Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

Fareham College

December 2010

SR 014

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 Fareham College carried out in December 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/or completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Good practice

The team has identified the following good practice for dissemination:

- the College has made progress in refining its management and reporting structures to accommodate higher education within its effective further education systems to assure standards and quality
- the open and collaborative partnership with the University includes active participation at various levels, especially the essential support given by the liaison tutor
- feedback from external examiners on the HNC provision consistently highlights the achievement of a high standard of work and the teaching team readily acts on recommendations made
- the entire higher education provision is employer-focused and reflects the distinctive needs of the local area
- good quality and informative feedback, promoting student learning and understanding, is provided on assignments across the provision
- the College invests heavily on an annual basis to ensure its information technology infrastructure remains up to date.

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:

- review programme specifications so that they are free standing, contain all necessary information and are presented in a consistent format.

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

- invite the College Higher Education Forum to debate the systems for the submission of student work across all higher education courses to ensure equivalence of the student experience and that academic standards are consistently maintained

- continue to develop the Higher Education Forum and structures for the strategic management of the higher education provision at college level, in order to secure academic standards and future enhancement
- reflect the needs of the staff involved in teaching higher education explicitly in the future development of the Teaching and Learning Strategy
- continue to monitor that information to students is always current and accurate, both in the paper versions and in the information which appears on the virtual learning environment.

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 Fareham College. The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the College discharges its responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes which the College delivers on behalf of Edexcel and the University of Chichester. The review was carried out by Mr Graham Brotherton, Mrs Catherine Fairhurst (reviewers) and Ms Penny Blackie (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, a meeting with students, telephone conversations with employers, 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 was conducted by a desk-based study. The review also considered the College's use of the Academic Infrastructure, developed by QAA on behalf of higher education providers, with reference to the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice),* subject and award benchmark statements*, The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and programme specifications.

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

4   The College is a general further education college located on the western outskirts of Fareham, offering education and training opportunities from pre-entry to level 7. It serves a population of almost 200,000 in the boroughs of Fareham and Gosport in south-east Hampshire, where around 76 per cent of young people stay in education after the age of 16. The College's main focus is on vocational provision, with a mission 'to develop the full potential of all our students and learners through outstanding teaching and support services'. In a recent Ofsted inspection (January 2009), the College was graded 'good with outstanding features'. The small amount of higher education provision is seen as important to the College and is designed to meet local employer needs.

5   In the academic year 2010-11, 84 students were following HEFCE-funded higher education programmes, amounting to 46.25 full-time equivalents. There are 59 students studying for HNC qualifications and 25 on the Foundation Degree (FdA) in Early Childhood, now in its second year. All students are part-time and sponsored by employers. Some 3,252 students are currently enrolled within the College's further education provision. Nine members of full-time staff teach on higher education programmes.

6   The higher education awards funded directly by HEFCE are listed below, beneath their awarding bodies and with full-time equivalent (FTE) numbers of students for 2010-11:

Edexcel

- Higher National Certificate Electrical/Electronic Engineering (6.5 FTEs)
- Higher National Certificate Mechanical Engineering (11 FTEs)

- Higher National Certificate Aerospace Engineering (12 FTEs)

University of Chichester

- FdA Early Childhood (16.75 full-time equivalents).

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

7   The engineering provision with Edexcel, which is part-time and offered in partnership with employers, has been offered for more than 10 years. The College has a mature relationship with Edexcel and changes to units are discussed when appropriate. Edexcel external examiners work with the College to assure the quality of the part-time day-release programmes. The University of Chichester has a number of college partners for the FdA Early Childhood. The University has a close relationship with the College and provides all the documentation for the programme. This is comprehensive and clear, as are the responsibilities for each partner.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

8   The higher education at the College is funded directly by HEFCE and, although the College unexpectedly over-recruited in 2009, it has been difficult to increase the student numbers due to the current limitation on funded student numbers. The College is keen to increase the provision, but recognises that this is not possible. One solution would be to offer programmes at full cost. An example has recently been implemented with BAE Systems. In the months before the review, the senior member of staff responsible for higher education has also had to become Acting Principal. The College has dealt with this by upgrading a director of faculty to an assistant principal's post to have an overview of higher education and spread the responsibility among other areas. Following the Developmental engagement recommendations of November 2009 the College has established a Higher Education Forum, which they plan will take an active role in the development of the provision and in engaging the student voice.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

9   Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the Summative review team. A submission was prepared with some support from the College. It was based on focus groups and an online survey, to which about 15 per cent of higher education students responded. The coordinator met a group of mostly first-year students at the preparatory meeting.

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 Higher Education and Professional Courses Curriculum Strategy 2010-2012 describes the College's aims for the development of higher education. There is

recognition that investment considerations must include the need to develop quality and other processes specifically for higher education programmes. The management of the higher education provision is completely integrated within the mainstream further education performance improvement, monitoring and reporting systems. Where there needs to be some differentiation, for example in staff development, the Academic Infrastructure and teaching and learning styles, current systems are gradually changing to become more specific.

11   The Vice-Principal Curriculum and Quality (Director of Planning) is responsible for the development of higher education. Academic standards are overseen by the Academic Standards Committee, which convenes at least once a term to review performance against expected targets. The College management structure has developed in the past two years to embrace the needs of its small (two per cent) but important higher education provision. These changes have included the establishment of an Academic Standards Committee that reports directly to a subcommittee of the College's Board of Governors; the Students, Curriculum and Quality Committee; and the Higher Education Forum. The establishment of this Forum was a recommendation of the Developmental engagement in assessment in 2009. The relationship between the various committees is clear and it is apparent how the College is managing its small provision of higher education within its further education systems.

12   The College's further education quality assurance systems are fit for purpose and have been judged as 'good' by Ofsted, with the procedures described as 'comprehensive'. Rigorous quality systems and procedures, including self-assessment frameworks and quality improvement plans, are very clearly explained in the College's Quality Assurance Handbook. These are appropriate for the higher education provision and are aligned to the needs of both Edexcel and the University of Chichester's quality assurance requirements. Internal Quality Reviews are carried out annually, and those for the engineering and early childhood provision are helpful to the course teams and appropriately evaluative. Staff reported that they clearly understood the systems and structures. The team considers it good practice that the College has made progress in refining its management and reporting structures to accommodate higher education within its effective further education systems to ensure standards and quality.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

13   In its self-evaluation, the College recognises that the Academic Infrastructure has not featured sufficiently in the past, although the University of Chichester takes responsibility for ensuring that the FdA Early Childhood reflects the Academic Infrastructure and incorporates the specifications which correspond to *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.* Meetings regularly take place between College staff and managers at the partner institution, which help the development of shared knowledge and understanding of these requirements. The external examiner for the HNC Engineering courses states that 'the centre meets the expectations of the QAA *Code of Practice* and the Academic infrastructure.' The external examiner for the Foundation Degree states that 'the FdA Early Childhood meets the requirements of QAA's *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark,* specifically the integration of academic and authentic work-based learning, the development of vocational skills and competencies and a clear progression route on to a BA (Hons) (Top-up) degree.'

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?

14   The partnership agreement with the University of Chichester sets out the specific responsibilities of the College and its partner. The open and collaborative partnership with the University includes active participation at various levels. There is a clear procedure in the University of Chichester Academic Framework for Collaboration document, and this brings together key documents and templates to assist colleges by providing the academic framework for development and delivery of their collaborative programmes. Higher education course leaders and staff are well supported by the parent programme at the University of Chichester. There are regular programme leaders' meetings, which include student representatives and networking with other collaborative colleges. The agenda includes minor modifications, external examiners and the standardisation of delivery, admissions, records, documents and assessment. The College considers the University's liaison tutor to be essential to this support in terms of guidance. The role is defined in detail by the University. The liaison tutor has been contributing significantly to the course development and delivery in the first year of provision of the Foundation Degree and is key in the relationship with the other colleges delivering this course.

15   The documentation and minutes of the 2009 validation event conducted at the College demonstrate that the approval event was attended by University representatives and external advisers and was well conducted. The University of Chichester team has also developed a helpful subject-specific marking grid, which supports shared understanding of expectations and standards and is used by all the partner colleges. Progression arrangements with specific honours degree programmes were considered at the validation event. Staff confirmed that sufficient time is allowed for the proper scrutiny of proposed curricula, intended learning outcomes and their assessment.

16   At course level, there is evidence that effective management and quality assurance of standards are in place and are consistent, as shown by the self-assessment reports for each course. These are concerned primarily with an evaluation of student achievement of the appropriate academic standards, and of the learning opportunities offered to students to support their achievements. All reports are submitted to the Quality Improvement Manager's office. At the same time, a copy of the report is sent to the relevant director of faculty. Reports are scrutinised by the Quality Improvement Manager. Areas of innovative and excellent practice, as well as areas in which there is a deficit of good practice, are drawn to the attention of the head of department. The reports form the basis of the College's self-assessment report.

17   External examiners appointed by Edexcel and the University confirm that the standards and quality of the provision are sound and that student achievement is at an appropriate level. Feedback from external examiners consistently highlights the achievement of a high standard of work and the teaching teams readily act on recommendations made. There are procedures for receiving the reports, identifying and progressing concerns, and checking their completion. The FdA Early Childhood uses University of Chichester protocols. In early childhood and engineering, the report goes to the Principal and the Quality Improvement Manager, who evaluate the report and refer any issues to the senior management team. Emerging issues are dealt with in an action plan from the course originator and the report is revised again by a set date. Good practice is shared at staff development days and in meeting slots; for example, development work on the virtual learning environment was shared across the College.

18   The College has in place robust systems for ensuring that assessment grades are comparable within a course. When students submit work, it is marked and internally verified and second-marked for the Foundation Degree. A Chichester colleague, the liaison tutor, samples overall and the marking is checked again by the external examiner for each programme. However, there are variations in the systems used for submission of student work between courses. The Developmental engagement team agreed that it would be desirable for the College to review the process of open-ended assessment. Currently, HNC students are able to submit their assignments twice to improve their grade, in accordance with Edexcel regulations. In view of the College's ambitions to expand and develop their higher education provision, the team considers it desirable that the College invite the Higher Education Forum to debate the systems for the submission of student work across all higher education courses to ensure equivalence of the student experience and that academic standards are consistently upheld.

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

19   The College has appointed a dedicated Academic Staff Development Manager, which has resulted in the expansion of the staff development function. There is a staff development and planning process with a specific staff development cycle based on the appraisal system using human resource software. All full-time teaching staff complete an annual tariff of 30 hours of continuing professional development, with part-time teaching staff pro rata. All full-time support staff complete an annual tariff of 15 hours of continuing professional development, with part-time support staff pro rata. The University of Chichester organises staff development sessions and away days for College staff, and one of the Foundation Degree staff has attended these. At the preparatory meeting, the teaching staff believed that they are fully prepared for higher education work, and there is evidence of preparation for teaching in higher education, research and subject updating in their curricula vitae.

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?

20   The arrangements for the management of higher education programmes are set out in paragraphs 11, 12 and 13. Ultimate responsibility for the management of the quality of learning opportunities rests with the Academic Standards Committee. Given the small size of the College's higher education provision, the generic framework for managing learning opportunities in the College is applied to the higher education programmes. The setting up of the Higher Education Forum provides a potential framework for ensuring that this system works effectively, but as noted elsewhere this is at an early stage in its development. There are small, close teams within faculties and a clear management structure. On a day-to-day basis, management is delegated to the course leaders and their teams.

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

21   External examiners' reports for both programmes confirm that adequate arrangements for learning opportunities are in place and that the courses adhere to the Academic Infrastructure. The regular meetings of the network of colleges with the University of Chichester offer the Foundation Degree teaching team the opportunity to discuss the development of the programme. In the first year of the Foundation Degree, joint teaching took place which ensured the quality of learning opportunities. As the College has become more familiar with the programme in its second year the University contribution has been reduced. As stated in paragraph 17, there is a clear system, coordinated by the Quality Improvement Manager, for ensuring that any issues raised in external examiners' reports are responded to and an appropriate action plan developed.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

22   The report from the recent Developmental engagement in assessment confirmed that the College has an effective assessment process for its higher education programmes which meets the expectations of the *Code of practice*, as set out in *Section 6: Assessment of students.* The early childhood programme has completed its first year and assessment was confirmed as congruent with the University's expectations through the programme leaders' meeting and the external examiner's report.

23   The entire higher education provision, and the Higher Education Strategy, is employer-focused and reflects the distinctive needs of the local area, which the team noted as good practice. The part-time higher education students are employed and receive valuable support from their employers, who are also involved productively in curriculum design. One employer a reviewer spoke to rated the College highly compared with others and said that any queries are dealt with straight away. The FdA Early Childhood has a system of placement support and mentoring, which includes training and modest payment for mentors in recognition of their role in supporting students. This is understood and valued by both students and employers and is in line with the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning*. It is also supported by clear guidance to all parties through clear and well organised handbooks.

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

24   Following the Developmental engagement, the College has recently developed the Higher Education Forum and given greater emphasis to higher education in its Academic Standards Committee. The dedicated Higher Education Forum, where academic staff, partner organisations, business support staff and students can discuss higher education under one structure, has only met on two occasions so far. The College feels that these changes to the committee structure align the quality assurance processes more closely with the needs of both Edexcel and the University of Chichester's quality assurance requirements. Course leaders and students are members of tHigher Education Forum and they will discuss and share good practice. Since tHigher Education Forum has only met on two occasions so far, the team considers it too early to judge the effectiveness of the new arrangements but recognises the establishment of tHigher Education Forum as a positive step. The team considers it desirable that the College continue to develop the Higher Education Forum and structures for the strategic management of the higher education provision at college level, in order to secure academic standards and future enhancement.

25   Teaching observations are based on a system developed for Ofsted, with observations undertaken by the head of department. In addition, there is a pilot peer review initiative, 'Teaching Squares', in which staff choose observation goals through appraisal. Since higher education is a small element of the College's overall portfolio and no staff within the College teach exclusively on higher education programmes, the system meets the College's current needs. Nonetheless, the team considers that it would be desirable for the College to reflect the needs of the staff involved in teaching higher education explicitly in the future development of the Teaching and Learning Strategy.

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

26   The College has sought to enhance its support mechanisms to improve information, advice and guidance afforded to students when they apply for a course. This is sometimes difficult, particularly since the HNC students are usually seconded from their employers and the College is unaware of who they are until quite late in the application cycle. An information pack and new induction system have been introduced, where first-year students are invited to attend for the week before the beginning of the course. This has had a positive impact on the retention of students by ensuring that they fully understand the commitment required to study at a higher level and while working full-time. This is to be further refined through the development of a new application form for the HNC for 2011 applicants.

27   Individual students are allocated a personal tutor, who is responsible for offering general guidance in their academic work, monitoring progress and initiating the provision of additional support where this may be required. Personal tutors fulfil a supportive role, particularly because all higher education students are part-time. They will discuss any matters affecting their academic work. Many do so through email, a helpful mechanism for part-time students. Foundation Degree students are required to keep a regular Personal Development Portfolio, as part of a discrete module, where they reflect on their professional practice and their learning at the College. Good-quality and informative feedback to students, promoting their learning and understanding, is provided on assignments across the provision.

28   The College offers online communication and tutorial facilities through email and the College virtual learning environment. This offers students real-time access to tutors. The virtual learning environment contains useful resources, such as course handbooks, assignment hand-in dates, session materials, self-assessment quizzes and student forums. As highlighted in the Developmental engagement, there are inconsistencies in the way it is used both within and between programmes, for example around the provision of module handbooks and additional resources to support learning. Some of the material did not seem to have been regularly updated.

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

29   Staff are supported in fulfilling their higher education teaching commitments through access to appropriate staff development opportunities. This is managed through the appraisal system. Staff records reflect an appropriate range of professional, industrial and academic experience, including strong links with awarding bodies. Staff are normally only expected to teach across two levels, for example level 3 and level 4, to support them in developing appropriate expertise. On the Foundation Degree, staff have access to the support of a liaison tutor and partnership meetings with the rest of the University of Chichester's Foundation Degree partnership.

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?

30   The Learning Resources Centre stays open until 7.00 pm each of the nights when higher education courses operate. Some students find it difficult to visit the Learning Resources Centre frequently enough to borrow books that are in high demand, or to use materials that can only be read in the Learning Resources Centre itself. The Learning Resources Centre attends closely to such issues through its policies on purchase of books and journals and on provision of photocopying facilities. This relates particularly to building up electronic resources and links with other libraries. The Learning Resources Centre has invested in the development of an ebrary facility, to allow access to e-versions of many books, which is also connected to the College virtual learning environment. The College invests heavily on an annual basis to ensure its information technology infrastructure remains up to date.

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?

31   The Memorandum of Agreement with the University of Chichester clearly identifies responsibilities for publishing information. The University is responsible for the provision of accurate information about validated programmes to the partner and for occasional audit of all promotional materials. Prior approval is normally required before any changes are made to agreed promotional materials. The College is responsible for accuracy in marketing, publicity and other promotional material in any media.

32   At course level, the FdA Early Childhood students are issued with a comprehensive University of Chichester Student Programme Handbook customised for the College, which includes programme specification, staff lists, key dates, learning and teaching (including Personal Development Planning), assessment, student guidance and support, programme management and module descriptors; this is also available on the virtual learning environment. Engineering students are given clear, standardised assessments briefs with learning outcomes and assessment criteria. In the student written submission, all of the students surveyed agreed that they received clear guidance on how they were to be assessed. The HNC Course Handbook is also considered to be a valuable source of information which prepares the students well for forthcoming assignments and assessment processes. However, the team considers that it is advisable for the College to review programme specifications so that they are free standing, contain all necessary information and are presented in a consistent format.

33   College information on its higher education provision is published in the Prospectus for Higher Education and Professional Courses, which contains information about all courses above level 3. The College student diary and handbook include College policy statements concerning complaints and student appeals, disciplinary procedures, and guides for students on sources of information and assistance which they might require during their period of study. The student diary also offers a useful planning tool. The College website contains a range of useful generic information to students about applications, study support and

College policies and procedures. However, little of this relates specifically to higher education. The University of Chichester's website does not include information about the College's provision, although other partner colleges are included. On-programme information to students is also available through the College virtual learning environment, which is well used and received by students.

34   The Developmental engagement identified students who commented on the lack of information available before they commenced their programme and felt that it would have been useful to have had available information relating to the programme level, assessment processes and what would be expected of them. This is still the case with the engineering students, who do not receive any advance information from the College. This is largely because the College does not receive applicants' details from employers before the start of the academic year. A comprehensive induction session is conducted with students who have not progressed internally from level 3 during the week before the start of term. The Developmental engagement advised the development of information packs, to be sent to all potential internal and external applicants for higher education programmes, since these would considerably assist students in the transition to programmes of study at level 4 and above, and enhance the status of the provision. The handbook developed for HNC students, following this recommendation, was commended by the external examiner. The Foundation Degree students receive very helpful advance information, explicit enough to enable them to know what is happening in each year.

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?

35   The College publishes a wide range of information relating to its courses of study in printed and in electronic form. Departments offer a range of specific information to students on both the individual courses on offer and the resources and services provided by the department. Heads of department are responsible for the accuracy of this information. Students are expected to receive and access a variety of information at the point of application and on entry to their chosen course of study. This may be supplemented by module handbooks or information on the virtual learning environment where module details are not included in the main handbook. As stated in paragraph 31, all material relating to the Foundation Degree is produced by or in cooperation with the University of Chichester. The team acknowledges that there are significant challenges facing the College in seeking to ensure that HNC students receive timely information, for reasons explained in paragraph 34. Progress has been made in this area since the Developmental engagement. The team considers it desirable that the College continue to monitor that information to students is always current and accurate, both in the paper versions and in the information which appears on the virtual learning environment.

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

C   Summary of findings from the Developmental engagement in assessment

36   The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in November 2009 and covered all the higher education provision. Three lines of enquiry were agreed with the College and ensured that all IQER core themes could be addressed:

Line of enquiry 1: the standard, level and clarity of assignment briefs and their promotion of the achievement of the learning outcomes.
Line of enquiry 2: the extent to which the College's public information prepares and develops students' understanding of the assessment requirements of their course and supports the achievement of learning outcomes.
Line of enquiry 3: the effectiveness of the College's virtual learning environment at improving academic progression and achievement for part-time students.

The Foundation Degree had started only a few months before the visit.

37   The Developmental engagement team identified a number of areas of good practice: well-designed assignment briefs on engineering programmes, clearly identifying the learning outcomes needed to demonstrate merit and distinction; positive feedback from external examiners on the standard of engineering programmes; the employer-focused nature of the higher education provision, which meets local needs; good quality and informative feedback to students on the engineering programmes; and the development of the virtual learning environment to enhance learning opportunities and remote access for part-time students.

38   The team also made a number of recommendations. It considered that it would be advisable for the College to refine the existing further education quality assurance processes to embrace the needs of the developing higher education portfolio; establish a higher education forum to promote the enhancement of academic standards, student learning opportunities, and the sharing of good practice; review programme specifications for consistency; and review programme handbooks to ensure a threshold level of information appropriate to programme and student needs. The team recommended that the College develop appropriate information packs to send to applicants for higher education programmes. The team considered it desirable to take action to review the process of open-ended assessment, which can lead to inconsistencies across the provision; revise the assessment policy to reflect higher education more fully; and develop the quality of written feedback provided on student assignments within the Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (now no longer part of the College's HEFCE-funded provision). The team also considered that the College could consider devising a template for programme handbooks for consistency of information and extend and encourage the consistent use of the virtual learning environment by the teaching staff.

D   Foundation Degrees

39   Reflecting its focus on vocational provision, the College offered its first Foundation Degree in Early Childhood in September 2009, sector endorsed and validated by the University of Chichester. The College would like to introduce further Foundation Degrees in Beauty Sciences, Graphics (2011) and Travel and Tourism (2012).

40   As the College's first Foundation Degree programme started in September 2009, it was too early for the team to draw any specific conclusions about the quality and standards of the Foundation Degree provision.

E   Conclusions and summary of judgements

41   The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Fareham 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, Edexcel and the University of Chichester.

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

- the College has made progress in refining its management and reporting structures to accommodate higher education within its effective further education systems to assure standards and quality (paragraph 12)
- the open and collaborative partnership with the University includes active participation at various levels, especially the essential support given by the liaison tutor (paragraph 14)
- feedback from external examiners on the HNC provision consistently highlights the achievement of a high standard of work and the teaching team readily acts on recommendations made (paragraph 17)
- the entire higher education provision is employer-focused and reflects the distinctive needs of the local area (paragraph 23)
- good quality and informative feedback, promoting student learning and understanding, is provided on assignments across the provision (paragraph 27)
- the College invests heavily on an annual basis to ensure its information technology infrastructure remains up to date (paragraph 30).

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

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

- review programme specifications so that they are free standing, contain all necessary information and are presented in a consistent format (paragraph 32).

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

- invite the College Higher Education Forum to debate the systems for the submission of student work across all higher education courses to ensure equivalence of the student experience and that academic standards are consistently maintained (paragraph 18)
- continue to develop the Higher Education Forum and structures for the strategic management of the higher education provision at college level, in order to secure academic standards and future enhancement (paragraph 24)
- reflect the needs of the staff involved in teaching higher education explicitly in the future development of the Teaching and Learning Strategy (paragraph 25)
- continue to monitor that information to students is always current and accurate, both in the paper versions and in the information which appears on the virtual learning environment (paragraphs 28, 34 and 35).

46   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.

47   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.

48   Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, and other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that, in the context of this Summative review, reliance **can** be placed on the accuracy and/or completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Fareham College action plan relating to the Summative review: December 2010						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
In the course of the Summative review the team identified the following areas of **good practice** that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
• the College has made progress in refining its management and reporting structures to accommodate higher education within its effective further education systems to ensure standards and quality (paragraph 12)	Further refinement of the management and reporting systems through the Higher Education Forum	July 2011	Vice-Principal Curriculum and Quality Quality Improvement Manager	Wider staff awareness plus greater dissemination of information and sharing of good practice	Academic Standards Committee	Greater awareness and consistency of systems across all higher education provision in the College Evidenced via **SCQ minutes***
• the open and collaborative partnership with the University includes active participation at various levels, especially the essential support given by the liaison tutor	We will continue to further enhance this partnership. The Liaison Tutor is a member of the Higher Education Forum and attends regularly. College staff will continue to attend University meetings with other collaborative partners	June 2011	Quality Improvement Manager Head of Department for Early Years and Education	The existing strong working relationship between the College and the University of Chichester will be further strengthened through collaborative working	Higher Education Forum and senior management team (SMT)	**Student and Staff perception survey results** Satisfaction survey of first cohort due to complete in June 2011

(paragraph 14)	Regular email and telephone correspondence will also continue to be developed to ensure accurate and timely correspondence					
• feedback from external examiners on the HNC provision consistently highlights the achievement of a high standard of work and the teaching team readily acts on recommendations made (paragraph 17)	The higher education Engineering team will continue to respond to any valuable feedback and recommendations from the external examiner, which is provided to the Higher Education Forum in written form The contents will continue to be discussed at Course Team Meetings and actions/ recommendations followed through as quickly as possible	June 2011	Quality Improvement Manager Head of Department for Engineering	Positive Edexcel External Examiner's Report in June 2010	Academic Standards Committee, Curriculum and Students' Committee and Higher Education Forum	Edexcel **External Examiner's Report** confirms high standards of course organisation, teaching and learning
• the entire higher education provision is employer-focused and reflects the distinctive needs of the local area	The College will continue to make use of local market intelligence and market trends to align its higher education curriculum	July 2011	Vice-Principal Curriculum and Quality Head of Department for Engineering	Increased numbers of higher education students enrolled Five additional employers engaged	SMT	Employer satisfaction with the supply of HNC engineering places Supply matches demand regardless

(paragraph 23)	The College is reviewing the need for a full-cost model to deliver HNC programmes in engineering disciplines to support the matching of demand with supply The HNC has seen considerable growth in recent years The current HEFCE funding allocation will not facilitate the required growth		Director of Faculty Technical Studies			of the need for additional HEFCE funding Via **Employer Satisfaction survey**
• good quality and informative feedback, promoting student learning and understanding, is provided on assignments across the provision (paragraph 27)	Plenty of space is provided on assignment script for assessment comments from assessor In addition, a tick-box system has been developed, allowing inadequacies in assignments to be clearly identified Further use of the student comment box to provide students with an additional opportunity for feedback will be encouraged	March 2011	Higher education Course Leaders	Extended use of good student feedback to encourage students to improve grades	Higher Education Forum	**Grades profile and student feedback** is very positive

	Foundation Degree staff will continue to provide informative feedback following University and External Examiner Guidelines					
• the College invests heavily on an annual basis to ensure its information technology infrastructure remains up to date (paragraph 30).	The College will continue to invest annually in a managed replacement scheme for desktop and mobile computers, network infrastructure and audio-visual equipment Specialist high-specification facilities will be provided where appropriate	July 2011	Information technology Services Manager Heads of departments with higher education provision	Continued targeted investment in IT for higher education students Improved access for all higher education students	SMT	**Information Technology Strategy** completed and student feedback highlights improved access
Advisable	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
The team agreed a number of areas where the College should be **advised** to take action:						
• review programme specifications so that they are free standing, contain all necessary information and are presented in a consistent format (paragraph 32).	Discussion is to take place between the HNC course leaders in engineering and early childhood learning A sample specification from the University for the early learning course	May 2011	Course leaders To forward specification template to Quality Improvement Manager to agree final format	Recognisable and consistent higher education specifications	Vice-Principal Curriculum and Quality	Consistent presentation of **higher education Specifications** to ensure equality of provision across all programmes

	Action to be taken					
	is to be provided and a standard specification developed following University specification Both teams to meet occasionally to ensure consistency is maintained across the provision Engineering to view Foundation Degree specifications and present in a similar format To devise a common format for the higher education provision so that there is universal and consistent presentation					

Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team agreed the following areas where it would be **desired** to take action:						
• invite the College Higher Education Forum to debate the systems for the submission of student work across all higher	Regular agenda item on future Higher Education Forum meetings to include protocols for the submission of student work	March 2011	Vice-Principal Curriculum and Quality Quality Improvement Manager	Improved consistency across all programmes to ensure a common and fair student experience in the treatment of	Higher Education Forum and Student and Curriculum Committee	Greater consistency of process relating to the submission of student work evidenced through **quality monitoring and student**

education courses to ensure equivalence of the student experience and that academic standards are consistently maintained (paragraph 18)				academic work		**feedback**
• continue to develop the Higher Education Forum and structures for the strategic management of the higher education provision at college level, in order to secure academic standards and future enhancement (paragraph 24)	Regular, appropriate agenda items supported by focused debate to ensure the strategic direction of the College's higher education provision is secured	March 2011	Vice-Principal Curriculum and Quality	Regular discussion and direction as to the strategic direction of the College's higher education is recorded and actioned through the Higher Education Forum	Higher Education Forum and SMT	Strategic direction of higher education features with greater prominence in the **College's Strategic Plan**
• reflect the needs of the staff involved in teaching higher education explicitly in the future development of the Teaching and Learning strategy (paragraph 25)	Foundation Degree staff to discuss training needs at Foundation Degree meetings and will feed back ideas to Curriculum Staff Development Manager Teaching and Learning	Summer 2011	Vice-Principal Students and Teaching	Updated strategy and staff development explored	Acting Principal	Students and staff recognise in feedback the different teaching strategies and techniques needed to deliver higher education provision

	Strategy to be reviewed and specific teaching delivery for higher education to be included. Development of further opportunities for higher education personal staff development for teachers					Via **Teaching and Learning Strategy**
• continue to monitor that information to students is always current and accurate, both in the paper versions and in the information which appears on the virtual learning environment (paragraphs 28, 34, 35).	The course leader for HNC engineering is to maintain the virtual learning environment for the programme area to ensure information is current An induction week for the HNC first year is to be programmed more formally, facilitating an enhanced briefing of the first-year students to take place before the HNC starts	June 2011	Vice-Principal Students and Teaching	More effective information, advice and guidance reported back from students Positive response from higher education students as to the quality of information provided	Vice-Principal Students and Teaching	**Student and employer feedback** is positive about information available and the accuracy of its content

*evidenced via detail shown in **bold**.