

## **Integrated quality and enhancement review**

### **Summative review**

April 2010

Hereford College of Arts

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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 Hereford College of Arts 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 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 College's clear strategic direction and its robust and proactive procedures for managing and delivering academic standards through engagement with the Academic Infrastructure are well integrated into its arrangements with the awarding bodies and have created, and are helping to sustain, a vibrant higher education community in the College
- the formal, well-managed involvement of employers in curriculum design and delivery ensures curricular relevance and contributes to the enhancement of academic standards
- the College's management of employer involvement in its suite of Foundation Degrees prepares students well for progression to honours degrees and subsequent employment
- the outcomes of sample course monitoring are used effectively to inform and enhance academic standards
- the College has implemented the Developmental engagement action plan most comprehensively and used it as a springboard for further enhancements to academic standards
- employer involvement in the delivery of work-based learning, including effective use of live briefs, facilitates students' acquisition of the skills that prepare them well for professional life
- academic and technical support staff provide an integrated, stimulating and supportive learning environment, which is highly appreciated by students
- tutorial pads are used effectively as formal records of academic and pastoral tutorials to inform and support student learning and personal development
- the well-designed module handbooks are used extensively by students, who find them particularly helpful in preparing assignments
- the attractive, well-designed and user-friendly Student Handbook and Academic Diary provides students with accessible, comprehensive information on all aspects of college life.

## 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:

- ensure that the articulation between oral and written feedback and the final grade awarded is made more transparent to students
- address student perceptions that software available in the Higher Education Centre is not compatible with that on the other sites.

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

- review student induction to specialist technical workshops to ensure that it is focused on the different needs of students
- ensure consistency in the essential, generic content of programme handbooks
- review assignment briefs for Cultural Studies modules in order that students can understand better what is required of them.



## 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 Hereford College of Arts. 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 Gloucestershire and the University of Wales. The review was carried out by Dr Elizabeth Briggs, Mr Mark Cooper and Mr Millard Parkinson (reviewers), and Mr Jeffery Butel (review coordinator).

2 The Summative review team (the team) conducted the review in agreement with the College and in accordance with *The handbook for Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review* (the handbook), published by QAA. Evidence in support of the Summative review included documentation supplied by the College and awarding bodies, meetings with staff, students, employers and partner institutions, reports of reviews by QAA and from inspections by Ofsted. In particular, the team drew on the findings and recommendations of the Developmental engagement in assessment. A summary of findings from this Developmental engagement is provided in Section C of this report. The review also considered the College's use of the Academic Infrastructure, developed by QAA on behalf of 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 was established in the City of Hereford in 1851 and is the only specialist college in the West Midlands dedicated to the provision of art, media, design and performing arts programmes in both further and higher education. The College occupies four sites and offers a wide range of academic awards, from entry-level work with schools through to honours degree programmes. The College has around 850 students, of whom 316 full and 19 part-time students are enrolled on higher education programmes. The College has around 180 staff, of whom approximately one-third are employed to deliver or support its higher education provision.

5 The College's mission is to provide outstanding education and employability in the creative arts, and progression opportunities for its students are seen as central to the rationale for its higher education provision. The College has sought to widen participation in education at all levels and has formed links with colleges and schools across the region. Since 2007, the College has validated or revalidated all programmes in the Media Arts programme area with the University of Gloucestershire and has validated or revalidated existing and new programmes in the Art and Design programme area with the University of Wales. All programmes are now delivered as part of a college-wide higher education modular framework, within a common programme structure.

6 The following HEFCE-funded programmes, listed by awarding body, are offered by the College. Enrolments and, for part-time programmes, full-time equivalents are shown in brackets.

### **University of Wales**

- BA(Hons) Artist Blacksmithing (33)
- BA(Hons) Contemporary Applied Arts (full-time 57; part-time 1)
- BA(Hons) Contemporary Applied Arts (Top-Up) (1)
- BA(Hons) Fine Art (full-time 30; part-time 0.5)
- BA(Hons) Fine Art (Top-Up) (full-time 11; part-time 4)
- BA(Hons) Jewellery Design (4)
- BA(Hons) Textile Design (15)
- BA(Hons) Textile Design (Top-Up) (10)
- FdA Creative Art Practice (full-time 2; part-time 3)

### **University of Gloucestershire**

- BA(Hons) Animation (12)
- BA(Hons) Film and Screen Media Design (8)
- BA(Hons) Graphic and Media Design (37)
- BA(Hons) Graphic and Media Design (Top-Up) (4)
- BA(Hons) Illustration (29)
- BA(Hons) Photography (full-time 40; part-time 0.5)
- BA(Hons) Photography (Top-Up) (4)
- FdA Animation (1)
- FdA Film and Video (5)
- FdA Graphic and Media Design (4)
- FdA Commercial Photography (full-time 9; part-time 0.5).

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

7 The College has formal agreements with the University of Gloucestershire and the University of Wales. The College has a Memorandum of Cooperation with the University of Gloucestershire and a Memorandum of Agreement for each validated programme. The College has a Validation Agreement with the University of Wales covering the six validated programmes. These agreements set out respective responsibilities very clearly. In both cases, the College is responsible for the design, development and delivery of the validated programmes. The College has a significant level of autonomy for assuring the academic standards of its higher education programmes and the quality of the learning opportunities it provides. It is well supported by its awarding bodies. Operational matters are defined in the University of Wales' Validation Handbook of Quality Assurance – Policies and Procedures, and by the University of Gloucestershire's Collaborative Partners Handbook. There is college membership on the University of Wales' Joint Board of Studies

and on a number of University of Gloucestershire committees, including the Collaborative Partners Committee. Both universities provide direct support at programme level. This is through an external moderator system for the University of Wales and a link tutor system for the University of Gloucestershire.

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

8 As demand for Foundation Degrees has proved limited, and most graduate entry into the creative industries has traditionally been through BA (Hons) routes, the College has focused its recent developments on its BA (Hons) provision. The College intends to move towards a single programme area for its higher education provision and, in the process, rationalise its higher education provision under a single awarding body, the University of Wales. Although the College has a Higher Education Centre, not all higher education programmes are currently located there. In order to enhance the higher education culture and ethos and students' learning experiences, the College is considering locating all higher education provision on one site. No further programme developments are planned in the immediate future.

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

9 Students on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the Summative review team. The submission was compiled by the college Student Liaison Officer following four meetings with higher education student representatives. During the process, meetings were minuted and a final meeting held to confirm that the resultant document reflected students' views accurately. The final document provided the team with a wide-ranging, representative and reflective view, which was extremely helpful in informing the review. During the visit the team met current and former 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?**

10 The College's key strategic aims for higher education are articulated clearly in its Strategic Plan, 2009. There is strong strategic management of the higher education provision to ensure it meets the objectives of providing appropriate progression opportunities, widening participation and offering specialised creative and media arts programmes. The College's clear strategic direction and its proactive procedures for managing and delivering academic standards are well integrated into its arrangements with the awarding bodies. The team considers these procedures, and the clear, vibrant higher education ethos they have helped to create, to be good practice.

11 Since 2006, the College has reorganised its management structure to enhance its higher education provision and delivery. Overall management of higher education provision is the responsibility of the Vice Principal, supported by programme managers for the two curriculum areas of Art and Design and Media Arts. The latter have responsibility for curriculum management and programme delivery and report to the senior management

team. Currently, the Programme Manager for Art and Design is also acting Programme Manager for Media Arts. There are plans to realign the management structure so that a single programme manager is appointed for the academic year 2010-11 to lead all higher education provision. This strategic change is linked to the College's intention to revalidate all its degree programmes with the University of Wales to facilitate administrative and management efficiencies. The College is investigating the feasibility of locating all its higher education work on one site.

12 The College is responsible for the design, development and delivery of programmes validated by the awarding bodies. Curriculum development is the responsibility of the senior management team, overseen by the Vice Principal, and involves consultation with the awarding bodies. Curriculum teams develop programme proposals and documentation, which must explain the rationale, target market and resource implications. Programme development proposals are considered by the senior management team for approval by Academic Board and the relevant awarding body before proceeding to the validation process.

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

13 Programme documentation includes references to the FHEQ, appropriate subject benchmark statements, and the *Code of practice*. Programme specifications demonstrate the alignment of intended learning outcomes with subject benchmark statements and with appropriate FHEQ level descriptors. Assessment policy and procedures and other aspects of programme management show clear engagement with the *Code of practice*. For example, the College admissions process reflects the *Code of practice, Section 10: Admissions to higher education* and student assessment draws upon *Section 6: Assessment of students*.

14 Foundation Degrees are aligned closely to the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark* and to the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning*. The College demonstrates good practice in its formal, well-managed involvement of employers in curriculum design and in the appropriate use of employers in assessment of work-based learning, ensuring curricular relevance and enhancement of academic standards. Furthermore, the College's management of employer involvement in its suite of Foundation Degrees prepares students well for progression to honours degrees and subsequent employment. The team regards this as good 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?**

15 College higher education quality assurance procedures are closely aligned with awarding body requirements through formal partnership agreements. There is well-established and rigorous annual monitoring. Reporting on quality and standards issues is to the college Academic Quality and Standards Committee, a sub-committee of the Board of Governors.

16 College membership of the annual Joint Board of Studies for University of Wales programmes and the University of Gloucestershire Collaborative Partners Committee facilitates continuous dialogue and review of quality assurance issues. These links are underpinned by considerable support through the external moderator system of the University of Wales and the link tutor system of the University of Gloucestershire. Together these mechanisms allow the College to assure itself that it is meeting the requirements of the awarding bodies.

17 Awarding bodies are informed of the performance of college students through the external examining system and the assessment boards. External examiners and moderators have commented favourably on the standards achieved by college students. The College's Higher Education Assessment Policy contributes significantly to ensuring consistency in all assessment matters, and gives confidence to the College and awarding bodies that appropriate standards are maintained. Staff adhere to the college policy for return of marked work and operate the formal complaints and appeals procedures of the awarding bodies. The University of Wales provides access to plagiarism detection software.

18 The College produces annual student progression, retention and achievement data, which is incorporated into the annual programme reports. The College makes effective use of such data, tracking the progression of students carefully, and using the data to measure college performance and inform strategic planning.

19 A sample course monitoring system was introduced in the 2009-10 academic year. This includes reviews of organisation, documentation and assessment processes. Members of the review panels are nominated by the Academic Board and drawn from across the College, including central services. The programme teams develop an action plan to address the findings of the review panel and this in turn informs the annual monitoring process. Of particular note is the emphasis on the identification of good practice in teaching, learning and assessment. The team regards as good practice the College's effective use of the outcomes of sample course monitoring to inform and enhance academic standards.

20 The College has implemented the Developmental engagement action plan most comprehensively and used it as a springboard for further enhancements to academic standards. The team regards this as good practice.

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

21 Staff are entitled to an annual minimum of 30 hours of continuing professional development. Staff development activities are well supported by the College and academic and support staff are able to benefit from internal and external training events to enhance their professional expertise to support academic standards. Staff development events held with the awarding bodies ensure that the College delivers appropriate academic standards.

22 The College is well aware of the specific staff development needs to support its higher education provision. Staff new to higher education teaching are mentored. The College also supports staff to extend and update academic knowledge and skills through scholarly activity. Individual staff development is managed through the College's annual professional development and review scheme, which encourages postgraduate study and research. Dissemination of staff scholarly activities and specialist creative arts developments is the main focus of the Research Study Group. The team concurs with the College's view that there is significant benefit to academic standards as a result of its staff development programme.

**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?**

23 Management of the quality of higher education learning opportunities for the two subject areas of Art and Design and Media Arts is delegated to the Programme Manager. The Programme Manager has overall responsibility for the coherence, staffing, and delivery of programmes. Coordinators for each of the individual programmes within the subject area have responsibility for the quality and outcomes of each programme and report directly to the Programme Manager. The clear delineation of responsibilities helps to ensure that the process is 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?**

24 In reviewing the appropriateness of learning opportunities provided, programme teams draw on a range of sources of evidence including external examiners' reports, retention, achievement and progression data, teaching observations, information from employers and validating bodies and student feedback.

25 Students' opinions are canvassed formally and informally during and after the completion of their studies. Each year group of each programme has at least two student representatives, who meet on a regular basis with their peers to discuss aspects of their learning experience. The findings from these representative meetings are discussed at meetings with coordinators, curriculum teams, senior managers and, if appropriate, college governors. In addition, the College draws upon the National Student Survey and the College's own Annual Internal Student Satisfaction Survey. Response rates in 2008-2009 for the National Student Survey were 84 per cent, compared with a national average of 60 per cent. The College's mean score of 4.2 is above the combined universities and further education colleges' score of 4.0. Students commented that the mechanisms for obtaining student views and the ease of access they have to teaching staff at the College lead to timely consideration of issues raised and, in many cases, to improvements in provision.

26 Students are involved in the sample course monitoring process through meetings with College management on aspects of their learning experience, for example the quality of programme and module handbooks; assignment and project briefs; the College virtual learning environment; assessment feedback; and tutorial and support provision. This has led to a series of recommendations and actions for improvement. These actions include publishing details of student representatives on programme notice-boards and the virtual learning environment, providing more information on postgraduate study, and better signposting of careers and support information.

27 Staff are suitably qualified, with over half holding a postgraduate qualification in their specialist subject area. Most teaching staff have a formal teaching qualification or are working towards one. Mentoring of staff new to higher education and the teaching observation scheme help to assure the College that teaching and learning are appropriate to the needs of its higher education students.

28 The student experience is enhanced by exposure to the professional world of the creative arts, as many part-time staff are also practitioners in creative arts industries. This contributes to the development of appropriate graduate skills. Current and former students also appreciate the contribution of specialist guest lecturers, and participation in local and national exhibitions and competitions. The use of live briefs for student projects has also provided learners with valuable transferrable skills in, for example, acting as a curator for art exhibitions. Employer involvement in the delivery of work-based learning, including effective use of live briefs, facilitates students' acquisition of the skills that prepare them well for professional life. Employers spoke of the importance they attach to the College's commitment to produce graduates with key transferable skills. The team regards the involvement of employers as good practice.

29 The suite of Foundation Degrees offers well-designed progression routes to honours degrees, which serve to maximise student opportunities for academic and career advancement. This is reflected in the subsequent levels of achievement of students, which offers further evidence of the College's provision of appropriate learning opportunities. The team considers this to be good practice.

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

30 Programme content and delivery is clearly aligned to the FHEQ and informed by the *Code of practice*, particularly *Section 6: Assessment of students*, *Section 3: Disabled students*, and *Section 9: Work-based and placement learning*. For example, the college Higher Education Assessment Policy and accompanying 'The Essential Guide for Higher Education Assessment – Tutor Handbook' have been written with reference to the *Code of practice*, *Section 4: Assessment of students*. Reference to the *Code of practice* is also made in programme documentation, including validation reports, and programme and module handbooks refer to relevant subject benchmark statements.

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

31 The quality of teaching and learning is monitored and graded in line with the College's Teaching and Learning Review Scheme (TLRS), and the outcomes reported to the Academic Board. If the quality of teaching and learning is judged poor, staff are provided with help and support to address the issues identified and re-observed at an appropriate point within three months of the original observation. Support provided includes peer review, mentoring, study for professional qualifications, and work shadowing. The outcomes of higher education classroom observations are monitored centrally and good practice, such as effective use of the virtual learning environment in the classroom, is highlighted for sharing.

32 Module and programme evaluations are used to inform the quality of teaching and learning. These are discussed at programme boards and an action plan produced. For example, a graphics programme evaluation indicated that induction was too brief. The College acted promptly to remedy this to the satisfaction of students.

33 Students consider the quality of teaching and learning to be consistently good and regard it as a strength of the College. This is confirmed in the student written submission, and in meetings with past and present students and employers, and in external examiners' reports. External examiners report that the quality of teaching and the commitment of staff is evident in the quality of the student work produced. Students value the quality of teaching and the subject knowledge and enthusiasm demonstrated by tutors and support staff.

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

34 The College has a well-established Tutorial Support and Guidance Policy, which prescribes a minimum entitlement of one formally-recorded tutorial per term for all students. In practice, due to the small, specialist nature of the institution, this is exceeded. Academic and pastoral tutorials provide support for students and are recorded formally on tutorial pads, which act as a reflective tool for students. These tutorial records in turn form the basis of the students' learning journals. Staff and students commented favourably on the effective use of the tutorial pad, particularly in how it informs and supports student learning and development. It is considered to be an area of good practice by the team. Students are also able to access specific additional learning support, either by self-referral to the Learning Support Unit or through referral by staff following identification of particular needs. Overall, the level of academic and pastoral support at the College is highly regarded by current and former students. The team concurs with this view.

35 The college Essential Guide for Higher Education Assessment, 2009-10, includes advice on awarding body assessment regulations, appropriate record keeping, the conduct of tutorials, course evaluation and the marking and grading of student work. This handbook provides helpful guidance to staff, particularly in differentiating between academic and pastoral tutorials.

36 In general, students consider the quality of feedback they receive on their submitted work to be good. This is confirmed by written feedback seen by the team and by external examiner reports. However, some students perceived there to be a discrepancy in the nature, tone and detail of oral feedback compared with the resulting written feedback and final grade. As a result, some students felt that oral feedback often led them to believe that their final grade for a piece of work would be better than the actual outcome. The team considers it advisable that the College ensures that the articulation between oral and written feedback and the final grade awarded is made more transparent to students.

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

37 The College has a well-funded staff development process that supports the enhancement of learning opportunities for students. The fund is open to academic and support staff and offers support for postgraduate study, research, conference attendance and training courses. In addition, the College provides in-house staff development activities and training events organised by the Assistant Principal. Staff development priorities for the College and individuals are determined during the Annual Professional Development and Review scheme. University of Wales moderators have also provided staff development sessions on matters such as using the university library, Harvard referencing, and the use of plagiarism detection software.

**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?**

38 Resource requests at programme level are made to the Programme Manager and senior management team through the course coordinators and the annual course monitoring system. Programme teams and module leaders also advise the Programme Manager on more general resource needs such as library and learning support requirements. Course coordinators, in conjunction with the Higher Education Programme Manager, are invited to submit an annual capital bid for new resources, replacements and



upgrades. The College has well-equipped studios and workshops managed by technical demonstrators, who support students in the production of work and through the provision of resources on loan. Fine Art, Artist Blacksmithing, Contemporary Applied Arts, Illustration, Jewellery Design and Textile Design students are provided with an individual workspace. Students regard access to workshops and spaces to be appropriate and the support offered by the technical demonstrators to be excellent.

39 The College has up-to-date versions of relevant specialist software. However, some students reported problems with the compatibility of software available in the Higher Education Centre with that on the other sites. The College maintains that there is no problem with either forwards or backwards compatibility. The team considers it advisable that the College address these student perceptions.

40 The College Library is open from 0845 to 1830 Monday to Thursday, 0845 to 1630 on Friday and closed at weekends. It is well stocked with books, journals and other media-based resources and offers students access to online journals and other resources. The Library is staffed by specialist arts librarians, and students value highly the support they provide for their learning. Students regard the Library as a useful facility, particularly the quiet study room, and consider that opening hours meet their needs.

41 Students receive an induction to the College and programme, although they reported that induction practice is variable. For example, BA(Hons) Fine Art top-up students expressed concern that they had no formal induction at all and had to rely on the help of their fellow students. Although most students consider the induction process to be useful, FdA Film and Video students considered induction to be uninformative and too late in the year, adversely affecting their access to and ability to use specialist equipment. BA (Hons) Photography students had concerns about low student attendance at induction, which they felt may lead the College to offer a more limited, and less useful, induction in future. However, the College confirmed that such a change is not planned. In addition, some, notably the more mature and less computer-literate, students expressed a desire for streaming during IT induction. The team considers it desirable that the College review student induction to ensure that it is focused on the different needs of students.

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

### **Core theme 3: Public information**

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

42 The college Marketing Unit is responsible for publishing the Higher Education Prospectus and related website material. It also inputs information to its section of the UCAS site and creates UCAS entry profiles for all programmes. Details about content, entry requirements and qualifications are supplied by programme teams. Programme coordinators, the Student Liaison Officer, the Lecturer in Professional Practice and Higher Education Careers and the Business Development Coordinator can also input information to the college website. Validating bodies have absolute discretion on the content of any statements or information about the awarding institution, particularly where it may be used to attract students to the College.

43 The College is responsible for the production of all programme and module handbooks, which are produced to a common format. Most are available in hard copy and all are on the virtual learning environment. They follow general guidelines provided by the awarding bodies, and are produced and reviewed annually. The content is monitored by the Vice Principal and Higher Education Programme Manager. Module handbooks have been revised recently to make them more student-friendly and usable. They are working documents that students use effectively, particularly when producing work for assessment. The team regards the design and use made of module handbooks in supporting student learning to be good practice. Programme handbooks contain information on the college and awarding body regulations and procedures. Students consider programme handbooks to be less useful due to the formal nature of the information provided, which includes content taken directly from submission documents, including programme specifications and module descriptors. These are also all available on the virtual learning environment. There is some inconsistency in the provision of essential, generic information in programme handbooks. For example, some do not contain information on health and safety considerations. The team considers it desirable that there should be greater consistency in the essential, generic content of programme handbooks.

44 The College produces a Student Handbook and Academic Diary. This is distributed to all further and higher education students. It is attractive, well designed and user-friendly and provides students with accessible, comprehensive information on all aspects of college life. The team regards this as an example of good practice.

45 The College produces the Essential Guide to Higher Education Assessment and is in the process of producing a work placement handbook, a draft of which is being circulated to students and employers. The draft handbook seen by reviewers indicated that these developments will enhance higher education provision in the College.

46 The College is responsible for the production of all assignment briefs. These are aligned to the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*. In general, students expressed satisfaction with the briefs, although some for the Cultural Studies modules were considered to be unclear in setting out the required assessment tasks. Although students can seek further guidance from tutors, the team considers it desirable that assignment briefs for Cultural Studies modules reviewed in order that students can understand better what is required of them. In all other respects, the College has responded well to recommendations from the Developmental engagement report and significant improvements have been made to the assessment information contained in module handbooks for the BA Fine Art and BA Photography. The College has also produced standardised documentation to be used to provide written feedback on students' assessed work on all programmes.

47 College and awarding body procedures and regulations for formal complaints and academic appeals are communicated effectively to students in programme handbooks, the Student Handbook and Academic Diary and on the virtual learning environment.

**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?**

48 The accuracy and currency of all information published on websites, UCAS and the virtual learning environment is monitored regularly by the Marketing Manager, Registrar, Higher Education Programme Manager, Vice Principal and Assistant Principal and is signed off by the Principal. The Information Technology Manager monitors the content of the virtual learning environment for appropriateness and copyright considerations. The Senior Higher

Education Officer has the central administration rights to input and monitor information on the College's UCAS site. Information is consistent across all media, the prospectus, website, handbooks, virtual learning environment and UCAS site. The awarding bodies monitor, check and confirm all information concerning awards and the nature of the partnerships.

49 Students indicate high levels of satisfaction with the quality and accuracy of information given prior to enrolment in all forms, including the Higher Education Prospectus, College website, UCAS site and open days. The team concurs and considers that College procedures are effective in ensuring the accuracy and completeness of the information it publishes.

**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**

50 The Developmental engagement visit took place in December 2008. The three lines of enquiry, agreed with the College in advance, are set out below. The lines of enquiry reflect a broad range of assessment issues.

**Line of enquiry 1:** How well does the College ensure assessment is fair, consistent and accurate?

**Line of enquiry 2:** How effectively does assessment inform student learning?

**Line of enquiry 3:** To what extent is the assessment information provided to students accurate and helpful?

51 The Developmental engagement team identified a range of good practice. This included close working with awarding bodies, application of a wide range of assessment tools, clear focusing on students' achievement of intended learning, and second and sometimes third-marking of student work. Student learning was supported effectively through provision of clear feedback on their work, use of learning journals and effective technician support. Assessment documentation was found to be accessible, accurate and produced in timely fashion.

52 The Developmental engagement report also made a number of recommendations. It advised the College to address some communication issues, including the need for greater clarity in some Cultural Studies assessment briefs and for a more formal means of disseminating good assessment practice. It also advised the College to review the effectiveness of the virtual learning environment in supporting assessment. The report considered it desirable that new and part-time staff be able to apply college assessment policy appropriately and consistently, and that the College develop its relationship with employers to ensure a clearer understanding, and expansion, of their role in assessment.

## **D Foundation Degrees**

53 The College currently offers five Foundation Degrees, one validated by the University of Wales and the others by the University of Gloucestershire. In response to the low level of student applications for places on the FdA Spatial Design and FdA Performing Arts courses the College withdrew provision for both programmes at the end of the academic year 2008-09. The College has also decided, for similar reasons, not to launch the recently validated FdA Web Design course; it will keep this under review as part of its strategic planning. Due to increased interest in BA (Hons) provision the College's Foundation Degree provision was further rationalised in 2008-09 with the withdrawal of the FdA Fine Art, FdA Textile Design and FdA Contemporary Applied Arts. From 2009-10 these have been replaced by a single FdA in Creative Art Practice validated by the University of Wales. In preparation for the transfer of all provision to the University of Wales, the College is considering further rationalisation of its Foundation Degree provision. No new Foundation Degree programmes are planned. The conclusions below relating to good practice and recommendations apply equally to Foundation Degrees.

## **E Conclusions and summary of judgements**

54 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Hereford College of Arts' 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 Gloucestershire and the University of Wales.

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

- the College's clear strategic direction and its robust and proactive procedures for managing and delivering academic standards through engagement with the Academic Infrastructure are well integrated into its arrangements with the awarding bodies, and have created, and are helping to sustain, a vibrant higher education community in the College (paragraph 10)
- the formal, well-managed involvement of employers in curriculum design and delivery ensures curricular relevance and contributes to the enhancement of academic standards (paragraphs 14, 28)
- the College's management of employer involvement in its suite of Foundation Degrees prepares students well for progression to honours degrees and subsequent employment (paragraphs 14, 29)
- the outcomes of sample course monitoring are used effectively to inform and enhance academic standards (paragraphs 19, 26)
- the College has implemented the Developmental engagement action plan most comprehensively and used it as a springboard for further enhancements to academic standards (paragraphs 20, 46)
- employer involvement in the delivery of work-based learning, including effective use of live briefs, facilitates students' acquisition of the skills that prepare them well for professional life (paragraph 28)

- academic and technical support staff provide an integrated, stimulating and supportive learning environment, which is highly appreciated by students (paragraphs 33, 34, 38)
- tutorial pads are used effectively as formal records of academic and pastoral tutorials to inform and support student learning and personal development (paragraph 34)
- the well-designed module handbooks are used extensively by students, who find them particularly helpful in preparing assignments (paragraph 43)
- the attractive, well-designed and user-friendly Student Handbook and Academic Diary provides students with accessible, comprehensive information on all aspects of college life (paragraph 44).

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

The team agreed two areas where the College is **advised** to take action:

- ensure that the articulation between oral and written feedback and the final grade awarded is made more transparent to students (paragraph 36)
- address student perceptions that software available in the Higher Education Centre is not compatible with that on the other sites (paragraph 39).

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

- review student induction to specialist technical workshops to ensure that it is focused on the different needs of students (paragraph 41)
- ensure consistency in the essential, generic content of programme handbooks (paragraph 43)
- review assignment briefs for Cultural Studies modules in order that students can understand better what is required of them (paragraph 46).

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

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 that it has **confidence** that, in the context of this Summative review, the College discharges its responsibilities effectively, as set out in the relevant partnership agreement for the management of the quality of learning opportunities to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

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 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.

Hereford College of Arts 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 <b>good practice</b> that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the College's clear strategic direction and its robust and proactive procedures for managing and delivering academic standards through the engagement with the Academic Infrastructure are well integrated into its arrangements with the awarding bodies, and have created, and are helping to sustain, a vibrant higher education community in the College (paragraph 10)</li> </ul>	To maintain and develop staff awareness about the College's strategic direction and encourage staff to actively engage with the Academic Infrastructure	September 2010	Senior Management Team Link Governors Link Tutors Programme Manager	Induction programme undertaken for all new staff Briefings undertaken by Principal and Link Tutors Positive feedback from awarding bodies via Link Tutor/ Moderator and College Governors	Programme Boards Academic Board Academic Quality & Standards Committee	Percentage of staff attending workshops/briefing events Staff feedback to Link Governors Feedback from awarding bodies via Link Tutor/ Moderator

Hereford College of Arts action plan relating to the Summative review: April 2010						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the formal, well-managed involvement of employers in curriculum design and delivery ensures curricular relevance and contributes to the enhancement of academic standards (paragraphs 14, 28)</li> </ul>	To further embed the good practice established through formal links established with employers and review annually	July 2011	Business Development Manager Vice Principal Programme Manager	Formal employer engagement activities/meetings undertaken Increased attendance/participation by employers	Course meetings Joint Board of Study Academic Board Academic Quality & Standards Committee	Positive feedback from employers/students and external examiners Annual Course Reports
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the College's management of employer involvement in its suite of Foundation Degrees prepares students well for progression to honours degrees and subsequent employment (paragraphs 14, 29)</li> </ul>	To maintain and develop employer involvement in/support for the College's Foundation Degree provision	July 2011	Business Development Manager Progressions Manager Programme Manager	Employer links further embedded/extended Positive feedback from students and employers	Academic Board Academic Quality & Standards Committee	Comparative analysis of student feedback Percentage of students progressing to honours degrees and subsequent employment

Hereford College of Arts action plan relating to the Summative review: April 2010						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the outcomes of sample course monitoring are used effectively to inform and enhance academic standards (paragraphs 19, 26)</li> </ul>	<p>To further embed Sample Course Monitoring across the HE curriculum and monitor/review outcomes</p> <p>Appropriate Course Co-ordinators to devise Action Plans for monitoring by Academic Board</p>	July 2011	<p>Course Co-ordinators</p> <p>Programme Manager</p> <p>Assistant Principal</p>	<p>Actions effectively addressed</p> <p>Academic Standards further enhanced</p>	<p>Course Team Meetings</p> <p>Programme Boards</p> <p>Academic Board</p> <p>Academic Quality &amp; standards Committee</p>	<p>Sample Course Monitoring Action Plans</p> <p>Annual Course Reports</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the College has implemented the Developmental engagement action plan most comprehensively and used it as a springboard for further enhancements to academic standards (paragraphs 20, 46)</li> </ul>	<p>To continue to embed and monitor the impact of initiatives introduced via the Developmental Engagement Action Plan</p>	September 2011	<p>Assistant Principal</p> <p>Vice Principal</p> <p>Programme Manager</p>	<p>Ongoing actions effectively addressed</p> <p>Positive feedback from student representatives/ focus groups and surveys</p>	<p>Academic Board</p> <p>Academic Quality &amp; Standards Committee</p>	<p>Comparative analysis of student feedback</p> <p>Comparative analysis of examination results</p> <p>Annual Course Reports</p>



Hereford College of Arts action plan relating to the Summative review: April 2010						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● employer involvement in the delivery of work-based learning, including effective use of live briefs, facilitates students' acquisition of the skills that prepare them well for professional life (paragraph 28)</li> </ul>	To continue to develop and extend opportunities for employer involvement and potential ways of facilitating students' acquisition of relevant skills	July 2011	Business Development Manager Progressions Manager HE Careers Co-ordinator Programme Manager	Positive feedback from students Student successes Percentage of students progressing to employment	Academic Board Academic Quality & Standards Committee	Comparative analysis of student feedback and employment progression statistics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● academic and technical support staff provide an integrated, stimulating and supportive learning environment, which is highly appreciated by students (paragraphs 33, 34, 38)</li> </ul>	To maintain and further enhance the level of support and service provided	July 2011	Estates Manager Programme Manager Assistant Principal	Positive feedback via student reps, focus groups and surveys	Programme Boards Academic Board Academic Quality & Standards Committee	Comparative analysis of student feedback

Hereford College of Arts action plan relating to the Summative review: April 2010							
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>tutorial pads are used effectively as formal records of academic and pastoral tutorials to inform and support student learning and personal development (paragraph 34)</li> </ul>	To maintain and further embed best practice via awareness raising events/workshops as appropriate	July 2011	Programme Manager Assistant Principal	Positive feedback from students Positive feedback via Sample Course Monitoring Report	Programme Board Academic Board Academic Quality & Standards Committee	Sample Course Monitoring Reports Analysis of student feedback	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the well-designed module handbooks are used extensively by students, who find them particularly helpful in preparing assignments (paragraph 43)</li> </ul>	To maintain and further embed best practice via awareness raising events/workshops as appropriate	October 2010	Course Co-ordinators Programme Manager Vice Principal	Positive feedback from students Positive feedback via Sample Course Monitoring Reports	Programme Boards Academic Board Academic Quality & Standards Committee	Comparative analysis of student feedback Sample Course Monitoring Reports	

Hereford College of Arts action plan relating to the Summative review: April 2010						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the attractive, well-designed and user-friendly Student Handbook and Academic Diary provides students with accessible, comprehensive information on all aspects of college life (paragraph 44).</li> </ul>	To review the accessibility of information provided and update content as appropriate	October 2010	Assistant Principal Student Support Managers Registry	Positive feedback from students	Academic Board Academic Quality & Standards Committee	Comparative analysis of student feedback

Hereford College of Arts action plan relating to the Summative review: April 2010						
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<p>The team agreed a number of areas where the College should be advised to take action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● ensure that the articulation between oral and written feedback and the final grade awarded is made more transparent to students (paragraph 36)</li> </ul>	<p>To review and revise current practice as appropriate and raise staff (and student) awareness via briefing events/workshops</p>	<p>October 2010</p>	<p>Course Co-ordinators Programme Managers Vice Principal Assistant Principal</p>	<p>Improved student feedback via student representatives, focus groups and Sample Course Monitoring Briefing events/workshops undertaken</p>	<p>Course Team meetings Programme Boards Academic Board Academic Quality &amp; Standards Committee</p>	<p>Comparative analysis of student feedback Analysis of staff development evaluations</p>

Hereford College of Arts action plan relating to the Summative review: April 2010						
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● address student perceptions that software available in the Higher Education Centre is not compatible with that on the other sites (paragraph 39).</li> </ul>	<p>To review currency and compatibility of software at the Higher Education Centre and respond as appropriate</p> <p>To improve student awareness and understanding of the use and compatibility of software at the Higher Education Centre via briefing events, notes of guidance and workshops</p>	<p>October 2010</p> <p>November 2010</p>	<p>IT Manager Programme Manager</p> <p>IT Manager Course Co-ordinators Programme Manager</p>	<p>Improved student feedback via student representatives, focus groups and Sample Course Monitoring</p>	<p>Senior Management Team Programme Boards Academic Board Academic Quality &amp; Standards Committee</p>	<p>Comparative analysis of student feedback</p>

Hereford College of Arts 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 <b>desired</b> to take action:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to review student induction to specialist technical workshops to ensure that it is focused on the different needs of students (paragraph 41)</li> </ul>	To review student induction processes and arrangements at curriculum and course level for specialist technical workshops and revise as appropriate	September 2010	Course Co-ordinators Programme Manager Vice Principal	Positive feedback via focus groups, student representatives and surveys	Programme Boards Joint Board of Study Academic Board Academic Quality & Standards Committee	Comparative analysis of student feedback

Hereford College of Arts action plan relating to the Summative review: April 2010						
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to ensure consistency in the essential, generic content of programme handbooks (paragraph 43)</li> </ul>	To review and further refine the generic content of programme handbooks to ensure consistency	September 2010	Course Co-ordinators Programme Manager Vice Principal	Positive feedback via focus groups, student representatives and surveys	Programme Boards Joint Board of Study Academic Board Academic Quality & Standards Committee	Analysis of student feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to revise the assignment briefs for Cultural Studies modules in order that students can better understand what is required of them (paragraph 46).</li> </ul>	To review and revise assignment briefs for Cultural Studies modules as appropriate	September 2010	Cultural Studies staff Programme Manager Vice Principal	Assignment briefs revised Improved student feedback via focus groups, student representatives and surveys	Programme Boards Academic Board Academic Quality & Standards Committee	Analysis of student feedback re clarity of assignment briefs for Cultural Studies modules

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