

Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

March 2010

Croydon 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 Summative review of Croydon College carried out in March 2010

As a result of its investigations, the Summative review 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 rigorous and consistently applied quality systems monitor effectively programme delivery, student performance, progression and achievement
- the Teaching, Learning and Standards Working Party works well in interpreting and disseminating information about the Academic Infrastructure to all staff, and in facilitating the sharing of good practice in teaching and learning
- the robust system of internal moderation and verification contributes appropriately to the assurance of academic standards and is confirmed by external examiners
- the wide range of methods for identifying and responding to students' views is effective
- there is extensive academic and pastoral support available to students
- there is a wide range of internal and external staff development opportunities offered, together with impressive staff participation in them
- the extensive specialist learning resources ensure students on Foundation Degrees work with industry-standard equipment.

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 **desirable** for the College to:

- explore the possibility of having a separate association for higher education students to meet with the Dean and senior staff to further enhance student feedback
- monitor the links between programme teams and the central careers service
- monitor the training and use of the virtual learning environment in order to achieve a more consistent approach to its use
- emphasise during the interview, enrolment and induction process for engineering students that some options listed in published materials may not be available
- ensure that manual checks of the accuracy of information are continued prior to the introduction of the enhanced model of the curriculum database.

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 Croydon 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 the programmes that the College delivers on behalf of London Metropolitan University; the University of London and Edexcel. The review was carried out by Mr Gary Hargreaves, Mr Wayne Isaac and Dr Sarah Shobrook (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 awarding bodies, meetings with staff, students, and employers. 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 awards, Section D of this report summarises details of the Foundation Degree programmes delivered at the College.
- 4 The College is a large college of general further education. It is made up of three constituent colleges: a skills and enterprise college; a sixth-form college; and the higher education college. In addition, a Skills for Life Directorate serves all three colleges. The three constituent colleges each have a dedicated group of governors (the College Councils) who give strategic direction to, and oversee the quality of, the respective college on behalf of the full governing body. Each college has a devolved budget, develops its own strategic plans and has its own mission statement. The College's mission statement is 'Croydon College aims to be at the heart of Croydon's communities, stimulating demand for learning through inspirational and supportive teaching which respects all and transforms our futures'. The mission statement for higher education is 'Croydon Higher Education College offers flexible opportunities for high quality and relevant university level qualifications for all, regardless of background or prior qualifications'. The College has no franchised provision of higher education programmes, being funded directly by HEFCE. The higher education college within Croydon College houses all its HEFCE-funded provision in a separate dedicated building.
- 5 Enrolments increased significantly in 2009 and the College is now at the top end of its contract range with HEFCE. Approximately 50 per cent of the College's students are from Croydon. The majority of the remainder travel from a number of inner city areas, such as Southwark, Lewisham and Lambeth. In 2009-10, the College enrolled 782 full-time equivalent students on its full and part-time higher education programmes.
- 6 In 2003, Croydon College was granted Accredited College Status by London Metropolitan University, whereby the University recognises the College's Academic

Regulations and quality assurance procedures as equivalent to its own. Apart from the validation of programmes and the appointment of external examiners, the College has a large degree of autonomy in relation to a range of responsibilities.

7 The programmes at the College are outlined below with the full-time equivalent student numbers:

London Metropolitan University

- BA (Hons) Business (93)
- BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies (19)
- BA (Hons) Fashion (1)
- BA (Hons) Fashion Design with Business (59)
- BA (Hons) Fine Art (58)
- BA (Hons) Graphics (49)
- BA (Hons) Design and Craft for Stage and Screen (31)
- BA (Hons) Professional Studies Education (19)
- Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (DTLLS) English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) (6)
- Additional DTLLS Literacy (1)
- Additional DTLLS Numeracy (4)
- Level 5 Diploma DTLLS (81)
- FdA Early Childhood Studies (90)
- FdA Digital Film Production (18)
- FdA Fashion Business (1)
- FdA Fashion Design, Pattern Cutting and Construction (32)
- FdA Legal Practice (5)
- FdA Public Health and Social Care (42)
- FdA Theatre Practice (1)
- Postgraduate Diploma in Human Resource Management (54)
- LLB (106)

University of London

- LLB

Edexcel

- HNC Building Services Engineering (Electrical Installations) (11)
- HNC BSE (Heating, Ventilation and Air-Conditioning) (12).

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

8 There is evidence of a close and effective working relationship between London Metropolitan University and the College. The College's quality assurance and enhancement processes are managed by its Performance and Standards Unit. The University's Academic Quality Monitoring Group monitors and assures the quality of its awards delivered at the College. The Group is co-chaired by the College's Dean of Higher Education and the University's Director of Academic Development. The post of Dean of Higher Education is jointly funded. Although primarily based at the College, the postholder also has a base at the University. The Monitoring Group oversees the College's internal quality assurance procedures and associated reports, including those from external examiners and reviews by professional and statutory bodies, including Ofsted and QAA.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

9 Currently, all higher education provision is housed in the Barclay Road Building. Most of this provision is due to move to a dedicated refurbished Fairfield Building when work is completed. The studio-based art and design will remain in Barclay Road. This year has seen an increase in total enrolments of approximately 100 full-time equivalent numbers since 2008-09. The new FdA in Public Health and Social Care is part of a strategy to gain better alignment with, and progression from, the College's further education provision.

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. The College provided an independent facilitator who collated the views of students across the range of full and part-time programmes in two focus group meetings. The major headings related to published information; the quality of learning opportunities and assessment. The summary produced proved helpful to the team, who found the views expressed were consistent with those obtained in their meeting with current students.

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 The College and London Metropolitan University entered into a strategic partnership in 2003. The University undertook responsibility for the awards of the majority of the College's existing portfolio of validated programmes. The memorandum of agreement has recently been extended until September 2011. The only programmes outside this arrangement are the LLB from the University of London, which has a small final cohort of part-time students graduating in 2010, and the Edexcel Higher Nationals in Building Services. The final cohort of part-time LLB students will complete in the academic year 2009-10.

12 The Accredited College Status awarded in 2003 is the highest level of collaborative partnership offered by the University and involves delegation of responsibility for many aspects of quality assurance. Since its awards are directly funded, the College has

responsibility for the student numbers, the quality of the provision and the student experience, but responsibility for the standards of awards remain with the awarding body. The College operates effective quality assurance systems with very limited operational oversight by the University. For new awards, the College undertakes an internal validation process independently of the University, managed by the Performance and Standards Unit. Subsequently, the University considers these proposals through its own validation panel, which reports to the joint Academic Quality Monitoring Group.

13 The College has a rigorous quality assurance system that monitors programme delivery and student performance. Responsibility is shared between the Higher Education College and the central Performance and Standards Unit. The College operates a three-tier system made up of the Programme Board, the Board of Studies and, ultimately, the Higher Education College Board. The Performance and Standards Unit operates a parallel system of review and the two processes intersect at key points each year.

14 The University Academic Quality Monitoring Group assures the quality of its awards delivered at the College, and is co-chaired by the College's Dean of Higher Education and the University's Director of Academic Development. The Monitoring Group oversees the College's internal quality assurance procedures and associated reports, including those from external examiners and reviews by professional and statutory bodies, such as Ofsted and QAA.

15 Day-to-day operation and quality assurance is the responsibility of programme leaders who report to the appropriate curriculum leader. Programme leaders have line management responsibility and represent the programme and its students. This includes recruitment, programme organisation, academic development, and the academic and pastoral well-being of students.

16 The Higher Education College Board oversees all matters relating to quality assurance. The team confirms that effective systems are in place for the management and delivery of academic standards across all higher education programmes. All staff attend and contribute to regular programme team meetings that thoroughly monitor programme and individual student progression.

17 Robust procedures are in place to oversee retention and completion. Being directly funded, the College has an annual contract with HEFCE which determines the funding agreement for the year. The College completes the Higher Education in Further Education Student Survey (HEIFES), providing data on full-time equivalent student load on recognised higher education programmes. This data is collected each December and is used to allocate funds for student numbers.

18 The College conducts its own assessment boards, and the Developmental engagement on assessment confirmed that appropriate arrangements are in place to moderate student work. Assessment boards sit twice each year enabling students to be aware of their progress at the end of each semester. The higher education academic tracking process provides continuous monitoring of individual student performance, and ensures that additional guidance and support is provided as necessary. In addition to liaising with the University for the purpose of its awards, the College informs HEFCE of the number of completers and qualifications awarded. The level of non-completion has declined dramatically over the past five years from 14 to 6 per cent. In the last academic year, the College's completed numbers were within 12 of its initial prediction.

19 Overall, there are clear lines of responsibility for managing the higher education provision. The effective reporting and communication provide senior managers with a clear picture of the academic standards of the College's provision.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

20 The team confirms that the College engages effectively with the Academic Infrastructure in managing standards and quality. Teaching staff demonstrate a good level of understanding of the FHEQ, the *Code of practice*, relevant subject benchmark statements and arrangements for personal development planning. Each programme is underpinned by a clear and helpful programme specification.

21 The College recognised the need to introduce a mechanism through which the precepts of the *Code of practice* could be systematically mapped against College procedures. The Higher Education College Board, working in conjunction with the Teaching, Learning and Standards Working Party, has already made good progress with this mapping. Central services, such as admissions, careers and student support are also monitored against relevant sections of the *Code of practice*.

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

22 A comprehensive and well-documented committee structure operates to confirm the achievement of academic standards. The structure is underpinned by clear role descriptions of key posts, and defines the protocols and procedures to be used. Programme teams meet to review programme and assessment issues throughout the year.

23 The financial viability and quality of the provision are discussed as part of an annual curriculum review process. Each curriculum manager meets with a panel, comprised of a senior management team, to discuss the previous year's performance, and determine the continuation or modification of existing programmes. These are reported to the Higher Education Council.

24 Annual Programme Review involves a self-assessment process, and evidence seen by the team indicates that this is effective for programme planning, development, quality enhancement and for improving success rates. Teaching teams consider the performance of their programmes and make judgements against identified key themes. Issues are identified and tracked through quality improvement action plans. Review documentation is detailed, evaluative and identifies where further improvements may be made. Programme leaders scrutinise a range of programme-specific reports from central college services, including lesson observation grades, student performance data and an analysis of student survey data. Curriculum leaders provide a summary of key issues to the Dean of Higher Education, who then prepares an annual monitoring report. This is presented to London Metropolitan University and the College Governing Body.

25 Internal moderation and verification systems are rigorous and applied consistently across all programmes. Assignment briefs are internally verified and assessment decisions are sampled. The College has well-established procedures for the moderation and double-marking of student work. Assessment boards confirm that these procedures have been followed.

26 External examiner procedures are robust, and the College values and responds to the feedback provided. External examiners confirm that assessment operates in line with the Academic Regulations, and that the academic standards achieved are appropriate for the level of the programme and comparable with similar provision elsewhere. The Dean of Higher Education prepares an annual summary of reports and responses which highlights good practice and areas for improvement. Agreed recommendations also feature in the action plans arising from annual programme review.

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

27 A college-wide policy provides continuing professional development for academic and non-academic staff, and is addressed during the appraisal process. Staff development activities are appropriately funded and enable staff to undertake academic and other scholarly activities for which they are allocated two hours each week. Currently, 93 per cent of staff either have a teaching qualification or recognition from the Higher Education Academy, while others are working towards these requirements. Where possible, teaching staff are qualified to one level above the highest level at which they teach. Three teachers have recently obtained master's degrees. The good practice, recognised during the Developmental engagement, of holding joint staff development days between University and College staff has continued. This allows staff from a wide range of disciplines to meet and exchange views, and encourages future contact.

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

Core theme 2: Quality of learning opportunities

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

28 Overarching responsibility for the quality of learning opportunities lies with the joint Academic Monitoring Group. It receives annual summaries of external examiner reports and annual programme reviews and associated action plans. It also oversees the programme of periodic review. These are the primary means by which the quality of learning opportunities is assured.

29 Day-to-day management rests with programme leaders (see paragraph 15), who line-manage their teaching teams, respond to external examiner comments report on the outcomes of student questionnaire data and student feedback on modules, and the outcomes of academic tracking data . Unresolved issues are taken to boards of study, chaired by curriculum leaders. Cross-college services personnel, such as from learner support and library services, also attend these meetings. Summary reports from these boards are considered at the Higher Education College Board. The Vice-Principal, Personalisation, who provides an annual update on College learning resources, and the Director of Quality are also members of this board.

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

30 Effective procedures enable the College to respond appropriately to student views on the quality of their learning opportunities. Three college-wide surveys each year provide opportunities to gather information on enrolment, induction and teaching and learning. In addition, end-of-module evaluations identify positive comments and areas for improvement. These opinions are summarised by programme leaders and discussed at programme boards, which student representatives also attend. The information gathered informs action planning during the annual monitoring review.

31 Innovative methods have been introduced to ensure that students are able to communicate their concerns immediately. The student written submission and meetings during the review confirmed that these methods operate effectively. Students may pick up a sheet from notice-boards and use it to communicate an area of concern or make a positive comment. Using the 'Talk2Me' poster system, the College highlights issues raised and states what has been done in response. This closes the student feedback loop, and students confirm that the issues they raise are dealt with effectively.

32 The Dean and senior college staff meet at a college-wide Student Association each term. Student attendance is less than at meetings focused at programme level. Whether or not a separate association for higher education students would generate better discussion of the issues directly related to their learning has been considered. This should be explored further.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

33 The Teaching, Learning and Standards Working Party's remit is to review policies and procedures associated with teaching, learning and quality assurance. Its key outcomes for 2009 indicate that it has reviewed Sections 4 to 7 of the *Code of practice* on external examining, academic appeals and complaints, the assessment of students, and programme design, approval, monitoring and review. Work is in hand on other sections. It ensures that amendments or additions to the Academic Infrastructure are embedded in College policies. They translate the precepts into language which staff find useful in their practice. All working party meetings have the identification of good practice as a standard agenda item (see paragraphs 20, 21).

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

34 The majority of staff teach only on higher education programmes and have different annual teaching loads from their further education colleagues. Students spoke very positively about the teaching they receive and its impact on their learning. They value the quality of the feedback they receive on assessed work. All staff are appropriately qualified in their subject areas and, on some programmes, such as the BA (Hons) Fine Art, the majority of teaching is delivered by practitioners.

35 College-wide graded lesson observations aim to improve teaching and learning. The scheme is seen as developmental for staff, as well as a means of informing management about the quality of teaching. For example, advanced practitioners conduct paired observations with new programme leaders to prepare them for their observation role. The scheme is led by the Director of Excellence in Teaching and Learning, supported by a Lead Advanced Practitioner and a team of 14 experienced teachers, some of whom specifically

focus on higher education. During 2008-09, the 78 per cent of lecturers graded 1 or 2 exceeded the 75 per cent target. The Dean reports on these outcomes to the Higher Education Council. The scheme was externally moderated and reviewed in 2008 and this has resulted in an increased emphasis on learning and staff development.

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

36 The majority of students commented positively about the admissions and induction processes. All students are interviewed and sit an initial assessment for literacy and numeracy. They felt that the information they were given at interview and at open days was sufficient and described accurately what to expect from their programme. Induction was seen as an enjoyable experience and students valued the content and quality of their programme and module handbooks. The assessment calendar enabled them to plan their work in advance.

37 The Developmental engagement confirmed that students receive a wide variety of advice on assessment and learning as they progress through their studies. Staff are allocated appropriate hours within the teaching timetable to ensure that an effective tutorial system operates. During tutorials, students are assisted in completing their personal development plans. They receive a grade that indicates the tutor's view of their progress and achievement. This grade is linked to the higher education academic tracking system (HEAT).

38 Good use is also made of reading and review weeks three times each year when there is no teaching, enabling a focused review of student progression. Staff identify any relevant support requirements. This process enables problems to be identified and addressed before the end of a semester.

39 The College has a Learning Difficulties and Disability Team that generally liaises effectively with teaching staff. There are opportunities for students to be referred to this support from induction and during their learning experience. Students spoke positively about the help available to them.

40 Much advice on careers is embedded within each programme. Art and design staff reflect a variety of expertise and they also involve the central careers service in discussions on the vocational nature of the course. The College has recognised the need to strengthen central careers advice following a recent turnover of staff. It would be desirable to monitor the links between subject staff and the central service in the light of recent new appointments.

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

41 Staff have opportunities for continuous professional development related to their subject-specific knowledge and expertise (see paragraph 27). During the Developmental engagement, staff provided much evidence of specialist updating, practising industry-standard skills, and the use of new equipment. They were able to add to this during the Summative review.

42 A range of staff development opportunities exists within the College. Two days are set aside each year to release staff to pursue development issues identified as having a high priority. Recent events have considered assessment and feedback and plagiarism. In 2008-09, higher education staff attendance at in-house staff development sessions totalled a creditable 319, and 54 attended training at external events.

43 The College adopted a new virtual learning environment in January 2009. A range of training has taken place and the majority of staff has participated. There is further work to be done to encourage staff to use this more widely as an aid to learning. Evidence showed that nearly all staff have attended training sessions on its use. However, the use of the learning environment across teaching teams is at a very early stage of development and this was mentioned by students. The College should monitor the training and use of this in order to achieve a more consistent approach to its use by tutors for the next 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?

44 Students have access to a range of resources within their departments, as well as cross-college ones such as the library. When the building work is complete in 2011, higher education students will move to a separate floor for all their teaching. There will also be a new library still shared with further education students. In addition to this, there are dedicated physical resources, including a common room and computing facilities, within the Barclay Road building.

45 The student written submission made some negative comments about the number of books, but other students spoke of the system being well managed through a system of reference copies and seven-day loans. There is good communication between subject staff in the library and teaching staff. Students confirm that reading lists are updated annually. Higher education students have a separate common room with computers.

46 The library is open for 61.5 hours each week during term-time, and accommodates areas for silent study, group work, information technology and learner support. The stock profile for January identifies a very wide range of resources in a variety of formats. Half of the College library budget is spent on higher education resources. In addition, the library subscribes to 59 online databases which are accessible both on and off-campus. Students and staff are automatically given an Athens account so that they may make use of these services. An online catalogue and technology that enables students to search multiple data sources at once is complemented by an innovative social networking service that enables users to create and share lists of useful resources.

47 Foundation Degree students benefit from up-to-date software and equipment. Art and design students spoke very positively about their learning resources. They have specialist studios and technical workshops supported by industry-standard equipment. There is a suite of 50 computers that use the latest operating system. Other resources enable students to edit digital images, undertake desk-top publishing, edit videos and produce films. Information and communication technology equipment is replaced on a three-year rolling programme, with software under a maintenance agreement that ensures the latest versions are available for students to use. Students on fashion programmes also use industry standard equipment for pattern-making and cutting.

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?

48 The College has three broad categories of published materials for the HEFCE-funded provision for which it is responsible. Pre-enrolment publicity and information includes a prospectus, the College website and material for UCAS. From enrolment onwards, information includes programme and module handbooks. Other public information relates to its strategic direction and governance. As an accredited college of London Metropolitan University, its devolved responsibilities include monitoring its own published information. The University audits published information through its periodic review procedures. For the most recent review of art and design programmes, the Marketing Working Party worked closely with programme staff and were able to share good practice identified there across the whole provision.

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?

49 College documentation clearly outlines the process for preparing and amending printed information and website material. This identifies which staff will be involved in preparing material and the person responsible for final approval before publication. The marketing of higher education programmes includes the use of imaginatively designed postcards with pictures that reflect the flavour of each programme together with succinct and accurate information about it.

50 The College publishes its overall strategic plan, including that relating to higher education, on its website. Minutes of all Governing Body meetings and the Higher Education College Council are also published. These must be approved by both the Clerk and the Chair prior to publication.

51 The main printed publicity material is the prospectus for higher education. Templates are used to ensure consistency of the material. This assists the programme teams in preparing their entries which are subsequently signed off by the appropriate curriculum leader. A variety of staff contribute to the more generic material in the prospectus, including the Dean of Higher Education, welfare and counselling and marketing. Ultimately, the prospectus is signed off by the Dean and the Director of Marketing. The final stage is approval from the University's Quality Enhancement Unit. UCAS information is managed by a pre-enrolment team within the Marketing Directorate, working closely with the curriculum leader. All material is signed off by the Director of Marketing. During the review, students confirmed that they found the pre-enrolment information helpful and that it accurately reflected their experiences. However, some part-time engineering students were led to believe that all options mentioned in published material would be available and were disappointed to learn that not all recruited sufficient students to be viable. Although the information on the website contains a disclaimer, the possibility that some options might be unavailable should be emphasised during the interview, enrolment and induction process.

52 The information in programme handbooks forms part of the validation agreement, making them definitive documents. Only minor changes are, therefore, permitted and this may be done without formal University approval. Programme handbooks are supplemented by the Higher Education Student Handbook. This is prepared by the

Associate Dean responsible for Teaching and Learning and is approved by the Director of Quality. The handbook contains generic information, including details of how to apply for mitigating circumstances and services such as welfare and counselling and finance. It also includes a summary of Academic Regulations. The Performance and Standards Unit is responsible for updating and publishing these regulations. Programme teams go through the information with students, highlighting any changes from the previous year. Students must sign to indicate that they understand what has been discussed and this is kept on file. Students confirmed in their written submission and during the review that they found this information accurate and helpful.

53 Students were very positive about the quality and accuracy of the information they receive at all stages of their learning. Programme handbooks are consistent in format and layout. Overall, the team agrees with this view. However, in a few instances on the website, and in other material, some of the language used to describe 'level' was confusing. The team accessed information which used descriptors from credit frameworks other than the FHEQ, and sometimes 'level' is used where it would be preferable to use 'year'. A flow chart helps staff to ensure accuracy at various points during the year. Currently, the database operates as a stand-alone system, which means that changes have to be made individually for each programme. It is hoped to introduce an enhanced version by April in order to increase consistency. Meanwhile, the present system of monthly checks should be continued, to ensure that manual checks of the accuracy of information are made prior to the introduction of the enhanced model of the curriculum database. Edexcel confirmed that they do not check any of the College's published information for accuracy, although its external examiners check programme handbooks. All published information on these programmes was accurate and consistent.

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

C Summary of findings from the Developmental engagement in assessment

54 The Developmental engagement visit was conducted in October 2008 and focused on the assessment of students. There were three lines of enquiry; firstly, whether internal verification procedures, interaction with external examiners and its use of the Academic Infrastructure ensure that assessment processes enable students to demonstrate appropriate learning outcomes throughout the grade range; secondly, whether mechanisms were in place to provide effective information and guidance necessary to improve student performance; and thirdly, whether the information on assessment in the College prospectus, student handbook and programme handbooks is accurate and sufficient to provide students with a clear sense of what is expected at each stage of their studies.

55 The team identified a number of areas of good practice. These included the twice-yearly assessment boards, combined with the higher education achievement tracking system which monitored students effectively and improved retention rates; the role of the Learning, Teaching and Standards Working Group in enhancing the provision; the quality of the mentor handbook for the FdA Early Childhood Studies that supported mentors involved in the assessment of work-based learning; the effective use of the reading/review week in reviewing student progression and identifying problems and the joint College and University staff development activities that enabled staff from a wide range of disciplines to meet and exchange views.

56 The team also made a number of recommendations. It suggested that it would be desirable for the College to monitor and evaluate the impact of new marking criteria; implement a virtual learning environment for all programmes; adopt the database used by the awarding body to provide staff with a quick and accurate overview of the assessment outcomes; check that students affected by a recent revalidation of the art and design programmes possessed all the relevant and current documentation; ensure that the stages of internal verification were recorded and documented for all programmes; and continue to monitor the scheduling and amount of assessment on all programmes.

D Foundation Degrees

57 This academic year, the College introduced a new FdA Public Health and Social Care as part of its strategy to widen participation by gaining better alignment and progression from its further education provision. Increased enrolments reflected the plans for growth, particularly in the areas of early childhood studies and health and social care. The College uses the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark* as a reference point for all Foundation Degree proposals. A number of Foundation Degrees which were validated when only the draft qualification benchmark statement was in place are closing when the final cohort completes. Although this is not the only reason why these degrees are being withdrawn, the fact that they do not meet the spirit of the current benchmark has influenced this decision.

58 Since its awards are funded directly, the College has responsibility for the student numbers, the quality of the provision and the student experience, but responsibility for the standards of awards remain with the awarding body. The College operates effective quality assurance systems with very limited operational oversight by the University.

59 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. All conclusions in Section E below, except for that in paragraph 51, relate to the Foundation Degree provision. The team identified a specific area of good practice as being the extensive specialist learning resources that ensure students on Foundation Degrees work with industry-standard equipment (paragraph 47).

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

60 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Croydon 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, London Metropolitan University and Edexcel.

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

- the rigorous and consistently applied quality systems monitor effectively programme delivery, student performance, progression and achievement (paragraphs 13 to 18, 22, 24)
- the Teaching, Learning and Standards Working Party works well in interpreting and disseminating information about the Academic Infrastructure to all staff, and in facilitating the sharing of good practice in teaching and learning (paragraphs 20, 21, 33)

- the robust system of internal moderation and verification contributes appropriately to the assurance of academic standards and is confirmed by external examiners (paragraphs 25, 26)
- the wide range of methods for identifying and responding to students' views is effective (paragraphs 30 to 32)
- there is extensive academic and pastoral support available to students (paragraphs 36 to 40)
- there is a wide range of internal and external staff development opportunities offered, together with impressive staff participation in them (paragraphs 41, 42)
- the extensive specialist learning resources ensure students on Foundation Degrees work with industry-standard equipment (paragraph 47).

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

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

- explore the possibility of having a separate association for higher education students to meet with the Dean and senior staff to further enhance student feedback (paragraph 32)
- monitor the links between programme teams and the central careers service (paragraph 40)
- monitor the training and use of the virtual learning environment in order to achieve a more consistent approach to its use (paragraph 43)
- emphasise during the interview, enrolment and induction process for engineering students that some options listed in published materials may not be available (paragraph 51)
- ensure that manual checks of the accuracy of information are continued prior to the introduction of the enhanced model of the curriculum database (paragraph 53).

63 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.

64 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.

65 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 the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Croydon College action plan relating to the Summative review: March 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:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the rigorous and consistently applied quality systems monitor effectively programme delivery, student performance, progression and achievement (paragraphs 13 to 18, 22, 24) 	<p>Develop a quality assurance handbook for staff</p> <p>Seek opportunities to disseminate practice at HE in FE Event</p>	<p>1/11/10</p> <p>31/1/11</p>	<p>Teaching, Learning and Standards Working Party</p> <p>Dean of Higher Education/ Associate Dean</p>	<p>Handbook in place and supporting best practice</p> <p>Offer to run workshop at HE in FE event</p>	<p>College Board</p> <p>College Board</p>	<p>Staff feedback</p> <p>Feedback from organisers</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the robust system of internal moderation and verification contributes appropriately to the assurance of academic standards and is confirmed by external examiners (paragraphs 25, 26) 	<p>Maintain and enhance practice of all staff through training event</p>	<p>5/11/10</p>	<p>Associate Dean</p>	<p>Training completed by all staff</p> <p>External examiner reports refer to robust practice</p>	<p>College Board</p> <p>College Board</p>	<p>Staff feedback</p> <p>External examiner feedback</p>

Croydon College action plan relating to the Summative review: March 2010						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Teaching, Learning and Standards Working Party works well in interpreting and disseminating information about the Academic Infrastructure to all staff, and in facilitating the sharing of good practice in teaching and learning (paragraphs 20, 21, 33) 	Review and enhance the remit of the Teaching, Learning and Standards Working Party within the Higher Education College	1/9/10	College Board	Teaching, Learning and Standards Working Party has enhanced role in relation to implementation of the Academic Infrastructure and the sharing of good practice	College Board/ University partner	College Annual Monitoring Report
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the wide range of methods for identifying and responding to students' views is effective (paragraphs 30 to 32) 	Review and further develop the use of module evaluation data in internal examiner reports and enhancing the student experience	1/12/10	Teaching, Learning and Standards Working Party	Consistent and improved use is made of module evaluation data in internal examiner reports and feedback to students	College Board	Quality Audit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> there is extensive academic and pastoral support available to students (paragraphs 36 to 40) 	Further enhance pastoral by introducing a Welfare Advice and Counselling service in the Barclay Road building	1/6/10	Vice Principal Personalisation/ Dean of Higher Education	Welfare Advice and Counselling Office open and utilised by HE students	College Board	Student feedback

Croydon College action plan relating to the Summative review: March 2010						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> there is a wide range of internal and external staff development opportunities offered, together with impressive staff participation in them (paragraphs 41, 42) 	Review and plan staff development activities for 10/11 and 11/12, further building on links with our University partner	29/10/10	Dean of Higher Education/ College Head of Continuing Professional Development/ University Partnership Office	Programme of staff development activities is in place	College Board	Staff feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> extensive specialist learning resources ensure students on Foundation Degrees work with industry standard equipment (paragraph 47). 	Ensure extensive specialist learning resources are provided for HE offer within the new HE building	1/9/11	Dean/Director of Resources	Specialist learning resources are available to students on Foundation Degree programmes re-located to the new building	College Board	Student feedback Annual Programme Review

Croydon College action plan relating to the Summative review: March 2010						
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<p>The team agreed a number of areas where the College would be desired to take action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explore the possibility of having a separate association for higher education students to meet with the Dean and senior staff to further enhance student feedback (paragraph 32) 	<p>Meet with Vice Principal Personalisation to consider a separate higher education student association</p>	2/7/10	Dean of Higher Education	Integrated structure for the College Parliament is reviewed to ensure it meets the needs of higher education students	College Board	Student feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • monitor the links between programme teams and the central careers service (paragraph 40) 	<p>Programme leaders to meet with new Careers Manager on bi-monthly basis to develop support for higher education</p> <p>College Careers Manager to establish link with university partner's career service</p>	2/7/10 and ongoing 10/9/10	HE College Operational Management Group College Careers Manager	<p>regular dialogue with Central Careers Service is maintained</p> <p>Higher education careers service is developed with advice from University partner</p>	College Board College Board	<p>Staff feedback</p> <p>Service evaluation report</p>

Croydon College action plan relating to the Summative review: March 2010						
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> monitor the training and use of the virtual learning environment in order to achieve a more consistent approach to its use (paragraph 43) 	<p>Establish cross-College Steering Group for the virtual learning environment (VLE) with representatives from HE College</p> <p>Set and monitor targets for VLE utilisation</p> <p>Monitor staff training records to ensure consistent practice</p>	<p>1/7/10</p> <p>1/7/10 and ongoing</p> <p>1/7/10 and ongoing</p>	<p>Vice Principal Personalisation</p> <p>College Operational Management Team</p> <p>Programme leaders</p>	<p>Steering Group in place and first meeting held</p> <p>Targets established with termly monitoring</p> <p>A more consistent HE approach is developing</p>	<p>College Board</p> <p>College Board</p> <p>College Board</p>	<p>Performance and Standards report</p> <p>Performance and Standards report</p> <p>Performance and Standards report</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> emphasise during the interview, enrolment and induction process for engineering students that some options listed in published materials may not be available (paragraph 51) 	<p>Review and amend published materials to ensure they accurately reflect options offered</p> <p>Explore use of VLE to enhance option choice available</p>	<p>1/6/10</p> <p>1/9/10</p>	<p>Programme Leader</p> <p>Programme Leader</p>	<p>Accurate information published on options available</p> <p>Curriculum offer reviewed and use of VLE considered</p>	<p>College Board</p> <p>College Board</p>	<p>Student feedback</p> <p>Annual Programme Review</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that manual checks of the accuracy of information are continued prior to the introduction of the enhanced model of the curriculum database (paragraph 53). 	<p>Maintain regular checks on published course information to December 2010</p>	<p>15/12/10</p>	<p>Programme leaders and College Marketing Department</p>	<p>Information published on the College website is accurate and up-to-date</p>	<p>College Board</p>	<p>Report from Marketing Manager</p>

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