



# **Integrated quality and enhancement review**

**Summative review**

**South Nottingham College**

**May 2012**

**SR 062/12**

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ISBN 978 1 84979 641 5

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Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

## **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 South Nottingham College carried out in May 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:

- course review reports are completed consistently and to a high standard with rigorous evaluation and well formed action plans
- management of the close and highly effective relationships with the College's awarding bodies
- development and implementation of the external examiner training pack
- staff share professional skills and development training with students and provide essential links with employers
- close links with industry professionals inform the development of assessment tasks and methods
- new initiatives in the use of electronic resources ensure staff and students receive valid and effective information to assist their teaching and learning.

### 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:

- develop clearly defined terms of reference for each main management group that include the functional elements of meeting frequency and reporting
- formally establish and implement the College Publications Group to ensure that public information is accurate and complete
- develop a mechanism to ensure that course and student handbooks are authorised internally as reliable and consistent.

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

- continue to develop and implement staff development systems and procedures which facilitate effective management of staff development activities
- widen student participation in the programme planning processes and higher level College committees to meet the recommendation made in the Development engagement report

- provide a mechanism for cross-college employers to be involved in curriculum development and to share good practice.

## 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 South Nottingham 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 De Montfort University, Edexcel, Nottingham Trent University, the University of Bedfordshire, the University of Derby and the University of Northampton. The review was carried out by Dr Patsy Campbell, Mr Peter Cutting, Mr Dan Morgan (reviewers) and Dr Margaret Johnson (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. A summary of findings from this Developmental engagement is provided in Section C of this report. The review also considered the College's use of the Academic Infrastructure, developed by QAA on behalf of higher education providers, with reference to the *Code of practice*, subject and award benchmark statements, the FHEQ, and programme specifications.

3 In order to 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 South Nottingham College is a further education college that merged with Castle College Nottingham in July 2011. It now offers higher education provision in five of its curriculum schools and over five centres across the city. The newly constituted College works in partnership with six awarding bodies: De Montfort University, Edexcel, Nottingham Trent University, the University of Bedfordshire, the University of Derby and the University of Northampton. The total College further and higher education enrolment for 2011 was 30,000 students. It currently has over 600 higher education students of whom 203 are full-time and 433 are part-time.

5 The higher education programmes at the College funded by HEFCE are listed below, by awarding body, and with full-time equivalent numbers of students in brackets.

### Edexcel

- HNC Electrical/Electronic Engineering (11)
- HND Electrical/Electronic Engineering (19)
- HNC Manufacturing Engineering (11)
- HND Manufacturing Engineering (15)
- HNC Operations Engineering (7)
- HNC Automotive Engineering (7)
- HNC/HND Engineering (Top Up) (4)
- HND Applied Biology (11)
- HND Textile Design (18)



### **De Montfort University**

- Commercial applications of the web (AXIS) (10)
- HNC Computing (14)
- HND Computing (22)
- HND Computing (Top Up) (4)
- BSc Audiology (22)
- BSc Clinical Physiology (13)
- BSc Clinical Technology (12)
- FdSc Dental Technology (24)
- BSc Dental Technology (11)

### **Nottingham Trent University**

- FdA/FdSc Computer Games and Interactive Media (32)
- FdSc Ophthalmic Science and Technology (4)
- FdA Photography (10)
- FdSc Sports Coaching (30)
- FdA Visual Arts Practice (19)

### **University of Bedfordshire**

- PGCE / Cert Ed (24)
- University Diploma Teaching Lifelong Learning (ESOL, Literacy, Numeracy) (10)

### **University of Derby**

- FdA Children's and Young People's Services (9)
- FdA Criminal Justice (27)
- FdEng Production Engineering (5)

### **University of Northampton**

- FdA Leadership and Management (14)

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

6 There is significant variation in the delegated responsibilities between the six awarding bodies. Arrangements for the management of higher education in the College are based on agreements with the awarding institutions that provide detailed operational guidance documents. The agreements, with the exception of that with Edexcel and the University of Northampton, predate the merger that formed the current College and refer to the precursor institutions. The College has confirmed with all awarding institutions that these agreements are still in force and that they will be updated on revalidation. De Montfort University sets the assignments used by the College while the University of Derby delegates this responsibility to the College with approval by the university before use. Courses awarded by Nottingham Trent University are both produced and quality checked by the College.

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

7 On 1 July 2011 South Nottingham College and Castle College Nottingham merged to become the newly constituted South Nottingham College. The merger brought

together two further education institutions with distinct higher education provision profiles. South Nottingham College offered a small number of directly funded full-time provision, and worked with one validating university: Nottingham Trent. Castle College Nottingham offered predominantly part-time provision with five collaborative partners: Edexcel and the University of Bedfordshire, the University of Derby, the University of De Montfort and the University of Northampton. A large proportion of the Health Science provision validated within the franchise arrangement with De Montfort University is currently in teach-out and will not recruit further students. The FdA in Children's and Young People's Services, validated by the University of Derby, will cease in May 2012 and the franchise relationship with the University of Northampton will cease, along with the FdA in Leadership and Management, in April 2013.

8 There was little duplication in provision across the two organisations, therefore the curriculum offer has remained stable. Change has concentrated predominantly in the relocation of curriculum within the individual schools, and major restructuring of the organisation to accommodate the increase in staff and student numbers. College management have decided to operate a 'hub and spoke' system to allow lower level and short provision in further education to be delivered in outlying centres while specialist full level provision is delivered in the main centre. Within this, the College's higher education provision is seen as a significant contributor to the development of a Higher Education Centre or 'hub' and strategic specialist higher education 'spokes'.

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

9 Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the team and attended the preparatory meeting with the coordinator. They were informed about the IQER process and consulted on their preferred method of involvement for the review. The students agreed that the views they had expressed in College surveys throughout the year should be used by the team for the review. However, a member of staff in the Learner Involvement team undertook a specific higher education survey within each curriculum area and produced a composite report based on the results that was submitted as the student submission during the visit. The report records student responses to questions on choice of college, public information, and the quality of learning opportunities and support.

10 During their visit to the College reviewers held a meeting with 15 students from a cross-section of programmes. The students were aware of the submission and most had contributed to it. The meeting covered a wide range of questions and confirmed the evidence given in the submission on learning resources.

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

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

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

11 The College has been quick to develop and implement a higher education management structure that uses good practice from both of the constituent colleges. The higher education management structure includes the Higher Education Strategic

Development Group, the Higher Education IQER Development Group and the Higher Education Staff Forum.

12 The Higher Education Strategic Development Group is a senior level forum, with the Vice Principal Curriculum, the Head of Higher Education, Heads of Schools and the Head of Quality as its members. The Head of Higher Education and the Vice Principal Curriculum are part of the College Senior Management Team and the latter is part of the College executive. This ensures that minutes of the Strategic Development Group meetings and higher education issues are considered and represented at the highest College management level.

13 The IQER Development Group reports to the Higher Education Strategic Development Group and its membership includes the Head of Higher Education, a manager from each curriculum area and a quality and learner services representative. Recently the group has broadened its remit and is evolving into the main operational management group for higher education; formerly a function of the Higher Education Staff Forum. The Higher Education Staff Forum will continue and will provide a vehicle for standards and quality improvement. Membership, terms of reference and meeting frequency are still under discussion.

14 The overall management of higher education provision is the responsibility of the Head of Higher Education who chairs all groups with a specific higher education management function. Scrutiny of meeting notes shows that this ensures good information flow and an effective and coherent management of standards. Awarding body representatives express confidence in the current management of standards by the College.

15 The College was unable to provide terms of reference, intended meeting frequency and clearly defined reporting structures for any of the groups involved in the College's management of delegated responsibilities for standards. The lack of definition of the purpose and function of the main management groups, given their changing functions, has the potential to reduce both the coherence and effectiveness of the systems. It is recommended as advisable to develop clearly defined terms of reference that include the functional elements of meeting frequency and reporting for each group.

16 The College operates a highly effective course review system facilitated by well designed cross-college report templates and helpful notes for guidance. Each course produces three reports a year. The report is monitored formally by the Curriculum Manager as part of the annual reporting cycle and facilitates the focus on standards with clear targets and timeframes for the course teams. For all Foundation Degrees, the third review is replaced by the report required by the validating university; the Annual Programme Standards and Quality Report and the Centre Standards and Quality Report required by Nottingham Trent University; and the Annual Monitoring Reports for De Montfort University and the University of Bedfordshire. This reinforces the good practice identified in the Developmental engagement and ensures the focus on quality maintenance and enhancement. Scrutiny of course reviews and annual reviews confirms good practice in the course review reports that are completed consistently to a high standard with rigorous evaluation and well formed action plans.

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

17 The team endorses the finding of the Developmental engagement for the College; that the close consideration of the Academic Infrastructure informs the maintenance of academic standards and, in particular, assessment methods. The engagement with the Academic Infrastructure has been continued following the merger and course teams are familiar with its components. Staff gave examples of effective engagement in the use of the FHEQ in validation documents. There is extensive use of the *Foundation Degree*

*qualification benchmark* in the development and validation of the College's Foundation Degree offer.

18 The team confirms the College's engagement with the relevant sections of the *Code of practice* and concludes that the College course monitoring and review procedures and practices are highly effective in maintaining and enhancing standards.

**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?**

19 The College assures itself that it is fulfilling its obligations to the validating universities and awarding body as described in paragraph 6.

20 There is significant variation in the delegated responsibilities between the six awarding bodies but university evaluative reviews confirm that the College is effective in managing the different requirements. This was further supported by the awarding body representatives who met the reviewers.

21 The self-evaluation recognises and the team confirms that examination boards, organised by the College, are a key activity in the maintenance and enhancement of standards. The boards, chaired by the Head of Higher Education, have external examiners, internal verifiers from the awarding body or partner university, all higher education Course Coordinators, Curriculum Managers, and representatives from learner services and the College's finance department as members. This provides an excellent opportunity for the collective discussion of a wide range of issues, and to identify good practice. External examiners frequently make positive statements on the College's enhancement of standards, such as the use of creative assessment tasks, teaching that is clearly linked to current sector practice, and the close productive links with the awarding bodies. The team confirms that the College is maintaining standards and meets the requirements of its validating partners and awarding bodies.

22 The effective engagement between the Nottingham Trent University internal verifier and the Foundation Degree course teams was identified as good practice in the Developmental engagement. The College has made commendable progress in assuring this is extended to all of the current awarding bodies. Representatives are very positive about the relationship with the College and the regular and productive dialogue in assuring standards. The management of the close and highly effective relationships with the College's awarding bodies is considered to be good practice.

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

23 The College has a clear policy and procedures for staff development to support standards. The awarding bodies provide a wide range of appropriate development activities which are open to all College staff. The College has provided considerable resources to support staff in undertaking professional development, including higher degrees and industrial updating. Funding is accessed through the general College Continuous Professional Development Fund, and the Higher Education Staff Development Fund known internally as the Rewarding and Developing Staff Fund. These provide substantial opportunities for staff to update professionally in their respective fields of expertise and to develop appropriately as higher education tutors.

24 Information related to participation in staff training is captured as part of the reflective Higher Education Course Review and through the individual Institute for Learning continuing professional development log. Scrutiny of information relating to participation in training events showed a low level of participation in higher education-specific training by most staff. The College has acknowledged this as an area for development. Effective management also requires proactive identification of College, team and individual training needs. Currently this is identified through the College's lesson observation and appraisal processes. The present system does not include any formal impact analysis of the training on practice or an evaluation of cost effectiveness.

25 To ensure the continued and effective role of staff development in the maintenance and enhancement of standards, it is recommended as desirable that the College continue to develop and implement systems and procedures which facilitate effective management of staff development activities.

**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?**

26 Responsibilities for the management of the quality of learning opportunities are those described in paragraphs 11 to 17. The team concurred with the findings of the Developmental engagement that the College's procedures for assuring the quality of learning opportunities are effectively led and that the Academic Infrastructure is understood by all staff and is used to support the provision.

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

27 The College assures itself that it is fulfilling its obligations to its awarding bodies to ensure that students receive appropriate learning opportunities using the procedures outlined in paragraphs 11 to 14.

28 The College has developed an effective training pack used at the induction of each new external examiner. It is attended by senior College staff and the validating university, and consists of a presentation, a discussion and a tour of the premises. The presentation identifies the role, responsibilities, tenure and rights of an external examiner, including the right to receive a response to points raised in the external examiner report. It introduces the College assessment and verification policies and procedures and its relationship with Nottingham Trent University. There is also a mid-term visit to the College where the external examiner meets course staff to discuss the progress of the year, has private one-to-one meetings with students, and consults the course coordinator about course documentation. The team considers the development and implementation of the external examiner training pack to be good practice.

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

29 As described in paragraphs 11 to 17, the team agree with the findings of the Developmental engagement that close consideration of the Academic Infrastructure, and its component parts, informs the quality of learning opportunities.

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

30 Post-merger, the College has developed a clear Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2012-15, that includes the College aims for higher education programmes and its successful graduates. It lists specific qualities expected from its Foundation Degree students and the range and types of learning outcomes expected across programmes. To achieve the aims of the Strategy the College is to develop excellence in teaching with a personal approach to student needs, a supportive, safe, inclusive and enjoyable culture, and well qualified staff with opportunities for professional development. The College maintains oversight through its monitoring processes and committee reporting structures, in particular through its regular course reviews. The review is supported by a substantial Learning and Teaching Handbook for staff, which outlines the tutor's duties and responsibilities, advises on care of the students, describes the College monitoring cycle and gives practical and legal information. Staff report that the handbook is very useful.

31 The College has established a robust staff observation scheme which monitors the quality of teaching. Formal observations are carried out by the school management team, supported by the Learning and Teaching Champion for the school. Each member of staff is observed at least once a year and the lesson is graded. Strengths and weaknesses identified from the observation are discussed during appraisal and any personal development is planned. The lesson observation profile is filed centrally and is intended to be used to share examples of good practice. Staff consider the system helpful in identifying possibilities for further professional development. Awarding bodies confirm that recruitment of staff is rigorous and that new staff are approved by them before appointment.

32 The College seeks students' views on teaching in a variety of ways including direct and regular access to tutors, evaluation of assignments, self and group critiques, online surveys, and meetings of the Higher Education Student Forum. Students greatly appreciate the teaching they receive. The College recognises that the increase in part-time students, studying on many sites, makes it difficult for students to attend meetings of the forum in the centre. It is investigating alternative ways of facilitating wider student discussion to improve participation. The College is keen to increase student participation in improving and developing courses. However, student representation on programme team meetings, formal programme review meetings and higher level College committees is inconsistent. It is recommended as desirable to widen student participation in the programme planning processes and higher level College committees to meet the recommendation made during the Development engagement.

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

33 The College has several years of experience in providing support for higher education students with a broad range of academic, pastoral, technical and other well staffed specialist services. The team heard of higher education students, from all areas of the provision, who had received long-term specialist support from the student support teams, and had made their study, progress and success possible. The tributes paid to the student support teams were corroborated in student questionnaires, the student written submission and in the meeting with students.

34 Policies and strategies relating to student support are fully implemented. The College provides high-quality and comprehensive support for its higher education students, beginning at admission and induction where basic needs and appropriate standards of study are established. The team confirms those aspects of student support highlighted in the Developmental engagement that fulfil the aims outlined in the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy.

35 The supportive nature of feedback to students was evident in the marked student work from the FdA Photography made available at the visit. All students appreciate the one-to-one feedback on assignments and most found it timely. Some students did not understand the moderation process and were concerned that they had not received a grade for their work. In addition, not all students were aware of the progression routes beyond their present course, or of appeals procedures.

36 Students are unanimous about the benefits of the College library but have variable experiences in accessing those of the awarding bodies. Part-time students particularly appreciate online library resources. Use of, and access to, the virtual learning environment is inconsistent. Those studying computing and science subjects are complimentary about the facilities but some found access to computers difficult. Students had not experienced any definable change in support since the merger. The College provides adequate and sufficient resources for its higher education provision.

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

37 The arrangements for staff development are outlined in paragraphs 23 to 25 and ensure the maintenance and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities.

### **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?**

38 The College Learning Resources Policy provides clear information and guidance to staff. Heads of School can make direct requests to the Head of Library or Information Technology, who considers the request in terms of need and funding. All students agreed that their opinion is sought and valued by the College. However, they are not aware that the responses they provide on questionnaires are considered each year in the School Annual Report. Staff confirmed that the College is keen to hear the students' views and explained that, if student views or needs could not be acted on directly by the tutor, they are referred to the Head of School and thereafter to the quality office. All completed actions are fed back to students in tutorials.

39 Many of the staff are practitioners and their skills provide essential links with employers outside the College in libraries, studios, dental clinics and in industry. The team was provided with several inspiring examples of staff, in visual arts and computing, who share professional skills and development training with students to enhance the student experience. The team considers this to be good practice.

40 The team met employers from a range of employment settings. All are involved as external partners in the development and delivery of higher education provision at the College and add a rich layer of expertise to the resources available to students. They support and enhance the learning opportunities for students and ensure vocationally current practices and thinking for the provision. The team was provided with examples from all areas

of the provision that the close link with industry professionals informs the development of assessment tasks and methods, and this is considered to be good practice.

41 The College has a guide, but no formal framework, to detail what is expected of students on placement; although some employers, such as the police force, provide their own formal codes of conduct and contracts for student trainees. Additionally, the College does not provide a forum to enable employers to share their contribution and experience across the higher education provision. This misses an opportunity to involve employers in curriculum development and to share good practice, and the team considers it desirable that the College provide such a mechanism.

**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?**

42 The College produces a variety of publications specific to its higher education provision, including course handbooks, a higher education student guide, and a higher education prospectus. It also maintains College and individual websites, with dedicated student websites to support effective learning and a staff website to communicate important information. The Marketing and Communications Department is responsible for the production of the external written and electronic materials such as the prospectus, the Higher Education Student Guide and the higher education website. Individual schools are responsible for the content of internal materials. Course handbooks are available to all students in both electronic and hard copy.

43 There is a good understanding and effective implementation of the College's delegated responsibilities for publications as a requirement of the respective partnership agreements. Prior to the merger, communications took place at course level but this is now being managed by a designated member of staff to ensure the respective requirements are upheld.

44 The College is developing an effective portfolio of electronic based portals providing information to support students and staff. A number of recently implemented strategies and policies ensure the College complies with legislation and follows good practice in the use of electronic sources. The team considers the new initiatives to be good practice that will help to ensure staff and students receive valid and effective information to assist their teaching and learning.

#### **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?**

45 A College Publications Group, formed in response to the Developmental engagement, is in the early stages of development and currently has no explicit terms of reference or clearly identified responsibilities. The College plans to incorporate the Group into its communications structure in the near future. The Group will review existing materials and receive all new materials relating to higher education, and therefore act as the



authorising agency within the College for all public information. The team recommends as advisable that the College establishes formally and implements the College Publications Group to ensure that public information is accurate and complete.

46 The primary responsibility for publishing course-related documents resides with each Curriculum Manager who collates the content of the documents. They are then authorised by the respective Head of School who ensures that all information is provided promptly, is accurate and is distributed effectively. The documents are sampled informally by the Quality Department. The team noted that some information in course handbooks is inaccurate and inconsistent. For instance, the handbook for the FdSc Sports Coaching includes the Mitigating Circumstances Policy for Nottingham Trent University but others do not. The team recommends, as advisable, the development of a mechanism to ensure that course handbooks are authorised internally as reliable and consistent.

47 The Marketing and Communications Department manages a college-wide major publications calendar that stipulates due-by dates for respective documents. The College's website is operated and managed internally by the Marketing and Communications Department. A version control system, linking the new College website to an external agency, ensures that regular monitoring occurs and that out-of-date materials are removed.

48 Students recognise the different formats and locations of information available to them. They are confident they receive all necessary information.

**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**

49 The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in June 2011. Three lines of enquiry were agreed with the College and ensured that all IQER core themes could be addressed. The lines of enquiry were as follows.

**Line of enquiry 1:** Are assessment methods effective in encouraging student learning and maintaining academic standards?

**Line of enquiry 2:** Does assessment inform and enhance the learning opportunities and support provided for students?

**Line of enquiry 3:** Is the range of information produced by the College effective in supporting students to achieve in their assessments?

50 Good practice was identified in the staff's understanding of the College's assessment and verification policy and procedures book supported by effective staff development, and the quality and maintenance of standards assured through effective engagement with the awarding body. There was a rigorous programme review process and extensive involvement of employers and industry partners in the development and delivery of provision. Of particular note was student support and an effective study skills programme to identify specific student need and improve their assessment performance. The portal site provides a comprehensive range of programme and assessment-related information that students consider an asset.

51 Development areas included the need for a mechanism to canvass students' experience at programme level, the differentiation of programme and module intended learning outcomes, mapping of assessment methods, and a more visible academic appeals procedure in documents and electronic repositories. The College was advised to develop a robust checking procedure for all published documents and programme-specific websites to ensure accuracy and consistency.

52 To enhance the provision the College was advised to ensure that the relevant policies and procedures for each award are followed and that the information provided for students relating to assessment schedules is applied consistently across all programmes. Encouragement was given to formalise the contributions to programme development and assessment by employers and to review the Higher Education Guide, the Higher Education Student Guide, and the student course handbooks.

## D Foundation Degrees

53 The College currently offers 10 Foundation Degrees validated by four universities: the University of Derby, the University of De Montfort, Nottingham Trent University and the University of Northampton. The College enrolled 174 full-time equivalent higher education students to its Foundation Degrees in 2011. Subject to successful validation the current Higher Nationals, within the Department of Visual Arts and Digital Media, will migrate to Foundation Degrees.

54 The areas of good practice and recommendations identified during the Summative review are common to the whole provision. They are listed in the main conclusions, paragraphs 55 to 62.

## E Conclusions and summary of judgements

55 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: De Montfort University, Nottingham Trent University, the University of Bedfordshire, the University of Derby, the University of Northampton, and Edexcel.

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

- course review reports are completed consistently and to a high standard with rigorous evaluation and well formed action plans (paragraph 16)
- management of the close and highly effective relationships with the College's awarding bodies (paragraph 22)
- development and implementation of the external examiner training pack (paragraph 28)
- staff share professional skills and development training with students and provide essential links with employers (paragraph 39)
- close links with industry professionals inform the development of assessment tasks and methods (paragraph 40)
- new initiatives in the use of electronic resources ensure staff and students receive valid and effective information to assist their teaching and learning (paragraph 44).

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

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

- develop clearly defined terms of reference for each main management group that include the functional elements of meeting frequency and reporting (paragraph 15)
- formally establish and implement the College Publications Group to ensure that public information is accurate and complete (paragraph 45)
- develop a mechanism to ensure that course and student handbooks are authorised internally as reliable and consistent (paragraph 46).

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

- continue to develop and implement staff development systems and procedures which facilitate effective management of staff development activities (paragraph 25)
- widen student participation in the programme planning processes and higher level College committees to meet the recommendation made in the Development engagement report (paragraph 32)
- provide a mechanism for cross-college employers to be involved in curriculum development and to share good practice (paragraph 41).

60 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 agreements for the management of the standards of the awards of its awarding bodies.

61 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 agreements for the management of the quality of learning opportunities to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

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, 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>South Nottingham College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 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>course review reports are completed consistently and to a high standard with rigorous evaluation and well formed action plans (paragraph 16)</li> </ul>	Ensure continued compliance across all areas of provision including Collaborative Partner Requirements	By December 2012	Higher Education Course Coordinators, Curriculum Managers	All reviews are produced in the required format and timescales	Head of Higher Education, Head of Quality, Curriculum Managers	Course Reviews, annual monitoring forms, Programme Standards and Quality Reports Curriculum Managers feedback forms
	Introduce logging system to help monitor reviews through Curriculum Managers, Heads of School, Head of Quality, Head of Higher Education	December 2012	Higher Education Administrator	Functioning populated system	Heads of Higher Education and Quality	File containing new system
	Review Course Review process in light of new UK Quality Code for Higher Education and RCHE	March 2013	Higher Education Operational Development Group; working group	Revised system where / if appropriate - introduction of new system	Higher Education Operational Development Group, Head of Quality	Notes from the meetings, working groups and subsequent review documentation

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>management of the close and highly effective relationships with the College's awarding bodies (paragraph 22)</li> </ul>	Build on good relationships at all levels and ensure attendance at all relevant meetings, groups and forums	Ongoing from July 2012		Full attendance and contribution at all meetings, groups and forums.	Relevant Vice Principal, Head of Higher Education, relevant other Heads and Collaborative Partnership Officers	Notes from meetings, collaborative reviews and action plans
	Establish contacts in all support areas and departments including finance and records	Ongoing from July 2012	Head of Higher Education, Course Coordinators, Learner Services Manager, Higher Education Administrator and Admissions staff	Efficient coordination and interaction between departments	Head of Higher Education, relevant other Heads, Collaborative Partnership Officers	Notes from meetings and available student and finance records
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>development and implementation of the external examiner training pack (paragraph 28)</li> </ul>	Ensure all Curriculum Managers and Heads of School are aware of the 'pack'. Review at Higher Education Operational Development Group	September 2012	Higher Education Operational Development Group	All new External examiners are inducted satisfactorily	Heads of School	External examiner reports, course reviews, exam boards
	Log system and materials with Continuing Professional Development manager	September 2012	Higher Education Curriculum Manager (Visual Arts and Digital Media)	Availability on Continuing Professional Development CPD site	Head of Higher Education	Continuing Professional Development records
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>staff share professional skills and development</li> </ul>	Share current practice and activity at Higher Education Operational	November 2012	Higher Education Operational Development	Increased activity with students	Heads of School	External examiner Reports Continuing

<p>training with students and provide essential links with employers (paragraph 39)</p>	<p>Development Group</p> <p>Continue to support Higher Education staff continuing professional development and scholarly activity through the Higher Education Staff Development Fund</p>	<p>Ongoing from September 2012</p>	<p>Group then to Course Coordinators</p> <p>Higher Education Operational Development Group, Higher Education Strategic Development Group</p>	<p>Increased Continuing Professional Development activity</p>	<p>Heads of School, Continuing Professional Development Manager</p>	<p>Professional Development records Student Success Lesson observations</p> <p>Notes from meetings and budget bids</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>close links with industry professionals inform the development of assessment tasks and methods (paragraph 40)</li> </ul>	<p>Share current practice and activity at Higher Education Operational Development Group</p> <p>Continue to support Higher Education staff Continuing Professional Development and scholarly activity through the Higher Education Staff Development Fund</p> <p>Encourage industry professionals to deliver elements of programme as guest speakers.</p>	<p>November 2012</p> <p>Ongoing from September 2012</p> <p>Autumn term</p>	<p>Higher Education Operational Development Group</p> <p>Higher Education Strategic Development Group</p> <p>Relevant Curriculum Managers, Course Coordinators</p>	<p>Increased breadth of curriculum</p> <p>Involvement in course delivery</p> <p>Increased participation from industry and employer contacts</p>	<p>Heads of School and Curriculum Managers</p> <p>Higher Education Strategic Development Group</p> <p>Heads of School and Curriculum Managers</p>	<p>Course content and assessment schedules. Report through reviews Reference in external examiner reports and course reviews</p> <p>Curriculum content and plan</p>

	Develop further links with industry during course development / validation events	April 2012	Relevant Curriculum Managers	Increased participation from industry / employer contacts	Heads of School	Meeting notes, validation notes, feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>new initiatives in the use of electronic resources ensure staff and students receive valid and effective information to assist their teaching and learning (paragraph 44)</li> </ul>	Introduce; 'SNC Interact' 'studentnet' 'staffnet'	September 2012	E-learning 'champion'	Fully operational virtual learning environments for students and staff	Head of Higher Education, Heads of School, Curriculum Managers	Website, virtual learning environment, downloads in student 'portfolios'
	Develop baseline and ensure relevant population	Continuing Professional Development day 10 July	Higher Education Operational Development Group working group, Course Coordinators	Uptake from all Course Coordinators	Head of Higher Education	As above
	Bid for Higher Education e-learning 'champion'	July 2012	Head of Higher Education	Secured provision of budget	Head of Higher Education	Budget bid paper
<b>Advisable</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>advisable</b> for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develop clearly defined terms of reference for each main management group that include the functional elements of</li> </ul>	Introduce new proforma designed to capture existing terms of reference, frequency and attendees of meetings	September 2012	Head of Higher Education	Terms of reference, frequency and membership available on virtual learning environments	Relevant Success Committees and Vice Principals	Notes from meetings and information on virtual learning environments
	Submit to relevant success committee	Autumn term	Head of Higher	Receipt by	Relevant Success	Notes from

meeting frequency and reporting (paragraph 15)			Education	relevant committees	Committees and Vice Principals	meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>formally establish and implement the College Publications Group to ensure that public information is accurate and complete (paragraph 45)</li> </ul>	<p>Publications Group established and has held initial meeting</p> <p>(May be superseded by revised remit of the College Market Success Committee)</p>	<p>June 2012</p> <p>Autumn term 2012</p>	<p>Head of Higher Education</p> <p>Market Success Committee</p>	<p>Sign-off of all publications</p> <p>Revised remit</p>	<p>Market Success Committee</p> <p>Vice Principal Market Development</p>	<p>Notes from meetings. Accurate and complete information available</p> <p>Notes from meetings</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develop a mechanism to ensure that course and student handbooks are authorised internally as reliable and consistent (paragraph 46)</li> </ul>	<p>Reference each publication to the baseline and content on the relevant virtual learning environment; 'SNC Interact', 'studentnet', 'staffnet'</p>	<p>September 2012</p>	<p>Relevant Course Coordinators and Curriculum Managers</p>	<p>Available on relevant virtual learning environments</p>	<p>Curriculum Managers, Higher Education Operational Development Group working group Sampled by Head of Higher Education and Head of Quality</p>	<p>Course virtual learning environment; 'SNC Interact', 'studentnet' and 'staffnet'</p> <p>Course reviews</p>



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>continue to develop and implement staff development systems and procedures which facilitate effective management of staff development activities (paragraph 25)</li> </ul>	Ensure all higher education-related continuing professional development events and activities are made available to staff through a 'new' system - including activity offered by Collaborative partners	From July 2012	Continuing Professional Development Manager	Events appear on Continuing Professional Development site	Vice Principal Corporate Services	Continuing Professional Development site
	Ensure all participation is captured by 'new' system	From Sept 2012	Continuing Professional Development Manager	Individual staff log available on Continuing Professional Development site	Head of Higher Education, Head of Quality	Individual staff Continuing Professional Development log  Combined higher education staffing Continuing Professional Development log  Course reviews  Staff appraisal scheme
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>widen student participation in the programme</li> </ul>	Explore alternative Higher Education Student Forum	October 2012	Learner Involvement Team Leader	Increased involvement from students	Learner Support Manager	Notes from meetings

<p>planning processes and higher level College committees to meet the recommendation made in the Development engagement report (paragraph 32)</p>	<p>meeting formats.</p> <p>Develop School based Higher Education Student Forums which will lead into Course Review meetings</p>	Autumn term 2012	Relevant Heads of School	Attendance at meetings and contribution to Course Review	Head of Higher Education	View virtual learning environment output and electronic noticeboards
	<p>Further explore links with DeMontfort University forums</p>	Autumn term 2012	Head of Higher Education	Introduction of joint forum	Collaborative Partnership Office	Course reviews
	<p>Reintroduce blog through appropriate new virtual learning environment</p>	Autumn term 2012	Learner Involvement Team Leader	Uptake and contribution from students	Learner Support Manager	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provide a mechanism for cross-college employers to be involved in curriculum development and to share good practice (paragraph 41)</li> </ul>	<p>Consult with existing and new employer contacts regarding the feasibility of an Employer Forum dealing with curriculum development and content</p>	Autumn term 2012	Head of Higher Education, Heads of School, nominated Curriculum Managers	Feedback from employers and introduction of Employer Forum	Vice Principal Curriculum	Survey letters and notes from meetings
	<p>Develop work placement framework and guidance</p>	Autumn term 2012	Head of Higher Education, Health and Safety Manager	Publish work placement guidance	Vice Principal Corporate Services	Policy and guidance on virtual learning environment

**RG 985 08/12**

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