



Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

South Essex College of Further and Higher Education

October 2011

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Preface

The mission of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications and to inform and encourage continual improvement in the management of the quality of higher education. As part of this mission, QAA undertakes reviews of higher education provision delivered in further education colleges. This process is known as Integrated quality and enhancement review (IQER).

Purpose of IQER

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

The IQER process

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

Developmental engagement

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

The main elements of a Developmental engagement are:

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

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

Summative review

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

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

Evidence

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

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

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

- *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)*, which includes descriptions of different higher education qualifications
- the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*
- subject benchmark statements, which describe the characteristics of degrees in different subjects
- guidelines for preparing programme specifications, which are descriptions of what is on offer to students in individual programmes of study
- award benchmark statements which describe the generic characteristics of an award, for example Foundation Degrees.

In addition, Developmental engagement teams gather evidence by focusing on particular aspects of the theme under review. These are known as 'lines of enquiry'.

Outcomes of IQER

Each Developmental engagement and Summative review results in a written report:

- Developmental engagement reports set out good practice and recommendations and implications for the college and its awarding bodies, but do not contain judgements. Recommendations will be at one of three levels - **essential**, **advisable** and **desirable**. To promote an open and collegial approach to Developmental engagements, the reports are not published.
- Summative review reports identify good practice and contain judgements about whether the college is discharging its responsibilities effectively against core themes one and two above. The judgements are **confidence**, **limited confidence** or **no confidence**. There is no judgement for the third core theme, instead the report will provide evaluation and a conclusion. Summative review reports are published. Differentiated judgements can be made where a team judges a college's

management of the standards and/or quality of the awards made by one awarding body to be different from those made by another.

Colleges are required to develop an action plan to address any recommendations arising from IQER. Progress against these action plans is monitored by QAA in conjunction with HEFCE and/or the college's awarding body/ies as appropriate. The college's action plan in response to the conclusions of the Summative review will be published as part of the report.

Executive summary

The Summative review of South Essex College of Further and Higher Education carried out in October 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:

- a variety of methods of engagement with the Academic Infrastructure embeds it in College policies, procedures and practice
- extensive staff development opportunities contribute to the systematic professional development of staff and support academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities
- extensive employer engagement to support teaching, learning and assessment enhances student employability skills and career opportunities
- the higher education staff and student handbooks and dedicated higher education intranet provide comprehensive higher education information and support a clear higher education identity for staff and students.

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 a consistent level of detailed assessment feedback which supports improvement.

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

- review the Teaching and Learning Strategy to support a clear focus for higher education teaching and learning
- continue to review its management and committee structure to ensure effective oversight of the accuracy and completeness of public information.

A Introduction and context

1 This report presents the findings of the Summative review of higher education funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) conducted at South Essex College of Further and Higher Education (the College). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the College discharges its responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes which the College delivers on behalf of the University of East London and the University of Essex. The review was carried out by Mr Fazal Dad, Ms Mary Blauciak, Mr Gary Hargreaves (reviewers) and Mrs Monica Owen (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 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 engagements in assessment and in work-based and work-related learning. A summary of findings from these Developmental engagements is provided in section C of this report. The review also considered the College's use of the Academic Infrastructure, developed by QAA on behalf of higher education providers, with reference to the *Code of practice 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 awards, section D of this report summarises details of the Foundation Degree programmes delivered at the College.

4 South Essex College of Further and Higher Education is a large, general further education college which was formed on 1 January 2010 following the merger of South East Essex College and Thurrock and Basildon College. In 2008 a Developmental engagement in assessment was undertaken at South East Essex College. No Developmental engagement took place at Thurrock and Basildon College prior to the merger. The Developmental engagement in work-based and work-related learning was undertaken in 2010 after the merger. The College operates on three main campuses in Basildon, Southend and Thurrock. In addition, there are specialist satellite centres such as the Thurrock Learning Campus in the centre of Grays. The College has a catchment area that extends to east London, north Kent and mid-Essex. There are pockets of deprivation in the catchment area and unemployment is slightly higher than the Essex and UK averages. The College's Vision is 'to better serve the learning needs of young people, adults, employers and communities of South Essex and to become an outstanding college offering outstanding skills, education and careers'.

5 The College has approximately 6,296 full-time and 4,000 part-time students, of whom 1,060 (997.5 full-time equivalent students) are enrolled on its higher education programmes. The 951 full-time and 109 part-time higher education students are taught by 77 full-time and 15 part-time staff. The College's higher education provision is taught across four faculties: Applied Science and Technology; Enterprise and Lifestyle Services; Health Care and Public Services; Media and the Creative Arts and the Teacher Teaching and Learning Development Team. The majority of the programmes are delivered at the Southend campus, with the Foundation Degrees in Construction Management, Engineering, Network

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Technology, Playwork and Therapeutic Playwork, Textiles and Fashion, and the BA (Hons) Playwork and Youth Studies delivered at Thurrock.

6 The College enrolls students on the following programmes listed under their awarding bodies, with the full-time equivalent student numbers in brackets:

University of East London

- BA (Hons) Playwork and Youth Studies (Years 2 and 3 only) (12)
- FdA Playwork and Therapeutic Playwork (Year 2 only) (3)
- FdA Textiles and Fashion (29)

University of Essex

- BA (Hons) Business Studies (74.5)
- Cert HE Business Studies (9)
- BSc (Hons) Computer Games Design (25)
- BSc (Hons) Computing (Year 3 only) (1)
- BA (Hons) Digital Animation (35)
- BA (Hons) Early Years Education (97)
- BA (Hons) Fashion Communication and Marketing (Year 3 only) (12)
- BA (Hons) Fashion Design (Years 2 and 3 only) (24)
- BA (Hons) Fine Art (50)
- BA (Hons) Graphic Design (48)
- Cert HE Graphic Design (3)
- BA (Hons) Interior Design (29)
- Cert HE Interior Design (3)
- BA (Hons) Journalism (Year 3 only) (7)
- BA (Hons) Music Performance, Production and Composition (Year 2 only) (6)
- BA (Hons) Music Production (30)
- BSc (Hons) Network Technology (Year 3 only) (10.5)
- BA (Hons) Photography (Year 3 only) (6)
- BSc (Hons) Social Studies (28)
- BA (Hons) Social Work (92)
- BSc (Hons) Sports Studies (92)
- Cert HE Sports Studies (11)
- BA (Hons) Special Education Studies (59)
- BA (Hons) Television Production and Screen Media (52)
- FdSc Construction Management (6.5)
- FdA Counselling (34)
- FdSc Engineering (19.5)
- FdA Fashion, Communication and Marketing (26)
- FdSc Network Technology (21)
- FdSc Personal Fitness Training (14)
- Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (Learning and Skills Sector) (21.5)
- Certificate in Education (Learning and Skills Sector) (7)

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

7 A collaborative Joint Venture Agreement with the University of Essex was agreed in 2001 and reviewed in 2006 to incorporate the development of an integrated further and higher education campus in the centre of Southend and developments in the Thames

Gateway Eastern Region. The programmes are developed by the staff of the College to meet local and regional needs. The College also has a collaborative agreement with the University of East London to deliver programmes at the Thurrock Campus. While the partnership agreements differ in detail, the University of Essex and the University of East London (the universities) retain ultimate responsibility for academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. This responsibility is met through validations, moderation, external examiners, examination boards, awarding qualifications and their own annual monitoring. The College has operational responsibility for the delivery of the programmes, including the marking of assessment, and the welfare and support of the students.

8 The merger has entailed major changes in the organisation and management structure since 2010, with further rationalisation in its structure during 2011-12 as a result of funding changes. As part of its Higher Education Strategy, the College has replaced its Edexcel Higher National programmes with Foundation Degrees validated by the University of Essex. The College has also taken the strategic decision to phase out the playwork programmes validated by the University of East London.

9 A new Higher Education Centre was established at the Southend Campus in January 2011 and classes previously delivered at a satellite centre were moved there. An area has been allocated for the Higher Education Student Council in order to raise its profile. The College, in partnership with the University of Essex and Southend Council, is planning a new building for 2013 which will include a shared library and dedicated Higher Education Centre. By 2013 the College also expects to have a new campus in the centre of Grays which will bring together the provision at the Thurrock Campus and Thurrock Learning Centre and provide capacity for expansion.

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 and a submission was made. The Higher Education Student Council devised questions which student programme representatives used to gather the students' views. The responses were discussed by the programme representatives at a focus group meeting or emailed to the Senior Student Representative, Higher Education, who collated the submission. This submission is a compilation of the questionnaire responses, focus group sessions, student council meetings, and data from student satisfaction surveys, and includes the views of 603 students. The team considered the submission helpful in highlighting issues and good practice for further enquiry. The team also met students 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?

11 The College has an effective management structure in place for the strategic development and oversight of higher education. The Acting Principal has overall responsibility for the quality of learning opportunities and academic standards together with the Vice Principal Curriculum. The Vice Principal manages the curriculum areas led by

heads of faculties and the Head of Teaching and Learning Development. Academy managers, who report to the heads of faculty, provide operational management support and manage the programme leaders and teams. In addition, the Head of Higher Education and Access (Curriculum) and the Head of Higher Education (Quality) provide cross-college support and coordination for all the curriculum areas on development and quality matters and advice to the Senior Leadership Team.

12 There are strong working relationships between the College and the universities. The Senior Leadership Team and heads of faculty meet with university staff to discuss curriculum developments, student recruitment, quality issues and staffing. College staff attend the University of Essex's Partnership Management Board and its subgroup, the Curriculum and Quality Group, which together oversee the quality and standards of the University's collaborative partnerships. There are also informal programme team links and staff development across the partnership. The University of East London maintains its oversight of the programmes through programme link tutors who work closely with and support the College programme leaders and report to the relevant school and quality committees of the University. The partnerships with the universities are strengths of the provision.

13 There is an integrated higher and further education college committee structure. The Senior Leadership Team Strategy Curriculum and Quality Group meets weekly to ensure effective and efficient strategic planning and prioritisation of the curriculum. The Curriculum and Quality Management Group, which also includes academy and other managers, including the heads of higher education and access, meets fortnightly to disseminate, implement and monitor the strategic priorities. Academic Board and the Further Education Corporation receive regular reports from these meetings and relevant university committees.

14 In addition, there are four Higher Education Review meetings each year chaired by the Acting Principal and attended by the Vice Principal Curriculum, heads of faculty or the Head of Teaching and Learning Development, and the heads of higher education and access. These evaluate the performance of each higher education programme and monitor quality improvement action plans. The meetings discuss issues arising from annual monitoring reports, external examiner reports, outcomes from examinations boards, external audits, teaching observations and student feedback. Where faculties are found to be in need of additional support, monthly quality improvement process meetings monitor progress. Higher education is successfully considered and embedded within the management and committee structure to ensure the maintenance of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

15 The universities' procedures and documentation, such as programme specifications, are set within the context of the Academic Infrastructure. College staff confirmed that they are involved in programme approval and validation processes, in line with the *Code of practice, Section 7: Programme design, approval, monitoring and review*. The definitive validation documents show the participation of both College staff and employers. They clearly indicate, where appropriate, alignment with subject benchmark statements, the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark* and *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)*.

16 The University of Essex annual monitoring reports consider updates to the Academic Infrastructure and actions taken are formally reported in the College's Institutional Annual Monitoring Report to the University. All the *Code of practice* is mapped to College policies and procedures and new sections are updated, for example, the *Code of practice*,

Section 9: Work-based and placement learning. The Developmental engagement in work-based and work-related learning regarded the annual monitoring consideration of the Academic Infrastructure as good practice. The Developmental engagement action plan shows continuing reflection and action to embed the Academic Infrastructure in College policies and curriculum.

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?

17 Robust systems enable the College to assure itself that standards of provision meet the universities' requirements. There is a clear College framework and handbook for annual monitoring and review. Programme leaders produce the University of Essex programme annual monitoring reports or the University of East London review and enhancement process reports. The programme link tutors support the latter's programme leaders in this process. All reports include evaluation of performance data, response to the external examiner's report and student and employer feedback. Academy managers produce a Programme Area Monitoring Report which feeds into an Institutional Annual Monitoring Report for the University of Essex. All the reports have accompanying action plans which are monitored at the College by the Higher Education Review Meetings and the Curriculum and Quality Management Group. The universities undertake periodic review of the programmes and since the merger have undertaken successful reviews of the College partnership. The review and monitoring processes enable effective College quality assurance and improvement of the provision.

18 There are comprehensively documented College quality assurance policies and procedures and the College complies with the relevant regulations, policies and procedures of the universities, including assessment. External examiners are appointed by the universities and the Head of Higher Education and Access (Quality) ensures all external examiners' reports are robustly monitored and actioned. The large majority of external examiners' reports are very positive, commenting favourably on the standards of students' achievement. The reports confirm that programme teams carry out assessment according to the universities' academic regulations and that the academic standards are appropriate and comparable with similar provision elsewhere.

19 There has been progress since the Developmental engagement in assessment in developing more consistent practice in assessment, including the clarity of assessment criteria and timeliness of feedback. However, the student written submission indicated low levels of satisfaction with assessment feedback in helping improvement. This was supported by the College Higher Education Student Survey and the National Student Survey with satisfaction levels below the College's 75 per cent target student satisfaction level. While some students commented that they do receive detailed written feedback or feedback in tutorials, many indicated that feedback on their assessments is often vague and unclear and does not help them understand what is required to improve their performance. It is advisable that the College ensures a consistent level of detailed assessment feedback which supports improvement.

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

20 The draft Staff Development Strategy 2011-12 outlines the key objectives for training and development. Staff development needs are identified through staff appraisal, teaching observations and annual monitoring. The Head of Teaching and Learning Development is responsible for staff development and the advanced practitioners. Academic

areas allocate a common one and a half hours of staff time per week for continuing professional development and there are specific higher education staff development days.

21 In addition to five days of self-directed scholarly activity, staff can apply for five additional days, including attending conferences or courses. Scholarly Activity Guidelines include academic research, professional and industrial updating and new course or higher education development. Staff undertake master's degrees and many staff are practitioners. There are a number of cross-partner subject groups' meetings, including a recent initial teacher training conference. Extensive staff development opportunities support academic standards.

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?

22 Line management responsibilities and reporting arrangements through the College committee structure for the quality of learning opportunities are detailed in paragraphs 11 to 14. The Vice Principal Learner Support and Community Links is responsible for Learner Services which include career guidance, financial and learner support and obtaining student feedback. Admissions, information technology, including the development of the virtual learning environment, and the libraries are the responsibility of the Executive Director Planning and Resources, who also reports directly to the Acting Principal. The Vice Principal Business Development is responsible for the Marketing Team. The vice principals and executive directors work closely together to deliver high quality learning opportunities.

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

23 The College is responsible for the recruitment of students, the general welfare and discipline of the students, and the delivery and support of the curriculum. This includes the provision of library services, computing facilities and welfare services. The process by which the College assures itself that it is fulfilling its obligations to the universities is detailed in paragraphs 17 to 19. Termly programme boards provide a focus for discussions between staff and student representatives on all areas relating to the quality of the student learning experience. Programme boards also meet without students.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

24 The College's engagement with the Academic Infrastructure is described in paragraphs 15 and 16. In addition, staff are informed about the Academic Infrastructure through higher education staff development days, the Higher Education Staff Forum, the College intranet and Higher Education Staff Handbook. All staff are briefed by the heads of higher education and access. Learner Services staff have consulted widely in reviewing College policies and procedures in the light of the updated *Code of practice, Section 8: Career education, information, advice and guidance* and *Section 3: Disabled students* and

produced action plans to ensure alignment. All staff are aware of the Academic Infrastructure. A variety of methods of engagement with the Academic Infrastructure embeds it in College policies, procedures and practice. This is good practice.

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

25 There is an overarching Teaching and Learning Strategy for both further and higher education, which is updated annually. The key principles relate to providing the highest quality learning experiences supported by staff development. While the Strategy identifies critical success factors to achieve an outstanding teaching and learning experience, there is no reference to how these may differ between higher and further education. For example, this includes the development of the higher level skills of critical and reflective thinking. It is desirable that the College reviews the Teaching and Learning Strategy to support a clear focus for higher education teaching and learning.

26 There are clear guidelines and protocols for the observation of teaching and learning based upon the Ofsted framework. The Higher Education Review meetings consider lesson observation reports and the grades are analysed at College level. There is a procedure for annual staff appraisal, which is linked to job descriptions, teaching observations and annual monitoring to identify areas for staff development. The Higher Education Advanced Practitioner works across programmes to improve the quality of teaching and learning when specific issues are identified.

27 The wide range of teaching, learning and assessment practice supports the development of skills and knowledge and is enhanced by engagement with employers and work-based and work-related learning. This was confirmed by the Developmental engagement and staff and students provided examples of live briefs, community projects and the provision of industry-recognised qualifications, for example on the network technology and media programmes. The FdA Textiles and Fashion students have worked extensively with the creative team of the Royal Opera House. The team concludes that the extensive employer engagement to support teaching, learning and assessment enhances student employability skills and career opportunities and is good practice.

28 The College involves students in the evaluation of their learning experience in a number of ways, including module evaluations and College and national surveys. Student representatives attend periodic reviews and programme board meetings and student feedback informs annual monitoring and action plans. The College consults students about curriculum changes. Students gave examples of where their feedback to tutors had resulted in changes, such as more guest lecturers. Actions as a result of feedback the previous year are recorded in the programme handbooks. Students elect representatives to join the Higher Education Student Council, which is chaired by the Senior Student Representative Higher Education and provides opportunities termly to discuss the student experience with senior College staff. The College has a formal complaints and compliments procedure, which students are aware of, but they confirmed that issues are usually resolved by talking to their tutors. The College has effective systems to obtain student feedback.

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

29 Prospective students are invited to attend open evenings and information events. A high proportion of both full and part-time students reflect the College's widening participation strategy to attract students from non-traditional backgrounds. The College operates an effective process for applicants with limited formal qualifications through the

mature entry route. There is a Higher Education Admissions Policy and procedures are mapped to the *Code of practice, Section 10: Admissions to higher education*.

30 All students receive a College induction and comprehensive student handbooks. All students have email accounts. The virtual learning environment is used for teaching materials and assessment and some programmes use an e-portfolio, developed by the sports programme team, for students to support their progress. The portfolio provides online storage of work, access to feedback and opportunities to reflect on practice. This is currently being rolled out to all first-year students but is not yet fully operational. Small group sizes, high contact hours and tutorials effectively support students. The accessibility of staff and the supportive environment have been commended at institutional and periodic reviews. Students confirmed that they are very well supported and have good access to tutors.

31 The Learner Services team hold Matrix Accreditation and offer a wide range of advice and guidance to students, for example on finance, accommodation, counselling, careers and study skills. Students with disabilities are well supported. The University of Essex Institutional Review confirmed the thorough coverage of students' support services across the College's three campuses. Student support is a strength of the provision.

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

32 Arrangements for staff development are detailed in paragraphs 20 and 21. The Higher Education Advanced Practitioner supports the teaching teams and the Teaching and Learning Development Team provides an annual programme of generic training. Examples include undertaking staff appraisal, introduction to the intranet and virtual learning environment. New staff attend a College induction. Staff new to teaching are required to enrol on a teacher training programme and are allocated a mentor.

33 The Higher Education Staff Forum provides an effective mechanism to disseminate good practice. Meetings take place at both the Southend and Thurrock campuses and are recorded in podcast for dissemination. Recent topics for discussion include effective programme leaders' practice, marketing higher education and the use of the e-portfolio. The University of Essex runs a series of good practice events for staff at partner colleges, such as best practice in employability and feedback from industry and technology-enhanced learning. Extensive staff development opportunities contribute to the systematic professional development of staff and support academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. This is good practice.

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?

34 Heads of faculty are responsible for resourcing the programmes through the College budgetary process and programme teams are required to show that the resources are adequate at the time of programme approval. Ongoing resource needs are identified through programme boards and annual monitoring, as well as through periodic and other external reviews. The majority of teaching spaces and facilities, such as printing, are shared with further education students which, the College recognises, impacts upon the higher education student experience. The students identified a number of areas for resource improvements, but also welcomed the new high specification computing facilities and specialist equipment, improved teaching rooms and the positive impact of the Higher Education Centre, with dedicated teaching spaces and computing suite.

35 There is a rolling programme for capital renewal. All the campuses have wireless networks and libraries with specialist software and a range of materials. There is a higher education study area in the Southend campus library and an effective daily inter-library loan service with the University of Essex Colchester campus. Inter-library loan facilities also exist at the Thurrock Campus and the University of East London students also use resources at the University.

36 All the teaching staff are approved by their respective universities, and are well qualified, many with professional experience and expertise. Additional weighting is given to higher education teaching hours. The College provides laptops to all the teaching staff. Overall, the College ensures the sufficiency and accessibility of 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?

37 The responsibilities of the College are clearly laid out in the awarding bodies' agreements. The College is responsible for marketing and publicity for the programmes in accordance with the universities' publicity protocols. The College produces the prospectus, website information, programme leaflets and general information for employers and students. All promotional material is submitted to the universities for approval. The Marketing Team confirmed that there is effective liaison with the universities to obtain a quick response and through the University of Essex Marketing Practitioners' Forum. The Team produces the dedicated higher education student prospectus, in hard copy and on the website, and this is supplemented by course information sheets and detailed UCAS entry profiles.

38 The College produces a Higher Education Student Handbook annually which is a comprehensive guide for students on policies and procedures, and is published on the intranet. Students also receive detailed programme handbooks and module guides. For University of Essex students these are based on a template produced by the Head of Higher Education and Access (Quality). The University of East London provides the template and programme materials to be included and this is combined with local information by the programme team before final approval by the programme link tutors. Students and employers are provided with handbooks and guides based on College templates for work-place learning. The students confirmed that they received comprehensive information about their programmes.

39 The College produces a Higher Education Staff Handbook, which is published on the intranet and provides an effective guide to the universities' policies and procedures and College information relevant to higher education. Staff confirmed this was a useful source of information. The College intranet provides dedicated sections for higher education staff and students, and these hold the definitive versions of all policies, procedures and programme documents. The higher education staff and student handbooks and dedicated higher education intranet provide comprehensive higher education information and support a clear higher education identity for staff and students. This is good practice.

**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?**

40 The faculty heads and the Head of Teaching and Learning Development sign off programme information checked by the academy managers. Academy managers approve the programme handbooks and the Head of Quality and Access (Quality) approves the staff and student higher education handbooks. The team found a few handbooks and some online materials not updated from the previous year. However, staff and students confirmed that they had received up-to-date and accurate programme handbooks in a variety of ways, online, hard copy or on a memory device.

41 The College prospectus goes through an extensive audit and draft process that begins at programme team level. Information is sent from the faculties and the Teaching and Learning Development Team to the Marketing Team, who produce the information according to the College Corporate Identity and Usage Guidelines. The prospectus is signed off by the academic teams and the universities. The College prospectus is accurate and complete.

42 Academy managers check the content of the virtual learning environment. The Information Learning Technology Team monitors usage of the virtual learning environment and the content of discussion forums. The College has clear Social Media Guidelines and the Marketing Team is responsible for the setting up and usage of social networks. The College recognises that there is no overarching coordination to audit public information and has recently established a Higher Education Recruitment Task Group. One of its roles is to review and coordinate published information. It is desirable that the College continues to review its management and committee structure to ensure effective oversight of the accuracy and completeness of public information.

The team considers that reliance can be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

C Summary of findings from the Developmental engagement in assessment

43 The Developmental engagement in assessment was undertaken in November 2008 at South East Essex College of Arts and Technology prior to the merger with Basildon and Thurrock College, which did not have a Developmental engagement. The lines of enquiry covered all core themes and were as follows:

- To what extent are assessment policies and procedures effectively implemented to ensure that academic standards are maintained across the different programme areas?
- How far do the assessment methods used and the assessment feedback given to students effectively support the student learning experience and enable the achievement of the intended learning outcomes?
- To what extent do staff and students have access to, and make use of, published assessment information to support the assessment process?

44 The Developmental engagement identified a number of areas of good practice. These included employer involvement in the design and delivery of assessments; the

business and information and communications technology students' submission of assessment through the plagiarism detection service, and the initial teaching programmes' collaborative development to clarify grading descriptors. The extensive reading and referencing skills support for assessment provided to BA Social Studies and BA Social Work programmes; group critiques, peer assessment and self-assessment on the art and design programmes, and the opportunity to review student submissions on the television and music programmes were also good practice. The BSc Social Studies programme handbook and the BA Early Years work placement handbook were good practice.

45 The team recommended that it would be desirable for assessment criteria, including criteria for group work, to be made more explicit and clearly stated on all assessment briefs, and that the Higher Education Board of Studies develop clear guidelines on, and monitor effectively, timely feedback to students. It would also be desirable to provide more information on the Academic Infrastructure in the Higher Education Staff Handbook.

Summary of findings from the Developmental engagement in work-based and work-related learning

46 The Developmental engagement in work-based and work-related learning was undertaken in November 2010 at South Essex College of Further and Higher Education. The lines of enquiry covered all core themes and were as follows:

- To what extent are College policies and procedures for work-based and work-related learning appropriate and effectively implemented to support the maintenance of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities?
- To what extent does employer engagement support the work-based and work-related experiences of students and enhance their employability?
- To what extent do staff and students have access to and make use of published information to support the work-based and work-related experiences?

47 The Developmental engagement identified a number of areas of good practice. These included the College's focus and commitment in developing the university partnerships to deliver programmes that meet the needs of the local area and that there is good liaison with employers to arrange and support work placements. Detailed employer feedback and consideration of the Academic Infrastructure in annual monitoring reports, were also good practice. The variety of employment activities, which supports the professional updating of tutors and the published information to employers providing placements was also considered to be good practice.

48 The team recommended that it would be desirable for the College to continue the planned roll-out of the e-portfolio to provide opportunities for students to reflect on work placements and support the development of their employability skills.

D Foundation Degrees

49 The College offers eight Foundation Degrees. These are the FdScs Construction Management, Engineering, Personal Fitness Training, Network Technology, the FdAs Fashion Communication and Marketing, and Counselling validated by the University of Essex. The FdA Playwork and Therapeutic Playwork and the FdA Textiles and Fashion are validated by the University of East London. The College has taken the strategic decision to phase out the playwork programmes by 2013 and has no current plans to offer new programmes.

50 The review confirms that the programmes are aligned to the *Foundation Degree benchmark statement*. There is direct involvement of employers at validation and in programme delivery. The programmes are aligned to the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning*. Overall, the College has in place effective management of the academic standards and quality of learning opportunities of its Foundation Degrees.

51 All the conclusions in Section E below relate to the Foundation Degree provision.

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

52 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in South Essex College of Further and Higher Education management of its responsibilities for academic standards and for the quality of learning opportunities of the awards the College offers on behalf of its awarding bodies. This was based upon discussion with staff and students and scrutiny of evidence provided by the College and its awarding bodies, the University of East London and the University of Essex.

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

- a variety of methods of engagement with the Academic Infrastructure embeds it in College policies, procedures and practice (paragraphs 15, 16 and 24)
- extensive staff development opportunities contribute to the systematic professional development of staff and support academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities (paragraphs 20, 21, 32 and 33)
- extensive employer engagement to support teaching, learning and assessment enhances student employability skills and career opportunities (paragraph 27)
- the higher education staff and student handbooks and dedicated higher education intranet provide comprehensive higher education information and support a clear higher education identity for staff and students (paragraph 39).

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

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

- ensure a consistent level of detailed assessment feedback which supports improvement (paragraph 19).

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

- review the Teaching and Learning Strategy to support a clear focus for higher education teaching and learning (paragraph 25)
- continue to review its management and committee structure to ensure effective oversight of the accuracy and completeness of public information (paragraph 42).

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

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

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

| South Essex College of Further and Higher Education action plan relating to the Summative review: October 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: | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a variety of methods of engagement with the Academic Infrastructure embeds it in College policies, procedures and practice (paragraphs 15, 16 and 24) | Ensure that the Academic Infrastructure continues to underpin policies and procedures and review and update mapping on an annual basis | January 2012 | Head of Higher Education and Access (Quality) | Annual Monitoring Reports identify examples of engagement with the Academic Infrastructure | College Curriculum and Quality Group University of Essex Partnership Curriculum and Quality Group | Evaluate effectiveness of engagement with the Academic Infrastructure in the Institutional Annual Monitoring Report |
| | Provide staff with updates at the annual higher education staff development day, Higher Education Staff Forum and through the higher education dedicated intranet page and Higher Education Staff Handbook | September 2012 | | Mapping of higher education policies and procedures to the <i>Code of practice</i> | | |
| | Ensure that the College utilises these methods of engagement to embed the new UK Quality Code published in 2011 | September 2012 | | Staff are aware of the Academic Infrastructure and use it to inform and develop practice | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> extensive staff development | Continue to provide a range of staff development | September 2012 | Heads of Higher | Programmes appropriately | Higher Education Review meetings | Evaluate effectiveness of |

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| <p>opportunities contribute to the systematic professional development of staff and support academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities (paragraphs 20, 21, 32 and 33)</p> | <p>opportunities which enhances the quality of learning opportunities for students</p> | | <p>Education and Access</p> <p>Head of Teaching and Learning Development</p> <p>Heads of faculty</p> <p>Advanced Practitioner Higher Education</p> | <p>staffed and student feedback on teaching is positive</p> | <p>University of Essex Partnership Curriculum and Quality Group</p> | <p>higher education staff development opportunities through evaluation forms, annual monitoring reports and staff appraisal process</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> extensive employer engagement to support teaching, learning and assessment enhances student employability skills and career opportunities (paragraph 27) | <p>Promote good practice and share examples of employer engagement at Higher Education Staff Forum</p> <p>Provide an annual update in the Annual Monitoring Report and ensure that the relevant section of the Annual Monitoring Report is shared across other faculties</p> <p>Entry profiles will continue to be updated annually and include information and examples of how the programmes develop</p> | <p>July 2012</p> <p>September 2012</p> <p>September 2012</p> | <p>Head of Higher Education and Access (Curriculum)</p> | <p>Programmes continue to equip students for employment as measured by Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education outcomes and from employer engagement at Periodic review</p> <p>Annual monitoring reports identify employer engagement</p> <p>Effective entry</p> | <p>College Curriculum and Quality Group</p> <p>Higher Education Review meetings</p> <p>University of Essex Partnership Curriculum and Quality Group</p> | <p>Evaluate effectiveness of employer engagement in the Institutional Annual Monitoring Report through range and quality of activities provided, student views and Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education data</p> |

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| | employability skills and highlight career opportunities | | | profiles | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the higher education staff and student handbooks and dedicated higher education intranet provide comprehensive higher education information and support a clear higher education identity for staff and students (paragraph 39). | Continue to update and publish higher education staff and student handbooks on the intranet and update and enhance the higher education intranet to ensure it supports higher education staff and students. Utilise these to underpin higher education induction and higher education staff development day and raise awareness of these | September 2012 | Heads of Higher Education and Access | Positive student feedback Higher education staff and students provided with clear information | University of Essex Partnership Curriculum and Quality Group | Student feedback. Staff feedback Institutional Annual Monitoring Report |
| 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: | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure a consistent level of detailed assessment feedback which supports improvement (paragraph 19). | <p>Implement a feedback monitoring process which includes learner feedback at programme boards</p> <p>Evaluate outcomes of this monitoring process in the annual monitoring report</p> <p>Provide staff development</p> | <p>December 2011</p> <p>May 2012</p> | <p>Academy managers</p> <p>Academy managers and Heads of Higher Education and Access</p> | <p>Improved student survey results</p> <p>Positive feedback from students at programme boards</p> <p>Positive external examiner reports</p> | <p>Higher Education review meetings</p> <p>Higher education programme boards</p> <p>University of Essex Partnership Curriculum and</p> | <p>Annual monitoring reports and Institutional Annual Monitoring Report</p> <p>Student satisfaction reports</p> |

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| | to ensure good practice in writing assessment feedback to support improvement | May 2012 | Heads of Higher Education and Access and Advanced Practitioner Higher Education | | Quality Group | |
| Desirable | Action to be taken | Target date | Action by | Success indicators | Reported to | Evaluation |
| The team considers that it is desirable for the College to: | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> review the Teaching and Learning Strategy to support a clear focus for higher education teaching and learning (paragraph 25) | Review the Teaching and Learning Strategy to ensure clear articulation of what higher education teaching and learning is and ensure this is reflected in Higher Education Staff Handbook and the Staff Development Strategy | August 2012 | Heads of Higher Education and Access and Head of Teaching and Learning | Student feedback on quality of teaching and learning | College Curriculum and Quality Group University of Essex Partnership Curriculum and Quality Group, Higher education programme boards | Institutional Annual Monitoring Form |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> continue to review its management and committee structure to ensure effective oversight of the accuracy and completeness of | Reform the Higher Education Recruitment Task Group to oversee accuracy and completeness of published information Programme boards to review and confirm | December 2012 September 2012 | Head of Higher Education and Access (Curriculum) Academy managers | Accurate information as evidenced by audit Positive student feedback at | College Curriculum and Quality Group University of Essex Partnership Curriculum and Quality Group | Annual monitoring reports and Institutional Annual Monitoring report Notes of Heads of Higher Education |

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| public information (paragraph 42). | accuracy of all published programme information included on intranet and internet | | | programme boards | Higher Education programme boards | Recruitment Task Group and Heads of Higher Education Programme Boards |
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The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

Southgate House
Southgate Street
Gloucester
GL1 1UB

Tel 01452 557000
Fax 01452 557070
Email comms@qaa.ac.uk
Web www.qaa.ac.uk