# Integrated quality and enhancement review

## Summative review

### West Nottinghamshire College

**December 2010**

**SR 015**

# 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 West Nottinghamshire College carried out in December 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 **good practice** for dissemination:

- there is strong leadership in the College's management of higher education and it is successful in engaging staff in the process, so that they have a sense of involvement and ownership
- there is high quality of support for students, especially during the application and induction processes, and for students with learning difficulties or disabilities
- the College's strategy to establish an ethos, through its management of learning resources, ensures students have an appropriate higher education learning experience
- the high quality of the information, advice and guidance material provided by the Higher Education Team for prospective students, applicants and new students at induction, including the Higher Education Information Pack and Welcome Pack, is highly supportive of students.

## Recommendations

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

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

- continue to monitor, and take appropriate action on, student success rates and ensure that through the annual monitoring process, all programme and school annual reports better reflect success rates and address low success rates where they occur.

# 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 West Nottinghamshire College (the College). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the College discharges its responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes which the College delivers on behalf of the University of Derby, Leeds Metropolitan University and Edexcel. The review was carried out by Ms Ann-Marie Colbert, Mr Wayne Isaac and Mr Millard Parkinson (reviewers) and Mr Philip Markey (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. Written statements from employers were also available. 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    West Nottinghamshire College is a large general further education college with two main sites and five smaller sites. Higher education is offered on five of the seven sites. The College is organised into nine Schools of Learning, with eight of these providing higher education programmes. These programmes are vocational in nature and have been developed to meet the higher education needs of the local community, including the needs of employers. The College identifies its market for higher education as predominantly local people, including the traditional 18 to 19 age group, single/non-working parents, the long-term sick, the recently redundant and part-time students, predominantly those in employment.

5    There are 3,510 full-time and 9,000 part-time students in the College. In the academic year 2010-11, there are 374 full-time students and 259 part-time students on higher education programmes making a total of 513 full-time equivalent students (FTEs). Since 2007-08, when there was a total of 339 FTEs, there has been a steady rise in the number of higher education students at the College.

6    The College offers the following programmes (with FTEs in brackets):

**Edexcel**

- HNC Interactive Media (0.5)
- HND Interactive Media (23)
- HND Fashion and Textiles (16)

- HND Music Performance (4)
- HND Performing Arts (13)
- HNC Electrical and Electronic Engineering (14)
- HND Electrical and Electronic Engineering (12)
- HNC Mechanical Engineering (10.5)
- HND Mechanical Engineering (13)

**Leeds Metropolitan University**

- FdSc Communication and Networking Technologies (23)
- FdSc Management Information Systems with Computing (5)
- FdSc Software Development with Multimedia (30)
- BA (Hons) Business and Management (24)
- FdA Business Management (45)
- FdA Public Sector Administration (28)
- FdA Corporate Administration (2)
- FdA Sport and Fitness (3)
- FdA Sport and Science (26)
- FdA Sport and Coaching (16)
- FdA Public Services and Law (29)
- FdA Operational Management (Service Industries) (10.5)

**University of Derby**

- Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (26)
- Graduate Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (18)
- FdA Children's and Young People's Services (59)
- FdA Spa (Therapies) (13)
- FdA Hairdressing and Salon Management (11)
- FdSc Built Environment (Construction)/FdSc Construction (17)
- FdSc Business Improvement Techniques (17.5).

## Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

7        The College works with two higher education partners, the University of Derby and Leeds Metropolitan University. It also offers some Edexcel awards in HNC and HND programmes. All students are directly funded by HEFCE. For University of Derby awards, the partnership is regulated by an annual financial agreement and more specifically by Operation Manuals, which identify responsibility for programme management roles. The quinquennial partnership review was successfully completed in April 2010 and specifically commended the College for ensuring that students felt part of both communities; the University and the College. For Leeds Metropolitan University awards, the partnership and responsibilities within the partnership are governed by the scheme approval document. The initial Scheme was approved in 2005, with the current Scheme in place since May 2008, when it was extended to include additional programmes. The Institutional Review and Scheme Re-approval event was successfully completed in June 2010 and commended the College for its 'commitment to, and engagement with, the partnership with the University'.

## Recent developments in higher education at the College

8        The College has been active in developing new programmes, enhancing teaching and learning in its management of higher education. In line with the College's higher

education strategy, new programmes were introduced in 2009-10, including Foundation Degrees in Public Sector Administration, Corporate Administration, Public Services and Law and a BA (Hons) Business and Management. The FdA Operational Management (Service Industries), developed in conjunction with Center Parcs, was validated for a 2010 start. New Edexcel provision in the School of Creative Arts was introduced in Fashion and Textiles and in Music Performance for 2009-10. The College plans to extend its programmes with the University of Derby through developments with the Faculty of Education, Health and Science. The introduction of Higher Education Academic Standards Committee addresses the need to manage strategic development in higher education. To enhance learning and teaching, the research group has been reconvened and time for scholarly activity has been agreed by the Executive. There is a feedback working group and observation of lessons has been adapted for higher education delivery to reflect good practice in the sector. More opportunities for developing the student voice have been established.

## Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

9        Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the Summative review team. Student representatives gathered information and were assisted by the Learning Consultant for higher education in compiling the report. The content was then checked by the student representatives. The submission was highly positive about every aspect of the students' experiences. During the visit, the team met a sample of students from all the programmes.

# 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?

10        Responsibility for managing the standards and quality of higher education provision on behalf of the awarding bodies ultimately resides with the Board of Governors. The College Corporation Board monitors standards through the Standards Committee, with responsibilities for management of the processes supporting academic standards executed through the Higher Education Team led by the Associate Director: HE Curriculum and Quality who reports to the Deputy Principal: Teaching and Learning. At the operational level responsibility for academic standards resides with the heads of school, each of whom reports to the Director: Curriculum and Standards. Responsibility for managing academic standards and the implementation and management of the underpinning procedures rests with programme teams. Overall arrangements for the management of quality assurance across the provision are ensured through the dedication and commitment of the Higher Education Team, which provides strong support for programmes in terms of operation planning and development.

11        The reporting structure is clear and made explicit to staff in the Academic Handbook. Higher education committees significant in the management of academic standards are the Higher Education Academic Standards Committee, the Higher Education Management Forum and the Higher Education Operations Forum. The terms of reference make clear the role, composition and reporting structure of these committees. Information to assure the management of academic standards is effectively disseminated through the

Academic Handbook and by the key committees. The College's higher education self-evaluation document forms the basis for college-wide action-planning and is considered by the Higher Education Academic Standards Committee. This document is informed by school summaries, which in turn are informed by the programme coordinator and module tutor reports. All reports are detailed and evaluative and use clear action-planning to identify and allocate responsibilities for the actions.

12      Overall, the College has developed a separate higher education quality system, with a precise and well-organised management structure, reporting processes and clear lines of communications between the various levels of the management. Senior management has been highly diligent and committed to ensure that there is a robust system for the oversight of higher education and that all staff participate in the process. The regular publication of the informative Higher Education Newsletter facilitates communications with staff and students. The College's strong leadership in the management of higher education and its success in engaging staff in the process, so that they have a sense of involvement and ownership, is good practice.

13      The College is effective in gathering student feedback using a range of methods, for example college-wide focus groups, mini-surveys, benchmarked programme evaluation questionnaires and team-based module feedback. Feedback is generally positive and where action needs to be taken there are well-defined procedures for responding to students. Students spoke positively about these responses and how they are encouraged to be involved in the quality processes. Student engagement is used effectively in the management of academic standards.

14      Despite the otherwise robustness of the management of higher education, there is one area that requires attention. The average overall success rate for programmes is 64 per cent for the period 2008-10. While one programme has an excellent success rate of 100 per cent, there are several that fall below 64 per cent. The progression rates for the 2009-10 first year cohort moving into the second year shows much improvement following the College's efforts to provide more support for students. While not all programmes and schools paid sufficient attention to success rates in their annual reviews, other college processes, including the Higher Education fora and the Leeds Metropolitan University annual planning event ensure that action is taken to address issues, including closure or major modifications to programmes. The Higher Education Team is aware of the need for the annual monitoring at programme and school levels to address low success rates. It presented the team with success rates for each year and, when requested, provided the overall rates for each programme and for the whole higher education provision. These rates demonstrated more clearly students' progress from the start to the completion of their programmes. The College had raised the need for clearer data from the University of Derby assessment boards, and this was noted in the University of Derby's Partnership Review (2010) where it recommended that 'a systematic method for monitoring and compiling student performances on all programmes and modules' should be established. The College provided an action plan to address the poor success rates. The matter was also raised at the Academic Standards Committee in July and November 2010 and will be discussed again at its next meeting. It will also be addressed at the next College Management Group meeting. It is recommended as advisable that the College continue to monitor, and take appropriate action on, student success rates and ensure that through the annual monitoring process, all programme and school annual reports better reflect success rates and address low success rates where they occur.

**What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?**

15      The College engages effectively with the Academic Infrastructure and the helpful introduction in the Academic Handbook ensures staff awareness. The College also ensures that QAA Circulars on revisions to Academic Infrastructure are communicated to staff. The FHEQ and subject benchmark statements are promoted to teams through heads of school, through staff development events and awarding body activities. Staff spoke clearly about their use of the Academic Infrastructure in developing programmes. In particular, effective use is made of the *Foundation Degree benchmark statement* in the development of Foundation Degrees. The *Code of practice* is used to guide programme development, for example, *Section 6: Assessment of students* and *Section 4: External examining.* Staff also demonstrated how the subject benchmark statements provided helpful guidance when developing programmes for approval.

16      Programme specifications are in place for all programmes and made available to students. These are embedded in handbooks for University of Derby programmes and provided separately for Leeds Metropolitan University and Edexcel programmes. The Academic Infrastructure is clearly referenced in programme specifications through the validation, revalidation and approval process with partner universities. The most recent example where this is demonstrated is by the FdSc Construction and the FdA Operational Management (Service Industries).

**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      The College and the awarding bodies work well together to ensure that academic standards are secure. The formal agreements in place with the University of Derby and Leeds Metropolitan University clearly identify roles and responsibilities. The College also offers a number of Edexcel programmes approved in the Edexcel statement. Leeds Metropolitan University is responsible for the standards of its awards and the quality assurance of programmes leading to those awards. Annual review and monitoring are undertaken using College processes and conducted in alignment with University regulations.

18      Responsibilities of the College and the University of Derby are clearly identified in the UK Collaborative Working Contract and the operations manuals. The operations manuals for each programme clearly outline the responsibility for management roles. The University of Derby retains overall responsibility for academic management, delivery and control of each programme and for maintenance, monitoring and evaluation of academic standards. Responsibility for the quality of provision resides with the College with monitoring of standards through the Academic Standards Committee.

19      The College and awarding bodies work effectively together when validating new programmes. New provision is discussed with partners prior to the planning approval process and is formally approved through the College's Academic Standards Committee. Planned developments are aligned with the College's higher education strategy. Recent validations for both awarding bodies indicate that the process is a thorough and shared activity.

20      The College is required to provide annual reports to the awarding bodies. For Leeds Metropolitan University programmes, annual review and monitoring are undertaken using College processes and conducted in alignment with University regulations. For awards of the University of Derby, programme coordinators provide an annual monitoring report which is informed by the module reports prepared by module tutors.

21      The College's responsibilities for assessment are carried out in an efficient and secure manner. Actions and outcomes arising from external examiner reports are reported at College level. Prior to this, external examiner reports and responses are monitored by the Associate Director and reported to Academic Standards Committee. Matters for action identified in external examiner reports are included in action plans at module and programme levels. These are monitored by the schools and addressed through annual monitoring. In all cases, the College and awarding bodies work well together to ensure that external examiners receive full responses to their reports.

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

22      There are effective processes in place for staff development to support standards. The College is committed to an approach to staff development that ensures that higher education receives a dedicated emphasis and has delivered a range of opportunities with a higher education focus. The role of the Learning Consultant, with a specific remit for higher education, is significant in the strategy. Development sessions are provided in-house and by the awarding bodies. The College has been responsive to awarding body recommendations regarding the scholarly activity by introducing a Research Group. The newly formed People Development Steering Group has reviewed the needs of higher education staff. Staff development activities are monitored and evaluated and satisfaction levels are high. The well attended Higher Education development days are central to generating a higher education ethos in the College. The latest included providing feedback on assessments and learning and teaching in higher education. Evaluation of staff development showed a 90 per cent level of satisfaction. In particular, staff responses were highly positive for the sessions on 'Introduction to Higher Education Delivery' and 'Teaching the Higher Education Way'. There are cross-college workshops to facilitate the sharing of good practice.

23      New staff are supported through an induction and mentoring programme. Other examples of staff development include peer observation, moderation days and cross-moderation events. Staff development related to assessment is provided by the awarding bodies. This includes moderation events and reports on the appropriateness and level of feedback. Support for staff includes attendance at conferences and postgraduate development with staff studying for higher degrees in areas such as education, law, learning and teaching and business. All staff are members of the Institute for Learning.

**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?**

24      The management and reporting arrangements for the quality of learning opportunities are those stated in paragraphs 10 to 14.

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

25      How the College assures itself that it is fulfilling its obligations to its awarding bodies to ensure that students receive appropriate learning opportunities is stated in paragraphs 17 to 21.

**What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?**

26      How the College takes account of the Academic Infrastructure is stated in paragraphs 15 and 16. With reference to learning opportunities, the College has paid particular attention to the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning* in developing this mode of learning in its Foundation Degrees and in establishing its Work Related Learning Group. Reference is also made to *Section 3: Disabled students* and *Section 10: Admissions to higher education* in developing support systems for students.

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

27      The College's Teaching, Training and Learning Coaching Programme applies to higher as well as further education. Staff are well supported by the Learning Consultant, who works with individuals or groups of staff to help drive up or maintain the quality of teaching and learning. All staff are observed each year, with some additional observations conducted by the awarding bodies. Classes tend to be small and friendly with approachable and encouraging tutors. This helps those students who have been out of education for a long period. A wide range of training activities is undertaken by staff to maintain and update teaching techniques, including work-based learning and the use of information technology. All staff have, or are working towards, teacher training qualifications.

28      The College has developed a wide range of Foundation Degrees and the Work Related Learning Group monitors student learning in the workplace. The College has been successful in working with employers to provide suitable placements for students in a range of occupations appropriate for the Foundation Degrees. Students spoke positively of their experiences especially how they were able to link theory and practice and develop their knowledge and skills in the workplace. Learning opportunities are enhanced by these opportunities.

29      The College takes seriously the views of students on learning and teaching and has a range of mechanisms to ensure that student comments about the quality of teaching and learning are identified and acted upon. For example, students' access to study skills support has been improved. Student representatives attend programme committees. The logistics of larger numbers and more cohorts has led to a revision of the approach to noting student views. Through its Student Voice facility, the College has sought to maintain the opportunities for both individual and group feedback, while improving processing and response times. In particular, focus groups are held with student representatives, and a series of emailed mini-surveys is planned which will collate individual feedback on a range of themes. All programmes analyse student feedback at the end of each module. Students comment that they are treated and respected as mature people. They regard learning and teaching as challenging, stimulating and supportive.

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

30      The College has well-organised procedures for guidance and support at all stages of students' learning. Responsibility for the preprogramme information and recruitment of students rests with the Higher Education Team. The College deals with all of its applications directly and does not participate in the UCAS admissions system. All preprogramme processes were revised and streamlined for applicants for September 2010. Applicants are invited to an application event where all appropriate guidance and counselling is offered. The College recognises the particular support needs of many non-traditional entrants at the preapplication stage. It provides supportive face-to-face interviews, augmented by a detailed information pack. Applicants who accept places are invited to a series of 'keep warm' activities, which include the lecture series 'Get, set, go' tasters and initial contact with the Study Skills Coach through the summer school programme. This helps build students' confidence, especially for those students who are returning to study. The support is highly appropriate for the College's widening access strategy.

31      Induction arrangements are thorough and supportive. They are spread over several weeks to meet the needs of part-time students more effectively. There is a consistent approach to inductions with a checklist for programme teams. Students receive copies of the programme and module handbooks, which provide information on programme aims and outcomes, programme administration, and assessment regulations. The handbooks and more detailed support documents are also made available on the virtual learning environment. All students have access either in the handbook or on the virtual learning environment to relevant policies relating to academic misconduct and mitigating circumstances. Students are generally well informed about academic expectations. The Study Skills Coach provides dedicated support for students during induction and throughout the programme. Workshops are offered throughout the year as part of the study support activity and students can book or be referred for one-to-one support. Much of this support is also linked to the personal and professional development modules.

32      There are clear procedures on support for assessment. The setting and adhering to deadlines and the quality of feedback is well organised. The College is aware of a problem with the delays to assignment marking and feedback on the Graduate/Professional Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector and is addressing this with the awarding body. The Developmental engagement noted that the assessment strategy includes the effective use of formative and summative assessments. Students confirmed that the scheduling of assessments was well organised to enable students to plan their learning.

33      Support is also available through the central teams in Student Services, the Learning Resource Centre and from the Additional Learning Support Team. This is signposted in information provided to students, including programme handbooks and the Higher Education Survival Guide, which are also available on the College's intranet. Key to the success of student support is the role of the Higher Education Team in facilitating access to other support areas. Of special note is the usefulness of the Higher Education Survival Guide, Passport to Higher Education Summer Schools and the effectiveness of the support for students with learning difficulties. Their needs are identified early and they receive dedicated staff or other resource support to support their studies, for example, special equipment for students with visual impairment, dyslexia assessment and provision of suitably trained support assistants. A feature of good practice is the high quality of support for students, especially during the application and induction processes and for students with learning difficulties or disabilities.

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

34      The College's arrangements for staff development are noted in paragraphs 22 and 23.

**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?**

35      The College recognises the need to provide high quality resources for its students, and over the last four years has increased the provision of dedicated higher education areas. There are Higher Education Zones on five of its sites to provide social/self-study areas for students. These create visibility for higher education as part of the College's approach to attract students and widen participation. The College has learning resource centres at each of its two main sites where the majority of the programmes are delivered. Additional collections of resources are located at the Sovereign Way site where HNC/D programmes in engineering are delivered and at the higher education centre at Station Park where programmes in teacher training and construction are delivered. Support is provided by well qualified and experienced staff who have a clear understanding of the learning resource needs of higher education students. The Learning Resource Centre staff have representation on the Operations Forum and the Management Forum and attend programme committee meetings. Students comment favourably on the overall quality of the resources available to support their learning.

36      Staff at the learning resource centres provide full support for students on library research. Computer workshops are also available in the IT Centres. Students comment that library facilities are sufficient and easily accessible. Laptops have recently been provided for some students. Electronic links are available to a range of library and learning resources provided by the awarding bodies. Students are generally satisfied with the range and accessibility of resources provided by awarding bodies and expressed appreciation of the value of inductions to resources at the campuses. Students are positive about the use made of the virtual learning environment, which provide students with access to learning materials, discussion forums, and assessment tasks and feedback at any time, either from the College or at home. Programmes have adopted different systems in order to meet the requirements of their students and subject areas with quite imaginative use of the virtual learning environment to enhance the student experience. All programmes are well resourced and staff are able to bid for an allocation of additional resources to programmes. There are very positive links between the programme teams and the resource centre support services. A feature of good practice is the College's strategy to establish an ethos, through its management of learning resources, which ensures students have an appropriate higher education learning experience.

**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 College publishes an extensive range of documents to support its higher education provision. The Higher Education Prospectus is produced in-house by the marketing team led by the Head of Marketing and Promotions. Students are issued with programme and module handbooks. These are available in hard copy and on the College's virtual learning environment. There is a checklist of essential contents for these. Handbooks for Edexcel and Leeds Metropolitan University validated programmes are produced to a College-devised template designed by the College marketing team with information provided by awarding bodies and programme teams and signed off by the Associate Director. These are designed specifically for College students and contain necessary information for study at the College. The template ensures consistency for each programme. The handbooks provide comprehensive information about the programme modules, academic standards, assessment and general College information. The handbooks are well-designed, user-friendly documents. The College produces Learning Resource Centre Guides for each programme. These are produced to a common format and include a relevant list of journals and audio-visual resources, details of university library services, and useful websites.

38      The College is responsible for a comprehensive range of information, advice and guidance material for prospective students and applicants. This includes presentation materials used by staff to provide information to prospective applicants. Information on fees, assessment, the student experience at the College and staff contacts is clear and informative. The College provides an impressive range of materials for students, including a Welcome Pack, a Survival Guide, Study Skills Guides, IT Guide and details of induction events. There is a termly Newsletter compiled by the Higher Education Team. Material produced for staff includes the Academic Handbook and a booklet for preparing and supporting students in the transition to higher education. A feature of good practice is the high quality of the information, advice and guidance material provided by the Higher Education Team for prospective students, applicants and new students at induction, including the Higher Education Information Pack and Welcome Pack, which is highly supportive of students.

**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?**

39      There is a rigorous system for ensuring the accuracy and completeness of information. For the prospectus, details of individual programmes are supplied by programme teams. The accuracy and currency of information are monitored by each head of school who signs off the documents. Information for the higher education provision is monitored and approved by the Associate Director. The same process of monitoring and approval is used for information on the College website. Any subsequent revisions or amendments can only be made by the Associate Director. Drafts of the prospectus are sent to awarding universities for their approval of any sections which refer to their institution, their awards or which incorporate their logos.

40      Programme and module handbooks for Edexcel and Leeds Metropolitan University validated programmes are designed by the College's marketing team with information provided by awarding bodies and programme teams and signed off by the Associate Director. Programme and module handbooks for University of Derby validated programmes are produced and approved by the University. Some of these are designed specifically for

College students, others are designed for university students with little reference or specific information for College students. The College has requested that the University should be aware of the need to contextualise handbooks for College students. Programme specifications are produced to a College template and signed off by the Associate Director.

41       All documents relating to applications and inductions are produced by the Marketing and Promotions Team and signed off by the Associate Director. The learning resource guides are produced by the learning resource staff with input from programme teams. They are checked by the Associate Director who ensures that programme titles and other details are correct and signs off all guides.

42       Students confirm that they are satisfied with the quality and accuracy of published information including the prospectus, website, information packs, guides, handbooks and assessment details. The Higher Education Team works well with the Marketing and Promotion Team, which maintains a continuous scrutiny of materials to ensure 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 Development engagement took place in December 2009. The lines of enquiry were:

**Line of enquiry 1:** How does the College manage its internal verification processes for the range of its programmes?

**Line of enquiry 2:** Is feedback constructive and timely, and does it promote both student learning and academic development?

**Line of enquiry 3:** How does the College ensure that information on assessment (especially that relating to the Personal and Professional Development modules and work-based and work-related learning) is accurate and understood by students?

44       The Developmental engagement identified six areas of good practice. The contribution of the Learning Consultant is particularly strong in supporting new staff and staff on new programmes in developing feedback techniques. The use of summer schools support students' transition to higher education and helps to advance the College's widening participation strategy. This was especially so on the FDs in Hairdressing and Salon Management and Spa (Therapies), where students enter the higher education programmes with NVQ3 qualifications, but are well prepared by the College for higher education assessments. The assessment strategy for the FdA Business Improvement Techniques meets the needs of the business and its part-time students through the careful scheduling of highly relevant assignments, with industrial mentors providing expert feedback to students. In the Personal and Professional Development modules for Foundation Degrees, validated by Leeds Metropolitan University, a tutorial activity develops the students' understanding of the use of feedback through a learning task using existing feedback. The Personal and Professional Development Group and the Work-Related Learning Working Group ensure consistency of assessment practices and students' work-related experiences across the

diversity of FDs. The HND Performing Arts handbook is a well-designed document and includes a clear presentation of assessment information.

45      There were two desirable recommendations. The first was to provide overall assessment schedules and assignments for the whole year in programme handbooks to enable students to plan their work more effectively. College policy required this, but not all handbooks provided the clarity of information needed. As the Developmental engagement team noted, the HND Performing Arts programme handbook is a model of good practice. Programme staff are working with the marketing team to produce handbooks across the College using this model for Edexcel and Leeds Metropolitan University programmes. For University of Derby programmes, the handbooks are provided by the University. The second was to provide word-processed written feedback to students on the feedback sheets. The College has consulted with students, and where this model is not adopted, the College requires staff to confirm this with students, and to ensure that any handwritten feedback is legible. The majority of courses have adopted this approach and the formal assessment hand-in sheet has been modified to reflect this. There was a well-received workshop at the Annual Planning Day held in July, which included how to provide feedback and annotation on scripts.

# D      Foundation Degrees

46      At the time of the review, the College offered 16 Foundation Degrees in the following areas: business and management; children's and young people's services; computing; construction; engineering; education; hair and beauty; public service; and sport. The degrees are awarded by Leeds Metropolitan University and the University of Derby. There is a total of 335 FTEs. The development of FDs is in line with the College's higher education strategy. The College works well with employers from the public and private sectors to secure appropriate learning experiences in the workplace. The majority of Foundation Degrees have high levels of recruitment and, where this has not been the case, the College has taken action to close programmes and develop new ones.

47      The team's findings and conclusions relate to all the College's higher education provision, including the Foundation Degrees, that it offers on behalf of its awarding bodies.

# E      Conclusions and summary of judgements

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

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

- there is strong leadership in the College's management of higher education and it is successful in engaging staff in the process, so that they have a sense of involvement and ownership (paragraph 12)
- there is high quality of support for students, especially during the application and induction processes, and for students with learning difficulties or disabilities (paragraph 33)

- the College's strategy to establish an ethos, through its management of learning resources, ensures students have an appropriate higher education learning experience (paragraph 36)
- the high quality of the information, advice and guidance material provided by the Higher Education Team for prospective students, applicants and new students at induction, including the Higher Education Information Pack and Welcome Pack, is highly supportive of students (paragraph 38).

50      The team also makes a recommendation for consideration by the College and its awarding bodies.

51      The team agreed an area where the College is **advised** to take action:

- to continue to monitor, and take appropriate action on, student success rates and ensure that through the annual monitoring process, all programme and school annual reports better reflect success rates and address low success rates where they occur (paragraph 14).

52      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.

53      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.

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

| West Nottinghamshire College action plan relating to the Summative review: December 2010 | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Good practice** | **Action to be taken** | **Target date** | **Action by** | **Success indicators** | **Reported to** | **Evaluation** |
| In the course of the Summative review the ream identified the following areas of **good practice** that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College: | | | | | | |
| • there is strong leadership in the College's management of higher education and it is successful in engaging staff in the process, so that they have a sense of involvement and ownership (paragraph 12) | Review higher education committee structures annually<br><br>Maintain higher education focus within staff development strategy | Summer 2011, and annually thereafter | Associate Director: Higher Education Curriculum & Quality | Maintain involvement in & ownership of across college | Higher Education Academic Standards Committee | Higher Education Team Business Support Self-Assessment Report<br><br>Internal review process (higher education and other support teams) |
| • there is high quality of support for students, especially during the application and induction processes and for students with learning difficulties or disabilities (paragraph 33) | Continue to develop support strategies, both pre and on-course<br><br>Extend good practice with Additional Learning Support Team to other | Summer 2011, and ongoing | Higher Education Development Manager (with Higher Education Study Skills Coach)<br><br>Support area managers | Improved retention | Associate Director: Higher Education Curriculum & Quality<br><br>Higher Education Fora | Student feedback |

| | cross-college support teams | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| • the College's strategy to establish an ethos, through its management of learning resources, ensures students have an appropriate higher education learning experience (paragraph 36) | Complete scheduled internal review of Learning Resource Centre | February 2011 | Quality Teaching Learning & Performance Team | Improved achievement on course, & post-course progression | Higher Education Academic Standards Committee | Annual Monitoring Reports process |
| | Review provision of learning resources in the light of changing demand/student expectations | July 2012 | Associate Director: Higher Education Curriculum & Quality | | | |
| • the high quality of the information, advice and guidance material provided by the Higher Education Team for prospective students, applicants and new students at induction, including the Higher Education Information Pack and Welcome Pack, is highly supportive of students (paragraph 38). | Review and update information materials<br><br>Develop an 'Employers' Guide to HE at WNC' | July 2011, and annually | Higher Education Development Manager | Positive recruitment process<br><br>Potential improved retention<br><br>Improved employer involvement | Associate Director: Higher Education Curriculum & Quality<br><br>Higher Education Fora | Student feedback<br><br>Annual Monitoring Reports |

| 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: | | | | | | |
| • to continue to monitor, and take appropriate action on, student success rates and ensure that through the annual monitoring process, all programme and school annual reports better reflect success rates and address low success rates where they occur (paragraph 14). | Revise annual monitoring templates to make explicit the analytical framework for success rates<br><br>Continue to work to establish internal benchmarks | Summer 2011 | AD: Higher Education Curriculum & Quality | Annual monitoring reports better reflect at each reporting level the discussion and action taken | Higher Education Academic Standards Committee | Review any impact on success rates |