



Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

Mid Cheshire 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 Mid Cheshire College carried out in May 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 manner in which the College manages or contributes to the formal responses to external examiner reports
- the extension of staff coaching from further into higher education through a successful pilot.

Recommendations

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

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

- give stronger leadership to programme-level developments in higher education.

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

- monitor the impact of scholarly activity and how it differentiates staff approaches to higher education
- share better practice in work-based and work-related learning more consistently across the provision
- include intended learning outcomes on feedback sheets and relate some comment to the achievement of these
- ensure that the academic staff use the study skills resource for the benefit of their students more consistently
- continue to strive for parity between programmes in the information it provides
- consult employers to ensure the content of the employers' and mentors' handbook is relevant to their needs.

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 Mid Cheshire 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 the University of Chester and Manchester Metropolitan University. The review was carried out by Mr Paul Monroe, Ms Polly Skinner and Mrs Trudy Stiles (reviewers) and Dr John Hurley (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 Mid Cheshire College is a medium-sized general further education College located in the rural and urban district of Cheshire West and Chester. Higher education programmes are delivered across two sites in Northwich and one in Winsford. The College is a member of the Higher Education Consortium which includes Macclesfield College, South Cheshire College and Manchester Metropolitan University. It receives the majority of its funding directly from HEFCE through this consortium (approximately 90 per cent) and through the University of Chester (approximately 10 per cent). The College mission statement is 'Mid Cheshire College: where learning comes first'.

5 In 2010-11, the College has enrolled a total of 8,120 students, of which 2,101 are full-time and 6,019 are part-time. The total number of higher education students is 337, of which, 293 are full-time and 44 are part-time (approximately 311 full-time equivalents (FTEs)). Higher education is taught by 40 staff of whom 16 are full-time, 14 are on fractional contracts of 50 per cent or more and 10 are part-time. In 2010-11 the following provision is being offered by the College in partnership with Manchester Metropolitan University and the University of Chester:

Manchester Metropolitan University

- FdA Business and Management (20 FTE)
- FdEng Engineering (33.5 FTE)
- FdA Supporting Teaching and Learning (42 FTE)
- FdA Sports Coaching and Physical Education (30 FTE)
- FdA Travel and Tourism (28 FTE)
- Certificate in Education/Post Graduate Certificate in Education (21.5 FTE)

University of Chester

- FdSc Commercial Music Technology (22 FTE)
- FdA Contemporary Photography Practice (41 FTE)
- FdSc Information and Communication Technology (21.5 FTE)
- FdA Fashion Design (27 FTE)
- FdA Graphic Design (25 FTE)

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

6 The agreement with Manchester Metropolitan University is for collaboration, and specifically states that it is not a partnership. The University retains responsibility for the maintenance of academic standards. The College is required to implement procedures to ensure compliance with the standards established by the University. External examiners are appointed by the University. The College is responsible for the operation of the programme as outlined in the definitive document for each programme, which is established at validation. These differ slightly according to the status of a programme; whether it is unique to the College, run by two or more colleges in the consortium, or franchised from the University. In particular, this influences the degree of responsibility in the College for curriculum development, writing and moderating assignments.

7 The agreement with the University of Chester requires the College to operate programmes to standards specified by the University. These are established jointly at validation and are monitored through an annual report. The College is responsible for all aspects of the operation of the programme. College staff are involved in curriculum development, setting and moderating assignments. The University approves staffing and appoints external examiners.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

8 Provision has remained unchanged in 2010-11 other than the first year 2 cohort of FdA Travel and Tourism students has run. Enrolments are slightly reduced in the current first year in order to remain within the cap on student numbers. The College has recently opened a new £10 million campus in Winsford which accommodates the FdA Supporting Teaching and Learning and Certificate in Education/PGCE, which were previously delivered at Hartford. There have been no significant changes to the College or academic structure.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

9 Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the Summative review team. The submission was written by a former student who had contributed to the Developmental engagement report and was based upon an online questionnaire completed by 189 students, drawn from all programmes, and from student perception data provided by the College. The submission is structured around the core themes and provides a frank evaluation, highlighting general satisfaction by students, but also a number of areas of dissatisfaction felt by students on particular programmes. A major cause of discontent on one programme was a change, made by the awarding body, to the arrangements for top-up from a full-time to part-time programme. This is outside the responsibility of the College.

10 In general, the submission suggests that students are highly satisfied with teaching, and the support given by their tutors. While students are generally satisfied with course

organisation and resources, these were the areas where most concerns were raised. The reviewers also met with students during the course of the visit. They confirmed this overall picture in their discussions although criticism was more muted. Students stated that in general their concerns were listened to and a response given.

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 claims effective arrangements for the management and development of higher education and the maintenance and enhancement of academic standards. Responsibility for higher education lies with the Vice Principal (Quality & Standards) supported by an Assistant Principal with cross-college responsibility for higher education, and a team leader with a coordinating role. Curriculum teams report to a higher education sub-group, which is attended by all programme leaders. The sub-group reports to a higher education management group, which is chaired by the Vice Principal and includes key college management team members. The management group reports to the College through quality assurance structures which cover both further and higher education.

12 The College works within the provisions of the respective partnership agreements, protocols and quality assurance procedures of the two awarding bodies. There are some minor differences between the requirements of the two partners but the College is able to comply with both quality assurance systems in an effective manner through a clear framework of policies and procedures. These are reviewed every four years to ensure continuing compliance. This provides an opportunity for the two awarding body partners to assess the performance of their programmes and judge the potential impact of any proposed changes.

13 Course review meetings are held on a termly basis in accordance with the College course review procedure. These meetings inform awarding body monitoring requirements and programme level self-evaluation documents. These are received and approved at annual self-evaluation meetings and are used to inform an overall college higher education strategic development plan.

14 The system is generally effective and the College has addressed the recommendations made in the Developmental engagement. Some of the actions taken have not been systematically implemented. For example, intended learning outcomes are now more clearly identified, but are not used consistently through the assessment process. Other examples are given in paragraphs 24, 32 and 42. Improvement and sharing good practice depends on the initiative of programme leaders. It is advisable that the College give stronger leadership to programme level developments in higher education.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

15 Effective use is made of the Academic Infrastructure during course development and validation with awarding body partners. Training and development opportunities relating specifically to use of the Academic Infrastructure have been provided for all staff since the Developmental engagement. Programme modules have been mapped against the *Code of*

practice, published by QAA, and subject benchmark statements. The mapping ensures that delivery and assessment of the learning outcomes are soundly based. Staff are generally clear about the use of the Academic Infrastructure.

16 Programme handbooks have been standardised as a result of the recommendations made in the earlier Developmental engagement and contain programme specifications that are produced during validation of the programmes. These follow the QAA *Guidelines for preparing programme specifications* in a clear and comprehensive fashion. Students understand the purpose of programme specifications and find them a valuable aid to their studies. The majority of the higher education programmes on offer are Foundation Degrees and these programmes clearly demonstrate engagement with the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*.

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?

17 The College has well-structured systems in place to ensure that academic standards meet the requirements of the awarding body partners. The agreements with the awarding bodies are aligned with the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)*, as are the systems used to assure academic standards. Quality enhancement and monitoring processes include those for programme validation and review, internal moderation or verification and annual self-assessment. The awarding body partners monitor assessment procedures and student performance at annual Subject Assessment and Final Assessment Boards which are chaired by representatives from the relevant awarding body. There is an element of inter-college moderation between certain programmes.

18 External examiner reports are initially scrutinised by the Quality Team, who identify any action points and major issues. These are then referred to the programme leaders for action. Effective and well-structured formal responses to the external examiner reports are collated and sent to the external examiners in a timely manner in the case of the University of Chester programmes, where the College is responsible for the responses. The detailed external examiner reports testify to good academic standards across the board. The manner in which the College manages or contributes to the formal responses to external examiner reports is good practice.

19 The College employs a variety of methods to ascertain the 'learner voice'. These include surveys conducted three times a year, course reviews, end-of-module questionnaires and the National Student Survey. These surveys take place both in hard copy and electronically. There are termly meetings with students. Students believe that their voice is heard and are able to cite examples of where suitable remedial actions had been taken to address their concerns. Progression concerns from the FdA Fashion remain, however, unresolved, although improvements to progression arrangements for the FdA Fashion are being proposed by the College. Separate concerns were expressed by students on the FdA Supporting Teaching and Learning about changes to progression arrangements made, after the start of their programme, by Manchester Metropolitan University, from full-time to part-time top-up degrees.

20 Termly higher education performance meetings are used to review the overall management and performance of the programmes. Courses which show poor recruitment, retention or student evaluation are deemed to have only 'limited confidence' and a course recovery programme is instituted. Performance against the course recovery action plan is

closely monitored at regular intervals. Only when the course meets all of the actions required is the course deemed to have achieved a judgement of 'confidence'.

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

21 The College has a well-developed training and development policy. Staff appraisal results in agreed development priorities including attendance at courses, undertaking further qualifications and scholarly activity. The College uses a variety of structures and mechanisms to promote opportunities to staff engaged on higher education programmes. A higher education training day is organised annually. The topics addressed recently include assessment feedback, the use of plagiarism checking software, and the Academic Infrastructure. Further opportunities for professional and subject development are provided by the awarding bodies.

22 Staff are encouraged to undertake research, subject updating and scholarly activity. The majority of full-time staff hold or are studying for master's degrees, mainly in their subject rather than in education. In the creative programme areas, staff are encouraged to undertake external activities to enhance the currency of their knowledge and skills. Examples of effective training and development include the focus on industry-related qualifications and the use of performance analysis in the sports area. There is no mechanism to disseminate the outcomes of research and scholarly activity. It is desirable that the College monitor the impact of scholarly activity and how it differentiates staff approaches to higher education.

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

Core theme 2: Quality of learning opportunities

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

23 The general arrangements for management and reporting are outlined in paragraphs 11 to 13. The Vice Principal (Quality and Standards) is responsible for monitoring the draft higher education development plan which follows the key strategic objectives detailed in the higher education strategy.

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

24 The general arrangements for quality assurance are outlined in paragraphs 17 to 20. The quality of learning opportunities provided by programmes is reviewed by partner awarding bodies through annual reviews and quality improvement plans. Good practice is shared through the higher education sub-group which includes programme leaders within its membership. Development in the use of the virtual learning environment has followed from such sharing. Good practice, identified in the Developmental engagement, in giving

assessment feedback and informing employers about their support role has been shared and acted upon, but the implementation is partial, has not been evaluated, and the full benefits have not been realised.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

25 The College shows a clear engagement with many sections of the *Code of practice*. Policies for admissions and student information, advice and guidance reflect the considerations of the *Code of practice, Section 8: Career education, information, advice and guidance*. There are examples of realistic and inventive work-based experience and placement learning opportunities, particularly on those programmes validated by the University of Chester. Employers emphasised their contribution to employability skills. The employer and student experience is one that is productive, interesting and worthwhile. Tutorial support and mentoring arrangements on some programmes do not engage as effectively with the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning* as others.

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

26 The College teaching and learning strategy is embedded in the Higher Education Strategy and aims to ensure that high quality learning opportunities are provided. Teaching and learning coaches, selected from outstanding practitioners, support all new staff and those with improvement needs. The higher education teaching and learning coach has offered effective help to teachers who work across both further and higher education, in being able to differentiate between teaching and learning levels. The extension of coaching from further into higher education through a successful pilot is considered to be good practice.

27 The College assures itself that the quality and consistency of teaching and learning is being maintained and enhanced through a well-established graded lesson observation process. All observers take part in moderation meetings. Drop-in sessions are offered to teachers whose weaknesses have been identified through this process or those who seek support for teaching and learning related issues. At their appraisal, teachers are encouraged to take specific staff development.

28 Full and part-time staff are well qualified. Part-time staff are generally active practitioners in their industry and a number teach in other higher education institutions. Staff participate in a range of relevant scholarly and subject updating activities. The active involvement of staff in updating helps to underpin the quality of teaching. Students value the high standard of teaching.

29 A range of work-related learning is offered across the disciplines, which includes live projects, competitions and placements for full-time students. Employers are closely engaged in the provision of work experience and some are involved in the programme assessment and delivery. While a range of interesting links with employers are sustained, there is little commonality of approach and only partial sharing of good practice since the Developmental engagement. The team reaffirms the finding of the Developmental engagement that the contribution of employers in some areas enhances relevance, challenge and involvement. However, it is desirable to share better practice in work-based and work-related learning more consistently across the provision.

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

30 The stated aim of the higher education provision is 'to provide programmes of study, delivery methods and academic support that are of the highest quality and which are responsive to learner needs and employer expectations'. The College aims to encourage and promote a culture in which all individuals are treated fairly and with respect, and which values diversity. The College has clear processes in place to support and promote achievement.

31 All staff are involved in pre-entry guidance and student induction. All students receive standard College guidance packs and one-to-one interviews to identify the most appropriate individual pathway. Evidence of practical and written skills is considered in art and design subjects. Academic staff provide guidance and support by email or telephone in this initial selection period. This strong initial support confirms the commitment to students by College staff. All students attend the appropriate awarding body campus for induction. The College provides College and programme-specific elements of induction. Most students found both university and College inductions useful. Diagnostic assessment to identify support needs is carried out at this stage. Continuing support is provided to meet identified needs.

32 All programmes incorporate a one-hour weekly tutorial where students experience individual progress review and feedback, or engage in group discussion with module tutors. The November 2009 Student Survey reported a positive rating of 83 per cent on the value of the tutorials. The College has developed a standardised feedback sheet for higher education in response to recommendations in the Developmental engagement. A small sample of completed feedback sheets illustrated a range of effective practices, but little consistency of approach, particularly in linking feedback to intended learning outcomes. There is scope to share approaches to the completion of the sheet. It is desirable that feedback sheets include intended learning outcomes and relate some comment to the achievement of these.

33 In response to the Developmental engagement, the College has developed an extensive study skills resource on the College virtual learning environment. This is available to all higher education staff and contains helpful guidance on a range of skills such as academic writing, research skills and plagiarism. The programme teams are able to download the resource materials, which they can customise or contextualise, to inform and enhance their teaching practice. Knowledge of this resource and its use is only partially developed. It is desirable that the College should ensure that the academic staff use the study skills resource for the benefit of their students more consistently.

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

34 Arrangements for staff development are outlined in paragraphs 21 and 22. Staff development clearly enhances the quality of learning opportunities and staff find the opportunities provided by the awarding bodies and the consortium particularly helpful.

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 There is a clear strategy for the management of learning resources. Computing resources are managed through a committee on which the Assistant Principal with responsibility for higher education sits. Capital funding from HEFCE has helped to facilitate the creation of good resources for higher education programmes. The College is well

equipped to deliver the current programmes. A new building for art and design programmes is planned for September 2012.

36 Staff are able to follow set procedures to bid for industry standard equipment to support teaching and learning. There is a particularly well equipped recording suite in the FdSc Commercial Music Technology programme which supports the programme's own record label, providing industrial experience.

37 The Hartford Campus houses the main library facilities and book stock. Book resources are adequate to sustain the programmes and the resource bidding process ensures that books identified at validation are available. There are small collections of relevant books for higher education at the other sites in the learning resource centres. Some College learning resource centres are closed at 5pm restricting student access, and some students believed a wider range of book and journal resources would be beneficial. The College is developing access to electronic journal resources in response. Both awarding body partners provide access to learning resources although in some cases this is more limited than the students would like.

38 The Higher Education Sub-Group has facilitated the dissemination of good practice identified in the Developmental engagement by the FdSc Commercial Music Technology to inform, support and provide formative feedback to students on their projects through the virtual learning environment. Students are submitting drafts of written assignments onto the virtual learning environment and receiving speedy written feedback enabling them to improve at the formative stage. Use is also made of an online journal in the form of reflective web logs. Software for online peer assessment and progress tracking is being piloted.

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?

39 The College publishes a dedicated higher education prospectus that provides: a useful introduction to each Foundation Degree programme; examples of students' experience and progression; and information on assessment, fees, support and progression. The same information is held on the College website from which the prospectus and course leaflets can be downloaded. Two recent innovations are a smartphone application for course information and a high quality DVD produced by students showing the College higher education experience from their perspective. The electronic documents on the website and the smartphone application are kept up to date, whereas the prospectus is printed about one year before the start of an academic year. All public information is provided in accessible formats such as Braille, audio/CD and large print if necessary.

40 The College produces a higher education interview pack for successful applicants. This provides the applicant with a record of their interview, a reminder of their offer conditions and an opportunity to declare any additional support needs. It provides the College with a means of monitoring interviews and also of planning for additional support.

41 During induction, students are guided through the essential information available

for their programme of study. A response to the Developmental engagement has resulted in a programme handbook template to ensure that students all receive the same minimum content but some variation in the amount of detailed information remains. The College virtual learning environment holds programme handbooks, programme and module specifications, and the relevant awarding body and College policies and procedures. Printed versions are available on demand. Use of the College virtual learning environment has progressed since the Developmental engagement as noted in paragraph 38. There is a common template for information, but there are still variations in its use. It is desirable that the College continue to strive for parity between programmes in the information it provides.

42 The College has made a number of other improvements to the available information in response to recommendations from the Developmental engagement. A standard employer and mentor handbook has been introduced. Employers who had seen the publication stated that it is not adequately informative and too concerned with administrative matters. There is scope to develop the handbook to make it of more relevance to the employers' role in supporting students. It is desirable that the College consults employers to ensure the content of the handbook is relevant to their needs.

43 The Learning Resource Centre has produced a wide range of excellent material on academic skills and good academic practice which is available on the staff area of the virtual learning environment for use in their modules. Staff were not all aware of this resource and evidence of its use in the modules sampled online is partial.

**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?**

44 The Cheshire Higher Education Consortium website lists the programmes available at each of the colleges, with course summaries and hyperlinks to the College website for more detailed information. The College publishes course information and programme handbooks with shared branding with the awarding bodies. All information is shared and compared with the consortium and awarding bodies at yearly meetings and partnership reviews.

45 The College has effective internal procedures to ensure the accuracy of the public information held on its website and in the prospectus. The College has full responsibility for procedures to ensure the accuracy of this information on programmes validated by the University of Chester, which is checked by the University. With Manchester Metropolitan University programmes this responsibility is shared with the University.

46 The Higher Education Sub-Group agrees the format of college handbooks, while the definitive content lists are provided by the awarding bodies. Programme teams are responsible for originating information in course leaflets, programme handbooks, and assignment briefs. Programme leaders are responsible for the accuracy of the course leaflets; the content then informs the website and hence the prospectus. Course leaflets are monitored by the link tutors and programme leaders. The Assistant Principal signs off the documents before printing and circulation. The Marketing Manager is responsible for the website and liaises with the awarding bodies' marketing teams to ensure that marketing publications meet their requirements. The team found the public information to be accurate, and helpful to the students. Marketing material and advice is also available at open days and public events such as the FdA Fashion Design show.

47 The majority of students consider both the information received prior to starting the course and the programme handbooks to be both useful and accurate. Students on a number of programmes including the FdA Supporting Teaching and Learning were given information regarding progression that was accurate at the time they joined the programme but subsequently became inaccurate due to a policy change by Manchester Metropolitan University in response to the cap on recruitment numbers.

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

48 A Developmental engagement in assessment was held at the College in April 2010. The lines of enquiry were:

Line of enquiry 1: To what extent does assessment feedback and academic support contribute to student learning?

Line of enquiry 2: How does the College ensure academic standards are maintained through assessment and what contribution do employers make to this?

Line of enquiry 3: To what extent does the College make information on assessment clear, accurate and accessible to students, staff and employers?

Through these open lines of enquiry the College invited a wide ranging review of its management of assessment and related issues in order to develop its management of higher education and prepare itself more fully for the Summative review.

49 A range of good practice in the College's approach to assessment is noted in the report. This includes the management of assessment standards and information about assessment. Employers made a strong contribution to the assessment of work-based learning in some areas. In the best instances, extended and constructive feedback was provided to students on assessment tasks. Outstanding use of learning technology is noted in the FdSc Commercial Music Technology to inform, support and provide formative feedback to students on their projects.

50 The report includes a number of recommendations. The College is encouraged to make the link between intended learning outcomes, assessment tasks and feedback more consistently clear. The report also recommends that greater emphasis should be placed on developing student writing skills and good academic practice and that these should be supported by consistent information. The College is also recommended to improve pre-entry information about assessment and to provide more information to employers and mentors to support work-based and work-related assignments and projects.

D Foundation Degrees

51 The College offers a portfolio of 10 Foundation Degrees which covers business, technology, education, tourism, art and design subjects. The portfolio is well-established although recruitment on some programmes is declining. The first cohort of students will

shortly reach completion on the FdA Travel and Tourism. Apart from teacher qualifications all higher education programmes are offered as Foundation Degrees.

52 The team is able to confirm the strengths noted during the Developmental engagement, including the high level of conformity with the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark* in the design and delivery of the programmes. In particular, strengths in the approach to work-based learning are again evident. The College has not made as much progress as anticipated in sharing the best practice observed in the Developmental engagement across the provision, but overall it continues to provide strong vocationally relevant programmes sustained by committed staff teams. Greater managerial oversight is judged to be advisable to ensure the continued success of the programmes in an uncertain and challenging future.

53 All the conclusions detailed below apply to the Foundation Degrees.

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

54 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Mid Cheshire 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, the University of Chester and Manchester Metropolitan University.

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

- the manner in which the College manages or contributes to the formal responses to external examiner reports (paragraph 18)
- the extension of staff coaching from further into higher education through a successful pilot (paragraph 26).

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

57 The team considers that it is **advisable** for the College to:

- give stronger leadership to programme-level developments in higher education (paragraphs 14, 24, 29, 32, 41, 42).

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

- monitor the impact of scholarly activity and how it differentiates staff approaches to higher education (paragraph 22)
- share better practice in work-based and work-related learning more consistently across the provision (paragraphs 25, 29)
- include intended learning outcomes on feedback sheets and relate some comment to the achievement of these (paragraph 32)
- ensure that the academic staff use the study skills resource for the benefit of their students more consistently (paragraphs 33, 43)
- continue to strive for parity between programmes in the information it provides (paragraph 41)
- consult employers to ensure the content of the employers' and mentors' handbook is relevant to their needs (paragraph 42).

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

60 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, and other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that 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.

61 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.

Mid Cheshire College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 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 manner in which the College manages or contributes to the formal responses to external examiner reports (paragraph 18) 	Continue to manage formal responses to external examiner reports	December 2011	Quality Improvement Manager, HE Team Leader, programme leaders	<p>External examiner reports acknowledge previous actions</p> <p>SEDs identify comments as actions which are monitored and reviewed termly</p>	Assistant Principal for HE	<p>External examiner reports</p> <p>SEDs</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the extension of staff coaching from further into higher education through a successful pilot (paragraph 26). 	Continue to offer staff support and coaching via the Teaching and Learning Coach (TLC) programme for higher education programme teams	December 2011	<p>Teaching and Learning Coach (HE)</p> <p>TLC Coordinator</p>	<p>Outstanding/good observation grades</p> <p>Success rates above benchmark (53 per cent)</p> <p>Positive student feedback on teaching and learning</p>	Quality Improvement Manager, Assistant Principal for HE	<p>Observation grades</p> <p>Success rates</p> <p>Student feedback</p>

Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is advisable for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> give stronger leadership to programme-level developments in higher education (paragraphs 14, 24, 29, 32, 41, 42). 	Monitor and report the implementation of quality procedures across all higher education programmes	January 2012	HE Team Leader and Quality Improvement Manager	HE quality review pro formas	Assistant Principal for HE	HE review pro formas
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"> monitor the impact of scholarly activity and how it differentiates staff approaches to higher education (paragraph 22) 	Review the impact of scholarly activity against success rates, student feedback and external examiner reports	December 2011 / June 2012	Quality Improvement Manager and HE Team Leader	Success rates above benchmark (53 per cent) Positive student feedback on teaching and learning External examiner reports identifying relevant and current industry practice	Assistant Principal for HE	Success rate Student feedback External examiner reports
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> share better practice in work-based and 	Identify and share work-based and work-related learning via the	December 2011/June 2012	HE Team Leader and programme teams	Staff development records, HE Sub-Group minutes,	Assistant Principal for HE	Assessment briefs (minimum of one per programme)

work-related learning more consistently across the provision (paragraphs 25, 29)	HE Sub-Group and staff development days			'live projects' across all programmes and external examiner reports		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> include intended learning outcomes on feedback sheets and relate some comment to the achievement of these (paragraph 32) 	Amend assessment feedback sheets to include intended learning outcomes against each task	September 2010	HE Team Leader	Annual higher education quality process	Assistant Principal for HE	Assessment feedback sheets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that the academic staff use the study skills resource for the benefit of their students more consistently (paragraphs 33, 43) 	<p>Promote study skills resources via the HE Sub-Group and course team meetings</p> <p>Develop customised study skills resources suitable for delivery via the HE Sub-Group and staff development days</p>	<p>December 2011</p> <p>June 2012</p>	HE Team Leader and programme teams	Staff development records, programme review cycle and lesson observation data	Assistant Principal for HE	<p>Staff development records</p> <p>Lesson observation records</p> <p>Programme VLE area</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> continue to strive for parity between programmes in the information it provides (paragraph 41) 	Continue to develop student programme handbooks across all higher education programmes	September 2011	HE Team Leader and programme teams	Student handbooks and student feedback	Assistant Principal for HE	Student handbooks

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> consult employers to ensure the content of the employers' and mentors' handbook is relevant to their needs (paragraph 42). 	<p>Obtain employer and mentor feedback on the current handbook</p> <p>Further develop employers' and mentors' handbook with feedback obtained</p>	<p>October 2011</p>	<p>HE Team Leader and programme teams</p>	<p>Employer and mentor feedback</p> <p>Employer and mentor handbook</p>	<p>Assistant Principal for HE</p>	<p>Employer and mentor handbook</p> <p>Employer and mentor feedback sheets</p>
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