



South Eastern Regional College

Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review,
Northern Ireland: Summative Review
by the Quality Assurance Agency
for Higher Education

March 2013

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, Northern Ireland (IQER NI).

Purpose of IQER NI

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, NI 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 NI focuses on three core themes: academic standards, quality of learning opportunities and public information.

The IQER NI process

IQER NI is a peer review process. It is divided into two complementary stages: Developmental Engagement and Summative Review. In accordance with the published method, all Department for Employment and Learning (DEL)-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 student submission by the student body
- a preparatory meeting between the college and the IQER NI coordinator several weeks before the Developmental engagement visit
- the Developmental engagement visit, which normally lasts 2.5 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 DEL-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 NI coordinator and QAA reviewers. They do not include nominees.

Evidence

In order to obtain evidence for the review, IQER NI review 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 NI review teams' expectations of colleges are guided by a nationally agreed set of reference points, known as the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code). This is published by QAA and consists of three main parts:

- Part A: Setting and maintaining threshold academic standards
- Part B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality
- Part C: Information about higher education provision.

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 NI

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 NI. Progress against these action plans is monitored by QAA in conjunction with DEL and/or the college's awarding bodies 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 Eastern Regional College carried out in March 2013

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/or 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 College's bespoke Tool Kit database enables staff to monitor effectively the standard of its higher education provision
- the thoroughness of approach and application of the Quality Code mapping exercise
- the Integrated Learning and Teaching and Pedagogy Programme supported by nine school-based mentors
- the Standard Operating Procedures provide a single source of guidance and information to all staff with a role higher in learning and teaching
- the development and implementation of the Business Engagement and Student Tracking System software in the management of placement learning, which helps to ensure an effective and safe learning environment.

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 **desirable** for the College to:

- consider extending the range of Standing Operating Procedures or developing terms of reference and a membership list for committees and groups with responsibility for academic standards and the quality of the student experience
- ensure that students understand clearly the penalties for late submission of assessments that apply to their current programme
- continue to monitor the appropriateness of education learning resources available to students.

A Introduction and context

1 This report presents the findings of the Summative Review of higher education funded by DEL conducted at South Eastern Regional 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: the University of Ulster; Liverpool John Moore's University; The Queen's University of Belfast; Pearson (Edexcel); City and Guilds; Counselling and Psychotherapy Central Awarding Body; Chartered Management Institute; London Chamber of Commerce Institute; Accounting Technicians Ireland; Institute of the Motor Industry; and the Vocational Training Charitable Trust. The review was carried out by Liam Curran, Jonathan Doney, John Hawthorn, Sandra Middleton, Trudy Stiles (reviewers) and Grant Horsburgh (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, Northern Ireland* (the handbook), published by QAA. Evidence in support of the Summative Review included a comprehensive self-evaluation document and supporting evidence provided by the College and meetings with staff, students, employers and awarding body representatives during the visit. 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 UK Quality Code for Higher Education, developed by QAA on behalf of higher education providers.

3 In order to assist DEL in gaining 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 Eastern Regional College was formed on 1 August 2007 as a result of the merger of the former North Down and Ards, East Down and Lisburn Institutes of Further and Higher Education. The College has campuses at Bangor, Downpatrick, Newtownards, Lisburn and Newcastle, as well as numerous outreach centres across the region. There were over 32,000 enrolments during 2011-12, including 539 full-time and 864 part-time higher education students. Higher education is focused within Lisburn and Bangor campuses with smaller numbers in Newtownards and Downpatrick. The College employs 343.5 full-time equivalent and 110 part-time lecturing staff. Of these, 128 full-time equivalent staff are directly involved in delivering higher education programmes.

5 The College's DEL-funded higher education provision in 2012-13 is shown below with the awarding bodies and full-time equivalent student enrolments in brackets.

Liverpool John Moores University

BA (Hons) Business Management (98)

BA (Hons) Business Studies (47)

The Queen's University of Belfast

FdSc Creative Multimedia (14)

Fd Early Childhood Studies (9.5)

University of Ulster

FdA Applied and Creative Arts (2.5)

FdA Counselling (20.5)

FdA Hospitality, Tourism and Events (17)
FdA Leadership and Management (0 - approved under development)
FdSc Sport Exercise and Fitness (65)

Pearson (Edexcel)

HND Advanced Practice In Work With Children & Families (27)
HND Applied Biology (28)
HND Computing and Systems Development (132)
HND Construction (111.5)
HND Creative Media Production (8)
HND Electrical/Electronic Engineering (37)
HND General Engineering (50)
HND Hair and Beauty Management (12)
HND Health and Social Care (42)
HND Interactive Multi-Media (14)
HND Manufacturing Engineering (34.5)
HND Music (26)
HND Performing Arts (28)
HNC Animal Management (9.5)
HNC Applied Practice work with Children and Families (11)
HNC Art and Design (Photography) (10)
HNC Business (15)
HNC Construction (Building Services Engineering) (6)
HNC Horticulture (1.5)
HNC Health and Social Care (10.5)
HNC Vehicle Operations Management (4)

City and Guilds of London Institute

L4 Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (30)
L4 Certificate in Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (32)
L4 Advanced Diagnostic Techniques (12)
L4 Certificate in Technology in Learning Delivery (12)

Counselling and Psychotherapy Central Awarding Body

L4 Diploma in Therapeutic Counselling (TC-L4) (24)
L5 Diploma in Cognitive Behavioural Skills and Theory (CBT-L5) Counselling (13)

Chartered Management Institute

L5 Diploma in Management (1)

London Chamber of Commerce Institute (LCCI)

L4 Executive Secretary's Diploma (18)

Accounting Technicians Ireland

L5 Accounting Technicians Diploma (81)

Institute of the Motor Industry

L5 Diploma in Automotive Management (26)

Vocational Training Charitable Trust

L4 Certificate in Sports Massage Therapy (12)

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

6 The College has partnership agreements with each of the awarding bodies listed on page 5. The majority of these partnerships are long-standing. The awarding bodies retain responsibility for the academic standard of their awards, including programme approval and monitoring, the appointment of external examiners and also the approval of teaching staff. The College has responsibility for daily quality management, recruitment, programme organisation and timetabling, and student support (both academic and pastoral). The maintenance of academic standards is monitored and supported through existing quality systems without unduly replicating processes.

7 The College offers higher national programmes under the Edexcel Standard Note and there is no formal partnership agreement. The courses are delivered and managed in accordance with the College's policies and procedures and are subject to external verification in accordance with established Edexcel protocols.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

8 DEL reviews annually the number of full-time student places available to the regional colleges. As a consequence, the number of full-time higher education students enrolled at the College has fallen from 621 in 2010-11 to 538 in 2012-13. The number of part-time higher education students has shown an increase from 712 in 2010-11 to 968 for 2012-13, a mode of attendance that is increasing in popularity. The development of science, technology, engineering and mathematics is a strategic aim for encouraging economic development throughout Northern Ireland. As a response, the College launched the science, technology, engineering and mathematics reward initiative which offers part-time students the chance to earn back their tuition fees by successfully completing their course. This initiative is credited with the nine per cent increase in enrolments across higher education subjects in 2012-13.

9 The impact of IQER on the College's higher education provision has been significant. Prior to the IQER process, engagement with the Academic Infrastructure was ceded to the awarding bodies. Engagement with IQER process has resulted in a greater understanding of the learning needs and academic standards of higher education students and the structures, operating procedures and policies necessary to meet their requirements. These developments are ongoing but have been embedded into the College's management structures.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

10 Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the Summative Review team. Following consultation between higher education coordinators and students it was agreed that the written submission was an opportunity to develop team working skills. Applications to be involved were invited and eight students from across Downpatrick, Lisburn and Bangor applied to lead the completion of the written submission. After consulting with their peers they attended two sessions where the submission was written and reviewed. The process was facilitated by the Student Affairs Officers and the Work Placement Coordinator. Additional information from focus groups and student surveys supplemented the process. In meeting a sample of students during the visit to the College, the team found that the written submission generally provided an accurate reflection of the views and opinions of higher education students.

B Evaluation of the management of DEL-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 a clearly defined, strong and effective management and reporting structure for its higher education provision with the Principal and Chief Executive assuming overall responsibility for the quality of the College's higher education. At operational level, heads of school, through the school higher education coordinators, report to the Head of Quality, Excellence and Development (Higher Education) who in turn reports to the College Management Team and provides support to the Principal. The College Management Team reports to the Education Committee, a subcommittee of the governing body, who monitors and reviews arrangements for higher education and improving and raising standards. The Director of Curriculum and Information Services is part of the College Management Team and meets with heads of school weekly to monitor the effectiveness of higher education curriculum development and quality matters. The College noted in its self-evaluation that the flat management structure in place with few layers of management facilitates the decision-making process.

12 In February 2012, following the Developmental Engagement, the College established a Higher Education Academic Review Board to ensure its higher education meets quality standards in accordance with the Quality Code and the expectations of its awarding bodies. Chaired by the Director of Learning and Customer Support, the Board comprises heads of quality, enhancement and development, heads of school, the Head of Customer and Community Services and the Head of Pastoral Care. The Board meets three times a year with the remit to consider college-wide higher education policies and procedures, external examiner reports, awarding body reports, student information and general higher education issues. The College Management Team receives recommendations from the Board.

13 However, within the committee structure only one group, the Higher Education Academic Review Board, has formally recorded terms of reference and a membership list. As a means of ensuring clarity and continuity within the decision-making structure it is **desirable** that the College consider developing terms of reference and a membership list for committees and groups involved with responsibility for academic standards and the quality of the student experience.

14 At programme level, the maintenance of academic standards is the responsibility of the appropriate Head of School supported by higher education coordinators and programme teams. Higher education coordinators from each school meet twice a year, working closely with the College quality team on standardisation and monitoring of higher education courses within their respective schools. This is especially important to ensure consistent practice where the same course is delivered across different campuses and a College Integrated Monthly Performance Meeting Committee has been introduced to facilitate this. External examiner, annual course review reports and subsequent action plans are scrutinised at higher education coordinator and team level and by the relevant head of school. The Integrated Monthly Performance Meeting Committee considers these and the Head of Quality, Excellence and Development (Higher Education) also monitors the implementation of any resulting action plans. Weekly programme team meetings monitor progress in

addressing action plans and taking corrective action if required. Student progression and attendance are also considered and support mechanisms identified where appropriate.

15 For its higher education programmes, the College works closely with its university partners who have responsibility for the oversight of academic standards. Close liaison between subject partnership managers, link tutors or university coordinators includes attending course committee meetings, staff-student consultative meetings, and progress and examination boards. Northern Ireland-wide collaborative forums are held twice a year and include college principals, higher education coordinators, university partnership managers and link tutors. University partnership managers and link tutors also attend staff-student meetings and examination boards at the College.

16 The College has developed a bespoke self-evaluation report database referred to as 'Tool Kit'. This is used by the heads of schools and higher education coordinators to internally benchmark recruitment, retention and achievement within higher education programmes. External DEL student performance benchmarks are used to monitor student achievement and courses more generally. The data can be analysed and extracted by a variety of categories. The system enables internal comparisons to be undertaken where the same programme is being offered in a number of campuses, ensuring parity of the student experience. Staff are enthusiastic about the Tool Kit and cited, for example, how they used it to identify trends or reasons for students leaving courses, enabling interventions and actions to be put in place. In one case (HND Health and Social Care) the interpretation of the data led to the first year curriculum being changed to ensure that students leaving at that time received a more rounded education to help their employment prospects. Staff provide higher education coordinators with feedback on the effectiveness of Tool Kit, which can lead to changes being made where appropriate. The College's bespoke Tool Kit database enables staff to monitor effectively the standard of its higher education provision and is an example of **good practice**.

What account is taken of the Quality Code?

17 For all awards, programme specifications have been produced in accordance with the Quality Code and are available to students and staff on the College virtual learning environment. The specifications provide comprehensive information to students indicating clear learning outcomes that ensure academic standards are explicit and understood. The College Curriculum Policy provides clear guidance for staff regarding academic standards. Student assessment is tested at the correct level in accordance with *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ).

18 The Head of Quality, Excellence and Development (Higher Education) began a comprehensive review and mapping exercise on the introduction of the Quality Code, which will continue as each subsequent chapter is published. The mapping has identified areas for development including the management and review of all College procedures and policies. This has resulted in a revision of some policies which are being managed through the Higher Education Academic Review Board. The thoroughness of approach and application of this mapping exercise is an example of **good practice**.

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's responsibilities are clearly set out in the memorandums of agreement, memorandums of recognition, declarations of approval, and in the case of the

University of Ulster, a Partnership Handbook. The College's two Heads of Quality, Excellence and Development (Higher Education) and (Further Education) share liaison responsibilities to the awarding bodies, except in the case of Liverpool John Moores University where subject-related matters are directly dealt with by the relevant head of school.

20 The College has in place a common quality assurance system. The quality team has responsibility for monitoring content of all quality reports and to identify college-wide matters which are reported to the College management team. All higher education programmes are required to produce annual self-evaluation reports and quality improvement plans. These are monitored by the Head of Quality, Excellence and Development (Higher Education).

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

21 The College has a formal staff development procedure, which aims to support the College development plan, and which provides a framework within which decisions regarding staff development can be made and supported. The College is committed to a detailed staff development programme. The annual appraisal process includes training needs analysis. These mechanisms inform the overall staff development needs of the College. Individual development needs are also identified through the College performance management process. Lecturing staff are encouraged to improve their pedagogic skills through the Information and Learning Technology Pedagogy Mentoring Programme.

22 Staff are expected to undertake a minimum of 36 hours of staff development annually. Senior College staff confirmed that all staff undertake mandatory training in areas such as safeguarding and health and safety. In addition, staff undertake development activities which are vocationally relevant to higher education teaching and learning, such as software training, information and learning technology pedagogy and an introduction to the Quality Code. Staff are positive in their support of this training and how it supports their knowledge in the maintenance of academic standards. Staff and higher education coordinators attend awarding body staff development events at the University of Ulster and also its annual collaborative conference. Staff teaching on the BA (Hons) Business and Management validated by Liverpool John Moores University attend meetings at the University.

23 The College operated a comprehensive staff development schedule for 2011-12 that included training in internal moderation, referencing and plagiarism, the use of plagiarism software, the assessment process, self-evaluation, and the principles in assessment for the University of Ulster's Re-engineering Assessment Practices. With the support of the relevant head of school, staff can apply for externally held staff development events and courses. Applications are considered by the Human Resources Department, which ensures external events link to the College Development Plan.

24 The College's peer teaching and learning observation scheme is a key feature ensuring higher education academic staff are teaching at the correct level of the FHEQ and understand Quality Code expectations. Most staff teach across a range of higher and further education programmes. There is a peer observation scheme in which staff are observed at their highest teaching level, for example, Higher National or bachelor's degree teaching. During 2011-12 all permanent higher education staff were observed as part of the appraisal process and supportive measures implemented as required.

25 The College has a comprehensive academic induction programme for all new full and part-time teaching staff. This is delivered by the College's Teacher Tutor and the Information and Learning Technology Pedagogy Coordinator. The induction focuses on effective aspects of teaching, student learning, student-centred feedback and information and learning technology pedagogy. There is a requirement from the university awarding bodies that they approve all new appointments in accordance with their memorandums of agreement. Newly appointed staff are supported by course teams and programme coordinators.

26 The College has a comprehensive personalised mentoring and Integrated Learning and Teaching and Pedagogy Programme supported by nine school-based mentors. This highly effective system for the improvement of the student experience was developed in response to self-evaluation reports identifying a lack of information learning technology skills among tutors. The programme has five stages, which include the mentee observing the mentor teaching and both engaging in delivering a session in the mentee's area of expertise. The final stage is to review progress and identify further areas for development. The programme is over-subscribed and staff actively seek to take additional development opportunities as they arise. The Integrated Learning and Teaching and Pedagogy Programme is an example of **good practice**.

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?

27 Responsibilities for managing the quality of learning opportunities reflect those for managing the delivery of academic standards discussed in paragraphs 11 to 16. The flat management structure, the associated meetings and the use of a single database of comprehensive student and course information ensure that the management of the quality of learning and teaching is maintained and enhanced through an effective, efficient and responsive structure.

28 College-wide 'Know and Show' meetings take place every six weeks to share good practice. The meetings bring together curriculum and corporate managers and the College Management Team to review and evaluate matters of concern or opportunities as they occur rather than waiting for the self-assessment review cycle. Records of matters discussed indicate a wide range and variety of topics including recruitment, retention, curriculum enrichment, assessment, analysis of staff, student and employer surveys and teaching and learning strategies and pedagogy. In addition to the cross-college 'Know and Show' meetings, programmes and schools run similar events to share good practice across and within academic areas.

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

29 The College implements effectively its partnership agreements and ensures the quality of learning opportunities meets the expectations of students and awarding bodies. The effectiveness of learning and teaching is monitored and evaluated through the quality assurance cycle. A calendar of activity, including meeting dates and deadlines for the production of self-evaluation reports and quality improvement plans and the associated monitoring activity, clearly identifies the milestones in the delivery of the quality assurance cycle. The College has well-developed, comprehensive and highly effective Standard Operating Procedures which cover all aspects of the delivery of learning and teaching. These include Higher Education Progress and Examination Boards, Accreditation of Prior Learning, Academic Misconduct, Higher Education Admissions and Learning Support Services Higher Education. The procedures include detailed explanations of the roles and responsibilities of staff, the tasks involved and the individual responsible for monitoring each procedure. The standard operating procedures are an example of good practice in providing a single source of guidance and information to all staff with a role in learning and teaching.

What account is taken of the Quality Code?

30 The mechanisms in place to ensure that the College takes full account of Quality Code expectations are discussed in paragraphs 17 and 18.

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

31 The College has robust and effective systems in place to maintain, monitor and enhance the quality of teaching and learning. Teaching and learning is guided by the Curriculum Policy and supported by peer observation and staff appraisal and mentoring programmes. The programme design process ensures that account is given to current knowledge and skills expected by industry and meets the individual needs of the students. Students indicated that, in their view, staff knowledge and expertise contributes to a quality learning experience.

32 The College monitors effectively the views of students. These underpin the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning process. Results from school-level student consultations inform school quality improvement plans and are shared with teaching teams. At programme level, two annual student consultations are held to discuss matters raised by students. This process includes sharing and discussion of external examiners' comments. Student Governors have been appointed since 2009 to represent the student voice on the Board of Governors. This has given a focus for student concerns at strategic management level.

33 A 'First Impressions' survey was undertaken in October 2011 and the top five matters of concern reported by respondents were developed through focus groups. A pool of staff were trained in the facilitation of focus groups by the Research Mentor, a dedicated role within the marketing team with a remit to adopt a structured approach to analysing questionnaires and reports. The involvement of heads of school enables their feedback on identified matters of concern to be noted by focus groups and a means of ensuring that required actions are addressed.

34 Students consider that the standard of teaching is excellent. Tutors are enthusiastic about their subjects, have industrial experience, and are dedicated to helping students reach

their potential. BA (Hons) Business Studies students indicated they benefit from the small class sizes as the student-tutor ratio allows for greater understanding of course content. A variety of delivery methods is used, including presentations, discussion groups, debates and the delivery of theory supported by practical work and placements. Teaching delivery is supplemented by the use of external speakers and visual material such as video.

35 The College has established an extensive network of international contacts and activities for higher education students. Engineering students take part in design and build integrative projects in collaboration with students attending a Japanese college. The projects are designed to enable assessment criteria from a variety of units to be assessed simultaneously. Students have participated in exchange visits to Japan and have presented their project results to an audience of Japanese businesses with a live video link back to the College. This experience has led to one student being employed by a Japanese firm locally. Business Studies students have, with the help of European Union finance, visited a variety of organisations throughout mainland Europe and one visit to the USA.

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

36 There are effective systems in place to support students in the College and on work placement. The College has an efficient scheme to identify individual student need. Case conferences, a secure electronic monitoring system, allow the course teams to consider the progress of each individual student. If identified as being at risk a comment is entered and any additional requirements noted. Case conferences are chaired by the Head of Quality Excellence and Intelligence (Higher Education) and include an assistant head of school and course leader. South Eastern Regional College Extra, a unit which shapes appropriate support for students and manages the withdrawal strategy, directs students to the most appropriate support service. Students who had utilised College support felt that the assistance was helpful. Other students were aware of where to go if they needed to seek help. Most felt that their course coordinator was their first contact in this regard. There are weekly tutorials with group and one-to-one discussions with students. Evening meetings with support staff can be arranged if required by part-time students. Tutorials are often used later in the year to support assignment work. The result of all these initiatives has been a 35 per cent drop in the number of student withdrawals.

37 There are comprehensive College and programme-level student induction programmes. These include information about support services, careers and finance as well as programme-specific regulations. Employability skills have been introduced as part of induction as a pilot in Higher National programmes. The students found the induction to be very intense, but the availability of the information for later reference proved a valuable resource. All student induction material is on the College intranet and as the induction process progresses, and the students become familiar with the use of the virtual learning environment, they electronically sign off their progress. However, during the meeting with students there was some confusion as to the policy on penalties arising from late submission of assessments. Discussions with staff indicated that this may have arisen due to different College policies for further and higher education programmes and students who progress from further education not realising that this is the case. While penalties from the late submission of assessments are contained in student handbooks it is considered **desirable** that programme teams ensure that students understand clearly the penalties that apply to their current programme.

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

38 As discussed in paragraphs 21 to 26, there are effective arrangements for staff development to maintain and enhance the quality of learning opportunities. There is a college-wide, positive attitude to staff development. Priorities for staff development in 2012-13 include the continued embedding of academic standards, the development of technical report writing, the development of teaching and learning at the higher education level, and training in the use of the College's Business Engagement and Student Tracking System. Specialisms are addressed through individual requests for support, with staff supported to deliver papers (for example at the International Society of Travel and Tourism Educators) and undertaking research (for example at the Northern Ireland Advanced Composite and Engineering Centre).

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?

39 The College has sufficient resources and equipment for the delivery of the higher education provision and students consider the resources are sufficient to meet their learning needs. Specialist learning resources have been procured for the campuses in Downpatrick and Lisburn. Examples include structure engineering laboratories and software, industry standard hospitality kitchens, sports equipment and skills equipment for creative technologies. In September 2012, HND Creative Media Production delivery was rehoused in a new facility on the Ballynahinch Campus. Each school has formed a group with a remit to analyse current and future developments in each subject area and employer feedback to ensure the allocation of learning resources provides students with access to the most up-to-date information or material.

40 As a direct response to student feedback there has been significant investment in the College computing network. The provision of relevant hardware and software to support student learning is a strategic priority. There is a planned investment programme for the computer network infrastructure to ensure optimum desktop performance. This includes a four-year replacement cycle of student accessible computers. This is complemented by a significant investment in data storage hardware to permit storage of video, audio and other data files and documents.

41 However, concerns have been raised by students regarding a lack of suitable areas for private study and the availability of printers, particularly in the library. Discussions with staff indicated that there are quiet areas in the library and that there are a number of high quality printers which are kept for specific purposes. In restating their belief that the College provides a good higher education environment on all campuses, staff acknowledged student concerns over the disruption and noise of younger students, particularly in the library areas. There are capital plans to upgrade accommodation, but space and budget constraints limit the development of dedicated higher education resources in the short-term. It is considered **desirable** that the College continues to monitor the appropriateness of higher education learning resources available to students.

42 Since the Developmental Engagement, the College has developed the Business Engagement and Student Tracking System software, which is an effective mechanism designed to monitor work placement activity. The software records travel and health needs, visit details and evaluations by both students and employers. The information to be included has been agreed by the legal team and the Health and Safety Committee. The College matches students to companies with which there are established links and working

relationships. The employers who had used the system found the software very useful as a source of information, recording and tracking. This in-house system contains a range of relevant information on both students and employers and a database of forms, such as those for health and safety, which may be completed online. The development and implementation of the Business Engagement and Student Tracking System software is an example of **good practice** in the management of placement learning as it enables students and employers to ensure an effective and safe learning environment.

43 In September 2011 a new Library Management System was installed which merged the three legacy book catalogues. This provided all students with 24 hour access to the online library catalogue where users can search, renew and reserve books, as well as having access to their own account to keep up to date on borrowed items. Statistics show that the use of the e-book collection grew significantly in 2011-12. Overall, 79 per cent of users were either extremely or very satisfied with the library resource centre service and facilities.

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 DEL-funded higher education?

44 The College's responsibilities for publishing public information are clearly defined in partnership and awarding body agreements. The College is responsible for the advertising, marketing and promotion of its higher education programmes. In the case of University of Ulster validated programmes the faculty subject partnership manager monitors the College's public information with regard to content and accuracy. Representatives from all the awarding universities approve marketing and course material of their validated programmes.

45 The College's paperless policy means that the main channel of communication for all College information is the internet. As such, safeguards are in place to protect against loss. For prospective students and employers, the College publishes clear online information on its higher education provision. A Higher Education Booklet gives general information including returning to learn, learning resources, fees, the application process and a course list. Further information on course descriptors, the International Office, student services and financial support is available through the links on the College's home page. Documents will be printed for students should special formats be needed.

46 The College publishes a wide variety of online documentation that provides students and staff with details of higher education programmes, policies and quality assurance procedures. This includes a comprehensive higher education student handbook providing guidance on matters such as enrolment, mechanisms for both College communication and student voice, the learning experience, assessment process and general higher education course policies. Programme specifications are available to students providing the necessary details on teaching and learning, student voice and assessment. Programmes awarded by university awarding bodies follow their templates. Pearson Edexcel programme specifications have been updated since the Developmental Engagement in a continuing process. A higher education staff guidance handbook is a reference point for

College policy relating to quality assurance procedures and guidance on academic and assessment matters.

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?

47 The College employs a range of measures to ensure that published information is appropriate and accurate. Students have been consulted on the various handbooks and guides during their development to ensure they are complete, unambiguous and useful. Student questionnaires, such as the induction survey, demonstrate a very high level of satisfaction with the quality and accuracy of information provided to students.

48 The College has introduced a standard operating procedure that delegates responsibility for ensuring the accuracy of information. This was a recommendation from the Developmental Engagement. It is the responsibility of all higher education coordinators to produce or review a programme handbook with unit guidance. In addition, an online course descriptor must be completed using a standard College template in the form of an e-brochure. This template allows for a more consistent approach to information provided to students. All web-based material must be agreed in advance with the Head of Communications and the Head of Quality, Excellence and Development for Higher Education prior to publication.

49 The College Quality Unit undertakes reviews and sampling audits to check the accuracy of information. Matters arising are addressed by the course director within 10 working days and the action taken agreed by the appropriate head of school. As part of the annual monitoring process students and other stakeholders are consulted on the validity and accuracy of information.

The team considers that reliance can be placed on the accuracy and/or 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

50 The Developmental Engagement in assessment took place in May 2011. Each line of enquiry provided a route through which the team was able to evaluate the three core themes. The College chose line of enquiry 1 to examine core theme 1: academic standards; line of enquiry 2: quality of learning opportunities; and line of enquiry 3: public information. The lines of enquiry for the Developmental Engagement in assessment agreed with the College in advance of the team's visit were:

Line of enquiry 1: How effective are the internal moderation procedures in supporting academic standards?

Line of enquiry 2: How effective is the College assessment strategy in promoting engagement with industry in programme assessment that ensures currency of industry skills and knowledge?

Line of enquiry 3: Does the assessment information available to students in the public domain accurately reflect and take account of the College assessment strategy and practice?

51 In the course of the Developmental Engagement, the team identified several areas of **good practice**: the consistent approach to, and the collective ownership of, the internal moderation process and assessment practice; the distinctive range of learning opportunities and innovative assessment strategies implemented by programme teams; the culture of employer engagement which is embedded across the College; the development and implementation of the programme enrichment matrix; and the information learning technology pedagogy mentoring programme.

52 The team also indicated that it was **advisable** for the College to take action on two points: review existing mechanisms for ensuring that students are provided with appropriate guidance on academic practice and that this is applied consistently across all higher education programmes; and review existing College mechanisms designed to ensure that information published by the College is accurate and complete. The team indicated that it would be **desirable** for the College to take action on four points: develop an appropriate structure to facilitate the implementation of a cross-college peer review process and staff development activities; review the curriculum policy to ensure that it more clearly defines the role of work-based learning within higher education programmes; implement a liaison group to oversee the management of the College's engagement with employers; and develop an online work placement management system to monitor and review assessment information.

53 The College provided as part of its evidence base for the Summative Review an updated Developmental Engagement action plan, which clearly indicated that an effective and appropriate mechanism is in place to ensure that the action plan is being taken to a full and successful conclusion.

D Foundation Degrees

54 The College offers eight Foundation Degrees in partnership with two university awarding partners. Foundation Degrees have been designed to respond to the needs of local and national business. Students obtain substantive work placements as part of their programme, and programme annual reports indicate that the majority move into work or continue to study using progression routes provided by the awarding partner. The meeting with employers indicated that the College has a close working relationship with a wide range of local and national companies and is a preferred partner in developing bespoke vocational education through its Foundation Degrees.

55 Additional Foundation Degrees will be developed to meet the needs of students and business where they can be funded. The College intends to maintain priority provision in existing subject areas and any new Foundation Degrees will build on strengths in the further education curriculum and provide pathways for progression.

56 The good practice identified and the recommendations made throughout this report apply to all higher education provision, including Foundation Degrees.

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

57 The Summative Review team has identified a number of features of good practice in South Eastern Regional College's management of its responsibilities for academic standards and for the quality of learning opportunities of the awards the College offers on behalf of its awarding bodies. This was based upon discussion with staff and students and

scrutiny of evidence provided by the College and its awarding bodies: the University of Ulster, Liverpool John Moores University, The Queen's University of Belfast, Pearson (Edexcel), City and Guilds, Counselling and Psychotherapy Central Awarding Body, Chartered Management Institute, London Chamber of Commerce Institute, Accounting Technicians Ireland, Institute of the Motor Industry, and the Vocational Training Charitable Trust.

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

- the College's bespoke Tool Kit database enables staff to monitor effectively the standard of its higher education provision (paragraph 16)
- the thoroughness of approach and application of the Quality Code mapping exercise (paragraph 18)
- the Integrated Learning and Teaching and Pedagogy Programme supported by nine school-based mentors (paragraph 26)
- the Standard Operating Procedures provide a single source of guidance and information to all staff with a role in learning and teaching (paragraph 29)
- the development and implementation of the Business Engagement and Student Tracking System software in the management of placement learning, which helps to ensure an effective and safe learning environment (paragraph 42).

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

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

- consider extending the range of Standing Operating Procedures or developing terms of reference and a membership list for committees and groups with responsibility for academic standards and the quality of the student experience (paragraph 13)
- ensure that students understand clearly the penalties for late submission of assessments that apply to their current programme (paragraph 37)
- continues to monitor the appropriateness of higher education learning resources available to students (paragraph 41).

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

62 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, and other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that it has **confidence** that, in the context of this Summative Review, the College discharges its responsibilities effectively, as set out in the relevant partnership agreement for the management of the quality of learning opportunities to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

63 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, and other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that, in the context of this Summative Review, reliance **can** be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

South Eastern Regional College action plan relating to the Summative review March 2013						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
In the course of the Summative review the team identified the following areas of good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the College's bespoke Tool Kit database enables staff to monitor effectively the standard of its higher education provision (paragraph 16) 	The bespoke Tool Kit database continues to be routinely used to evaluate higher education provision	June 2014	Head of Quality, Excellence and Development	Tool Kit database is uniformly used to monitor the standard of higher education provision	College Management Team	Course and College self-evaluation; progress and examination board reports; case conference minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the thoroughness of approach and application of the Quality Code mapping exercise (paragraph 18) 	Continue to systematically map the Quality Code to higher education standard operating procedures and practices and monitor through the Higher Education Review Board	June 2014	Head of Quality, Excellence and Development	Dates in planner for review and implementation of Quality Code are met Policies and processes reflect principles within Quality Code	Higher Education Review Board	Policies and processes updated and communicated Student surveys and programme self-evaluations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Integrated Learning and Teaching and 	School-based mentors continue to systematically support	June 2017	Head of Quality, Excellence and Development	80% of higher education full and part-time staff	College Management Team	Pedagogy records; staff development

Pedagogy Programme supported by nine school-based mentors (paragraph 26)	higher education staff through the integrated teaching and pedagogy programme			continue to use the programme every three years to update and reflect on teaching and pedagogy practice		records; student focus groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Standard Operating Procedures provide a single source of guidance and information to all staff with a role in learning and teaching (paragraph 29) 	Annual review of Standard Operating Procedures provision to ensure that guidance to staff is current and accurate	August 2013	Head of Quality, Excellence and Development	Single source of guidance for staff maintained and easily accessed on Quality Public site	College Management Team	Site usage figures; HE co-ordinators meeting minutes; programme self-evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the development and implementation of the Business Engagement and Student Tracking System software in the management of placement learning, which helps to ensure an effective and safe learning environment (paragraph 42). 	Monitor Business Engagement and Student Tracking System (BEST) system through the Integrated Monthly Performance Meeting System, case conference and self-evaluation to ensure continued consistent usage in management of placement learning	June 2014	Business Engagement and Student Tracking Co-ordinator	Levels of student satisfaction with work placement learning experience remain high BEST is routinely used to manage workplace learning by all programmes	Director of Learning and Customer Service	BEST usage figures; Integrated Monthly Performance Meeting System records; case conference records; course self-evaluation

Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is desirable for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> consider extending the range of Standing Operating Procedures or developing terms of reference and a membership list for committees and groups with responsibility for academic standards and the quality of the student experience (paragraph 13) 	Develop terms of reference and membership lists for the HE Co-ordinators group.	June 2013	Head of Quality, Excellence and Development	Terms of reference and membership lists created for all current and future groups responsible for student experience.	College Management Team	Terms of reference; Membership lists; Minutes of meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that students understand clearly the penalties for late submission of assessments that apply to their current programme (paragraph 37) 	<p>Update session with staff on late penalties and submission policy</p> <p>Set induction and semester dates in higher education quality cycle for review of policy and penalties with students</p> <p>Monitor student awareness through</p>	<p>August 2013</p> <p>August 2013</p> <p>May 2014</p>	Head of Quality, Excellence and Development	<p>Update session held and staff queries addressed</p> <p>Dates agreed and met</p> <p>Students are consistently clear</p>	HE Review Board	<p>Minutes of update session; inclusion in higher education key quality cycle dates;</p> <p>Focus group meetings and action plans</p> <p>Minutes of case conferences, progress boards</p>

	<p>focus groups and module evaluation</p> <p>Monitor possible staff issues at progress, case conference meetings and standardisation weeks</p>	May 2014		<p>about policy and penalties</p> <p>Policy and penalties are implemented consistently by staff</p>		<p>and standardisation activities</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> continue to monitor the appropriateness of higher education learning resources available to students (paragraph 41). 	<p>Continue to review higher education environment monthly at Integrated monthly performance management meetings</p>	June 2014	Head of Learning Resources	<p>Students report 85% or greater level of satisfaction with learning environment</p>	Director of Learning and Customer Support	<p>IMPMS minutes, records of learning resource usage, complaint records, student focus groups and module evaluations</p>

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