



QAA

Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

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Alton College

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Preface

The mission of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications and to inform and encourage continual improvement in the management of the quality of higher education.

As part of this mission, QAA undertakes reviews of higher education provision delivered in further education colleges. This process is known as Integrated quality and enhancement review (IQER).

Purpose of IQER

Higher education programmes delivered by further education colleges (colleges) lead to awards made by higher education institutions or Edexcel. The awarding bodies retain ultimate responsibility for maintaining the academic standards of their awards and assuring the quality of the students' learning opportunities. The purpose of IQER is, therefore, to safeguard the public interest in the academic standards and quality of higher education delivered in colleges. It achieves this by providing objective and independent information about the way in which colleges discharge their responsibilities within the context of their partnership agreements with awarding bodies. IQER focuses on three core themes: academic standards, quality of learning opportunities and public information.

The IQER process

IQER is a peer review process. It is divided into two complementary stages: Developmental engagement and Summative review. In accordance with the published method, colleges with less than 100 full-time equivalent students funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) may elect not to take part in Developmental engagements, but all HEFCE-funded colleges will take part in Summative review.

Developmental engagement

Developmental engagements explore in an open and collegial way the challenges colleges face in specific areas of higher education provision. Each college's first, and often their only, Developmental engagement focuses on student assessment.

The main elements of a Developmental engagement are:

- a self-evaluation by the college
- an optional written submission by the student body
- a preparatory meeting between the college and the IQER coordinator several weeks before the Developmental engagement visit
- the Developmental engagement visit, which normally lasts two days
- the evaluation of the extent to which the college manages effectively its responsibilities for the delivery of academic standards and the quality of its higher education provision, plus the arrangements for assuring the accuracy and completeness of public information it is responsible for publishing about its higher education
- the production of a written report of the team's findings.

To promote a collegial approach, Developmental engagement teams include up to two members of staff from the further education college under review. They are known as nominees for this process.

Summative review

Summative review addresses all aspects of a college's HEFCE-funded higher education provision and provides judgements on the management and delivery of this provision against core themes one and two, and a conclusion against core theme three.

Summative review shares the main elements of Developmental engagement described above. Summative review teams, however, are composed of the IQER coordinator and QAA reviewers. They do not include nominees.

Evidence

In order to obtain evidence for the review, IQER teams carry out a number of activities, including:

- reviewing the college's self-evaluation and its internal procedures and documents
- reviewing the optional written submission from students
- asking questions of relevant staff
- talking to students about their experiences.

IQER teams' expectations of colleges are guided by a nationally agreed set of reference points, known as the Academic Infrastructure. These are published by QAA and consist of:

- *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*, 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 desk-based Summative review of Alton College carried out in April 2009 with a subsequent visit on 09 July 2009

As a result of its investigations, the Summative review team considers that there can be **limited confidence** in the College's discharge 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. The team also considers that there can be **confidence** in the College's discharge of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreements, for the management and assurance of the quality of learning opportunities it offers. The team considers that reliance **can** be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Good practice

The team has identified the following good practice for dissemination:

- the mixture of formal and informal processes for gathering the views of staff and students demonstrated by the FD in Early Years Care and Education staff resulting in effective communication
- the College learning support unit is effective and is complemented by liaison with awarding body services
- the high quality of the academic and tutorial support provided by staff who are responsive to the challenges posed by part-time study
- the initiative displayed by the FD in Early Years Care and Education staff in developing a helpful study pack that supports students without a background in psychology
- the effective use made of staff development by staff on the FD in Early Years Care and Education.

Recommendations

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

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

- establish a more explicit, transparent and systematic approach to its management of the higher education provision, in order that the specific needs of higher education students are explicitly acknowledged.

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

- establish a formal and transparent procedure for gathering, reporting and responding to issues raised by students in a timely manner
- establish a committee, as indicated by its partnership agreement with the awarding body, to enable Certificate in Education staff and students to meet or to formalise the ways issues are currently considered, to ensure that feedback between the two bodies is robust and transparent

- explore ways of raising staff and College awareness of the Academic Infrastructure, and to increase the focus on academic standards and the quality of students' learning opportunities
- establish a development programme specifically for staff teaching on higher education programmes, so that the quality of learning opportunities may be maintained and enhanced
- amend the annual College self-assessment report, so that the learning opportunities for students on higher education programmes students are addressed explicitly.

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

- engage with the University of Portsmouth, to ensure that responses are made to annual reports
- align the criteria used in the College teaching observation scheme more closely to those used by the awarding bodies.

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 Alton College (the College). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the College discharges its responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes which the College delivers on behalf of the University of Portsmouth and the University of Southampton. The review was carried out by Dr Margaret Johnson and Mr Mark Langley (reviewers), and Mrs Christine Plumbridge (coordinator).

2 The Summative review team (the team) conducted the review in agreement with the College and in accordance with *The handbook for Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review* (the handbook), published by QAA. Evidence in support of the Summative review included documentation supplied by the College and awarding bodies, reports of reviews by QAA and from inspections 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 specification.

3 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.

4 In order to assist HEFCE to gain information to assist with the assessment of the impact of Foundation Degree (FD) awards, Section D of this report summarises details of the FD programmes delivered at the College.

5 The College mission is 'to provide high quality sixth form and adult education and training in an inclusive, supportive and challenging environment, enabling people within our community to achieve their potential'. Alton College is a sixth form college located in rural Hampshire. It has one main campus, but programmes are also offered at a wide range of other locations in the community. Most students live within 20 miles of the College. There are 1,961 students aged 16-18 and 24 students aged over 18 who study full-time at the College. There are also 68 students aged 16-18 and 1,113 adults who study on a part-time basis. Of these students, there are 74 studying higher education programmes, amounting to a total of 20.8 full-time equivalent students, all of whom study at the main campus on a part-time basis; 10 staff teach on the higher education programmes. They are managed by either the Department of Business and Professional Studies, or the Department of Health and Social Care. Both departments are in the Faculty of Social and Business Studies at the College.

6 The higher education awards that are funded by HEFCE are listed below, beneath their awarding bodies.

University of Portsmouth

- Foundation Degree (FD) in Business and Management
- FD in Early Years Care and Education (Sector endorsed)

University of Southampton

- Certificate in Education 2nd Year (Post-Compulsory Education and Training (PCET)).

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

7 The FDs in Early Years Care and Education, and in Business and Management, work within the framework of a partnership agreement between the College and the University of Portsmouth, made in July 2006. The former programme had operated under an earlier agreement since 2002. The FD in Business and Management commenced in 2008. This agreement states that the primary responsibility for academic standards and quality assurance lies with the University, who will provide guidance upon the maintenance of academic standards and quality generally, through its Quality Assurance Committee. The agreement outlines where the responsibility lies for a range of administrative and academic matters.

8 The partnership agreement with the University of Southampton, signed in September 2007, relates to the Certificate in Education (PCET). It sets out the nature of the relationship between the parties and their respective obligations, in line with the University's policy and procedures for collaborative programmes. This agreement also states that while the University has overall responsibility for the academic standards and quality of the programme, the responsibility for the maintenance of the academic standards is delegated to the College.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

9 The College has widened its provision of higher education programmes over the last three years, and wishes to further develop this, to include a Postgraduate Certificate in Education and a BA in Post-Compulsory Education, with the University of Southampton. This aspiration will be announced in the College's Strategic Development plan in autumn 2009, following a two-year review of the Certificate in Education (PCET).

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

10 Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the Summative review team, but did not take up this opportunity. They were unable to attend the preparatory meeting.

11 The College provided responses from students on the FD in Early Years Care and Education and Certificate in Education programmes to questions prepared by the coordinator.

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?

12 The operation and management of the University of Portsmouth programmes are administered by the appropriate board of studies for the FDs in Early Years Care and Education and in Business and Management. Student representatives have the right to attend these boards. However, minutes indicate, and the College confirms, that they do not attend because meetings are held during the day when students are at work, and the distance is too great to travel.

13 The FD in Early Years Care and Education programme has established informal meetings for their staff and students, and minutes are taken and issues acted upon. The programme documentation confirms that staff attend meetings and regularly report to the University of Portsmouth, as well as using more informal processes through telephone calls and emails. This level of communication could be adopted by other programmes.

14 A recommendation accompanying the partnership agreement for the FD in Business and Management asked for the practicalities of running boards of studies online to be explored by the University. The College may find it helpful to discuss this with the awarding body. Although a provision in the handbook invites students to submit their views, anonymously if they wish, to a discussion area on the University virtual learning environment, for consideration at the Board of Studies, it was not evident that students are aware of this mechanism, or that they have used it.

15 The University of Southampton agreement requires partner institutions to establish appropriate student committees that report to the University's Board of Studies. The membership should consist of the core team of academic staff responsible for the programme with student representation. This formal requirement is not followed. Staff contend that because the group size is small they can gather student feedback on an informal basis. However, there are no minutes available to support this. It is advisable that the College considers establishing a committee, as indicated in the agreement, or formalising the discussion with students by taking minutes, identifying action to be taken, and ensuring that matters raised are followed through.

16 During the visit, students reported a number of concerns. On the FD in Business and Management programme: there was a marked disparity in the number of teaching contact hours they received compared to other partner colleges; they had been uncertain about how work would be marked and some believed the outcome would mirror that of an honours degree, and the late return of marked work from tutors had been reported directly to the awarding body and a response had been made, but the programme leader was not aware of this. On the Certification in Education course a student, who already had an honours degree on enrolment believed, and the documentation indicated, that they could pursue a Postgraduate Certificate in Education. The validation was only for a Certificate in Education. Although these situations have been clarified and/or resolved, the system by which this was achieved is not transparent. No documentation was available to demonstrate that staff had identified and followed these matters through. Generally, staff on these

programmes rely on informal methods of gathering feedback from students as the programme progresses. It is advisable for the College to establish a formal and transparent procedure for regularly gathering, reporting and responding to issues raised by staff or students.

17 The partnership agreement with the University of Southampton states that the College has a responsibility to maintain the academic standards of the awards of its validating body. The College contends that its responsibility is simply to report to the University, who are expected to deal with matters raised. It was difficult for the team to see the outcomes of some of the matters raised. Annual reports completed by the FD in Early Years Care and Education programme leader and sent to the University of Portsmouth end with a prompt asking whether a response had been received from the University from the previous year. This had not happened. To ensure that such outcomes are clear, it is desirable that the College communicates with their awarding bodies to ensure that this final stage of the quality loop is complete and transparent.

18 The College contends that its quality assurance mechanisms, recognised as rigorous by Ofsted, and designed primarily for its further education provision, can provide the quality assurance for all its programmes. However, the College Quality Cycle Diary does not indicate how the quality processes required by its awarding bodies inform the College's own quality assurance. The term 'higher education' is not explicit in any of the College documentation shown to the team. There is limited evidence of how the College's quality improvement unit monitors, in a timely manner, responses to issues raised at either of the University's board of studies, or by staff or students as these programmes progress.

19 Generally, there is effective communication between individual programme tutors and awarding bodies. However, the College infrastructure makes no explicit acknowledgement of the specific needs of higher education students.

20 Currently, there is inconsistency in the way programme-related issues are managed at a local level. A more focused, transparent and systematic approach to higher education would ensure that the College itself, as opposed to individual programme leaders, has a clear overview of the whole provision. This would, further, enable the sharing of good practice and identify strategies for enhancement across programmes.

21 During the review visit, the team were informed that following the College's scrutiny of a draft IQER report they intend to form a Higher Education Management Board. This would have focus on quality assurance of this element of the provision; on the development of new higher education provision, and on the dissemination of issues raised at boards of studies.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

22 Academic staff and quality managers at the College demonstrated little awareness or understanding of the Academic Infrastructure. They believe that this is the responsibility of their awarding bodies and that matters will have been addressed by them. The University of Southampton makes the programme handbook available on its website and this contains the programme specifications. The University of Portsmouth states that students use individual unit handbooks which comprise the programme's learning outcomes. However, the handbook for Business and Management does contain a programme specification.

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?

23 Both partnership agreements outline the requirements of each University for periodic and annual monitoring of awards delivered in partner institutions. The FD in Early Years Care and Education programme has completed both these processes and academic staff have responded appropriately to the comments made following their reviews.

24 On the FD in Early Years Care and Education programme, two pieces of work for each unit are moderated by the University Programme Manager. This sample is kept for external examiners who report on programme delivery. All student work on the Certificate in Education programme is double-marked in the College, and then moderated by the University of Southampton under the auspices of the Programme Director.

25 The FD in Early Years Care and Education has established good communication with the University of Portsmouth, as evidenced by the monitoring visit report, but this level of dialogue has yet to be achieved for the other programmes.

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

26 Staff development for tutors teaching on higher education programmes is led by the validating universities. Recently, three staff and most Certificate in Education students visited Southampton University for a conference entitled 'MSc Conference on issues in PCET'. The University of Southampton runs an annual School of Education PCET Conference. One tutor from the College has attended this. The College does not provide staff development that focuses specifically on higher education, such as the achievement of appropriate academic standards, or on the Academic Infrastructure.

The team concludes that it has limited 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?

27 Responsibilities for managing the quality of learning opportunities reflect those for managing academic standards, as described in paragraphs 12 to 20.

28 As discussed in paragraph 18, action points for higher education programmes cannot easily be identified. For example, the College's Quality Cycle Diary is predicated upon the key questions used for Ofsted self-evaluation reports. These do not address engagement with the Academic Infrastructure, or the ability of the College to reflect in a self-critical manner on higher education practices within the College. Each department produces a self-assessment for its range of provision. The FD in Early Years Care and Education's self-assessment specifically mentions a range of higher education issues, and this level of reflection should be encouraged for all higher education programmes. However, individual subject self-assessments are then incorporated into an overall College self-assessment. In these, it is not possible to identify issues requiring attention or good practice related

directly to higher education. It is advisable for the College to ensure that the quality of learning opportunities of higher education students is specifically addressed in all relevant self-assessment reports.

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

29 The College follows the procedures outlined by the awarding bodies in the partnership agreements. For both universities, boards of studies ensure that the College staff are represented and that they discuss matters affecting student learning opportunities. It appears that only one student has attended any board of studies, and in general they do not appear to be aware of the matters which have been discussed. There is no formal mechanism within the College to review specifically the quality of learning opportunities for higher education students.

30 The University of Portsmouth monitors its partner institutions. A visit includes teaching observation and scrutiny of student work. The Programme Leader from Portsmouth meets with College students and staff. A report is then sent to the programme leader identifying outcomes of the visit. However, reports from external examiners are dealt with by the University. The feedback does not allow each partner college to identify comments that relate only to its provision. The University of Portsmouth's staff student consultative committee identified concerns about the College library, and these have been addressed.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

31 The College's engagement with the Academic infrastructure is described in paragraph 22.

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

32 The majority of the staff teaching on the Certificate in Education programme are employed on variable contracts and offer a wide range of specialisms. At least one tutor has experience of teaching at higher education level elsewhere. Some staff have master's qualifications, or are working towards them. The awarding bodies confirm that all staff have the appropriate qualifications to deliver the programmes.

33 Both the universities carry out peer observation of the teaching and confirm that the quality is good. The Ofsted assessment report of 2006 described the College's own lesson observation scheme as rigorous, but this not designed with higher education in mind. It is not clear how the College observation scheme is used to identify good practice or to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in higher education programmes. Staff expressed the opinion that the criteria against which the Universities observe teaching focuses on higher education. The feedback report comments are developmental and could usefully be incorporated into the College system.

34 The University of Southampton uses an end-of-programme survey to obtain student feedback. The Certificate in Education students confirmed that tutors use different styles of teaching, and all are at least good. Students consider that their schedule is stressful, with several assignments due within a short timescale. The University Board of Studies has discussed this and changes are being implemented for the next academic year. No feedback from students completing the first year of the University of Portsmouth Business and Management programme was available.

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

35 Students spoke very positively about the academic and tutorial support provided. They particularly value the small group size, and the accessibility and responsiveness of staff, who understand the challenges of part-time study. They also value the College's learning support unit, which is effective in supporting students having physical and learning difficulties. A nominated tutor for adult students is available at the College during the day, and some evenings, to provide advice.

36 The interface between College and university learning support is effective. The University of Portsmouth supplies specimen interview questions, to ensure consistency across its partner colleges. College staff and the University link tutor liaise, to ensure that students meet the University admissions criteria before they are enrolled. Students may record their learning needs on both the College application form and the University of Portsmouth registration form.

37 Extensive academic support mechanisms exist for students on the FD in Early Years, Care and Education programme. Students attend an induction evening at the College, and confirm that this is helpful. It enables those returning to education to improve their study skills, form support networks, and to develop a realistic understanding of the level of study required.

38 For first-year students, tutors read drafts of assignments and comment on matters, such as referencing and academic writing, and offer additional opportunities for formative feedback through email. There are one-to-one tutorials for all units, and third-year students benefit from fortnightly tutorials, which they can request while working on final-year projects. Each student has a personal tutor for support on pastoral issues. The University of Portsmouth also provides advice on professional development units and advises workplace mentors.

39 College staff have also developed a study pack for students, in advance of the third-year 30-credit Psychology unit. This enables students with no background in the subject to become familiar with the terminology and ideas common to the subject during their vacation. Although not all students use this pack, it has been well received by those who do, and adopted by the University for its own students. Because students find it difficult to attend University open evenings, the teaching team has developed a programme to provide information for those who wish to progress to honours programmes.

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

40 Both the universities provide opportunities for staff development related to learning and teaching. Excellent examples of staff development were provided by the programme leader for staff teaching on FD in Early Years Care and Education. This identified a number of development activities undertaken by staff, how what was learned was disseminated to other teaching team members, and where development linked to this had led to changes in teaching and learning within that team.

41 No mechanisms exist within the College to ensure that good practice gained from University staff development events is shared across the separate teaching teams. Although a learning and development slot has recently been introduced into staff timetables, there is no evidence that the College plans any staff development activities specifically for higher education staff. The majority of staff teaching on the University of Southampton's programmes are part-time, and the College confirmed that these staff do not attend staff development activities, either at the College or the University.

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?

42 The self-evaluation states that there are excellent resources available to students on higher education programmes. Teaching rooms are equipped with electronic projection or interactive whiteboard facilities, and rooms are available for small-group study. Students on the FD in Business and Management programme use a dedicated adult teaching room. Students expressed satisfaction with the learning environment.

43 A learning resource centre comprises both information technology resources and a library. Programme tutors liaise with library staff to build up stocks of relevant textbooks. The College appointed a librarian specifically to support the Certificate in Education programme. Access to computers is stated by the College to be excellent. Most students use their own computers, as their classes are part-time and in the evening. Students have access to the virtual learning environment of both the universities, which they can access remotely. The College is piloting the development of e-portfolios with the University of Southampton. In response to student feedback on the FD in Early Years Care and Education programme, the library confirmed that additional texts will be available for the next academic year. These students, and those on the Certificate in Education programme, find library staff very helpful and facilities are good. Students on the FD in Business and Management programme who attend for only two hours, one evening a week, do not use the learning resource centre. They buy their own books and use the University's virtual learning environment.

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?

44 The awarding bodies are responsible for publishing the majority of programme-related material. The partnership agreement with the University of Southampton states that it has responsibility for all advertising and publicity material relating to its awards. The College self-evaluation acknowledges that the University has the final right of veto in relation to all publicity material.

45 The Partnership Agreement for the University of Portsmouth states that the College's external advertising and publicity relating to the programme of study covered by the agreement is agreed jointly between the appropriate representatives of the University and College.

46 College information on higher education is published within an 'Adult Studies Handbook' and the 'Adult Learning and Skills: Programme Directory', and replicated in web-based versions. Although the three programmes are identified as such, the term 'higher education' is not used in the publications. The College identifies that programmes are offered in collaboration with the awarding bodies and are subject to their general entrance requirements.

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?

47 The Vice-Principal (Student Services and Business Development) has responsibility for material published by the College. Public information is checked for accuracy and completeness by the College on an annual basis and, where appropriate, further confirmation of its correctness is carried out by the universities. The information in the College prospectus is also published on the website.

The team concludes 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

48 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

49 Both Foundation Degrees (FDs) are awarded by the University of Portsmouth. The sector-endorsed FD in Early Years Care and Education has operated at the College since 2002 and underwent a successful re-validation in 2006. The FD in Business and Management was also validated in that year. The programme commenced in 2008. Currently, there are no plans to extend this provision. All the provision is part-time.

50 The academic management of these programmes is based firmly with the awarding body. Staff do not engage directly with the Academic Infrastructure. The awarding body has ensured that elements of work-based learning and reference to the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark* have been addressed. Currently, there is little evidence available for the degree in Business and Management. The FD Early Years Care and Education programme is a mature provision, and College staff liaise effectively with the awarding body with regards to academic standards, and the quality of learning opportunities available to students.

51 Staff on the FD Early Years Care and Education programme have made good use of staff development provided by their awarding body. They disseminate what they learn and are able to demonstrate how this has impacted positively on the curriculum. They have written a study pack to support students prior to studying psychology for the first time.

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

52 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Alton College's management of its responsibilities for academic standards, and for the quality of learning opportunities of the awards the College offers on behalf of its awarding bodies. This was based upon discussion with staff and students and scrutiny of evidence provided by the College and its awarding bodies, the University of Portsmouth and the University of Southampton.

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

- the mixture of formal and informal processes for gathering the views of staff and students, demonstrated by the FD in Early Years Care and Education staff, resulting in effective communication (paragraph 13)
- the College learning support unit is effective and is complemented by liaison with awarding body services (paragraphs 35, 36)
- the high quality of the academic and tutorial support, provided by staff who are responsive to the challenges posed by part-time study (paragraphs 35, 37-39)
- the initiative displayed by the FD in Early Years Care and Education staff in developing a helpful study pack that supports students without a background in psychology (paragraph 39)
- the effective use made of staff development by staff on the FD in Early Years Care and Education (paragraph 40).

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

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

- establish a more explicit, transparent and systematic approach to its management of the higher education provision (paragraphs 14-16, 18-21).

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

- to establish a formal and transparent procedure for gathering, reporting and responding to issues raised by students in a timely manner (paragraphs 14-16, 20)
- to establish a committee, as indicated by its partnership agreement with the awarding body, to enable Certificate in Education staff and students to meet or to formalise the ways issues are currently considered, to ensure that feedback between the two bodies is robust and transparent (paragraph 15)
- to explore ways of raising staff and College awareness of the Academic Infrastructure, and to increase the focus on academic standards and the quality of students' learning opportunities (paragraphs 22, 31, 50)
- to establish a development programme specifically for staff teaching on higher education programmes so that the quality of learning opportunities may be maintained and enhanced (paragraphs 26, 41)
- to amend the annual College self-assessment report so that the learning opportunities for students on higher education programmes are addressed explicitly (paragraph 28).

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

- to engage with the University of Portsmouth to ensure that responses are made to annual reports (paragraph 17)
- align the criteria used in the College teaching observation scheme more closely to those used by the awarding bodies (paragraph 33).

55 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 **limited 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.

56 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.

57 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.

Alton College action plan relating to the Summative review: July 2009						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<p>In the programme of the Summative review the team identified the following areas of good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the mixture of formal and informal processes for gathering the views of staff and students demonstrated by the FdA Early Years Care and Education staff resulting in effective communication (paragraph 13) 	<p>Processes for gathering students data will be disseminated and adopted where appropriate on the FdA Business and Management and Certificate in Education courses</p>	<p>December 2009</p>	<p>HE Management Board</p>	<p>All students will know that their views have been listened to and acted on where appropriate for the FdA Business and Management and Certificate in Education courses</p>	<p>HE Management Board</p>	<p>Student views reports for FdA Business and Management and Certificate in Education courses HE Management Board report on student views</p>

Alton College action plan relating to the Summative review: July 2009							
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the high quality of the academic and tutorial support provided by staff who are responsive to the challenges posed by part-time study (paragraphs 35, 37-39) 	We will seek the views of our students to further improve our academic and tutorial support.	June 2010	HE Management Board	All students will know that their views on academic and tutorial support have been listened to and acted on	HE Management Board	HE Management Board report on student views	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the College learning support unit is effective and is complemented by liaison with awarding body services (paragraphs 35, 36) 	Our learning support unit will seek further feedback from students to improve its service	June 2010	HE Management Board	All students will know that their views on learning support have been listened to and acted on	HE Management Board	HE Management Board report on student views	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the initiative displayed by the FdA Early Years Care and Education staff in developing a helpful study pack that supports students without a background in psychology (paragraph 39) 	Explore the appropriateness and student need for this form of study pack support across FdA Business and Management and Certificate in Education provision	December 2009	Programme manager Certificate in Education Programme manager FdA Business and Management	Appropriate Study packs for FdA Business and Management and Certificate in Education will be available on line / hard copy	HE Management Board	Study packs for FdA Business and Management and Certificate in Education	

Alton College action plan relating to the Summative review: July 2009						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the effective use made of staff development by staff on the FdA Early Years Care and Education (paragraph 40). 	<p>This model of effectiveness will be extended to the FdA Business and Management and Certificate in Education courses.</p>	<p>June 2010</p>	<p>Programme manager Certificate in Education Programme manager FdA Business and Management</p>	<p>FdA Business and Management and Certificate in Education teachers will model the behaviour of staff on FdA Early Years Care and Education</p>	<p>HE Management Board</p>	<p>HE Management Board Effectiveness of professional development report</p>

Alton College action plan relating to the Summative review: July 2009						
Essential	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<p>The team agreed the following areas where it would be essential for the College to take action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to establish a more explicit, transparent and systematic approach to its management of the higher education provision (paragraphs 14-16, 18-21). 	<p>Establish a higher education management board responsible for the quality and standards of HE provision. Performance of HE provision will be reported through one annual review of HE.</p>	<p>June 2010</p>	<p>Quality and Development Team</p>	<p>HE Management Board annual self assessment and termly action plan update.</p> <p>HE Management Board with defined responsibilities.</p> <p>Positive outcomes of monitoring visits and reports by awarding bodies</p>	<p>Quality and Development Team</p>	<p>Annual HE self assessment report</p> <p>Termly HE updates of action plans and action plan review</p> <p>Successful monitoring and evaluation visits by awarding bodies</p>

Alton College action plan relating to the Summative review: July 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:							
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to establish a committee, as indicated by its partnership agreement with the awarding body, to enable Certificate in Education staff and students to meet or to formalise the ways issues are currently considered, to ensure that feedback between the two bodies is robust and transparent (paragraph 15) 	<p>Establish a Board of Studies Committee to enable Certificate in Education staff and students to communicate their issues and ensure that feedback is robust and transparent</p>	December 2009	Programme manager for Certificate in Education	<p>Minutes and actions of Board of Studies Committee meetings</p> <p>Minutes and actions of University of Southampton's Boards of Studies meetings.</p>	HE Management Board	<p>Minutes and actions of Board of Studies Committee meetings</p> <p>Minutes and actions of University of Southampton's Boards of Studies meetings.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to explore ways of raising staff and College awareness of the Academic Infrastructure, and to increase the focus on academic standards and the quality of students' 	<p>Through the College's Learning and Development Programme, staff delivering HE courses will engage in</p>	June 2010	HE Management Board	<p>Staff and students will have a full awareness of the Academic Infrastructure.</p>	HE Management Board	<p>Professional development records of HE staff.</p> <p>HE staff development events</p>	

Alton College action plan relating to the Summative review: July 2009						
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
learning opportunities (paragraphs 22, 31, 41)	professional development to raise their awareness of the Academic Infrastructure. The College will increase the focus on academic standards and the quality of students' learning opportunities through student focus groups, its lesson observation scheme and through its Internal Quality Research scheme.					HE annual self assessment report Lesson observation records Internal Quality Research Executive Summary

Alton College action plan relating to the Summative review: July 2009						
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● establish a formal and transparent procedure for gathering, reporting and responding to issues raised by students in a timely manner (paragraphs 14-16, 20) 	<p>Establish a higher education management board responsible for gathering, reporting and responding to issues raised by student focus groups.</p>	October 2009	HE Management Board	All students will know that their views have been listened to and acted on	HE Management Board	HE Management Board report on student views
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to establish a development programme specifically for staff teaching on higher education programmes so that the quality of learning opportunities may be maintained and enhanced (paragraphs 26, 41) 	<p>The HE Management Board will establish a strategy for developing staff that teach on higher education programmes.</p>	March 2010	HE Management Board	HE Management Board professional development strategy	Head of Human Resources	Engagement of staff with professional development activities. Sharing of the outcomes of professional development across the HE team and through the HE Management Board

Alton College action plan relating to the Summative review: July 2009						
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to amend the annual College self-assessment report so that the learning opportunities for students on higher education programmes are addressed explicitly (paragraph 28). 	<p>The annual College self assessment report will include an appendix on our HE provision with judgements made against the same headings as those used in IQER.</p>	December 2009	Head of Faculty - Adult Education	The College Self Assessment Report.	Vice Principal Curriculum and Organisation Development	The College Self Assessment Report.

Alton College action plan relating to the Summative review: July 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:							
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to engage with the University of Portsmouth to ensure that responses are made to annual reports (paragraph 17) 	Our higher education management board will be responsible for receiving and responding to annual reports.	June 2010	HE Management Board	Responses to annual reports.	HE Management Board	Higher Education Self Assessment Report.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> align the criteria used in the College teaching observation scheme more closely to those used by the awarding bodies (paragraph 33) 	An HE practitioner will be recruited to the Core observation team and will judge the standards of teaching and learning based on the requirements of our awarding bodies	December 2009	Quality and Development Team	Lesson observation reports, judgements and grading.	Quality and Development Team	Lesson observation reports, judgements and grading that are aligned with those used by our awarding bodies.	

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