



# **Integrated quality and enhancement review**

**Summative review**

**Warrington Collegiate**

**June 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 Warrington Collegiate carried out in June 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 particularly well established and complementary relationship with the University of Chester fully supports strategic development and assures academic standards
- the cohesive and effective embedding of the Academic Infrastructure both secures academic standards and also supports the teaching and assessment of the higher education provision
- the clear differentiation of the levels of study and, in particular, the use of progression workshops secures students' academic and intellectual progression
- the commitment to supporting and developing a higher education teaching environment in order to enhance the provision
- the diagnosis of students' learning needs is timely and effective, and comprehensive learning support is provided
- the particularly detailed and rigorous scrutiny of public information provided by both the College and the University of Chester ensures accuracy and completeness.

### 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:

- ensure that the committee terms of reference set out clearly the relationship between the committee and management structures in order to make wholly clear the coherence of the structure and show how actions are progressed.

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

- introduce a single means of tracking the completion of action points in order to record clearly the resolution of actions
- review the internal processes of programme design and validation to ensure that higher education concepts are fully embedded at the design stage
- sustain and further develop the engagement of employers in the College's higher education provision

- fully document the processes for the checking and approval of public information so that the information is readily available to all parties
- support and encourage all higher education student representatives throughout the provision to make use of the virtual learning environment as a means of gathering the views of their constituents.

## 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 Warrington Collegiate (the College). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the College discharges its responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes which the College delivers on behalf of Edexcel and the University of Chester (the University). The review was carried out by Dr Patsy Campbell, Mr Andrew Lancaster, Mr Mark Langley (reviewers) and Dr Daniel Lamont (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, 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 and a Developmental engagement in employer engagement. A summary of findings from these Developmental engagements 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 Warrington Collegiate aims to provide highly relevant vocational education and training which adds value to a client making a life, business or career transition and provides the opportunity for a stimulating and social experience. The College has worked in partnership with the University since 2002 and gained Associate College status in 2006. HEFCE funding for all courses is drawn down through the University. The College has a strong commitment to providing a broad and integrated range of vocational curriculum from introductory to higher education level to ensure there is an opportunity for all students to select their individual programme and progress according to their own needs and aspirations. It is the College's intention to increase significantly the learning opportunities at higher education level, over the next three years, in line with the College's mission and vision. While progression to higher education will be encouraged across the spectrum of all potential students, adult employed part-time students are a particular focus for the planned growth. The College operates from a single campus and has one partner organisation.

5 Warrington Collegiate currently has 242 students (172 full-time equivalent) studying higher education across nine programmes. The programmes, with their full-time equivalent student numbers in brackets, are as follows:

### Edexcel

- HNC Business (17)
- HNC Computing and Systems Development (7)
- HNC Construction (12.5)
- HNC Electrical and Electronic Engineering (16)
- HND Electrical and Electronic Engineering (18)
- HNC Manufacturing Engineering (22)

- HNC Manufacturing Engineering (22)
- HND Public Services with Criminology (30)

#### **University of Chester**

- Certificate of Education in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (12.5)
- Professional Graduate Certificate in Education in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (1)
- FDS in Information and Communication Technology (12)
- Leadership and Management modular programme (Work-based and Integrated Studies) (2)

### **Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies**

6 The College has formal partnership agreements with Edexcel and the University. These are up to date and clearly define the respective responsibilities of partners. Partnership arrangements with the University indicate responsibilities devolved to the College together with clear mechanisms enabling them to maintain a rigorous oversight of the provision. There is a strong sense of partnership between the College and the University, which includes the arrangement of relevant staff training events. The College follows the Edexcel Note for programmes awarded by them.

### **Recent developments in higher education at the College**

7 A number of higher-level programmes are being developed for 2012-13 delivery, based upon internal and external demands and local skills. These include higher national qualifications in the areas of performing arts, health and social care and sport. The College is in the early stages of exploring additional partnerships that would complement the existing strategic partnership with the University of Chester. The College is a long-standing member of the Cheshire and Warrington Consortium of Colleges and recently joined a sub-group of this, the Higher Education Consortium, to explore further opportunities for curriculum development and growth with fellow providers of higher education in further education.

### **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 students made a written submission. In addition, the review coordinator explained the Summative review process to student representatives at the preparatory meeting and the team met full and part-time students. The submission identified a number of issues that were useful to the team, and which were discussed in the meetings with students during the visit.

## **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 As an associate college of the University since 2006, both the College and the University of Chester are committed to developing higher education strategically in Warrington. The College's Principal and the Director of Higher Education and International Development maintain an ongoing dialogue with University senior managers through regular formal and informal meetings. These plan future developments and inform the maintenance of academic standards. The University devolves operational management to the College, but retains overall responsibility for academic standards. University faculties oversee validated provision through their Boards of Studies and Partnerships Sub-Committee monitors the Edexcel external examiners' reports in order to ensure a comparative process for Edexcel programmes.

10 The University's operational and strategic meeting structure ensures that faculties interact effectively with the College in order to maintain quality and standards. Staff regard this support highly, together with the input of University link tutors. The University's Academic Development Adviser: HE in FE serves a similar function for Edexcel-validated provision. Staff confirm that communication issues identified in 2010-11, and echoed in the second Developmental engagement, have been resolved. Students appreciate the clear flow of information between the two institutions. The particularly well established and complementary relationship with the University fully supports strategic development and assures academic standards. This is an example of good practice.

11 The College has recently moved to a 'cabinet style' management system, ensuring that deputy principals and directors maintain oversight for their respective areas of concern, while also having a college-wide perspective. All managers attend the same meetings where action plans task individuals with key responsibilities, thus avoiding unwieldy reporting structures in this medium-sized College. This streamlining of the process is a key strategic aim for the Principal.

12 The Director of Higher Education and International Development has strategic responsibility for higher education. However, the Higher Education Curriculum Leader (who is also one of the College's learning enhancement practitioners) and the Director of Quality and Marketing chair the committees that respectively oversee the operation and the quality assurance of the provision. This ensures that all three aspects interact. Similarly, the higher education committees integrate with the College's further education processes, ensuring that the College's Academic Board and ultimately its Standards and Curriculum Committee have oversight of the provision. It will be important to monitor the effectiveness of the new structure.

13 The Higher Education Curriculum Manager chairs the Higher Education Sub-Group, which receives all operational reports from programme teams. The Director of Quality and Marketing chairs the recently constituted Higher Education Management Committee, which receives minutes from the Higher Education Sub-Group and reports directly to the College's Academic Board. The Senior Management Team of the ten core managers has weekly meetings, which are not recorded, where the papers discussed are actioned. The monthly

meeting of the wider College Management Team monitors action plans and data. A formal record of action plans would strengthen this process. The team found that the committee terms of reference do not clearly set out the relationship between the committee and management structures. It would be advisable for the College to ensure that the committee terms of reference set out clearly the relationship between the committee and management structures in order to make wholly clear the coherence of the structure and show how actions are progressed.

14 The College produced its comprehensive higher education strategy in 2009. The draft 2012 strategy and analysis of the achievements of the 2009 strategy exemplify the considered approach to strategy and planning. University policies and procedures inform all College higher education practices. The College has three specific higher education policies, including one for assessment, cited as good practice in the Developmental engagement. Staff appreciate its impact on teaching and learning and the way it ensures standards and consistency of assessment. Students receive a copy of the policy during induction in their programme handbooks and believe assessment is fair and that they are fully informed. External examiners concur.

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

15 The College aligns its programmes and policies to the Academic Infrastructure. Partnership validation documents and programme specifications explicitly refer to the *Code of practice*, the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark* and relevant subject benchmark statements. The College's assessment policy aligns with the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*. In developing programmes, the College's emphasis on vocational and part-time delivery draws appropriately on the precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning*; the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*; and the FHEQ. Where applicable, programmes reflect appropriate professional standards to ensure students meet industry requirements. For instance, the Certificate of Education and Professional Graduate Certificate of Education programmes uses Lifelong Learning UK standards. Staff development activities and the College's annual higher education conferences ensure that staff knowledge of the Academic Infrastructure is current. The team noted the thoroughness with which the Academic Infrastructure has been embedded in securing the academic standards of the College's provision and agreed that this was an example of good practice.

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

16 As indicated in paragraphs 9 and 10, communication with the University is clear and effective. The College's Higher Education Sub-Group receives programme reports produced by the programme teams and forwards these to the Higher Education Management Committee. The committee sends reports to the University for approval and comments on any required action points. Once returned, the Quality and Standards Directorate then monitors programme and college-wide improvement plans (incorporating external examiners' action plans). The committee sends the finalised reports and plans to the Academic Board. An Annual Institutional Report, which includes these plans, is monitored by the Higher Education Management Committee.

17 Additional College quality processes also monitor the progress of action plans, for example, the termly internal performance reviews. Newly instigated internal assessment boards (as below) at the end of each semester confirm student progress and grades and monitor any actions arising from external examiners' reports, internal assessment board minutes or the Quality Improvement Action Plan. Collectively, these expedite the resolution of any

issues identified within the Quality Improvement Action Plan. While the scrutiny and efficacy of the process is very good, it would be desirable to introduce a single means of tracking the completion of action points in order to record clearly the outcome of actions.

18 The process of programme validation is clear for both University and Edexcel provision. For Edexcel, a process of internal application for approval precedes an internal validation process before applying to Edexcel for approval. For University programmes, internal College validation precedes the University's process of outline proposal planning, steering panels and final approval. Since the last Developmental engagement, the College has reviewed its provision in liaison with relevant employers. The work on the sport and public services programmes to liaise with employers is of particular note. The College consults employers throughout the process of programme design, ensuring the currency and vocational focus of the programmes. All programmes go through an internal process of programme approval, but the approval form does not encourage staff to articulate the higher education specific nature of the programme. It is desirable that the College reviews its process of programme design and validation to ensure that it always embeds higher education concepts, in line with the *Code of practice, Section 7: Programme design, approval, monitoring and review* and *Section 9: Work-based and placement learning*.

19 Separate University assessment board meetings maintain an overview of academic achievement. The University receives all assessment board minutes and reviews them at the Operational Group. Edexcel external verifiers and external examiners confirm that the process of internal verification, assessment setting and moderation are thorough. Assessments follow a consistent format that identifies a vocationally relevant scenario and some employers confirm that they help the College to write assignment briefs. Learning outcomes for all programmes set clear standards for all student work, commensurate with the FHEQ. Students are highly articulate about the increments in complexity for each level of study.

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

20 The College's Training and Professional Development statement articulates the staff development policy. This is not differentiated for higher education, but it identifies training and continuing professional development as essential and personal development as non-strategic. The College partly finances higher degrees and the University offers a discount to College staff studying on its postgraduate programmes. The process of performance management review and programme review enables the College to plan its training needs and manage the requests for financial support. As members of an associate college, staff can also access and attend university-led staff development sessions.

21 Internal staff development activities include training related to College quality processes, identified through annual monitoring. For example, staff attribute their understanding of the College's comprehensive quality processes to the College's higher education-specific training, which ensures that staff follow and monitor these processes assiduously. The annual Higher Education Conference, scheduled workshops and training events share identified good practice across the higher education team. Staff also share good practice with other partner associate colleges. Take-up for all events is very good, evidenced by fellowships of the Higher Education Academy and the clear understanding of quality processes and the Academic Infrastructure.

22 New staff receive induction as a part of their probationary process. They work with a mentor and the relevant curriculum manager follows a checklist. All College staff receive training in terms of resources, and curriculum managers provide higher education specific focus where required. Teaching observations and the newly introduced 'teaching squares'

provide peer observations and inform the staff development plan for the year. The College has adopted the 'teaching square' method of peer observation where four colleagues observe each other's teaching and reflect on the experience. Staff are very positive about this process.

**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?**

23 The College management structure and the delegation of management responsibilities, outlined in paragraphs 9 to 14, apply equally to the management of students' learning opportunities.

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

24 All students engaged in collaborative programmes are subject to the University policies and procedures and staff attend annual partner College information days for updates and guidance. All policies and procedures are reviewed regularly in order to ensure that they remain fit for purpose. The monitoring of the quality of learning opportunities as well as academic standards is supported through termly internal performance reviews. There are also links between programme leaders with relevant staff in partner higher education institutions and with external examiners. Edexcel programmes are supported by a named contact at the University.

25 The College's higher education assessment boards ensure the overall quality and standards of provision, including teaching and learning, learner support and achievement, identifying actions as appropriate. External examiners consistently report on the College having 'effective management in place' with 'embedded policies and procedures' to support delivery of the programme, from recruitment and induction to certification. They further report that programmes are being delivered and assessed at the appropriate level and include adequate vocational content. The team agreed that the College has quality processes in place that are understood by staff who engage with them, and disseminated by higher education staff training events. These processes are effective and ensure that students receive appropriate learning opportunities.

26 The Certificate in Education and Professional Graduate Certificate in Education have been supported very effectively throughout by the link tutor at the University (Academic Support Tutor) and the PCET (Post-Compulsory Education and Training) Coordinator.

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

27 The College embeds the Academic Infrastructure by ensuring that its policies are aligned with the awarding bodies and that staff are made aware of how the Academic Infrastructure is used in everyday practice (for example assessment, approval and

monitoring of programmes and at the development stages in the design of new programmes) to ensure academic standards are maintained. Staff engagement with academic standards is supported internally through staff development activities and the College's annual higher education conferences. The cohesive and effective embedding of the Academic Infrastructure in the teaching and assessment of the higher education provision is good practice.

28 The use of the Academic Infrastructure in programme design is reinforced by the University. Learning outcomes and their associated teaching and learning methods for Foundation Degrees are informed by the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark* and the FHEQ descriptors for qualifications at levels 4 and 5 (as applicable). Staff and students commented on the significance and clarity of appropriate differentiation of levels of study, particularly in regard to developing students' reflective and critical skills. The team noted the way that the College secured academic and intellectual progression and that this was fully understood by staff and students alike. They identified this as good practice.

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

29 The College conducts an annual student survey and also holds student focus groups. There are good levels of student satisfaction, particularly of teaching, learning and assessment. Where dissatisfaction has been expressed, there is evidence that the College responded, for example in the engineering and information communication technology programmes. Issues were addressed through learner involvement in the recruitment process, revisions to assessment schedules, additional tutor support and delivery, and communication through group meetings and the virtual learning environment.

30 The College carries out the observation of teaching and learning and encourages a peer support environment within the higher education team to develop good practice. The graded and peer systems include a focus on supporting the delivery and assessment of level 4 and 5 provision. The College has a Higher Education Learning Enhancement Practitioner who conducts formal and informal teaching observations and organises well received peer observation, conducted through 'teaching squares', as a systematic approach to promoting good practice. She also delivers staff development sessions focused on quality assurance issues and pedagogy specific to higher education. The College is actively engaged in collaboratively investigating more appropriate methods of observing higher education in further education, working alongside other institutions to develop a model of good practice. The College's work in developing a multifaceted approach for the observation of higher education teaching is good practice.

31 Employer involvement in relation to the design and review of programmes has been identified as an area for development, but an improvement is already evident. After a limited employer survey, a new survey is intended to measure the impact that the learning has for the employer in the workplace, supported by a higher education member of staff with clear responsibility of engaging with employers. Feedback from employers is very positive about the relevance of programmes to their sector. The team considers that it would be desirable that the engagement of employers in the College's provision is sustained and further developed.

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

32 The College offers guidance at the initial recruitment stage, for example by conducting a series of information, advice and guidance events, attended by prospective students prior to enrolment. All prospective students are interviewed and informed by the

Higher Education Programme Leader. All students undertake an initial assessment which includes appropriate pre-course assessment tasks and, where appropriate, diagnostic assessments. Programme teams put in place appropriate and timely learning support when a need is identified. This might include study and referencing skills, academic English writing or effective support for dyslexia. Students commented very positively on this. The effective and timely diagnosis of students' learning needs and the provision of comprehensive learning support is an example of good practice.

33 Programme teams have relevant industry experience and, in many cases, are members of professional bodies. This underpins their approach to preparing students for the workplace. This is recognised as a strength by students themselves. All students, whether full or part-time, have scheduled tutorials that include a focus upon career planning and personal skills for employment. These are completed through a range of flexible and effective methods even though this is not always formally recorded. Business, public services and teacher training programmes also conduct 'milestone' tutorials, supported by Student Progress Reviews. Students made it clear that they value the tutorial support that they receive. The team is pleased to note that this good practice is being shared across all HEFCE-funded provision in 2011-12 and will be fully implemented for 2012-13.

34 Programme leaders report on attendance, student progress, referrals for specialist diagnosis and support (or additional tutor support needs) and students 'at risk' on a weekly basis in the Programme Team Meeting. All students are provided with timely and supportive feedback on their learning throughout their programme. The progress of sponsored students is reported to employers throughout the year. Teacher training programmes utilise a programme-specific employer review in order to seek feedback from employers.

35 The College provides weekly drop-in study skills workshops and now has created an online study skills support resource, supported by higher education staff and good practice workshop. Face-to-face study skills support is available from the Learner Services Team. Such skills are also developed through being effectively embedded within the module delivery, with students enhancing their confidence with presentations and group work, as well as higher-level reading skills through literature reviews (for example Public Services) and increased focus on academic writing and referencing (for example Construction). The College has developed a series of student progression workshops and mock job interviews, designed to support the students' preparation for the next level of study.

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

36 The staff development arrangements for academic standards, as outlined in paragraphs 20 to 22, are equally applicable to learning opportunities. As part of appraisal, staff are identified for any relevant training to support vocational delivery of higher education in further education. Staff are able to apply through the College's Long Term Award process to have funding approved for subject-specific higher-level qualifications, with a number of staff working towards master's degrees and doctorates. College staff are involved in external events to ensure awareness of good practice across the sector. The team noted that the College is actively engaged in collaboratively investigating more appropriate methods of observing higher education in further education, working alongside other institutions to develop a model of good practice.

### **How does the College ensure the sufficiency and accessibility of the learning resources the students need to achieve the intended learning outcomes for their programmes?**

37 The College has created a Centre for Higher Education at the Warrington campus, which includes teaching and learning resources, wireless access and a higher education student lounge. Staff and students view these positively. Students on programmes delivered off-site, in partnership with Longridge, had experienced some difficulties with access to information technology resources, but the College has now addressed this through additional provision.

38 The College has a guest lecturer programme, which adds breadth and currency to its learning. This is used in teacher training, business, construction and public services and the team encourages further development, especially in relation to the local business community. The College has invested in information technology facilities and created a well utilised virtual learning environment, which has continued to develop since the Developmental engagement. This, together with a remote access desktop, is crucial in supporting those part-time students with significant work commitments. Some innovative use of the virtual learning environment exists and this is being further developed across the provision through staff training in 2011-12. The College sets a minimum expectation for each course's virtual learning environment provision. In addition, those students on the University-validated programmes have access to the University's own virtual learning environment.

39 The College has an established capital and consumable purchasing mechanism which enables staff to apply directly to the higher education manager. The library purchasing approach supports new programmes and updates learning resources for existing ones. There is an increased focus upon e-books and online journals and materials. Programmes support and challenge students to draw upon their work-based learning and experience, encouraging continual reflective practice appropriate to the levels. The College has recently reviewed assessment practice to ensure that work-related elements are in line with the requirements of the modules. Employers have commented positively on the relation between study and vocational practice.

**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 education?**

40 The College produces a wide range of attractive, high-quality, informative publications, which are readily identified as a 'brand' specifically dedicated to higher education. These include a Higher Education Prospectus, a Higher Education and Professional Programmes Handbook, course publicity, induction material, student, module and employer handbooks. Further college-wide manuals, such as the Mentor Handbook and Agreement, are also provided to higher education students.

41 The College is increasing the role of its virtual learning environment as the primary and most effective channel for publication of information from induction onwards, allowing students, including part-time students, to access initial advice and guidance on finance

and welfare support, as well as specific programme information in the form of handbooks. The College has introduced a variety of new methods for disseminating information about its courses in podcast presentations from programme leaders and students, employer inductions and higher education employer showcase events at the Centre for Higher Education and the introduction of student case studies in the improved Higher Education Prospectus. Information in hard copy remains an important reference source for staff and students.

42 Public information is made accessible to all relevant audiences, including potential applicants, through attractive hard copy publicity distributed locally in libraries, schools and sports centres, as well as on the website. The College visits local schools and holds open days where staff disseminate information in various ways with the assistance of current students. The University guide for staff at partner organisations requires the College to provide its HEFCE-funded students with programme and a guide to each module which conform to University guidelines.

**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?**

43 The College has developed a rigorous process for scrutinising and monitoring its publication of higher education materials, both in hard copy and online, in order to ensure its accuracy and consistency. In the case of marketing materials and publicity, programme teams initially compile the material for public documents relating to their area. Following checks for accuracy, the Marketing Team then includes this material in college-wide publications and other publicity material. The resulting integrated document drafts are submitted to the programme leaders, curriculum managers and the Director of Higher Education for initial approval. In the case of programme materials in handbooks and on the virtual learning environment, programme teams provide material to the curriculum managers for checking before approval by the Director of Higher Education. It would, however, be desirable if these processes were fully documented so that the information is readily available to all parties.

44 All publicity for courses validated by the University bears its logo and publications are closely scrutinised by the University Marketing, Recruitment and Admissions Deputy Director. The team agreed with previous external reviews that 'the excellent proactive and collaborative relationship between the College and the University, especially on the marketing and dissemination of public information, is close and ensures that the quality of information available to students is of a particularly high standard'. In each case, where the information includes details regarding programmes validated by the University, the draft copy is sent to the marketing department at the University for approval. Once approved, information is printed and usually published on the College website. The team found a high level of accuracy in material published by the College. The team agreed that the particularly detailed and rigorous scrutiny of public information provided by both the College and the University to ensure accuracy and completeness is an example of good practice.

45 Students are not formally involved in ensuring accuracy and completeness of published information, but relevant representations are noted by the staff and acted on by the Marketing Manager if appropriate. Employers have an input to College publications and this was confirmed by conversations with small number of employers. There is a yearly general meeting with employers in July. The team noted that the subject-specific Mentor Handbook and Agreement for the Certificate of Education teaching has much more practical information than the Higher Education Employers Handbook, which contains only case histories and is more a piece of general publicity.

## **What are the students' views on published information, and how does the College know what students think?**

46 Students who met the team made it clear that they had found the published information supplied before and during the application process, during induction and throughout their course, to be complete, accurate and helpful. Handbooks were particularly praised in these respects. All handbooks were reported to be of high quality - containing detailed course information, a schedule, the assessment policy, information on and dates of submission for assignment briefs, criteria for marking and information about the appeals process. From 2012, students will be given a separate, subject-specific Qualification Handbook which sets out the programme specifications in user-friendly terms. Students particularly appreciated the access to information on the virtual learning environment and mentioned the use of the website by staff for teaching and learning in a variety of ways, and the utility of the virtual learning environment for information sharing between students, staff and student representatives. The College seeks student views in a variety of ways, through online questionnaires, and by word of mouth. The team noted an example of the use the College virtual learning environment to gather student views. It would be desirable for the College to support and encourage all higher education student representatives throughout the provision to make use of the virtual learning environment as a means of gathering the views of their constituents.

**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 engagements**

### **Developmental engagement in assessment**

47 The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in September, 2009. The review included two institutional nominees. The lines of enquiry agreed with the College were as follows:

**Line of enquiry 1:** How does the College's management of assessment policies and practices, within its partnership agreements, ensure that awards are set and maintained at the appropriate level?

**Line of enquiry 2:** How effective is the College's approach to providing written feedback and assessment-related support to promote and develop students' learning and academic development?

**Line of enquiry 3:** The effectiveness and completeness of information concerning the College's assessment principles, procedures and processes and also of the mechanisms for publicising them in ways that are explicit, valid and reliable and fit for purpose.

48 In the course of the Developmental engagement, the team identified as good practice the development of a college-wide assessment policy specifically for its higher education provision; the high quality of the liaison and collaboration with the University which secures the maintenance of academic standards and forms a basis for the planned future developments in higher education; the appointment of an Advanced Teaching Practitioner

for Higher Education with a specific brief to develop teaching and assessment; the provision of study skills diagnosis and support designed to enable students to progress successfully through their courses of study; the establishment of various means of obtaining student views through online forums and a college-wide higher education student forum; the professional development modules where assessment outcomes contribute to the students' personal and professional development; the provision of initial advice and guidance about courses; the process for checking the accuracy and completeness of information in student handbooks both by the College and the University; the use of the virtual learning environment to inform students about assessment and academic requirements and as a means of providing feedback to students.

49 The team made a number of recommendations. It considered that it would be advisable for the College to continue the development of the Higher Education Assessment Policy, particularly with regard to internal verification procedures and the conduct of assessment boards, and to ensure that it is fully embedded in all higher education courses by means of targeted staff development. It also considered that it would be advisable for the College to develop the facility for peer communication and support by means of the virtual learning environment to include all courses; introduce the personal development practice and assessment as exemplified in the Foundation Degree in Information Communication Technology to all courses; continue the development of work-related assessment modes and opportunities; put in place processes for the further development of the virtual learning environment to ensure consistency and standardisation across courses.

## **Developmental engagement in work-based learning**

50 The Developmental engagement in work-based learning took place in May, 2011. The review included one institutional nominee. The lines of enquiry agreed with the College were as follows:

**Line of enquiry 1:** Are academic standards maintained by means of a student experience that draws upon work-based learning experience?

**Line of enquiry 2:** How is preparation provided, by a comprehensive learning experience, in order to enable the student to obtain maximum benefit from work-based learning and experience?

**Line of enquiry 3:** Is the information provided to students and employers, in relation to the work-based learning experience, both accurate and complete?

51 In the course of the Developmental engagement, the team identified as good practice the collaborative work between the College and the University in the creation of the Work-based and Integrative Studies; the designation of a dedicated member of staff with responsibility for enhancing employer engagement facilitates the development of work-based learning; the creative use of technology, to provide an accessible means of feedback to students within the workplace; the excellent proactive and collaborative relationship between the College and the University, especially on the marketing and dissemination of public information which ensures that the quality of information available to students is of a particularly high standard. The teacher education programme has developed comprehensive and supportive information to support employers in their role as student mentors.

52 The team made a number of recommendations. It considered that it would be desirable for the College to further develop, and fully implement, its policy for involving of employers in the design and review of programmes; continue with its intention to extend and

develop its plans to ensure the provision of workplace learning is up to date, such as the programme of visiting speakers; review and develop its mechanisms for the dissemination of good practice to ensure that innovative developments in one programme are shared with staff on all other programmes; further develop and implement its review model for the role of the employer in order to enhance the College's knowledge of skills needs and enable the College to measure the effectiveness of student learning in the workplace.

## D Foundation Degrees

53 The College's Foundation Degree in information communication technology provides enhancement opportunities for students to extend work-based learning and see the relevance of linking this to theory. Strengths include close relationships with employers, high-quality student support and the incorporation of skills development to support future employment. It fully conforms with the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*. The programme monitoring systems and the College committee structure for the consideration of higher education issues constitute a robust and effective mechanism for assuring the quality and standards of higher education provision.

54 The good practice and recommendations identified in the Conclusions apply equally to the College's Foundation Degree provision.

## E Conclusions and summary of judgements

55 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, Edexcel and the University of Chester.

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

- the particularly well established and complementary relationship with the University of Chester fully supports strategic development and assures academic standards (paragraph 10)
- the cohesive and effective embedding of the Academic Infrastructure both secures academic standards and also supports the teaching and assessment of the higher education provision (paragraphs 15 and 27)
- the clear differentiation of the levels of study and, in particular, the use of progression workshops secures students' academic and intellectual progression (paragraph 28)
- the commitment to supporting and developing a higher education teaching environment in order to enhance the provision (paragraph 30)
- the diagnosis of students' learning needs is timely and effective, and comprehensive learning support is provided (paragraph 32)
- the particularly detailed and rigorous scrutiny of public information provided by both the College and the University of Chester ensures accuracy and completeness (paragraph 44).

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

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

- ensure that the committee terms of reference set out clearly the relationship between the committee and management structures in order to make wholly clear the coherence of the structure and show how actions are progressed (paragraph 13).

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

- introduce a single means of tracking the completion of action points in order to record clearly the resolution of actions (paragraph 17)
- review the internal processes of programme design and validation to ensure that higher education concepts are always fully embedded at the design stage (paragraph 18)
- sustain and further develop the engagement of employers in the College's higher education provision (paragraph 31)
- fully document the processes for the checking and approval of public information so that the information is readily available to all parties (paragraph 43)
- support and encourage all higher education student representatives throughout the provision to make use of the virtual learning environment as a means of gathering the views of their constituents (paragraph 46).

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 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.

61 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.

62 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.

Warrington Collegiate action plan relating to the Summative review: June 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 <b>good practice</b> that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the particularly well established and complementary relationship with the University of Chester fully supports strategic development and assures academic standards (paragraph 10)</li> </ul>	<p>Continue with operational and strategic meetings to support both quality and standards, and strategic developments</p> <p>Ensure the Higher Education Strategy (2012-15) supports a shared strategy between the College and higher education institution</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>October 2012</p>	<p>Director of Higher Education</p> <p>Director of Higher Education</p>	<p>Maintenance of academic standards</p> <p>Approval of Higher Education Strategy (2012-15) that incorporates a vision</p>	<p>Deputy Principal (Curriculum and Quality)</p> <p>Principal</p>	<p>Annual Self-Evaluation Report</p> <p>Annual Partnership Report</p> <p>Higher Education Strategy (2012-15) approval</p> <p>Senior Strategic Review updates</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the cohesive and effective embedding of the Academic Infrastructure both secures academic standards and also supports the</li> </ul>	Continue with a Programme of Higher Education Staff Development activities for all staff, including 'good practice' seminars	Ongoing	Higher Education Curriculum Manager	<p>Staff fulfilment of Continuing Professional Development hours</p> <p>Dissemination of good practice</p>	Director of Higher Education	<p>Staff appraisal</p> <p>Self-Evaluation Document</p> <p>Staff appraisal</p>

teaching and assessment of the higher education provision (paragraphs 15 and 27)	Provide a full and inclusive staff induction process for new staff, with a focus on Academic Infrastructure, teaching, learning and assessment in higher education	September 2012	Higher Education Curriculum Manager	Completion of higher education staff induction programme for all new staff	Director of Higher Education	Self-Evaluation Document
	Continue to support staff completion of The Higher Education Academy Professional Standards (fellowship)	Ongoing	Higher Education Curriculum Manager	Maintenance of academic standards All higher education staff to achieve or working towards The Higher Education Academy Professional Standards	Director of Higher Education	Staff appraisal Self-Evaluation Document
	Develop a higher education staff virtual learning environment area to supplement staff development activity and support sharing of good practice	September 2012	Higher Education Curriculum Manager	Full staff engagement with the virtual learning environment resource	Director of Higher Education	Self-Evaluation Document
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the clear differentiation of the levels of study and, in particular, the use of</li> </ul>	Continue with the embedding of student understanding of the requirements of the levels of study	Ongoing	Higher education programme leaders	Well designed programme planning documentation Good student	Higher Education Curriculum Manager	Lesson observation reports Self-Evaluation Document

<p>progression workshops secures students' academic and intellectual progression (paragraph 28)</p>	<p>Continue with student workshops to support progression and academic development</p>	Ongoing		<p>awareness of the requirements of academic levels</p> <p>Continued student achievement rates above 95 per cent</p> <p>Very good levels of student academic and vocational progression</p>		<p>Self-Evaluation Document</p> <p>Self-Evaluation Document</p>
	<p>Continue to develop the higher education online study skills resources</p>	Ongoing		<p>Positive student feedback</p> <p>Full student engagement with the virtual learning environment resource</p>		<p>Student forums</p> <p>Module reviews</p> <p>Virtual learning environment usage report</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the commitment to supporting and developing a higher education teaching environment in order to enhance the provision (paragraph 30)</li> </ul>	<p>Continue with a higher education peer support system (for example teaching squares)</p>	Ongoing	Higher Education Curriculum Manager	<p>Dissemination of good practice to enhance provision</p>	Director of Quality	Teaching squares evaluation report
	<p>Introduce a multi-faceted approach for the observation of higher education teaching</p>	September 2012	Teaching, Training and Development Manager	<p>Bespoke graded observation process for higher education focused on QAA requirements to highlight good practice and areas</p>	Director of Quality	Graded observation report

	Continue to support capital investments in higher education teaching and learning resources		Director of Higher Education	for development in teaching, learning and assessment  Continued student achievement rates above 95 per cent	Deputy Principal (Finance)	Student feedback  Self-Evaluation Document
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the diagnosis of students' learning needs is timely and effective and comprehensive learning support is provided (paragraph 32)</li> </ul>	Continue with student support arrangements to diagnose learning needs and provide timely support for all learners	September 2012	Higher education programme leaders	Effective diagnosis of needs  Student satisfaction with support arrangements  Continued student achievement rates above 95 per cent across all learner groups	Higher Education Curriculum Manager	Self-Evaluation Document
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the particularly detailed and rigorous scrutiny of public information provided by both the College and the University of Chester ensures accuracy and completeness (paragraph 44).</li> </ul>	Ensure continued scrutiny in developing new provision and revisions to existing provision to maintain high levels of accuracy  Continue effective collaboration with a partner higher education institution to monitor and review	Ongoing	Higher Education Curriculum Manager	Accuracy and completeness of public information  High student satisfaction	Director of Higher Education	Self-Evaluation Document

	accuracy and completeness of information					
<b>Advisable</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>Target date</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Success indicators</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
The team considers that it is <b>advisable</b> for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensure that the committee terms of reference set out clearly the relationship between the committee and management structures in order to make wholly clear the coherence of the structure and show how actions are progressed (paragraph 13)</li> </ul>	Review and publish terms of reference which clearly set out: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the relationship between the Higher Education Management Committee and Management structures</li> <li>how actions are monitored and progressed</li> </ul>	September 2012  Ongoing	Director of HE  Higher Education Curriculum Manager	Clear and coherent structure communicated to staff and understood by appropriate staff  Timely completion of actions	Director of Quality  Director of Higher Education	Academic Board minutes  Updated Higher Education Action Plan
<b>Desirable</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>Target date</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Success indicators</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
The team considers that it is <b>desirable</b> for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>introduce a single means of tracking the completion of action points in order to record clearly the</li> </ul>	Introduce a 'one stop' action plan tracking system that factors in all quality assurance mechanisms (for example internal	September 2012	Higher Education Curriculum Manager	Monitoring, progression and resolution of actions	Director of Higher Education	Academic Board minutes  Self-Evaluation Document

resolution of actions (paragraph 17)	performance reviews, assessment boards, annual reviews)  Ensure tracking system is reviewed and updated termly and reported to Academic Board, showing clearly how actions are monitored and progressed					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>review the internal processes of programme design and validation to ensure that higher education concepts are always fully embedded at the design stage (paragraph 18)</li> </ul>	Revise the internal approval process to clearly incorporate higher education concepts, with particular reference to the <i>Code of practice, Section 7: Programme design, approval, monitoring and review</i> and <i>Section 9: Work-based and placement learning</i>	September 2012	Director of Quality	Revised internal approval documentation articulates higher education concepts  Programme design embeds higher education concepts	Deputy Principal (Curriculum & Quality)	Annual Partnership Report  Self-Evaluation Document
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sustain and further develop the engagement of employers in the College's higher education provision (paragraph 31)</li> </ul>	Formalise the process for receiving feedback from employers through appropriately designed surveys  Provide sector-based forums for employers to support discussions on the design,	December 2012  December 2012	Higher Education Curriculum Manager  Director of Higher Education	Review and development of provision to take account of employer needs	Director of Higher Education  Deputy Principal (Curriculum and Quality)	Self-Evaluation Document  Higher Education Strategy (2012-15)

	development and review of provision to meet higher level skills needs					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>fully document the processes for the checking and approval of public information so that the information is readily available to all parties (paragraph 43)</li> </ul>	<p>Develop clearly articulated policies and procedures for the development and dissemination of public information</p> <p>Provide a tracking system to monitor and review the progress and update of public information</p>	<p>December 2012</p> <p>December 2012</p>	Marketing Manager	Development and dissemination of Public Information Policy	Director of Quality, Standards and Marketing	<p>Self-Evaluation Document</p> <p>Marketing Self-Assessment Report</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>support and encourage all higher education student representatives throughout the provision to make use of the virtual learning environment as a means of gathering the views of their constituents (paragraph 46).</li> </ul>	<p>Ensure all student groups have a nominated student representative within the first six weeks of term</p> <p>Provide all student groups with information and guidance on the virtual learning environment feedback tool at induction</p> <p>Introduce online module feedback surveys, consistently used across all</p>	October 2012	Higher education programme leaders	<p>Full student engagement across all groups, facilitated by identified student representative</p> <p>Consistency of student engagement with module surveys</p>	Higher Education Curriculum Manager	<p>Self-Evaluation Document</p> <p>Student Written Submission</p> <p>Outcomes of virtual learning environment student survey</p>

	<p>programmes</p> <p>Ensure all programmes have an online student forum that is consistently utilised across all programmes</p> <p>Monitor and review the usage of the virtual learning environment feedback tool to ensure the consistency of use across all programmes</p>			<p>across all programmes</p> <p>Full student engagement with forum across all groups</p> <p>High level of student usage across all programmes</p>		<p>reports</p> <p>Virtual learning environment usage report</p>
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**RG 1020 08/12**

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