



Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

Halesowen College

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Preface

The mission of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications and to inform and encourage continual improvement in the management of the quality of higher education. As part of this mission, QAA undertakes reviews of higher education provision delivered in further education colleges. This process is known as Integrated quality and enhancement review (IQER).

Purpose of IQER

Higher education programmes delivered by further education colleges (colleges) lead to awards made by higher education institutions or Edexcel. The awarding bodies retain ultimate responsibility for maintaining the academic standards of their awards and assuring the quality of the students' learning opportunities. The purpose of IQER is, therefore, to safeguard the public interest in the academic standards and quality of higher education delivered in colleges. It achieves this by providing objective and independent information about the way in which colleges discharge their responsibilities within the context of their partnership agreements with awarding bodies. IQER focuses on three core themes: academic standards, quality of learning opportunities and public information.

The IQER process

IQER is a peer review process. It is divided into two complementary stages: Developmental engagement and Summative review. In accordance with the published method, colleges with less than 100 full-time equivalent students funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) may elect not to take part in Developmental engagements, but all HEFCE-funded colleges will take part in Summative review.

Developmental engagement

Developmental engagements explore in an open and collegial way the challenges colleges face in specific areas of higher education provision. Each college's first, and often their only, Developmental engagement focuses on student assessment.

The main elements of a Developmental engagement are:

- a self-evaluation by the college
- an optional written submission by the student body
- a preparatory meeting between the college and the IQER coordinator several weeks before the Developmental engagement visit
- the Developmental engagement visit, which normally lasts two days
- the evaluation of the extent to which the college manages effectively its responsibilities for the delivery of academic standards and the quality of its higher education provision, plus the arrangements for assuring the accuracy and completeness of public information it is responsible for publishing about its higher education
- the production of a written report of the team's findings.

To promote a collegial approach, Developmental engagement teams include up to two members of staff from the further education college under review. They are known as nominees for this process.

Summative review

Summative review addresses all aspects of a college's HEFCE-funded higher education provision and provides judgements on the management and delivery of this provision against core themes one and two, and a conclusion against core theme three.

Summative review shares the main elements of Developmental engagement described above. Summative review teams however, are composed of the IQER coordinator and QAA reviewers. They do not include nominees.

Evidence

In order to obtain evidence for the review, IQER teams carry out a number of activities, including:

- reviewing the college's self-evaluation and its internal procedures and documents
- reviewing the optional written submission from students
- asking questions of relevant staff
- talking to students about their experiences.

IQER teams' expectations of colleges are guided by a nationally agreed set of reference points, known as the Academic Infrastructure. These are published by QAA and consist of:

- *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*, which includes descriptions of different higher education qualifications
- the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*
- subject benchmark statements, which describe the characteristics of degrees in different subjects
- guidelines for preparing programme specifications, which are descriptions of what is on offer to students in individual programmes of study
- award benchmark statements which describe the generic characteristics of an award, for example Foundation Degrees.

In addition, Developmental engagement teams gather evidence by focusing on particular aspects of the theme under review. These are known as 'lines of enquiry'.

Outcomes of IQER

Each Developmental engagement and Summative review results in a written report:

- Developmental engagement reports set out good practice and recommendations and implications for the college and its awarding bodies, but do not contain judgements. Recommendations will be at one of three levels - **essential**, **advisable** and **desirable**. To promote an open and collegial approach to Developmental engagements, the reports are not published.
- Summative review reports identify good practice and contain judgements about whether the college is discharging its responsibilities effectively against core themes one and two above. The judgements are **confidence**, **limited confidence** or **no confidence**. There is no judgement for the third core theme, instead the report will provide evaluation and a conclusion. Summative review reports are published. Differentiated judgements can be made where a team judges a college's

management of the standards and/or quality of the awards made by one awarding body to be different from those made by another.

Colleges are required to develop an action plan to address any recommendations arising from IQER. Progress against these action plans is monitored by QAA in conjunction with HEFCE and/or the college's awarding body(ies) as appropriate. The college's action plan in response to the conclusions of the Summative review will be published as part of the report.

Executive summary

The Summative review of Halesowen College carried out in April 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 College has adopted a committed and proactive stance in enhancing standards of assessment by participating in collaborative activities with partner universities and making use of partnership networks to draw on good practice at neighbouring colleges
- the College has developed a range of rigorous supplementary internal monitoring procedures, often reworking established further education practices, as demonstrated by the Higher Education Self Assessment Report, the Higher Education Inspection Scheme and the use of the Higher Education Board of Studies
- the Curriculum Leadership Programme provides a sustained opportunity for staff development relating to the maintenance and enhancement of higher education policy and procedures and this has contributed significantly to the assurance of academic standards on the programmes
- the use of interviews with employers as part of the College's internal inspection framework for higher education provides an effective method for securing employer perspectives on the quality assurance and enhancement of students' work-based learning.

Recommendations

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

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

- continue to embed and make more explicit the use of the Academic Infrastructure in developing its policy and procedures for higher education. This will assist the College in its aim to provide a whole-college approach to the delivery of academic standards and learning opportunities.

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 Halesowen 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 Newman University College, the University of Wolverhampton, the University of Worcester and Edexcel. The review was carried out by Professor Gillian Grant and Mr Bob Millington (reviewers) and Mr Grant Horsburgh (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 qualitative and quantitative information formed around a self-evaluation document with an accompanying portfolio of supporting evidence which contained: information on higher education policy and procedures; partnership agreements; meeting minutes; reports resulting from internal monitoring and review activities; external examiner reports; course leaflets and handbooks. The team also took account of the outcome of a meeting with students, 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. During the IQER scoping exercise undertaken by QAA in 2007-08, the College had 49.5 full-time equivalent students enrolled on higher education programmes. As a result, this Summative review was undertaken as a desk-based study and conducted in accordance with the arrangements for Summative review for colleges with fewer than 50 full-time equivalent students. 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 Halesowen College is a tertiary college located in the Metropolitan Borough of Dudley, eight miles west of Birmingham. It currently operates from three sites close to the centre of Halesowen. The site at Coombs Wood is primarily used for the delivery of higher education courses, training for employers and professional training for adults, including the College's own staff. The College serves a local population from surrounding towns in the boroughs of Dudley and Sandwell plus a significant number from west Birmingham. The area served by the College is primarily urban in character and includes wards with a high index of deprivation. The College's mission is 'to strive for excellence in delivering opportunities for education and training in Halesowen and the surrounding area'. At the time of the review there were 4,824 full-time students enrolled at the College of which 288 (165 full-time equivalent) were studying on higher education programmes. The College has delivered higher-level courses in business, accounting, counselling, and consumer affairs for many years. Although this has been a relatively small element of the College's overall provision it has been given equal importance to all other courses provided by the College.

Integrated quality and enhancement review

5 The College's strategy is to work in partnership with local higher education institutions, and in partnership with local networks including Aim Higher and the Birmingham, Black Country and Solihull Lifelong Learning Network. The current partnerships with the University of Worcester and the University of Wolverhampton are longstanding, and the main purpose of partnership working is to build capacity coherently and efficiently, to offer a wider range of courses and thereby enable more local people to study at a higher level. One key focus, through Aim Higher activities, has been to encourage more level 3 learners to progress. Courses have been developed in sector areas where there is a need for employees to possess higher level skills.

6 The College's HEFCE-funded higher education provision in 2010-11 is shown below with awarding body and student enrolments including, for part-time programmes, full-time equivalents (FTEs).

Newman University College

- FD in Business and Media Production (17)

University of Wolverhampton

- FD in Small Business (Salon Management) (4; 2 FTEs)
- FD in Consumer Protection (6; 3 FTEs)
- HND in Forensic Science (5; 3 FTEs)

University of Worcester

- FD in Early Childhood (136; 74 FTEs)
- FD in Early Years (14)
- FD in Health and Social Care (9; 5 FTEs)
- FD in Learning Support (32; 17 FTEs)
- Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (54; 28 FTEs)

Edexcel

- HNC Business (11; 6 FTEs).

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

7 The College has current partnership agreements with Newman University College, the University of Wolverhampton and the University of Worcester. The partnership agreements have been developed by the awarding bodies to take account of the requirements of the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)*. The awarding bodies retain responsibility for the academic standard of their awards, including programme approval and monitoring, the appointment of external examiners and the approval of teaching staff. The College has responsibility for daily quality management, course delivery, student support services and learning resources. Course teams work closely with link tutors from the awarding bodies in the operational management of the programmes. Appropriate articulation agreements are in place for the progression of Foundation Degree students to relevant bachelor's degrees with honours. Representatives from two of the College's awarding bodies attended the preparatory meeting and provided evidence to indicate that they value their partnerships with the College.

8 The College also operates an Edexcel HNC Business under the Standard Note and there is no formal partnership agreement. The course is delivered and managed in accordance with the College's policies and procedures and is subject to external verification in accordance with established Edexcel protocols.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

9 In January 2011 the management structure for higher education provision was enhanced by the introduction of the post of Staff Development and Higher Education Director, a senior management post reporting directly to the Principal and with direct responsibility for overseeing the management of the College's higher education provision. The College continues to upgrade and invest in its infrastructure, with new learning and teaching facilities at the Whittingham Road campus due for completion in July 2011. The College continues to review its higher education provision and is working closely with its awarding body partners and employer contacts in discussing how the provision might continue to develop. Future developments under consideration at the time of the desk-based study include a possible Foundation Degree in Sports and progression pathways in pharmacology and animal care.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

10 Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the Summative review team. The submission was based on the outcomes from meetings with focus groups of higher education students held during December 2010 and January 2011. Students completed questionnaires, developed around themes underpinning the IQER process in general and a variety of specific areas where the College saw benefit in seeking broader feedback on the student experience. The focus groups provided students with the opportunity to raise other matters and also to provide more detail to the answers they had provided on the questionnaires. The meetings with individual focus groups were carried out by course leaders from higher education courses other than their own and, as such, staff present were unknown to the students in each focus group. This allowed members of staff familiar with higher education procedures to conduct the surveys without having specific student or course knowledge to affect their enquiries. At the desk-based study preparatory meeting the Coordinator and Review Support Officer met with 11 students from six of the programmes included within the scope of the Summative review. The students' written submission and the discussion with students at the preparatory meeting provided the team with a valuable and helpful insight to the learning experience of higher education students at the College.

B Evaluation of the management of HEFCE-funded higher education

Core theme 1: Academic standards

How are responsibilities for managing and delivering higher education standards delegated within the management structure and what reporting arrangements are in place?

11 The College has a growing portfolio of higher education provision, with the majority of courses delivered on a part-time basis. The College has formal partnership arrangements with three local higher education institutions: Newman University College; the University of

Wolverhampton; the University of Worcester; as well as an Edexcel licence for HNC Business. Current partnership agreements with the three higher education institutions clearly define roles and responsibilities for managing and delivering higher education standards.

12 The report resulting from the Developmental engagement notes that the expansion in the College's higher education provision had initiated a need to strengthen the management of higher education programmes to provide a consistent approach to their delivery. The management restructure undertaken in January 2011 embraces this need and appears to provide a clear structure for managing, delivering and reporting on the standard of the College's higher education provision. However, given the timing of the Summative review it is too early in its implementation for the team to provide valid comment on the effectiveness of the revised management structure. The College believes that this revised management structure will provide a whole-college approach to higher education delivery and, where appropriate, in marketing, pre-entry advice and guidance, teaching and learning, liaison with awarding bodies and engaging staff in continuing personal and professional development activities. The management structure has helped to raise the profile of higher education activity within the College and has placed it equally alongside all other provision delivered by the College.

13 Each higher education course has a nominated course leader who is responsible for the day-to-day management and quality assurance of the course and who, for this purpose, is functionally managed by the Higher Education Curriculum Development Manager. Each course leader is line-managed by a curriculum team manager who is responsible for the quality of teaching and learning across all programmes in the curriculum area. The Higher Education Curriculum Development Manager reports to the Staff Development and Higher Education Director, a senior management post reporting directly to the Principal and with direct responsibility for overseeing the management of the College's higher education provision. The Higher Education Curriculum Development Manager has 40 per cent of their time allocated to this role which enables the incumbent to provide the College senior management team with reports on matters relating to the delivery of higher education while retaining higher education teaching duties.

14 The Higher Education Board of Study, which reports to the College Quality Team, meets each term. Membership consists of higher education course leaders, the Higher Education Curriculum Development Manager, the Staff Development and Higher Education Director, who is the chair, and the Vice-Principal for Teaching and Learning. The Higher Education Board of Study forms an essential part of the College's self-assessment and quality assurance processes for higher education. The College Quality Team which comprises all members of the senior management team meets monthly and retains oversight of the management of all academic quality matters. The team found that responsibilities for managing and delivering higher education standards are delegated appropriately within the management structure and that appropriate reporting arrangements are in place.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

15 The report resulting from the Developmental engagement noted the measures implemented by the College to improve staff's understanding of the Academic Infrastructure. In the interim period the College has continued to provide training sessions for course leaders to familiarise them with the Academic Infrastructure and intends to provide further events as new course leaders join the higher education team.

16 Programme handbooks indicate that the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark* and the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students* have been important reference points at the time of validation in determining programme teaching, learning and assessment strategies. Staff provided examples to demonstrate the use of

the specific sections of the *Code of practice* to support their work. However, in acknowledging that it has not yet included reference to the Academic Infrastructure in its recently produced higher education policy documents, the College indicates that this is a development area that has been recognised as a priority for the Staff Development and Higher Education Director. The team considers that it is desirable that the College continues to embed and make more explicit the use of the Academic Infrastructure in developing its policy and procedures for higher education, as this will assist the College in its aim to provide a whole-college approach to the delivery of academic standards and learning opportunities. This development work will also help the College achieve its stated aims associated with its interaction with awarding bodies, marketing, pre-entry advice and guidance, teaching, learning and assessment, and engaging staff in continuing personal and professional development activities.

17 All College staff involved in the development, delivery and assessment of higher education programmes and in their quality monitoring and enhancement are supported to ensure that appropriate account is given to the Academic Infrastructure through the Curriculum Leadership Programme discussed in paragraph 23.

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

18 As noted during the Developmental engagement, the College has well-established and robust mechanisms in place to ensure that the standard of its higher education provision meets the requirements of its awarding bodies. The team was able to confirm the good practice noted during the Developmental engagement in that the College continues to take a committed and proactive stance in enhancing standards of assessment by participating in collaborative activities with partner universities and making use of partnership networks to draw on good practice at neighbouring colleges.

19 Each course submits a detailed annual monitoring report which draws on a wide range of appropriate evidence. Course reports in turn inform the higher education self-assessment report which informs the College self-assessment process. The scrutiny of evidence indicates that the College has taken appropriate action to address the desirable recommendation from the Developmental engagement to ensure that all annual monitoring reports be thorough and self-critical.

20 The College has developed a range of rigorous supplementary internal monitoring procedures, often reworking established further education practices, that include the Higher Education Self Assessment Report, the Higher Education Inspection Scheme and the use of the Higher Education Board of Studies which the team found to be good practice. While this range of mechanisms is used effectively to identify and disseminate good practice and to ensure consistency across the provision, their design does not actively encourage engagement with relevant elements of the Academic Infrastructure. Discussions with staff indicated that the future formatting of higher education reports will be included in the development work discussed in paragraph 16. Oversight of quality monitoring processes by the Higher Education Board of Study and the College Quality Team, and the direct involvement of senior management through membership of both bodies, are key measures which help to assure that the College continues to meet awarding body requirements.

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

21 The College has a well qualified and professionally experienced staff team engaged in the delivery, management, quality assurance and enhancement of its higher education provision. Over 60 per cent of teaching staff have, or are working towards, a higher degree. Well-established mechanisms exist to systematically evaluate the development needs of staff who teach on higher education programmes. The College provides support to higher education staff wishing to undertake further academic qualifications. The scrutiny of evidence indicates that higher education staff are engaged in an appropriate range of scholarly, industrial and professional development activities that support the delivery of higher education provision at the appropriate level of the FHEQ.

22 Awarding body criteria relating to staff teaching on higher education courses are adhered to during the selection process. Teaching staff qualifications are verified as being appropriate and individuals are registered for associate status with the relevant awarding body. This enables staff to access staff development and continuing professional and personal development activities at the partner university. All new staff have a mentor appointed and attend weekly mentoring meetings. They have a 10-month probation which involves three lesson observations and regular reviews of their performance. A senior management probation panel meets regularly to consider the progress of probationers and discuss any support or interventions that might be required.

23 Course leaders attend a mandatory meeting each week as part of the College's Curriculum Leadership Programme. The Programme was introduced in September 2010 as a means of increasing consistency in course management across the curriculum. The Programme provides a facilitated opportunity to share good practice and to complete quality assurance and course management tasks for higher education course leaders. Minutes from meetings indicate that topics discussed include the Academic Infrastructure, assessment, process standardisation, teaching and learning and course information. The Curriculum Leadership Programme provides a sustained opportunity for staff development relating to the maintenance and enhancement of higher education policy and procedures and this is a feature of good practice which has contributed significantly to the assurance of academic standards on the programmes.

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?

24 The arrangements described in paragraphs 11 to 14 are also effective in supporting the management of learning opportunities. Aspects of the day-to-day management of courses are devolved to the curriculum areas in accordance with partnership agreements. Course leaders have significant responsibilities including chairing regular course team meetings and the production of annual monitoring reports. Committee minutes and reports

drawn from across the provision confirm that appropriate structures and reporting systems are in place and are being used effectively to manage the quality of learning opportunities.

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

25 Partnership agreements establish that the College has delegated responsibility for the delivery and quality assurance of learning opportunities which include admissions, induction, teaching and learning, work-based learning, student support and resources. There are clear reporting mechanisms in place at course level between the College and each awarding body, with minor, well-understood variations that reflect the character of particular partnerships. Scrutiny of minutes and reports confirms that programme staff meet their commitments and are liaising regularly with university academic departments and link tutors, and are using the staff development days and cross-college network events to maintain and improve the quality of the provision. Arrangements on the HNC Business course are in keeping with the Edexcel Standard Note and the external examiner confirms the College is fulfilling its obligations regarding the standards and quality of the provision.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

26 The general arrangements described in paragraphs 15 to 17 also ensure that staff make reference to the Academic Infrastructure when considering the quality of learning opportunities.

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

27 The College has developed a comprehensive learning and teaching strategy which prioritises learner-centred approaches and personalised learning goals. The strategy underpins the systematic monitoring of teaching quality that occurs in the annual lesson observation and internal inspection scheme which involves all members of teaching staff. Sessions are graded and opportunities identified for individual development, and the results evaluated in the self-assessment reports. A distinctive feature of the provision has been the development of an internal inspection framework for higher education overseen by an external consultant, which focuses on the peer observation of a cross-section of teaching on all the programmes. The observations inform the production of an annual internal inspection report that has confirmed consistent high standards in implementing the College's learning and teaching strategy and identified general strengths and areas for improvement.

28 The Developmental engagement established that staff found the higher education observation process most helpful not only in improving their professional practice but as a means of spreading good practice. In this respect the input of the external consultant is especially significant in enabling staff to be aware of best practice outside their own College. The team found the inspection framework and the involvement of an external consultant to be good practice. However, the team encourages the College through the development work discussed in paragraph 16 to build on its strengths and place more focus in future observations on themes that are specific to higher education delivery.

29 The College's attention to the learner voice is extensive and good use is made of student feedback to enhance the provision. The mechanisms for collecting student feedback include student representation at course team meetings, end of module questionnaires, external agency surveys of courses, and focus groups. The results are thoroughly evaluated at a range of levels including course meetings, annual monitoring reports and the Higher

Education Board of Study. Students confirmed that teaching standards are generally high on all courses and that they believe their opinions on course quality are valued by the College. They provided examples of the way the issues they had raised had been promptly and effectively addressed. They were also very positive about the vocational relevance of the courses and the regular opportunities provided to take examples from the classroom into the workplace. Plans are now in hand to provide written or electronic feedback to students on the way the College has responded to particular concerns.

30 The College has further demonstrated its capacity to improve the learning opportunities on the courses from the useful progress that it has made in implementing the Developmental engagement action plan. In particular, positive steps have been taken to ensure the provision of fuller developmental feedback on assessments. As noted in paragraph 18, the effective way good practice in this area has been drawn from a neighbouring partner college, and the role of the Higher Education Board of Study and the Curriculum Leadership Programme in disseminating good practice within the College, as discussed in paragraph 23, are particular strengths of the management of the College's higher education learning and teaching delivery.

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

31 The College provides comprehensive support for its higher education students in keeping with its learner-centred approach. All courses have regular timetabled tutorial slots to discuss progress. As part of their induction, students receive an initial diagnostic assessment to ensure prompt academic support and, where necessary, students are referred to the personal skills support team. Progression to bachelor's degree with honours awards at partner universities is supported by access to the College careers service and individual talks by link tutors. Students expressed their general satisfaction with the overall tutorial arrangements and the accessibility and helpfulness of the tutorial staff especially in the structured help they provide in their preparation of written assignments.

32 The College has built strong and effective relations with the employers and mentors that support students on work-based learning and it maintains close contact with them to ensure they are fully aware of their responsibilities. For example, the use of interviews with employers as part of the College's internal inspection framework for higher education provides an effective method for securing employer perspectives on the quality assurance and enhancement of students' work-based learning. The team found this to be good practice.

33 The effectiveness of the College's student support is fully evaluated through the detailed analysis of student feedback included in annual monitoring reports, and is also addressed in the self-assessment report of the College's Learner Services, which maintains a full range of professional accreditations, including the Matrix standard. The quality of student support is further assured through the close attention that is paid to course performance data. The College's robust retention strategy provides an effective means for monitoring student progression as demonstrated by the generally high level of retention and achievement on the courses.

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

34 The general arrangements for staff development have been discussed in relation to academic standards in paragraphs 21 to 23. Staff development for teaching and learning is well-supported both by the College and its partner universities and appropriate staff development arrangements are in place to maintain and enhance the quality of learning

opportunities. The College provides a wide range of professional training events that are well attended by staff, and a number of these are fully relevant to higher education. Professional development also occurs when staff attend development or training days organised by the academic departments of partner universities supporting their course. Records indicate that the majority of staff are taking up appropriate professional development opportunities or are engaging in scholarly activities that support the delivery of their courses.

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?

35 The sufficiency of both human and physical resources is considered at the time of course approval. Awarding bodies check the qualifications and experience of designated teaching staff at course approval or when new appointments are made. Within the College the budgeting strategy for the higher education programmes is fully integrated with that of its further education. Curriculum areas bid annually for learning resources and integrated learning technologies from central allocations. Students and staff continue to benefit from the ongoing improvement to accommodation and facilities on the three sites where higher education courses are currently delivered. On one site there is a dedicated Careers and Higher Education Centre with computers, where higher education students can work undisturbed. On another site there is a dedicated learning resource centre for adult learners.

36 Students make good use of the College's virtual learning environment and the online materials made available by university partners. Initial problems with password access to University sites have now been fully addressed. There has been a series of initiatives to increase the range of blended learning materials that are available for the courses on the College's intranet. For example, the College's Personal Skills Development team makes all of its learning and assessment support materials available online, where it is readily accessible to download. Overall, the resource provision for the courses is well-suited to the needs of the largely part-time, adult learners.

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?

37 The College publishes both general and specific information for prospective students about its higher education provision, including specific course information leaflets. Students confirm that course information provided by the College is accurate. In particular the 'Higher Education Guide' was described by students as being a useful and accurate tool. However, a small number of students indicated that they were not fully aware of the amount of written work involved in their assessments, nor on one course, the number of examinations to be taken.

38 Programme and module specifications are an integral feature of all higher education programmes as part of the awarding partners' approval process. Programme specifications

which take account of awarding body expectations are now included in all course handbooks.

**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?**

39 The team concurs with the findings of the Developmental engagement in that the College has effective procedures for assuring that public information is complete, accurate, fit-for-purpose and takes account of awarding body publication protocols set out in partnership agreements. The content of course leaflets is coordinated by the Higher Education Curriculum Development Manager, in conjunction with the College Publicity and Promotions Manager. Information is made available both electronically and in hard copy. Programme staff advise on the content of publicity materials, which is checked and approved by their curriculum leaders, the Director of Planning and students, and audited by the awarding body.

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 in assessment took place in February 2010. Three lines of enquiry were agreed with the College and ensured that all IQER core themes could be addressed:

Line of enquiry 1: How are assessment processes used to maintain academic standards and how is their impact evaluated?

Line of enquiry 2: Are the requirements for feedback on assessed work well understood and do they support the learning of all groups of students and the achievement of intended learning outcomes?

Line of enquiry 3: How does the College ensure the accuracy and completeness of its published information on assessment and that it is shared with students and staff in a format they understand?

41 The Developmental engagement team identified six areas of good practice: the robust and well-documented procedures in the College at both course and senior executive level for responding to external examiners, which ensure that their reports are used to address concerns and to enhance provision; the production of a specific annual higher education report, based on comprehensive quality procedures; the proactive stance taken by the College in working to enhance standards of assessment by participating in collaborative activities with both partner universities and other partner colleges; the preparedness of College staff to read preliminary drafts of assignments and to offer individual support and feedback at the preliminary stages as well as after the work has been marked; the annual Internal Inspection process, which includes the well-embedded observation of teaching, using external consultants; and, the use of the College's virtual learning environment to make available to students high-quality learning materials in a variety of formats.

42 The team also made a number of recommendations. It considered that it would be advisable for the College to: in conjunction with its partner universities, ensure that all courses make programme learning outcomes explicit in order that all students have an overall understanding of the coherence of their courses; ensure that all feedback on student work is fully developmental in order to demonstrate to students how they may improve their performance; ensure that the format and presentation of all course leaflets is consistent, so that all prospective students are equally well informed; and, ensure that all course handbooks provide full and complete information about articulation routes for Foundation Degrees to honours degrees, in addition to that included in course leaflets. The team also considers it desirable for the College to take action to: ensure that, by building on best practice, all annual monitoring reports are equally thorough and self-critical; and, consider the contextualisation of generic grading criteria at module level by providing more specific assessment criteria in order to give the students a clearer understanding of the expectations of the course.

D Foundation Degrees

43 The College currently offers six Foundation Degrees in partnership with three awarding bodies: Newman University College, the University of Wolverhampton and the University of Worcester. The College has worked closely with its awarding partners to develop the programmes and ensure that appropriate progression routes to further higher education study are available. The College has recently engaged in discussions with the University of Worcester which suggest that the existing portfolio will be consolidated with a possible Foundation Degree in Sports to be available in 2012.

44 The validation process of all Foundation Degrees has ensured that full account has been given to the requirements of the Academic Infrastructure and the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*. The College works effectively with its partner universities to deliver, monitor and evaluate the Foundation Degrees, and has well-developed systems for the creation, approval, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of its provision.

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

- the College has adopted a committed and proactive stance in enhancing standards of assessment by participating in collaborative activities with partner universities and making use of partnership networks to draw on good practice at neighbouring colleges (paragraphs 18, 28 and 30)
- the College has developed a range of rigorous supplementary internal monitoring procedures, often reworking established further education practices, as demonstrated by the Higher Education Self Assessment Report, the Higher Education Inspection Scheme and the use of the Higher Education Board of Studies (paragraphs 20, 23 and 27)
- the Curriculum Leadership Programme provides a sustained opportunity for staff development relating to the maintenance and enhancement of higher education policy and procedures and this has contributed significantly to the assurance of academic standards on the programmes (paragraphs 23 and 27)
- the use of interviews with employers as part of the College's internal inspection framework for higher education provides an effective method for securing employer perspectives on the quality assurance and enhancement of students' work-based learning (paragraph 32).

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

- continue to embed and make more explicit the use of the Academic Infrastructure in developing its policy and procedures for higher education. This will assist the College in its aim to provide a whole-college approach to the delivery of academic standards and learning opportunities (paragraphs 16 and 20).

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

47 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Halesowen 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: Newman University College, the University of Wolverhampton, the University of Worcester and Edexcel.

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

- the College has adopted a committed and proactive stance in enhancing standards of assessment by participating in collaborative activities with partner universities and making use of partnership networks to draw on good practice at neighbouring colleges (paragraphs 18, 28 and 30)
- the College has developed a range of rigorous supplementary internal monitoring procedures, often reworking established further education practices, as demonstrated by the Higher Education Self Assessment Report, the Higher Education Inspection Scheme and the use of the Higher Education Board of Studies (paragraphs 20, 23 and 27)
- the Curriculum Leadership Programme provides a sustained opportunity for staff development relating to the maintenance and enhancement of higher education policy and procedures and this has contributed significantly to the assurance of academic standards on the programmes (paragraphs 23 and 27)
- the use of interviews with employers as part of the College's internal inspection framework for higher education provides an effective method for securing employer perspectives on the quality assurance and enhancement of students' work-based learning (paragraph 32).

49 The team also makes a recommendation for consideration by the College and its awarding bodies.

50 The team considers that it is **desirable** for the College to:

- continue to embed and make more explicit the use of the Academic Infrastructure in developing its policy and procedures for higher education. This will assist the College in its aim to provide a whole-college approach to the delivery of academic standards and learning opportunities (paragraphs 16 and 20).

51 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, and other documentary evidence and from its meetings with students and telephone conference discussions with staff, 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 students and telephone conference discussions with staff, 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 students and telephone conference discussions with staff, 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.

Halesowen College action plan relating to the Summative review: April 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:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the College has adopted a committed and proactive stance in enhancing standards of assessment by participating in collaborative activities with partner universities and making use of partnership networks to draw on good practice at neighbouring colleges (paragraphs 18, 28 and 30) 	Staff will continue to attend HEI assessment events and Partnership Advisory group meetings	July 2012	HE Course Leaders	Continued compliance with higher education assessment standards	HE Board of Study	Annual monitoring reports (AMRs); Higher Education Self Assessment Report (SAR)
	Experience from moderation and assessment events will be shared at HE Board of Study	July 2012	HE Course Leaders			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the College has developed a range of rigorous 	Internal monitoring arrangements and documentation will be	May 2012	Staff Development and Higher	Further improved internal monitoring that accurately	HE Board of Study; The College's	Annual programme reviews; Annual

<p>supplementary internal monitoring procedures, often reworking established further education practices, as demonstrated by the Higher Education Self Assessment Report, the Higher Education Inspection Scheme and the use of the Higher Education Board of Studies (paragraphs 20, 23 and 27)</p>	<p>reviewed to ensure that they more accurately reflect engagement with relevant elements of the Academic Infrastructure and higher education practice, particularly in relation to the Higher Education Inspection Scheme and the observation of teaching, learning and assessment. The college will ensure that the external consultant used to carry out the internal inspection of the programmes will have had recent up to date experience of the delivery of HE programmes in FE. The HE Self Assessment Report will reflect outcomes from a wide range of evidence, including the student voice and external examiners reports</p>		<p>Education Director</p>	<p>reflects the Academic Infrastructure, the quality of the teaching learning and assessment on higher education programmes</p>	<p>Quality Team</p>	<p>Higher Education Internal Inspection Report; Higher Education Self Assessment Report</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Curriculum Leadership Programme provides a sustained opportunity for staff development relating to the maintenance and enhancement of higher education policy and procedures and this has contributed significantly to the assurance of academic standards on the programmes (paragraphs 23 and 27) 	<p>The Curriculum Leadership Phase 2 will continue to monitor the assurance of academic standards on programmes and further develop the embedding of the Academic Infrastructure</p>	<p>September 2011</p>	<p>HE Manager and Staff Development and HE Director</p>	<p>Sustained staff development and assurance of further embedding of Academic Infrastructure</p>	<p>HE Board of Study</p>	<p>Higher Education Self Assessment Report and AMRs</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the use of interviews with employers as part of the College's internal inspection framework for higher education provides an effective method for securing employer perspectives on the quality assurance and enhancement of students' work-based learning (paragraph 32). 	<p>Employer interviews will continue to be sought to inform the quality process within the College's Internal Inspection Framework. Work-based learning will continue to be embedded and enhanced through application of the Academic Infrastructure</p>	<p>May 2012</p>	<p>HE Course leaders; HE Course teams; HE Director</p>	<p>Improved engagement with employers, positive evaluations from employers and regular communication between mentors and tutors</p>	<p>HE Board of Study</p>	<p>Higher Education Self Assessment Report and AMRs</p>

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:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> continue to embed and make more explicit the use of the Academic Infrastructure in developing its policy and procedures for higher education. This will assist the College in its aim to provide a whole-college approach to the delivery of academic standards and learning opportunities (paragraphs 16 and 20). 	Use curriculum leadership phase 2 to continue to embed the Academic Infrastructure	June 2012	HE Manager Staff Development and HE Director	All elements of the Academic Infrastructure and FHEQ are understood and regularly reviewed for all higher education courses	HE Board of Study	AMRs, HE SAR
	Re-visit policies and procedures for higher education and ensure the Academic Infrastructure is referred to explicitly	June 2012	Staff Development and HE Director	Policies and procedures relating to higher education explicitly refer to the Academic Infrastructure	College Executive	College policies

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