



# **Integrated quality and enhancement review**

**Summative review**

**City of Wolverhampton College**

**March 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 City of Wolverhampton College carried out in March 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 management structure provides an effective matrix which steers both strategic development and the operational delivery of the higher education provision within the College
- the College has developed an imaginative scheme for the observation of higher education teaching and learning, which is clearly linked to the Academic Infrastructure
- the College makes varied and interactive use of blended learning across the higher education provision
- the new dedicated Higher Education Centre acts as a focal point for both higher education students and staff
- there is a range of imaginative workplace opportunities in Foundation Degrees in the creative arts, which enhances employability
- students value the high quality support provided by friendly and accessible staff, both on a formal and informal basis
- inventive and responsive staff development opportunities contribute to systematic professional development
- the College provides a range of user-friendly publications designed to encourage non-traditional learners.

### 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:

- review, in consultation with the University, the provision of external examiner reports to ensure that they include information that is specific to the College.

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

- complete the development of a higher education teaching and learning strategy, to be in place by September 2012.

## 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 City of Wolverhampton 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 Edexcel and the University of Wolverhampton (the University). The review was carried out by Mrs Helen Corkill, Mr Seth Crofts, Mr David Gardiner (reviewers), and Mr Robert Jones (coordinator).

2 The Summative review team conducted the review in agreement with the College and in accordance with *The handbook for Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review* (the handbook), published by QAA. Evidence in support of the Summative review included documentation supplied by the College and awarding bodies, meetings with staff and students, and reports of reviews by QAA and from inspections by Ofsted. In particular, the team drew on the findings and recommendations of Developmental engagements in assessment and in teaching and learning. 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 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 is a large general further education college, which was formed in 1999 from the merger of Bilston College and Wulfrun College. Located on three main campuses in the centre of Wolverhampton, it serves a predominantly urban area which includes districts of significant deprivation, and has a well established and recognised commitment to social and educational inclusion. The College has gone through significant expansion in terms of its estate, and invested heavily in the improvement of social learning facilities for students, including provision of a dedicated higher education room at the main campus. The College's higher education strategy indicates an intention to expand its higher education provision through the development of Foundation Degree programmes, as and when funding allows.

5 The College's mission is 'to support the development and regeneration of Wolverhampton and its region by providing education, training and skills development to enhance individual, community and economic prosperity'. The College has a broad and extensive vocational base which provides progression routes from entry level through to Foundation Degrees, which reflects the educational aspirations of the local community as well as being responsive to the training needs of industry and business. The curriculum encompasses three Centres of Vocational Excellence based on music, video and journalism, healthcare, and engineering. The College is currently delivering a wide-ranging higher education provision in flexible modes of study, including Higher National, Foundation Degrees and teacher education programmes. In the academic year 2011-12, there are approximately 11,000 students enrolled in the College, of whom 363 are following higher education courses, comprising 147 full-time and 216 part-time students.

6 The College offers the following HEFCE-funded higher education programmes in conjunction with Edexcel and the University of Wolverhampton. The Foundation Degrees are offered either as 'joint' provision, delivered at both the University Campus and the College, or

as a 'franchise' arrangement, with the programme delivered at the College only. In some cases, only the first year of the Foundation Degree is taught at the College. The number of full-time equivalent students is given in brackets after each programme.

### **Edexcel**

- HNC Construction (11)
- HNC Electrical/Electronic Engineering (12)
- HNC Mechanical Engineering (26.5)

### **University of Wolverhampton**

- Certificate/Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (24)
- FdA Broadcast Journalism (full-time, joint provision) (32)
- FdA Business and Management (full-time, year one only) (26)
- FdA Business and Management (part-time) (18.5)
- FdA Commercial Video Production (full-time, joint provision) (21)
- FdA Health and Social Care (full-time, joint provision) (16)
- FdSc Interactive Computing (full and part-time, joint provision) (22.5)
- FdA Creative Music Production (full-time) (16)
- FdA Early Years Services (part-time, year one only) (9)
- FdA Supporting Children in Primary Education (part-time, joint provision) (8)
- FdA Uniformed Public Services (full-time) (19)

### **Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies**

7 The College has a major and long-standing partnership with the University of Wolverhampton that provides memoranda of cooperation for each individual programme of study. This partnership governs all of the higher education provision at the College, except for the HNCs, which are accredited by Edexcel.

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

8 The key development in 2011-12 has been the creation of a new Higher Education Centre, with its own administration, social learning space and teaching rooms. The College has also published a higher education prospectus and developed a separate section of its website dedicated to its higher education provision. It plans to make use of additional HEFCE-funded places to introduce a range of new higher national qualifications in horticulture, sport and leisure management, art and design, and hospitality and catering.

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

9 Students studying on higher education courses at the College were invited to present a submission to the team. The Higher Education Manager drafted a submission based on a meeting of the Student Forum. The students attending the forum meeting subsequently endorsed the submission as an accurate reflection of the views expressed. During the review visit, the team held a productive meeting with representative students.



## **B Evaluation of the management of HEFCE-funded higher education**

### **Core theme 1: Academic standards**

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

10 The City of Wolverhampton College is an established provider of higher education, offering a diverse range of courses. There is a mature partnership with the University of Wolverhampton, which validates the majority of the provision. There is also a well established relationship with Edexcel. The partnership between the University and the College functions on a number of levels. The College's Principal is a member the Principals' group, chaired by the University's Vice-Chancellor; this group plans the collaborative strategy for the University. The College is actively involved in the University's Collaborative Quality Forum, which has a remit for maintaining consistent academic standards. The College is also actively involved in the Wolverhampton Collaborative Achievement Network and the Black Country Partnership for Learning. These groups develop specific measures to extend participation in higher education and bring together evidence of areas of local skills shortages.

11 The College has a well developed leadership structure which addresses strategic and operational issues relating to the higher education provision. The Higher Education Manager oversees the operational delivery and performs a coordinating role, ensuring consistency across different subject areas. The post holder reports to the Director of Higher Education Development, Standards and International, who holds a strategic role for this provision and acts as leader for the higher education delivery among the College directors in charge of the College's four faculty curriculum areas. Heads of school lead specific subject areas, while course leaders manage individual awards and oversee the delivery to students. The mixture of centralised higher education management and subject-based accountability result in the provision of an effective matrix structure for course management. The academic staff work in cooperation to enhance the student experience. All staff are fully aware of the lines of responsibility in relation to the higher education provision.

12 The College has established an effective committee structure which oversees standards across the higher education provision. The Quality Improvement and Advisory Group, which has a specific remit for provision at higher education level, ensures effective deliberation on student achievement. These deliberations are fed into the Standards Committee, which has a college-wide remit, covering both further and higher education. There is a Higher Education Development Forum which is chaired by the Higher Education Manager and includes representatives from all curriculum areas. This group seeks to ensure that a coordinated approach is taken in relation to the management of higher education across all subject areas. This forum has a major remit for acting upon student feedback and disseminating best practice and innovation. The group is well attended by staff from across the higher education provision and is making good progress in rolling out best practice across the College.

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

13 The College has raised the profile of the Academic Infrastructure among all of the staff involved with the higher education provision. Staff demonstrate a good understanding of issues relating to the FHEQ and subject benchmarks and also a clear understanding of the

provisions of the *Code of practice*. Staff gave examples of how it was applied to enhance current practice. For example, the Developmental engagement in assessment identified a need to develop the use of the FHEQ by course teams to define better the level of achievement expected from students in assessments. As a result, a higher education assessment policy has been developed to align with the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*. Staff are asked about the provisions of the *Code of practice* during teaching observation. This process offers a useful prompt for staff. New courses are aligned with the Academic Infrastructure at the time of validation, and are further checked through internal and external reviews.

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

14 Comprehensive arrangements are in place to monitor courses across all of the higher education provision. The precise nature of these arrangements varies depending on the requirements of the two awarding bodies and the protocols of different schools of the University. Some schools require the College course team to provide a full annual monitoring report, whereas in other areas the College self-assessment review is used to monitor the provision.

15 The College's programme monitoring reports are informed by student evaluation and feedback from external examiners. At College level, the course reports filter into subject self-assessment reports, which are considered by the Quality Improvement and Advisory Group and then feed into the Standards Committee. Issues raised during these reviews form the basis of action plans that are monitored by the course teams in collaboration with the Higher Education Manager. The College is confident in the robustness of these arrangements. As a result, discussions have been initiated between the College and the University to revise the approach to course monitoring, provide a more consistent approach, and increase the autonomy of the College. A journal approach has been proposed that would allow the College to complete its own annual review reports and post them online, along with other relevant monitoring data, to inform the University monitoring process. The team welcomes this development.

16 Academic managers are working with course leaders to enhance the provision and address issues that arise from course monitoring. For example, a traffic light system has been implemented to track the progress of students on the FdSc Interactive Computing because retention is a matter of particular concern.

17 The College works with other collaborative partners of the University to ensure consistency of standards between partner colleges. Collaborative partners delivering the same Foundation Degrees meet to compare assessment outcomes through standardisation meetings. This provides an excellent opportunity for wider discussion of student performance.

18 Reports from external examiners indicate that standards within the College are consistent with those of the University. External examiner reports from the Edexcel provision in engineering and construction provide a positive account of academic standards within the College. Both sets of external reports indicate that an appropriate level of student achievement is maintained. All external examiner reports are received by both the Higher Education Manager and heads of College schools, who deliberate on the reports promptly and address any urgent actions that are required. The external examiner reports are fed into either University annual monitoring reviews or College subject assessment reviews.

Action plans are developed and monitored by the Quality Improvement and Advisory Group, and in turn by the College Standards Committee.

19 Some external examiner reports provide specific reference to provision at the College, but some confine themselves to commenting more generally upon standards across all collaborative partners, despite instructions in the University form to comment on each partner College separately. These variations in practice reduce the clarity of information available to the College to make judgements upon the academic standards and address issues that relate specifically to its own courses. The team considers that it is advisable for the College to review, in consultation with the University, the provision of external examiner reports to ensure that they include information that is specific to the College.

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

20 The College provides a useful programme of staff development events that address a range of issues in relation to academic standards. These events respond to issues identified in course review and monitoring and address the concerns of external examiners. This portfolio is coordinated by the Higher Education Teaching and Learning Adviser and participation is linked to the performance review and appraisal of academic staff. Updating in relation to the Academic Infrastructure has taken place during College staff development sessions and is part of the induction process for all new academic staff.

**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?**

21 The line management responsibilities and reporting arrangements through the committee structure, as described in paragraphs 11 and 12, are also effective in supporting the quality of learning opportunities.

22 Partnership agreements with the University indicate that the College is responsible for setting and marking assignments, arranging work placements where appropriate, and dealing with appeals, complaints and student discipline. Arrangements for Edexcel-accredited courses are similar, but include additional responsibilities for recruitment. The College has produced clear higher education policies and procedures that have been designed to take account of these responsibilities.

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

23 The processes by which the College assures itself that it is fulfilling its obligations to its awarding bodies are described in paragraphs 14 to 18. Course teams participate actively in the processes of approval and annual monitoring of courses, all of which address obligations to provide appropriate learning opportunities. External examiner reports comment on the quality of the learning opportunities for students offered at the College, often very favourably.

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

24 The College's engagement with the Academic Infrastructure is outlined in paragraph 13. The College introduces the Academic Infrastructure to all new staff and offers a refresher session for existing staff on an annual basis. Higher education lesson observation reports indicate that staff make good use of the FHEQ and the *Code of practice*.

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

25 The College currently has one overarching teaching and learning strategy covering both further and higher education. The principles of the strategy relate to providing high quality learning experiences at all levels, supported by appropriate staff development. While the strategy identifies critical success factors, there is little reference to how these differ between further and higher education. The College plans to develop a separate but linked higher education teaching and learning strategy to support a clear focus for higher-level provision. The College should consider completing the development of this strategy by September 2012.

26 The College has developed an imaginative scheme for the observation of higher education teaching and learning, based on the teaching and learning strategy, the FHEQ and the *Code of practice*. This encourages staff to apply the Academic Infrastructure and was highlighted as good practice in the Developmental engagement in teaching and learning, and was confirmed during this Summative review visit. Following the lesson observation process, there is a clear cycle of annual staff appraisal through which areas for staff development are identified.

27 A wide range of teaching, learning and assessment practice supports the development of students' skills and knowledge. In the newly equipped and technology-rich Higher Education Centre (see also paragraphs 32, 33 and 36), the College is actively developing a blended learning approach across its higher education provision. The Higher Education Manager was seconded to the University for a year in 2006-07 to develop approaches to e-learning based on the expertise at the University and the Higher Education Academy subject centre, Escalate. A funding bid subsequently enabled the dissemination of this work at the College.

28 Students and staff provided examples of where participatory software applications are being used effectively, for example in the Certificate/Professional Certificate in Education, FdSc Interactive Computing, FdA Early Years Services, and FdA Uniformed Public Services. Good practice was demonstrated in the development of reflective practice through the use of academic blogging in the Certificate/Professional Certificate in Education.

29 Teaching and learning are underpinned by involvement with employers, which in turn enhances employability. The School of Creative Arts runs an enterprising in-house creative media production company, which works with external clients to provide training and workplace experiences for students, particularly on the FdA Commercial Video Production course. Live briefs are used effectively in FdA Broadcast Journalism and FdA Music Production. The FdSc Interactive Computing course integrates one-year work placements, while FdA Commercial Video Production operates a flexible approach to integrating workplace opportunities, depending on what projects are offered. The School of Creative Arts also encourages involvement in the European Union Leonardo da Vinci scheme and has secured funding to send 30 students to work on an extended placement in Florence. In addition, a number of students have the opportunity to work on a summer production each year with the British Youth Film Academy.

30 The College operates effective systems to obtain student feedback. It involves students in the evaluation of their learning experience in a number of ways, including module evaluations, and College and national surveys. Annual monitoring and action plans are informed by student feedback. The College consults students about curriculum changes. Staff gave examples of where students' feedback had influenced revalidation processes.

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

31 The College has comprehensive and effective policies and systems for supporting its students. Requests for additional learning support are channelled through course tutors, with a similar system operating for both full and part-time students. Students confirm that staff at the College offer a high level of tutorial, pastoral and academic support. Students on all courses have regular timetabled group and individual tutorials and staff freely offer additional time informally outside scheduled classes. The tutorial system at the College is highly valued by students, who consider staff to be friendly, approachable and helpful. Personal development plans are used to inform and record tutorials, for example on HNC Construction. All tutorials, as well as formative and summative grading, are additionally recorded and reviewed through an electronic system.

32 The new Higher Education Centre provides students with a focal point for higher education-related enrolment, and financial and careers advice as well as counselling. The Higher Education Registry Coordinator is based in the Centre, providing valuable help that is much appreciated by students. Both full and part-time students have equal access to help and advice. Staff are often available in the social learning space to help with assignment work. Induction of new students is managed through the higher education centre and implemented by the course teams. The College has developed some innovative approaches to ensure that induction is effective and enjoyable.

33 The Higher Education Centre also provides a physical and symbolic focus for recruitment, including an active drive to widen participation in higher education. Prospective students are provided with a carefully considered range of information, advice and guidance opportunities, including a new set of distinctively branded higher education publications which align with the new Higher Education Centre. As part of this carefully considered range of materials, the centre produces a booklet offering innovative 'Step Up' courses: individual modules drawn from Foundation Degrees which serve as an introduction to higher education. The Centre is used to accommodate higher education taster visits from level 3 students already studying at the College as well as from external visitors. It is systematically used for interviewing applicants. The College operates a dedicated higher education roadshow to visit the local community, business forums and secondary schools to talk about higher education opportunities. College staff and local businesses, including the Chamber of Commerce, hold meetings and events in the new Centre, cementing staff and employer links with higher education.

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

34 The College is committed to encouraging staff to participate in professional updating and scholarly activity to ensure that they are aware of current developments in their subject areas and to further their knowledge and skills base. The College offers a range of staff development activities, including mentoring of new staff, sessions to share good practice, the observation of higher education lessons as a developmental process, and reciprocal study arrangements with the University. In response to the Developmental engagement in assessment, the College has held staff development events to facilitate the sharing of good practice on assessment. Good practice, particularly in blended learning, is also shared with the University. A successful external bid provided funding for higher education staff and students to make a video on behaviour management, which is now shared with staff across the University partnership. The College hosted its first annual scholarly activity event in summer 2011. Staff have also presented at national and international academic conferences.

35 The College operates a system of annual performance management review to identify staff development needs in relation to higher education. Through this process, staff can elect to undertake self-directed study or enrol for a further qualification. The College has a reciprocal agreement with the University allowing staff at each institution to study for appropriate qualifications free of charge. Many staff undertake higher education courses under this agreement, including master's and doctoral degrees. In order to encourage an increase in the number of staff undertaking awards focused on higher education, the College has funded a scheme whereby individual master's level modules are delivered at the College by University staff. The modules have covered a variety of areas related to supporting higher education students through mentoring and coaching. Since 2010, there have been over 80 staff enrolments on this scheme. Responsive staff development is also demonstrated by the organisation of bespoke staff development sessions for both academic and support staff to meet the needs of an autistic student. Overall, inventive and responsive staff development opportunities contribute to systematic professional development.

### **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?**

36 The Higher Education Centre is a focal point for higher level study. It provides teaching rooms specifically equipped for higher education teaching and learning and a large social learning space equipped to meet the needs of higher education students. The Centre is equipped throughout to a high specification, with hardware, software and interactive whiteboard technology for the delivery of a blended learning approach to higher education. The Centre also provides a focus for staff development activity for higher education, particularly in connection with the delivery of technology-enhanced teaching and learning.

37 Students have access to a wide range of learning resources, both electronic and in hard copy, both at the College and the University. The College's learning resource centres provide access to online journals, databases and e-books. Higher education students have access to virtual learning environments both at the College and the University. Students confirmed that the College and University virtual learning environments and online resources were very useful both as a repository for information and as a learning tool. A number of students reported that using different virtual learning environments was confusing and that it would be better for all resources to be in one location. Staff are aware of the issue, but equally aware of the practicalities. Part-time students have good access to all resources, whether attending in the day or the evening.

**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?**

38 The College publishes a comprehensive range of information for applicants and has, as a result of an unsatisfactory student response in 2010, developed a newly-designed higher education prospectus and a dedicated website. The higher education website is accessed by one click through the main College website. Information is made accessible for enquirers and applicants mainly through the higher education website.

39 The higher education prospectus 'Prepare for a Different Future' is an informative guide published in both paper copy and online. It contains clear and consistent information for prospective students. It is still published in hard copy as market analysis has revealed that the College is not well known as a higher education provider and many non-traditional learners lack the information technology skills to access electronic information. The prospectus is user-friendly, informative and aspirational for prospective students.

40 There is also an introductory higher education booklet on 'Step Up' for non-traditional learners, which outlines a set of taster modules. It clearly describes the modules in a brief, informative, and uncomplicated way to attract potential students who are uncertain of their academic ability. The booklet is circulated to applicants as part of a carefully considered range of publications, as described in paragraph 33.

41 Course and module guides are devised and produced by both awarding bodies. In addition, the College provides all higher education students with a student handbook at induction. The handbook complements the course guides by giving information about the College. It provides both a clear initial summary of student entitlements and an advisory guide for support mechanisms and potential challenges.

42 A comprehensive repository of documentation for all higher education courses is held on the College's virtual learning environment. Students appreciate the ready accessibility of this material, which is relevant, helpful and consistently kept up to date.

43 In response to the Developmental engagement in teaching and learning, the College has gathered together all quality documentation into a Higher Education Quality Handbook which is available on the staff area of the virtual learning environment. This is an interim solution pending a decision on how best to consolidate the College higher education quality systems.

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

44 The College carefully follows the public information policies of the University. Both partners recognise the need to monitor the reliability of public information and have developed clear procedures to review relevant documentation and electronic information sources.

45 One of the main terms of reference of the higher education development forum is to agree public information. Actions and outcomes from the higher education development forum are reported by the Higher Education Manager to the Director of Higher Education Development, Standards and International. The Higher Education Manager meets each faculty management team twice a year to discuss the curriculum offer and advise on public information.

46 In order to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the information it is responsible for publishing, the College works to a production schedule which commences in April approximately 18 months prior to publication. The first stage of quality assurance includes the review and development of the higher education website, the College student handbook and assignment, and assessment and internal verification templates. The second stage of the production schedule includes a clear focus on checking and approving amended and new material. Course information is completed by the course teams following key headings such as entry requirements and course modules to ensure consistency. At the end of each academic year, during the annual review, course leaders sign off all public information to ensure consistency and correctness. This information is approved by the Higher Education Manager.

47 The higher education prospectus is prepared for print and proofed by the marketing department, while the Higher Education Manager is responsible for approving its final draft. Final documentation is then sent to the education partnerships team at the University for approval.

48 Higher education students at the College have an opportunity to feed back opinion about the type and quality of information when their opinions are collected in the year end module review. In the event of particular concerns during the academic year, there is an opportunity to consider the quality and effectiveness of public information through the higher education Student Forum.

**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 engagements**

49 The first Developmental engagement was in assessment and took place in October 2009. There were three lines of enquiry.

**Line of enquiry 1:** How effectively does the quality of feedback on assessments from staff to students contribute to the achievement of academic standards?

**Line of enquiry 2:** Do internal quality assurance mechanisms effectively monitor assessment?

**Line of enquiry 3:** How effective are learning resources in preparing students for assessment?

50 The Developmental engagement team identified a number of areas of good practice. Methods of assessment support the needs of non-traditional students, are well matched to work-based learning and, in some cases, are linked to helpful feedback against stated criteria. The use of the virtual learning environment supports assessment.



The College cooperates effectively with the University in a number of ways, including staff development and the moderation of assessment. Use made of external examiners to convey feedback to students is an important feature in monitoring the assessment process.

51 The team also made a number of advisable recommendations. Feedback to students should be timely and should consistently address assessment criteria; the level of achievement expected from students should be defined more clearly; and this should be communicated to students consistently and effectively. It would also be desirable for the College to develop a wider range of formative assessment methods and for it to ensure that action taken in response to external examiners' reports is formally recorded.

52 The second Developmental engagement was in teaching and learning and took place in January 2010. There were three lines of enquiry.

**Line of enquiry 1:** How effective is teaching and learning in enabling learners to achieve the appropriate academic standards?

**Line of enquiry 2:** To what extent are online resources used to support teaching and learning, how effective are they, and how is good practice disseminated?

**Line of enquiry 3:** What is the nature of public information available to students, is it effective, and how is it monitored?

53 The Developmental engagement team identified a number of areas of good practice. The College is successful in supporting non-traditional learners by use of carefully targeted pre-course information and a flexible approach to teaching and learning. It makes good use of lesson observations and a wide variety of formative assessment techniques. Academic staff are supported in their development of blended learning, and there are examples of highly effective use of the virtual learning environment.

54 The team also made a number of desirable recommendations. The College should provide a higher education quality handbook; continue to monitor the availability of specialist resources; and develop a strategic plan to promote consistent access to blended learning resources. It should ensure that course handbooks are made more accessible; consider the development of a consistent approach to the formal approval of public information; and continue to work closely with the awarding bodies to clarify the information on assessment.

## **D Foundation Degrees**

55 Most of the higher education provision in the College takes the form of Foundation Degrees. They comprise the following courses: Broadcast Journalism; Business and Management; Commercial Video Production; Health and Social Care; Interactive Computing; Creative Music Production; Early Years Services; Supporting Children in Primary Education; and Uniformed Public Services. Following disappointing student progression rates in Interactive Computing and Early Years Services, the College is considering whether to switch to HND provision. The College is currently in discussion with Stourbridge College about collaborating on the development of an FdA in Retail Management.

56 This provision is closely integrated with the other higher education courses by means of a common quality assurance process, and the areas of good practice and recommendations listed below apply equally to the Foundation Degrees.

## E Conclusions and summary of judgements

57 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, Edexcel and the University of Wolverhampton.

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

- the management structure provides an effective matrix which steers both strategic development and the operational delivery of the higher education provision within the College (paragraph 11)
- the College has developed an imaginative scheme for the observation of higher education teaching and learning, which is clearly linked to the Academic Infrastructure (paragraphs 24 and 26)
- the College makes varied and interactive use of blended learning across the higher education provision (paragraphs 27, 28 and 34)
- the new dedicated Higher Education Centre acts as a focal point for both higher education students and staff (paragraphs 27, 32, 33 and 36)
- there is a range of imaginative workplace opportunities in Foundation Degrees in the creative arts, which enhances employability (paragraph 29)
- students value the high quality support provided by friendly and accessible staff, both on a formal and informal basis (paragraphs 31 and 32)
- inventive and responsive staff development opportunities contribute to systematic professional development (paragraphs 34 and 35)
- the College provides a range of user-friendly publications designed to encourage non-traditional learners (paragraphs 33, 39 and 40).

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

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

- review, in consultation with the University, the provision of external examiner reports to ensure that they include information that is specific to the College (paragraph 19).

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

- complete the development of a higher education teaching and learning strategy, to be in place by September 2012 (paragraph 25).

62 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.

63 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.

64 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.

City of Wolverhampton College action plan relating to the Summative review: March 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 <b>good practice</b> that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the management structure provides an effective matrix which steers both strategic development and the operational delivery of the higher education provision within the College (paragraph 11)</li> </ul>	Review management structure annually to ensure it is fit for purpose and communication between school team and cross-college team enhances higher education provision within the College	July 2012	Director of Higher Education	Improved student experience of College systems; positive staff and student evaluations of course provision  Increased recruitment to target	College Senior Management via quality and finance reviews	Staff and student surveys, School and higher education self-assessment reports
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the College has developed an imaginative scheme for the observation of higher education teaching and learning, which is clearly linked to the Academic Infrastructure (paragraphs 24</li> </ul>	Develop higher education lesson observation proforma to enhance peer review element; pilot non-graded approach utilising new UK Professional Standards for higher education teaching and learning as well as the FHEQ	July 2012	Higher Education Manager and Higher Education Teaching and Learning Adviser	Higher education staff engage students in challenging lessons; staff engaged in peer review closely linked to continuous professional development plans for following year	Head of School, Head of Teaching and Learning Service  College Standards Committee	Lesson observation reports and action plans  Higher education self-assessment reports, teaching and learning self-assessment reports

and 26)						Staff continuous professional development evaluations  Report on impact to standards committee
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the College makes varied and interactive use of blended learning across the higher education provision (paragraphs 27, 28 and 34)</li> </ul>	<p>FdA Interactive Computing team to showcase their site at higher education development forum meeting</p> <p>Annual scholarly activity event - section on blended learning</p>	June 2012	Higher Education Manager	New higher education staff engaged with sites and developing blended learning within their provision	Higher Education Manager/ Teaching and Learning Manager	<p>Evaluations at continuous professional development events</p> <p>Contributions to in-house scholarly activity publication</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the new dedicated Higher Education Centre acts as a focal point for both higher education students and staff (paragraphs 27, 32, 33 and 36)</li> </ul>	<p>Plan series of events at higher education centre to promote the facilities to new students as part of induction process</p> <p>Run continuous professional development and higher education forum meetings from higher education centre</p> <p>Ensure higher education centre is</p>	July 2012  September 2012	Higher Education Manager and Higher Education Registry Coordinator	<p>All new staff /students use the centre to support/enhance their studies</p> <p>Good attendance at continuous professional development/forum events with every subject area represented</p>	Higher Education Manager  Director of Higher Education	<p>Evaluations from continuous professional development events/review of higher education development forum</p>

	promoted effectively in all marketing and public information					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>there is a range of imaginative workplace opportunities in Foundation Degrees in the creative arts, which enhances employability (paragraph 29)</li> </ul>	<p>Assistant Head Creative Arts to showcase employability opportunities within media subjects at higher education development day</p> <p>Establishment of a higher education employer engagement team</p>	<p>June/July 2012</p> <p>September/October 2012</p>	<p>Higher Education Manager</p> <p>Higher Education Manager/ Employer Engagement Manager</p>	<p>Good attendance at continuous professional development/forum events with every subject area represented</p> <p>Clear actions for each subject area regarding developing own employer links</p> <p>Increased employer links in all subject area</p> <p>Good attendance at team meetings with each area represented; clear actions for each subject area regarding developing own employer links</p>	Director of Higher Education	<p>Higher education Programme Reviews (University of Wolverhampton Quality Journal)</p> <p>Higher Education self-assessment report for College self-assessment report</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>students value the high quality support provided by friendly and accessible staff, both on a formal and informal basis (paragraphs 31, 32)</li> </ul>	Develop and formalise 'academic writing/ student support' provision within the higher education centre	September 2012-June 2013	Higher Education Manager/Higher Education Teaching and Learning Adviser	<p>Students access academic support as and when required</p> <p>Increased retention and student success</p>	Director of Higher Education	Higher education self-assessment report, and College and school self-assessment reports
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>inventive and responsive staff development</li> </ul>	Construct staff development continuous	July 2012	Higher Education Manager/ Higher Education	Good attendance at events from all subject areas	Higher Education Manager/ Continuous	Evaluations for continuous professional

<p>opportunities contribute to systematic professional development (paragraphs 34 and 35)</p>	<p>professional development programme linked to current staff needs as outlined in the Teaching and Learning strategy</p> <p>Promote and monitor individual subject-specific staff development/research with context of UK professional standards for higher education teaching and learning</p> <p>Reinstitute scholarly activity grants</p>	<p>July 2012- June 2013</p>	<p>Teaching and Learning Adviser</p>	<p>Creative and employer responsive research proposals submitted and research undertaken</p> <p>Publication of research in-house summer review/opportunities to speak at conference/higher education institution events</p>	<p>Professional Development Manager</p>	<p>development events; minutes for higher education development forum meetings</p> <p>Higher education self-assessment report</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the College provides a range of user-friendly publications designed to encourage non-traditional learners (paragraphs 33, 39, 40)</li> </ul>	<p>Review first prospectus and website and amend/add annually</p> <p>Phase 3 of website completed to include dynamic, visual information and search tool</p>	<p>May 2012 June 2012</p>	<p>Higher education development forum</p> <p>Higher Education Manager with website consultant</p>	<p>Prospectus 2 is accurate and any amendments/additional information are in place; continue to develop 'aspirational' theme of publications</p> <p>Increased website hits</p> <p>Increased number of online applications</p>	<p>Higher Education Manager</p>	<p>Student and staff feedback</p> <p>Higher education self-assessment report</p>

Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is <b>advisable</b> for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>review, in consultation with the University, the provision of external examiner reports to ensure that they include information that is specific to the College (paragraph 19)</li> </ul>	Meet with University Quality Manager to establish how external examiner proformas can be developed to ensure consistent and detailed information on individual College provision	June 2012	Higher Education Manager	Improved proforma which will return subject-specific external examiner reports for June 2013	Director of Higher Education, University Quality Enhancement Committee	Higher education self-assessment report, school self-assessment report
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is <b>desirable</b> for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>complete the development of a higher education teaching and learning strategy, to be in place by September 2012 (paragraph 25)</li> </ul>	Draft Higher Education Teaching and Learning Strategy taking account of the FHEQ, <i>Code of practice</i> for Assessment and new UK Professional Standards for higher education teaching and learning	June 2012	Higher Education Manager/ Teaching and Learning Adviser Manager	Challenging teaching and learning that shows awareness of the FHEQ and the <i>Code of practice</i> , underpinned by the UK Professional Standards for teaching and learning	Director of Higher Education	Lesson observation reports  Higher education self-assessment report, Teaching and Learning self-assessment report



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