QAA

Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

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South Thames 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 South Thames College carried out in March 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 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 areas of good practice for dissemination:

- summative feedback is clearly linked to the assignment briefs and prepares students effectively for their future assessments
- the explicit learner reflection on staff feedback on the HNC Media Production and HNC Music Production programmes that maximises learning opportunities
- generally high-quality formative feedback supports student learning effectively.

Recommendations

The team has also identified a number of recommendations for the enhancement of the higher education provision.

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

- ensure that the Higher Education Working Group and Higher Education Forum implement their terms of reference, thereby improving the effectiveness of the quality procedures
- complete the integration of South Thames College and Merton College quality systems to provide an enhanced oversight of all higher education provision
- obtain cohort progression data on Kingston University programmes regularly and use it to improve the effectiveness of programme review
- make staff development more focused on the needs of the higher education provision to support curriculum delivery and assessment
- increase the availability of library texts for the BA Business Management and the Foundation Degree (FD) Early Years to provide more support for student learning.

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

- ensure that student attendance at the Higher Education Learner Forum is sufficient to obtain comprehensive and representative feedback from students across the provision, thereby providing opportunities for quality enhancement
- ensure that public information on the website and in the prospectus is correct.

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 Thames 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 Canterbury Christ Church University, Edexcel, Kingston University, London South Bank University and St George's, University of London. The review was carried out by Professor Jenny Anderson, Mr Rob Mason, Mr Millard Parkinson (reviewers) and Dr Peter Steer (Coordinator).

2 The Summative review team (the team) conducted the review in agreement with the College and in accordance with *The handbook for an Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review*, (the handbook) published by QAA. Evidence in support of the Summative review included documentation supplied by the College, separate meetings with staff including awarding body representatives, employers and students, the student written submission, QAA review reports and Ofsted reports. In particular, the team drew on the findings and recommendations of the Developmental engagement in assessment. A summary of findings from this Developmental engagement is provided in Section C of this report. The review also considered the College's use of the Academic Infrastructure, developed by QAA on behalf of higher education providers, with reference to the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, subject and award benchmark statements, *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and programme specifications.

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

4 The College is one of the largest general further education colleges in south London following its recent merger with Merton College. It is the largest provider of post-16 education and training in the London boroughs of Wandsworth and Merton. The College's mission is to be the lead provider of learning and skills in Wandsworth, Merton and the central London area, and deliver outstanding provision to learners, employers and communities. Most of the College's students live locally. Approximately 75 per cent of the students live in areas classified as being socially disadvantaged. Nearly 57 per cent of students are female and approximately 50 per cent are from minority ethnic groups. In 2009-10, the College has enrolled about 3,500 full-time 16-18 year old learners and 6,100 adult learners on accredited and non-accredited programmes ranging from pre-entry to degree level. In addition, there are over 5,600 learners enrolled on part-time Adult and Community Learning programmes.

5 The College has centres in Wandsworth, Roehampton, Putney, Battersea, Merton and Tooting. Most programmes are vocationally orientated. English for speakers of other languages is the largest area of provision. There is a range of work-based learning programmes and apprenticeships, the majority being in construction and hairdressing. The College has 14 schools, of which Finance and Professional Studies; Creative Industries; Health and Hospitality; Technology; Construction; and English for International Students have higher education programmes. Higher education is delivered at the Tooting, Wandsworth and Merton sites. HEFCE-funded enrolment in 2009-10 is 283.5 full-time equivalents (FTEs) made up of 214 full-time and 139 part-time students.

The higher education provision offered by the College is:

Canterbury Christ Church University

- Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (90 FTEs)

Edexcel

- HNC Computing (28 FTEs)
- HNC Media Production (12 FTEs)
- HNC Music Production (13 FTEs)

Kingston University

- HND Business and Finance (5 FTEs)
- BA Business Management (43 FTEs)
- FD Business and Professional Administration (16 FTEs)
- FD Early Years (25.5 FTEs)
- FD IT for e-Business (14.5 FTEs)
- FD Pharmaceutical and Chemical Science (13.5 FTEs)

London South Bank University

- HNC Construction (10 FTEs)

St George's, University of London

- FD Long Term Conditions (13 FTEs).

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

6 The College is directly funded by HEFCE for its Edexcel provision and has partnership agreements with four universities. In collaboration with the College, the awarding bodies have a variety of approaches for the oversight of the provision. London South Bank University provides the assessments and undertakes moderation, while Edexcel devolves these tasks to the College, subject to external examiner oversight. Kingston University and St George's, University of London use a model similar to that of London South Bank University. Canterbury Christ Church University's provision involves more delegated powers to a consortium of providers. All the agreements put the main responsibility on the College to provide the resources to support learning, although library and virtual learning environment access is available from the university partners. All the partnership agreements provide clear guidance as to the responsibilities of the partners.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

7 The College has recently merged with Merton College and the process of integration is being undertaken during this academic year. The management structure of the College remains largely unchanged. Recent building work includes the renovation and significant extension of the Wandsworth site. The increase in HEFCE-funded numbers this year is due to the merger with Merton, which added a small number of full-time equivalent students

through the provision of three Foundation Degrees and increased recruitment for the HNC Computing.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

8 Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the Summative review team and did so in February 2010. Students completed questionnaires provided by the College. Student representatives analysed the results, with administrative support from College staff. Students met the team during the review and contributed to the preparatory meeting. The team found the student written submission useful.

B Evaluation of the management of HEFCE-funded higher education

Core theme 1: Academic standards

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

9 The College's responsibilities for ensuring the standards of its higher education provision are clearly specified in partnership agreements and are amplified through detailed information provided by partners. There is a close relationship with the university awarding bodies, who give the College significant support.

10 The College has clear responsibilities and reporting arrangements for managing and delivering academic standards. The Director of Quality and Student Services has overall responsibility for the management of quality assurance for further and higher education, and for ensuring the implementation of policies and procedures of partner universities. The Higher Education and Access Quality Manager has a higher education focus and reports to the Director of Quality and Student Services. The Quality and Performance Committee, a subgroup of the College's Governing Body, heads the formal structure for the monitoring of quality assurance and management. Reporting to this group is the Quality Improvement Board, which receives and monitors information from various elements of the quality system. The Quality Improvement Board consists of senior managers who overview the operation of all education in the College and feed into procedures as required. Working alongside the robust awarding body procedures, these internal arrangements are generally effective.

11 The Higher Education Working Group has a responsibility for monitoring some aspects of the higher education provision and reports to the Quality Improvement Board. It meets twice per term and has a membership mainly of curriculum managers and directors of service areas. Students are also invited when appropriate. Attendance has sometimes not been high. The Higher Education Working Group's terms of reference include the research, promotion and dissemination of best practice and the identification of training needs. Consideration of minutes and discussions with staff show that the terms of reference are not being fully implemented.

12 The Higher Education Forum potentially brings together all those who teach on higher education programmes, and meets twice per term. It reports to the Higher Education Working Group. The self-evaluation sees the Higher Education Forum as ensuring

consistency and informing the College's various academic and quality boards. Attendance at the meetings has often been low and discussions have focused largely on operational rather than more strategic aspects of its terms of reference. There are no minutes for one recent meeting. The team's view is that this group does not meet its terms of reference effectively. It is advisable that the Higher Education Working Group and Higher Education Forum implement their terms of reference, thereby improving the effectiveness of the quality procedures.

13 The Higher Education Learner Forum meets termly, with membership consisting of student programme representatives. The generally low attendance limits the opportunity to obtain extensive student feedback on the provision. It is desirable that attendance at the Higher Education Learner Forum should be sufficient to provide comprehensive and representative feedback from students across the provision, providing opportunities for quality enhancement.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

14 College procedures for aligning the provision with the Academic Infrastructure are strongly supported by the policies of the university partners. The universities undertake detailed mapping of their programmes, as well as providing written guidance and staff development to College staff. University staff or consortium members control much of the assessment process for programmes not awarded by Edexcel. Intended learning outcomes are included in the programme specifications. They are produced by the awarding bodies and are in line with the FHEQ. Assignment procedures properly reflect the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*.

15 Quality policies and procedures for higher education are included in the Higher Education Curriculum Quality Procedures Manual. Staff find the Manual helpful and use it widely in the management and delivery of programmes. Although staff from Merton have used the procedures only from August 2009, they have embraced them enthusiastically and find them helpful in reviewing and improving the provision. The Higher Education Curriculum Quality Procedures Manual helps staff understand the Academic Infrastructure and encourages its use in programme development. Curriculum managers find the recent mapping of the *Code of practice* against the provision very helpful.

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?

16 The College has developed comprehensive quality assurance procedures. These supplement the effective validation, review and annual monitoring requirements of its awarding bodies. The annual cross-college quality assurance cycle sets the timing for key activities including self assessment, student surveys, lesson observations, internal inspections, quality audits, internal and external verification, and quality meetings. There are specific actions for higher education.

17 A cross-college higher education self-assessment is completed in October, building upon evaluation at the programme level. After its finalisation, the College prepares a quality improvement plan which is subsequently monitored by the Quality and Standards Committee. Generally these procedures work well. Merton College produced a self-assessment before the two colleges merged in 2009, but this report did not include any substantial review of higher education. During this transition period South Thames' procedures are being introduced for all programmes. Merton staff find this helpful. At the

time of the review the results of this harmonisation are not yet fully apparent. It is advisable that the College completes the integration of South Thames College and Merton College quality systems in order to provide an enhanced oversight of all higher education provision.

18 Until recently the College had not held progression data for its students on partner higher education programmes. The College had significant difficulties in providing cohort statistics for its Kingston University programmes during the review. This lack of access to data has meant that it cannot be used in quality procedures. It is advisable that the College obtains cohort progression data on Kingston University programmes regularly and uses it to improve the effectiveness of programme review.

19 External examiners are appointed by the awarding bodies. Their reports confirm that the programmes achieve appropriate academic standards. There is an effective system for considering the comments of external examiners. Their reports are received by the quality team and heads of school and the latter complete the necessary actions to a set timescale. Each university partner replies formally to the external examiners.

20 The internal verification system to check the quality and consistency of assessment is generally effective. Second marking of at least 20 per cent of marked work takes place at frequent intervals. In some cases, for example, for the Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector, College staff meet the University team regularly to discuss and review standards.

21 External examiners report that summative feedback is timely and of a high standard. Generally, summative feedback is extensive, informative and linked closely to the assessment briefs, which include the intended learning outcomes. Students are very positive about the written comments they receive on their assessed work. Indications on how to improve are clear and helpful for subsequent assignments. The team considers this to be good practice. On the HNC Media Production and HNC Music Production, staff ensure that students reflect on and discuss tutor feedback on assessed work to maximise learning opportunities. The team considers this to be good practice. Cases of late feedback identified in the Developmental engagement report have been resolved.

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

22 The College's continuing professional development policy provides objectives and entitlement for all staff. There is no specific identification of how higher education staff development is prioritised, planned and delivered. Staff are also invited to development events at partner universities, which some attend and find useful. Attendance records are not kept.

23 A Staff Development Handbook is comprehensive but is focused mainly on further education. Several topics, for example aspects of assessment, can be transferred into a higher education context. The programme contains a small number relevant specifically to higher education. A recent College conference on assessment brought together higher education staff from the two merged colleges, which staff found valuable.

24 Staff can apply for funding to undertake study for higher-level qualifications and research. However, generally, opportunities for subject-related staff development are limited, although the College indicates there are plans for expansion in the future.

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?

25 The Director of Quality and Student Services and the Director of Curriculum consider the resource requirements for new programmes before internal validation. Partner universities look at resourcing as part of their approval processes. Provision of appropriate learning resources for Edexcel programmes is monitored by their external examiners.

26 Recurrent resource requirements, including those for appropriate teaching staff, are the responsibility of the heads of school. After consultation with programme teams they make bids to the Director of Curriculum, who is the budget holder. Bids for resources are often considered by the Senior Leadership Team and as part of the Principal's review. This procedure has been effective in allocating resources, for example in the acquisition of computer equipment for media programmes and in rectifying the previous shortage of specialist staff on the HNC Construction, identified in the 2008-09 programme self-assessment. Some funding for learning resources is available from partner universities.

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

27 The College provides all the teaching on the provision, together with student support. It is also responsible for ensuring that learning accommodation and resources are appropriate and that the programmes are delivered by appropriately qualified teaching staff. The quality procedures described in paragraphs 16 and 17 provide data and evaluative comment concerning resourcing and other issues. Resource allocation is determined through the processes described in paragraphs 25 and 26, while the committees described in paragraphs 10 to 13 decide on other topics like staff, student and external examiner comments.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

28 The College, in partnership with its awarding bodies, has appropriate policies and procedures to support the quality of the learning opportunities in line with the Academic Infrastructure. College policy on disabilities is detailed and reflects the precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 3: Disabled students*. Comprehensive support is available for disabled students.

29 College guidance on placements is often supplemented by university awarding body information, for example the useful mentoring handbook on the FD Early Years. Employers value the guidance they receive, which complies with the *Code of practice, Section 9; Work-based and placement learning.* The College has appropriate admissions procedures. Policies for the accreditation of prior learning and prior experiential learning are appropriately implemented in liaison with the awarding bodies.

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

30 The College has a number of procedures to assure the quality of teaching and learning. Teaching observations are conducted annually using a system developed for further education. Data from teaching observations is monitored by the College Quality Improvement Board. The College is developing a more higher education-focused observation system in a pilot peer observation project with staff from Kingston University. Student satisfaction surveys indicate high levels of satisfaction with teaching, a view reinforced by students who met the team.

31 The Summative review team confirms the high quality of the formative feedback found in the Developmental engagement. Through the implementation of the action plan, the good practice identified in the Developmental engagement has been extended to other programmes. This formative feedback is available throughout the academic year and effectively supports student learning. The team considers this to be good practice.

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

32 The College provides comprehensive details of the support available to students at their two-day induction. Students receive a College student handbook, which provides valuable information on all support services available in the College; information on support available at partner universities is often part of a separate handbook.

33 Careers support based on the *Code of practice, Section 8: Career education, information, advice and guidance* begins at induction. There are careers advisors on each site. Careers advice and enhancing employability are embedded in the curricula. Students commend the high level of employment-related skills incorporated into the HNC Computing programme. Foundation Degree students receive substantial support from workplace mentors.

34 The HNC Media Production and HNC Music Production have steering groups involving industry practitioners, who run workshops and advise students on careers in these industries. Recently the College has provided additional support for students whose first language is not English.

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

35 The College offers a range of staff development opportunities to support the quality of learning opportunities. Heads of schools control budgets for staff development. All staff are registered with the Institute for Learning and are obliged to undertake 30 hours of continuous professional development per year. Most of this general training is focused on further education. The team considers it advisable that staff development should be more focused on the needs of the higher education provision, to support curriculum delivery and assessment.

36 There are valuable staff development opportunities available to support teaching. For example, Canterbury Christ Church University operates an associate tutor scheme, which provides support for staff in a number of areas including enhancing teaching and assessment practice. Half of the students on the College's teacher training programme are College staff. The College provides support for industrial placements for staff, for example in the School of Creative Industries.

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?

37 Generally, the College, with substantial assistance from its partner universities, provides resources that support students' learning effectively. The College has invested in new learning resource centres at the expanded Wandsworth site and at Tooting, each with dedicated higher education areas. The Tooting site now also has dedicated higher education teaching accommodation. Students at the College have access to learning resources and comprehensive virtual learning environments at partner universities, which they find valuable. The Merton and South Thames sites currently use different virtual learning environments, although this is in the process of being changed. While students have access to the Kingston University library and some electronic texts, there is a shortage of key texts for the BA Business Management and Foundation Degree Early Years programmes. The team considers it advisable that the College increases the availability of library texts for the BA Business Management and the FD Early Years in order to provide more support for student learning.

38 A new, industry-standard facility has been provided for the HNC Music Production programme. The College has addressed the need for additional technical support in the media and music areas, identified by the external examiner in 2009, by the appointment of an additional technician in January 2010.

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?

39 In conjunction with its higher education partners, the College is responsible for publishing its prospectus and providing information on its website. Kingston University retains control of programme marketing and publicity. All College information is submitted to the relevant board of study at the University for approval prior to publication. London South Bank University programmes are marketed primarily by the College and also appear in the University prospectus. Each partner seeks the approval of the other on public information. For the St George's, University of London-validated programme all information is first approved by the University. Canterbury Christ Church University information is checked through the consortium procedures, with the College having local responsibility for College-specific elements. The universities provide the College with programme specifications, while the College has produced useful local versions of the programme specifications for its Edexcel provision.

40 The College follows Edexcel guidelines, including using some allowed discretion in the labelling of the programme titles for marketing purposes. This gives students a better idea of the content. For example, the HNC Media Production programme is advertised as HNC Media (Creative Sound and Vision).

41 The College has differing responsibilities for public information according to the awarding body. For example, Kingston University provides information directly to students on its regulations, policies and procedures. On Edexcel programmes the College provides information on academic misconduct, academic appeals, and the accreditation of prior

learning. Generally information is available in both paper and electronic format. Because the merger between the two colleges took place just before the start of the academic year, there is currently a separate South Thames College and Merton College prospectus and website. Plans are underway for a single prospectus and website for 2010-11.

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?

42 Working in cooperation with the awarding bodies, the College produces comprehensive information to support students in their studies. The College has generally effective procedures for the production and checking of public information. Students find the pre-entry and induction information valuable. Heads of school, working closely with subject staff, have responsibility for the accuracy of information. This includes module and programme guides and information for external publication. The websites are reviewed by the Marketing Department when prospectuses are being produced. A Marketing and Admissions Group meets once a month to discuss the website and prospectus. There is also a College Enquiry Unit, which monitors feedback from students. The student written submission indicates that 83 per cent of students feel the information provided is helpful and accurate.

43 The South Thames prospectus provides clear information including that relating to programme structure, entry requirements and fees, and assessment. The Merton College Full Time Courses Guide is less thorough. There is little reference to higher education programmes in the foreword or contents pages. The guide includes limited details of the higher education provision and its assessment. Merton and South Thames prospectuses will be in the same format in the future, although the Merton College name will be retained.

44 While generally accurate, there are some errors and omissions on the website and in the prospectus. For example, the FD Early Years is not included in the Merton prospectus. The FD IT for e-Business is listed as IT Foundation Degree in the Merton prospectus, while the HNC Music Production is listed as being full-time on the website and part-time in the prospectus. The team considers it desirable that information on the website and in the prospectus should be correct.

45 Students receive programme handbooks at induction; some students receive a programme handbook from both the College and the awarding body. Handbooks produced by the College are checked by the Higher Education and Access Quality Manager as part of the quality assurance cycle. All the handbooks are useful, although there is variation in their quality. Academic impropriety, complaints and appeals are covered in all of them. The handbooks for the Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector and the FD Early Years are produced largely as part of consortium arrangements, with local contextualisation, and are comprehensive. A standard programme handbook template for HNCs has recently been introduced, although it lacks reference to areas such as careers, childcare, counselling and ethics, which are found in the best handbooks.

46 Module handbooks, distributed at the start of every module, are valued by students. Some of the modules guides are produced by the awarding body with input from College staff. The module guide for Business Accounting is comprehensive, but there is considerable variation in the amount of information provided in other module guides.

47 The School E-Learning Development Plan 2009-10 aims to increase the online information provided to students. An auditing process checks compliance with the College's minimum requirements for programme information on the virtual learning environment. This currently includes a welcome message, a programme syllabus and handbook, schemes of work, assignment details and staff 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

48 The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in March 2009. It addresses the following lines of enquiry agreed with the College:

- College processes that exist to monitor the quality of assessment and moderation of standards when marking and grading student work
- The extent to which feedback, both formative and summative, enables the student to achieve an appropriate standard with respect to the intended learning outcomes
- The information published and issued to students in relation to assessment; is it fit for purpose, timely, accurate, relevant and appropriate?

49 The areas of good practice identified during the Developmental engagement, which the team linked in every case to particular programmes, were: effective internal verification processes; high-quality and innovative formative feedback; employer involvement in formative feedback; prompt provision of feedback on student work; the development of explicit student reflection on the feedback provided by staff; and the high quality of learner handbooks.

50 The Developmental engagement indicated that it was advisable to: ensure there is always a signed partnership agreement; take action to develop fully the role of the new Higher Education Forum; and review the process for monitoring the production of public information. It was considered desirable that: the Higher Education Working Group should provide additional oversight of the provision; the Higher Education Curriculum Quality procedures manual should be finalised; higher education staff development should be more focused towards enhancing assessment practices; on some programmes, summative feedback should be more closely linked to the intended learning outcomes; feedback to students on their work, on some programmes, should be more timely; programme handbooks should be more consistent in content; and there should be greater use of the virtual learning environment available to students.

D Foundation Degrees

51 The College has five Foundation Degrees with two awarding partners, with 140 part-time and 13 full-time enrolments. The Merton higher education provision is exclusively Foundation Degrees. The FD Early Years and FD IT for e-Business are offered at the Tooting and Merton sites. The programme teams are working to harmonise the provision in the merged College. The College strategic vision is to achieve degree awarding powers over the next two-to-three years and a growth in Foundation Degree provision.

52 The College Higher Education Strategy identifies the need for the provision to reflect national and regional priorities and to support widening participation. All the Foundation Degrees are linked with one or more of these objectives. For example, the FD Long Term Conditions is designed specifically to enhance skills in a priority area, while the Foundation Degrees in business and IT play an important role in widening participation within the local community. Foundation Degrees are delivered in close association with the awarding bodies, as part of a consortium including other further education providers, with many of the student materials common to all providers. These arrangements provide an effective system for the development and oversight of Foundation Degrees.

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

- summative feedback is clearly linked to the assignment briefs and prepares students effectively for their future assessments (paragraph 21)
- generally high-quality formative feedback supports student learning effectively (paragraph 31).

54 The team agreed a number of areas where the College is **advised** to take action:

- ensure that the Higher Education Working Group and Higher Education Forum implement their terms of reference, thereby improving the effectiveness of the quality procedures (paragraphs 11, 12)
- complete the integration of South Thames College and Merton College quality systems to provide an enhanced oversight of all higher education provision (paragraph 17)
- obtain cohort progression data on Kingston University programmes regularly and use it to improve the effectiveness of programme review (paragraph 18)
- make staff development more focused on the needs of the higher education provision to support curriculum delivery and assessment (paragraphs 22, 35)
- increase the availability of library texts for the BA Business Management and the FD Early Years to provide more support for student learning (paragraph 37).

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

- ensure that student attendance at the Higher Education Learner Forum is sufficient to obtain comprehensive and representative feedback from students across the provision, thereby providing opportunities for quality enhancement (paragraph 13)
- ensure that public information on the website and in the prospectus is correct (paragraph 44).

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

56 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in South Thames 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: Canterbury Christ Church University; Edexcel; Kingston University; London South Bank University; St George's, University of London.

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

- summative feedback is clearly linked to the assignment briefs and prepares students effectively for their future assessments (paragraph 21)
- the explicit learner reflection on staff feedback on the HNC Media Production and HNC Music Production programmes that maximises learning opportunities (paragraph 21)
- generally high-quality formative feedback supports student learning effectively (paragraph 31).

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

The team agreed a number of areas where the College is **advised** to take action:

- ensure that the Higher Education Working Group and Higher Education Forum implement their terms of reference, thereby improving the effectiveness of the quality procedures (paragraphs 11, 12)
- complete the integration of South Thames College and Merton College quality systems to provide an enhanced oversight of all higher education provision (paragraph 17)
- obtain cohort progression data on Kingston University programmes regularly and use it to improve the effectiveness of programme review (paragraph 18)
- make staff development more focused on the needs of the higher education provision to support curriculum delivery and assessment (paragraphs 22, 35)
- increase the availability of library texts for the BA Business Management and the FD Early Years to provide more support for student learning (paragraph 37).

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

- ensure that student attendance at the Higher Education Learner Forum is sufficient to obtain comprehensive and representative feedback from students across the provision, thereby providing opportunities for quality enhancement (paragraph 13)
- ensure that public information on the website and in the prospectus is correct (paragraph 44).

60 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.

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 quality of learning opportunities to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

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, 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 Thames College action plan relating to the Summative review: March 2010						
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:						
• summative feedback is clearly linked to the assignment briefs and prepares students effectively for their future assessments (paragraph 21)	Dissemination of exemplars to HE Teams. Training events arranged for HE continuing professional development (CPD) Day	July 2010 July 2010	HE FORUM Course Manager (CM) Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (DTLLS)	Internal verification (IV)/external verification (EV) Reports identify high quality feedback	Higher Education working Group (HEWG)	HEWG to review audits/ IV/ EV outcomes
• the explicit learner reflection on staff feedback on the HNC Media Production and HNC Music Production programmes that maximises learning opportunities (paragraph 21)	Dissemination of exemplars to HE Teams. Training events arranged for HE CPD Day	July 2010 July 2010	HE Forum Higher Education and Access Quality Manager (HEAQM)	IV/ EV Reports identify high quality feedback	HEWG	HEWG to review audits/ IV/ EV outcomes

South Thames College action plan relating to the Summative review: March 2010						
Good practice	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
• generally high-quality formative feedback supports student learning effectively (paragraph 31)	Dissemination of exemplars to HE Teams. Training events arranged for HE CPD Day	July 2010 July 2010	HE Forum HEAQM	IV/ EV Reports identify high quality feedback	HEWG	HEWG to review audits/ IV/EV outcomes

South Thames College action plan relating to the Summative review: March 2010						
Advisable	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
The team agreed a number of areas where the College should be **advised** to take action:						
• ensure that the Higher Education Working Group and Higher Education Forum implement their terms of reference (TORS), thereby improving the effectiveness of the quality procedures (paragraphs 11, 12)	Review all terms of reference currently in place for next HE Forum and HE Working Group Review membership Rotate location of meetings to improve accessibility for all.	HE Forum May 2010 HEWG June 2010	HEAQM Director of Curriculum (DOC)	TORs in place, agreed and in monitored through academic year. Minutes of meetings demonstrate action taken to improve quality.	Senior Leadership Team (SLT) DOC HEAQM	HEWG to assess effectiveness and attendance
• complete the integration of South Thames College and Merton College quality systems to provide an enhanced oversight of all higher education provision (paragraph 17)	Harmonisation process action plan in place Review of Self Assessment process for HE for the merged colleges.	SEPT 10	Vice Principal Quality and Student Services (previously the Director of Quality and Student Services)	Quality Cycle harmonised Self Assessment Review (SAR) process in place.	SLT	SLT to validate HE SAR

South Thames College action plan relating to the Summative review: March 2010						
Advisable	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
• obtain cohort progression data on Kingston University (KU) programmes regularly and use it to improve the effectiveness of programme review (paragraph 18)	• Liaise with KU and other partners to develop dashboard system of data integration for all partners • Request data in timely manner from partners to identify common themes and areas of difference. • Use data as source evidence for self assessment as part of course review	Dec 2010 July 2010 Sept 2010	Head of Curriculum Information Services HEAQM Head of Quality (KU) HEAQM Head of Quality (KU)	Dashboards System in place and ongoing and collaborative use of timely data. Data used to make judgements SAR Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for HE uses data to identify areas for development	SLT DOC	HEWG to evaluate effectiveness of data reporting SLT to validate HE SAR
• make staff development more focused on the needs of the higher education provision to support curriculum delivery and assessment (paragraphs 22, 35)	Peer Observation Scheme Pilot with KU	Sep 2010 Sep 2010	HEAQM CM DTLLS CPD Manager	Improved T&L for HE Groups	HE Forum	HE Forum to evaluate, discuss and use research within practice

South Thames College action plan relating to the Summative review: March 2010						
Advisable	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
	Develop Canterbury Christ Church University activities to roll out to HE staff Ongoing CPD development in cooperation with awarding bodies Develop recording and use of research into innovative and current T&L practice within HE.	July 2010 Dec 2010 Sept 2010		HE staff increase hours of HE related CPD Research disseminated and used.		
• increase the availability of library texts for the BA Business Management and FD Early Years to provide more support for student learning (paragraph 37)	Review and order library texts and e-learning materials in the Learning Resource (LR) Centre		Heads of Schools (HOSs) Head of LR	Increase appropriate text books by 5 per cent	HEWG	Review of resource availability

South Thames College action plan relating to the Summative review: March 2010						
Desirable	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
The team agreed the following areas where it would be **desired** to take action:						
• ensure that student attendance at the Higher Education Learner Forum is sufficient to obtain comprehensive and representative feedback from students across the provision, thereby providing opportunities for quality enhancement (paragraph 13)	Dates published which clearly outline events/ activities for academic year. Use of technologies to inform students of events (FB, Twitter, Blackboard) CM to take on responsibilities to inform HE student reps.	Sept 2010 Oct 2010 Oct 2010	HEAQM CMs	Increase attendance at HE Forum Increased feedback from HE learners.	HEWG	Review % attendance Review actions in response to areas identified through forums and feedback.

South Thames College action plan relating to the Summative review: March 2010						
Desirable	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
• ensure that public information on the website and in the prospectus is correct (paragraph 44)	Review of all public information for accuracy. Partners to have timely access to draft information for approval. Review of all public information with HEAQM/ DOC. Termly meeting with Mktng manager specifically for this purpose Copy of Memorandum of Agreements to be given to Marketing in order to check course titles. These to be used across prospectus and website.	May 2010 May 2010 May 2010 May 2010	HOSs Marketing Manager HEAQM DOC	Accurate information available on all public information. Public information updated with changes	HEWG	Review all public information

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