QAA

Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

May 2009

Thanet College

SR24/2009

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*

- 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 Thanet College carried out in May 2009

As a result of its investigations, the Summative review team (the team) considers that there can be **confidence** in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreement, for the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of its awarding body. The team also considers that there can be **confidence** in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreements, for the quality of learning opportunities it offers. The team considers that 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.

Good practice

The team has identified the following good practice for dissemination:

- HNC Computing students appreciate the College's virtual learning environment that provides comprehensive schemes of work, session plans and a good range of learning resources.

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:

- use, at all levels of management, the Academic Infrastructure in managing academic standards and learning opportunities

- access College-specific feedback on the Certificate to teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector and Diploma to teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector from the external examiner to inform the annual course review and enhance the provision

- clarify for all stakeholders the roles and responsibilities for the management of learning support, including meeting statutory requirements for the management of the disabled students' allowance, between the College and the University.

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

- continue the positive development of a reflective portfolio for HNC Computing students

- provide a discrete higher education observation process to support lecturers in aligning learning and teaching to reflect implicitly the FHEQ

- clarify and formalise the allocation of tutorial contact time for the higher education provision.

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 Thanet 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 Canterbury Christ Church University. The review was carried out by Mr David Fallows, Ms Jane Waldron (reviewers) and Professor Caroline Strange (coordinator).

2   The Summative review team (the team) conducted the review in agreement with the College and in accordance with *The handbook for Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review* (the handbook), published by QAA. Evidence in support of the Summative review included documentation supplied by the College and the awarding body, meetings with staff and students and reports from an inspection and monitoring visits by Ofsted. The review also considered the College's use of the Academic Infrastructure, developed by QAA on behalf of higher education providers, with reference to the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, subject and award benchmark statements, *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and programme specifications. The College did not have a Developmental engagement. For this Summative review, the team did not meet with staff or students; however, the coordinator was able to meet with staff and students at the preparatory meeting.

3   Thanet College, a medium-sized general college of further education, is the leading local provider of training and further education. It is also a Centre of Vocational Excellence in Catering and Hospitality. An extensive range of full-time, part-time, distance learning and community based courses is offered at the College's main campus on Ramsgate Road, Broadstairs. Some provision in construction is based at Hornet Close, Broadstairs. The area in which the College operates has high levels of social and economic deprivation. The College's mission is 'to raise aspirations, develop skills and deliver quality'. The College's ethos and values are high performance and top quality, a culture of mutual respect and fairness, professionalism with a strong customer focus, the diversity of its learners and staff, and inspiring and empowering people to achieve their potential.

4   The College is organised into three divisions; two of which focus on curriculum areas and include the two sections delivering higher education. These sections are 'Essential Skills' and 'ICT and Business Administration'. In 2008-09, of the 1,972 full-time and 1,698 part-time students at the College, 18.25 full-time equivalent students were studying on higher education awards. The awarding body for all higher education awards is Canterbury Christ Church University. The following higher education programmes are offered at the College:

- HNC Computing (10 part-time)

- Certificate to teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (30 part-time)

- Diploma to teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (23 part-time)

Partnership agreements with the awarding body

5   There is a detailed Memorandum of Agreement between the University and the College that makes very clear the responsibilities of both the College and the University in delivering these programmes. For the Certificate to teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector and Diploma to teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (teaching awards), an Annex to the Memorandum of Agreement provides specific detail about the programmes and arrangements. This includes, for example, the requirement that University staff teach 25 per cent of the programme. The College offers the teaching awards as part of a multi-partner consortium. As an original member of the consortium, the College took part in the development of these current programmes, which were revalidated in June 2007.

6   The College has developed a close relationship with the University for the delivery of higher education and has links with its neighbouring Broadstairs campus. The HNC in Computing was run for a number of years at the College but ceased in 2005 due to declining numbers. Following discussions with employers and students, the College revalidated the HNC in Computing, an Edexcel programme. This commenced in September 2008. As this is an Edexcel programme, Edexcel additionally approves the appointment of the external examiner.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

7   It is planned that the College will move to a new-build nine-acre campus, near to the University campus in Broadstairs, in September 2011. As there is high unemployment in the area, it is hoped that one of the many benefits of the relocation of the College will be the continued regeneration of the Thanet district.

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 Summative review team but did not do so; however, feedback was received from students on the teaching awards. This was coordinated by two student group representatives. The coordinator met a representative group of students from all the programmes during the preparatory meeting at the College in February 2009. The coordinator provided written feedback from this meeting to the team.

B Evaluation of the management of HEFCE-funded higher education

Core theme 1: Academic standards

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

9   The College claims, in its self-evaluation, that it 'has robust QA procedures, which incorporate HE'. There is a clear and concise strategy. Its strategic aims include the development and expansion of higher education through the College, working with employers and partners in response to the needs of the local, regional and national economy. The College's broad approach to its strategy also encompasses raising awareness of higher education among its further education staff. The College's quality assurance procedures incorporate the higher education provision, with the annual quality assurance cycle based on the Ofsted inspection framework. To date, given the small number of

students, a discrete review of higher education has not been undertaken, but this is planned from 2009-10. The Deputy Principal has responsibility for ensuring that there are robust systems and processes to assure the relevance and quality of the higher education provision. The development and coordination of this provision is the responsibility of the Business Development Director, who chairs the Higher Education Committee. The Deputy Principal and Business Development Director are each responsible for a division with a focus on curriculum areas. Between them they oversee the provision, and work closely with employers to see that it meets their needs and those of the community and that learning support is provided. Given the College's matrix organisation structure and that both the Deputy Principal and the Business Development Director are members of the College's senior management team, the ability to effectively exchange information is provided.

10　In managing its higher education provision, the College adheres to the framework established by the University. In the 'Memorandum of Agreement in respect of Collaborative Provision', the University clearly sets out the roles and delegated responsibilities for managing responsibilities for academic standards. These are understood by the College. The Higher Education Forum, chaired by the University's Senior Pro Vice-Chancellor, oversees the strategic development of higher education at Thanet and is attended by senior stakeholders from Thanet College and the University. The Forum receives recommendations from the College's Higher Education Committee, guides the strategic direction of the partnership and can also consider unresolved operational issues. For the teaching awards, an academic link tutor from the University provides support regarding quality assurance and quality enhancement for the programmes. Within the College, for all programmes, the Programme Director/Leader has responsibility for the daily management of the programme, and reports to the Section Manager at the College. Student representatives are elected on all programmes and students commented that feedback mechanisms are effective.

11　The College's quality assurance committee structure was not clearly defined within the self-evaluation and portfolio of evidence. The main College committees, where quality issues are either discussed or on the terms of reference, are the Academic Standards Committee and the Higher Education Committee. Membership of the Academic Standards Committee includes all those with cross-College management responsibility for higher education. The Business Development Director provides a conduit for higher education development issues and any associated quality matters to meetings through the Higher Education Committee, the Academic Standards Committee, at senior management level and across the partnership.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

12　Within the self-evaluation there is little reference to the Academic Infrastructure. The University takes a strong lead in the management of the programmes, particularly in meeting the precepts of the *Code of practice*, published by QAA. For all awards, the alignment of the curricula with the Academic Infrastructure is assured by the University. The University takes a strong lead in managing academic standards. These are first established through validation procedures. The revalidation documentation for the awards includes programme specifications that are aligned with the level descriptors of the FHEQ, and, in the case of the teaching awards, national standards. Under the existing partnership agreement, there is engagement with the Academic Infrastructure through the University.

13 At the College, the Higher Education Committee provides operational oversight of the higher education provision. It is responsible for the development of a consistent approach to the quality management of higher education programmes, and the development and implementation of the higher education learning, teaching and assessment strategies. Quality is a standing agenda item at meetings of this committee but there is little evidence of analysis, evaluation or use of the Academic Infrastructure. The College is advised to use, at all levels of management, the Academic Infrastructure in managing academic standards and learning opportunities through, for example, documentation for the higher education provision.

14 The team noted that the University Assessment Handbook was published in 2005 and has therefore not been matched with the revised *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*. The College, however, in using further education systems for the observation and grading of teaching, has included a judgement of the extent to which staff use assessment and review information throughout a programme in monitoring student progress and the planning of their learning, thus meeting the requirements of the revised *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*.

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

15 Annual College programme review and improvement action planning is informed by the College curriculum review and observation process, student achievement and progression, student feedback, course risk assessment, University quality assurance feedback, external examiners' reports, and, for the teaching awards, consortium peer review feedback. There is also a system of local programme monitoring and review at the College that is conducted in accord with the College's further education practices to ensure careful oversight of retention, achievement and student satisfaction. This monitoring and the programme reviews result in a section self-assessment report with an action plan. This is moderated by the Improvements and Innovation Section, and incorporated in the College self-assessment report, reported to the College Senior Management Team and hence to the Board of Governors Curriculum and Standards Committee. The Ofsted Monitoring Report, 2008, stated that 'self-assessment reports and action plans are closely monitored by the Senior Management Team'. Programme review also feeds into the appropriate University programme quality monitoring and enhancement report.

16 The self-assessment report for the ICT and Business Administration Section in 2006-07 covers the previous HNC in Computing and includes some reference to feedback from the external examiner for the HNC in Computing. No reference is made, however, in the course review 2007-08 for the teaching awards to feed back from external examiners, although two external examiners' reports for 2007-08 had been provided to the team. External examiner reports on the predecessor HNC and those provided for the teaching awards indicated satisfaction with standards. The self-evaluation stated that the external examiners' reports for the teaching awards are sent to the University Programme Director who sends them to centre managers in the consortium. The team was informed that external examiners' reports for the teaching awards apply to the consortium provision rather than specifically to a college. According to the Annex to the Memorandum of Agreement for the teaching awards, however, an external examiner is assigned to Thanet College. The team recommends that the College access College-specific feedback on the teaching awards from the external examiner to inform the annual course review and enhance the provision.

17   Assessment and its moderation are monitored by the University. For the HNC, the proposed assignment is sent by the programme director to the University link tutor for approval before being given to students. A University template is used for the assignment brief. For the teaching awards assignment briefs are discussed and agreed within the consortium. The College then interprets the briefs for their students. College markers have responsibility for aligning feedback on student work to assessment criteria. For the HNC, 50 per cent of module assessment is second-marked by the University, while for the teaching awards, 25 per cent of assessments are second-marked by another college within the consortium, with a further 25 per cent being second-marked by a University tutor. Where appropriate, the University arranges for the induction and training of College staff in order for them to be granted examiner status of the University. Students on the teaching awards programmes commented that 'the majority of students have a clear understanding of the assessment process and understand the learning outcomes that contribute to that'. The HNC students commented that they clearly understand assessment deadlines and procedures for handing in work but that the guidelines for achieving merit or distinction are not clear. The team agrees that, for some of the first assignments set in 2008-09, greater clarity in the criteria for achieving Merit or Distinction would have been beneficial. The criteria in more recent assignments are clear.

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

18   A range of staff development is provided by the University to support staff in maintaining academic standards. Staff teaching on the Certificate to teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector and the Diploma to teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector are required to engage with the University's associate tutor scheme. It is planned that HNC lecturers and the programme leader will undertake the associate tutors course (Certificate of Teaching in Higher Education) over the next two years. Centre managers and the main teacher trainer in the Professional Development Centre team have also undertaken a range of workshop activities held by the University; these include marking assignments and the exchange of good practice and support.

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

Core theme 2: Quality of learning opportunities

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

19   The responsibilities for managing the quality of learning opportunities for higher education programmes are given in paragraphs 9 to 11 of this report. From the strategic plan, the College has an annual operating development plan for the whole of its provision. This addresses both further education and higher education and sets out the College targets for the year in question. Targets are also set for student recruitment and success rates. Since 2005-06, there has been a steady increase in the numbers of students completing the teaching awards: on the Certificate to teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector, the completion rate has risen from 56 per cent to 65 per cent in 2007-08, while on the Diploma to teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector, the completion rate has risen from 86 to 94 per cent.

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

20 The College's processes for fulfilling its obligations to the University are given in paragraphs 15 to 17. It is planned that the further education curriculum review process (mini-inspection) will be extended to higher education from 2009-10. This activity focuses on teaching and learning, achievement and standards, feedback from students, leadership and management staff development and external feedback and feeds into the College self-assessment report process.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

21 The College makes no reference to the Academic Infrastructure within its higher dducation strategy but does reference it in relation to validation documents. The College considers that programme teams engage implicitly with the *Code of practice*; this also occurs through the contribution to University reports, such as the programme quality monitoring and enhancement report.

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

22 The College requires programme staff to carry out annual reviews that include the review of learners' achievements, the effectiveness of teaching, training and learning, and guidance and support for learners. Feedback from students indicates that resultant actions are evident. Data is collected to support trend analysis in both enrolment and, in each year, the achievement of students. This data is discussed at programme meetings and included in the programme review.

23 The HNC is monitored and reviewed in accordance with the University's guidelines for collaborative provision. This is recorded in several ways at programme team meetings, meetings with the University Programme Director, programme review meeting, end-of-year questionnaire and finally by the annual review. The teaching awards are similarly monitored and reviewed in accordance with University requirements. Student feedback is collected by the College at various levels including tutorials and formal feedback after induction, and at the end of a programme. On the teaching awards, formal feedback is also sought at the end of each module. The use of a virtual learning environment portfolio by HNC students provides a further channel for student feedback. Student feedback from questionnaires is collected through the College's Improvements and Innovation Team and is accessible to students electronically. The programme team analyses the feedback. This is used to revise programme delivery and/or content as appropriate. On the teaching awards, changes are made from the team's evaluation of the teaching and learning as well as from the students' feedback. This review resulted, for example, in extra sessions on writing, literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology; these have provided good sources of support for students in helping them study at the level of these programmes. To determine the support needed, students are assessed on admission. Following the success of this support, it is planned to change induction for HNC students to include an assessment of students' support needs in literacy and numeracy. HNC students reported that they had noticed a 'considerable jump from level 3 to level 4, with much more emphasis on detailed writing'.

24   A student forum has recently been introduced. Student representatives are invited to attend in order to discuss the programme content and the teaching and learning. In pilot form this year, it aims to collect more effectively the students' views and to support the perspective that they are effectively part of the review of the programme. This has allowed discussion on matters such as the structure of the professional development plan under each module and supported feedback to students as to the ways in which views have been taken into consideration. On the HNC there are regular team meetings with student input. One example of response to student feedback is the consideration of reducing the eight-hour day for the programme and giving students more independent study time and supported tutor time.

25   The College has a teaching observation system in which staff are observed delivering learning on an annual basis but not necessarily when teaching higher education students. For 2008-09, the process is being changed to ensure that staff teaching higher education programmes are observed when teaching at that level. This move to provide a discrete higher education teaching observation process will further support lecturers in aligning learning and teaching to reflect the higher education levels (FHEQ) of these programmes. The Improvement and Innovations Section oversees the teaching observation process; academic members of this team also deliver on the teaching awards. The findings from the Ofsted Monitoring Visit, May 2008, stated that 'the improved observation programme has enabled managers to identify development priorities for key College staff and provides more targeted support to teachers'. The collated outcome of observations is reported in the section self-assessment report with commentary on the impact of ongoing activity. If an observation is satisfactory/inadequate a supported action plan is agreed with appropriate mentorship in place. A timescale for re-observation would then take place. If there is insufficient improvement, the College's capability procedure would be instigated. Students stated that their course tutors are excellent. Most students commented positively on the teaching.

26   In supporting reflective practice, students on the teaching awards are required to complete a number of reflective accounts and action plans. These must be completed electronically. The HNC makes good use of the virtual learning environment, with the e-portfolio system being developed to take reflective practice and personalised learning a step further. Students commented that the introduction of an e-portfolio system was a good idea in principle; there had been some initial problems with it, but that the College is sorting out the operational issues. A review undertaken by the HNC programme team in March 2009 of the use of the e-portfolio system by the students suggested areas for further development. This included issues of technology, reflective practice itself and the guidance relating to professional development plans, their introduction and subsequent embedding. The College reports that teams have learnt a great deal from pilot and student feedback, and are now working with student representatives to rework the model and revise the interface to the virtual learning environment. The College is encouraged to continue the positive development of a reflective portfolio for the HNC students.

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

27   Tutorials are organised to provide academic support. The team was informed that an allocation of one hour for each module is available for each student. For the HNC programme, the University expects that all students have three tutorials of 30 minutes' duration with the course tutor each year. This is in addition to any unit-specific tutorials arranged by subject lecturers. The expected tutorial allocation for the teaching awards was not clear to the team. For the teaching awards, students stated that they would welcome tutorial days to provide greater opportunity for students to discuss issues in a one-to-one

session with their tutors. They also recommended more support for computing skills, since some students were unaware of the emphasis on computing when starting the programme. It is recommended that the College clarifies the formal allocation of tutorial contact time to assure effective academic support for students. Students, though, found the teaching staff to be friendly and approachable and respond promptly to requests for help from students.

28 Detailed feedback on assessed work is provided within a turnaround time of three weeks. The College feels this is valued by students as it helps students to progress in their assignment work. Students considered that feedback on assignments is very good, and gives clear guidance on students' achievements, as well as areas for improvement. Even for assignments awarded a grade of Distinction, students are provided with feedback on 'what went well'. The teaching awards team at the College marks all the professional development action plans for all modules regardless of the module they respectively teach, in order to ensure a continuity of students' support. This also enables staff to follow the individual student's progress.

29 Additional study-skills support on University writing, literacy, numeracy and information communications technology was put in place in the last academic year for students on the teaching awards. This will be extended to HNC students for the coming academic year. Academic study skills are built into HNC modules; additional support is provided through one-to-one tutorials and resources accessed through the College's link to the University's web-based study-skills tools. Students deemed to be at risk of failing are identified and support discussed. Students so identified meet with the course tutor to discuss concerns/issues and develop action plans. Liaison is undertaken by the tutor with other members of the teaching team, Thanet College student support staff, University support and external agencies as necessary and/or appropriate. The tutor reports progress back to the programme leader.

30 Students are registered at the University and have access to welfare, financial and learning support through the University, this includes the disabled students' allowance application (DSA). The College's Learning Support Team can assist students with their application. Pastoral and study support are provided by the College. Students made reference to the predominant use of the College rather than the University for their support needs. Although the College's virtual learning environment for HNC students contains a link to student support from the University, the information provided for higher students does not make clear the roles and responsibilities for the management of learning support. In particular, in meeting the statutory requirements for the management of the disabled students' allowance, clarity is needed on the roles of the College and the University. An example of this is given in the annual course report for the teaching awards (2007-08) where it is stated that 'students still do not benefit from all the services available as a University student' and that 'access for specific support such as dyslexia tends to be difficult for students at this level'.

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

31 The College provides considerable support for staff development. The need to support the training and development of staff for the higher education provision is also a strategic aim within the higher education strategy. All lecturers annually undertake the 30 hours of continuing professional development as required by the Institute for Learning.

32 Joint staff development activities are available through, and with, the University partnership structure. Some of this staff development is outlined in paragraph 18 of this report. Teaching with colleagues from the University is seen by the College to add value across the teaching awards provision. The College views this as an opportunity to exchange views and share good practice. HNC staff engage with subject-specific development activity at the University. A range of informal sessions with University programming lecturers to ensure appropriate currency of programming skills/knowledge has been provided. Teacher education staff are encouraged to engage in University continuing professional development modules. The College has supported a member of the HNC team to undertake Cisco Certified Network Associate training. Training has also been provided on object-oriented programming and object-oriented analysis and design techniques.

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 Resource requirements, including staffing, are established through validation and reviewed by the University during revalidation; there is also an annual resource review hosted by the University. The College's annual course reports, that input to section self-assessment reports and then the College self-assessment report, include a review of staffing, student resources and facilities. The 2007-08 annual course report for the teaching awards states that 'most of our students are not enrolled before Christmas'. In the documentation provided to the team, this had not been addressed in the University programme quality monitoring and enhancement report 2007-08. Students commented that registrations had taken longer to process than expected and there had thus been a delay in issuing library cards and getting access to some University facilities.

34 Students commented on the excellent learning resources. They stated that the College library offers good electronic resources and computing facilities and had extended opening hours that include evenings and half-term. A dedicated room in the Professional Development Centre is provided for students on the teaching awards, this is equipped with computers, interactive whiteboard, DVD and its own library of books that reflect the recommended bibliography. Students appreciate this facility. Students on the HNC programme use a dedicated computing suite and a hardware/networking laboratory. A resourcing review for the HNC programme is undertaken annually by the University to ensure that all resources continue to meet students' needs. The last review, undertaken in December 2008, included a comprehensive review of physical and staffing resources, library resources, learning technology resources, for example, e-learning support for students, and learning support and guidance.

35 All students have access to the College's virtual learning environment and the University's equivalent. HNC Computing students appreciate the College's virtual learning environment and the resources within it. HNC tutors provide comprehensive schemes of work, session plans and a good range of resources to support learning. A chat area has recently been established. Some students on the teaching awards had displayed fears and anxiety about using the University's virtual learning environment at the start of their programme. Students commented that the various online activities, through using the College's virtual learning environment and the University's equivalent, have given them more confidence in using information technology.

36 The University approves staff to teach and examine on the programmes and holds curricula vitae of all staff engaged academically with delivery of a programme. The College is required to update information on the qualifications and experience of all these staff on an annual basis. The updating of the staff's curricula vitae was confirmed by the College. Within the annual College planning process, curriculum development informs the staffing structure; this, together with staff curricula vitae, informs staff development needs.

The team concludes that it has confidence in the College's management of its responsibilities for of 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?

37 In addition to the part-time prospectus, the Professional Development Centre prospectus and a programme fact-sheet providing further information to prospective students, the College is responsible for publishing module guides; programme handbook information for the HNC; publicity and promotional material; the range of services provided at the College and University; complaints procedures, and the day-to-day arrangements for assessment and examination including assessment schedules and submission dates. The College is also responsible for material on the College's virtual learning environment.

38 The College's complaints procedure is published in the College 'student diary'. For the teaching awards, the College is required to follow procedures detailed in the University's Annex to the Memorandum of Agreement, 2008-09; complaints about the delivery of the programme are first directed to the College who informs the University, before dealing with the complaint, whereas complaints relating to academic judgements are made to the University. This Annex also states that the student complaints procedures are detailed in the University programme handbook; that for 2008-09 did not contain any reference to a complaints procedure.

What arrangements does the College have in place to assure the accuracy and completeness of information the College has responsibility for publishing? How does the College know that these arrangements are effective?

39 There are clear and generally effective procedures for ensuring the accuracy and completeness of the information published by the College. For higher education programmes publicity materials the College follows the procedures set out by the University; all publicity materials are also checked and approved by the University. Advertising response, for example student recruitment following specific enquiries for programme information, is also recorded by the College to measure the effectiveness of its publicity material. All marketing material is drafted, approved and produced centrally in the Sales and Marketing Department to maintain control, consistency and quality. Staff requesting marketing material must first complete a briefing template to ensure that the Marketing Department has enough information to draft the appropriate marketing materials. Following approval, the Marketing Department provides draft concepts for comment and then approval. The final artwork is signed by the sponsor/manager, an independent proof-reader and the marketing person responsible for the artwork before it is produced.

40   Student evaluation forms, made available to the team for the first year intake of the HNC, specifically request feedback on the usefulness of the information provided for them by the College. The feedback from the induction questionnaire for the first year of operation is positive. This view was supported by students at the preparatory meeting who reported that the information about their programme had been good. Students at the meeting considered that the interview process was very helpful in giving information about the HNC programme and giving realistic expectations about workload.

41   The HNC team liaises closely with their contacts at the University to ensure that their expectations in relation to course and module handbooks are understood and met. The published materials for the HNC programme derive mainly from Edexcel. The College virtual learning environment is well populated with material for the HNC, much of which is useful; however, it is variable in its appropriateness with some dated texts listed in Edexcel unit material. Most of the documentation provided for the teaching awards is the responsibility of the University.

42   Checks on a sample range of publications confirmed that information is accurate and up-to-date. Programme specifications were contained in the revalidation documentation for both the teaching awards and the HNC in Computing. It is not clear, however, how these are made available to students. The team found that web-based material contained some typographical errors that the College should have picked up by a careful editing and monitoring system. The information in the prospectuses regarding entry requirements to the teaching awards would benefit from greater clarity, to reflect that given in the revalidation document; for example, an explicit statement for both the Certificate and the Diploma to teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector regarding the minimum number of hours of appropriate teaching that the candidate must be able to secure.

The team considers that 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.

C Summary of findings from the Developmental engagement in assessment

43   As the total full-time equivalent students funded by HEFCE at the College is less than 100, in accordance with the published review method, the College elected not to take part in a Developmental engagement.

D Foundation Degrees

44   The College does not offer Foundation Degrees.

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

45   The Summative review team has identified a feature of good practice in Thanet 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 a desk-based review that included some discussion with staff and students and scrutiny of evidence provided by the College and its awarding body, Canterbury Christ Church University.

46 In the course of the review, the team identified the following area of **good practice**:

- HNC Computing students appreciate the College's virtual learning environment that provides comprehensive schemes of work, session plans and a good range of learning resources (paragraph 35).

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

The team also agreed a number of areas where the College is **advised** to take action:

- to use, at all levels of management, the Academic Infrastructure in managing academic standards and learning opportunities (paragraphs 12, 13, 21)

- to access College-specific feedback on the Certificate to teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector and Diploma to teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector from the external examiner to inform the annual course review and enhance the provision (paragraph 16)

- to clarify for all stakeholders the roles and responsibilities for the management of learning support, including meeting statutory requirements for the management of the disabled students' allowance, between the College and the University (paragraph 30).

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

- to provide a discrete higher education observation process to support lecturers in aligning learning and teaching to reflect implicitly the FHEQ (paragraph 25)

- to continue the positive development of a reflective portfolio for HNC Computing students (paragraph 26)

- to clarify and formalise the allocation of tutorial contact time for the higher education provision (paragraph 27).

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.

Thanet College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2009

Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
In the course of the Summative review the team identified the following areas of **good practice** that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
● HNC Computing students appreciate the College's virtual learning environment that provides comprehensive schemes of work, session plans and a good range of learning resources (paragraph 35).	Organise Sharing Good Practice via VLEs workshop with HE Colleagues across College	December 2009	Head of Section ICT & Business Admin/l&l	Increased satisfaction of all learners with VLE	HE Committee	Student verbal and written feedback to demonstrate increased use of and improved value attached to use of VLE

Thanet College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2009

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:						
● to use, at all levels of management, the Academic Infrastructure in managing academic standards and learning opportunities (paragraphs 12, 13, 21)	A HE Committee to be designated for input from CCCU on Academic Infrastructure and for access tutors / Deputy Principal to attend this event	December 2009	CCCU/KE	All staff involved in HE delivery have a clear understanding of Academic Infrastructure	HE Committee	CCCU to review College practices in respect to use of academic infrastructure to improve provision
● access College-specific feedback on the Certificate to teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector and Diploma to teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector from the external examiner to inform the annual course review and	Feed back to Centre managers meeting with the Programme Director and the Manager of Academic Partnerships	Sept 2009	CCCU Programme Director and CCCU coordinator appointed for Thanet College and South Kent college for external examination	Actions from PQMER addressed in timely manner.	Deputy Principal Head of Section HE committee	Improved feedback from CCCU external examining board

Thanet College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2009

Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
enhance the provision (paragraph 16)	Specific actions from PQMER relating to Thanet College programme are acted upon as necessary	July 2010	process followed up by PDC AP	Positive programme feedback.		
• to clarify for all stakeholders the roles and responsibilities for the management of learning support, including meeting statutory requirements for the management of the disabled students' allowance, between the College and the University (paragraph 30).	Already in place for Teaching Award as per comment in recommendations paragraph earlier To be clarified at HE Committee and clear guidelines agreed.	December 2009	CCCU /Director of Business Development	Smooth access to learning support. Learners feedback that they are well supported	Head of Section HE Committee	Review by CCCU to show good management of learning support for all HE provision. Student feedback to show high satisfaction rates for support received

Thanet College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2009

Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team agreed the following areas where it would be **desired** to take action:						
● to provide a discrete higher education observation process to support lecturers in aligning learning and teaching to reflect implicitly the FHEQ (paragraph 25)	Plan of HE observations to be included for 09/10	June 2010	Deputy Principal	At least 50% of HE delivery observed. Quality of HE provision observed with feedback for development provided	Academic standards committee HE committee	Observation reports to show standard of teaching and learning on HE provision
● to continue the positive development of a reflective portfolio for HNC Computing students (paragraph 26)	Continue to develop Pebble Pad as reflective portfolio ready for next HNC cohort of students starting in September.	September 2009	HNC Course Leader/I&I	Full adoption by all students on programme	Programme Team/HE Committee	E-Learning Champion to review use and impact of portfolios with students during the academic year. Progress reports to be provided to Senior Management Team and Heads of Section

Thanet College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2009

Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
● to clarify and formalise the allocation of tutorial contact time for the higher education provision (paragraph 27).	Tutorial time to be clearly indicated in course handbook.	PDC AP Sept 2009	October 09 HNC Course Leader	Clear guidelines, info in students' handbook All students aware of tutorial provision	Head of Section HE Committee	Tutorial records will be used to monitor use of tutorial time and impact on student progress. Student feedback to review impact of tutorial provision