Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

Derby College

April 2011

SR 78/2010

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*, which includes descriptions of different higher education qualifications
- the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*
- 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 Derby College carried out in April 2011

As a result of its investigations, the Summative review team (the team) considers that there can be **confidence** in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreements, for the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of its awarding bodies. The team also considers that there can be **confidence** in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreements, for the quality of learning opportunities it offers. The team considers that reliance **can** be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Good practice

The team has identified the following good practice for dissemination:

- the development of a Higher Education Quality Handbook which makes quality procedures and partnership arrangements accessible to all staff
- the positive and productive relationship between the College's programme leaders and the link tutors at Nottingham Trent University and Sheffield Hallam University in enhancing as well as maintaining academic standards, since it ensures effective collaboration
- the effective and productive engagement with employers ensures that the design of programmes meets the needs of industry and that students are well supported in the workplace.

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:

- ensure that all matters raised by the Higher Education Quality and Standards Committee are addressed fully by the college Executive Team and to ensure that the outcomes of such deliberations are fed back to teaching staff and students
- ensure that minutes of meetings are sufficiently detailed and that action plans specify priorities and target dates for completion, together with arrangements for their effective implementation, to enable the College to take a strategic overview of the management of its higher education provision
- ensure that higher education external examiners' reports are considered in their entirety by the college Executive Team so that any matters which require attention and response are acted upon at this level
- establish a clear system for evaluating the effectiveness of the provision of resources to support learning, taking full account of student views.

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

- clarify in more detail where strategic overview takes place, the form it takes and what the outcomes are
- follow up its review of admission procedures with a programme of systematic review of all sections of the *Code of practice* as it applies to the College's provision

- monitor closely the effectiveness of its revised arrangements for engaging with students
- review the availability of library resources and the ease of access to electronic learning resources
- ensure that all students receive a consistent and rigorous briefing on programme handbooks and programme specifications
- provide students with a more comprehensive induction to the virtual learning environment to enable them to gain maximum benefit from online resources
- take further action to embed the policy on the management of public information and raise awareness of it by all academic staff with programme management responsibility.

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 Derby College (the College). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the College discharges its responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes which the College delivers on behalf of Edexcel, Nottingham Trent University and Sheffield Hallam University. The review was carried out by Mr Seth Crofts, Mr Millard Parkinson, Mrs Sally Powell (reviewers) and Dr Daniel Lamont (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 awarding bodies, meetings with staff, students, employers and partner institutions, 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 for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (*Code of practice*), subject and award benchmark statements*, The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and programme specifications.

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

4   The mission of Derby College is to 'release potential and achieve outstanding success'. The College is in the process of updating its Corporate Plan, but currently the main strategic objectives are:

- to champion excellence by embedding a culture of continuous improvement, resulting in outstanding outcomes and an exceptional learning experience for all
- to positively impact on economic development, generating the future talent required by business
- to promote social interaction and inclusion, celebrating diversity and recognising commonality
- to maximise commercial return by exploiting innovative opportunities to be reinvested to enhance the learning experience the organisation provides
- to enhance our reputation and corporate positioning, influencing decision making through effective relationships with partners.

5   Derby College is one of England's largest further education colleges. It was established in 2002, as a result of a merger which brought together three Derbyshire colleges. The subsequent merger with South East Derbyshire College in February 2010 has resulted in the College operating across four main campuses: Roundhouse, Joseph Wright, Broomfield and Ilkeston, and Heanor. Derby College operates a federal structure that supports over 30,000 learners each year, has a turnover of around £58 million and employs 1,500 professional staff. Derby College currently has 277 (182.5 full-time equivalent) students studying higher education across 15 programmes. The programmes, with their full-time equivalent student numbers in brackets, are as follows:

Edexcel

- HNC Civil Engineering (3)
- HNC Construction (3)
- HNC Electrical/Electronic Engineering (7)
- HND Electrical/Electronic Engineering (5)
- HNC Manufacturing Engineering (64)
- HND Manufacturing Engineering (9)
- HNC Operations Engineering (24)

Nottingham Trent University

- Professional Graduate Certificate in Education:
  Lifelong Learning Sector (In-Service) (17)
- Certificate in Education:
  Lifelong Learning Sector (In-Service) (21)
- Professional Graduate Certificate in Education:
  English Literacy (9)
- Certificate in Education: English Literacy (5)
- Professional Graduate Certificate in Education: English ESOL (3)
- Certificate in Education: English ESOL (5)
- Foundation Degree in Construction Management (18)

Sheffield Hallam University

- Foundation Degree in Integrated Engineering (82)

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

6   The College has a formal partnership agreement with Edexcel, Nottingham Trent University and Sheffield Hallam University. These are up to date and define clearly the respective responsibilities of partners. Partnership arrangements with the universities indicate responsibilities devolved to the College together with clear mechanisms enabling them to maintain a rigorous overview of the provision. There is a strong sense of partnership between the College and the universities, which includes the arrangement of relevant staff training events. The College follows the Edexcel Note for programmes awarded by them.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

7   The addition of South East Derbyshire College (SEDC) has led to changes in the accommodation portfolio. The professional construction department, including its HNCs and FdSc, has moved to the Roundhouse campus. The generic in-service education programmes have moved to the Ilkeston campus. In July 2010 the College underwent a major reorganisation of its management structure, although programme management roles have remained the same throughout this process and continue to do so.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

8   Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the Summative review team. The students made a written submission which was produced with the support of the College. In addition, the review

coordinator explained the Summative review process to student representatives at the preparatory meeting and the team met a representative group of students. The submission identified a number of issues that were useful to the team, and which were discussed in the meetings with students and staff during the visit.

B Evaluation of the management of HEFCE-funded higher education

Core theme 1: Academic standards

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

9   As a result of a recent restructuring exercise, the College has a matrix management structure where the Principal and two deputy chief executives form the Executive. They, in turn, are supported by teams of heads of faculty and assistant principals. Higher education falls under the remit of the Assistant Principal (Strategy) who reports to the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Strategy and Commercial. The college Executive Team has authority and responsibility for the higher education provision, which it delegates to the Higher Education Quality and Standards Committee. It is advisable that the college should ensure that all matters raised by the Higher Education Quality and Standards Committee are addressed fully by the College Executive Team and to ensure that the outcomes of such deliberations are fed back to teaching staff and students. The college Executive Team has a strategic overview of its higher education provision and this overview is underpinned by an extensive planning exercise involving all staff. It would be desirable for the College to clarify in more detail where this strategic overview takes place, the form it takes and what the outcomes are. The college Higher Education Quality Handbook brings together all policies which have been developed specifically to support higher education, together with those generic college policies that have relevance to higher education. This is available in hard copy and on the staff intranet. It has been developed in close consultation with programme teams and the three awarding bodies and is a most positive and welcome document which makes quality procedures and partnership arrangements accessible to all staff, and with which staff are familiar and supports the maintenance of academic standards. The team agrees that this is good practice.

10   The Team Manager Higher Education plays a pivotal role in supporting higher education activity in the College. In addition to liaising with the link tutors of partner institutions, he provides day-to-day support to programme teams, advises on curriculum development and coordinates higher education staff development. He also produces the College Higher Education Quality and Standards Report which is reviewed by the college Executive. There is a procedure for reviewing matters of significance to higher education and, through the college performance management systems, follow-up action is implemented.

11   Programme committees take delegated responsibility for programme management, development, delivery, monitoring and enhancement of the higher education provision, and report to the Higher Education Quality and Standards Committee, which receives their annual monitoring reports. These are detailed compilations of the operation of the programme during the year, and include student progression and achievement statistics, student feedback and comments from external examiners. An action plan is also included. It is advisable to ensure that the minutes of all meetings are sufficiently detailed and that action plans specify priorities and target dates for completion, together with arrangements for

their effective implementation, to enable the College to take a strategic overview of the management of its higher education provision.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

12   The College has been active in raising staff awareness of the Academic Infrastructure. This has been supported by the awarding bodies. For example, Sheffield Hallam University provided a day workshop on assessment issues following which staff and students were able to report improvements to the quality and timeliness of assessment feedback. The Team Manager Higher Education has coordinated staff development sessions on the Academic Infrastructure. Programme specifications are available for all programmes and are included both in validation documents and in programme handbooks. Programme teams are responsible for producing and maintaining programme specifications, and ensure that programmes accord with current subject benchmark statements. The engineering programmes have been reviewed to ensure that they align with the FHEQ. In addition, the College has been working with the relevant professional bodies to secure appropriate accreditation of the College's programmes. The Higher Education Quality Handbook demonstrates an engagement with the Academic Infrastructure, especially the *Code of practice.*

13   A review of admissions procedures was undertaken during 2010. The team agrees that this is a useful starting point, but scrutiny of the minutes of the Higher Education Quality and Standards Committee indicates that there is no schedule for the systematic review of other sections of the *Code of practice* yet planned. It would be desirable for the College to initiate such a review. This could helpfully begin with the *Code of practice* sections on collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning and on work-based and placement learning.

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

14   The Higher Education Quality Handbook articulates clearly the relative roles and responsibilities of the College and its partner awarding bodies. Procedures are embedded in curriculum areas and programmes in line with awarding body requirements and the college Higher Education Strategy. It is clear from discussions with staff and scrutiny of documentation that there is close collaboration with the university partners. Partnership agreements are reviewed regularly in discussions between the Team Manager Higher Education and the awarding body partnership manager; details are provided in validation documents or operational manual. There is regular communication and discussion between the College and the partner universities on operational matters. The positive and productive relationship between the College's programme leaders and the link tutors at Nottingham Trent University and Sheffield Hallam University is an example of good practice in enhancing as well as maintaining academic standards, since it ensures effective collaboration.

15   External examiners are nominated and appointed according to the practices stipulated by the awarding bodies. Their reports cover the provision in more than one college, but issues specific to Derby College programmes are usually identified. The universities are introducing a revised report template which encourages external examiners to make college-specific comments, where appropriate. The universities consider external examiners' reports and monitor the programme team, the College's response to these reports and actions taken to address issues. External examiners' reports and Edexcel external verifiers' reports are received in the College by programme leaders and inform the

comprehensive and detailed annual monitoring reports which contribute to the College Higher Education Quality and Standards report. A summary of these reports is scrutinised at a senior management level. However, it is advisable that higher education external examiners' reports are considered in their entirety by the college Executive Team so that any matters which require attention and response are acted upon at this level.

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

16   The college Higher Education Strategy requires all teaching staff to be qualified teachers. Staff teaching on higher education programmes are appropriately qualified and they are encouraged to join the Higher Education Academy. The College makes use of the professional development activities offered by the Academy's learning and teaching support centres. This is borne out by staff development plans and staff records. As part of a continuing programme, the Faculty of Engineering has recently appointed a Learning Director (Advanced Practitioner) to support teaching. Training officers from local employers attend development sessions with the staff of programmes on which they have students. This leads to effective collaboration with local employers who contribute to the delivery of programmes.

17   A specific higher education-focused staff development programme was introduced in 2009-10. Staff are allocated time for continuing professional development and are supported in a wide range of developmental activities, including learning and teaching practice and action research. These are organised by the Professional Development Department and delivered by guest speakers and the Team Manager Higher Education. Sessions have included topics on the Academic Infrastructure, course development, assessment, research skills and scholarly activity. Staff development activity is reported to the Higher Education Quality and Standards Committee, which oversaw the meeting of staff development objectives set out in the Developmental engagement action plan. There is also an annual Higher Education Conference which is valued by staff.

18   The college-wide Professional Development Policy outlines the College's commitment to enhance the capabilities and potential of all college employees, in line with its mission statement and strategic objectives. This is supported by performance management review. This includes the appraisal scheme where members of staff meet their line managers at intervals through the year to agree three professional objectives and one personal development objective. These objectives are collated by the Professional Development Department and used to inform the business planning process, which includes resource allocation.

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

Core theme 2: Quality of learning opportunities

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

19   The College management structure and the delegation of management responsibilities outlined in paragraphs 9 to 11 apply equally to the management of students' learning opportunities.

20   Subjects are grouped into academies which, together with programme teams, are responsible for the management of learning opportunities at operational level. They are clear about their responsibilities. Matters arising from discussion and consideration at programme level are discussed at the Higher Education Quality and Standards Committee and considered by the college Executive Team. Outcomes are then reported back to programme teams and students.

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

21   The programme teams and Higher Education Team Manager are in regular communication with partnership managers and link tutors at the awarding universities. All awarding bodies appoint suitably qualified external examiners who visit the College, sample students' work, attend assessment boards and produce annual reports. Issues raised in external examiners' reports are included in programme annual monitoring reports, which comment on learning opportunities provided for students and include feedback from students on their experience of these.

22   As outlined in paragraph 11, the Higher Education Quality and Standards Committee receives and examines all programme annual monitoring reports and is expected to ensure that all actions identified are implemented. However, student views are not incorporated fully into the annual monitoring reports. The action plan from the Annual Summary Quality Report does identify the need to review the incorporation of student feedback and the use of student representatives as an action point, but there is no indication of how, or when, this might be implemented.

23   The College has been successful in attracting funding through the Science, Technology and Mathematics project to develop work-based learning projects on the FdSc Integrated Engineering programme. However, the 2009-10 Sheffield Hallam University Collaborative Annual Quality Report cites negative feedback from students on the information technology infrastructure. The report identifies the problems and makes a recommendation that the infrastructure should be strengthened with a deadline of December 2010. The team is satisfied that very significant progress has now been made in developing information technology resources available for students studying engineering.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

24   As outlined in paragraphs 12 and 13, the College has engaged with the Academic Infrastructure.

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

25   Teaching staff are appropriately qualified, with relevant academic, professional and teaching qualifications. Staff curricula vitae are scrutinised at validation events and included in programme definitive documents. Any changes to teaching staff must be approved by awarding bodies. The College operates a process of observation of teaching which assesses the performance of individual tutors and identifies development plans for staff who do not demonstrate effective practice. A systematic plan, driven by the appraisal process, is implemented for academic staff whose performance is less than satisfactory.

26   The College undertakes comprehensive module evaluations. These, together with external examiners' reports and student feedback, indicate high levels of satisfaction with classroom teaching and tutorial support at the module level. Where there have been issues around the delivery of modules, these have been addressed. This is confirmed by students who speak highly of the support they receive from teaching staff.

27   The College enjoys close relationships with employers and employer bodies. It is clear from meeting employer representatives, staff and students, that the students' theoretical studies in college are complemented by effective practical work and work-based learning. Employers contribute to the design of the courses and to the selection of topics for projects. Students are well supported by mentors and the College has excellent relations with employers, supported by regular contact. The effective and productive engagement with employers ensures that the design of programmes meets the needs of industry and that students are well supported in the workplace. This is an example of good practice. The College is, therefore, able to assure itself that its work-based learning provides appropriate learning opportunities for students.

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

28   The College has comprehensive policies and procedures for supporting students, which are generic to all college provision. Additionally, specialist learning support is provided to meet individual needs. The provision includes an effective tutorial system which supports students well. This was highlighted in the Developmental engagement report. Students confirm that levels of support are high.

29   There is a student representative system. The College has made significant efforts to engage more effectively with higher education students in the current academic year. As indicated in paragraph 22, evidence from the annual college summary report and the annual monitoring reports suggests that the learner voice is not incorporated fully into the monitoring and enhancement procedures operated by the College. The recently established higher education forums are recognised by staff as not yet being fully effective. Although students may attend meetings, their engagement has been variable. The College has made efforts to engage more students in these forums, through varied scheduling of meetings, and has sought to attract a more diverse range of students. The team recognises that the College has made significant progress in gathering student views and, in particular, has made a concerted effort to engage more consistently with the higher education student body. Nonetheless, the College should continue to incorporate this initial phase of work into its procedures and evaluate the measures taken. It is desirable that the College monitors closely the effectiveness of its revised arrangements for engaging with students.

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

30   As outlined in paragraphs 16 to 18, the College has a comprehensive range of staff development opportunities with support given to staff to study for higher qualifications, attend conferences and other events and participate in industrial activity. Staff are encouraged to become involved in the Technology Enhanced Teaching and Learning Project (TETLA), which helps them to develop technology to enhance teaching, learning and assessment. Staff are encouraged to engage with action research and other scholarly activity as well as the professional development activities provided. Partner universities provide a range of activities which college staff are encouraged to attend. Students regard programme staff as being well qualified, knowledgeable and experienced. The College has a systematic approach to supporting staff to use the virtual learning environment. This is linked to staff appraisal and carefully monitored by key managers with responsibility for both learning and teaching, and subject delivery.

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?

31   Students indicate a general level of satisfaction with the College's provision of learning resources. The exception to this is in the provision of specialist information technology and computing resources which are essential to engineering and construction programmes. This was particularly problematic in the engineering provision where the laptops provided were not suitable for the specialist software, students could not save work on USB drives, and computers frequently crashed, losing their work. The team noted the frustration of students and their inability to resolve this in the past and their concern that they were unable to meet programme intended learning outcomes. Despite having raised these matters formally and informally, appropriate and timely action has not followed. These difficulties are also reported from 2009 in a number of other documents, including reports, programme annual monitoring reports, Assessment Board minutes and programme team meetings.

32   Further scrutiny of the evidence and further discussions with staff and students identified that these problems are in the process of being resolved by the purchase of specialist equipment, following a comprehensive consultation process with both staff and students. New computers, which are fit for purpose and contain all relevant software, have now been installed in the engineering area. Students confirm that these have addressed the difficulties previously experienced. This is supported by the external verifiers' report for HNC Engineering 2010-11, which indicates that there are no concerns around resource provision and that students are able to achieve the intended learning outcomes. New systems for the storage of students' work have been provided, such as allowing students to have access to a networked drive from outside the College. Students confirm that the facilities for storing work are now effective. However, it is important that students are informed of actions taken to address their concerns in a timely manner. It is advisable that the College establishes a clear system for evaluating the effectiveness of the provision of resources to support learning, taking full account of student views.

33   In the written submission, engineering students stated that the stock of specialist library books was inadequate. Students on programmes validated by partner universities have access to these universities' libraries, but such access is not available to Edexcel students. Students expressed concerns about access to online resources such as e-books. Students on the Cert Ed/PGCE had experienced difficulties in accessing the virtual learning environment provided by Nottingham Trent University from home, but they reported that both

it and the college virtual learning environment were very useful in supporting their studies. However, the College is aware of these issues and is addressing them. It would be desirable for the College to review the availability of library resources and students' ease of access to electronic learning resources.

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

Core theme 3: Public information

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

34   The College is responsible for producing the college prospectus and marketing information, both of which include information about higher education programmes. In addition, it produces handbooks and programme information for current students. The College has developed a higher education web-based prospectus which provides clear and user-friendly information for prospective students, including information on career progression opportunities and assessment strategies. The college is planning to develop a new range of easily accessible web-based marketing materials that will aim to provide user-friendly, readily accessible information for prospective students. These materials will continue to be subject to an approval process involving awarding bodies.

35   Detailed and informative programme specifications have been developed for the higher education programmes by college staff and the awarding bodies working together. These are comprehensive and provide clear information for students. However, students' awareness of the availability of programme specifications is variable. While some students are not familiar with these documents, other students are and found that they provide useful guidance. The College and the awarding bodies have also developed detailed programme handbooks that provided extensive information about the programmes, including details on intended learning outcomes, assessment and student support. However, in some areas of the provision students perceive that they are not provided with these handbooks in a timely fashion. In particular, students report that the delays in receiving both teaching and assessment schedules had a negative impact upon their learning experience. It would be desirable for the College to ensure that all students receive a consistent and rigorous briefing on programme handbooks and specifications.

36   The College has made significant investment in the use of the virtual learning environment to provide extensive information in relation to the majority of higher education programmes. For the Nottingham Trent University provision, online support provides a comprehensive bank of information to support students' learning and to deliver additional guidance. Feedback from students suggests that there is a variable level of uptake of the virtual learning environment and in some programme areas students have not been able to access this resource due to delays in their student registration. In addition, the introduction to the virtual learning environment is variable across the provision and some students reported that they needed more guidance to make effective use of it. It is desirable that students should be provided with a more comprehensive induction to the virtual learning environment to enable them to gain maximum benefit from online resources. This will ensure that all students are well prepared to make effective use of this excellent resource. The College continues to make further developments to it through the creation of a

dedicated Higher Education Zone. However, these developments are at an early stage and the College acknowledges that further work is needed to develop this resource.

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

37   The College has a public information policy which provides clear guidance for staff delivering the higher education provision. This policy sets out the responsibilities of the programme leaders and other senior staff in relation to the management of the accuracy and completeness of public information. The College's public information policy regulates document control, ensuring that information is current and accurate. Significant progress has been made in relation to the management and control of public information since the Developmental engagement. The policy on the management of public information was developed as part of the Developmental engagement action plan and it has recently been implemented. It is desirable that the College should take further action to embed it, and raise awareness of it by all academic staff with programme management responsibility.

38   The College has a dedicated marketing department, which includes the services of a number of specialist marketing professionals, including marketing officers, an events coordinator and a specialist designer. The public information policy provides a timeframe for the development and approval of marketing materials that is aligned to the marketing and recruitment cycle for higher education programmes. The College operates a systematic approach to planning marketing activity, which involves negotiations between all higher education curriculum areas and the marketing department. Academic teams in all curriculum areas develop a marketing plan which is approved by the Assistant Principal and becomes part of an annual college marketing plan which drives the marketing activities over the academic year. Individual marketing plans specify the nature of marketing materials, for example course flyers. The production of marketing plans is regulated by the annual strategic planning cycle. All marketing materials are scrutinised carefully by the relevant awarding body in a formal approval process which ensures that the materials are checked for accuracy and completeness prior to publication.

> **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

39   The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in March 2010. The review included one institutional nominee. The lines of inquiry agreed with the College were as follows:

Line of enquiry 1: How effective are the College's internal verification and internal moderation processes in assuring that appropriate standards are achieved in the Edexcel programmes?

Line of enquiry 2: To what extent does the College effectively manage the communication of information to students that helps to prepare them for assessment; and ensure its accuracy and completeness?

Line of enquiry 3: How does the College ensure that the quality and timeliness of written and associated feedback to students on summative assessment enable students to see what standards they have achieved and how they can improve their future performance?

40   In the course of the Developmental engagement, the team identified as good practice the effectiveness of the internal verification system, for the Edexcel higher national programmes in engineering, in ensuring that standards are maintained, and the effectiveness of the tutorial system on the engineering programmes in helping to improve students' learning experience.

41   The team made a number of recommendations. It considered that it would be advisable for the College to proceed with its plans to enhance the use of the Academic Infrastructure by staff in the delivery of the higher education programmes, especially the use of the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*. This would ensure that their assessment practice reflects its expectations and that standards are maintained. The team also advised the College to identify the public information it is responsible for publishing and develop robust procedures for ensuring its accuracy and completeness. The Developmental engagement team also reported that it would be desirable for the College to continue to develop plans for sharing good practice across the higher education provision, review the operation of the Edexcel Higher National assessment boards with a view to enhancing their rigour, and ensure a greater consistency in information about written assessment given to its higher education students. In addition, the team recommended that the College should proceed with its plan to enhance the staff development opportunities provided to staff teaching on higher education programmes, devise minimum expectations for the quality of written feedback provided to students on their work, and endeavour to establish a standard maximum timescale for the provision of written feedback to students on their work. It would be desirable to enhance the effectiveness of management arrangements for monitoring the quality and timeliness of written feedback to students across the provision.

D   Foundation Degrees

42   The College's Foundation Degrees provide enhancement opportunities for students to extend work-based learning and see the relevance of linking this to theory. Strengths include close relationships with employers, high quality student support and the incorporation of skills development to support future employment. They conform fully with the *Foundation Degree award benchmark*. The development of a Higher Education Quality Handbook will support the maintenance of quality and standards on Foundation Degrees. The programme monitoring systems and the college committee structure for the consideration of higher education issues constitutes a robust and effective mechanism for assuring the quality and standards of higher education provision.

43   The good practice and recommendations identified in section E apply equally to the College's Foundation Degree provision.

E   Conclusions and summary of judgements

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

provided by the College and its awarding bodies, Edexcel, Nottingham Trent University and Sheffield Hallam University.

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

- the development of a Higher Education Quality Handbook which makes quality procedures and partnership arrangements accessible to all staff (paragraph 9)
- the positive and productive relationship between the College's programme leaders and the link tutors at Nottingham Trent University and Sheffield Hallam University in enhancing as well as maintaining academic standards, since it ensures effective collaboration (paragraph 14)
- the effective and productive engagement with employers ensures that the design of programmes meets the needs of industry and that students are well supported in the workplace (paragraph 27).

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

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

- ensure that all matters raised by the Higher Education Quality and Standards Committee are addressed fully by the college Executive Team and to ensure that the outcomes of such deliberations are fed back to teaching staff and students (paragraph 9)
- ensure that minutes of meetings are sufficiently detailed and that action plans specify priorities and target dates for completion, together with arrangements for their effective implementation, to enable the College to take a strategic overview of the management of its higher education provision (paragraph 11)
- ensure that higher education external examiners' reports are considered in their entirety by the college Executive Team so that any matters which require attention and response are acted upon at this level (paragraph 15)
- establish a clear system for evaluating the effectiveness of the provision of resources to support learning, taking full account of student views (paragraph 22, 32).

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

- clarify in more detail where strategic overview takes place, the form it takes and what the outcomes are (paragraph 9)
- follow up its review of admission procedures with a programme of systematic review of all sections of the *Code of practice* as it applies to the College's provision (paragraph 13)
- monitor closely the effectiveness of its revised arrangements for engaging with students (paragraph 29)
- review the availability of library resources and ease of access to electronic learning resources (paragraph 33)
- ensure that all students receive a consistent and rigorous briefing on programme handbooks and programme specifications (paragraph 35)
- provide students with a more comprehensive induction to the virtual learning environment to enable them to gain maximum benefit from online resources (paragraph 36)

- take further action to embed the policy on the management of public information and raise awareness of it by all academic staff with programme management responsibility (paragraph 37).

49   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.

50   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.

51   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.

Derby College action plan relating to the Summative review: April 2011						
Good practice	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
In the course of the Summative review the team identified the following areas of **good practice** that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
• the development of a Higher Education Quality Handbook which makes quality procedures and partnership arrangements accessible to all staff (paragraph 9)	Ensure Higher Education Quality Handbook is reviewed and updated and continues to be accessible to all staff via the intranet and Higher Education Zone All higher education procedures to be incorporated into wider organisation policies and available on the intranet and Higher Education Zone	October 2011	Team Manager - Higher Education Assistant Principal - Strategy	Maintained accessibility, ensuring effective up-to-date communication and information	Strategy Enactment Group - Higher Education, staff development, university partners, Quality Improvement Group Strategy & Quality Director Deputy CEO	Monitor feedback via SEG, higher education staff and university partners
• the positive and productive relationship between the College's programme leaders and the link tutors at	Continued commitment to ensuring positive and productive relationships via robust meeting structures, via the Communication Strategy and partner	Reviewed termly	Team Manager - Higher Education Assistant Principal - Strategy Programme	Positive feedback from university partners, staff and learners	Strategy Enactment Group - Higher Education Strategy & Quality Director	Programme Standards Quality Report, Annual Quality Review Programme Committee meetings, annual monitoring

Nottingham Trent University and Sheffield Hallam University in enhancing as well as maintaining academic standards, since it ensures effective collaboration (paragraph 14)	feedback		leaders		Deputy CEO	reports/self-assessment reports, staff and learner feedback
• the effective and productive engagement with employers ensures that the design of programmes meets the needs of industry and that students are well supported in the workplace (paragraph 27).	Continued commitment to ensuring positive relationships with employers via higher education forums/programme committees All employers of higher education learners are allocated a Key Account Manager (KAM), all employers are reviewed on a regular basis and feedback any requirements, which are actioned by the appropriate area	Monthly review starting Sept 2011	Team Manager - Higher Education Programme leaders Employer Responsive Assistant Principal - Strategy KAM and Assistant Principal - Business Development	Positive employer feedback/survey results/impact criteria	Strategy Enactment Group - Higher Education Strategy & Quality Director Deputy CEO	Employer feedback survey Annual monitoring reports/self-assessment reports

Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is **advisable** for the College to:						
• ensure that all matters raised by the Higher Education Quality and Standards Committee are addressed fully by the college Executive Team and to ensure that the outcomes of such deliberations are fed back to teaching staff and students (paragraph 9)	Review current processes and systems to ensure all matters raised are fully addressed and resolved by college Executive Team The outcomes to be fed back to teaching staff and learners (via the Strategy Enactment Group - Higher Education, Quality Improvement Group and learner forums)	December 2011 June 2012 December 2012	Team Manager - Higher Education Assistant Principal - Strategy Strategy Enactment Group - Higher Education Quality Improvement Group Learner forums	Positive process review/audit outcomes Appropriate actions to address raised matters are completed by teaching or appropriate staff Increased learner satisfaction rates Clear reporting lines for higher education matters: timely and consistent response on issues requiring strategic action	Strategy & Quality Director Deputy CEO	Internal process review/audit outcomes are presented at Strategy Enactment Group and Quality Improvement Group and learner forums where correctional action is taken as required Learner feedback survey outcomes identify areas of good practice and concern The self-assessment report and annual monitoring reports process identifies

						strengths and areas for development including the corrective action required to improve
• ensure that minutes of meetings are sufficiently detailed and that action plans specify priorities and target dates for completion, together with arrangements for their effective implementation, to enable the College to take a strategic overview of the management of its higher education provision (paragraph 11)	Review current standard of meeting minutes to ensure they are sufficiently detailed, and that effective implementation of priorities and target dates for completion are carried out The outcomes to be fed back to teaching staff and learners (via the Strategy Enactment Group - Higher Education, Quality Improvement Group and Learner Forums) Review of meeting structure to ensure all meetings have Executive representation	December 2011 June 2012 December 2012	Team Manager - Higher Education Assistant Principal - Strategy Strategy Enactment Group - Higher Education Quality Improvement Group Learner forums	Positive process review/audit outcomes Minutes provide effective recording of action and priorities tracking in an accurate manner Appropriate actions to address raised matters are completed by teaching or appropriate staff Increased learner satisfaction rates Clear reporting lines for higher education matters: timely	Strategy & Quality Director Deputy CEO	Internal process review/ audit outcomes are presented at Strategy Enactment Group and Quality Improvement Group and learner forums where correctional action is taken as required Learner feedback survey outcomes identify areas of good practice and concern Annual monitoring reports/self-assessment reports process

				and consistent response on issues requiring strategic action		identify areas of strengths and areas for development and corrective action attributed to complete
• ensure that higher education external examiners' reports are considered in their entirety by the college Executive Team so that any matters which require attention and response are acted upon at this level (paragraph 15)	Review current external examiners' report process/systems and documents to ensure examiners' reports are considered in their entirety by the college Executive Team, results fed back to Strategy Enactment Group, Quality Improvement Group and learner forums	October 2011	Team Manager - Higher Education Programme leaders Faculty heads Assistant Principal - Strategy	All matters acted upon by the appropriate college teams and teaching staff Increased learner satisfaction rates 100 per cent external examiner action completed Direct claims for all programmes	Strategy & Quality Director Deputy CEO	Review outcomes are presented at Strategy Enactment Group, Quality Improvement Group and learner forums where correctional action is taken as required
• establish a clear system for evaluating the effectiveness of the provision of resources to support learning, taking full account of student views (paragraph 32).	Implement higher education working groups, including higher education learners and staff to evaluate effectiveness of resources and problem solving Review the learner voice process, including all	October 2011	Team Manager - Higher Education Faculty heads Assistant Principal - Strategy	High learner satisfaction rates with regard to the effectiveness of resources to support learning	Strategy & Quality Director Deputy CEO	Learner feedback surveys - resource section Cross College Resource Group feedback Annual monitoring reports, self-assessment

	current methodologies Implement the Cross College Resource Group, review and monitor impact Results to be fed back to Strategy Enactment Group, Quality Improvement Group and learner forums					reports Business Plans
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:						
• to clarify in more detail where strategic overview takes place, the form it takes and what the outcomes are (paragraph 9)	Continued commitment to current strategic process, business planning cycle and management structure Review flowcharts to further clarify higher education strategic management	October 2011	All teams	Clear strategic responsibility and ownership Business plans/strategies Clear reporting lines for higher education matters: timely and consistent response on issues requiring strategic action	Strategy & Quality Director Deputy CEO	Meeting minutes distribution Strategic flowchart Derby College higher education strategies/ business plans
• follow up its review of admission procedures with a	Team Manager Higher Education to work with Assistant Principal -	Ongoing (annual basis)	Team Manager - Higher Education	100 per cent current relevant codes of	Strategy & Quality Director	Internal monitoring process for

programme of systematic review of all sections of the *Code of practice* as it applies to the College's provision (paragraph 13)	Strategy & Learner Journey to continue the systematic review of all policies and procedures on annual basis

Further review and clear definitions of policy and procedures, to ensure all policies are aligned to current strategic plans via the Derby College Strategic Matrix | | Faculty heads

Assistant Principal - Strategy

Assistant Principal - Learner Journey | practice, policy and procedure | Deputy CEO | policy and procedure |
| • monitor closely the effectiveness of its revised arrangements for engaging with students (paragraph 29) | Continue to monitor higher education agenda item via Quality Improvement Group and student feedback

Continue to monitor the effectiveness of the learner voice methodologies via higher education forum feedback | December 2011 | Team Manager - Higher Education

Faculty heads

Assistant Principal - Strategy

Assistant Principal - Learner Journey | High learner satisfaction rates | Strategy & Quality Director

Deputy CEO | Annual monitoring reports/self-assessment reports, minutes meeting, higher education forums, learner feedback |
| • review the availability of library resources and the ease of access to electronic learning resources (paragraph 33) | All teams to identify required library resources and availability and ease of access at business planning sessions, programme meetings, team meetings, learner forums and at University Partner & Awarding | December 2011 | Team Manager - Higher Education

Faculty heads

Assistant Principal - Strategy

Assistant | Learner satisfaction rates

Higher education external examiner reports

Business plans/strategies, annual | Strategy & Quality Director

Deputy CEO | Learner satisfaction rates, annual monitoring reports/self-assessment reports, minute meetings higher education forums |

	Body Approval meetings		Principal - Learner Journey Programme coordinators Team managers and tutors	monitoring reports/self-assessment reports		
• ensure that all students receive a consistent and rigorous briefing on programme handbooks and programme specifications (paragraph 35)	Review current higher education induction process to ensure all learning resources are identified and issued The induction checklist to be reviewed and improved This document to be revisited at first tutorial to ensure completion and programme specifications/handbooks issued	October 2011	Faculty heads Team Manager - Higher Education Assistant Principal - Strategy Assistant Principal - Learner Journey Programme leaders	High learner satisfaction rates High usage of virtual learning environment/ e-learning software Success rates	Strategy & Quality Director Deputy CEO	The induction checklist signed by learner and tutor Learner feedback - higher education forums Tutorial, surveys
• provide students with a more comprehensive induction to the virtual learning environment to enable them to gain maximum benefit from online resources (paragraph 36)	Review current higher education induction process to ensure all learning resources are identified and virtual learning environment information and training is completed Minimum standard templates to be	October 2011	Faculty heads Team Manager - Higher Education Assistant Principal - Strategy Assistant Principal -	High learner satisfaction rates High usage of virtual learning environment/ e-learning software Success rates	Strategy & Quality Director Deputy CEO	The induction checklist signed by learner and tutor Learner feedback - higher education forums Tutorial, surveys

Integrated quality and enhancement review

	implemented for the virtual learning environment All teams to complete mandatory higher education continuing professional development Review tutorial document and procedures		Learner Journey Programme leaders			
• take further action to embed the policy on the management of public information and raise awareness of it by all academic staff with programme management responsibility (paragraph 37).	Annual Review and monitoring of policy and documentation published by College/Marketing All information to go through public information review process in line with QAA guidelines All programme staff to complete public information training as a mandatory outcome	October 2011	Team Manager - Higher Education Faculty heads Assistant Principal - Strategy Assistant Principal -Learner Journey Assistant Principal - Marketing Programme staff	100 per cent current accurate marketing and higher education documentation CPR reports	Strategy & Quality Director Deputy CEO	University partners, students, employers and staff feedback