QAA

Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

East Berkshire College

March 2011

SR 48/2010

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 East Berkshire College carried out in March 2011

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

Good practice

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

- the Higher Education Steering Group brings together heads of school and programme leaders across the provision and enables the sharing of good practice
- the annual Higher Education Summary Report, which covers all aspects of the provision, enabling senior managers and others to gain a clear picture of the College's higher education provision
- the College facilitates support for students through work-based mentors, who receive clear specifications of their roles and course information
- the Teaching Squares scheme enhances teaching, learning and assessment through a process of peer review.

Recommendations

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

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

- consider means by which staff could be made more aware of the Academic Infrastructure as it relates specifically to their College roles
- ensure that all programmes meet defined minimum standards for content on the virtual learning environment and that usage continues to be regularly monitored
- ensure consistency of student experience by defining best practice in handbook design and content and ensure that all course handbooks are produced to these standards.

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 East Berkshire 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 Buckinghamshire New University, London South Bank University and Thames Valley University. The review was carried out by Mr Peter Cutting, Mrs Catherine Fairhurst, Mr Peter Hymans (reviewers) and Mr Martin Hill (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   East Berkshire College is a large general further education college with two campuses, one in Slough and one in Windsor. The College offers a range of programmes from pre-entry to level 3 and, in some subjects, levels 4 and 5 for young people and adults. The higher education provision has been developed to meet local and regional employers' skills needs and represents approximately two per cent of all College enrolments. The overall mission of the College is 'to provide high quality education so that our students, whatever their ability, reach their potential'.

5   In the academic year 2009-10 the College had 10,654 enrolments; 51 per cent of the full-time equivalent (FTE) students were 16-18 years old and 49 per cent were adults. The College employs over 800 full-time and part-time staff, and of these 460 are engaged in teaching. There are currently 140 students (137.67 FTEs) studying higher education programmes at the College, taught by 25 staff. The higher education awards that are funded by HEFCE are listed below:

Bucks New University

- Diploma in Higher Education Stitched Textiles, part-time year three (7 students) (4.67 FTEs)
- FD Business and Management, part-time, year one (14 students) (14 FTEs)
- FD Early Years, part-time (33 students) (33 FTEs)
- FD Primary Education, part-time (32 students) (32 FTEs)

London South Bank University

- FD Construction, part-time (13 students) (13 FTEs)
- FD Building Services Engineering, part-time (18 students) (18 FTEs)

Thames Valley University

- FD Working with Children and Young People, part-time (23 students) (23 FTEs).

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

6   There are three Foundation Degrees offered in partnership with Bucks New University, together with a Diploma in Higher Education in Stitched Textiles. Two Foundation Degrees are offered with London South Bank University and one with Thames Valley University. The higher education programmes are offered on a part-time basis and students are required to be in paid or voluntary employment.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

7   During 2009-10, the College reviewed its plans for higher education growth in the light of national funding changes, local skills needs and areas of teaching expertise within the College. It was agreed to discontinue the FD Computing, the FD Automotive Technologies and the Diploma in Higher Education in Stitched Textiles from September 2009. In October 2009 the College successfully bid for national funding for a project to prepare Foundation Degrees specifically for workforce development in the construction industry. The College relaunched and recruited new students for the FD Business and Management in September 2010.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

8   Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the team. The student submission was compiled by two student experience reporters. The document was assembled following discussions with higher education students, who were asked about their experiences of their programmes. The team found the document helpful in identifying the comments and concerns of students and was able to pursue some of these in a meeting with two representative samples of 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?

9   The College has developed a robust structure for the management of its higher education provision within the overall management arrangements for the College. Each higher education programme is located within a curriculum area and is managed by a Head of School or equivalent. The heads of school plan for and manage the resourcing of all programmes within the curriculum area, including higher education. The heads of school

delegate the organisation of the programmes, including liaison with link tutors, to programme leaders. The heads of school report to one of two assistant principals or the Director of Quality and Standards. In turn they report to the Deputy Principal for Curriculum and Quality, who chairs the Curriculum Senior Management Team. The Principal chairs the Senior Management Team, which oversees both the further and higher education provision.

10   Programme teams hold regular meetings to discuss issues relating to the management of the curriculum. Minutes of these meetings show that they make a valuable contribution to the maintenance of academic standards. These minutes are considered by the Higher Education Steering Group, which receives reports from the higher education curriculum teams, monitors each programme-level Quality Improvement Plan and receives and discusses programme team action plans. Heads of school and all higher education programme leaders are members of the Higher Education Steering Group, which meets regularly and reports to the Senior Management Team on programme progress and the outcomes of higher education projects. The Developmental engagement in assessment action plan was considered by the Higher Education Steering Group and staff reported on how useful the forum is in providing an opportunity for the sharing of good practice. Staff reported that through its meetings a new system for providing feedback to students had been developed, trialled and evaluated. The team views the work of the Higher Education Steering Group as good practice.

11   Meeting weekly, the Curriculum Senior Management Team receives reports from the Higher Education Steering Group, which provide senior managers with detailed information on the higher education provision, including that relating to academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. This is then fed through to the full Senior Management Team meetings. Minutes of these meetings demonstrate that, as a result of the management structure, senior managers are well informed and able to make secure decisions regarding the higher education provision.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

12   Under the terms of the three partnership agreements, all programmes have been developed by the awarding bodies, which retain responsibility for the management of academic standards and the quality of the student experience. The agreement for programmes with Bucks New University states explicitly that the management of academic standards and the quality of the student experience are fully integrated into the university's procedures, including validation, monitoring, assessment, evaluation and periodic review.

13   The programme specifications produced by the awarding bodies are of varying assistance to the College in defining where the provisions of the Academic Infrastructure have been incorporated. All Foundation Degrees have been referenced to the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark* and relevant sections of the *Code of practice* during the validation processes by the awarding bodies. In its self-evaluation, the College states that all programme teams and support functions, such as learner services and marketing, are made aware of the provisions of the Academic Infrastructure. In the meetings held with staff there was uncertainty about the terminology of the Academic Infrastructure and a lack of ownership. The team concluded that it would be desirable for the College to consider means by which staff could be made more aware of the Academic Infrastructure as it relates specifically to their College roles.

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   Within the terms of its agreements with its awarding bodies, the College is required to submit annual reviews and action plans to the Universities. The manner in which these annual reviews and action plans are completed by the College ensures that academic standards are fully considered both within the College and by the awarding bodies on a regular basis. Actions are followed through in a rigorous manner.

15   Within the College's quality management procedures, each programme leader maintains a Quality Log throughout the academic year with regular reviews and monitoring of actions. At the end of the year a further and higher education self-assessment report for each curriculum area is produced which is informed by the programme Quality Logs. A Quality Improvement Plan is generated from the self-assessment report which provides the basis for future actions. The self-assessment process provides a secure and rigorous framework within which the College manages its higher education provision.

16   As the higher education provision is distributed across three schools, the College has, for the last two years, produced an overarching synoptic annual Higher Education Summary Report. This provides a detailed review of higher education across the College, including sections on academic standards and the monitoring of data. The Higher Education Summary Report also contains an analysis of external examiners' reports, including a table showing recommendations. This document provides an excellent overview of the higher education provision. It enables senior managers to gain a full appreciation of the academic standards and quality of the higher education programmes and to monitor the progress of planned actions. The team considers this to be good practice.

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

17   The College has no specific policy relating to staff development for higher education teaching. Responsibility for staff development rests with the Director of Quality and Standards. Staff reported that the awarding bodies provide support in the development of academic standards including attendance at awarding body moderation events, collaborative conferences and individual support from link tutors. From meetings with staff, the team concluded that programme teams were aware of their responsibilities for the management of academic standards.

18   The College has a statement on the professional development entitlement for teaching and learning which is linked to the appraisal process. Using this statement, heads of school are responsible for prioritising development needs for staff, and requests are authorised by the Director of Quality and Standards. Formal staff development activity is monitored centrally. Informal development activity is recorded by individuals on training and development records at department level.

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?

19   Within the terms of its agreements with its awarding bodies, the College is responsible for the daily management and delivery of the programmes. There is an established and effective quality improvement cycle which includes the higher education programmes. This is fully described in paragraphs 9 to 11 above. College teams review their higher education provision as part of the self-assessment cycle and comments and analysis are included in the school self-assessment reports, Quality Improvement Plans and the higher education action plans.

20   The management of learning opportunities is reported in the Higher Education Summary Report. This report considers student achievement and progression, enrolments and retention, analysis of external examiner reports, student experience and action planning. The statistical information in the Higher Education Summary Report is based on a single year analysis of the student numbers submitted to the awarding bodies. As a result, the figures for retention and achievement by students give a misleading view on the success on programmes. For example, the figures for the FD in Construction for 2009-10 indicate 100 per cent of students were retained. Using the figures for the same cohort in 2008-09 it is apparent, however, that 17 students enrolled, of whom 12 have completed and achieved the qualification. This indicates a lower success rate. It would enhance the usefulness of the Higher Education Summary Report if the section on student data and progression was based on a cohort analysis rather than a single year view.

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   Under the partnership agreements the College has established course boards and has identified specific staff to liaise with the university link tutors. These arrangements are effective in ensuring that the learning, assessment and progression of students are closely monitored. The staffing of the College's higher education provision is formally approved by the awarding bodies according to the agreements.

22   External examiners' reports confirm the quality of the learning opportunities and note that the College responds appropriately to their comments. The College is aware that in some cases, where a defined award is also offered by the partner university and other colleges, the external examiners' reports offer an overall commentary and do not make a clear distinction between performance at the different institutions. However, programme teams respond to external examiners' comments either directly or through the university programme meetings. Where action is necessary, this is incorporated into the School Quality Improvement Plan.

23   There is clear employer involvement in the learning experience, particularly through the mentor scheme, which was identified in the Developmental engagement in assessment as good practice on the Foundation Degrees in education. The review team was provided with extensive evidence that confirms that these practices had been extended and apply to all programmes. The procedures facilitate the engagement of mentors with student assessment and with the College and align with the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based*

and placement learning. These arrangements and activities are considered by the team to be good practice.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

24   The programmes were developed by the universities in line with the Academic Infrastructure. It is clear that the appropriate sections of the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students* and *Section 10: Admissions to higher education* have been taken into account when developing the assessment and admissions processes. The *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning* was considered in reviewing the mentoring arrangements during the students' employment. The Development engagement in assessment also noted the thorough processes by which programme and module-level intended learning outcomes are reinforced using schemes of work, lesson plans, assignment briefs, feedback on assignments and the arrangements for lesson observations, and this was confirmed by the team.

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

25   The College assures itself of the quality of learning opportunities through formal staff appraisal and teaching observation, student feedback and the annual planning and review process. The College lesson observation scheme includes the observation of higher education teaching. The College introduced a pilot 'Teaching Squares' scheme in November 2010 to enhance teaching, learning and assessment through a process of peer review rather than observation. Higher education teams have formed discrete Teaching Squares. The process is helpful and supportive and an example of good practice.

26   From the staff's responses in meetings, it is clear that there is a strong understanding of the needs of teaching at higher level, including the development of independent learning, wide reading, and the need for appropriate referencing. In September 2010 the College introduced a highly visible and easily accessible web-based teaching and learning toolkit. This covers a number of teaching areas, of which assessment has information specific to higher education.

27   Comments in the students' written submission suggested that students are very satisfied with the quality of the teaching and the enthusiasm of the staff. Students give informal feedback through tutorials and this enables staff to respond quickly. Students also complete module evaluation questionnaires, which are taken into consideration by the College for future teaching and learning. Module evaluation sheets are completed by tutors and reported to the universities at review meetings. This information is recorded in College quality logs, which in turn informs future planning. Views from the student groups are collected through the student representatives, who gather views and report to the awarding bodies' programme committees or the College course boards. The students commented that they feel that their views are considered and the College responds appropriately

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

28   Students have a personal tutor and regular group tutorials to discuss assessment feedback and their achievement. The College publishes a student charter and has been externally awarded the matrix standard, awarded by an organisation improvement and assessment company, for its processes and procedures. Students needing any extra study skills support may be identified at enrolment and offered support at the College or through the awarding bodies' induction processes. Students may be directed by their tutor to student services for learning, financial and pastoral support. The students are aware of, and

appreciate, the support that is available to them and confirmed a high level of academic guidance and pastoral support.

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

29   The College's staff development, appraisal and teaching observation is based on the further education provision. This is extended for staff delivering higher education through the 'Teaching Squares' initiative. Staff have access to and make extensive use of University staff development programmes. Higher education staff engage with professional development in a number of areas, including subject updating and the use of information technology in their teaching. Staff are allocated three days of staff development during the year. At Staff Development Days during the spring term, the higher education staff considered the virtual learning environment in relation to the assessment and delivery of the higher education programmes.

30   There is no specific induction process for staff new to teaching higher education. New staff are allocated to a critical friend or mentor under the provisions of the Professional Development Entitlement. Staff reported that this system of mentoring was used to ensure that new staff were teaching and assessing at appropriate levels, in some cases by the double-marking of their work.

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?

31   The College teaching accommodation includes Learning Resource Centres at both campuses. There is no dedicated higher education space. Higher education students also have access to and use the learning facilities at the partner universities. In the two student meetings, however, the students said that access was very good, and that they used the College and the awarding bodies' virtual learning environments remotely and also in class. The staff and students confirmed that access to university resources is very good. Requests for library resources go directly from the programme leaders to nominated subject librarians in the Learning Resources Centres. The librarians are also proactive in obtaining new learning resources. Electronic books can be accessed through the virtual learning environment.

32   Heads of school plan for and manage the resourcing of all programmes within their curriculum areas, including higher education. The budget setting process takes place annually in March and is managed by the Deputy Principal. Heads of school put forward budgets for central approval, which include the delivery and resourcing of higher education within their area. There is separate resourcing for the Learning Resources Centres and the virtual learning environment.

33   The Developmental engagement in assessment recommended that the College systematically monitor the level of student use of the virtual learning environment and further develop student usage. The review team was provided with evidence that clearly shows that very significant progress has been made to enhance the content and use of the virtual learning environment in teaching and learning. Data from monitoring usage shows a steady increase in access by staff and students. Meetings with students showed some variation in the amount of use made of the virtual learning environment both between and within programmes. Those students who do make regular use of the platform were enthusiastic about the information provided and confirmed that the difficulties in external access referred to in the students' written submission had been resolved.

> **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?

34   The College publishes information for potential students, current students, College staff, employers and workplace mentors. Public information is available in paper format and electronically. Electronic information is available on the College's website and the virtual learning environment. A link to the higher education portal through the website provides both generic and programme-specific information. The self-evaluation states that the College website provides up-to-date and accurate information on all programmes, and the team confirms this.

35   The published material includes pre-programme information for prospective students such as factsheets, a leaflet on higher education, and general College full and part-time prospectuses. All have links to further advice guidance and support. These links provide clear information on application procedures and learning support available in the College. The College provides prospective students with a comprehensive and useful admissions pack. The information and procedures clearly align to the *Code of practice, Section 10: Admissions to higher education.* Website information and links to both the College and university virtual learning environments contain extensive, user-friendly information on learner support and show good recognition of *Code of practice, Section 3: Disabled students.* Following a recommendation in the Developmental engagement in assessment, the Higher Education Steering Group and programme teams have reviewed and amended programme factsheets to include information on assessment. Students reported to the team that they made extensive use of both paper-based and electronic sources before starting their programmes and found both to be accessible and useful.

36   Information for enrolled students is provided in programme specifications and module or unit guides published by the respective universities. Students also receive programme handbooks during induction. The information in these documents is produced by the respective universities with supplements from the College. The Developmental engagement found good practice in the College having clear guidance regarding the roles of work-based mentors and their involvement in assessment. The team confirmed that mentors are given clear specifications of their role and information on programme content on the virtual learning environment and given a handbook for managers and mentors.

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?

37   In the self-evaluation report the College claims that it has a clearly defined process to ensure the accuracy of information on its higher education provision. The team was provided with evidence that supports this statement. The partnership agreements between the College and the partner universities clearly identify the mutual nature of the responsibility for published information. The College uses a comprehensive statement on marketing and communications procedures which contains a section for higher education. Consequently, all

the information the College publishes about its higher education programmes is agreed with the relevant partner universities. This involves checking both at programme team and senior management levels. Suggestions for amendments are passed to the Director of Quality and Standards, who has the responsibility of liaising with the awarding bodies.

38   Scrutiny of the student handbooks confirmed that they all contain a core of useful information, including timetables, module details, contacts, guidance on academic conduct, regulations on mitigation and extensions, appeals, and how to seek learning support. There are some differences between handbooks, with those for the FD in Early Years and the FD in Primary Education being exemplary in their content. They include marking grid and assessment criteria which derive from the Academic Infrastructure and assessment calendars for assignments, enabling students to plan their work through the year. The handbooks for the other College higher education programmes do not provide the same level of information, and there is also significant variation in the use of references and hyperlinks to College and partner university virtual learning environments. To ensure consistency and comparability of student experience, it is desirable that the College define best practice in handbook design and content and ensure that all programme handbooks are produced to these standards.

39   Scrutiny of the content of the virtual learning environment revealed some variation between programmes. A higher education virtual learning environment subgroup meets regularly and has produced a useful specification for minimum requirements for programme content on the virtual learning environment. It is recommended that the College ensure that all programmes meet the defined minimum standards for the virtual learning environment and that student and staff usage continues to be monitored.

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

40   The Developmental engagement on assessment took place in March 2010. The lines of enquiry reflected a broad range of assessment issues.

Line of enquiry 1: The arrangements that the College has in place to ensure that assessment methods enable learners to achieve intended learning outcomes across its provision with different partner institutions

Line of enquiry 2: The way in which staff and students use feedback on assessment to improve learning and the achievement of intended learning outcomes

Line of enquiry 3: How the College ensures the accuracy and completeness of information on assessment provided to students and employers.

41   The Developmental engagement team identified several areas of good practice, including the thorough processes by which programme and module-level intended learning outcomes are reinforced using schemes of work, lesson plans, assignment briefs, feedback on assignments and the arrangements for lesson observations. There are clear arrangements by which the College facilitates support for students with work-based

mentors or assessors, who receive clear specifications of their roles and programme information. The assessment and review approach used in the Diploma in Higher Education in Stitched Textiles gives students opportunities to review their work and receive guidance and stimulating feedback from their peers, College and university staff and expert practitioners.

42   The team also made a number of recommendations. It considered it advisable for the College to discuss with the awarding bodies the arrangements by which the timeliness of feedback on summative assessment can be improved. It was also desirable for the College to discuss with the awarding bodies the ways in which external examiners' reports could more fully comment on assessment arrangements within the College. The College should consider ways in which the level of student use of the virtual learning environment can be systematically monitored. Finally, the College should review the completeness of information on assessment contained in the programme factsheets.

D   Foundation Degrees

43   The College has run Foundation Degrees since their inception in 2001. Currently most of the College's higher education provision is Foundation Degrees. From September 2011 the College will only offer Foundation Degrees. There are 140 students studying Foundation Degrees, of whom 84 per cent are mature learners. All of the students work or have placements in settings relevant to their area of study.

44   The Foundation Degrees that are funded by HEFCE at the College are listed below:

Bucks New University

- FD Business and Management, part-time, year one (14 students) (14 FTEs)
- FD Early Years, part-time (33 students) (33 FTEs)
- FD Primary Education, part-time (32 students) (32 FTEs)

London South Bank University

- FD Construction, part-time (13 students) (13 FTEs)
- FD Building Services Engineering, part-time (18 students) (18 FTEs)

Thames Valley University

- FD Working with Children and Young People, part-time (23 students) (23 FTEs).

45   Following a review in 2009-10 the College decided to relaunch and recruit new students for the FD in Business and Management. Fourteen students were enrolled on this programme at the time of the review. The strategic plan for the College identifies higher education as one of the priority areas for the focus of activity over the next three years. The College has recently successfully bid for funding to develop 'Building Blocks'. This is an innovative programme, validated by London South Bank University, involving the flexible study of bite-sized modules that meet employers' needs in the area of renewable energy. The first group of students is due to start in 2011. In addition, the College plans to provide higher education and training at FD level through level four and five advanced apprenticeships in science, technology, construction, engineering and business. These are all linked to the local business and economy. The College will continue to offer the Foundation Degrees in education.

46	The conclusions below apply to all the Foundation Degrees offered at the College.

# E	Conclusions and summary of judgements

47	The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in East Berkshire 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, Bucks New University, London South Bank University and Thames Valley University.

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

- the Higher Education Steering Group brings together heads of school and programme leaders across the provision and enables the sharing of good practice (paragraph 10)
- the annual Higher Education Summary Report, which covers all aspects of the provision, enabling senior managers to gain a clear picture of the College's higher education provision (paragraphs 16 and 20)
- the College facilitates support for students through work-based mentors, who receive clear specifications of their roles and course information (paragraphs 23 and 36)
- the Teaching Squares scheme enhances teaching, learning and assessment through a process of peer review (paragraph 25).

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

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

- consider means by which staff could be made more aware of the Academic Infrastructure as it relates specifically to their College roles (paragraph 13)
- ensure that all programmes meet defined minimum standards for content on the virtual learning environment and that usage continues to be regularly monitored (paragraphs 33 and 39)
- ensure consistency of student experience by defining best practice in handbook design and content and ensure that all course handbooks are produced to these standards (paragraph 38).

51	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.

52	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.

53   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.

East Berkshire College action plan relating to the Summative review: March 2011						
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 Higher Education Steering Group brings together heads of school and programme leaders across the provision and enables the sharing of good practice (paragraph 10)	The Higher Education Group will continue to meet on a regular basis to identify and share good practice	Twice per term	Director of Quality & Standards	Examples of good practice shared on Stand Out Teaching and Learning website	Senior Management Team (SMT)	SMT will discuss and evaluate the contribution of the HE Steering Group in terms of sharing good practice
• the annual Higher Education Summary Report, which covers all aspects of the provision, enabling senior managers and others to gain a clear picture of the College's higher education provision	The College will continue to produce an annual Higher Education report	November each year	Director of Quality & Standards	The profile of higher education within the College will be raised	Senior Management Team	SMT will review the key performance indicators for its higher education provision and make recommendations accordingly

(paragraphs 16 and 20)						
• the College facilitates support for students through work-based mentors, who receive clear specifications of their roles and course information (paragraphs 23 and 36)	The College will continue to support and develop its good practice in workplace mentoring. All programmes will be reviewed and evaluated annually to ensure high standards are upheld	September annually	Course leaders	Good practice in workplace mentoring continues	HE Steering Group	Evaluation of feedback from mentors and students
• the Teaching Squares scheme enhances teaching, learning and assessment through a process of peer review (paragraph 25).	Teaching Squares will be rolled out across all College programmes from September 2011	By July 2012	Heads of school	The benefits of peer review for lesson observation will result in improved teaching	Senior Management Team	SMT will assess the contribution of Teaching Squares and peer review to enhancing teaching and learning
Desirable	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
The team considers that it is **desirable** for the College to:						
• consider means by which staff could be made more aware of the Academic Infrastructure as it relates specifically to their College roles	HE Steering Group will review the Academic Infrastructure (AI) and make recommendations for engaging all higher education tutors in this process	December 2011	HE Steering Group and course leaders	Higher education staff will have a better understanding of *Code of practice* and other aspects of the Academic Infrastructure and how they relate to	To be included in annual review of higher education in the College	Heads of school will report on the levels of understanding of the AI among higher education staff in their areas

				their programmes		
• ensure that all programmes meet defined minimum standards for content on the virtual learning environment and that usage continues to be regularly monitored (paragraphs 33 and 39)	An ILT sub-group of the HE Steering Group will be formed to review and report on the use of the virtual learning environment in higher education programmes	July 2011	ILT sub-group to prepare report and present to HE Steering Group twice-yearly	Increase in use of the virtual learning environment across all programmes	Annual report to Senior Management Team	Assistant principals will review use of the virtual learning environment in their areas
• ensure consistency and equality of student experience by defining best practice in handbook design and content and ensure that all course handbooks are produced to these standards (paragraph 38).	A review of handbooks across all higher education programmes to inform and agree standards for common course content for higher education student handbooks	January 2012	Subgroup of HE Steering Group	Standard, comprehensive content in all handbooks	HE Steering Group	Peer review of student handbooks by members of HE Steering Group; feedback from students