Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

Strode College

May 2012

SR 061/12

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 the college's awarding body. 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 Strode College carried out in May 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 body. 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 opportunities for staff scholarship and research enhance the quality of learning opportunities for students
- the individual support provided by tutors and the College's central services are well matched to the diverse needs of students
- the opportunities for formative assessment feedback facilitated by the virtual learning environment help students to develop their assignments and to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Recommendations

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

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

- develop further its strategies for encouraging students to make more effective use of the University's virtual learning environment and its e-library facilities
- review the documentation for its work-based learning to ensure that it more readily engages with the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning.*

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 Strode 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 Plymouth (the University). The review was carried out by Mr Kevin Burnside, Mrs AnnMarie Colbert (reviewers) and Mr Robert Hodgkinson (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 the awarding body, telephone conversations with College staff, a meeting with students, 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. The review was conducted by a desk-based study. 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   Strode College is a general further education college located in Street, Somerset and occupies a single campus. It has 1,500 students aged 16-18 and 2,000 adult students on a range of full-time and part-time courses. Strode College's mission is to provide high standards of education within an inclusive and supportive environment. The majority of Foundation Degree students are recruited from within Somerset. The University of Plymouth validates its higher education courses. Foundation Degrees are offered in the Business and Professional Studies, and Advanced Level academic teams. There are 39 students, of whom 38 are full-time and one part-time, making approximately 38.5 full-time equivalents.

5   The current higher education awards, with the relevant awarding body and full-time equivalent student numbers in brackets, are as follows.

University of Plymouth

- FdSc E-Business Technology (0)
- FdA History, Heritage and Archaeology (21.5)
- FdSc Managing in Public Sector Services (17)

Partnership agreements with the awarding body

6   The College has a formal partnership agreement with University of Plymouth documented in an academic cooperation agreement. The University has a faculty dedicated to its widening participation work with further education colleges, known as the University of Plymouth Colleges Faculty. The University is responsible for programme approval and alignment with the Academic Infrastructure. This responsibility is undertaken through programme validation; acceptance of student applications; and ensuring common standards

through annual programme monitoring, external examiners' reports and final assessment. The College is responsible for programme delivery; assessment and internal moderation; quality of teaching and learning; application of the University's standards; regular internal monitoring of quality; and adherence to the University's requirements for the annual evaluation and review of the provision.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

7   The College's higher education strategy is being reviewed to take account of changes in its funding and the possible introduction of new partners. The College is currently seeking institutional validation of its provision with Bath Spa University. Although there are no students currently studying for the FdSc E-Business Technology, additional HEFCE numbers have been approved to allow the College to offer this programme in September 2012.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

8   Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the team. The student representatives produced a submission that was supported by the College and the University of Plymouth College's Student Union Manager. It was based on earlier feedback submissions that have been produced annually for the past three years. Once completed the draft submission was circulated to all Foundation Degree students for their agreement. During the preparatory visit the students were given the opportunity to expand on some of the points that were made in the submission. Their evidence was of value to the team.

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?

9   The academic cooperation agreement between the University and the College outlines their respective responsibilities for managing and delivering higher education academic standards. More specific responsibilities are identified in the programme documentation, handbooks, templates, reporting structures, and review and assessment procedures that are prescribed by the University. These define clearly the structure and scope of the collaboration between the parties. They describe each partner's role in a range of processes and procedures that include their responsibility for quality assurance, programme management and delivery, assessment, student recruitment, admissions and support. Additional College responsibilities are reflected in a range of awarding body policies, procedures and other documentation, for example in the assessment and moderation policies, teaching and learning strategies, and operational instructions for Subject Assessment Panels. These policies and other documents have been developed by the awarding body to reflect fully the precepts of the *Code of practice*. The University operates through the University of Plymouth Colleges Faculty, which is dedicated to widening participation with further education colleges.

10   The responsibility for the management of academic standards is defined clearly at all levels and reflects the small size of the provision. An executive management team comprising the Principal and two Deputy Principals is responsible for the oversight of the higher education strategy and the overall management of the provision. Their responsibilities for higher education and further education are integrated. Programme managers are responsible for the management and the delivery of the provision, programme development and preparation for validation by the awarding body. They also chair the programme committees that monitor and report on quality-related issues and are responsible for annual programme monitoring and action planning as required by the awarding body. The annual programme monitoring report action plans, produced by the programme managers, are reviewed at meetings with the Subject Forum Chair. The latter is the link between the awarding body's College Faculty and the cognate faculties. Programme managers structure the assessment calendar and distribute module and student handbooks. Module leaders are responsible for module handbook production, delivery of the programmes, assessment, and uploading this information on to the College's virtual learning environment.

11   There is a well defined framework to ensure that the College operates in accordance with the policies, procedures and practices of the awarding body's Colleges Faculty. The College management structure identifies clearly the main roles of College staff. This formal structure supports assessment, quality processes, the academic development of the programmes and staff development. Matters relating to the quality assurance of each programme are reported to the awarding body's Faculty Board through its Joint Boards of Studies meetings. The College Deputy Principal and her awarding body counterpart chair jointly the University's Colleges Faculty Autumn Joint Board of Studies. It includes College student representatives and staff drawn from all levels of the provision. Academic liaison persons supported by a subject forum chair from the University's Colleges Faculty provide key links with the College at the level of the programme. The academic liaison persons work closely with the college-based teams on academic and related issues, helping to maintain and enhance academic standards. This liaison has aided the sharing of resources and the supporting of progression links. These close formal and informal working relationships between the University and College staff at all levels enhance the effectiveness of the assessment processes and procedures.

12   The College's Head of Higher Education coordinates the transfer of information on academic standards, including assessment, between the College and the University's Colleges Faculty. This ensures that programme managers and teams are kept well informed about developments and changes in assessment practices and procedures. To support and consolidate this transfer of information the Head of Higher Education has produced a programme manager's handbook. This provides advice, and informs and consolidates key University and College policies and procedures. Programme managers and new and existing staff welcome the summaries contained in the handbook which make them more aware of the scope and changes in the University's regulations and procedures that underpin the delivery of the provision.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

13   The awarding body has overall responsibility for programme approval and alignment of programmes with the Academic Infrastructure. Templates provided by the University ensure that the development and design of programmes is informed by the Academic Infrastructure and align with the FHEQ, the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark* and the *Code of practice.* This ensures appropriate learning outcomes are developed, which are confirmed through the University's validation process and the College's and University's quality assurance processes. Engagement with the Academic Infrastructure and the FHEQ is evidenced in the programme approval documentation, in

student and staff handbooks, in external examiner reports, and in assignment learning outcomes. Staff are made aware of the requirements of the Academic Infrastructure through specific staff development and training, provided by the College and the University, and engagement in validation activity.

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 body?

14   The academic cooperation agreement and associated University documents clarify what is expected of the College in meeting the standards expected. The College's higher education quality assurance cycle illustrates clearly the processes for the annual monitoring and review of its programmes. This, together with the list of events provided in the College's self-evaluation, indicates the timing of the production of the programme self-assessment reviews, dates for course reviews, and meetings of key college and awarding body committees. The quality assurance cycle indicates clearly the links and communication routes between the College's committees and lends credence that they are operating effectively to fulfil its obligations.

15   Following its Developmental engagement, the College has clarified its committee and reporting structures so that these are now more transparent and effective. These are now represented in its quality assurance cycle diagram. The Higher Education Strategy Group meets each term and focuses on the monitoring, reviewing and amending of the College's higher education strategy and recommends new programmes for approval. The Higher Education Operational Group's remit has been expanded to monitor formally programme quality and student progression and to review the higher education self-assessment reviews. The sharing of good practice on assessment within the College has been predominantly informal. This is now considered formally within the Higher Education Operational Group meetings.

16   The academic standards for the provision are maintained through the external examination processes that are clearly prescribed by the awarding body. External examiner reports are reviewed by the Head of Quality as part of the College's self-assessment process. Responses are prepared by programme managers and reviewed as part of the award monitoring process and by the Joint Board of Studies. External examiner feedback informs subsequent action planning.

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

17   The processes and procedures that encourage staff development operate effectively. The College has an annual staff development policy and plan that is specific to staff teaching in higher education. It outlines the support that can be accessed for their development and scholarly activity. Staff development needs are identified through the self-assessment and annual programme monitoring processes. The College and the University offer regular joint staff development sessions that include training in the use of the virtual learning environments and focused staff development days. Staff development events are well attended and have included sessions on assessment design, the Academic Infrastructure, and induction for new teaching staff. Opportunities to share good practice are identified by the Higher Education Operational Group and inform staff development planning and delivery. The Staff Development Officer of the University's Colleges Faculty has visited the College to highlight the range of staff development opportunities that are offered by the University.

18   At Higher Education Operational meetings there are opportunities for teaching staff to share new initiatives and developments in the classroom. At these meetings, good practice is an agenda item. Sharing good practice across the provision can include peer presentations that stimulate staff to explore new ideas.

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 body.

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 responsibilities for the management of the quality of learning opportunities and reporting arrangements are detailed in paragraphs 9 to 12. The procedures are well established and operate effectively. The University's Faculty Board, through its Joint Boards of Studies, monitors the quality of learning at the College. The College's responsibilities for the management of the quality of learning opportunities include programme delivery, assessment and internal moderation. The College's reporting arrangements and associated cycle of activities are effective and appropriate in assuring the quality of learning opportunities. Good practice guides and comprehensive guidance about academic regulations and procedures are readily accessible in the University of Plymouth Colleges Faculty virtual handbook. The policies and procedures as defined by the University are described in the College's programme managers' handbook, derived from a University template. The programme teams are expected to be familiar with and apply these, and abide by the University's regulations.

20   College annual Subject Assessment Panels and University meetings are held at the end of each academic year. The presence of the programme team, University representatives and external examiners helps to ensure that all matters relating to student assessment are considered carefully. There is also the opportunity for the panel and boards to identify areas of good practice.

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

21   The quality assurance arrangements described in paragraphs 14 to 16 are appropriate in underpinning the learning opportunities. The programme committees and Joint Board of Studies meetings, the outcomes of the Subject Assessment Panel and award board inform the College's annual self-assessment reporting and action planning processes at programme and College level. These processes allow for the monitoring of progress against previous action plans and from external examiner and student feedback. They aid the College in monitoring standards through its measurement of learner achievement, retention and progression, teaching quality and reporting on equality and diversity. Self-assessment reports and action plans are programme-based, contributing to a College self-assessment report that is monitored by the College's Senior Management Team and Academic Board. At the end of this academic year the College is proposing to make separate its higher education self-assessment reporting from the previously used generic College framework. The self-assessment reports are effective in underpinning the

management of the provision and contribute to the enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities.

22 Assessment moderation is effective and engages with the precepts of *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*. The Head of Quality and Deputy Principal moderate the module handbooks and assessment briefs annually. Assessment information is clear and accessible to students and external examiners confirm the appropriateness of the learning outcomes and assessments. A second marker samples summative assessments and all marks are scrutinised during the annual Subject Assessment Panels and award board.

23 Student engagement in the quality processes is encouraged by a number of means. In addition to their feedback being reflected in the self-assessment reporting process as outlined in paragraph 21, students are given many opportunities to express their views on the quality of the provision. They are represented at Joint Board of Studies, programme committee meetings and through the National Student Survey (NSS).

24 As part of the development of new Foundation Degrees, employer forums are used to discuss the proposals and to provide advice. This relationship is fundamental in ensuring the vocational relevance of the Foundation Degrees. Employers make a valuable contribution to the enhancement of learning opportunities through their involvement in programme design, approval and the provision of work-based learning opportunities. Programme teams have developed extensive links with employers that provide work-based learning opportunities for students pursuing their subject specialisms. Employer forum groups and individual student and tutor contact with employers has aided the College in providing learning opportunities that match students' individual specialist needs. In particular the external examiner report for the History, Heritage and Archaeology programme acknowledges the positive contribution made by the work-based learning opportunities in stimulating staff and students to produce academic papers and publications.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

25 Programme Managers are responsible, in liaison with the Assistant Principal and Deputy Head of Team, for programme development and validation preparation for new programmes. During the approvals process all learning outcomes are systematically mapped to the *Code of practice* and tested for alignment with the FHEQ, the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark* and relevant subject benchmark statements. In particular, the team confirms that the University's assessment regulations align with precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students* and are followed by the College. The close working relationships between the University and College staff ensure that changes to the Academic Infrastructure are discussed and implemented fully within the College's provision.

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

26 The College's teaching and learning strategy describes clearly the requirements for the delivery of its higher education provision. This reflects the College's overall approach to teaching and activity-based learning. Advanced practitioners and mentors help teaching staff, some of whom also teach further education programmes, to provide learning and teaching that is tailored to the delivery of the higher education provision. In addition, the College's Professional Development Centre offers tailor-made staff development opportunities to support the delivery of a variety of teaching and learning strategies.

27   The quality of teaching and learning is reviewed through lesson observation, by consideration of student performance and from student feedback about the delivery of teaching. To support and enhance the quality of teaching and learning, graded lesson observation is supplemented by developmental lesson observation. Most lesson observation is undertaken when staff deliver the further education programmes. The quality of part-time lecturers' teaching is reviewed, evaluated and monitored through developmental observation. If concerns arise during developmental observation, an advanced practitioner provides additional support to improve lecturers' teaching and learning. Generally, the students confirm their satisfaction with the teaching and learning.

28   Higher education teaching staff are well qualified. The College's annual long qualifications process offers opportunities for staff to apply to study for additional qualifications including postgraduate awards. The College is committed to subsidising 50 per cent of these costs. Six of the 12 staff teaching on the programmes have been awarded master's degrees and two of these are studying for Doctor of Philosophy awards. These opportunities for further study have promoted effectively staff's scholarship resulting in publications and participation in international conferences. They enhance the quality of learning opportunities for students and represent good practice.

29   Appropriate arrangements are in place for the collection of student views. The College gathers student feedback in biennial internal College surveys, through learner voice meetings, the annual awarding body student perception questionnaire, and the National Student Survey (NSS). The completion of module evaluations and representation at programme committees enable students' views to be heard. Results and associated comments from surveys are reviewed by academic teams and relevant senior managers, and contribute to the self-assessment process. Student satisfaction is discussed at programme committees, the Higher Education Operational or Strategy Group as appropriate, and the Joint Board of Studies. Student views are represented at programme committee meetings, during annual programme monitoring and at the Joint Board of Studies. The College is responsive to comments raised by students. Information about actions taken is provided to staff and students on posters and is reviewed as an agenda item at subsequent formal meetings.

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

30   The College Information, Advice and Guidance Group is instrumental in ensuring that students are supported effectively by providing clear and timely information about the support available, responding to feedback from students and reviewing retention data. The College induction, an informative induction pack and student handbooks provide comprehensive information about the support services that students can expect. Support needs are identified at the time of a student's application or during the early stages of the programme. If required students can be directed to the University and College support structures for assistance. The procedures to deal with mitigating circumstances and chronic ill health are well established and clear guidance is provided to students on their use. The wide range of central support services is well matched to the diverse needs of students. This and the individual support provided by tutors demonstrates good practice.

31   The students are able to access individual and flexible personal support from tutors and programme teams that is tailored to their needs. Formal tutorials, supplemented by informal communication, provide a range of contact opportunities and support that is appreciated by students. Personal development planning is used to support students and to give them the opportunity of reflecting on their learning. It allows them to collate formative feedback that they have received and to assemble material to assist in their preparation for

work-based learning. The external examiners confirm the valuable contribution that the academic and pastoral support is making to students' performance.

32   Students are well supported in their achievement of the intended learning outcomes by receiving timely formative assessment feedback. Students can elect to deposit their assignments electronically into the virtual learning environment or to submit paper copies. From this they receive formative feedback to enable them to develop their responses prior to final submission. Those electing to use the electronic facility value it and would welcome its expansion to include all modules. To ensure consistency programme managers monitor the quality of the formative feedback provided to students by tutors. The opportunities for formative assessment feedback facilitated by the virtual learning environment help students to develop their assignments and to achieve the intended learning outcomes. They represent good practice.

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

33   The College has an extensive staff development provision that includes 17 days of academic development for all academic staff. Staff development requirements are identified in the annual staff appraisal, during which targets and training needs are reviewed systematically and planned. Matters arising from self-assessment reports and the annual programme monitoring process also inform staff development planning. All unqualified teaching staff are required to undertake a teaching qualification. If unqualified, mentor support is provided through teacher training. Close liaison between the College and the University also leads to the provision of joint staff development. Staff use the opportunities for continuous professional development effectively. They contribute positively to enhancing students' learning opportunities. The College's virtual learning environment is used to disseminate information on staff development activities to part-time staff unable to attend staff development opportunities.

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   The consideration of learning resources, including staffing, equipment and library stock, is evidenced in the annual curriculum planning, capital planning and budget setting processes. Appropriate study facilities are provided in the College Learning Centre where a range of support and software is available for students with disabilities. At least one copy of all mandatory programme texts is provided and most advisory texts. The students have full borrowing rights for the University library, and access to its online datasets and journals. The University also provides inter-library loan facilities for texts that the College is unable to provide. However, students are reluctant to make full use of these facilities.

35   Students value the College's virtual learning environment. Good use is made of this facility to upload assessments for formative and summative assessment. Each programme has access to a section of the virtual learning environment whose content includes a student handbook, tools for checking plagiarism and a referencing guide. Module guides and related learning materials are readily available. Programme information and learning materials, as well as a wide range of support facilities that can aid students' learning, are available in the awarding body's virtual learning environment. Students make very little use of this facility and are, in the main, not encouraged to do so by tutors. It is desirable that the College develops further its strategies for encouraging students to make more effective use of the University's virtual learning environment and its e-library facilities.

> **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 body 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 is responsible for producing and publishing all the information and marketing materials for its courses. Prior to their publication, the University approves all publicity, marketing materials and web pages that refer to the University of Plymouth. The College also publishes other higher education information of relevance to applicants. This includes a College mission and strategic objectives, a clearly expressed student charter, publications on student support, and a university-level learner journey diagram. Much of this information is expressed clearly and is attractive.

37   A separate awarding body section of the College's website contains helpful information that provides an overview of aims, module content, assessment and progression opportunities for the provision. The College website is linked to the University's website. There is no current College Prospectus that details the higher education provision.

38   Comprehensive well designed handbooks contain clear information about assessment. Useful guidance to assist students' in their studies is included with helpful hyperlinks to subject-specific information and the awarding body's portal. Student handbooks adhere to the University's template and are contextualised for the College. The information provided is clear. It includes teaching team contact details, programme specifications, assessment regulations, and brief guidance on extenuating circumstances. Students value the referencing guide that is provided. An informative section about the support available for disability is also included. Module guides are clear and support student understanding, schemes of work and assessment schedules.

39   The information provided to students about the expectations, roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders involved in work-based learning is limited. Student handbooks identify briefly the importance of work-based learning in enabling students to apply academic study to the workplace. The requirement to relate work-based learning experience to assessments is identified for students in the module guidance. However, there is no handbook to identify clearly to students what they can expect in relation to work-based learning and the roles and the responsibilities of students, tutors and employers. Students require more guidance and support in finding work placements. It is desirable that the College reviews the documentation for its work-based learning to ensure that it more readily engages with the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning*.

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?

40   The processes by which the College checks the accuracy and completeness of the information on its provision are defined clearly. They reflect fully and are appropriate to the small size of the provision. The College is responsible for producing and publishing all the information and marketing materials for its courses. All marketing materials and student

handbooks use University templates, and are reviewed annually by the College and the University. Prior to their submission to the University for checking and approval, the Deputy Principal examines their content for accuracy. An approval timetable ensures that the process is completed before documents are published or uploaded onto the website. Any requests for changes to general information are the subject of a rigorous checking and approval process.

41   Programme leaders are responsible for the preparation of programme information including confirming the programme status, venues, charges, time and days of attendance, checking module guides and revising annual student handbooks. Prior to publication this information is reviewed by the Head of Higher Education and checked against the requirements of the academic cooperation agreement. This includes specific sections that are relevant to the College's provision.

42   The currency of information available in the College's virtual learning environment is maintained effectively by its annual review undertaken by the Head of Quality and Head of Learning Resources. Periodic checking by the Head of Quality, the Head of Learning Services and programme managers ensures all that material remains current and appropriate.

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

43   The Developmental engagement in assessment for the College was undertaken in May 2011. There were three lines of enquiry.

Line of enquiry 1: How effective are the assessment strategies, policies, procedures and moderation processes in ensuring that the intended learning outcomes are met?

Line of enquiry 2: How is the College assured that the feedback on assessment is appropriate to student needs, enhances their learning opportunities, and is sufficiently challenging and developmental?

Line of enquiry 3: Are the procedures that the College has implemented effective in ensuring that it provides accurate and complete information on its assessment practices?

44   The lines of enquiry focused on the structures, policies and procedures that underpin the assessment process including the documentation available to students. They covered the implementation of the University regulations on assessment across the programmes and the responsibilities of the College in these processes. The Developmental engagement in assessment covered all the higher education programmes offered by the College.

45   The Developmental engagement identified a number of areas of good practice. These included the self-assessment reports that demonstrate a rigorous approach to the management of academic standards and the close formal and informal working relationships between the awarding body and College staff that improves the effectiveness of the assessment processes and procedures. In addition the well constructed programme

manager's handbook summarises the key elements of the College's policies, procedures and regulations. The opportunities for formative feedback on students' work and the well designed and comprehensive student handbooks were identified as good practice. The Developmental engagement identified a number of desirable recommendations. These included the need to ensure that college-based reporting structures were more transparent. In addition the College needed to review the use of its virtual learning environment to promote active teaching, learning, assessment and feedback. The report also recommends that the College should review its assessment practices for work-based learning and make more explicit to stakeholders which of its policies, procedures and documentation on assessment take precedence.

D   Foundation Degrees

46   The College currently delivers two Foundation Degrees. They represent 38.5 full-time student equivalents, of which 38 are full-time and one is part-time. Although there are no students currently studying for the FdSc E-Business Technology, additional HEFCE numbers have been approved to allow the College to offer this programme in September 2012. The awards are in History, Heritage and Archaeology, and Managing in Public Sector Services.

47   The Foundation Degree programmes are validated by the University of Plymouth. The self-assessment reports for the Foundation Degree programmes, and the engagement in meetings of College representatives with the University, demonstrate the close working relationship and effective communication between them. The University has a faculty dedicated to its widening participation work with further education colleges, known as the University of Plymouth Colleges Faculty. The University is responsible for programme approval and alignment with the Academic Infrastructure. This responsibility is undertaken through programme validation; acceptance of student applications; ensuring common standards, annual programme monitoring and external examiners' reports; and final assessment. The College is responsible for programme delivery; assessment and internal moderation; quality of teaching and learning; application of the awarding body's standards; regular internal monitoring of quality; and adherence to the awarding body's requirements for the annual evaluation and review of the provision.

48   All the conclusions in paragraphs 49 to 52 apply equally to the Foundation Degree provision.

E   Conclusions and summary of judgements

49   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 body. This was based upon discussion with staff and students and scrutiny of evidence provided by the College and its awarding body, the University of Plymouth.

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

- the opportunities for staff scholarship and research enhance the quality of learning opportunities for students (paragraph 28)
- the individual support provided by tutors and the College's central services are well matched to the diverse needs of students (paragraphs 30 to 31)

- the opportunities for formative assessment feedback facilitated by the virtual learning environment help students to develop their assignments and to achieve the intended learning outcomes (paragraph 32).

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

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

- develop further its strategies for encouraging students to make more effective use of the University's virtual learning environment and its e-library facilities (paragraphs 34 to 35)
- review the documentation for its work-based learning to ensure that it more readily engages with the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning* (paragraph 39).

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 body.

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.

Strode College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2012						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
In the course of the Summative review the team identified the following areas of **good practice** that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
• the opportunities for staff scholarship and research enhance the quality of learning opportunities for students (paragraph 28)	This strength is particularly notable in one programme area History, Heritage & Archaeology. This practice is to be shared across all other areas of higher education in the College, through staff development	December 2012	History, Heritage & Archaeology Team and all teams	Other teams taking up research and scholarships	Higher Education Operations Group Senior Management Team	Through lecturers' Continuing Professional Development records and Joint Boards of Study and student feedback
• the individual support provided by tutors and the College's central services are well matched to the diverse needs of students (paragraphs 30 to 31)	To ensure that student handbooks are up to date with information about support services to students	September 2012	Head of Student Support	Student feedback	Higher Education Operations Group	Student Feedback Student Surveys - College & national
• the opportunities for formative	To share this practice with new HE providers	December 2012	Programme Managers	Formative Feedback	Programme meetings	Student Feedback External

assessment feedback facilitated by the virtual learning environment help students to develop their assignments and to achieve the intended learning outcomes (paragraph 32).	planned for September 2012		Head of E-Learning Head of Quality	documentation on Moodle	Higher Education Operations Group Joint Boards of Study	Examiners' reports
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:						
• develop further its strategies for encouraging students to make more effective use of the University's virtual learning environment and its e-library facilities (paragraphs 34 to 35)	This applies to university based providers and UPC in particular Programme manager to work with the Head of E-Learning	March 2013	Programme Managers Head of E-Learning	Increased number of students accessing e-library facilities through the awarding body's virtual learning environment	Higher Education Operations Group Joint Boards of Study	Students bibliographies are extended and up to date
• review the documentation for its work-based learning to ensure that it	Review work based documentation including internet in the student handbook to set out clearly what	September 2012	Programme Managers Head of HE	Updated student handbooks Updated student work based learning guides	Higher Education Operations Group Joint Boards of Study	Student Feedback: Informal - tutorials and student forums

more readily engages with the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning* (paragraph 39).	students can expect in relation to work-based learning and the roles and the responsibilities of students, tutors and employers					Formal - National Student Survey and college-based student survey

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