



**QAA**

## **Integrated quality and enhancement review**

**Summative review**

June 2007

New College Durham

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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 the QAA and consist of:

- *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* which includes descriptions of different higher education qualifications
- the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*
- subject benchmark statements which describe the characteristics of degrees in different subjects
- guidelines for preparing programme specifications which are descriptions of what is on offer to students in individual programmes of study
- award benchmark statements which describe the generic characteristics of an award, for example Foundation Degrees.

In addition, Developmental engagement teams gather evidence by focusing on particular aspects of the theme under review. These are known as 'lines of enquiry'.

### **Outcomes of IQER**

Each Developmental engagement and Summative review results in a written report:

- Developmental engagement reports set out good practice and recommendations and implications for the college and its awarding bodies, but do not contain judgements. Recommendations will be at one of three levels - **essential**, **advisable** and **desirable**. To promote an open and collegial approach to Developmental engagements, the reports are not published.

- Summative review reports identify good practice and contain judgements about whether the college is discharging its responsibilities effectively against core themes one and two above. The judgements are **confidence**, **limited confidence** or **no confidence**. There is no judgement for the third core theme, instead the report will provide evaluation and a conclusion. Summative review reports are published. Differentiated judgements can be made where a team judges a college's management of the standards and/or quality of the awards made by one awarding body to be different from those made by another.

Colleges are required to develop an action plan to address any recommendations arising from IQER. Progress against these action plans is monitored by QAA in conjunction with HEFCE and/or the college's awarding body(ies) as appropriate. The college's action plan in response to the conclusions of the Summative review will be published as part of the report.

## Executive summary

### The Summative review of New College Durham carried out in May 2007

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:

- course teams have made effective use of the operations manuals to demonstrate compliance with University regulations and procedures
- the College has adopted a proactive stance in mapping the various precepts of the *Code of practice*, published by QAA, across its programmes and evaluating the extent to which provision matches them
- assessments are explicitly mapped to intended learning outcomes in the programme specifications
- the overview report of University-validated programmes is well focused and clearly identifies areas of strength and weaknesses, discusses common issues and provides a clear agenda for action for the forthcoming year
- a University member of staff fulfils a valuable role as a subject-specific link person for the FD Complementary Therapies
- employers are involved in market research, the design of intended learning outcomes, assessments and work-based assessment briefs
- there are effective arrangements for academic skills support, including an Academic Support Tutor appointed specifically for higher education programmes
- the College takes an open approach to its website, which contains useful information specific to higher education, including the annual higher education achievement report.

The team also makes some recommendations for the enhancement of the higher education provision.

### Recommendations

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

- review the management of the higher education provision in line with the conclusions of the HE Steering Group to provide greater coherence and a clearer definition of the roles of individuals

- adopt a clear, robust and consistent approach to the handling of all higher education external examiners' reports.

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

- more clearly identify the development and assessment of transferable skills in programme documentation
- review and, where necessary, update the Higher Education Quality Manual to ensure the completeness of the information in it
- ensure that the provision for progress files for all students is applied consistently across all programmes
- develop a coherent policy for regular subject updating by all of those staff teaching higher education
- explore the potential for greater evaluative use of student cohort data and trend analysis by course teams.

## A Introduction and context

1 This report presents the findings of the Summative review conducted at New College Durham (the College). The purpose of the review was to provide public information on how the College discharges its responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students for programmes it delivers on behalf of Edexcel and the University of Sunderland (the University). The review was carried out by Mr Bob Millington, Ms Pat Millner, Mr Colin Stanfield (reviewers) and Mr Martin Hill (Coordinator).

2 The team conducted the review in negotiation with the College and in accordance with *The handbook for a pilot study of an integrated quality and enhancement review*, 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. 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 the higher education sector, with reference to the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, subject and award benchmark statements, *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)* and programme specifications.

3 In order to assist the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) in gaining information for assessing the impact of Foundation Degree (FD) awards, Section D of this report summarises details of the FD programmes delivered at the College.

4 The College is a mixed economy college, established in 1977 through the amalgamation of Durham Technical College and Neville's Cross Teacher Training College. The mission of the College is to provide first-class learning and training for individuals, business and the community.

In the academic year 2006-07, there were 7,974 full-time and 5,956 part-time student enrolments. Of these, 616 full-time and 1,115 part-time students were enrolled on higher education programmes. The higher education provision is taught by 72 staff, of whom approximately 15 are fractional and 21 are agency appointments. In September 2006, the majority of students on higher education programmes, 64 per cent, were from County Durham, with a further 15 per cent from Teesside, 9.5 per cent from Newcastle, 9 per cent from Sunderland and 2.5 per cent from outside the North-East region.

5 The College relocated all of its provision to new buildings on the Framwellgate Moor Campus opened in September 2004. The relocation prompted a management restructure with further changes made in the autumn of 2006. The College has the following higher education provision.

### Validated by the University of Sunderland

BA (Hons) Management, Business and Administration

BA (Hons) Social Work

FD Business Operations

FD Public Sector Administration



FD Travel and Tourism Management

FD Music Management

FD Sport and Exercise Studies

FD Computing and Networking

FD Internet Computing for Business

FD Housing

FD Public Services

FD Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations

FD Complementary Therapies

FD Maintenance Engineering

FD Counselling Practice.

### **Validated by Edexcel**

HNC/D Business

HNC/D Electrical/Electronic Engineering

HNC/D Construction

HNC/D Manufacturing Engineering

HNC/D Civil engineering

HND Graphic Design.

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

6 The College currently uses two awarding bodies for its provision: Edexcel for Higher National (HN) provision and the University of Sunderland for all other provision. Since 2002, the College has been engaged in the development of a range of FD provision. The portfolio of FDs is expected to expand further over the next five years. In a number of cases, the FDs have replaced existing HN provision.

7 HN Certificates and Diplomas have been offered by the College since the early 1970s and were developed in response to employer and student demand. This provided a route for local students to progress from cognate further education provision offered by the College.

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

8 A major element of the strategic partnership between the College and the University is the College's commitment to use the University as its sole validating partner. To this end, quality assurance across the two organisations has been aligned, resulting in a Statement of Quality Assurance and Enhancement produced in 2004. The College has developed specialist expertise in the fields of health, education, social work, and business and management, and this is reflected in the portfolio of provision delivered at honours degree level. The College does not anticipate significant further development of its honours degree level provision.

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

9 Students on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the Summative review team and took advantage of this opportunity. The College provided administrative support to the student representatives and guidance from the Head of Academic Development and Quality. An invitation to contribute to the written submission was also made to the student representatives who attended the meetings of the College HE Student Forum. The written submission was approved by the student representatives before being submitted to QAA.

## **B Evaluation of the management of HEFCE-funded higher education**

### **Core theme 1: Academic standards**

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

10 Effective committee and management structures are in place to enable the College to assure the standards of its higher education programmes. Quality assurance centres on the HE Academic Standards and Quality Committee, a sub-committee of the College's Academic Board. There is also an FD Steering Group, providing a forum for the development of FDs. At programme level, there are regular team meetings to discuss issues arising and to advance annual course reports and plans. The College continues to develop its committee structure and very recently has set up an HE Steering Group to oversee the College's overall higher education strategy.

11 Responsibilities for the senior management of the higher education provision are shared. The Director of Curriculum and Quality assumes responsibility for the strategic management of higher education as part of an overall College portfolio. Operational management is primarily the responsibility of one of the two assistant directors, of curriculum and quality, who between them oversee the work of the schools. The assistant directors are supported in their work, especially the development of new higher education programmes, by the Head of Academic Development and Quality. Responsibilities are then devolved to the respective heads of school where higher education activities are often fully integrated with the management of other levels of college provision. While the broad lines of the management structure are appropriate, the team considered that responsibilities are dispersed. To achieve greater coherence and clearer definition of the roles of individuals, it is advisable that the College should review the management of the higher education provision in line with the conclusions of the HE Steering Group.

12 The decision to enter into a strategic partnership with the University has enabled the College to progress its mission and refine its quality assurance systems. Since 2004, the College has transferred the programmes validated by a previous partner to the University, converted a number of HN programmes to FDs and begun a series of new FD programme initiatives. Each programme involves a separate memorandum of agreement and negotiation of the model of collaboration. The majority of the validated provision operates under arrangements affording the College the maximum delegated authority.

13 All new and revised programmes have been exposed to rigorous scrutiny through the University's validation procedures. One distinctive feature in more recent validations has been the development of operations manuals, which are now a University requirement.

These set out the detailed management procedures to be adopted for the new programme at the College. There is good practice in the effective manner that course teams have used the manuals to demonstrate compliance with University regulations and procedures. The development of FD programmes highlighted that delays were being caused because new subject areas did not have an equivalent area of expertise in the University. A separate validation unit was set up to oversee the quality assurance of these programmes. One worthwhile recent initiative was the decision to invite some senior staff at each institution to serve on or attend each other's boards.

14 Similar standards are demonstrated in HN programmes in keeping with the published guidance from Edexcel. In aligning them to the new National Qualification Framework specifications, minor changes were discussed and approved by the external examiners. As with the University-validated programmes, staff teams produce annual reports for HN awards, working beyond the requirements of Edexcel.

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

15 The College is engaging with the Academic Infrastructure and national reference points are used to inform the development, delivery and monitoring of standards. It has taken a proactive stance in mapping the various precepts of the *Code of practice*, published by QAA, across its programmes and evaluates the extent to which its higher education provision matches them. This good practice was recognised in the Developmental engagement. Programme specifications used for recent validations reveal that teams have planned intended learning outcomes with close attention to subject benchmark statements and appropriate reference to sections of *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ). A key element of the development of the specifications is the explicit mapping of assessments to intended learning outcomes in a skills matrix. The team concurs with the Developmental engagement conclusion that this feature of the provision is clearly an example of good practice.

16 Good use is generally made of the Academic Infrastructure in University validations. However, the team found that in two recent validations key transferable skills were reported as being developed but not assessed and that the suggestions of the panel to review this may not have been subsequently acted upon. It is desirable that the College and University should clearly identify the development and assessment of transferable skills in programme documentation.

### **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?**

17 External examiners appointed by the University and Edexcel confirm that the standards and quality of the provision are sound. On Edexcel programmes, external examiners' reports are received centrally by the Assistant Director Quality and Curriculum before distribution to the relevant programme leader. With the University-validated provision, reports are sent by the external examiner to the designated member of the University and then forwarded directly to the programme leader. The College has noted that occasionally, due to lack of clarity of the responsibilities, reports have been held back, delaying the production of the annual report. One external examiner's report identifying significant assessment issues had been delayed at the University for nearly three months before receipt by the appropriate school. It is advisable that a clear, robust and consistent approach to the handling of all higher education external examiners' reports is adopted.

18 Annual course reports produced by each programme team demonstrate valuable reaction to external examiners' comments, employer input and student feedback. All the reports are received and approved by HE Academic Standards and Quality Committee and, in the case of the University-validated provision, forwarded to the University. Variations in the standards of reporting have been recognised by the College and to enhance this process scrutineers have been appointed to provide oral and written feedback to report authors. The team concurs with the Developmental engagement conclusion that this represents potentially good practice and encourages the College to disseminate good practice in the way scrutineers are enhancing the reporting process. The University requires the College to produce an overview report drawing together the information presented in the relevant annual course reports. The most recent overview report was a very well-focused document clearly identifying areas of strength and weaknesses, discussing common issues and providing a clear agenda for action for the forthcoming year. The document deserves wide dissemination in the College as a model of good practice.

19 Quality management procedures are supported by the HE Quality Manual. While procedures for ensuring standards on the University-validated provision are well developed, there are omissions. These include the management and committee structure underpinning higher education programmes and a policy statement on the conduct of assessment boards for HN programmes. It is desirable that the document is reviewed and, where necessary, updated to ensure the completeness of information.

20 Good use has been made of internal and external reviews to enhance the provision, for example in the response to the QAA Major review of healthcare programmes in 2005. The team is impressed by the thorough action plans produced following the recent Developmental engagement and the speedy way in which the College has already begun to address concerns.

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

21 There are four College-wide staff development days and an annual conference covering training in information learning technology, assessment techniques and teaching and learning, although the latter is not focused particularly on higher education provision. College staff are also able to access staff development activities within the University. The good practice of having a University member of staff acting as a subject-specific link person for the FD in Complementary Therapies is recommended for other University-validated provision. The College may wish to consider ways in which good practice in teaching and learning at higher education level might be discussed in subject areas and more widely to create a shared understanding of its distinctiveness.

**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?**

22 The quality of provision is managed effectively, providing opportunities for operational issues to be disseminated to senior College management and to the appropriate University committees. Course teams meet at least once each semester to review issues such as retention and achievement, concerns raised by students or staff, and to monitor action plans arising from their annual course reviews. The regular meetings of course teams and curriculum leaders with their heads of school ensure that issues raised by higher education students can be dealt with quickly. Heads of school meet with the Director of Curriculum and Quality fortnightly and alternately with their Assistant Director.

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

23 The memoranda of agreement with the University define the expectations for the quality of learning opportunities. Initially, this is assured through site visits to examine physical resources, validation documentation and rigorous scrutiny at validation events. The University follows up recommendations made during validation through the annual course review at the end of the first year of delivery. Thereafter, the annual course reviews are forwarded to the College's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Unit and then sent to the appropriate School Quality Board at the University. These arrangements work well.

24 The College's Learning and Teaching Policy sets out general principles, practices and statutory requirements but makes no explicit reference to higher education teaching and learning. The College has a strategy for student support and guidance. External examiners have commented favourably on the quality of support offered to students, highlighting the developments in personal development planning and work-based learning and the commendable professional and pastoral support.

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

25 Relevant aspects of the Academic Infrastructure are made known to students through programme specifications included in programme handbooks. The specifications accompanying the Edexcel provision are well focused and concise, such as in HN Engineering. Those in the University-validated programme handbooks are generally longer and less user-friendly. Students confirmed that they understood the significance of intended learning outcomes. Students on the FD programmes indicated familiarity with progress files and some social work students spoke very positively about the value of personal development plans. However, students on another programme claimed to have no knowledge of this feature. The team noted that there was no overarching policy underpinning the development of progress files in the College. It is desirable that the College ensures that the provision for progress files for all students is applied consistently across all programmes.

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

26 The College uses student surveys to canvass perceptions and, in general, they recorded a high level of satisfaction with most aspects of teaching and learning. Students are able to articulate the challenge and progression to independent learning. There was good evidence

in some annual course reviews that student feedback had been received in a timely fashion and acted on to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

27 The College has 72 higher education staff postholders, of whom approximately 15 are fractional and 21 are employed through an agency. The staff delivering higher education programmes are well-qualified and vocationally experienced. Newly appointed staff undergo induction and have a mentor appointed to them for their first year of employment. The senior management team holds regular performance monitoring meetings to review the adequacy and sufficiency of staff delivering higher education programmes. A high proportion of staff hold teaching qualifications and those newly appointed staff without one are expected to complete a qualification within two years.

28 The quality of teaching and learning is monitored through a rigorous peer observation and assessment procedure which operates for further and higher education teaching staff and grades their teaching performance. Staff are observed by others experienced in higher education delivery but not necessarily from within the same subject area. Each school collates these grades and provides a grade profile that distinguishes further and higher education and performances. Areas of good practice are also listed but there is no separation of further and higher education practice. The team considers that there is a need for greater emphasis on the sharing of views on the distinctiveness of higher education teaching and, in particular, how the integration of higher-level academic skills within programmes may be achieved.

29 The College recognises that employer involvement is important. In all schools offering higher education, the team found excellent and productive examples of the involvement of employers in market research, the design of intended learning outcomes, assessments and work-based assessment briefs. The final validation report of the FD in Housing commended the team on the good model of work-based learning which is relevant to the 40 housing organisations that collaborated in the development of the programme.

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

30 The College has effective procedures for the admission of students although the report for the Developmental engagement noted that the opportunities for the accreditation of prior learning could be explained further to students. Students receive a comprehensive induction covering institutional and programme-specific issues, an introduction to the virtual learning environment and receive programme handbooks and module guides. All students have a personal tutor for the duration of their studies who provides guidance and monitors progress. The student written submission and student surveys confirmed that students are well informed of the tutorial support arrangements at the start of their programme. They consider that the personal and academic guidance can be very helpful.

31 There are impressive arrangements for academic skills support which include an HE Academic Support Tutor appointed specifically for higher education programmes. This demonstrates the commitment to the needs of adult, part-time and international students. This tutor works closely with other colleagues to provide a range of study skills using a variety of appropriate delivery methods. Students spoke very positively about the support offered but it was clear this was taken up only after difficulties had arisen. The College is considering systems for the early diagnosis of learning and information technology skills needed by part-time students and learners returning to study. There is very good support for students with particular learning needs and comprehensive services for careers advice and guidance, financial advice and counselling. An external examiner has commented positively on the way the College encourages and successfully supports students from widely different backgrounds.



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

32 There is a thorough annual appraisal system, informed by the peer observation scheme, which reviews past performance and plans the future development of staff in an action plan. There is a wide range of development opportunities offered to higher education staff. Higher degrees are identified as a priority for staff development and the team noted several examples of staff undertaking higher degrees and some links with professional bodies. However, the book lists for some modules are dated, demonstrating a need for some staff to keep more up to date within their subject area. It is desirable that the College should develop a coherent policy for regular subject updating by all of those staff teaching higher education.

**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?**

33 The new building at the Framwellgate Moor Campus affords very high-quality learning resources for higher education provision, being described as first class by an external examiner. The Learning Resource Centre provides a wide range of books, journals and e-journals. Staff in the centre provide a comprehensive service to students taking into account disability issues, services for distance learners, interlibrary loans, online databases and subject-specific guides. The Learning Resource Centre also houses a large number of networked PCs with internet access. Students are able to book computers and use the open access area. Student surveys indicate a very high level of satisfaction with library and information technology facilities. The learning facilities of the University are also accessible to the College's higher education students.

**The team concludes that it has confidence in the College's management of its responsibilities for the quality of the learning opportunities, as required by the awarding bodies, to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.**

**Core theme 3: Public information**

**What information is the College responsible for publishing about its HEFCE-funded higher education?**

34 Public information on higher education provision at the College is available through the College website and higher education-specific prospectus. The website contains a higher education-specific microsite which is at an early stage of development and includes programme summaries and some reference to the partnership with the University. Programme-specific information on the website, in the prospectus and the subject information leaflets are in line with the contents of those programme specifications that were available for review. The website contains other higher education-specific information, an example of which is the annual higher education achievement report 2005-06. This represents an open approach by the College and a valuable source of information for prospective students. The annual College Report, which includes reference to higher education provision within each School, is also on the College website. Both the higher education prospectus and the College website articulate the distinctive nature of the higher education provision.

**What arrangements do 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?**

35 Development of the prospectus is through the College's Marketing and Events Department in collaboration with programme teams. A series of proofreading exercises are undertaken by Heads of School to ensure accuracy prior to publication and also for any subsequent updating. The College's Senior Executive Group formally approves the prospectus. The prospectus of the University makes reference to provision at the College, as does the Partnerships brochure produced at the University. The College utilises document management software to monitor the development and review of internal and external documents, identifying where responsibility lies for ensuring the accuracy of information.

36 Students indicated that they have no specific concerns relating to the quality or accuracy of published information, except for some difficulties in navigating the website. They also suggested that the number of leaflets could be reduced to avoid duplication and complexity. Students commented positively on the information that they receive throughout the student journey. They agreed that their programme experience met the expectations arising from the information that they received prior to entry. The Developmental engagement report found that staff were diligent in ensuring the accuracy of programme and module handbooks distributed to students. The student written submission and comments from students confirmed this. Students considered that the information they received relating to assessment decisions was effectively conveyed in sufficient detail and in a timely manner to enable them to make decisions relating to progression.

37 The report on higher education student achievement November 2006 details achievement by school and level. This report and the annual course reports are informed by the College management information system, which is based around standard sector software. The latter is populated by both further and higher education data, although the latter is at a relatively early stage of development. The team noted some variation in the presentation and evaluation of student cohort data in annual course reports. The team saw no evidence within the reports of the analysis of trend data other than within the duration of any programme and it is desirable that the College explore the potential for greater evaluative use of such data by course teams. Management information data are used for strategic decision-making about higher education provision and are considered against internal targets for performance at programme and school level.

**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**

38 The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in February 2007 and addressed four lines of enquiry, agreed in advance with the College. The lines of enquiry were:

- how does the College assure the appropriateness of identified assessment methods to intended learning outcomes and level of the programme?
- are the criteria used for marking at module/unit level and the descriptors used for degree classifications communicated to all staff and students? How does the College monitor the timeliness of feedback given to students?
- does the College's approach to assessment carried out on placement and in work-based learning enable students to achieve their intended learning outcomes?



- how does the College ensure that published assessment information is current, accurate and complete?

39 The team found a range of good practice across the provision, including the College's engagement with the Academic Infrastructure. This is exemplified in the mapping of assessment against the *Code of practice* and the integration of staff from the University and the College in ensuring the coherence of the assessment strategy. The assessment sections of the operations manuals are used to show compliance with University procedures, while the University's degree classification descriptors are systematically communicated to College staff. Programme specifications incorporate the mapping of assessments to learning outcomes and marking criteria are set out on assessment feedback sheets. The report also highlights the value of the annual college student survey. The College has excellent links with employers, characterised by their involvement in practice-based assessment. These are supported by clear and concise employer handbooks for student placements. Pre-assessment boards are used to confirm the accuracy of assessment data in advance of formal examination boards.

40 The Developmental engagement report also includes a number of desirable recommendations. These include the need to review the approach to assessment in FDs to better support students' transition to the top-up honours degrees and to ensure that the review of course action plans allows for their more timely implementation. The report recommends that existing good practice be used to promote more consistency and equity in the assessment feedback provided for students. It also suggests that an internal mechanism be established at institutional level to monitor the quality and timeliness of the feedback. The FD Development Group might be used to share good practice so as to support the development of further innovative ideas and models of work-based learning. It was judged desirable that a workplace mentor support programme and handbook be introduced across all programmes and that accreditation of prior experiential learning opportunities be strengthened to better support the needs of mature and experienced students. Existing good practice in gathering views on assessment in the student survey might be extended to explicitly cover assessment and feedback for work-based learning. It was further recommended that the College might build on the model used in the School of Business, Management and IT for the review of new and amended assignment tasks prior to their inclusion in course documents.

## **D Foundation Degrees**

41 The College currently offers 13 Foundation Degrees in five of the six schools. There are 650 students enrolled on the FD programmes. Since 2002, the College has been engaged in the development of a range of FD provision, and the portfolio of FDs is expected to expand further over the next five years. In a number of cases, the FDs have replaced existing HN provision. The HE Development plan 2005-08 identifies that additional pathways will be sought in youth work, community radio and media, housing and business for the voluntary sector. Work will also continue to transform progressively the existing range of HN qualifications into FD programmes. Exceptions to this may arise where there are issues raised by employers, professional bodies or validating bodies.

42 The College has an FD Steering Group consisting of all the leaders of the College's FD programmes and chaired by the Head of Academic Development and Quality. Its brief is to provide a forum in which members can raise curriculum and non-curriculum issues associated with FD provision. It is proposed that this group will report to HE Steering Group in the

College. Employers have a wide range of involvement in FD programmes, from design and market research, through to developing assessments and involvement in practice-based ones.

## E Conclusions and summary of judgements

43 The Summative review team 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 New College Durham and its awarding bodies, Edexcel and the University of Sunderland.

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

- the effective manner in which course teams have used the operations manuals to demonstrate compliance with University regulations and procedures (paragraph 13)
- the proactive stance adopted by the College in mapping the various precepts of the *Code of practice*, published by QAA, across its programmes and evaluating the extent to which provision matches them (paragraph 15)
- the explicit mapping of assessments to intended learning outcomes in the programme specifications (paragraph 15)
- the well-focused overview report of University-validated programmes, which clearly identifies areas of strength and weaknesses, discusses common issues and provides a clear agenda for action for the forthcoming year (paragraph 18)
- the practice of having a University member of staff acting as a subject-specific link person for the FD Complementary Therapies (paragraph 21)
- the involvement of employers in market research, the design of intended learning outcomes, assessments and work-based assessment briefs (paragraph 29)
- the arrangements for academic skills support, which include an Academic Support Tutor appointed specifically for higher education programmes (paragraph 31)
- the open approach used on the college website, which contains specific higher education information, including the annual higher education achievement report (paragraph 34).

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

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

- achieve greater clarity and coherence and clearer definition of the roles of individuals; the College should review the management of the higher education provision in line with the conclusions of the HE Steering Group (paragraph 11)
- adopt a clear, robust and consistent approach to the handling of all higher education external examiners' reports (paragraph 17).

47 The team also agreed the following areas where it would be **desirable** for the College to take action:

- clearly identify the development and assessment of transferable skills in programme documentation (paragraph 16)
- review and, where necessary, update the HE Quality Manual to ensure the completeness of information in it (paragraph 19)
- ensure that the provision for progress files for all students is applied consistently across all programmes (paragraph 25)
- address the lack of a coherent policy for all staff teaching higher education to undertake regular subject updating (paragraph 32)
- explore the potential for greater evaluative use of student cohort data and trend analysis by course teams (paragraph 37).

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

49 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, and other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that it has confidence that, in the context of this Summative review, the College discharges its responsibilities effectively, as set out in the relevant partnership agreement for the management of the quality of learning opportunities to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

50 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, and other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that, in the context of this Summative review, reliance can be placed on the accuracy and/or completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

New College Durham action plan relating to the Summative review May: 2007						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<p>In the course of the Summative review the team identified the following areas of <b>good practice</b> that are worthy of wider dissemination within the college:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● the effective manner in which course teams have used the operations manuals to demonstrate compliance with University regulations and procedures (paragraph 13)</li> </ul>	<p>Programmes currently validated by the University to complete the operations manual as they are reviewed. All new programmes will have a completed operations manual at validation</p>		<p>Heads of school Curriculum leaders</p>	<p>All programmes validated by the University to have a completed operations manual</p>	<p>AD chair HE Academic Standards and Quality Committee University QAE unit</p>	<p>By internal and University- validation panels</p>

New College Durham action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2007							
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the proactive stance adopted by the College in mapping the various precepts of the <i>Code of practice</i>, published by QAA, across its programmes and evaluating the extent to which provision matched them (paragraph 15)</li> </ul>	<p>Keep under review current precepts of the <i>Code of practice</i> and make any amendments to the College's mapping in response to future changes in the <i>Code</i></p>		HE Academic Standards and Quality Committee	College mapping remains aligned to the current <i>Code of practice</i>	HE Academic Standards and Quality Committee Academic Board NCD University QAE Unit	Validation and review of programmes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the explicit mapping in the programme specifications of assessments to intended learning outcomes (paragraph 15)</li> </ul>	<p>Continue to ensure that all HE programmes in the College incorporate explicit mapping of assessments to learning outcomes</p>		Heads of school programme teams	Monitoring of programme specifications for validation and review	AD Curriculum and Quality Head of Academic Development and Quality	Internal and external validation panels Student surveys	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the well-focused overview report of University-validated programmes which</li> </ul>	<p>Completion of overview report in December 2007</p>		AD University QAE AD - chair HE Academic	Report completed on time and submitted to	QAE of University HE Academic Standards &	QAE, collaborative Provision Group HE Academic Standards and	

New College Durham action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2007						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
clearly identifies areas of strength and weaknesses, discusses common issues and provides a clear agenda for action for the forthcoming year (paragraph 18)			Standards and Quality Committee	QAE Sub group of SPSC and the University Collaborative Provision group for consideration	Quality Committee HE Steering Group Academic Board of College	Quality Committee
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the involvement of employers in market research, the design of ILOs, assessments and work-based assessment briefs (paragraph 29)</li> </ul>	Disseminate good practice across all HE programmes via staff development events and the Employer Engagement Steering group		ADs Curriculum and Quality Heads of school Curriculum leaders Employer Engagement Steering group	A greater number of employers involved in all aspects of HE programme design and delivery	HE Steering Group HE Academic Standards and Quality Committee Employer Engagement Steering Group	Employer surveys
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the arrangements for academic skills support which include a higher education appointed Academic Support Tutor (paragraph 31)</li> </ul>	Coordinate activities to further enhance the support for higher education students and higher education teaching teams		AD Curriculum and Quality	Widespread and focused use of the HE Academic Support Tutor	AD Curriculum and Quality	Student surveys Student achievements

New College Durham action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2007						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the practice of having a University member of staff acting as a subject specific link person for the FD Complementary Therapies (paragraph 21)</li> </ul>	Continue the well-established practice of designated link people for Model B & C programmes		AD QAE at the University Head of HE Academic Development at the college	Good communication of University procedures to staff within the college	AD Curriculum and Quality	Annual reports Staff surveys
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the open approach used on the College website which contains specific higher education information, including the annual higher education achievement report (paragraph 34)</li> </ul>	Continue to share higher education reports and information using the college website and appropriate committees		AD Curriculum and Quality AD Business Development Head of Marketing	Timely reports posted to the college website Staff kept informed of latest information	AD Business Development Head of Marketing Academic Board	Staff surveys

New College Durham action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2007						
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team agreed a number of areas where the College should be advised to take action:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to achieve greater clarity and coherence and clearer definition of the roles of individuals, the college should review the management of the higher education provision in line with the conclusions of the HE Steering Group (paragraph 11)</li> </ul>	Following the conclusions of the HE Steering Group, the college senior management team will review the management of higher education provision in the college	To be implemented from September 2007	Senior Executive Group Higher Education Steering Group	Clearly defined roles for those responsible for the management of higher education in the college that are understood by staff and external contacts	Principal and Chair of Corporation	Staff surveys
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a clear, robust and consistent approach to the handling of all higher education examiners' reports should be adopted (paragraph 17)</li> </ul>	University to ensure that external examiner reports are forwarded to AD Curriculum and Quality at the college on receipt	Implemented July 2007	AD QAE at the University AD Curriculum and Quality at the College	External examiner reports for all programmes, validated by the University, received in the College promptly Appropriate	AD QAE University AD Curriculum and Quality College	Partner colleges annual report Annual audit of response to external examiner reports



New College Durham action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2007						
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
	Major issues from external examiner reports for University-validated programmes and Edexcel approved programmes to be identified by AD Curriculum and Quality on receipt of report and response made within one month			action taken in response to identified issues from any external examiner report		

New College Durham action plan relating to the Summative review May: 2007						
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team agreed the following areas where it would be <b>desired</b> to take action:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to clearly identify the development and assessment of transferable skills in programme documentation (paragraph 16)</li> </ul>	Amendments to be made to programme specifications guidelines	Implemented in all programmes developed from September 2007 onwards	QAE of University HE Academic Standards and Quality Committee of the College	Consideration by Head of HE Academic development and Quality at New College and by approval/ review panels of the University	HE Academic Standards and Quality Committee of the College	Annual programme monitoring
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensure that the provision for progress files for all students is applied consistently across all programmes (paragraph 25)</li> </ul>	Develop standard approach to progress files (e-portfolios) for all higher education programmes	To be in place for all higher education programmes by September 2008	HE Academic Standards and Quality Committee	All students on higher education programmes will have a progress file	QAB at the University Chair - HE Academic Standards and Quality Committee Heads of School	Student surveys Annual reports

New College Durham action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2007						
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>review and, where necessary, update the Higher Education Quality Manual to ensure the completeness of information in it (paragraph 19)</li> </ul>	<p>Include specific Edexcel information into the HE Quality Manual</p> <p>Review contents annually</p>	<p>Review and updating began in July 2007 and will continue with annual monitoring</p>	<p>AD Quality &amp; MIS</p> <p>AD Curriculum and Quality</p> <p>Quality Improvement Manager</p>	<p>Higher Education Quality Manual complete and up to date</p>	<p>AD Quality &amp; MIS</p> <p>AD Curriculum and Quality</p>	<p>Audit of HE Quality Manual in July of each year</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>address the lack of a coherent policy for all staff teaching higher education to undertake regular subject updating (paragraph 32)</li> </ul>	<p>Review current Staff Development Policy with respect to staff teaching higher education</p>	<p>Review September 2007 to implement September 2008</p>	<p>Senior Executive Group</p>	<p>Increased numbers of staff teaching HE are supported to undertake subject updating</p>	<p>Senior Executive Group</p>	<p>Report from Lifelong Learning Manager to monitor number of staff attending updating events</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>explore the potential for greater evaluative use of student cohort data and trend analysis by course teams (paragraph 37)</li> </ul>	<p>Include evaluation of cohort data (module and programme level) in annual report and compare with results from previous years</p>	<p>To begin in annual reports October 2007</p>	<p>AD Quality &amp; MIS</p> <p>AD Curriculum and Quality</p> <p>Head of HE Academic Development</p> <p>Curriculum leaders</p>	<p>Annual reports include clear evaluation of module and programme results</p>	<p>AD Quality &amp; MIS</p> <p>QAE Sub group of University</p> <p>HE Academic Standards and Quality Committee of College</p> <p>Academic Board of College</p>	<p>Staff survey</p> <p>Overview report on higher education provision in the college</p>

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