



# **Integrated quality and enhancement review**

**Summative review**

**Middlesbrough College**

**February 2012**

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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* (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 Middlesbrough College carried out in February 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 body and organisations. 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 Collaborative Provision Annual Monitoring Report is highly evaluative with all programmes considered in detail and strengths and weaknesses clearly identified
- the 'traffic lights' system is a robust auditing tool for monitoring the progress and consideration of its higher education reports
- access to the virtual learning environment by employers provides them with the opportunity to be actively and regularly engaged with the College and provides effective support for students
- students' research projects and skills contribute to employers' business activities and to solutions for problems
- teaching staff share good practices as part of staff development exercises that have a direct impact on students' learning experiences
- the strategic commitment to invest in resources, especially specialist resources, enhances students' learning experience.

### Recommendations

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

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

- ensure that the Higher Education Standards Committee addresses learning and teaching as required by its terms of reference.

## 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 Middlesbrough College (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 Teesside University (the University), Edexcel, the Institute of Leadership and Management, the Association of Accounting Technicians, the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants, and the National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health. The review was carried out by Mr Gary Hargreaves, Ms Catherine Hill, Mr Brian Whitehead (reviewers) and Mr Philip Markey (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 its awarding bodies, meetings with staff, students, employers and partner institutions, and 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 and a second Developmental engagement in learning and teaching. A summary of findings from these Developmental engagements 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 help HEFCE 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 Middlesbrough College is the largest further education college in the Tees Valley. It was established in 2002 following mergers of small colleges. In 2008, the College moved to new purpose-built premises. Along with four other colleges, Middlesbrough College is a member of the Teesside University Higher Education Business Partnership which was established in 1995. The College contributes to the priority of the partnership for widening access and providing flexible progression routes to higher education through locally based programmes and awards. More recently, there has been a shift towards an explicit emphasis on employer engagement with the aim of up-skilling the workforce.

5 All the College's higher education students are indirectly funded through a franchise arrangement with Teesside University. In 2007-08, the College embarked on a strategy to expand its higher education provision, with student numbers increasing by 77 per cent by 2010. All the 1,274 students are part-time, making a total of 631.41 full-time equivalent students (FTEs).

6 The College offers the following programmes (with full-time equivalent numbers in brackets).

### Teesside University

- BA Education Studies (NQF5 & NQF6) (12)
- BA (Hons) Performing Arts (Top-up) (13)
- BSc Music Technology (90)

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- Certificate in Education: Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (25)
- FdA Business Management (74)
- FdA Creating Music Performance (10)
- FdA Creating Theatre (14)
- FdA Culinary Arts and Management (11)
- FdA Early Years Sector Endorsed (January start - predicted numbers) (47)
- FdA Hospitality Management (9)
- FdA Leadership and Management (Hair, Beauty and Spa Therapies) (4)
- FdA Stage and Media Production (6)
- FdA Travel & Tourism (31)
- FdSc Computing (11)
- FdSc Fitness Instruction & Sports Massage (49)
- FdSc Outdoor Leadership (19)
- FdSc Renewable Energies (7)
- FdSc Sport and Exercise (Personal Training) (11)
- HND Electrical & Electronic Engineering (Top-up) (6.5)

## Edexcel

- HND Health and Social Care (29)
- HND Instrumentation & Control Engineering (Top-up) (2)
- HND Social Sciences (29)
- HNC Electrical & Electronic Engineering (24.5)
- HNC Instrumentation & Control Engineering (15)
- HNC Mechanical Engineering (13.5)
- Professional Graduate Certificate in Education: Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (25)

## The National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health

- NEBOSH Diploma (9)

## Institute of Leadership and Management

- Certificate in Management (3.5)
- Executive Diploma in Management (3.5)

## Association of Accounting Technicians

- NVQ4 Accounting (11.25)

## Chartered Institute of Management Accountants

- Operational Level 5 - Financial Operations (3.57)
- Operational Level 5 - Performance Operations (3.57)
- Operational Level 5 - Enterprise Operations (3.74)
- Management Level 6 - Financial Management (0.85)
- Management Level 6 - Enterprise Management (0.85)
- Management Level 6 - Performance Management (0.85)
- Strategic Level 7 - Financial Strategy (1.19)
- Strategic Level 7 - Performance Strategy (0.85)
- Strategic Level 7 - Enterprise Strategy (0.85)
- Test of Professional Competence in Management Accounting (0.34)



## **Partnership agreements with the awarding body**

7 Middlesbrough College, with four neighbouring colleges, is part of Teesside University's Higher Education Business Partnership. Through the University, the College also has agreements with the Association for Accounting Technicians, the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants, the Institute of Leadership and Management, and the National Examination Board for Occupational Safety and Health. With Edexcel, the College offers HNC/HND programmes. The licence for this 'transferred in' award is held by Teesside University. The College follows the quality processes for the Teesside University's Partnership guidance for its higher education provision, including the professional programmes.

## **Recent developments in higher education at the College**

8 Since the Development engagements, the College has restructured its management of higher education. Three new Foundation Degrees in Sports and Exercise, Computing and Web Design have been added, with intakes starting in 2011. Three new HNDs in Electronic, Instrumentation and Mechanical Engineering will start in 2012. The College has decided to withdraw two Foundation Degrees in Renewable Energy Engineering, and Leadership and Management, and an HND in Health and Social Care. To enhance the student experience, the FdA Performing Arts pathways are being rewritten to provide a single pathway from 2012.

9 The College has invested in equipment to resource two rooms in the Visual and Performing Arts Directorate to support the delivery of the BSc Music Technology and the FdA Performing Arts pathways. A further investment is planned for 2012 for capital spending for staff development and learning in teaching in higher education. In its strategic plan, the College says that it expects to maintain current levels of higher education delivery and to continue working with Teesside University to take advantage of available growth funding.

## **Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission**

10 Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the team. The students received assistance from the student outreach coordinator from Teesside University in compiling their submission. Student representatives were invited to attend a feedback session relating to responses to 15 questions on their experiences at the College. Student representatives had previously consulted fellow students on their programmes. The submission indicates that students are very positive about most aspects of their learning experiences, with some statements expressing the need to improve information technology and dedicated higher education areas. All the issues raised in the submission were discussed with students at their meeting with the team. At this meeting the students said they were aware of the submission and that it reflected their views.

## **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's management recently underwent an organisational review, which has clarified the operational and strategic leadership of the higher education programmes. There is a distinct process in the College's organisation for the management and reporting of the higher education provision. While the awarding body has ultimate responsibility for the quality of the programmes, the College takes full ownership and responsibility for all matters relating to the management and delivery of the programmes. The process includes Teesside University, Edexcel and professional body programmes.

12 Higher education programmes are located in seven of the eight academic directorates. Each of the directorates is managed by a Programme Director. The directors, along with the Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality, provide the strategic development, support and quality monitoring of the higher education programmes. The delivery of higher education is provided by the Director of Higher Education, supported by a representative from each of the directorates. This team, the Higher Education Directorate Representatives, meets monthly and reports to the Higher Education Standards Committee which meets termly.

13 There is a clear process for the consideration of reports at all levels in the provision. Module leaders produce annual module reviews. Programme leaders then write an Annual Programme Report which is based on information from the module reviews, external examiners' reports and student feedback. These reports, along with the Annual Quality Monitoring Visit reports, which are conducted by the relevant School in Teesside University, contribute to the Collaborative Provision Annual Monitoring Report which is produced by the Director of Higher Education. Reports from the Higher Education Directorate Team are considered by the Curriculum and Learning Matters Group and the College Leadership Team. Reports are also presented to the College Governors. This reporting process is efficient and ensures that higher education is considered at every level in the College's management. The College also produces reports for the professional programmes from the awarding organisations. All the reports are detailed and identify good practices and matters that require action. In particular, the team considers that the Collaborative Provision Annual Monitoring Report is good practice because it is highly evaluative with all programmes considered in detail, with strengths and weaknesses clearly identified.

#### **What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?**

14 The Academic Infrastructure is embedded throughout the development and delivery of higher education at the College and is reinforced by the links with the awarding body. All new programmes, and revisions to existing programmes, are presented to the Teesside University's Academic Quality and Standards Policy Committee. Here consideration is given to all aspects of the Academic Infrastructure. Staff are familiar with the Academic Infrastructure and are able to demonstrate how it is used to inform the management of academic standards. For example, for work-based and placement learning, the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning* informs the delivery of this mode of learning.

## **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 The College is clear regarding its obligations and requirements of the awarding body and organisations. The relationship with Teesside University is strong, with the College becoming increasingly confident and more autonomous in the operation of its higher education programmes. This is supported by the Partnership. The College is guided by the Teesside University Quality Handbook and the Threshold Quality Standards. The professional programmes, franchised through Teesside University, are guided by the requirements identified by the awarding organisations.

16 The College and Teesside University and the awarding organisations for the professional programmes work effectively together to ensure that the assessment process is rigorous. Assessment is managed in line with the relevant schools at Teesside University, and is guided by the Teesside University Operations Manual, which contains clear and detailed information about assessment requirements. The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy includes guidelines for first and second marking and the verification/moderation processes. The team is able to confirm that the assessment practices are in line with this strategy.

17 External examiners' reports are received by the Assistant Principal: Quality, Standards and Excellence who notes any issues before passing them to the Quality Assurance Manager. These are logged before being distributed to the programme teams. Comments and action plans are returned to the Quality Assurance Manager. Until recently, students were allowed access to external examiners' reports. The College and Teesside University are working together to resolve the problem of identifying how external examiner reports can be more specific about individual colleges where a programme is delivered at several colleges. Once this is done, students will have access to reports and the College will be able to respond to specific, rather than generic, recommendations.

18 The College operates a 'traffic lights' system to monitor the progress of higher education reports. This is efficiently managed by the College's Quality Assurance Manager. There are seven stages in this system which ensures that all reports are produced on time and that they are addressed by the appropriate management group at each stage in the quality process. The team regards as good practice the College's 'traffic lights' system, which is an effective auditing tool for monitoring the progress and consideration of higher education reports.

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

## **Core theme 2: Quality of learning opportunities**

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

19 The College's responsibilities for managing the quality of learning opportunities is similar to that for academic standards as outlined in paragraphs 11 to 13. As indicated in the partnership agreement, the College is responsible for the quality of all the learning and

teaching, admissions, induction procedures, student support, and the provision of suitable work-related learning opportunities. It is also responsible for ensuring the learning accommodation and resources enable students to achieve the learning outcomes of their awards. The process covers Teesside University, Edexcel and professional body programmes.

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

20 How the College assures itself that it is fulfilling its obligations to its awarding body is similar to that for the management of academic standards as outlined in paragraphs 15 to 19. Teaching staff clearly understand their obligations to the awarding body for the management of the quality of learning opportunities. They participate with diligence in the internal quality processes, and those of Teesside University, for annual reviews. The information from these reviews, data from teaching observations, and reports from external examiners provide the evidence for addressing the quality of learning opportunities.

### **What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?**

21 The means by which the College engages with the Academic Infrastructure is outlined in paragraph 14. More specifically, in relation to the management of the quality of learning opportunities, the College staff demonstrate how the parts of the Academic Infrastructure relating to learning opportunities inform their practices. Programmes are aligned with the Academic Infrastructure at the time of validation and institutional approval. External examiners' reports confirm that the quality of learning opportunities is informed by the College's understanding of the Academic Infrastructure. Staff engagement with relevant sections of the Academic Infrastructure has improved since the Developmental engagement. Staff also commented that their enhanced understanding of the precepts of the *Code of practice* and subject benchmark statements has contributed to enhancement in teaching practice and assessment plans and in their use of work-based learning to enhance learning opportunities.

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

22 There are several processes whereby the College assures itself that the quality of teaching and learning is being maintained and enhanced. The College has a well developed higher education teaching and learning strategy which was cited as good practice in the Developmental engagement. This strategy puts the development of the student as an independent learner at the heart of the process. This remains an important thread through the student journey at the College. There is a rigorous programme of graded/peer observations with a supportive improvement strategy to address the recommendations resulting from the observations.

23 The partnership agreement states that Teesside University must approve the appointment of new members of staff to teach on higher education provision. This involves either the involvement of University staff or arrangement for the University to see and approve the applications prior to appointment. Staff new to teaching in higher education are provided with appropriate mentors, experience induction arrangements, and have access to a range of 'rough guides' from the University to help them prepare for delivering higher education.

24 The National Student Survey (2011) results, and the team's meeting with students, confirm the students are satisfied with their teaching and learning. Programme and module handbooks provide students with detailed schedules which enable them to plan their learning. Students say that they benefit from staff who are highly skilled practitioners and who demonstrate awareness of their subjects. The teaching is challenging and students are provided with stimulating learning materials. In programme areas such as music, engineering, performance and sport, student learning is underpinned by specialised technology.

25 Good practice is shared through the Teaching and Learning Focus Group meetings. Reports on the quality of teaching and learning are discussed by the College Leadership Team and the Standards Committee of the Governing Body. While the Education Standards Committee addresses most higher education issues, it has yet to show consideration of learning and teaching. The team considers it desirable that the Higher Education Standards Committee addresses learning and teaching in line with its terms of reference. These require the committee to set, monitor and scrutinise standards and quality across all aspects of higher education delivery.

26 Work-based learning is a key feature of the College's provision. There are many examples of how work-based learning is used to enhance student learning and access to learning opportunities. Programmes use personal development planning linked with work placements with a wide range of local and regional businesses. Employers spoke positively of their experience of working with the College and the way that the College responds to their ideas. Staff confirm how employers have helped to enhance students' learning through their advice on developing students' employability skills. The team considers it good practice that employers have access to the virtual learning environment because it provides them with the opportunity to be actively and regularly engaged with the College, and provides effective support for students.

27 There are some instances where the students' research is used by employers to help them with projects. For example, in the FdA Travel and Tourism students undertake a 13-week placement during which each student conducts a piece of research to help provide solutions or information to take the business forward in some way. This approach has provided students with real insight into working practices in a diverse range of travel and tourism organisations. It has also provided beneficial outcomes for the businesses involved. In the FdA Business Management, a new module on Enterprise and Entrepreneurship has been developed in collaboration with local employers which has enhanced the opportunity to develop the skills necessary to set up and run a new business or venture. This has also provided students with the experience of understanding the strategic aspects of management, which is often difficult to provide in classroom situations. The team considers the way students' research and skills are contributing to employers' projects and providing solutions to problems to be good practice.

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

28 The College provides students with effective support through a well organised system of personal and academic tutorials. All module and programme reports address student support. The College works closely with the University to ensure that students are supported effectively. For example, students with additional learning needs are assessed by the team at Teesside University and their applications for financial support are processed by the University. There is a 'drop in centre' at the University that offers advice on a range of study needs such as essay writing, time management and maths. The College recognises that having to attend Teesside University to access this type of support does not always meet individual students' needs and is considering how it might replicate such a service at the College.

29 The National Student Survey (2011) shows a high satisfaction rate for the quality of academic support and the provision the College makes for personal development. The student submission and student evaluations organised by the College and Teesside University also indicate a high level of student satisfaction. There are elected student representatives for all programmes, who meet with the Director of Higher Education regularly to raise and discuss issues related to their student experience. The meeting with students had a high proportion of student representatives present and they confirmed that the College was diligent in listening and responding to their feedback. Following the Developmental engagements, the College has improved its annotation on student work and students now regard that the formative and summative feedback on their work supports their learning.

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

30 The College's arrangements for staff development to maintain and enhance the quality of learning opportunities are outlined in the Workforce Development and Training policy. This identifies higher education as a specific priority and staff confirmed that the opportunities afforded to them by the College and the University enable them to enhance their subject knowledge, update their own professional practice, and continue to benefit from the sharing of good practice that the partnership provides. The College also provides annual abatement to the contracted teaching hours for any member of staff teaching on higher education. Staff reported that this time is used to enhance their scholarship by involvement in a range of projects and activities; for example, staff in performing arts have been involved in a project with the Higher Education Academy. Staff in music technology have enhanced their knowledge and use of the latest software. In both cases this work has had a tangible benefit to learning opportunities provided to students by allowing them to learn and use industry-standard techniques and practices.

31 The College is well represented at the annual Higher Education in Further Education conference hosted by Teesside University. Staff from the College have led sessions on a range of topics and confirm that this conference has had an impact on student learning. An example of this is a member of staff from music technology who delivered a session on the effective use of oral assessments, constructively aligned to learning outcomes to assess student knowledge and understanding in relation to practical skills. Individual staff development needs are identified and addressed through the annual performance review process and through outcomes of teaching observations. The team consider as good practice the way teaching staff share good practices as part of the staff development exercises that have direct impact on the students' learning experiences.

### **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 The College has a well organised process for ensuring that students have access to sufficient learning resources. Students are taught in a new building with high quality facilities. There is an annual business planning process, which uses internal reports and a review process to identify resource needs. There is an annual capital expenditure bid process for high cost resources, and the departmental budgets are allocated to support renewal and updating of items or consumables. Included in the building is the Higher Education Lounge. The Developmental engagement recommended that the College make better use of this centre. Currently, it is used mainly as a social/leisure centre with students able to access computers.

33 Students have access to the libraries at the College and at Teesside University. There is an effective induction into using these at the beginning of their programmes. The College library is well stocked with recommended texts. Students studying BSc Music Technology and teacher education programmes especially found the College library resources to be extensive and to fully support their learning. Students on other programmes found the University resources met their needs more effectively. The virtual learning environment is used by staff and students as a useful and effective tool for information, learning and assessment. Students confirmed that information on the virtual learning environment was a 'lifeline' and they used it to submit assignments and contact staff. The College is developing new and innovative ways of using technology to enhance learning opportunities with students, for example the use of enhanced technology methods for online tutorials and interactive lectures.

34 Students confirmed that the recent investment in equipment for BSc Music Technology and BA (Hons) Performing Arts has resulted in enhancement of their learning opportunities. They now have studios, equipment and software that is equivalent to that found in commercial studios. Further investments are planned to enhance teaching and learning and the student experience. Students indicated that some areas identified in the student submission as needing improvement have already been addressed and that the College was very responsive to listening to their feedback. Overall the team consider as good practice the strategic commitment to invest in resources, especially specialist resources, to enhance students' learning experience.

**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?**

35 Both the College and Teesside University have well established and clear protocols for the production and distribution of published information. They have a joint role in providing general marketing materials which are monitored by both parties. The College produces content reflecting specific aspects agreed with the University, including programme specific website material and printed marketing materials. As part of programme validation, the College produces student handbooks and module guides. Although there are similarities in content, these are defined, approved and aligned to the corresponding University faculty regulations. All subsequent published information is derived from this validation process and follows further regular scrutiny by the College and University. Teesside University provide the UCAS entry profiles after consultation with the College. The processes and the way information is provided is outlined in *Methods of Communicating with Higher Education students at Middlesbrough College*. It also includes how students can feed back on published information.

36 The College provides a range of published information in printed and electronic formats. Where printed materials are provided these are replicated electronically for wider distribution and are used for marketing purposes. Information such as that in the prospectus is published through the College website for potential students and schools. The staff intranet provides access to a wealth of published materials that include validation documents, programme specifications, handbooks, placement planning, policies, and

regulations on the use of social media. The virtual learning environment provides programme documents, teaching and learning materials, and information on study skills, which are accessible to students, employers and staff.

37 All students are provided with a student handbook specific to their programme that contains generic and useful information about the College and Teesside University, for example library resources, guidance on teaching and learning methods, plagiarism, and assessment protocols. Module guides are provided to all students. These include an overview of the programme, delivery pattern, aims and learning outcomes, indicative content assessment methods and schedules, and recommended reading and essential texts. Module guides are produced jointly by the College and University, and approved at validation.

38 While published materials provided to students are distinctive and reflect the faculty validation requirements, the College is aware that there are some gaps in information. For example, there is some variation in providing programme learning outcomes following a decision by one University school not to include programme specifications. Instead, some programmes have modified the specifications to make them more readily accessible for students. For example, the programme handbook for the FdA Travel and Tourism contains programme specifications modified to be more student friendly. Module learning outcomes are included, but programme learning outcomes are sometimes omitted. The FdA Stage and Media Production handbooks include full programme specifications. The College is aware of this issue and is acting with the University to ensure that all programme handbooks have a minimum expectation that includes the programme learning outcomes.

39 More detailed programme information is provided through the website in programme fact sheets. The fact sheets on the College website are consistent and include accurate details on programme and module content, assessment, the teaching and learning strategy, and information for employers. Information on progression routes is also provided. These fact sheets are produced with programme teams, guided by the agreed processes, with the University and the College's Marketing Department.

**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 these arrangements are effective?**

40 Guidance on published information, including marketing materials, is made clear in the Teesside Operations Manual. The College and University validation processes ensure that documents provide the basis for accurate information. The responsibilities for ensuring accuracy are largely at programme-level supplemented by regular auditing by the College. Programme leaders agree content with the appropriate validating University school. The College adapts the information for fact sheet template to ensure consistency. Further checks are made by the directorates. The process is thorough and strengthened by the scrutiny of the Marketing Information Manager. The Marketing Department uses Teesside University's Design Guidelines to ensure the information is accurate and complete.

41 The process to ensure the accuracy and completeness of public information is strengthened by periodic audits. For example, all handbooks were recently checked following revisions. The virtual learning environment is also audited for accuracy. The College's Programme Validation Procedure includes liaison with the Marketing Department regarding the supply of new or amended programme information before the programme is advertised and delivered.



42 The College has mechanisms to share good practice in marketing. For example, the Higher Education Directorate Representative Meeting tabled a promotional leaflet used by the sports programmes to be considered as a template for all programmes. Similarly, there is an enhanced marketing strategy by the College's Marketing Department and Teesside University focused on 'promoting the Performing Arts, the quality of the facilities and the opportunities for students'. Students said that they regard all the published information about their programmes with reference to the application process and information provided while at the College to be accurate and complete. Their learning experiences confirmed that the information was accurate.

**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**

43 The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in March 2010. It covered all the five colleges in the Teesside Higher Education Business Partnership. It addressed the following lines of enquiry agreed with the colleges.

**Line of enquiry 1:** How do the colleges in the partnership assure themselves that they are fulfilling the requirements of the awarding body in relation to assessment?

**Line of enquiry 2:** Are the requirements for feedback on assessed work being understood by all to support the achievement of the intended learning outcomes?

**Line of enquiry 3:** How does each college in the partnership ensure the accuracy and consistency of information it publishes on assessment?

44 The Developmental engagement identified a number of areas of good practice. These included the collaborative arrangements between the College and its awarding body for the assessment process and for the internal approval processes for new programmes prior to consideration by the University. The assessment exercises used in the induction period help students to understand plagiarism. Where similar programmes are delivered across the colleges, the robust and secure assessment processes ensure consistency and comparability. Staff development in assessment is strengthened by the use of 'Teaching Squares'. There is high quality written feedback on assignments in Foundation Degrees in Complementary Therapies and in Early Years and the HNC Advanced Practice in Work with Children and Families. The efficient system for returning assignments supports student learning. The assessment details in the programme specifications and information sheets are especially clear and demonstrate the close collaboration between the College and University. The work-based learning handbooks for students and employers are particularly detailed and comprehensive, especially the information on assessment.

45 The team made eight desirable recommendations, all of which have now been implemented by the College. Students, employers and work-based mentors now have access to external examiner reports. There are details in handbooks on the agreed policy for the reading of drafts of summative assessments. Written feedback now refers more to intended learning outcomes. These are now checked to ensure that they are consistent across all documents. Word-processed feedback is now provided on the feedback sheets and it was recommended that there should be more annotations on student assignments.

Information on assessment and progression routes for Foundation Degrees is provided. Programme handbooks and module guides provide the information identified in the University's Threshold Quality Standards document.

## **Summary of findings from the Developmental engagement in learning and teaching**

46 The second Developmental engagement took place in March 2011. It covered all the five colleges in the partnership. It addressed the following lines of enquiry agreed by the colleges.

**Line of enquiry 1:** How do the colleges ensure that the standards of teaching and learning on the higher education programmes meet the requirements of the awarding body?

**Line of enquiry 2:** How do the colleges ensure that higher education learners have access to a wide range of learning opportunities?

**Line of enquiry 3:** Do the colleges publish informative and accurate information about teaching and learning on their programmes?

47 This Development engagement identified four areas of good practice relating to Middlesbrough College. The partnership's continuing professional development strategy and its provision of opportunities for higher education staff to gain postgraduate qualifications and/or industrial experience strengthens learning and teaching. The partnership demonstrates the sharing of good practice in learning and teaching across many programmes, especially in the FdA Early Years programme. Academic support for learning is well organised and is particularly appropriate for part-time students. The College has extensive links with local industry and services which serve to enhance students' learning through the opportunity for work placements, and enables the College to identify and develop skills for its students.

48 The five desirable recommendations included producing an explicit and documented learning and teaching strategy aligned with the awarding body's 'Priorities of the Strategy' in its Threshold Quality and Standards. The College should ensure that all staff are more familiar with the application of the Academic Infrastructure, especially regarding any updates. It should also ensure that all programmes build on existing practices and make fuller use of the virtual learning environment. Learning and teaching strategies should include reference to making the best use of the higher education centre to enhance the learning opportunities for students. More general information should be provided on learning and teaching in pre-enrolment documentation and, in on-programme documentation, make more reference to the range and types of learning and teaching in the College.

## **D Foundation Degrees**

49 The College offers 14 Foundation Degrees in a range of areas such as business, computing, early years, music, performing arts, and travel and tourism. All the programmes recruit well, but the College is vigilant in cutting programmes where recruitment is continually low. Three new Foundation Degrees in Sports and Exercise, Computing, and Web Design have been added, with intakes starting in 2011. The College decided to withdraw two Foundation Degrees in Renewable Energy Engineering, and Leadership and Management. To enhance the student experience and rationalise delivery, the FdA Performing Arts pathways are being rewritten to provide a single pathway from 2012.

50 The College has effective links with a range of businesses and public services. Employers provide placements for students or enable them to use the workplace for placements and work-based learning. They also contribute to the development of programmes. All Foundation Degrees have good completion rates, with many students moving on to progression routes at Teesside University.

51 All the good practices and recommendations listed in paragraphs 53 to 55 also relate to the Foundation Degrees.

## E Conclusions and summary of judgements

52 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Middlesbrough 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, Teesside University, Edexcel, the Association of Accounting Technicians, the Chartered Institute of Accounting Technicians, and the Institute of Leadership and Management.

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

- the Collaborative Provision Annual Monitoring Report is highly evaluative with all programmes considered in detail and strengths and weaknesses clearly identified (paragraph 13)
- the 'traffic lights' system is a robust auditing tool for monitoring the progress and consideration of its higher education reports (paragraph 18)
- access to the virtual learning environment by employers provides them with the opportunity to be actively and regularly engaged with the College and provides effective support for students (paragraph 26)
- students' research projects and skills contribute to employers' business activities and to solutions for problems (paragraph 27)
- teaching staff share good practices as part of staff development exercises that have direct impact on students' learning experiences (paragraph 31)
- the strategic commitment to invest in resources, especially specialist resources, enhances students' learning experience (paragraph 34).

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

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

- ensure that the Higher Education Standards Committee addresses learning and teaching as required by its terms of reference (paragraph 25).

56 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.

57 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

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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.

58 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.

<b>Middlesbrough College action plan relating to the Summative review: February 2012</b>						
<b>Good practice</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>Target date</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Success indicators</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
In the course of the Summative review the team identified the following areas of <b>good practice</b> that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the Collaborative Provision Annual Monitoring Report is highly evaluative with all programmes considered in detail with strengths and weaknesses clearly identified (paragraph 13)</li> </ul>	Report to be shared with other Higher Education Business Partnership Colleges via SharePoint	April 2012	Deputy Director Educational Partnerships Teesside University	Report made available on SharePoint and reviewed and discussed with partner Colleges	Higher Education Business Partnership Coordinators Group	Process to be reviewed at Higher Education Business Partnership Coordinators Group meeting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the 'traffic lights' system is a robust auditing tool for monitoring the progress and consideration of its higher education reports (paragraph 18)</li> </ul>	Traffic lights system already used across the College for further education programmes  Continue to feed reports into system and monitor progress	September 2012	Director of Higher Education Quality Manager	All actions highlighted by reports continue to be dealt with in a timely manner	Higher Education Standards Committee	Annual Review & Monitoring Report will capture outcome of actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>access to the virtual learning</li> </ul>	Approach to be shared with partner Colleges	July 2012	Director of Higher Education	Workshop provided at Higher	Higher Education Standards	Workshop feedback reviewed

environment by employers provides them with the opportunity to be actively and regularly engaged with the College and provides effective support for students (paragraph 26)	at Higher Education in Further Education Conference 2012			Education in Further Education Conference	Committee	and evaluated
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>students' research projects and skills contribute to employers' business activities and to solutions for problems (paragraph 27)</li> </ul>	Model to be promoted to partner Colleges at Teesside University Higher Education in Further Education Conference	July 2012	Director of Higher Education	Workshop provided at Higher Education in Further Education Conference	Higher Education Standards Committee	Workshop feedback reviewed and evaluated
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>teaching staff share good practices as part of staff development exercises that have direct impact on students' learning experiences (paragraph 34)</li> </ul>	Share model with Head of Teaching & Learning for integration into Further Education Observation of Teaching and Learning process	March 2012	Director of Higher Education	Developmental model adopted across whole College	College Leadership Team	Effectiveness of model to be monitored and reviewed in the annual Teaching & Learning Report

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the strategic commitment to invest in resources, especially specialist resources, enhances the students' learning experience (paragraph 34)</li> </ul>	Continue to ensure sufficient resource allocation to maintain and improve standards	January 2013	Director of Higher Education	Suitable allocation agreed to enable achievement of objectives	Higher Education Standards Committee	The impact of investment to be captured and reviewed in Annual Review & Monitoring Report
<b>Desirable</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>Target date</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Success indicators</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
The team considers that it is <b>desirable</b> for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensure that the Higher Education Standards Committee addresses learning and teaching as required by its terms of reference (paragraph 25)</li> </ul>	Ensure all Higher Education Standards Committee meetings have standard agenda item for learning and teaching	March 2012	Director of Higher Education	Standard agenda item included	Higher Education Standards Committee	Complete

**RG 899 05/12**

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