



Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

Sussex Coast College Hastings

March 2012

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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 Sussex Coast College Hastings carried out in March 2012

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 collaborative development of the higher education staff guide and the increased integration and dissemination throughout the provision, which together have established a strong higher education identity and experience for students
- the extent and nature of employer involvement, including the provision of live briefs, projects and placements, which results in significant enhancement of learning opportunities
- the provision, utilisation and nature of information provided through a variety of teaching and communications media which are tailored to individual courses, student need and modes of delivery, which enriches the student learning experience
- the detailed and attractive Art and Design promotional booklet, which has been designed jointly by staff and students to encourage the progression of students from level 3 into relevant higher education courses at the College.

Recommendations

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

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

- develop further the higher education committee structure to provide more cohesive channels of communication, and embed continual review and planning to support and enhance the quality of learning opportunities
- provide evidence of critically evaluative senior management oversight of the higher education provision within the annual monitoring and self-assessment processes, in order to assure and enhance the quality of learning opportunities
- formally record and review completion and progression trends and develop action plans to improve the quality of the learning experience and/or share good practice as appropriate.

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

- improve the clarity of information it provides in the undergraduate prospectus to ensure that it covers progression routes and learning support, and indicates how the College meets the entitlements of students with disabilities.

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 Sussex Coast College Hastings (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 Brighton, the University of Central Lancashire, and Edexcel. The review was carried out by Mr David Charlton, Mrs Jane Davis, Mrs Catherine Fairhurst (reviewers), and Dr Chris Amodio (coordinator).

2 The Summative review team (the team) conducted the review in agreement with the College and in accordance with *The handbook for Integrated quality and enhancement review* (the handbook), published by QAA. Evidence in support of the Summative review included documentation supplied by the College and awarding bodies, meetings with staff, students, employers and partner institutions, and 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*, subject and award benchmark statements, the FHEQ, and programme specifications.

3 In order to help 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 Sussex Coast College Hastings, formerly known as Hastings College of Arts and Technology, is a further education college serving the areas of Hastings and Rother in East Sussex. It was formed in the early part of the twentieth century. Formerly based in St. Leonards-on Sea, the College was renamed in 2010 and relocated to two main campuses, at Station Plaza, Hastings, and Ore Valley. It also has motor vehicle workshops in Bexhill-on-Sea and an energy centre for plumbing, heating and nuclear training in St. Leonards-on-Sea. The higher education provision is located at the Station Plaza and Ore Valley campuses.

5 The College's vision is 'Inspiring Futures; Changing Lives', and its mission is the provision of 'outstanding education development and training for the benefit of all our students and stakeholders'. Within this framework, the College's strategic aims are to provide outstanding quality and performance management; excellent resource management; and to be at the heart of education-led regeneration. The College delivers its higher education provision in partnership with two universities and with Edexcel. Eight of the nine Foundation Degrees, together with one level 6 course, and the postgraduate education programme are awarded by the University of Brighton. The part-time Foundation Degree in Nuclear Engineering, part of a national network for the development of nuclear skills in the local area, is awarded by the University of Central Lancashire. The College currently delivers two HNC programmes, validated by Edexcel. In the academic year 2011-12, there are some 4,960 students enrolled in the College, of which 296 are following higher education courses amounting to approximately 230 full-time equivalents. There are 180 students studying full-time.

6 The College offers the following higher education programmes. The full-time equivalent student numbers enrolled on each course are given in brackets.

Edexcel

- HNC Business Studies (part-time) (6.5)
- HNC Engineering (part-time) (2.5)

University of Brighton

- FdSc Computing (full and part-time) (23)
- FdSc Sport and Fitness (full-time) (28)
- FdA Contemporary Crafts Practice (full and part-time) (21.5)
- FdA Fashion Design (full-time) (17)
- FdA Contemporary Fine Art Practice (full and part-time) (29.5)
- FdA Graphic Communication (full-time) (26)
- FdA Illustration (full-time) (29)
- FdEng Engineering (Manufacturing and Electrical) (part-time) (3)
- BSc (Hons) Internet Computing Levels 4 and 5 (full and part-time) (10.5)
- BA (Hons) Art and Design Level 6 (full-time) (16)
- Certificate in Post Compulsory Education (part-time) (7.5)
- Postgraduate Certificate in Post Compulsory Education (part-time) (9)

University of Central Lancashire

- FdEng Nuclear Engineering (part-time) (7)

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

7 The College offers its HEFCE-funded higher education programmes in conjunction with Edexcel, the University of Brighton and the University of Central Lancashire. The respective responsibilities of the College and the awarding body are defined in a Memorandum of Cooperation with the University of Brighton, an Instrument of Agreement with the University of Central Lancashire, and a contract with Edexcel. In each case the partner institution validates and awards the qualification. The Foundation Degrees are offered either as consortium provision, delivered within a group of local Colleges, or as a 'franchise' arrangement, with the programme delivered at the College only. The Foundation Degree in nuclear engineering is delivered as part of a national network for the development of nuclear skills in the local area. Maximum student numbers for each programme of study are agreed between the College and the relevant awarding bodies. Only specific years of the bachelor's degrees are taught at the College, as indicated above.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

8 Significant changes have taken place within the College's management and responsibility structure since the Developmental engagement and following publication of the latest Ofsted report. The Director of Higher Education now has overall responsibility for the higher education provision. In line with the College's current Strategic Plan to expand vocational provision which reflects needs of the local area, and following discussion with local employers and advisers, the College decided to re-establish its higher national provision. As a result, Edexcel validated 14 new HNC/D programmes in June 2011. Two of these HNC programmes first recruited in October 2011, the rest being scheduled to commence in autumn 2012. Reflecting its strategy for expansion of international provision, the College entered into a partnership in 2011 with St Patrick's College, London to support such development.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

9 Students studying on higher education courses at the College were invited to present a submission to the team. At the preparatory meeting, the coordinator explained the Summative review process to student representatives, emphasising their role in it. Subsequently, a specific questionnaire was used to survey opinion of higher education students under a number of aspects related to the core themes. The College also organised a focus group involving course representatives. An overview report was compiled and verified by the higher education student body as being an accurate summary of student views. In addition, the team had the opportunity to meet a representative group of 20 students and discuss the higher education provision with them during the review visit. The students' written and oral contributions together enabled the team to get a good overview of the students' perspectives of the higher education provision.

B Evaluation of the management of HEFCE-funded higher education

Core theme 1: Academic standards

How are responsibilities for managing and delivering higher education standards delegated within the management structure and what reporting arrangements are in place?

10 The Director of Higher Education has recently assumed overall responsibility for strategic management of higher education and oversight of collaborative partnerships. Operational responsibility for higher education rests with the Head of Learning, Higher Education, who effectively manages the general day-to-day operation and maintenance of academic standards across the College, ensuring arrangements are appropriate to the regulatory frameworks and partnership agreements of the three awarding bodies.

11 The College has effective systems for linking with its awarding bodies. The close and positive relationship with the University of Brighton is strong and beneficial. Each of the universities has regular contact with the College through the partnership manager as appropriate and through link tutors who support their respective subject leaders. Edexcel's Regional Quality Manager acts as a link to the College, and the Head of Learning, Higher Education, acts as a direct link for Higher National programme subject leaders. At course level, the reporting mechanism involves subject leaders, teaching staff and students. Subject leaders work directly with the university link tutors who provide guidance and support. The link tutors report directly to the Head of School at the university.

12 The College is organised into eight academic divisions. Within each of these, the Head of Learning is responsible for the management of courses. Management of the delivery of higher education standards across the provision is executed effectively through the higher education office, where the Head of Learning, Higher Education, is supported by the Higher Education Administrator who oversees the relevant administrators in the divisions. The Head of Learning, Higher Education, liaises with the heads of learning of individual subject divisions with regard to the broader implementation of higher education strategy, and also meets with the College's senior leadership team three times a year in formal performance management reviews. The focus of these meetings is the consideration of areas such as delivery, academic standards, staffing, monitoring processes, relationships with providers, and retention and achievement.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

13 The Academic Infrastructure underpins the College's delivery of higher education. The FHEQ and the *Code of practice* are referenced within each programme specification and student handbook. Two recent staff development sessions have concentrated on the Academic Infrastructure, with particular reference to the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*. The staff confirmed that these sessions were beneficial and aided their understanding.

14 The College recently produced a higher education staff guide, which contains further references to the Academic Infrastructure. During discussion with the team, teaching and support staff were able to refer to various sections of the *Code of practice* by name and number and were able to readily give examples of how these were used in the validation process. Academic staff confirmed that they also use the benchmark statements and level descriptors to guide them in their marking. Support staff check to ensure they are engaging with the necessary precepts that cover their area. The nature and level of engagement with the Academic Infrastructure by subject staff and within support structures, as well as by College managers, is extensive and well documented.

How does the College assure itself that it is fulfilling its obligations to ensure that the standards of higher education provision meet the requirements of validating partners and awarding bodies?

15 Responsibilities for ensuring standards of provision are executed effectively by the College. Operational communication with all three awarding bodies is dealt with by the Head of Learning, Higher Education. Each subject leader produces an annual academic health report which takes into account matters raised by the relevant external examiner. All external examiners' reports and academic health reports are incorporated into a College institutional report.

16 The University of Brighton has now amended its external examiners' report template to allow for areas specific to the College to be discussed. This may be further developed as necessary in the future. The chair of the examination board at the University of Brighton is responsible for ensuring that issues and good practice raised by external examiners have been acted upon, following discussion at course board level. Review of external examiners' reports confirms the team's opinion that the College's academic standards are appropriate for the level of the respective award. The current cross-college self-analysis reporting process is being developed to encompass the University of Central Lancashire and Edexcel programmes as well as those validated by the University of Brighton, so that the higher education self-assessment report from the College will be separate from its institutional report for the University of Brighton.

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

17 A scholarly and research activity policy was piloted and implemented in June 2011, with further research bids submitted during the current academic year. Staff welcome the policy but its impact has yet to be assessed. The College provides staff development days for higher education staff, led by the Head of Learning, Higher Education. Staff development within the College has considered the social needs of higher education and provided research time for support staff. Staff have also attended development workshops at both the University of Brighton and the University of Central Lancashire, which promote the sharing of

good practice. A number of the higher education team have taken master's programmes with the University of Brighton.

18 Since the Developmental engagement there have been a number of meetings involving all higher education staff. These have resulted in a greater degree of integration of the different higher education curriculum areas, and have facilitated the dissemination of good practice. Additionally, the College published a higher education staff guide to which the academic staff have contributed. This document contributes to the higher education identity, and helps to establish consistency between courses and appropriate academic levels. This was confirmed in discussions with staff and students. Students commented to reviewers that they feel part of a university experience. The team regards the collaborative development of the higher education staff guide and the increased integration and dissemination throughout the provision, which together have established a strong higher education identity and experience for students, as good practice.

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

Core theme 2: Quality of learning opportunities

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

19 The College's responsibilities are clearly set out in the partnership agreements. It has the primary responsibility for delivering the programmes as validated, and for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. This includes responsibility for staff deployment and development, accommodation and equipment, libraries, and information technology facilities. The College is also responsible for ensuring that arrangements for supporting students are in place.

20 The College has appropriate and effective management structures in place for managing the quality of learning opportunities. The Deputy Principal Curriculum and Quality has overall responsibility for learning opportunities within the College, providing line management for all heads of learning. This role has been supplemented by the recent appointment of the Director of Higher Education, who has strategic responsibility. Operational management of higher education at the College is the responsibility of the Head of Learning, Higher Education, who works effectively and proactively with subject leaders and student representatives to promote a culture of continual quality improvement and enhancement of learning opportunities.

21 The management of higher education is supported through a committee structure at strategic and operational levels. However, the format and function of these meetings is not well developed. The committee structure does not yet facilitate effective communication between senior management and course teams and, while subject leaders welcome the opportunity to interact as a community, the meetings have not been used as effectively as they could have been for the management of learning opportunities. The team considers it advisable for the College to develop further the higher education committee structure to provide more cohesive channels of communication and embed continual review and planning to support and enhance the quality of learning opportunities.

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

22 The College is required to provide an annual monitoring and evaluation report for each course, which is submitted to the University of Brighton by the course leader each year. Additionally, the College completes an annual institution-level monitoring report in accordance with the University of Brighton's published procedures. Reports at both levels are required to critically evaluate the management of learning opportunities. These reports are narrative in style and the institutional report does not evaluate the effectiveness of processes and structures, for the management and enhancement of learning opportunities. The team considers it advisable for the College to provide evidence of critically evaluative senior management oversight of the higher education provision, within the annual monitoring and self-assessment processes, in order to assure and enhance the quality of learning opportunities.

23 The College seeks and acts upon feedback from students through a range of informative mechanisms at course level. These include formal and informal communications such as module evaluations, tutorials, and course boards. The College also provides an effective and useful opportunity for institutional feedback through the development and implementation of the higher education student forum. Students who met the team confirmed that these processes generally work well.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

24 As indicated in paragraphs 13 and 14, the College, with the awarding bodies where relevant, is working actively to develop deeper understanding of the elements of the Academic Infrastructure within academic, administrative and student support teams. Academic staff have been involved in developmental activity and are able to discuss relevant sections of the *Code of practice* while student support teams actively engage with it during policy development and review. This is evident in several areas including the admissions policy and support provided for students with disabilities.

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

25 The College has developed a higher education quality assurance policy that comprehensively outlines the processes and procedures employed to support the enhancement of standards and the quality of the students' learning experience. The policy embraces reporting requirements, the student voice, observation of teaching and learning, the teaching and learning strategy, the approval of staff appointments, the higher education assessment policy, higher education staff induction, staff development, and the use of data for quality improvement. The quality assurance policy document was compiled in January 2012 and the team considers it has the potential to develop and enhance further the quality of learning opportunities within the College.

26 The College has an overarching teaching and learning strategy that incorporates its Higher Education Partner College Teaching Policy (2010). The policy embraces the Higher Education Academy's 'UK Professional Standards Framework' and outlines the associated teaching observation framework for staff. Teaching teams are familiar with the principles of the teaching and learning strategy and have engaged positively with the higher education framework for teaching observations. Teaching staff also undertake peer observations and have found subsequent feedback supportive and developmental. Themes arising from observations are shared with peers but are not formally reviewed.

27 The effectiveness of the College's processes for assuring the quality of teaching and learning was confirmed by students. They provided very positive feedback about the quality of teaching on their courses and were happy to recommend their programme of study. Students find feedback on assessment to be constructive and effective in supporting personal development, and emphasised the value of one-to-one tutorials. They also commended the relevance of the curriculum and the personalised approach to learning enabled through small cohort sizes. Particularly positive feedback was received on the commitment and accessibility of teaching teams and the ongoing professional and vocational activity of most tutors.

28 The College works proactively with employers and industry, and all students have opportunities for work placement or live projects. Employers from engineering, sports, photography, education and arts sectors expressed enthusiasm for the opportunities provided through interaction with the College's provision. Subject leaders have developed very positive working relationships with employers, who are well informed of College processes and engage with the development of assignment briefs where appropriate. Students undertaking placement or project activity are recognised as being well equipped for the experience. The team considers that the extent and nature of employer involvement, including the provision of live briefs, projects and placements, which results in a significant enhancement of learning opportunities, is good practice.

29 A variety of communication media is employed and tailored to individual courses, student needs and modes of delivery. The College encourages equality of learning opportunities by employing a good range of teaching, learning and assessment methods that are targeted to the needs of specific student subject cohorts. This includes the use of podcasts, personal tutorials, exhibitions, and presentations in addition to formal lectures. All of these are explained well in relevant course documentation. The team considers that the provision, utilisation and nature of information provided, through a variety of teaching and communications media which are tailored to individual courses, student need and modes of delivery, enriches the student learning experience and is an area of good practice.

30 Students are engaged in personal development practice through a range of techniques and media appropriate to their curriculum area. A particular emphasis is placed upon the development of learning journals for students in the Creative Industries and Education programmes, such that it has become an embedded part of their learning activity. This supports reflective practice, and has worked well to engage students in self-assessment and peer review, thus enhancing the quality of learning.

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

31 Student support services provided by the College are effective and work proactively to support the needs of the individual across a range of areas, from financial advice to counselling. Students are also referred to the support teams at the University of Brighton. Study skills support is provided by referral to the Higher Education Student Mentor, through seminars and workshops provided by the library. Students value the comprehensive range of support available.

32 The College recognises the importance of using data for quality improvement and this policy has been implemented effectively at course level. Data referring to the current year of study is presented through course reviews, and subject leaders maintain records of full course achievement for boards of examiners. Annual health reports and the institutional report make reference to retention and achievement data.

33 The University of Brighton provides the College with completion and progression data. These show variability across courses with some excellent progression and some areas for concern. However, this data is not currently used sufficiently by senior managers to inform action planning for improvement and the sharing of effective practice. The team therefore considers it advisable for the College to formally record and review completion and progression trends and develop action plans to improve the quality of the learning experience and/or share good practice as appropriate.

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

34 The College has a comprehensive and appropriate staff development strategy, supported by a staff development group that has responsibility for its implementation. The staff development action plan provides an indication of priorities for further development; this does not include reference to specific developments for higher education. The impact of staff development is evaluated according to the learning and development evaluation policy.

35 Many members of staff continue with their own industrial practice and undertake relevant qualifications, which are part of the College's scholarly activity. Art students particularly point out that tutors keep them up to date with the latest developments in their sphere and have first-hand experience through working in the industry. This currency in practice substantially enhances the number and nature of learning opportunities available to students.

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?

36 The quality of resources is reviewed through the process of annual health reporting. This incorporates student feedback at module and course level. The College responds appropriately to student feedback and has provided additional resources such as a common room for higher education students and improved access to computer facilities. Most curriculum areas are well resourced following investment during the relocation to the new building and use of the capital bidding process that forms part of the annual budgeting procedure.

37 The library is a useful resource and is well stocked. Library staff are helpful and approachable. They interact with subject teams through subject liaison officers and a library-based higher education representative. The library staff provide an induction for students designed to develop research skills and to ensure that students are aware of the learning resources available across the various campuses of the College and through the University of Brighton.

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?

38 The College's responsibilities for publishing information about its higher education courses validated by the University of Brighton and the University of Central Lancashire are clearly detailed in the agreements with these universities. Partner universities assist in the marketing of programmes through their own channels but production of all publicity and promotional material associated with higher education programmes is ultimately the College's responsibility.

39 The College's website is attractive and provides a showcase for students' work to better inform the general public and stakeholders, ultimately enhancing the quality of the higher education provision. This website is user-friendly with a prominent higher education navigation tab on the front page; staff, student and employer portals are also easily accessible. The information on the website is being developed to support work-based learning. There is also employer engagement before the start of any placement and an appropriate health and safety document.

40 The College publishes a dedicated undergraduate prospectus, designed by a current graphic communications student. This is available electronically and in printed format but not in a range of languages or formats. The prospectus includes details on finance, application procedures, entry requirements, and programme modules. It is attractive, well designed and aspirational, but the details covering progression and assessment for individual programmes could be made clearer even though students confirm that these are explained at the application stage, during interview and in tutorials. There is no pre-programme information in the undergraduate prospectus covering learning support or how the College meets the entitlements of students with disabilities. In order to support consistency of applicant understanding, the team consider that it is desirable for the College to improve the clarity of information it provides in the undergraduate prospectus to ensure that it covers progression routes and learning support, and indicates how the College meets the entitlements of students with disabilities.

41 The College has produced an informative booklet to promote higher education to the College's Art and Design National Diploma and Foundation Degree students. This gives a clear description of the various opportunities available, the importance of a portfolio and the application process in a well designed setting. The team considers the development and use of this detailed and attractive Art and Design promotional booklet, designed jointly by staff and students to encourage the progression of students from level 3 into relevant higher education courses at the College, to be good practice and worthy of wider dissemination.

42 The College publishes the higher education course handbooks which are contextualised to reflect individual course detail and learning outcomes. They vary according to the university schools' requirements or the internal template for Edexcel courses but all include module descriptors and information on assessment, course regulations and student support. Handbooks are available electronically, in hard copy and on a smart phone application. The students confirmed the team's view that the handbooks are useful and informative, and noted that they use them regularly.

43 A key additional source of public information is the virtual learning environment. The students have ready access to academic regulations and assessment schedules on the virtual learning environment. They understand assessment requirements and workload

demands at an early stage. The virtual learning environment is used extensively by the students who reported that it is a useful source of information.

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 Developmental engagement recommended that it would be advisable for the College to review processes for checking course information in the public domain to make them more rigorous and effective. In response, the College has published the protocols for achieving this, in a higher education marketing and communications process document. This requires the Head of Marketing and Communications to work with subject leaders on the development of course information within an internal template. For the Foundation Degree courses, the universities then approve course-specific material, use of the university logo, public relations information, and website content prior to their publication. The style and content of the higher education prospectus is finally signed off by the College's senior leadership team. The Head of Learning, Higher Education, undertakes an annual audit of key documents.

45 The content and use of the website is closely monitored. Monthly data is analysed at the marketing focus group meeting. Staff are surveyed about its content and students are surveyed at interview and induction. The mechanisms established to monitor consistency and clarity of the information the College is responsible for publishing, are enhanced by the good relationships with the universities, the employers and the small student cohorts.

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

46 The College's Developmental engagement in assessment took place in March 2011. The review team included two institutional nominees. The lines of enquiry agreed with the College were as follows.

Line of enquiry 1: How has internal verification led to assurance and enhancement of academic standards?

Line of enquiry 2: Is the nature of feedback on assessed work well understood, and does it support learning of all groups of students and the achievement of intended learning outcomes?

Line of enquiry 3: How is information on the higher education provision and nature of the programmes of study communicated to students and potential stakeholders, and how effective are these processes?

47 The Developmental engagement encompassed one level 4 TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) certificate (Trinity College), nine Foundation Degrees (eight with the University of Brighton and one with the University of Central Lancashire), two certificates in post-compulsory education, and parts of two bachelor's programmes, all with the University of Brighton.

48 The Developmental engagement identified a number of areas of good practice. These included the effective procedures for internal verification and subsequent moderation of student work well above the requirements of the awarding bodies, and the practice whereby some subject leaders moderate and verify work from other specialisms within their division to ensure that standards are appropriately set, achieved and maintained across the provision. It also found that informative and timely feedback is provided on most student work, the nature of feedback effectively supports student learning, and that the highly committed teaching staff provide a wide range of support to enable students to achieve learning outcomes. In some cases this level of support stimulated them to produce work of exceptionally high quality. The provision, utilisation and nature of information provided on the variety of communications media tailored to individual courses, student needs and modes of delivery were also regarded as good practice.

49 The College was advised to ensure that academic staff have a deeper understanding of the Academic Infrastructure, particularly the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*, and how it applies to their courses, and to ensure that the good practice in assessment standardisation is effectively shared across the higher education provision of the College. It was also advised to establish and implement a consistently applied mechanism for the identification and dissemination of good practice concerning the quality, nature and extent of feedback provided on student work, and to introduce a process of standardisation of higher education-related documentation within the boundaries of the awarding body requirements. The team considered it desirable for the College to identify mechanisms to reflect higher education more explicitly within its quality assurance and enhancement processes, to consider mechanisms to help students to reflect more fully on their work and the feedback provided, to review processes for checking course information in the public domain, and to establish improved conduits for communication between itself, specific subject areas and employers. Finally it was desirable for the College to communicate the achievement of its students to the general public and stakeholders more effectively.

D Foundation Degrees

50 The College currently offers eight Foundation Degrees in partnership with the University of Brighton, with which it has established a close relationship. These are in Computing, Sports and Fitness, Illustration, Contemporary Fine Art Practice, Graphic Communication, Contemporary Craft Practice, Fashion Practice, and Engineering (manufacturing and electrical). A partnership was set up in 2010 with the University of Central Lancashire to validate the FdEng Nuclear Engineering course as part of a national network for the development of nuclear skills in the local area. The College has no immediate plans to expand its portfolio of Foundation Degrees; however, following discussions with local stakeholders, it has decided to develop a range of HNC/D courses.

51 The Foundation Degree provision provides effective learning opportunities for students, with generally satisfactory retention and achievement. Many students progress to the final year of an honours degree programme at the University of Brighton or elsewhere. The provision reflects the defining characteristics of Foundation Degrees as defined in the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*, and is appropriately aligned to the relevant sections of the *Code of practice*. The team concluded that the College effectively manages the academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities of its Foundation Degrees.

52 In the course of the review, the team identified areas of good practice and made some advisable and desirable recommendations. All refer to Foundation Degree programmes. These are identified in Section E.

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

53 The 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 bodies, the University of Brighton, the University of Central Lancashire, and Edexcel.

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

- the collaborative development of the higher education staff guide and the increased integration and dissemination throughout the provision, which together have established a strong higher education identity and experience for students (paragraph 18)
- the extent and nature of employer involvement, including the provision of live briefs, projects and placements, which results in significant enhancement of learning opportunities (paragraph 28)
- the provision, utilisation and nature of information provided through a variety of teaching and communications media which are tailored to individual courses, student need and modes of delivery, which enriches the student learning experience (paragraph 29)
- the detailed and attractive Art and Design promotional booklet, which has been designed jointly by staff and students to encourage the progression of students from level 3 into relevant higher education courses at the College (paragraph 41).

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

56 The team considers that it is **advisable** for the College to:

- develop further the higher education committee structure to provide more cohesive channels of communication, and embed continual review and planning to support and enhance the quality of learning opportunities (paragraph 21)
- provide evidence of critically evaluative senior management oversight of the higher education provision within the annual monitoring and self-assessment processes, in order to assure and enhance the quality of learning opportunities (paragraph 22)
- formally record and review completion and progression trends and develop action plans to improve the quality of the learning experience and/or share good practice as appropriate (paragraph 33).

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

- improve the clarity of information it provides in the undergraduate prospectus to ensure that it covers progression routes and learning support, and indicates how the College meets the entitlements of students with disabilities (paragraph 40).

58 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.

Integrated quality and enhancement review

59 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.

60 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.

Sussex Coast College Hastings action plan relating to the Summative review: March 2012

Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<p>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:</p>						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the collaborative development of the higher education staff guide and the increased integration and dissemination throughout the provision, which together have established a strong higher education identity and experience for students (paragraph 18) 	<p>To continue to develop a strong higher education ethos across the College</p> <p>Review the Higher Education Guide twice per year in conjunction with the higher education wiki to consolidate higher education practice at the College</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Formal review September each academic year</p> <p>Formal review September/January each year</p>	<p>Higher Education Director; Higher Education Manager; Heads of Learning; Subject Leaders</p> <p>Subject Leaders; Higher Education Manager; Director of Quality</p>	<p>Evidence in increased branding, bespoke higher education systems, processes and recruitment</p> <p>Consolidate all higher education practices to ensure comparable standards and consistencies are met by higher education staff as</p>	<p>Senior Leadership Team</p> <p>Director of Quality Higher Education Director</p> <p>Deputy Principal of Curriculum and Quality</p>	<p>Annual Higher Education Self-Assessment Report.</p> <p>Principal's Performance Reviews, Course level Academic Health reporting</p> <p>Higher education annual action plan; staff feedback at forums/training/questionnaires; marketing self-assessment report; recruitment data</p> <p>Staff feedback, student experience through focus groups and questionnaires</p> <p>Recruitment targets achieved</p>

	To introduce the concept of a staff guide to the further education provision in the College by divisions	Training weeks July - August 2012	Heads of Learning; Director of Quality	per college and national guidelines Consolidate practice and develop identity within further education		Further education staff feedback, further education self-assessment reports; Heads of Learning forums, Principal's Performance Review, the staff survey
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the extent and nature of employer involvement, including the provision of live briefs, projects and placements, which results in significant enhancement of learning opportunities (paragraph 28) 	Establish Higher Education Employers' Forum and review the process annually	November 2012	Higher Education Manager	Formal involvement of employers through the Employers' Forum leads to increased involvement by employers in the local community, in the design and development of courses, and in supporting and assessing learner work, learning and assessment	Director of Quality Higher Education Manager	Direct employer feedback at Employers' forums
	Establish a higher education database of employers, higher education placements and student success, to be reviewed annually	September 2012 Ongoing	Higher Education Manager		Director of Quality Higher Education Director Deputy Principal of Curriculum and Quality	Higher education student placement feedback; student questionnaires, Course Level Academic Health reporting, Higher Education Self-Assessment Report Feedback by employers; active contributions by employers to programmes, learning and assessment; institutional reporting
	Continue to build on current good practice to enhance learning opportunities within the workplace and prepare learners for employment or	January 2013	Higher Education Manager		Higher Education Director Deputy Principal of Curriculum and Quality	Higher education student placement feedback; student questionnaires, Course Level Health reporting, Higher Education Self-Assessment Report; feedback by employers; institutional

	progression within current employment			studies for higher education marketing Ongoing success with work-based opportunities securing appropriate local, regional and national placements		reporting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the provision, utilisation and nature of information provided through a variety of teaching and communications media which are tailored to individual courses, student need and modes of delivery, which enriches the student learning experience (paragraph 29) 	Identify good practice and disseminate throughout all provision; include in the Sussex Coast College Higher Education Staff Guide	September 2012; monitor on yearly basis	Higher Education Manager, Subject Leaders, Higher Education Mentor	Positive use by students of specific communication media for their course, to ensure their curriculum needs are met	Student experience and student success	Subject Leader feedback at Higher Education Forums, student questionnaires/ feedback at focus groups; student feedback in Academic Health Reports/mid-year Course Reviews; information and Learning Technology forum meetings; Higher Education Academic Board; higher education staff guide
	To critically review practice and take action to ensure communication media on each programme is relevant and enhances the student learning experience	September 2012	Higher Education Manager Subject Leaders	Use of a broader range of media that meets a diverse range of learning needs and enhances the student experience	Director of Quality Higher Education Director Heads of Learning	Course level tutorials, module feedback; Academic Health Reports, student feedback at focus groups and questionnaires; staff level course meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the detailed and attractive Art and 	To build on best practice in Art &	October 2012	Higher Education Manager	Positive feedback by Subject	Heads of Learning	Higher Education self-assessment report, direct

Design promotional booklet, which has been designed jointly by staff and students to encourage the progression of students from level 3 into relevant higher education courses at the College (paragraph 41).	Design and create promotional booklets for each area/division to encourage progression of students into relevant higher education in the College. To use the promotional booklets to target external applications into the College		Higher Education Marketing Manager	Leaders, level 3 Course Leaders, level 3 students and the increase of internal progression and external applications through the implementation of promotional booklets for each area/division to achieve target numbers	Higher Education Director	feedback from Heads of Learning, Subject Leaders and level 3 students at internal recruitment stage Review by marketing department
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is advisable for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop further the higher education committee structure to provide more cohesive channels of communication, and embed continual review and planning to support and 	To implement and establish the revised Higher Education committee structure, including the introduction of a Higher Education Academic Board	September 2012	Higher Education Manager Higher Education Director Director of Quality	A bespoke higher education communication process that develops clear lines of communication throughout the organisation and enhances the quality of learning, learning opportunities and	Senior Leadership Team	Higher Education Quality Assurance policy/process including schedule, Higher Education Self-Assessment Report process Reporting to Governors, internal and external higher education focused audits Higher Education Forums and Sussex Coast College Hastings Higher Education

enhance the quality of learning opportunities (paragraph 21)	To critically evaluate the effectiveness of the committee structure on planning, communication and improvement			planned provision		Board Principal's Performance Review on five occasions per year
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide evidence of critically evaluative senior management oversight of the higher education provision within the annual monitoring and self-assessment processes, in order to assure and enhance the quality of learning opportunities (paragraph 22) 	Ensure that dedicated mechanisms are in place for Senior Managers to plan, monitor and critically evaluate higher education provision against agreed performance measures, indicators and targets	September 2012	Higher Education Manager Deputy Principal of Curriculum and Quality	Higher education quality reviewed as part of College review and evaluation and quality process reviewed, developed and enhanced by Senior Managers to ensure provision meets the needs and interests of students and employers; provision recruits to target, standards of provision provide full confidence, students achieve and progress to or within employment Actions for improvement are	Senior Leadership Team Higher Education Director Higher Education Manager	<p>Strategy in place and reviewed formally on an annual basis.</p> <p>Recruitment targets monitored and actions taken to achieve targets for the three-year planning period.</p> <p>Self-Assessment Report, critical evaluation and moderation with action to address under-performance</p> <p>Institutional reporting, Course Review, including reporting to College Governors</p> <p>Feedback to Heads of Learning, Higher Education Director, Director of Quality, Higher Education Manager at the Higher Education Board</p>

				recognised and addressed with secure solutions on a timely basis		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> formally record and review completion and progression trends and develop action plans to improve the quality of the learning experience and/or share good practice as appropriate (paragraph 33). 	Establish dedicated in-house/commercial Management Information Systems reporting and monitoring systems for higher education that provides current, accurate data and enables customised reports to inform monitoring of standards, development and improvement to assure the management of the quality of provision	September 2012	<p>Management Information Systems Manager</p> <p>Higher Education Manager</p> <p>Director of Quality</p>	A bespoke higher education in-house/commercial Management Information Systems reporting and monitoring system in place that provides reliable data for higher education at course, department and corporate levels to inform improvement and can be used by the Senior Leadership Team planning purposes	<p>Higher Education Director</p> <p>College Senior Leadership Team</p>	Higher Education Self-Assessment Report, Principal's Performance Reviews, Management Information Systems reporting, Course Level Reviews, Quality Assurance Policy, monitoring at higher education boards 'PEER' scheme
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"> improve the clarity of information it provides in the undergraduate 	To provide additional detail that addresses the diverse needs of applicants to support them to meet their	October 2012	<p>Higher Education Manager</p> <p>Marketing Manager</p>	Feedback by students and prospective students on the currency and	<p>Higher Education Director</p> <p>Director of Quality</p>	Direct feedback: Student Services, Subject Leaders, Higher Education Communication policy/paper to provide evidence in all

<p>prospectus to ensure that it covers progression routes and learning support, and indicates how the College meets the entitlements of students with disabilities (paragraph 40).</p>	<p>aspirations and to enable them to make informed decisions on their futures</p>			<p>appropriateness of information in the Undergraduate Prospectus is a decisive factor in their course choice</p> <p>Recruitment targets are achieved, students achieve successfully and positive progression outcomes to higher levels of learning and/or employment are realised</p>	<p>Student Services Manager</p>	<p>higher education marketing</p> <p>Direct feedback by students through questionnaires and focus groups of detail/approach for future promotion</p> <p>Recruitment targets achieved</p> <p>Progression data shows positive outcomes for students</p>
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