Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

Worcester College of Technology

January 2012

SR 031/12

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* (FHEQ), which includes descriptions of different higher education qualifications
- the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (*Code of practice*)
- 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 Worcester College of Technology carried out in January 2012

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 thorough and robust monitoring and action planning arrangements assure standards and the quality of learning experiences within the higher education provision of the College
- the provision of an integrated system of support addresses the needs of all higher education students
- the many opportunities provided by employers enable students to acquire and demonstrate work-related skills and enhance their employability
- there are multiple opportunities for students to provide feedback and the College has developed innovative ways to facilitate feedback for the benefit of all students.

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:

- discuss with its awarding bodies ways in which the processes of approving marketing and publicity material can be formally documented to ensure transparency and enable the College to demonstrate compliance.

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

- develop and clarify the role of the Academic Standards Group as a mechanism for enhancing practice
- continue to develop staff understanding and engagement with the *Code of practice* to ensure that the guidance is considered in all aspects that impact upon the quality of learning opportunities
- develop a strategically-focused approach to employer engagement to promote systematic involvement of employers in curriculum design, delivery and enhancement across the provision
- continue to monitor and review its virtual learning environment provision, and develop clear policies and requirements to ensure it provides parity of support for all students

- include in course handbooks and on the College website information for students and employers regarding the accreditation of prior learning and experience.

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 Worcester College of Technology (the 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 Aston University, Staffordshire University, the University of Worcester, Coventry University, the University of Glamorgan, the University of Warwick, and Edexcel. The review was carried out by Mrs Victoria Faulkner, Mr David Gardiner, Dr Robert Wilkinson (reviewers) and Dr Judith Foreman (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 the awarding bodies, including the College's Higher Education Strategy, annual monitoring reports, and validation and review reports. Evidence was used from meetings with staff, students and employers, from 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, subject and award benchmark statements, the FHEQ, and programme specifications.

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

4   The College's mission statement is 'Outstanding Learning for Successful Lives'. The College was established in 1896 and is a large provider of further and higher education serving the counties of Herefordshire and Worcestershire. There are approximately 10,000 students studying a range of qualifications at different levels. The College works in partnership with schools and employers to meet local skills needs and engage the community in lifelong learning. Provision is distributed across five main buildings comprising the campus in the centre of Worcester and four additional locations to the North and South of the City.

5   As part of its strategic plan, the College has expanded its higher education provision over recent years to meet local employer and community needs and widen participation in higher-level study. It offers vocational higher education courses in a wide range of subjects in partnership with six university awarding bodies and Edexcel. In 2012 there were 2,077 students following higher education courses. There are 1,652 part-time students and 425 full-time students, making a total of 1,051 full-time equivalent students. Higher education is delivered at the city-centre campus. The College has the following higher education provision. Full-time equivalent (FTE) student numbers are in brackets.

Edexcel

- HNC Advanced Practice in Work with Children and Families (0)
- HNC Building Studies (8.5)
- HNC to HND top-up Construction (3.5)

- HNC Civil Engineering (4.5)
- HNC Computing and Systems Development (3.5)
- HNC Engineering - Manufacturing (15)
- HNC Engineering - Operations Engineering (7)
- HNC Engineering - Mechanical (15.5)
- HNC Engineering - Electrical/Electronic (18.5)
- HNC Graphic Design (1)
- HNC Performing Arts (0)
- HNC Science - Applied Biology (5.5)
- HNC Science - Applied Chemistry (4.5)
- HND Advanced Practice in Work with Children and Families (18)
- HND Building Studies (0)
- HND Business and Finance (0)
- HND Computing and Systems Development (43)
- HND Engineering - Mechanical (7)
- HND Engineering - Manufacturing (0)
- HND Engineering - Electrical/Electronic (9)
- HND Engineering - Operations Engineering (0)
- HND Graphic Design (17)
- HND Law (23)
- HND Public Services (35)

Aston University

- FdSc Engineering - Mechanical (5.5)
- FdSc Engineering - Manufacturing (1.5)

Coventry University

- FdSc Electrical Systems and Control (1.5)
- FdSc Electrical Installation (2)
- FdSc Automotive Engineering (0.5)

University of Glamorgan

- FdA Popular Music Technology (33)

Staffordshire University

- Postgraduate Diploma in Law (12)
- Certificate of Higher Education in Crime and Criminal Justice (5)
- LLB (Hons) Law (40)

University of Warwick

- Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (22)

University of Worcester

- HND Theatrical Make-up and Costume (33)
- HND Sports Studies (49)
- FdSc Fitness, Training and Healthy Lifestyles (18)

- FdSc Sports (Tourism) Coaching and Development (23.5)
- FdA Business (53)
- FdA Service Sector Management (37)
- FdA Early Years (30.5)
- FdA Fashion and Surface Pattern (8)
- FdA Payroll Management (426)
- BA (Hons) Performance (Costume and Make-up) (10).

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

6   The College works in collaboration with seven awarding bodies in the delivery and assurance of its higher education courses. There are partnership agreements with six university partners, and the College is an Edexcel-approved centre. The College has partnerships with Aston University, Staffordshire University and the University of Worcester for indirect funding, and direct funding through partnerships with Aston University, Coventry University, Staffordshire University, the University of Glamorgan, the University of Warwick, the University of Worcester, and Edexcel. The current partnership arrangement with Aston University is in its final year of operation following a review of collaborative activity by the University. Teacher training for the lifelong learning sector awards are delivered in partnership with the University of Warwick. Written partnership agreements with all awarding bodies clearly identify the College's responsibilities for the management of its provision.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

7   In order to maintain curriculum currency and provide progression routes for students, links are being developed with the University of Gloucestershire to deliver new Foundation Degree provision in computing, focussing on security and cyber crime. The College is currently in the process of replacing the current HND provision in Law with a new Foundation Degree in Paralegal Studies through its partnership with Staffordshire University.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

8   Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the team. A written submission was presented. This was developed by means of a questionnaire, which was used in focus groups with a sample of students and online, to gather feedback on a range of questions. The findings were analysed and written up by one of the students who acted as the coordinator of the process. The key matters include published information about the College, assessment, and students' experiences as learners and the support they receive. The team also met full and part-time students at the preparatory meeting and during the review visit. The written submission and the meetings with students were helpful and productive.

B   Evaluation of the management of HEFCE-funded higher education

Core theme 1: Academic standards

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

9   Higher education is well managed as part of the overall provision of the College. The Vice-Principal (Curriculum and Planning) has responsibility for the strategic management of the College's higher education programmes, and for ensuring that the policies and procedures of the awarding bodies are implemented. The Vice-Principal is supported in this role by the Curriculum Resources and Quality Leader for Higher Education. Higher education matters are reported by the Vice-Principal to the College Senior Leadership Team and to the Board of Governors. A member of the Governing Body is assigned as the 'Governor Champion' for higher education.

10   The curriculum is divided into three directorates. Within each directorate, Curriculum Resource and Quality Leaders and Managers are responsible for the quality assurance and enhancement of higher education provision, working with teaching teams at programme level. The College has created the post of Teaching and Quality Improvement Manager to strengthen cross-college quality assurance and enhancement of higher education programmes. The Manager works closely with the directorate quality leaders and managers. There is also a Higher Education Performance Review Group, chaired by the Vice-Principal, which monitors programme operation during the year focusing on such issues as the implementation of College procedures and retention and achievement.

11   The Higher Education Academic Standards Group, chaired by the Curriculum Resources and Quality Leader for higher education, has devolved responsibility for implementation of the higher education strategy and operational management of higher educational activities. The group enables academic and support practitioners from across the College to discuss and share information about higher education provision and contribute to the development of policy and practice. The recent University of Worcester partnership review highlighted the further potential of the Academic Standards Group for the enhancement of practice. The team confirm this view. However, the role and remit of the group are not formally documented. In order to further strengthen the management of quality and standards, the team recommends as desirable that the College develops and clarifies the role of the Academic Standards Group as a mechanism for enhancing practice.

12   The College has strong partnerships with its awarding bodies which effectively contribute to the management and delivery of standards. Guidelines from the awarding bodies clearly identify the location of mutual responsibilities for the development and enhancement of standards. Academic link tutors appointed from the universities liaise with the College at programme level and ensure that staff and students are aware of awarding body regulations, policies and quality assurance procedures, and that processes to meet the requirements of partnership agreements are implemented.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

13   Templates prepared for approval and validation with awarding bodies incorporate programme specifications and demonstrate consideration of subject benchmark statements, sections of the *Code of practice*, and use of the FHEQ to ensure appropriate levels for the

award. For example the programme specification for the HND Sports Science programme is mapped against the *Subject benchmark statement: Hospitality, leisure, sport and tourism*. In addition, placement guides for students and employers have been developed by the awarding body in response to the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning*. The FdA Service Sector Management programme, developed and designed by staff at the College, has been mapped against the *Subject benchmark statement: General business and management* and includes a module based on the principles of Action Learning that has been devised to meet the criteria for good practice set out in the *Guidelines for HE Progress Files*.

14   Foundation Degrees align with the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*. They demonstrate the centrality of work-based and work-related learning in course content and in teaching and learning. They also articulate with named level 6 programmes offered by partner institutions and provide effective progression routes for students.

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

15   All programmes are subject to rigorous approval and validation processes managed by the awarding bodies. Following approval a range of quality assurance processes and structures assures the College that it discharges its responsibilities effectively. These include regular meetings with awarding body representatives, the external examining process, the operation of examination boards and committees, and periodic review processes undertaken with the awarding bodies. The recent partnership review by the University of Worcester confirmed that the College is fulfilling its obligations and praised the effective two-way communication which pervades the partnership from senior management through to the programme team.

16   The College has effective reporting and monitoring processes. Each programme area prepares an annual self-evaluation report. The format of these reports varies to comply with the specific requirements of different awarding bodies. Monitoring reports are evaluative and draw on information from external examiners' reports, link tutor reports, and student and employer feedback, as well as statistical information on student recruitment, progression and achievement, to produce clearly articulated action plans. Within each directorate course reports are reviewed at directorate higher education meetings and combined into a single directorate self-evaluation report. Once approved, directorate self-evaluation reports are forwarded to the Quality Standards Unit and are reviewed by the Curriculum Resource and Quality leader for higher education, who produces a College higher education self-evaluation report. Action plans are implemented and monitored through the Academic Standards Group.

17   There is thorough monitoring of external examiner reports which are received by the Quality Standards Units, disseminated to programme teams through the higher education shared drive, and used to inform annual course monitoring. In addition, all external examiners' reports are scrutinised by the Teaching Quality Improvement Management, the Vice-Principal for Curriculum and Planning, and the Principal. Reports from the scrutiny process are fed back to course teams and highlight strengths and any areas that require action. External examiners confirm that the standards and quality of the provision are sound and that students are achieving the intended learning outcomes. Where an issue requiring action is identified by an external examiner, the College responds appropriately. For example, in 2011 the external examiner for the HND Advanced Practice in Work with Children and Families identified a problem with student assessment and internal verification. This was noted by the Quality Standards Unit and addressed in the course action planning.

The team considers the thorough and robust monitoring, and the action planning arrangements developed to assure academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities in the higher education provision of the College, to be a feature of good practice.

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

18   The management and delivery of staff development involves an effective combination of College, partner and staff-directed activities. Arrangements for staff development are set out in the Continuing Professional Development Procedure statement. Development needs for individual staff are identified through coaching and development meetings carried out with line managers. This process is informed by reference to annual monitoring reports, quality improvement plans and teaching observation. In addition, the identification of specific needs may arise as part of the annual strategic planning process and in response to external drivers. Staff development records are systematically maintained within a College electronic database known as Passport to Success.

19   Collaborative working with university partners makes an important contribution to the enhancement of academic standards and learning opportunities. Some partners make information about their own staff development programmes available to staff at the College and encourage their participation in these events. The College has clear succession plans in place to ensure that managers and teachers are appropriately qualified to undertake roles. All staff new to teaching on University of Worcester programmes are required to complete a specific induction programme and are invited to apply for the award of the title of registered lecturer.

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

Core theme 2: Quality of learning opportunities

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

20   The College's management structure is outlined in paragraphs 9 to 10. Overall responsibility for managing the quality of learning opportunities lies with the Vice-Principal (Curriculum and Planning) in liaison with the Curriculum Resources and Quality Leader for higher education and the heads of the teaching directorates. Clear responsibilities and reporting mechanisms are in place and are effective.

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

21   The processes by which the College assures itself that it is fulfilling its responsibilities are explained in paragraphs 15 to 17. The College's agreements with the universities include references to mutual responsibilities for the provision of learning opportunities. These responsibilities are well understood by staff and embedded in the College's systems and procedures. Learning opportunities are explored as part of the

approval and validation process. The College takes part in periodic reviews with the awarding bodies, and the quality of teaching and learning opportunities is monitored through annual programme reviews and regular team meetings, where programme and student progress is checked. The team concludes that the College has effective mechanisms for ensuring that it meets its obligations to its awarding bodies to provide appropriate learning opportunities for its students.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

22   Over recent years the College has worked diligently to ensure that processes and procedures relating to issues such as admissions, the support provided for disabled students, and equality of opportunity reflect best practice. The College makes use of a range of external reference points to enhance the quality of its services to students and has gained MATRIX accreditation for its provision of information, advice and guidance. The College's understanding and use of the Academic Infrastructure is tested through programme approval, validation and review processes with the universities, explained in paragraphs 13 and 14. However, the team found in its meetings with staff that engagement with the guidance contained in sections of the *Code of practice* relating to learning opportunities was not consistent across all staff teams. The team recommends as desirable that the College continues to develop staff understanding and engagement with the *Code of practice* to ensure that the guidance is considered in all aspects that impact upon the quality of learning opportunities.

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

23   The College has an effective annual monitoring process which includes consideration of the quality of teaching and learning. Evidence used in the monitoring process includes progression and achievement data, teaching observations, comments from external examiners, and student feedback.

24   Teaching and learning are guided by the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy which describes the College's commitment to providing outstanding teaching and learning for all students and the ways in which it will achieve this. Although aimed at the whole of the College's provision, the strategy does contain specific and appropriate references to the requirements of higher education. Transparency of assessment practices on Edexcel provision has been improved since the Developmental engagement through the introduction of new common assessment documentation and the creation of a separate Higher Education Assessment Protocol.

25   There is a well developed system of regular teaching observation undertaken by experienced higher education staff. Staff requiring additional support are linked with a subject learning coach with specific responsibility for higher education. The College has recently introduced a cross-college initiative called 'supported experiments' as a further quality improvement measure. Staff confirmed this as a useful opportunity to enhance peer support for developing teaching and to share good practice.

26   Much of the curriculum has been designed in response to employers' skills needs and sector skills requirements. One example is the FdA Payroll Management which has been developed in partnership with the Chartered Institute for Payroll Professionals. The College also delivers a sector-endorsed FdA Early Years. Employer engagement includes arrangements whereby employers and teaching staff can engage in dialogue regarding the development of awards. For example, the engineering programme area has an active Engineering Advisory Group which meets regularly and ensures that curriculum

design and content meet the needs of local industry. Similarly, the FdA Early Years programme team holds partnership meetings with the local authority and there are regular meetings with employers and professional body representatives on the FdA Payroll Management. Arrangements to involve employers at programme level make an effective contribution to the curriculum in many cases. However, there is no overarching strategic approach to employer engagement. The team recommends as desirable that the College develops a strategically-focused approach to employer engagement to promote systematic involvement of employers in curriculum design, delivery and enhancement across the provision.

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

27   Student guidance arrangements, including pre-entry guidance and induction, are effective. All students are interviewed and receive an induction to their programme. Students confirmed that they found the pre-entry guidance helpful and comprehensive.

28   Support for students while studying is thorough and addresses a wide range of needs. There is effective liaison between the teaching teams and the learning resource centres, and a clearly articulated structure for accessing support for students with additional learning needs. Students praised the tutorial support and value the additional help that is available from the library staff who support with study skills and provide a proofreading service. A strong system of tutorial support has been implemented for students on the blended learning FdA Payroll Management. The provision of an integrated system of support which addresses the needs of all higher education students represents good practice.

29   The College has good links with employers on a number of programmes and these have been used well to support students' learning. The innovative and extensive contributions made by employers to the assessment of students were identified as good practice in the Developmental engagement. This also applies to the provision of a broad range of work-related learning opportunities through, for example, work placement, project activities, and employer feedback on student performance. The many opportunities provided by employers which enable students to acquire and demonstrate work-related skills and enhance their employability is good practice.

30   The College places importance on the achievement of representative, reliable and informed student feedback. Students' views about their support are solicited in a variety of ways including surveys, module evaluations, and the programme representative system. Students have effective representation on programme-level committees and there are regular cross-college course representative meetings. There is also an annual Student Quality Improvement Strategy Team meeting which is attended by senior managers. In 2011, higher education students participated in the Corporation Planning Away Day. To maximise levels of student engagement and ensure that course representatives on part-time courses are not disadvantaged, the College has recently created an online forum, an email helpline and regular drop-in sessions. Student feedback is used in annual monitoring and action planning, and students confirmed that changes are made in response to their views. The multiple opportunities for students to provide feedback and the development of innovative ways to facilitate this for the benefit of all students are good practice.

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

31   The arrangements for the management of staff development are described in paragraphs 18 and 19. Staff teaching on higher education courses are well qualified and

some tutors combine teaching with relevant external professional practice. An annual programme of generic professional development sessions is aimed at further and higher education staff in the College and there are opportunities to participate in events organised by the awarding bodies for those who teach on higher education provision. Staff are encouraged to undertake scholarly activity to support their subject. A variety of individual examples of external professional activity and scholarly projects appropriate to support higher education teaching and learning was provided to the team. These include staff undertaking master's and doctoral awards; training in new industrial techniques; attendance at conferences; and work shadowing. Staff identify and share good practice through the Academic Standards Group.

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?

32   Resources for higher education programmes are reviewed and determined through the annual business planning process in which academic and service area managers take part. Directorates control revenue budgets and there is a bidding process for major capital items. A ring-fenced higher education budget is managed by the College's senior librarian to ensure that learning resource centres are appropriately stocked. In the allocation of teaching and social space the College has shown sensitivity to the needs of students through the designation of dedicated higher education areas where possible. The suitability and accessibility of learning resources are scrutinised during the validation process and reviewed subsequently through awarding body and College periodic and annual monitoring processes.

33   The College makes extensive use of a virtual learning environment to support teaching and learning and students report very positively on its availability in many areas. There are some excellent examples of programme sites such as the FdA Service Sector Management, the HND Computing, the FdA Payroll Management, and HND Law. However, in others such as the HND/C Advanced Practice in Work with Children and Families the site is still under development and would benefit from updating. The team recommends as desirable that the College continues to monitor and review its virtual learning environment provision, and develops clear policies and requirements to ensure it provides parity of support for all students.

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

Core theme 3: Public information

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

34   The College produces a range of general higher education materials and for specific programmes, in line with its collaborative arrangements. Materials include a higher education prospectus and course information leaflets which are available in print and electronically through the College website.

35   Entry requirements, assessment methods, progression routes and career options are for the most part clearly detailed in the prospectus and course information leaflets. The College website includes a signposted area for higher education which provides an

appropriate range of general information as well as links to specific course descriptions. Information for employers on higher education provision is not well developed through the College website. The College is endeavouring to improve access to information for all users through the development of a web search facility, funded by the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC), which will allow external users to search using a variety of different key words and criteria.

36   All programmes have a detailed handbook which is available to students in printed format and through the virtual learning environment. The handbook for the FdA Payroll Management is particularly notable as it includes information regarding the accreditation of prior certificated and experiential learning and ways in which credit may be claimed. The team recommends as desirable that the College includes in course handbooks and on the College website information for students and employers regarding the accreditation of prior learning and experience.

What arrangements does the College have in place to assure the accuracy and completeness of information the College has responsibility for publishing? How does the College know that these arrangements are effective?

37   There are clearly understood processes in place which contribute to assuring the accuracy and completeness of information. The production of publicity and marketing information is coordinated centrally in the College through the Marketing Department. The prospectus is planned in advance, with senior managers and those responsible at programme level, to ensure that course information is accurate. Course information leaflets are stored centrally and are audited and updated regularly. Updating and revision of student handbooks is overseen by the Quality Standards Unit. Amendments to website information are controlled by the Marketing Department.

38   Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies clearly state mutual responsibilities for the production of marketing and publicity information and the requirements for approval prior to issue. Staff confirmed that these requirements are adhered to, with link tutors and other partner representatives directing the approval process at programme level. However, the recording of the approval process is not consistently documented or transparent. It is recommended as advisable that the College discusses with its awarding bodies ways in which the processes of approving marketing and publicity material can be formally documented to ensure transparency and enable the College to demonstrate compliance with awarding body requirements.

39   The College surveys students at the start of and during their programme to ascertain their views on the information they receive. Most students who have used the prospectus or website consider the information to be accurate, informative and easy to understand. Students are also very appreciative of the wide range of information made available to them through the virtual learning environment.

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 April 2011. Three lines of enquiry were agreed with the College and ensured that all core themes could be addressed. These were: the extent to which processes of programme monitoring and evaluation of assessment ensure that academic standards are maintained; how the College assures the quality, appropriateness and timeliness of assessment feedback to students; and the extent to which the information provided to students by the College on the assessment process is comprehensive, clear and accurate.

41   The Developmental engagement team identified a number of areas of good practice. Assessment methods are effective with innovative contributions from employers. There are thorough and robust systems for programme monitoring and evaluation and a comprehensive range of methods by which the views of students are collected. The course handbooks used on HND Sports Studies and FdA Service Sector Management are exceptionally detailed. The shared area on the College intranet contains useful information available to all tutors, managers and support staff and makes an effective contribution to maintaining academic standards.

42   The team also made a number of recommendations. It recommended as desirable that the College should consider the introduction of more formal cross-college processes for the collection of employer views. It could consider strengthening the management of assessment through the development of a higher education assessment policy. It should also consider the development of a feedback sheet template to facilitate consistency and provide more detailed and constructive written feedback to students. Oversight of the accuracy and completeness of information given to students could be strengthened by developing a system for the approval of course handbooks prior to issue to students. Following the Developmental engagement the College implemented the majority of recommendations. Consideration is being given to ways of formalising the collection of employer views.

D   Foundation Degrees

43   The College considers that its higher education strategy has been supported by the development of Foundation Degrees particularly because of the flexibility they offer employers and students. The College has used Foundation Degrees as vehicles for widening participation, providing students who might not otherwise have engaged with higher education opportunities to study in both full and part-time modes. The College involves employers in programme and assessment design, and in curriculum delivery. Many employers offer work placements, provide live briefs and projects, and offer feedback on assessment and performance. The College developed an innovative Foundation Degree in Payroll Management in collaboration with the Chartered Institute of Payroll Professionals, and this provides work-based and distance learning opportunities to a large number of practitioners annually.

44   The College offers 13 Foundation Degrees. These are in the areas of payroll management, popular music technology, fashion, early years, service sector management, business, sports and fitness, electronics, electrical installation, mechanical, manufacturing, and automotive engineering. The conclusions below relating to good practice and recommendations apply to Foundation Degrees.

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

45	The team has identified a number of features of good practice in the 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: Aston University, Coventry University, Staffordshire University, the University of Glamorgan, the University of Warwick, the University of Worcester, and Edexcel.

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

- the thorough and robust monitoring and action planning arrangements assure standards and the quality of learning experiences within the higher education provision of the College (paragraph 17)
- the provision of an integrated system of support addresses the needs of all higher education students (paragraph 28)
- the many opportunities provided by employers enable students to acquire and demonstrate work-related skills and enhance their employability (paragraph 29)
- there are multiple opportunities for students to provide feedback and the College has developed innovative ways to facilitate feedback for the benefit of all students (paragraph 30).

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

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

- discuss with its awarding bodies ways in which the processes of approving marketing and publicity material can be formally documented to ensure transparency and enable the College to demonstrate compliance (paragraph 38).

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

- develop and clarify the role of the Academic Standards Group as a mechanism for enhancing practice (paragraph 11)
- continue to develop staff understanding and engagement with the *Code of practice* to ensure that the guidance is considered in all aspects that impact upon the quality of learning opportunities (paragraph 22)
- develop a strategically-focused approach to employer engagement to promote systematic involvement of employers in curriculum design, delivery and enhancement across the provision (paragraph 26)
- continue to monitor and review its virtual learning environment provision, and develop clear policies and requirements to ensure it provides parity of support for all students (paragraph 33)
- include in course handbooks and on the College website information for students and employers regarding the accreditation of prior learning and experience (paragraph 36).

50	Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, 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.

51   Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, 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.

52   Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, 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.

Worcester College of Technology action plan relating to the Summative review: January 2012						
Good practice	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
In the course of the Summative review the team identified the following areas of **good practice** that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
• the thorough and robust monitoring and action planning arrangements assure standards and the quality of learning experiences within the higher education provision of the College (paragraph 17)	Continue the central assessment and grading of external examiner reports and encourage all higher education institutions to provide evaluative feedback on partnership courses	November 2012	Curriculum Resources and Quality Leader (higher education) and Quality and Standards Manager	All higher education course teams receive grading and evaluative comments on their external examiner reports and provide actions to improve	Curriculum Resources and Quality Leader (higher education), Quality and Standards Manager, Vice-Principal (Quality and External Relations)	Course and Directorate self-assessment reports
• the provision of an integrated system of support addresses the needs of all higher education students (paragraph 28)	Maintain the tutorial support provided within academic teams. Ensure all higher education learners receive appropriate support which addresses their needs	Ongoing	Course teams	Learner feedback on support systems and resources is positive	Academic Standards group; Director of Student Support Services	National Student Survey, course and end of unit learner evaluation, directorate and college higher education self assessment reports

• the many opportunities provided by employers enable students to acquire and demonstrate work-related skills and enhance their employability (paragraph 29)	To further develop opportunities for learners in all areas to enhance their employability through the development of work-related skills	July 2013	Course teams	Greater input of industry-related assessment activities in assessment schemes and assignment briefs	Subject cluster industrial liaison group	Course self-assessment report; Student end of unit evaluation questionnaires
• there are multiple opportunities for students to provide feedback and the College has developed innovative ways to facilitate feedback for the benefit of all students (paragraph 30)	To further develop mechanisms to allow all higher education learners to provide feedback to the College	November 2012	Curriculum Resources and Quality Leader (higher education), student voice coordinator	Learners report easy access to feedback mechanisms	Academic Standards Group	National Student Survey; course, directorate and College higher education self-assessment reports
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:						
• discuss with its awarding bodies ways in which the processes of approving marketing and	Confirmation of identity management guidelines with higher education institution partners to ensure that all marketing and	College actions completed by September 2012	Vice-Principal (Curriculum and Planning) Marketing manager	All College marketing and publicity materials comply with identity management	Academic Standards Group	Marketing and Quality Standards Unit audit reports

Integrated quality and enhancement review

Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
publicity material can be formally documented to ensure transparency and enable the College to demonstrate compliance (paragraph 38)	publicity material complies with their requirements			guidelines of higher education institution partners		
The team considers that it is **desirable** for the College to:						
• develop and clarify the role of the Academic Standards Group as a mechanism for enhancing practice (paragraph 11)	Membership and terms of reference for Academic Standards Group to be reviewed and clarified	July 2012	Academic Standards Group	New terms of reference produced, agreed and in place for start of 2012-13 academic year	Senior Leadership Team	Higher education self-assessment report
• continue to develop staff understanding and engagement with the *Code of practice* to ensure that the guidance is considered in all aspects that impact upon the quality of learning	Provide staff training to enhance understanding and engagement with the *Code of practice* through mandatory Continuing Professional Development sessions	6 July 2012 and ongoing	Curriculum Resources and Quality Leader (higher education) Quality and Standards Manager	Attendance and engagement in Continuing Professional Development workshops	Academic Standards Group	Higher education self-assessment report

opportunities (paragraph 22)						
• develop a strategically-focused approach to employer engagement to promote systematic involvement of employers in curriculum design, delivery and enhancement across the provision (paragraph 26)	Establish industrial liaison groups within vocational subject clusters	March 2013	Vice-Principal (Curriculum and Planning) Curriculum Resources and Quality Leaders and Managers	Industrial liaison groups provide involvement of employers in curriculum design, delivery and enhancement	Academic Standards Group	Course self evaluation (C-Seds) Higher education self-assessment report
• continue to monitor and review its virtual learning environment provision, and develop clear policies and requirements to ensure it provides parity of support for all students (paragraph 33)	Continue to monitor and review the virtual learning environment. Produce clear guidelines regarding the quality and extent of information to be provided for higher education learners via the virtual learning environment	December 2012	Information and Learning Technology Manager and Quality Standards Unit	Produce and disseminate the guidelines to all higher education practitioners and managers	Academic Standards Group	Higher education self-assessment report
• include in course handbooks and on the College	Clear statement on accreditation of prior learning to be made	September 2012	Higher education course teams	Individual learning plans to include reference to	Curriculum Resources and Quality Leader	Course self-evaluation documentation

web site information for students and employers regarding the accreditation of prior learning and experience (paragraph 36)	within individual higher education course information			accreditation of prior learning and present in course management file.	(higher education); Quality and Standards Manager	(C-Seds)

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