

Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

May 2010

Guildford College

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Preface

The mission of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications and to inform and encourage continual improvement in the management of the quality of higher education.

As part of this mission, QAA undertakes reviews of higher education provision delivered in further education colleges. This process is known as Integrated quality and enhancement review (IQER).

Purpose of IQER

Higher education programmes delivered by further education colleges (colleges) lead to awards made by higher education institutions or Edexcel. The awarding bodies retain ultimate responsibility for maintaining the academic standards of their awards and assuring the quality of the students' learning opportunities. The purpose of IQER is, therefore, to safeguard the public interest in the academic standards and quality of higher education delivered in colleges. It achieves this by providing objective and independent information about the way in which colleges discharge their responsibilities within the context of their partnership agreements with awarding bodies. IQER focuses on three core themes: academic standards, quality of learning opportunities and public information.

The IQER process

IQER is a peer review process. It is divided into two complementary stages: Developmental engagement and Summative review. In accordance with the published method, colleges with less than 100 full-time equivalent students funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) may elect not to take part in Developmental engagements, but all HEFCE-funded colleges will take part in Summative review.

Developmental engagement

Developmental engagements explore in an open and collegial way the challenges colleges face in specific areas of higher education provision. Each college's first, and often their only, Developmental engagement focuses on student assessment.

The main elements of a Developmental engagement are:

- a self-evaluation by the college
- an optional written submission by the student body
- a preparatory meeting between the college and the IQER coordinator several weeks before the Developmental engagement visit
- the Developmental engagement visit, which normally lasts two days
- the evaluation of the extent to which the college manages effectively its responsibilities for the delivery of academic standards and the quality of its higher education provision, plus the arrangements for assuring the accuracy and completeness of public information it is responsible for publishing about its higher education
- the production of a written report of the team's findings.

To promote a collegial approach, Developmental engagement teams include up to two members of staff from the further education college under review. They are known as nominees for this process.

Summative review

Summative review addresses all aspects of a college's HEFCE-funded higher education provision and provides judgements on the management and delivery of this provision against core themes one and two, and a conclusion against core theme three.

Summative review shares the main elements of Developmental engagement described above. Summative review teams, however, are composed of the IQER coordinator and QAA reviewers. They do not include nominees.

Evidence

In order to obtain evidence for the review, IQER teams carry out a number of activities, including:

- reviewing the college's self-evaluation and its internal procedures and documents
- reviewing the optional written submission from students
- asking questions of relevant staff
- talking to students about their experiences.

IQER teams' expectations of colleges are guided by a nationally agreed set of reference points, known as the Academic Infrastructure. These are published by QAA and consist of:

- *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*, 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 Guildford College carried out in May 2010

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 role and function of the Director of Higher Education has had a significant and crucial impact on the development of the College's higher education provision by developing a range of differentiated strategies and practices, leading the drive for consistency of operation across the College
- the production of a specific annual self-assessment report for the higher education provision has had a significant impact on enhancement and development
- the extensive interaction with employers enhances teaching, learning and career opportunities across a range of Foundation Degrees
- the College's ongoing consideration and strategy for the enhancement of personal development planning leads in turn to improved learning opportunities
- the information contained in the College's higher education prospectus is comprehensive and of a high standard, and there are robust editorial procedures established to ensure the accuracy, accessibility and inclusivity of the information the College publishes on its website and other promotional materials.

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:

- establish a stronger strategic and overarching steer to embed more fully the higher education strategy across the whole College, with more of an emphasis on a collegiate approach to quality assurance and enhancement
- construct formal programme specifications for all Edexcel programmes
- formalise the relationship between the careers services and the contribution made by higher education staff by mapping all career-related guidance with the *Code of practice, Section 8: Career education, information, advice and guidance*

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- provide a specific feedback return date for each assessment and consider the use of interim feedback to inform future assignments
- empower staff approaches more fully in higher education by embedding effective systems for sharing good practice into the cross-curricular management and delivery of higher education
- enhance the quality of learning opportunities by embedding, in a timely manner, more learning tools on the virtual learning environment.

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 Guildford 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, the Universities of Chichester, Greenwich and Surrey, Kingston University and London South Bank University. The review was carried out by Mr Mark Langley, Ms Angela Maguire and Mr Bob Millington (reviewers), and Dr Chris Amodio (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 in gaining 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 College was founded as a technical college in 1936 and has delivered higher education programmes since the 1950s. The College is the largest college of further and higher education in the region, serving Surrey, northern Hampshire and eastern Berkshire. It is located on three campuses. The main site is at Stoke Park, Guildford, with the other campuses located at Merrist Wood, Worplesdon, and Farnham College. Students studying higher education programmes at the College come primarily from within a 15-mile radius of Guildford, although there is a more national profile for those studying land-based subjects. A College aim is to differentiate the learning experience for students studying at higher levels, establishing distinctive higher education centres at both the Stoke Park and Merrist Wood campuses.

5 In the academic year 2009-10, approximately 10,900 students are enrolled with the College's further education provision and 588 students are following higher education programmes directly funded by HEFCE. In addition, there are 218 students following franchised higher education programmes. 259 are studying part-time, giving a total of 595 full-time equivalent higher education students. Higher education programmes are delivered across five faculties: Health, Care and Service Industries; Technology Services; Guildford Business School; Merrist Wood; and the Centre for 6th Form and Creative Studies.

Higher education provision at the College

6 The College offers the following higher education programmes in conjunction with Edexcel and five universities:

Validated by Edexcel

- HNC Construction (41.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) students)
- HND Construction (12.0 FTE)
- HND Computing (31.0 FTE)
- HND Equine Management (19.0 FTE)
- HND Media (Moving Image) (17.0 FTE)

Validated by Kingston University

- FdSc Animal Management (29.7 FTE)
- FdSc Animal Behaviour and Welfare (41.1 FTE)
- FdA Garden Design (25.0 FTE)
- FdSc Conservation Management (8.7 FTE)
- FdA Golf Management (20.0 FTE)
- BA (Hons) Garden Design* (0.0 FTE)
- BA (Hons) Golf Management* (10.0 FTE)
- BSc (Hons) Equine Management* (0.0 FTE)
- BSc (Hons) Animal Management* (2.0 FTE)
- BSc (Hons) Animal Behaviour and Welfare* (14.0 FTE)

Validated by London South Bank University

- FdA Early Childhood Studies (35.1 FTE)
- BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies* (14.5 FTE)
- BSc (Hons) Construction Management (franchised) (15.41 FTE)

Validated by the University of Chichester

- FdA Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (Final year of delivery 2009-10) (8.7 FTE)

Franchised by the University of Greenwich

- FdA Integrative Counselling (32.0 FTE)
- FdA Humanistic Counselling (43.0 FTE)
- BA (Hons) Counselling (18.0 FTE)

- Professional Graduate Certificate in Education/Professional Certificate in Education and Training (54.9 FTE)

Validated by the University of Surrey

- FdA Business and Management (16.7 FTE)
- FdA Hospitality Management (20.7 FTE)
- FdA International Travel and Tourism Operations Management (20.4 FTE)
- BA (Hons) Business Studies* (19.0 FTE)
- BA (Hons) Business Studies (25.0 FTE)

* Foundation Degree progression programme

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

7 The College currently works with Edexcel and five partner higher education institutions, although the sole programme validated by the University of Chichester is in its final year, having being discontinued by the College for strategic reasons. Guildford College is an Associate College of Kingston University, a link college of the University of Greenwich, and an Associated Institution of the University of Surrey and of London South Bank University.

8 The partner institutions strongly support the effective management of their respective programmes and provide comprehensive documentation. They have ultimate responsibility for the quality and academic standards of the relevant award. This is made evident in each respective memorandum of agreement, which also clearly indicates where specific responsibilities lie with the College or the relevant University. All of these agreements are subject to regular review. Link liaison tutors are formally designated by London South Bank University, Kingston University and the University of Chichester, while the University of Surrey appoints a moderator for each of its programmes. Relevant staff training events are organised. All programmes validated by the University of Greenwich are franchised to the College as part of a consortium of providers, and the BSc (Hons) Construction Management part-time programme is franchised to the College by London South Bank University. The College is a recognised centre for the delivery of Edexcel programmes, all funded directly by HEFCE.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

9 Since the Developmental engagement, the College has gone through a period of consolidation rather than expansion. The total number of students following programmes of study within the higher education provision has remained fairly static overall. The Foundation Degree programmes in Photography and in Small Scale Theatre Practice have been discontinued due to low recruitment. Following a faculty decision at London South Bank University to relinquish validation responsibility for Foundation and BA (Hons) degrees in Early Childhood Studies, these two programmes will be validated by the University of Greenwich from September 2010, subject to final approval. The College is currently involved in a new venture with the local Chamber of Commerce for the development of a new Foundation Degree in Leadership, Innovation and Management, to be validated by the University of Surrey.

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. At the preparatory meeting, the Coordinator explained the Summative review process to student representatives. The submission itself was constructed by a group of student programme representatives following the use of a questionnaire and a briefing by the Director of Higher Education. Programme representatives then distributed the questionnaire to all other students on their respective programmes. Completed questionnaires were subsequently discussed at feedback sessions, facilitated by the College's Widening Participation Manager to ensure impartiality. Using the feedback from questionnaires, key information was extracted under the three core themes. The student written submission was subsequently constructed and circulated to student representatives to confirm that it was a true reflection of student views. The team had the opportunity to meet a group of 17 students and discuss the higher education provision with them during the review 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?

11 The College's relationships with five universities and Edexcel have arisen through direct approaches to the College by the higher education institutions as well as links formed because of specialist provision or reputation at particular institutions, for example Kingston University and the land-based provision. No College faculty works with more than two awarding bodies. It is the College's intention to reduce the number of University partners and consolidate relationships with the other institutions.

12 The nature of the relationships with the validating bodies, as described in the relevant Memorandum of Agreement, varies, although effective systems are established in each case with identified link liaison personnel in the supporting faculty of the validating university. The relationship with the University of Surrey is more mature, with the College having delegated responsibility for the organisation of the programme boards of examiners. These are chaired by the College's Director of Higher Education, with University moderators in attendance. The University of Surrey has commended the College for its adherence to good practice.

13 Processes and procedures that ensure the higher education programmes are managed effectively on behalf of the awarding bodies are also defined in the various Memoranda of Agreement. The strategic steer within the College is provided by the Vice Principal for Curriculum and Quality, in association with the Director of Higher Education, who has a cross-college responsibility for ensuring all programme teams embed and achieve the required academic standards for the programme. The role and function of the Director of Higher Education has had a significant and crucial impact on the development of the College's higher education provision. This has led to the development of differentiated strategies and practices, leading the drive for consistency of operation across the College and enhancing the relationships with the various awarding bodies, which the team

considers to be good practice. In addition, the College produces a specific annual self-assessment report for its higher education provision. This has had a significant impact on its enhancement and development. The team also identified this as an area of good practice.

14 The College's higher education curriculum is split into five faculties, each headed by a director. Programme managers lead one or more curriculum teams, overseen by heads of learning and standards. The College's executive directorate has responsibility for higher education strategy and policy, reflecting the 2009-12 Higher Education Strategy. Programme managers, in conjunction with the Director of Higher Education, are responsible for overseeing and ensuring performance in the delivery of provision at programme level. The relevant College faculty is then responsible for the implementation of strategy in its programme area and for managing course delivery and standards. Vocational heads of learning and standards are responsible for management of curriculum delivery and curriculum quality.

15 To provide a more detailed focus on academic standards, the College established a Higher Education Quality and Academic Standards Committee in 2008. The self-evaluation indicates that this committee needs to become further embedded in the College's quality assurance process. Therefore, while the team notes the effective role and function of the Director of Higher Education, it considers it desirable for the College to establish a stronger strategic and overarching steer. This would embed ownership of the higher education strategy across the whole College and provide greater emphasis on a more collegiate approach to quality assurance and enhancement.

16 The team confirmed that the College has effective policies, practices and procedures for the maintenance of academic standards, as noted in the report of the Developmental engagement, which also identified some variability in how these standards are applied. Generic guidance on the quality assurance processes and procedures to be used is provided centrally by the College. This guidance is then customised to fit with the programme-specific academic regulations of the respective awarding body.

17 The College's higher education self-assessment report provides an effective overview clearly identifying good practice and areas for improvement. Evidence is drawn from a variety of sources, such as programme area quality reviews, reports of external examiners, performance management meetings, student focus groups and the review of the Higher Education Quality and Academic Standards Committee. It also includes a realistic action plan. As the College notes in its self-evaluation for the Summative review, all annual monitoring documentation could be more evaluative.

18 Considerable progress has been made since the Developmental engagement in articulating more clearly the interrelationships between quality procedures to develop consistency of approach and enhance standards across the provision. However, scrutiny of documentation and discussions with staff confirm that the system is still overcomplicated. The team welcomes the College's intention to clarify further its higher education quality assurance and quality enhancement processes within a higher education quality manual. This would clearly identify interactions both internally and externally, embed and enhance standards across the whole provision, and ensure comparability of higher education provision across the College.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

19 It is an aim of the College to pursue excellence in provision in partnership with its awarding bodies and QAA, promoting adherence to internal and external regulatory

developments and engagement with the FHEQ, subject benchmark statements and the *Code of practice*. All documents connected with internal and external validation processes are scrutinised by the Director of Higher Education and the awarding institution to ensure that full use is made of the elements of the Academic Infrastructure.

20 There are evident connections between learning outcomes, assessment strategy and curriculum design reflecting engagement with the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students* and *Section 7: Programme design, approval, monitoring and review*. The College is required to assure the partner university that its higher education provision complies with the expectations of the Academic Infrastructure within its annual monitoring reports. Programme specifications are available for all programmes except those validated by Edexcel. In line with the *Code of practice*, the team considers that it would be desirable for formal programme specifications to be written and published for all Edexcel programmes. Overall, there is clear evidence that the Academic Infrastructure is embedded appropriately across the higher education provision to support academic standards.

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

21 As noted above, under the relevant Memorandum of Agreement, the College is responsible for the delivery, assessment, quality control and enhancement of the programmes of study that lead to an award of each University. The College ensures comparability of standards and confirms that its levels of study are appropriate by its strong working relationships with the link tutors and feedback from the external examiners. Where appropriate, comparison with programmes at similar institutions takes place, as with those franchised by the University of Greenwich that are offered within a consortium of colleges. External examiners' reports are considered and evaluated in detail. A response and detailed action plan is then submitted to all university partners in the College's annual statements. Subsequent feedback from the partner institutions is then included in its revised action planning process. Formal examination boards are held for the Edexcel as well as for the University-validated programmes. The procedures for managing extenuating circumstances and mitigation comply with the regulations of the University and are fully documented for staff and students.

22 The annual planning process enables minor modifications, as defined by the awarding body, to be made to routes, pathways and existing programme structures at the end of and during each academic year. The College reviews current provision, taking into account student feedback, external examiner reports and learning, teaching and assessment methods, and considers proposals for changes to modules and programmes. While the partner universities have different approaches to periodic programme review, the College faculties have a clear understanding of them. There is evidence of modifications and revalidations within a variety of programmes.

23 The staff involved in programme delivery routinely monitor courses by end-of-module evaluation. The system of programme area quality reviews, including the evaluation of learning and teaching material, is the responsibility of the heads of learning and standards. The Director of Higher Education uses programme monitoring reports to produce an overall higher education action plan and report on action plans from the previous year. While these are generally effective, the College's self-evaluation acknowledges the need for these reports to be more evaluative. The College might wish to consider wider cross-college participation in this process.

24 In addition to the internal course evaluation and reporting systems, the College provides the partner universities with a detailed annual statement. Representatives of the awarding bodies met by the team commended the College on the effective working relationships established, and its commitment to the partnership arrangements.

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

25 Specific development sessions for staff engaged in higher education teaching have been established to ensure that all are familiar with the regulatory frameworks for the design and delivery of higher education programmes. A specific policy is currently under development to support tutors teaching on higher education programmes. There have been opportunities for professional engagement and interaction with staff from the validating universities, for example between Kingston University and the staff delivering the Foundation Degree in Garden Design.

26 The College supports the sharing of good practice with the partner universities and other external stakeholders such as employers. However, more could be done to embed more fully the internal dissemination of good practice to address issues and challenges identified through using the Academic Infrastructure, which could provide staff with opportunities for creative and innovative reflective practice through peer groups or action learning sets.

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 The arrangements outlined in paragraphs 11 to 18 are also relevant in supporting the College's management of the quality of learning opportunities. The College's self-evaluation refers to the strategic objectives set out in its Aiming for Excellence strategic planning document and explains that the Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality, the Director of Higher Education, the directors of faculty and the Quality Improvement Department translate these aims into key targets with measurable outcomes. The College then embeds these targets in its annual monitoring processes, which results in the higher education self-assessment report. As indicated in paragraph 21, the awarding bodies monitor this process through their link personnel and through their annual monitoring processes. Overall, the process works well.

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

28 The College uses the processes described in paragraphs 21 to 24 to ensure that it fulfils its obligations to the awarding bodies to ensure that students receive appropriate learning opportunities. The university representatives and external examiners' reports confirm that the College does this effectively. Annual monitoring reports and the higher education self-assessment report fully address learning opportunities and student opinions.

29 The College uses a range of methods to gather student opinion, including formal committee structures, faculty community meetings and college-wide events. However, students who met the team indicated that there are too many surveys. The College is aware of this and that the content of the questionnaires asks students to describe their experiences, rather than reflect on the content and impact of each module. Also, the questionnaire does not align with the National Student Survey. The College may wish to liaise with its awarding bodies and students to explore methods of gathering information that are reflective of the higher education experience, without being burdensome.

30 University partners approve the appointment of staff through the validation process. Staff CVs demonstrate that most lecturers have first degrees and/or excellent professional experience and many have higher degrees or postgraduate certificates. Student comments about teaching are positive, and staff benefit from team teaching and exchange teaching with university colleagues.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

31 As indicated in paragraphs 19 and 20, the College has embraced the Academic Infrastructure throughout its programme documentation, underpinning the quality of learning opportunities and supporting this with a range of staff development opportunities. The Developmental engagement described how the College had established processes to enable assessment of prior experiential learning in line with the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning*. The College has aligned its admissions process to the *Code of practice, Section 10: Admissions to higher education*. For example, the College has recently reviewed its induction process and devised a generic format, which all programmes develop to best suit their needs.

32 At induction, the College provides students with an outline of the support offered by its careers services. The adviser subsequently works with students towards the end of their programmes to help with CV writing. Significantly, students stated they preferred to seek careers advice from their personal tutors, a sentiment echoed by the staff. While the careers service has mapped its work against the *Code of practice, Section 8: Career education, information, advice and guidance*, the support provided by the tutors and through professionally focused modules has not been. The team considers it desirable for the College to formalise the relationship between the careers services and the contribution made by higher education staff by mapping all career-related guidance with the *Code of practice, Section 8*.

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

33 The College's curriculum strategy is effective in supporting the development of programmes that meet the demands of local employers and potential students. The Developmental engagement recommended that the College should cultivate further its interface with employers to enhance student learning opportunities. The College regards this area as one still requiring further improvement, but it has already established significant contacts. An example of this is the consultation process with Surrey Chamber of Commerce established in the development of the FdA in Business and Management. The team considers the College's increased interaction with employers as good practice that enhances teaching, learning and career opportunities across a range of Foundation Degrees.

34 The robust system of internal verification ensures the quality of all assignment briefs, and many external examiners comment on the effectiveness of this process. External examiners also comment on the College's responsiveness to points raised in previous reports. The team confirms the findings of the Developmental engagement; that there are examples of excellent, well-designed and internally verified assignment briefs, which accurately reflect the world of work and encourage students to respond effectively to the task set. External examiner reports confirm the College has sustained this approach. In line with the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*, the College manages the quality of learning opportunities for higher education programmes effectively.

35 The Developmental engagement also recommended that the College should include consistently detailed marking criteria within all assignment briefs. Scrutiny of examples from many programmes demonstrate that the College has since embedded grading criteria across its higher education provision. The assignment briefs enable students to engage effectively with assessment learning opportunities.

36 Students who met with the team during the review described the quality of feedback on their work positively. However, they echoed several comments in the student written submission concerning the need for more timely return of written feedback on their assignments. The College's Assessment Policy, which encompasses all of its provision, requires a turnaround of 10 working days, yet, to accommodate the requirements of second marking by partner institutions, some programmes require 20 working days. To enable marking commensurate with the level and content of the work, the College has decided not to apply a fixed return time for higher education programmes. However, the team considers it desirable for staff to provide a specific feedback return date for each assessment and to consider the use of interim feedback to inform future assignments.

37 The College operates the same robust lesson observation scheme for further and higher education, results of which inform the annual appraisal system. Advanced teaching practitioners and teaching and learning coaches support this process. The College has discussed aligning its lesson observations with the Higher Education Academy's *The UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education*, but has not yet found a satisfactory way to do so. The College faculties use a variety of methods to promote peer observation, but only do so within each faculty. It is apparent that the College supports good practice in teaching and learning within the spirit of the *Professional Standards Framework*, but does not share this practice in a manner that identifies cross-college issues. The College may wish to explore mechanisms to embed an effective process of peer observation across all College higher education faculties to enhance the provision.

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

38 The dedicated administrator and student services team are conversant with, and receive regular briefings on, higher education admission processes, student loans, and welfare matters. With the exception of some international students, applicants only receive an offer of a place after interview and receive a joining pack in the July preceding enrolment. In addition, some programme teams send students preparatory exercises and reading lists during the summer vacation. From the point of receiving student application forms, the College Learning Support Team highlights any requirements for individual students and this process continues throughout enrolment, induction and the first term. The College has a Widening Participation Manager who, along with the Equality and Diversity Team, has contributed positively to the sense of the College being a safe, multicultural environment. The College's recruitment process is systematic and effective, encouraging participation from applicants who have not traditionally been well represented in higher education.

39 The Developmental engagement identified the College's approach to personal development planning as good practice. The College has since invested further in personal development planning, staff training and web-based resources to support its provision, about which students who met the team commented positively. Quality processes also require staff to document how programme teams enable students to engage in personal development planning. The team considers the College's ongoing strategy for the enhancement of personal development planning to be good practice that has a positive effect on learning opportunities.

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

40 The College's staff development policy provides specific training for higher education staff by using teaching quality funds to support those who wish to study for higher degrees or other postgraduate qualifications. Staff who met the team confirmed that the College supports them in meeting the Institute for Learning's annual requirement for professional development and that they engage in a range of scholarly activities with many professional bodies. Significantly, there is no recognised process for colleagues to share knowledge and professional experiences across higher education programme areas. The team considers it desirable for the College to empower staff approaches more fully in higher education by embedding effective systems for sharing good practice into the cross-curricular management and delivery of higher education.

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?

41 The College has distinctive higher education centres on two campuses. It gathers information regarding the development and acquisition of equipment from students and staff through the annual programme monitoring process. The Director of Higher Education subsequently prioritises resource requests through the higher education self-assessment report. Staff and students cited several instances where the College had positively responded to such requests.

42 The Learning Resource Centre at the Stoke Park campus has a discrete higher education area. Lecturers provide copies of reading lists, which the librarians ensure are stocked in either hard copy or electronically. Students can access the electronic book collection from any computer through a password system. Each main higher education subject area has a link librarian to support the student experience.

43 The Developmental engagement regarded the high-quality and detailed information related to assessment, including resources required, placed on the virtual learning environment for most programmes as good practice, but identified the need to enhance e-learning. The College has invested in human resources and a significant capital project in providing further physical resources to support higher education teaching and learning. The College plans to establish a more vibrant virtual learning environment, with increased emphasis on learning tools, rather than as just a repository for information. The team considers it desirable for the College to utilise this project to enhance the quality of learning opportunities by embedding more learning tools on the virtual learning environment and to do so in a timely manner.

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?

44 The College is responsible for the publication of all information for applicants, including the higher education prospectus, programme and module outlines, admissions procedures and student support. Information is available both as hard copy and through the College's website and can be provided in other formats to meet particular additional needs. The provision is marketed separately from the further education portfolio and the language and tone of the materials is appropriate for higher education. Scrutiny of the publications showed the information to be current, accurate and consistent. In particular, the team noted the high standard of comprehensive information contained in the prospectus, which included course content and assessment methods, progression opportunities, course fees and financial advice.

45 For current students, the chief source of information produced by the College is the programme handbook. This is provided in hard copy, but is also often available online. The College has begun to address the inconsistencies noted during the Developmental engagement in some of these documents, but, because of the timing of this event at the end of the previous academic year, has had insufficient time to revise the documentation that is currently in use. A checklist of content has been circulated, together with an exemplar handbook, with a view to informing the updating of documentation for the next academic year. Given the circumstances, the team considers that this response is appropriate.

46 The College also requires students to be provided with copies of the programme specifications. The team found that these documents, or the key information they contain, were included in programme handbooks on all the university-validated programmes. However, it found that this information is missing from the handbooks on a number of the Edexcel-validated programmes. The College acknowledges that these formal specifications may not have been produced and approved for some Higher National programmes. When these have been provided, students on all the Higher National Diploma programmes will have a clearer understanding of the overall expectations of their programmes, especially in terms of the intended learning outcomes and their assessment.

47 Students can access a wide range of additional programme information and learning materials on the College's intranet, including module guides and work-based learning handbooks. Working in collaboration with University partners, the College continues to develop the quality and consistency of information these documents contain. Students who met the team were generally positive about the quality of published information they received, confirming its accuracy and value in providing them with realistic expectations about the content, delivery and assessment of their programmes. Many were particularly appreciative of the College website and intranet as a means of providing them with direct access to the information they needed. The inclusion of student biographies and comment within the prospectus and website was particularly well received. While students on the Counselling programmes appreciated the very detailed information they received, they suggested that it would be helpful to provide them with timely information about their placements to enable them to plan ahead.

**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?**

48 The College has established robust editorial procedures to ensure the accuracy, accessibility and inclusivity of the information it publishes on its website, in the higher education prospectus and other promotional materials. The team considers this, together with the high quality and comprehensive nature of the higher education prospectus, to be good practice. The marketing department is responsible for maintaining the currency of information available and updates it on an annual basis. Consistency of information is ensured through the use of a standardised template, with current information circulated to relevant programme managers to check and, where necessary, propose amendments. The documents are then signed off by each faculty director and, at this stage, the updated template is forwarded to partner universities for their approval. As a further check on accuracy, the Director of Higher Education reviews the amended templates before the formal approval meeting between the marketing team and the Vice Principal for Information and Funding, who signs off the agreed content. Before publication, financial details, such as course fees, are also checked and signed off by the Vice Principal for Finance and Resources. Additional detailed information to support applicants' choice of appropriate programmes, such as that provided for the Foundation Degrees in Humanistic and Integrative Counselling, is also checked by the Director of Higher Education on an annual basis.

49 The accuracy and completeness of information in programme handbooks and on the College intranet is the responsibility of programme teams and managers. While programme handbooks are formally scrutinised during university validation procedures, the Developmental engagement established that there was no formal mechanism for centrally checking the quality of handbooks across the College. As part of its action plan, all handbooks will in future be regularly audited by the Academic Standards and Quality Committee. In view of the ongoing inconsistencies noted in paragraph 45, the College could usefully review the robustness of its procedures to ensure that programme handbooks now being produced contain clear, accurate and sufficient information about the course and the College policies and procedures supporting it.

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

50 The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in May 2009. The review team included two institutional nominees. The lines of enquiry agreed with the College were as follows:

Line of enquiry 1: the processes and procedures by which Guildford College assures itself that the assessment strategy and design of assessments for each awarding body reflect appropriate academic standards, including effective and efficient use of moderation, verification and external examining.

Line of enquiry 2: the extent to which Guildford College involves employers in curriculum design, development, assessment practice and review to ensure vocationally relevant programmes of study and a range of learning opportunities.

Line of enquiry 3: an evaluation of how well published data informs students about the demands and expectations of assessment at higher education levels and how effective structured feedback and engagement with professional development planning is in promoting opportunities for learning to enable successful progression and achievement.

51 The scope of the Developmental engagement encompassed HNC/D programmes (Edexcel), 14 Foundation Degrees (five with Kingston University, two with London South Bank University, one with the University of Chichester, two with the University of Greenwich, and four with the University of Surrey), the Professional Graduate Certificate in Education and the Professional Certificate in Education (University of Greenwich), seven Foundation Degree progression programmes, and five honours degrees (one validated by Kingston University, two by London South Bank University, one by the University of Greenwich and one by the University of Surrey).

52 The Developmental engagement identified several elements of good practice. The information regarding assessment provided in the College's prospectus and on its website was found to be consistently accurate and of a high standard, preparing students well for entry into higher education. Assignment briefs reflecting the world of work were well designed and internally verified, with subsequent feedback to students on their work being detailed and of high quality, effectively supporting their learning. The College provides wide-ranging opportunities for vocationally related work experience and places strong emphasis on personal development planning. Finally, the College has an effective process for collecting students' views to enhance learning opportunities and develop academic quality, in which the students actively participate.

53 The College was advised to revise the learning outcomes of the professional development in the workplace modules to reflect more closely the National Occupational Standards, thus ensuring work-skill competency. It was also advised to review current practice with a view to constructing a work-based learning/placement policy with particular reference to the role of employers and other agencies. It was considered desirable for the College to indicate more clearly the interrelationships between it and relevant stakeholders in quality assurance and enhancement processes, and to develop further the interface between employers and the College. It was also considered desirable for the College to clarify its moderation and second marking processes and include consistently detailed marking criteria within all assignment briefs. Finally, it was deemed desirable for the College to review the credit value and assessment methodology for the modules concerned with professional development in the workplace to ensure consistency for Foundation Degree students, and to monitor centrally the nature and quality of information provided to stakeholders to ensure its standard, quality and consistency based on best practice.

D Foundation Degrees

54 Guildford College offers Foundation Degrees in Animal Management, Animal Behaviour and Welfare, Garden Design, Conservation Management, and Golf Management (Kingston University); Early Childhood Studies (London South Bank University); Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (University of Chichester); Integrative Counselling, Humanistic Counselling (University of Greenwich); Business and Management, Hospitality Management, International Travel and Tourism Operations Management (University of Surrey). The College has made a strategic decision to discontinue the Foundation Degree in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector. Following a faculty decision at London South Bank University to relinquish validation responsibility for the Foundation Degree in Early Childhood Studies, it will be validated from September 2010 by the University of

Greenwich, subject to final approval. No new Foundation Degrees have been validated since the Developmental engagement in 2009. A new programme in Business and Management is being validated within this academic year. The College has successfully initiated an innovative curriculum development for a new Foundation Degree in Leadership, Innovation and Management, in partnership with Foundation Degree Forward, the British Chamber of Commerce, the Surrey Chamber of Commerce and local employers. This programme is presently subject to validation by the University of Surrey.

55 The team found that the College has integrated academic studies effectively with work-based learning, particular examples being evident in the Foundation Degrees in Animal Management, Golf Management, and Counselling. It also noted that the Foundation Degree programmes provide learners with opportunities to apply and develop work-related knowledge and skills in the workplace. The College has used the approved processes for the accreditation of prior learning to reflect this. National Occupational Standards, professional bodies and employers' views are used to inform curriculum design. This is particularly evident in the areas of business and management and hospitality and tourism, which have been mapped to the National Occupational Standards.

56 The Foundation Degree provision provides effective learning opportunities for students, with generally good progression and retention. It is fit for purpose and meets the QAA defining characteristics of Foundation Degrees. In the course of the review, the team identified areas of good practice which apply to the Foundation Degree provision, and made some desirable recommendations. These are identified in Section E. All relate to the Foundation Degree provision except for the one referred to in paragraphs 20 and 46.

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

57 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Guildford 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, Kingston University, London South Bank University and the Universities of Chichester, Greenwich and Surrey.

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

- the role and function of the Director of Higher Education has had a significant and crucial impact on the development of the College's higher education provision by developing a range of differentiated strategies and practices, leading the drive for consistency of operation across the College (paragraph 13)
- the production of a specific annual self-assessment report for the higher education provision has had a significant impact on enhancement and development (paragraphs 13, 17)
- the extensive interaction with employers enhances teaching, learning and career opportunities across a range of Foundation Degrees (paragraph 33)
- the College's ongoing consideration and strategy for the enhancement of personal development planning leads in turn to improved learning opportunities (paragraph 39)
- the information contained in the College's higher education prospectus is comprehensive and of a high standard, and there are robust editorial procedures established to ensure the accuracy, accessibility and inclusivity of the information the College publishes on its website and other promotional materials (paragraphs 44, 48).

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

60 The team agreed the following areas where it would be **desirable** for the College to take action:

- establish a stronger strategic and overarching steer to embed more fully the higher education strategy across the whole College, with more of an emphasis on a collegiate approach to quality assurance and enhancement (paragraph 15)
- construct formal programme specifications for all Edexcel programmes (paragraphs 20, 46)
- formalise the relationship between the careers services and the contribution made by higher education staff by mapping all career-related guidance with the *Code of practice, Section 8* (paragraph 32)
- provide a specific feedback return date for each assessment and consider the use of interim feedback to inform future assignments (paragraph 36)
- empower staff approaches more fully in higher education by embedding effective systems for sharing good practice into the cross-curricular management and delivery of higher education (paragraphs 26, 40)
- enhance the quality of learning opportunities by embedding, in a timely manner, more learning tools on the virtual learning environment (paragraph 43).

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/or completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Guildford College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2010						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the role and function of the Director of Higher Education has had a significant and crucial impact on the development of the College's higher education provision by developing a range of differentiated strategies and practices, leading the drive for consistency of operation across the College (paragraph 13) the production of a specific annual self-assessment report for the higher education provision has had a significant impact on 	<p>Continue with the role and function of the Director of Higher Education (HE). A revised College structure will facilitate consistency of operation across faculties.</p> <p>Continue to develop the format for the report to elicit evaluative commentary</p>	Ongoing	Executive Team Director of HE	Continued development of a range of differentiated strategies and practices with evidence of embedding HE processes within Guildford College quality assurance systems and processes. More consistent high-quality provision across the College through the identification	Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality/ Director of Achievement, Standards and Curriculum Reform Director of Achievement, Standards and Curriculum Reform	Achievement of Performance Management Objectives related to HE quality assurance Annual report shared at the cross-college HE Quality and Academic Standards

Guildford College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2010						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
enhancement and development (paragraphs 13, 17)	and ensure capture of qualitative and quantitative data and to reduce bureaucracy by minimising duplication of information required by awarding bodies.			and sharing of good practice.		Committee.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the extensive interaction with employers enhances teaching, learning and career opportunities across a range of Foundation Degrees (paragraph 33) 	Embed the newly created work-based learning (WBL) policy and use of Employer Handbook to enhance the quality of employer interaction with the aim of better work-based learning for the student	Ongoing	Director of HE Programme teams Placement office	Improved quality of work-based learning experience and progression of students into careers vocationally related to their Foundation Degree programme.	Director of Achievement, Standards and Curriculum Reform	Student and employer feedback captured through HE monitoring and evaluation processes.

Guildford College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2010						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the College's ongoing consideration and enhancement of personal development planning leads in turn to improved learning opportunities (paragraph 39) 	<p>Quality Assurance Handbook identifies the strategy for engagement with personal development planning and range of approaches to provide examples of best practice for collegiate sharing.</p>	July 2011	Director of HE Programme teams	Students feel more empowered in their learning and, using the developing skills of reflection, improve their level of academic achievement.	Director of Achievement, Standards and Curriculum Reform	<p>Student feedback.</p> <p>HE achievement data.</p> <p>Destination survey.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the information contained in the College's higher education prospectus is comprehensive and of a high standard, and there are robust editorial procedures established to ensure the accuracy, accessibility and inclusivity of the information the College publishes on its website and other promotional materials (paragraphs 44, 48). 	<p>Continue with the robust procedures already established.</p>	Reviewed annually	<p>Director of HE</p> <p>Directors of faculty</p> <p>Director of Achievement Standards and Curriculum Reform</p> <p>Marketing Department</p>	Continued accuracy, accessibility and inclusivity of published information.	Vice Principal Information and Funding	<p>Applicant and student feedback.</p> <p>Employer feedback.</p>

Guildford College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2010						
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<p>The team agreed the following areas where it would be desired to take action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establish a stronger strategic and overarching steer to embed more fully the higher education strategy across the whole College, with more of an emphasis on a collegiate approach to quality assurance and enhancement (paragraph 15) 	<p>New Quality Assurance Handbook for Higher Education to be devised identifying commonality of approaches and providing a definitive steer; regular higher education Programme Manager and heads of learning & standards meetings for dissemination. HE Quality and Academic Standards</p>	<p>July 2011</p>	<p>Director of Higher Education</p>	<p>The distinctive ethos of teaching and learning in higher education is embedded in the processes and quality assurance practices of the College and harmonised across faculties.</p>	<p>Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality</p>	<p>All staff delivering at higher education level are confident in and adhere to the quality assurance and enhancement processes established by the College in accordance with the Academic Infrastructure for HE. Staff feedback.</p>

Guildford College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2010						
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> construct formal programme specifications for all Edexcel programmes (paragraphs 20, 46) 	<p>Committee to report regularly to the Curriculum and Standards subcommittee of the Corporation.</p> <p>Instruct relevant programme managers to include a specific programme specification in their handbooks for the start of 2010-2011.</p>	September 2010	<p>Director of Higher Education</p> <p>Programme managers</p>	All Edexcel higher education programme managers devise a programme specification that is visible in the relevant Programme Handbook and on the College virtual learning environment.	Director of Achievement, Standards and Curriculum Reform	Feedback from students on Edexcel Higher-level programmes affirms they have clearly defined expectations about the structure, teaching and learning and academic outcomes of their programme.

Guildford College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2010						
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> formalise the relationship between the careers services and the contribution made by higher education staff by mapping all career-related guidance with the <i>Code of practice, Section 8</i> (paragraph 32) 	<p>All programme managers to map the careers guidance activities undertaken by their team with the <i>Code of practice, Section 8: Career education, information, advice and guidance</i> identifying links with the careers service at the College.</p>	July 2011	<p>Programme managers Professional development tutors Head of Service and Standards Information, Advice and Careers</p>	<p>The establishment of an integrated, coherent and internal collaboration on career education, information and advice and guidance between programme teams and the careers team is in evidence.</p>	Director of Achievements, Standards and Curriculum Reform	<p>Student feedback that expectations are met in respect of their preparedness for their future career, and to produce graduates equipped with skills to meet the fluctuating demands of the employment market of today and tomorrow.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide a specific feedback return date for each assessment and consider the use of interim feedback to inform future assignments (paragraph 36) 	<p>Directive from Director of HE to all HE programme areas. Incorporate into the planned Quality Assurance Handbook for Higher Education.</p>	September 2010	<p>Director of Higher Education Programme teams</p>	<p>Students will have interim feedback on assessments in a timely manner in order to benefit from assessment feedback in advance of next due assessment.</p>	Director of Achievements, Standards and Curriculum Reform	<p>Student feedback.</p>

Guildford College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2010						
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> empower staff approaches more fully in higher education by embedding effective systems for sharing good practice into the cross-curricular management and delivery of higher education (paragraphs 26, 40) 	<p>Programme Manager meetings re-established.</p> <p>HE continuing professional development days contain a 'sharing good practice' session.</p> <p>HE online forum developed.</p>	September 2010	<p>Director of Higher Education</p> <p>Continuing Professional Development Manager</p> <p>Web Services Manager</p>	<p>More collegiate approach to the delivery of higher education</p>	<p>Director of Achievements, Standards and Curriculum Reform</p>	<p>External examiner feedback.</p> <p>Internal quality and audit processes.</p> <p>External scrutiny.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> enhance the quality of learning opportunities by embedding, in a timely manner, more learning tools on the virtual learning environment (paragraph 43). 	<p>Planned HE pilot group identified to begin implementing e-learning strategy.</p> <p>Trained staff to cascade good practice to colleagues.</p>	July 2012	<p>Director of Higher Education</p> <p>Continuing Professional Development Manager</p> <p>Web Services Manager</p>	<p>Increased emphasis on e-learning tools on the virtual learning environment rather than using it as an information repository.</p>	<p>Director of Achievements, Standards and Curriculum Reform</p>	<p>Student feedback.</p>

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