the University quality assurance procedures planned for 2012, to ensure the protection of academic standards.

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

12 The University academic regulations and procedures make explicit reference to the Academic Infrastructure, and the Academic Agreement identifies that it is necessary for the College to implement these. The College has developed a detailed higher education strategy supported by a learning and teaching strategy and the widening participation strategy. These documents contain multiple references to the Academic Infrastructure and are appropriately implemented. For example, the College makes use of the University's award and programme approval handbook which specifically focuses on the *Code of practice*, subject benchmark statements and programme specifications when new programmes are validated. The staff handbook identifies appropriate guidance on assessment criteria and learning outcomes available from the QAA subject benchmark statements and the FHEQ. Staff induction and development sessions also include reference to the Academic Infrastructure. The Developmental engagement identified that the high level of engagement with and effective implementation of the academic infrastructure was an area of good practice. The College action plan, in response to the Developmental engagement, has further strengthened this aspect of provision. The review team consider the high level of engagement with and effective implementation of the Academic Infrastructure as an example of good 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?**

13 The University academic review process is designed to evidence that academic standards continue to be met. This periodic activity, operating within a six year cycle, is devolved to faculty level. The College implements the University timetable and has now built up both experience and confidence in the process. Each revalidation has University and external representation, often in the form of employers and graduates. Both partners are confident that periodic reviews are conducted thoroughly and have not only maintained standards but led to improvements in programme design and student experience.

14 A wide range of evidence, including module reports, annual programme reports, validation and approval outcomes, subject reviews, external examiner reports, and the collection of student surveys are brought together to form the annual departmental action plan. This comprehensive document is the main vehicle for the monitoring and maintenance of academic standards. These action plans were introduced in 2010-11 and the University has stated that they are the most detailed of their partnerships. The plans are owned and overseen by departmental committee meetings which regularly monitor their progress. This committee also receives reports from the chairs of programme student-staff liaison groups and monitors IQER action plans. The timing and integration of meetings is clearly outlined in the higher education academic calendar, which forms part of the staff handbook.

15 The processes for initial and second marking, standardisation, moderation, and external scrutiny of marking are clearly outlined in the staff handbook. The outcomes of these processes are recorded in 'module boxes' as well as being forwarded to the appropriate field and award boards for administrative processing. External examiner reports are overwhelmingly supportive and positive in relation to the standards of student performance. Student views on assessment and feedback, as expressed in the National

Student Survey, are compared with both University and national averages and appropriate action plans arise from these comparisons.

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

16 The College recognises the need to assist new members of staff and has a comprehensive induction and mentoring policy to provide such support. In line with policy, all new staff have an induction programme comprising general and local activities coordinated by their line manager. The staff handbook provides detailed information about staff roles and responsibilities within the College structures. The implementation of the Staff Development Policy is supported by a line manager's guide to the staff development and performance appraisal scheme. The policy contains an expectation that every member of higher education staff will undertake an appropriate amount of staff development annually. For a full-time member of staff this is 30 hours; pro-rata for part-time and fractional staff. This consists of a minimum of 10 hours each for staff training sessions, discipline-specific sessions and personal professional development. A staff development log shows a good variety of both internal and external activity. Teaching observations support the maintenance of appropriate academic standards. Staff development for higher education staff is well developed and highly effective and the review team agreed this is an area of good practice.

17 Recognition of the importance of research in higher education is embodied in the University of the West of England Hartpury Research Guidelines which state that 'all members of higher education staff are involved in some kind of research, scholarly activity or knowledge exchange'. To achieve this, staff are supported by the Research and Exchange Committee, the research student forum, established research interest groups, the use of external advisers and the Hartpury research mentoring project, in addition to the research observatory located on the University website. As well as these permanent structures, periodic events such as a research development day and a writing retreat foster and support research, and are to be repeated and possibly extended. Outputs and activities are publicised in the Research update, giving research activity a presence across the College and beyond. The culture generated has recently been identified as emulating University norms and as good practice for higher education within a further education context by the Higher Education Academy's subject centre for education. Since the Developmental engagement, a research and scholarship mentoring scheme as well as a teaching and learning in higher education research group have been established, and these strengthen the College's commitment to research and scholarship in support of academic standards. The review team agrees that the strong institutional commitment to research and scholarship in support of academic standards is good practice for higher education within a further education context.

**The team concludes that it has confidence in the College's management of its responsibilities as set out in its partnership agreements for the management and delivery of the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of its awarding bodies.**

## **Core theme 2: Quality of learning opportunities**

### **How are responsibilities for managing the quality of learning opportunities for higher education programmes delegated within the management structure and what reporting arrangements are in place?**

18 Following the Developmental engagement, the management structure and processes at the College have been modified and enhanced to parallel those at the University. The College Academic Standards & Quality Committee (ASQC) reports directly to the University Academic Board and receives reports from the Departmental Committee Meetings (DCMs) and the Programme Staff Student Liaison Groups (PSSLGs). The committee structure is coherent and effective in ensuring appropriate implementation of University regulations and alignment with the Academic Infrastructure. They ensure that the College is responsive to the views of students, external academics and employers, as well as staff, to ensure effective management of the quality of learning opportunities.

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

19 Responsibilities for the quality of learning opportunities are clear at strategic, programme and module level. Ownership of the quality of learning opportunities is reflected in the consideration programme teams give to external examiner reports, module surveys, and the implementation of departmental action plans.

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

20 The Academic Standards & Quality Committee has a key role in ensuring implementation of the University regulations and alignment with the Academic Infrastructure. Curriculum development, programme reviews, validation, and approval are overseen by the faculty validation panel (FVP). During programme development, care is taken to ensure that student assessments are set at an appropriate level and mapped against programme and module learning outcomes. Reference to the Academic Infrastructure, for example subject benchmark statements, the FHEQ, and the *Code of practice*, especially *Section 6: Assessment of students*, and programme specifications, is embedded in the programme development, review and validation process to enhance the quality of learning opportunities.

21 Higher education procedures and strategies contain appropriate reference to the Academic Infrastructure. The University Academic Agreement contains information on assessment which clearly relates to the *Code of practice*, as do the University academic regulations on assessment and feedback. There is additional robust evidence of reference to the Academic Infrastructure in the higher education strategy. The College uses the University's manual for programme approval, which contains clear references to the Academic Infrastructure, specifically to the *Code of practice*, subject benchmark statements, programme specifications, and assessment. Tutors are well informed about all components of the Academic Infrastructure and consider them systematically across the higher education provision. The team considers that the high level of engagement with and effective implementation of the Academic Infrastructure is good practice.

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

22 The College's learning and teaching strategy is formulated around six aims. Achievement of the aims and objectives set out in the strategy was monitored by the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee (LTAC), but under the new governance structure this role is fulfilled by the Academic Standards & Quality Committee (ASQC) and via the annual action plan. The Strategic Business Plan 2010-11 to 2013-14 encompasses responsibility for teaching and learning at a strategic level.

23 The Developmental engagement review team noted innovative teaching approaches across all programmes, but suggested that it would be desirable to formalise and document a coherent, strategic approach to sharing good practice. As a result the College has implemented staff development activities designed to share good practice. The impact is reflected in improved National Student Survey scores for 2010-11 in relation to teaching; the surveys confirm that subjects are interesting and staff are enthusiastic and good at explanation. Students confirmed that the standard of teaching is high and that many of the tutors have relevant and current industry knowledge which they share. The review team considers an area of good practice to be the teaching buddy scheme which provides a particularly useful and supportive means of sharing good practice and developing new members of staff.

24 Peer Assisted Learning (PAL), whereby one group of students in the second or third year coaches another group in the first year, is widely used. This encourages students to be reflective, become autonomous learners, and improve their employability skills. The system benefits both student groups and, along with placements and the enhanced Graduate Development Programme, impacts positively on employability. Higher Education Statistical Agency statistics show that graduate employability has increased in 2011 by 10.7 percentage points.

25 The Graduate Development Programme is designed to help students make the transition to higher education, encourage the development of academic skills, and consider career implications. The objectives are clearly outlined and communicated to students. The University Students' Union reviewed the Graduate Development Programme across the whole University and noted that there is a wide range of experiences, including some lack of awareness and general inconsistency. The team found that the operation of the Graduate Development Programme at the College was commendable; it is tailored to the students' needs across the institution. The Graduate Development Programme is well embedded and contextualised across all academic disciplines and students are very positive about the opportunities that it provides, and the team considers this to be good practice.

26 The report on the Developmental engagement states that while the general coherence of work-based learning in Foundation Degree programmes is evident, the embedding of work experience is not consistent in all subject areas. The external examiner report for sports science comments positively on the quality of teaching and makes some constructive comments regarding work-based learning. Students within the subject demonstrate a wide range of skills and knowledge, which is a reflection of the quality of teaching provided by the faculty. Students are provided with the opportunity to follow thematic streams in keeping with their interests and future career aspirations. Work placements and work-related learning form an important part of all programmes at the College. Students recognise the value in this opportunity, although the way in which they operate varies with some student groups, so it is difficult for some to complete the required number of hours. Systems for organising placements are clearly documented and procedures are aligned to the University with appropriate customisation for the land-based sector. Students benefit from a wealth of opportunities to get involved in College business,

for example farm and equine duties, organising events, and assisting in research. Full use is made of the College facilities and staff expertise, allowing students to get involved in a range of experiences which prepares them for the real world of work and inspires them to be ambitious. Employers are very positive about relationships with the College and would welcome more involvement and opportunities to provide feedback following work placements. The vocational relevance of programmes and potential employability of graduates is supported by outstanding facilities and enhanced through the close association with commercial, professional and regulatory bodies and is an area of good practice.

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

27 The College has a number of mechanisms to support students which they appreciate. The University Learner Charter clearly sets out what students can expect and in return what is expected of them. All students have a personal tutor who works closely with the Graduate Development Programme tutor and placement tutor. Module teachers are also available to provide academic guidance and students reported that information relating to their programme overall and individual modules are effectively communicated through the virtual learning environment and the Course Handbook. Academic tutors provide students with feedback on draft assignments as well as examination scripts and this is welcomed and contributes to student success.

28 Students have access to specialised counselling and learning support, and may also obtain independent support and guidance from officers of the University Students' Union which maintains an office on the College campus. Advisers from the University careers service visit the campus weekly and offer an appointment service. Induction is well considered and includes input from the College services such as learner support and the library. Students appreciate the efforts made to ensure that they feel welcome by the College; in particular international students are satisfied with efforts made to help them integrate. The College has recently employed a Student Experience Officer who has had a significant impact on the range of extra-curricular activities. In 2010-11 the College piloted a complementary study week in sport. This allowed students to undertake additional vocational qualifications such as Rugby Football Union Tag Rugby qualifications. It is too early to measure the impact of this scheme, but it has the potential to further enhance employability.

29 Graduate interns act as student advisers and provide a first point of call for many student enquiries. They answer emails and help students to make the transition into higher education. This role is designed to be proactive in identifying students at risk of non-attendance or leaving the College and ensuring that appropriate support is provided. The student adviser role, along with initiatives such as the Student Experience Officer, ensures that students make an effective transition to higher education. This has contributed to improved retention trends on the first year of programmes.

30 Support mechanisms are well embedded, starting with pre-entry screening and advice, diagnostic testing, and assessment of need, followed by appropriate individualised support to help students succeed, such as study skills workshops. Regulations for students who require alternative assessment methods are clearly outlined in the University academic regulations. Arrangements for student support are effectively evaluated as part of annual programme reporting and monitored by the department committee. Learner feedback through questionnaires shows improving scores for learning support across all areas of higher education and this is also evidenced by positive oral feedback from learners. Students are aware of the opportunities to participate in the management of their programme. There is a high level of awareness of the role of course representatives. Examples were given of course representatives influencing decisions, such as adjusting conflicting assignment deadlines.

31 The College makes extensive use of the University virtual learning environment and websites to provide information and learning support. All modules are supported by a dedicated module page, which provides student access to a range of learning, support and guidance material. The University website provides access to online study skills guidance and a range of other support services, including access to e-learning resources. The Academic Systems Office produces student fact sheets that outline and guide students through the operation of key regulations and procedures. The College utilises a wide variety of communication methods including emails, virtual learning environment announcements, and personal telephone calls from tutors and student advisers. Text-tools are used to notify students of urgent events.

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

32 Staff development is managed and encouraged through the operation of robust induction procedures and a formal system of staff appraisal. The College also operates rigorous mentoring and peer teaching observation schemes, which clearly enhances the quality of learning opportunities. These schemes are effective, particularly for new members of staff, and allow the College to identify and manage individual, departmental or faculty level training and development needs.

33 Staff development plays an important role in enhancing the quality of learning opportunities at the College by promoting pedagogic and subject-specific scholarship to ensure staff remain abreast of their subject and are able to teach confidently at an appropriate level. There is an expectation that new staff without a teaching qualification or experience will obtain one within two years of appointment. Tutors have the opportunity to attend events at the University and there is evidence of sharing of best practice.

### **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?**

34 Student learning is supported by excellent quality teaching rooms, lecture theatres, laboratories, information technology, and the learning resource centre. Outstanding vocational facilities include an international standard equine centre and equine therapy centre, as well as a commercial farm, game and shooting facilities, and a sports academy. These allow the College to host regional, national and international events in all curriculum areas. Student access to and participation in these events, along with their involvement in their organisation and management, provides excellent learning opportunities.

35 The Developmental engagement noted the effective use of resources, and the College has taken this forward by implementing improvements in the subject areas of sport and agriculture. Physical resources are routinely considered in annual monitoring, and strategic level committees oversee the development of resources, such as the estates committee, the library user group, and the laboratory user group. It was evident that the College makes good use of external speakers and that employers contribute to a range of programmes which ensures the currency of the curriculum.

**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?**

36 The College publishes a wide range of information concerning its higher education provision. This includes both electronic and paper-based media. The audience is prospective and current students, staff and employers. As an associate faculty of the University of the West of England, the College has access to and makes significant use of a wide range of information produced by the University. This information is extensively contextualised for use in the College; a good example being the Higher Education Prospectus. The prospectus is attractive and well designed. It contains a range of relevant information about the College, its facilities and the higher education on offer. The College produces a range of additional information contained on the website: the staff handbook, course handbooks, module guides, and useful student fact sheets on a variety of topics.

37 The main channel for communication used by prospective students, current students and staff is electronic. This includes the growing use of social media, although the documents are also available in paper format. External to the College the key access point is the College website which is highly user-friendly. It contains a range of information that is easy to locate, useful, and in accessible language. This includes information about student life, financial support, outlines of programme content, application procedures, and some indication of assessment methods. There is an area for international students. Many areas contain clear and useful links to more detailed information if required. The virtual learning environment provides students with programme handbooks, module guides and programme specifications. Staff make extensive use of the staff intranet and the Higher Education Staff Handbook.

38 The Academic Agreement between the College and University clearly identifies the joint responsibility for the production and updating of marketing information. The College has delegated responsibility to produce and check programme-specific and generic marketing information, which is then approved by the University.

### **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?**

39 The College operates robust and effective procedures to ensure that published information relating to higher education is fully accurate and complete. Working with the awarding body, the College takes a dynamic and proactive approach to managing public information. College staff and managers are fully conversant with in-house procedures for both checking and tracking changes and adhere to them. This provides good version control and ensures communication to all appropriate parties. The College marketing team liaises closely with University colleagues, with regular meetings to facilitate sharing of information and ideas. Final responsibility for public information in the College is with the Vice Principal of Higher Education.

40 There have been many significant improvements to the course handbook template during the last academic session. The College actively sought and incorporated student views at the design stage to ensure the style and content were appropriate to their needs. Combined with staff input, this has resulted in high quality programme handbooks which are very student-friendly in style, contain extensive detailed relevant information, and are both accurate and complete. The electronic versions on the student virtual learning environment allow ready access to further information. Handbooks are provided for all students and are



extensively used, and the team agreed this as an area of good practice. The involvement of the student voice and resulting user-friendly format and detailed content of the higher education programme handbooks was considered good practice by the team.

41 The Developmental engagement notes problems with the consistency of information provided in the student virtual learning environment with a linked recommendation. The College has taken a number of steps. These define minimum standards for content audits of the quantity and quality of the information provided and a summary report. These reports are passed to departmental heads and action taken. This process was carried out twice in 2010-11 and showed the progress made and areas of continuing concern. The team's scrutiny of the content of the student virtual learning environment by the review team showed that the information content was still somewhat variable. It is recommended that the College ensures that all programmes meet the defined standards for content on the College virtual learning environment and that student and staff usage continues to be monitored.

**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**

42 The developmental engagement in assessment took place in 2010. There were three lines of enquiry: the effectiveness of information given to students before and after assessment to support their learning and achievement; the range of learning opportunities and assessment tools employed to assess practical skills within the academic context; and an evaluation of the internal verification process being effective in helping to support and maintain academic standards.

43 The Developmental engagement team identified a number of areas of good practice for dissemination in the context of the College's management of student assessment. There is a high level of engagement with and effective implementation of the Academic Infrastructure, and the effective use of guidance supplied by professional bodies for inclusion into delivery and assessment strategies. The inclusion of information about assessment and work placement in marketing information, programmes and module handbooks is highly effective. There is extensive adherence across all programmes to the policy of returning assessed student work within four weeks, and a comprehensive and effective process of second marking. The College has developed an effective mentoring system for new staff or staff new to teaching on higher education programmes.

44 The team also made a number of recommendations. It considered that the College should further develop higher education quality and standards guidance and implement it across all areas of higher education quality and standards guidance. It should review the implementation of the Graduate Development Programme to ensure consistency of content and engagement by all students and staff. The College was encouraged to further develop the assessment process so that it considers the student experience based on programme coherence, rather than just at a modular level, and to formalise and document a coherent, strategic approach to sharing good practice and innovative teaching approaches across all programmes.

45 The team was satisfied that all the points raised in the Developmental engagement action plan had been fully addressed. All of the issues have been implemented and embedded within the College to enhance the management of higher education.

## D Foundation Degrees

46 Since 2004, the higher education provision has included Foundation Degrees, which provide a progression route for students with both the traditional A Level and non-standard entry qualifications. Such students can obtain a Foundation Degree and then progress to an honours degree at the College. Foundation Degrees were developed initially in all areas where equivalent honours degrees were also delivered at the College. As the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark statement* and University policies were developed, the College developed stronger links with professional bodies and employers. This development has resulted in a model of Foundation Degree that capitalises on combining the technical skills of the relevant profession with academic knowledge and intellectual skills. Future plans for the Foundation Degree provision are centred on consolidation and rationalisation. This will facilitate a focus on the stronger areas of the College provision, where Foundation Degrees have proved to be successful. The College has a clear commitment to foster vocational and work-based learning opportunities for students.

47 There are currently 13 Foundation Degree programmes operating with 339 full-time equivalent students. Foundation Degrees are well established within the College and the team confirmed that they contain well integrated work-based learning opportunities. They have been designed to meet local, regional and national needs and are led and developed by demand.

48 All subsequent conclusions relate equally to Foundation Degrees offered by the College.

## E Conclusions and summary of judgements

49 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in the 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 body the University of the West of England.

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

- the high level of engagement with and effective implementation of the Academic Infrastructure (paragraph 12)
- staff development for higher education staff is well developed and highly effective (paragraph 16)
- the strong institutional commitment to research and scholarship in support of academic standards (paragraph 17)
- the teaching buddy scheme provides a particularly useful and supportive means of sharing good practice and developing new members of staff (paragraph 23)
- the Graduate Development Programme is well embedded and contextualised across all academic disciplines and students are very positive about the opportunities that it provides (paragraph 25)

- the vocational relevance of programmes and potential employability of graduates is supported by outstanding facilities and enhanced through the close association with commercial, professional and regulatory bodies (paragraph 26)
- the involvement of the student voice and resulting user-friendly format and detailed content of the higher education programme handbooks (paragraph 40).

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

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

- monitor the implementation of the changes to the University's quality assurance procedures planned for 2012 to ensure protection of the College's academic standards (paragraph 11)
- ensure all programmes meet the defined standards for content on the virtual learning environment and continue to monitor staff and student usage (paragraph 41).

53 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, 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.

54 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, 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.

55 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, 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.

Hartpury College action plan relating to the Summative review: October 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 <b>good practice</b> that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the high level of engagement with and effective implementation of the Academic Infrastructure (paragraph 12)</li> </ul>	<p>Ensure policy and practice continues to be mapped against all components of the Academic Infrastructure</p> <p>Ensure information on the Academic Infrastructure and its implementation is readily available to staff</p> <p>Ensure that changes and updates to QAA guidance relating to the Academic Infrastructure are discussed and disseminated via staff training and development sessions</p>	Ongoing/continuous	Vice Principal (Higher Education); Director of Higher Education; ASQC (Teaching & Learning Group); CAP	<p>Academic Infrastructure embedded in College policies and practice.</p> <p>Staff familiar with and understand core precepts of Academic Infrastructure and use this knowledge to inform practice</p>	Higher Education Executive; ASQC	Adherence of Higher Education provision to the Academic Infrastructure assessed/tested during the programme validation and review procedures under QMEF

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>staff development for higher education staff is well developed and highly effective (paragraph 16)</li> </ul>	<p>Continue to implement current Staff Development Policy</p> <p>Increase the range and diversity of training and staff development opportunities available to staff</p> <p>Increase focus on teaching and learning-based staff development through the initiation of a Teaching &amp; Learning subgroup of ASQC which will identify potential areas for development as well as examples of good practice</p>	<p>Ongoing/continuous</p> <p>Progress assessed annually</p>	<p>Vice Principal (Higher Education)</p> <p>College Human Resources Department</p>	<p>High level of staff engagement and involvement in staff development</p>	<p>Higher Education Executive</p>	<p>Formal Staff Appraisal Procedures</p> <p>Human Resources department record of Staff Development Activities</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the strong institutional commitment to research and scholarship in support of academic standards (paragraph 17)</li> </ul>	<p>Review College Research and Scholarship Strategy to ensure it will continue to support staff engagement in scholarship and research</p> <p>Development of MRes in Equine &amp; Animal Sciences to build upon</p>	<p>Ongoing/continuous</p> <p>Progress assessed via annual audit of output</p>	<p>Vice Principal (Higher Education); research</p>	<p>Increased staff involvement in scholarship and production of measurable outputs</p>	<p>RKEC</p>	<p>Annual audit of scholarship and research activities and outputs</p>

	<p>staff expertise, facilities and enhance the research output further</p> <p>New Research and Scholarship Strategy in place from 2013/14</p>	December 2012				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the teaching buddy scheme provides a particularly useful and supportive means of sharing good practice and developing new members of staff (paragraph 23)</li> </ul>	Continue to develop and implement current practice; look for opportunities to increase support available to staff	<p>Ongoing/continuous</p> <p>Annual review of staff outcomes and feedback</p>	<p>Director of Higher Education</p> <p>ASQC (Teaching &amp; Learning Group)</p>	Improvements in teaching quality	Higher Education Executive; ASQC	National Student Survey and student feedback on teaching
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the Graduate Development Programme is well embedded and contextualised across all academic disciplines and students are very positive about the opportunities that it provides (paragraph 25)</li> </ul>	<p>Continue to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>encourage student engagement in programme</li> <li>develop resources and materials</li> <li>utilise student feedback in shaping the content and delivery of the programme</li> <li>ensure staff development supports the effective delivery of the programme</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing/continuous</p> <p>Annual Programme Reviews</p>	<p>Student experience</p> <p>ASQC (Teaching &amp; Learning Group)</p> <p>DCMs</p> <p>PSSLG</p>	Increased student engagement and satisfaction with Graduate Development Programme	<p>Higher Education Executive</p> <p>ASQC</p>	<p>Student feedback</p> <p>Demonstrable improvement of student achievement linked to engagement with Graduate Development Programme</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the vocational relevance of programmes and potential employability of graduates is supported by outstanding facilities and enhanced through the close association with commercial, professional and regulatory bodies (paragraph 26)</li> </ul>	<p>Ensure that employers, professional and regulatory bodies continue to have an input and influence on programme development and curriculum content</p> <p>Building on current good practice, encourage greater integration of facilities and commercial links into teaching across the curriculum</p>	<p>Ongoing/ Continuous</p> <p>Annual Programme Reviews</p>	<p>Student experience (employability)</p> <p>ASQC (Teaching &amp; Learning Group)</p> <p>DCMs</p> <p>PSSLG</p>	<p>Increased use and integration of facilities and commercial employment-related activities into teaching</p>	<p>Higher Education Executive</p> <p>ASQC</p>	<p>Student Feedback</p> <p>Audit of 'partnership' activities and links</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the involvement of the student voice and resulting user-friendly format and detailed content of the higher education programme handbooks (paragraph 40)</li> </ul>	<p>Formalise practice of consultation with the student body when producing guidance material and handbooks</p> <p>2011-12 focus on pre-enrolment information and student handbook and developments with the student virtual learning environment</p>	<p>Develop formal guidance on procedures for review and updating of student guidance material</p> <p>June 2012</p>	<p>Vice Principal (Higher Education) and Director of Higher Education in conjunction with Student Campus Chair</p>	<p>Student voice embedded in documents produced</p>	<p>Higher Education Executive</p>	<p>User and stakeholder feedback on the value and usefulness of guidance documents and material provided</p>

Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is <b>desirable</b> for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>monitor the implementation of the changes to the University's quality assurance procedures planned for 2012 to ensure protection of the College's academic standards (paragraph 11)</li> </ul>	<p>Monitor the implementation and effectiveness of new governance and quality assurance procedures</p> <p>Monitoring to include consideration of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>external reference points, eg external examiner and advisers' views/comments</li> <li>student performance</li> <li>staff and student feedback</li> </ul>	Ongoing - subject to annual committee review and reports to the University of the West of England and QSC	Vice Principal (Higher Education); Director of Higher Education; Higher Education Executive; CAP	Quality and standards maintained	University of the West of England Academic Board.  QSC  ASQC	<p>External examiners continue to express confidence in academic standards and quality</p> <p>Student performance maintained</p> <p>DCM Action Plans and Annual Programme Reviews continue to identify and address issues/areas for improvement</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensure that all programmes meet the defined standards for content on the virtual learning environment and continue to monitor staff and</li> </ul>	<p>Ensure virtual learning environment audits continue to be undertaken and areas for improvement identified and acted on</p> <p>Ensure all staff are suitably trained to be</p>	Audit of virtual learning environment use to be undertaken shortly after the start of each	<p>Audit: Academic Systems</p> <p>Follow up: Vice Principal (Higher Education) and Director of Higher Education, Heads of</p>	All programme and module virtual learning environment pages appropriately populated with material to meet or exceed	Higher Education Executive ASQC	<p>Student feedback via National Student Survey and PSSLG</p> <p>Virtual learning environment audit reports to Higher Education</p>



student usage (paragraph 41)	able to achieve minimum requirement.	semester  Staff development sessions held for all relevant staff by September 2012	Department	minimum criteria		Executive
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ASQC: Academic Standards and Quality Committee

CAP: Curriculum Approval Panel

DCM: Departmental Committee Meetings

PSSLG: Programme Staff Student Liaison Groups

QSC: Quality and Standards Committee (subcommittee of College Board of Governors)

QMEF: Quality Management and Enhancement Framework

RKEC: Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee

**RG 826 01/12**

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