QAA

Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

April 2010

Hertford Regional College

SR76/2009

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*, 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 Hertford Regional College carried out in April 2010

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

Good practice

The team has identified the following **good practice** for dissemination.

- The post of Higher Education Development Manager has enhanced leadership and guidance to staff and provides an overview of higher education quality assurance processes, which contributes to the maintenance and enhancement of standards and the quality of the provision.

- The higher education self-assessment report provides a focused overview of programmes, identifies strengths and areas for development and ensures continuing enhancement of the higher education provision.

- The College's interaction with its partners in the Consortium contributes to a culture of continuous quality improvement.

- The use of the themed observation process by business and computing to focus on higher education has effectively provided staff with an opportunity to focus and reflect on sector-specific issues and to share good practice.

- The improvements achieved by the appointment of an e-learning champion for higher education.

- The high-quality online learning materials produced by business and computing and early years, which students confirm encourage them to take more responsibility for their own learning.

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:

- demonstrate the consistent implementation of the procedures for addressing issues raised in external examiners' interim moderation reports, and ensure that annual monitoring and evaluation reports are compiled correctly.

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

- discuss with the University of Greenwich a way to ensure that the external examiner's report is made available to College tutors to enable them to make a detailed response and learn from the examiner's overall comments

- discuss with the University of Hertfordshire how the College and University templates could be amended to ensure that both the positive and negative comments in external examiners' reports are clearly indicated to provide an overall view of the provision

- perform an annual audit of specific higher education development activities to develop a more focused and proactive development programme for staff

- consider ways to ensure that the action taken in response to student feedback is communicated to them more effectively and directly

- ensure that the work and location of the careers service is emphasised to students during induction and that this information is included in programme handbooks

- continue to discuss with the University of Greenwich ways to solve their students' difficulties in accessing its online virtual learning environment

- extend the induction arrangements for students in the use of the virtual learning environment and integrate its use more fully in programme delivery

- highlight the likely cost of additional materials needed to complete assessments more clearly on the website and in the relevant programme literature.

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 Hertford Regional 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 Greenwich and the University of Hertfordshire. The review was carried out by Mrs Claire Blanchard, Mr Peter Cutting and Mr Bob Millington (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*, published by QAA. Evidence in support of the Summative review included documentation supplied by the College and its awarding bodies, a written submission from students, meetings with staff, students and partner institutions. In particular, the team drew on the findings and recommendations of the Developmental engagement in assessment. A summary of findings from this Developmental engagement is provided in Section C of this report. The review also considered the College's use of the Academic Infrastructure, developed by QAA on behalf of 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.

3   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.

4   The College is a medium-sized general further education college with two major campuses at Ware and Broxbourne in east Hertfordshire. Learners are recruited mainly from east Hertfordshire, but about one-third come from north London, Essex and other nearby localities. In 2009-10 the College enrolled 11,500 students on a wide range of full and part-time programmes including new diploma students, 16 to 18-year old learners, adult learners, apprentices, work-based learners and higher education students. The College employs over 700 staff.

5   Currently, 270 full-time and 137 part-time students are enrolled on higher education programmes. This equates to 382 full-time equivalents. The College is divided into eight departments, five of which offer higher education programmes. There are 44 staff teaching on these programmes, of whom 25 are full-time and 19 are part-time, or hourly paid lecturers.

6   The College offers the following higher education programmes, listed beneath their awarding bodies. All programmes are delivered at the Ware Campus, apart from the Professional Graduate Certificate in Education and the Foundation Degree (FdA) Public Services (Uniformed), which are delivered at Broxbourne.

University of Hertfordshire

Foundation Degrees	FTE
● FdA Business	25.5
● FdA Business with Finance	17
● FdA Business with Human Resource Management	5
● FdA Business with Marketing	23
● FdA Business with Travel and Tourism	7
● FdA Creative Enterprise (Fine Art Practice)	18
● FdA Creative Enterprise (Graphic Design)	61
● FdA Creative Enterprise (3-D Design)	24
● FdA Community Playwork Practice and Extended Provision	17
● FdA Early Years	58
● FdSc Information Technology and Business	10.8
● FdA Information Technology for the Internet	4
● FdA Information Technology for Multi-media	3
● FdA Public Services (Uniformed)	4
● FdA Visual Merchandising	31

Extended degrees

● Engineering	24
● Modular Extended Degree	26

University of Greenwich

● Professional (Graduate) Certificate in Education	23.5

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

7   Hertford Regional College is a member of the Hertfordshire Higher Education Consortium, which is made up of the University of Hertfordshire and the four further education colleges in Hertfordshire. The Consortium was established in August 2000 and has the status of a franchise. The University of Hertfordshire Memorandum of Agreement outlines the nature and responsibilities of the relationship between the University and the College.

8   The Professional (Graduate) Certificate in Education programme is validated by the University of Greenwich. The relationship is governed by the University of Greenwich Memorandum of Agreement and is subject to the academic regulations of the University of Greenwich as laid down in the Administration Handbook.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

9   In January 2007 the College embarked on a major rebuilding programme on both sites, and these buildings are now complete and fully occupied. A new Principal and a new Finance Director joined the College early in 2009. A new Vice-Principal for Curriculum and Quality for the next academic year will bring together the Quality Development Unit and all curriculum areas that are currently managed through different members of the senior management team. The Memorandum of Agreement with the University of Hertfordshire is coming to the end of its five-year term. It will be reviewed in light of new strategic directions in government policy and consequent changes in both the further and higher education sectors. The College is considering whether to move from a franchised to a directly-funded provision in the future.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

10   Students on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the team. Students from Business, Early Years, Engineering and Visual Merchandising met with representatives from the College's Student Services section. Using a questionnaire, responses to a range of questions covering the whole of their experience at the College were collated. This provided the team with helpful insight into the student learning experience and formed the basis of its further enquiries during the review.

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?

11   All but one of the programmes are validated by the University of Hertfordshire. The processes and procedures for managing the delivery of standards are clearly outlined in the Hertfordshire Higher Education Consortium Quality Handbook, in conjunction with the Collaborative Working Practices Handbook. A link tutor from the University is appointed for each programme.

12   The University has made significant changes in its academic management structure since the Developmental engagement, resulting in changes to link tutors and other personnel. The work formerly carried out by the Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies has moved into the relevant faculty or school. The Academic Partnership Office takes an overview of the provision, and key staff have remained in post. The Consortium committee structure remains, but with increased representation from the University faculties.

13   The College committee structure has clear reporting lines at operational and strategic levels. The Higher Education Committee has overarching responsibility for academic quality, and meets three times a year. It reports to the College's Academic Board and the University's Consortium Quality Committee. The Developmental engagement asked the College to look at the composition and effectiveness of this committee, and this has been addressed. It now consists of representatives from senior, academic and operational management, together with those responsible for cross-college issues, including the Learning Resource Centre Manager and the E-learning Champion, and is regularly attended

by a University of Hertfordshire representative. Two places on this committee are reserved for students, but, in spite of the efforts made by staff, these have not yet been filled. Minutes indicate that it now provides for the discussion of a wider range of opinions and perspectives. It also oversees the production of programme annual monitoring and evaluation reports for Hertfordshire programmes and programme monitoring reports for the University of Greenwich.

14 The overall responsibility for programmes is located in the relevant curriculum area. An area programme manager has responsibility for a range of related programmes and/or a programme manager for individual programmes. The Programme Managers' Group meets regularly and useful information flows between this group and the Higher Education Committee. At a strategic, senior management level, the Academic Management Group and the Senior Management Team receive information from these bodies, and there is input about higher education from the Higher Education Development Manager and others. A programme manager is a staff representative on the Board of Corporation.

15 The post of Higher Education Development Manager has enhanced leadership and guidance to staff, and provides an overview of higher education quality assurance processes which contribute to the maintenance and enhancement of standards and the quality of the provision. The post holder is the key interface between the College and the universities, chairs the Programme Managers' Group meetings and has been central to the development and implementation of a comprehensive Higher Education Strategy document.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

16 Both awarding bodies take responsibility for ensuring that their policies and procedures meet the expectations of the Academic Infrastructure. The self-evaluation claims that the Academic Infrastructure is embedded in all the College's provision, and the team confirms this. The Higher Education Development Manager demonstrates up-to-date knowledge of all elements of the Infrastructure, including the recent changes to the *Code of practice*. Meetings with programme and student services staff demonstrated their familiarity with elements of the Academic Infrastructure relevant to them.

17 Programme specifications prepared at the time of validation fully align with the relevant sections of the Academic Infrastructure. For example, the recent validation of the FdA Community Playwork Practice and Extended Provision demonstrated appropriate reference to the subject benchmark statement for youth and community, the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students,* the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark* and the FHEQ level descriptors.

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?

18 The College works within the structures and regulatory frameworks of its respective awarding bodies. Link tutors from both universities liaise effectively with programme managers at the College, subject specialists at each university, and with the College's Higher Education Development Manager to provide support and guidance on matters such as curricula, assessment design and cross-college moderation. The internal verification and moderation is tracked, clearly demonstrating that each stage of the process is complete.

19   The University of Hertfordshire requires the College to produce an Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report for each programme at the end of each academic year, using a standard template. The majority of reports seen during the review were properly completed and contained evidence of the strengths and weaknesses within each programme, followed by an appropriate action plan, indicating that overall this process is effective. Link tutors work with the College to ensure that the document covers all significant issues and that the report is evaluative. The link tutors' reports, external examiners' reports and responses to these are attached as appendices. Each report is considered at the appropriate Faculty Academic Quality Enhancement Committee at the University, attended by the link tutor. The College then receives feedback and minutes of the meeting and, where necessary, they are asked to revise the report. External examiners submit verbal moderation reports at the end of each semester at the relevant module examination boards.

20   One annual monitoring and evaluation report for the FdA Creative Enterprise did not follow the process in a number of ways. It contained a written interim moderation report from the external examiner, specific to the College, rather than the formal external examiner's report which relates to the provision as a whole. The monitoring report also contained the response from the University and their agreement to recommendations made by the external examiner. However, these related to the formal external examiner's report, not to the moderation report for the first semester. This error was not identified at the Faculty Academic Quality Enhancement Committee and the annual monitoring report was signed off at that time. During the visit, no written evidence was available of a response to the interim moderation report. Documentary evidence was received six weeks afterwards which indicated that the external examiner's concerns were being addressed. The College needs to demonstrate the consistent implementation of the procedures for addressing issues raised in external examiners' interim moderation reports, and ensure that annual monitoring and evaluation reports are compiled correctly.

21   Overall, external examiner reports confirm that the standards and quality of the provision and the level of student achievement are sound. All comments from external examiners' reports have been addressed at programme level. The College confirmed that it had not received a copy of the external examiner report from the University of Greenwich for the teacher training programme for 2008-09. The link tutor had sent an email summary of the main points. The team recommends that the programme leader discusses with the University a way to ensure that the external examiner's report is made available to tutors, to enable them to make a detailed response and learn from the examiner's overall comments.

22   The College has introduced an internal audit process to consider annual monitoring and review reports. This has the potential to enhance the provision in the future. The standard College template follows the University model, which requires a simple 'Yes' or 'No' in concluding whether standards have been met and are comparable with other institutions. This is followed by a prompt asking for positive comments to be identified. In a separate section within the template, areas for improvement are identified; however, the team considers that a clearer overall view of the provision would be achieved if these templates were amended to ensure that both the positive and negative comments in external examiners' reports are clearly indicated at the outset.

23   A self-assessment report on the higher education provision has been introduced this year. Whereas many of the College's processes incorporate both further and higher education, this provides a helpful overview of recent developments and summaries of the main strengths and areas for development of the higher education provision. This has the potential to improve the provision and enable the sharing of good practice.

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

24 The College incorporates higher education staff development within its College-wide processes. The validation process ensures that staff delivering the programmes are appropriately qualified and experienced, and new appointments must also be approved by the awarding body. Staff are encouraged to take part in developmental activities run by the awarding bodies, and the College makes time available for this activity. The Developmental engagement identified that the effective interaction of the College with all partners in the Consortium resulted in a rich cross-fertilisation of ideas and encouraged a culture of continuous quality improvement in standards and practice, and the team confirmed that this good practice is continuing.

25 This year, the University of Greenwich has organised events for staff in the recently established network clusters. There is already evidence that these clusters are providing opportunities for staff from different colleges to communicate and share good practice.

26 The self-evaluation identifies, and the team confirms, that although staff take up a range of development opportunities, the recording and monitoring of these activities is incomplete. The team agrees with the College that an annual audit of specific higher education development activities would help to develop a more focused and proactive development programme for its staff. Staff development is also being integrated within the appraisal system to streamline the identification of development needs and enable the monitoring of both participation and impact on practice.

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

Core theme 2: Quality of learning

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 The general responsibilities and arrangements for managing and reporting on the quality of learning opportunities are those described for academic standards in paragraphs 13 to 15. At operational level, significant responsibilities for monitoring teaching and learning are devolved to curriculum departments through the work of programme area managers and programme leaders. The College's quality assurance policy follows well-established reporting procedures for lesson observations, performance review boards, analysis of student survey data and the production of annual monitoring reports. The Higher Education Development Manager takes an oversight of all reports and identifies cross-college themes and issues relating to the quality of learning opportunities. These are then addressed through departmental and college-wide meetings. Committee and programme minutes confirm that the structures and reporting arrangements are effective.

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

28 The procedures and arrangements through which the College ensures it is fulfilling its obligations to the awarding bodies are clear and generally effective, as set out in paragraphs 18 and 19, and 21 to 23. There are clear reporting mechanisms in place between the College and its awarding bodies, with appropriate variations to reflect the particular relationship. These ensure that the obligations set out in the respective partnership agreements are met. The University of Hertfordshire confirms the College's active contribution to the Consortium.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

29 The team confirms that the Academic Infrastructure is well embedded in College procedures, as described in paragraphs 16 and 17. Following validation, programme specifications are published on the University website and these provide clear information to staff, students and other stakeholders on the teaching, learning and assessment strategy of every programme.

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

30 The College's Learning Policy and Strategy provides a college-wide framework for all learning activities. Teaching and learning quality is monitored closely by the College and robust arrangements are in place for the peer observation of teaching staff, who are observed at least once each year. Observations are graded, but also serve an important developmental purpose. The outcomes are focused upon during appraisal to identify training and continuing professional development needs. The higher education observations are currently fully integrated with the further education provision in the College and graded with the same criteria. The latest results indicate a generally high standard of observed sessions across the College. A recent initiative has been the development of dedicated higher education observations in the business and computing department. In the College's themed observation scheme, departments choose to focus on different areas each year. Staff confirm that this exercise has been successful as a means of focusing and reflecting on sector-specific issues, and sharing good practice between tutors. The team believes that this use of the themed observation process to focus on higher education constitutes good practice worthy of wider dissemination across the provision.

31 Student opinion and feedback is used at all levels of delivery to monitor and enhance learning opportunities. Student representatives participate in programme meetings, and issues that cannot be addressed at programme or departmental level are taken forward to the higher education student forum. Students also participate in the National Student Survey. Minutes confirm that these procedures have achieved improvements. The College's responses to the issues raised are fed back to students in a range of ways, although not all students at the meeting were clear what action had been taken, particularly where action required University involvement. There is a need to close this information loop and ways should be considered to ensure that the action taken in response to student feedback is communicated to them more effectively and directly. Student feedback questionnaires are completed for each Consortium module and analysed subsequently on an individual and combined basis. The completed comparative data prepared by the University for 2007-08 indicates that the College scored well in comparison with the partner colleges. Student satisfaction levels for teaching, assessment and support in the end-of-year questionnaire in 2008-09 were extremely high. Students value the subject expertise of teaching staff.

32   Students who met the team were generally very positive about the good quality of the teaching and the willingness of tutors to support their studies. They describe staff as helpful and approachable and easy to contact. Some second-year students on the business and creative arts programmes, keen to progress to honours degree programmes, had reservations about whether there was sufficient academic challenge in their learning. However, their views contrasted sharply with students on the teacher training and early years programmes, who were appreciative of the opportunities for more independent learning.

33   The Developmental engagement recommended the further development of the University of Hertfordshire's online managed learning environment. The College has appointed an e-learning champion for higher education to coordinate its response to the Consortium's blended learning strategy. This has resulted in further implementation of the strategy and the identification of good practice in providing online learning materials for modules. Staff on the FdA Business and Computing and FdA Early Years have produced a range of high-quality interactive materials. Students confirm that they benefit from using these materials, which incrementally encourage them to take more responsibility for their own learning.

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

34   A comprehensive range of support is available to students. During induction, students undertake an initial online diagnostic assessment to identify strengths and areas for support in literacy, numeracy and information technology skills. Following the students' unfavourable response to specific aspects of the diagnostic test, the College is reviewing this in order to ensure that students are clear on the purpose of the test and how it may contribute to their learning. Students meet with their personal or subject tutor on a regular basis to discuss their progress and to participate in group tutorials. Personal development planning is embedded effectively in programme delivery. Students are generally well prepared and supported during their work-based learning. In response to external examiner comments, additional support has been provided for academic writing on creative enterprise programmes.

35   Generally, students are clear about progression arrangements to honours degree study. Recent changes have led to a wider choice of progression being made available on the visual merchandising programme, and this should be further emphasised to current students. Careers information is largely integrated in programme delivery. Most students are unaware of the careers service provided by the College or where the office is located. The team believes that the work and location of the careers service should be emphasised to students during induction and that this information should be included in programme handbooks.

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

36   The College's arrangements for staff development to maintain and enhance the quality of learning opportunities are those described in paragraphs 24 to 27. A recent initiative has been the introduction of a higher education development day at the end of each academic year.

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

37 A college-wide learning resources strategy identifies and allocates resources based upon departmental needs. The sufficiency of human and physical resources is considered at validation on the Consortium programmes. Similar arrangements apply for the University of Greenwich programme. Staff records confirm that they are well qualified and that all have relevant vocational expertise and recognised teaching qualifications.

38 The new building has provided many higher education students with impressive teaching and social facilities, and a new Learning Resources Centre. However, the second phase of building on the Ware site cannot go ahead. There has been an increase in numbers on the creative enterprise programmes, putting a strain on physical resources and equipment. The College is working hard to upgrade facilities and equipment for students currently using the old buildings. A tour of resources confirmed the adequacy of the accommodation and equipment in the old buildings. Following the recommendation made in the Development engagement, the College now provides students with an opportunity to comment on learning resources in feedback questionnaires.

39 Subject tutors work closely with learning resource staff to ensure that resources are sufficient to support student research. Overall, students on the Consortium programmes describe their learning resources as adequate, although some part-time learners found working with reference-only copies inconvenient. College students enjoy the same access to resources as students at the University. Students on the teacher training programme appreciate the quality and quantity of materials available to them. However, in spite of the efforts of the programme tutor, students on the University of Greenwich programme continue to experience difficulties in accessing the University's online learning environment. The College should continue to discuss with the University ways to solve their students' difficulties in accessing its online virtual learning environment.

40 The online managed virtual learning environment is an important resource for all Consortium students, providing them with a single personalised portal to access a wide range of services including module information, lecture materials, assessment information, administration procedures, discussion groups, support services, online journals and e-books. Students are introduced to the facility during induction and further support is available in print and electronic form. Many students report continuing difficulties with the system, and some had been discouraged from further attempts to use it. The College recognises the continuing issues and the team considers it desirable to extend the induction arrangements for students in the use of the virtual learning environment and to integrate its use more fully in programme delivery.

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?

41   The College produced a higher education strategy for 2009-12 for HEFCE. A wide range of helpful information relating to its higher education programmes is available in print and on the College's website.

42   The majority of the higher education provision is validated by the University of Hertfordshire, and comprehensive and accurate information on relevant policies and procedures is available on both the College's and the University of Hertfordshire's websites. The University has primary responsibility for ensuring the accuracy and completeness of the information about its provision. Information is provided in the programme handbook, programme specifications, definitive module documents and in information on grading, progression and awards, academic misconduct, extenuating circumstances, University regulations and the appeals procedure.

43   The Memorandum of Agreement encourages members of the Consortium to play an active role in the management of shared programmes. The content of student handbooks, module guides and assessment briefs results from effective collaboration between colleagues within the Consortium, coordinated through the University's link tutor. Each faculty ensures that staff use up-to-date documentation.

44   Students confirm that they are given accurate information when they commence their programme. However, some students had been surprised by the cost of materials which they had to purchase in order to complete assessment tasks. The team agrees that the likely cost of additional materials should be highlighted more clearly on the website and in programme literature where relevant.

45   The University ensures that programme handbooks and module guides are revised annually and provided to students in hard copy and/or online. Learning outcomes and assessments are clearly identified and match those in the validation documents. Students state that they find these documents helpful.

46   The University of Greenwich provides students with a programme handbook which accurately describes key assessment policies and procedures. In addition, they receive a study guide for each module, which clearly identifies the module learning outcomes and how these will be assessed. College staff work with students to ensure that they have a clear understanding of the programme and its assessment.

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 majority of programmes are validated by the University of Hertfordshire, which works closely with the College using a range of processes to ensure the accuracy and completeness of published information. Programme information in standard format is sent to College programme managers, heads of department and the Higher Education Development Manager for checking before publication.

48   Regulations in the Collaborative Working Practices Handbook clearly describe the process for the approval of publicity material. The Consortium Management Committee has approved a new campaign for hard copy marketing material, such as the prospectus, programme leaflets and posters. The marketing sub-group at the University meets with representatives from colleges across the Consortium to decide on priorities and spending of the shared budget. This group, along with the higher education managers from all colleges, together with input from the Academic Partnership Office, is responsible for the accuracy of the material.

The team considers that reliance can be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

C   Summary of findings from the Developmental engagement in assessment

49   The Developmental engagement in assessment was conducted in November 2008 and focused on the assessment of students. The three lines of enquiry were agreed with the College in advance and reflected a broad range of assessment issues. These took the form of the following questions: What procedures does the College use to maintain academic standards in assessment policy and practice? To what extent does assessment practice promote the development of the skills required for effective learning? Is the published information on the procedures and processes of assessment, grading, progression and awards presented to the student in an explicit, valid, reliable and consistent form?

50   The team identified a number of areas of good practice. These included the effective engagement of the College with all partners within the Consortium, leading to continuous quality improvement; the effective liaison between the link tutors and college staff, enabling support and guidance on curriculum, assessment design and cross-college moderation; the comprehensive and user-friendly Student Guide to Feedback and Learning; the staff development opportunities, which enrich assignments with vocational relevance; the comprehensive range of information available, which is helpful to students and their mentors; and the use of the online managed learning environment in ensuring that examination regulations have been read by students.

51   The team also made a number of recommendations. It suggested that it would be desirable for the College to review the membership of the Higher Education Committee in order to improve its effectiveness; introduce a tracking system to ensure that the internal moderation process is complete; emphasise and encourage the skills development element of the diagnostic assessment undertaken by all students; ensure that students on University of Hertfordshire awards have the opportunity to comment on all learning resources; and further implement the online blended learning strategy.

D   Foundation Degrees

52   The College delivers Foundation Degrees as listed in paragraph 6. This provision is franchised from the University of Hertfordshire and is indirectly funded. The portfolio of programmes offered at the College has become increasingly streamlined and focused. The FdA Public Services (Uniformed) has been withdrawn due to poor recruitment and is now in its final year. A new FdA in Community Playwork Practice and Extended Provision is running for the first time this academic year and has recruited strongly.

53 The College operates effective quality assurance systems which meet the requirements of its awarding body. The Memorandum of Agreement with the University is coming to the end of its five-year term, and will be reviewed in the light of new strategic directions in government policy and consequent changes in both the further and higher education sectors. The College is considering whether to move from a franchise to a directly-funded provision in the future.

54 The current Foundation Degree provision provides good learning opportunities for students, with good progression and retention. The team concluded that all Foundation Degrees are fit for purpose. The areas of good practice and recommendations identified during the Summative review are common to the whole provision. They are listed in the main conclusions, in Section E, and, except for those in paragraphs 21 and 40, all relate to the Foundation Degree provision.

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

55 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Hertford Regional 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 Greenwich and the University of Hertfordshire.

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

- the post of Higher Education Development Manager has enhanced leadership and guidance to staff and provides an overview of higher education quality assurance processes, which contributes to the maintenance and enhancement of standards and the quality of the provision (paragraph 15, 27)

- the higher education self-assessment report provides a focused overview of programmes, identifies strengths and areas for development and ensures continuing enhancement of the higher education provision (paragraph 23)

- the College's interaction with its partners in the Consortium contributes to a culture of continuous quality improvement (paragraph 28)

- the use of the themed observation process by business and computing to focus on higher education has effectively provided staff with an opportunity to focus and reflect on sector-specific issues and to share good practice (paragraph 30)

- the improvements achieved by the appointment of an e-learning champion for higher education (paragraph 33)

- the high-quality online learning materials produced by business and computing and early years, which students confirm encourage them to take more responsibility for their own learning (paragraph 33).

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

The team agreed one area where the College is **advised** to take action:

- demonstrate the consistent implementation of the procedures for addressing issues raised in external examiners' interim moderation reports, and ensure that annual monitoring and evaluation reports are compiled correctly (paragraph 20).

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

- discuss with the University of Greenwich a way to ensure that the external examiner's report is made available to College tutors to enable them to make a detailed response and learn from the examiner's overall comments (paragraph 21)

- discuss with the University of Hertfordshire how the College and University templates could be amended to ensure that both the positive and negative comments in external examiners' reports are clearly indicated to provide an overall view of the provision (paragraph 22)

- perform an annual audit of specific higher education development activities to develop a more focused and proactive development programme for staff (paragraph 26)

- consider ways to ensure that the action taken in response to student feedback is communicated to them more effectively and directly (paragraph 31)

- ensure that the work and location of the careers service is emphasised to students during induction and that this information is included in programme handbooks (paragraph 35)

- continue to discuss with the University of Greenwich ways to solve their students' difficulties in accessing its online virtual learning environment (paragraph 39)

- extend the induction arrangements for students in the use of the virtual learning environment and integrate its use more fully in programme delivery (paragraph 40)

- highlight the likely cost of additional materials needed to complete assessments more clearly on the website and in the relevant programme literature (paragraph 44).

59 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 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.

60 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 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.

61 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 completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Hertford Regional College action plan relating to the Summative review: April 2010

Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
In the course of the Summative review the team identified the following areas of **good practice** that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
● the post of Higher Education Development Manager has enhanced leadership and guidance to staff and provides an overview of higher education quality assurance processes, which contributes to the maintenance and enhancement of standards and the quality of the provision (paragraph 15, 27)	Postholder continues to provide leadership and guidance to ensure quality HE provision	Ongoing	HE Development Manager	Continued high-quality provision	HE Committee	Vice-Principal Curriculum & Quality
● the higher education self-assessment report provides a focused overview of programmes, identifies strengths and areas for	Report to be produced on an annual basis Details of report to be	Annually in October October 2010	HE Development Manager	Appropriately detailed report produced on time	HE Committee	Reviewed and evaluated at HE Committee

Hertford Regional College action plan relating to the Summative review: April 2010

Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
development and ensures continuing enhancement of the higher education provision (paragraph 23)	enhanced with further student voice information					
• the College's interaction with its partners in the Consortium contributes to a culture of continuous quality improvement (paragraph 28)	Senior managers continue to represent the College and play an active role on Consortium committees	Ongoing	Vice-Principal Curriculum & Quality, HE Development Manager	Attendance at Consortium committees – Consortium Executive Group, Consortium Management Committee, Consortium Quality Committee	HE Committee	Reviewed at HE Committee
	Programme managers continue to liaise with Consortium partners at programme level	Ongoing	HE programme managers	Attendance at cross-college meetings	Programme Committees	HE Committee, Consortium Quality Committee

Hertford Regional College action plan relating to the Summative review: April 2010

Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
	Annual monitoring and review of quality procedures to ensure maintenance of standards	November 2010 and annually	HE programme managers	Production and acceptance of Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Reports	HE Committee	HE Committee, University Faculty Committees
• the use of the themed observation process by business and computing to focus on higher education has effectively provided staff with an opportunity to focus and reflect on sector-specific issues and to share good practice (paragraph 30)	Extend HE themed observations to all HE subject areas	June 2011	Heads of department	All HE areas observed	Quality Manager	HE Committee
	Encourage observations to evaluate HE-specific characteristics such as learner autonomy	September 2010	Quality Manager, lesson observation team	HE-specific characteristics evaluated and included in reports		

Hertford Regional College action plan relating to the Summative review: April 2010

Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
● the improvements achieved by the appointment of an e-learning champion for higher education (paragraph 33)	Maintain and increase liaison with Consortium blended learning sub-group to share good practice	Ongoing	E-learning Champion	Meetings attended and information disseminated	HE Programme Managers' Group	HE Committee
	Monitor use of virtual learning environment by staff and students	October 2010	E-learning Champion	Monitoring report for 2009-10 produced	Blended Learning Group, HE Development Manager	HE Committee
	Produce specific departmental action plans for continued development of e-learning	Jan 2011	E-learning Champion	Action plan available and disseminated	Academic Management Group	Plans agreed and reviewed by Academic Management Group

Hertford Regional College action plan relating to the Summative review: April 2010

Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
● the high-quality online learning materials produced by business and computing and early years, which students confirm encourage them to take more responsibility for their own learning (paragraph 33).	Staff development event to share good practice	July 2010	Staff Development Manager	Event results in improved number and quality of online materials	HE Programme Managers' Group	Evaluated at programme level by programme teams
	HE staff to attend University of Hertfordshire blended learning events	As offered	HE Development Manager	Staff from each HE area attend at least one event	Staff Development Manager	Evaluated at HE Programme Managers' Group
	Introduce plagiarism software as a formative learning tool	Sept 2010	E-learning Champion	Use of plagiarism software introduced	HE Programme Managers' Group	Reviewed at HE Committee

Hertford Regional College action plan relating to the Summative review: April 2010

Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team agreed the following areas where it would be **advisable** for the College to take action:						
● demonstrate the consistent implementation of the procedures for addressing issues raised in external examiners' interim moderation reports, and ensure that annual monitoring and evaluation reports are compiled correctly (paragraph 20).	Compile and use a central mechanism to audit all stages of the quality procedure	October 2010	HE Development Manager	All reports are signed off internally and Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Reports completed appropriately	HE Committee	Reviewed at November meeting of HE Committee

Hertford Regional College action plan relating to the Summative review: April 2010

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:						
● discuss with the University of Greenwich a way to ensure that the external examiner's report is made available to College tutors to enable them to make a detailed response and learn from the examiner's overall comments (paragraph 21)	Enter dialogue with University of Greenwich in order to enable access to reports	July 2010	HE Development Manager	Reports available concurrent with submission to the University	HE Committee	HE Committee
● discuss with the University of Hertfordshire how the College and University templates could be amended to ensure that both the positive and negative comments in external examiners' reports are clearly indicated to provide	Discuss formulation of Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report template with partners via Consortium Quality Committee	November 2010	HE Development Manager	Templates discussed and any changes agreed	Consortium Quality Committee, HE Committee	Reviewed and evaluated at HE Committee

Hertford Regional College action plan relating to the Summative review: April 2010						
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
an overall view of the provision (paragraph 22)						
• perform an annual audit of specific higher education development activities to develop a more focused and proactive development programme for staff (paragraph 26)	Audit HE staff development activity annually	from September 2010	Staff Development Manager	Audit completed	HE Development Manager	Progress monitored and evaluated by HE Committee
	Develop an HE-focused staff development plan to include the promotion of scholarly activity	January 2011	Staff Development Manager	Development plan with scholarly activity focus devised	HE Development Manager	
	Arrange focused HE staff development	July 2011	Staff Development Manager	First phase of development plan implemented	HE Development Manager	
	Use appraisal system to ensure that continuing professional development on HE issues is being addressed	July 2011	Line managers	System records HE-specific staff development	Staff Development Manager	

Hertford Regional College action plan relating to the Summative review: April 2010

Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
● consider ways to ensure that the action taken in response to student feedback is communicated to them more effectively and directly (paragraph 31)	Develop mailing list for student reps to disseminate information	October 2010	HE Development Administrator	List generated	HE Student Forum	Effectiveness monitored by HE Development Manager
	Ensure feedback and response is a standing item at programme committee	September 2010	HE programme managers	Item appears on all programme committee agendas	HE Student Forum	
● ensure that the work and location of the careers service is emphasised to students during induction and that this information is included in programme handbooks (paragraph 35)	Complete the relocation of careers service to Learning Resource Centre (Ware campus)	September 2010	Estates	Careers office relocated	All staff	HE Programme Managers' Group
	Induction programme to include information on College and University (Graduate Futures) services	October 2010	HE programme managers	Careers information delivered during induction	HE Programme Managers' Group	HE Programme Managers' Group

Hertford Regional College action plan relating to the Summative review: April 2010

Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
	Student/programme handbooks to include information on careers services	October 2010	University link tutors	Careers information included in handbooks	HE programme managers	
• continue to discuss with the University of Greenwich ways to solve their students' difficulties in accessing its online virtual learning environment (paragraph 39)	Enter dialogue with University of Greenwich with a view to improving access	July 2010	HE Development Manager	Improved student access	HE Student Forum, PGCE Programme Committee, PGCE network cluster	University of Greenwich PGCE network cluster
• extend the induction arrangements for students in the use of the virtual learning environment and integrate its use more fully in programme delivery (paragraph 40)	Student tutorial programme to include focused virtual learning environment sessions	from October 2010	E-learning Champion, HE programme managers	Students show increased use of virtual learning environment	HE Programme Managers' Group	Effectiveness considered by E-learning Champion
	Continue to develop virtual learning environment materials	Ongoing	HE programme managers	Increased level of virtual learning environment materials available		

Hertford Regional College action plan relating to the Summative review: April 2010						
Desirable	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
● highlight the likely cost of additional materials needed to complete assessments more clearly on the website and in the relevant programme literature (paragraph 44).	Survey and analyse range of additional material costs for students	December 2010	HE programme area managers	Costings obtained for each HE area	HE Programme Managers' Group	Progress monitored by HE Development Manager
	Update information on website and online programme information	January 2011	Web Administrator	Information on website and online materials	HE Development Manager	
	Include information on printed literature	At each reprint	Marketing Administrator	Information in printed literature	Marketing Manager	