



**QAA**

## **Integrated quality and enhancement review**

### **Summative review**

September 2009

Aylesbury 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 Aylesbury College carried out in September 2009

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

### Good practice

The team has identified the following good practice for dissemination:

- the recruitment of a higher education governor is an innovative means of supporting the development of higher education in the College
- the thoroughness with which internal verification processes are carried out is highly effective in ensuring academic standards
- the use of advanced practitioners supports the enhancement of higher education teaching and learning through the range of support and guidance the advanced practitioners provide
- the College's Marketing Coordinator spends one day a week working at the Buckinghamshire New University Campus and this facilitates and supports the development of appropriate and accurate information within the College.

### 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:

- review the effectiveness of the committee structure, particularly the remit of the Higher Education Group, to ensure full consideration of higher education matters and the dissemination of good practice
- the College should review mechanisms so that higher education matters are clearly reported on at all levels of the quality cycle to minimise the potential for higher education issues to be overlooked.

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

- formalise and record procedures for identifying and addressing higher education staff development needs across the provision
- introduce a more formal system to check the accuracy and completeness of public information.



## A Introduction and context

1 This report presents the findings of the Summative review of higher education funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) conducted at Aylesbury 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 that the College delivers on behalf of Oxford Brookes University and Buckinghamshire New University. The review was carried out by Mr Maldwyn Buckland and Ms Claire Blanchard (reviewers), and Dr Susan Hill (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, a meeting with staff and students, reports of reviews by QAA and from inspections by Ofsted. As the College has a small higher education provision there has been no Developmental engagement, and the team undertook a desk-based Summative review which did not involve a visit to the College. 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 awards, Section D of this report summarises details of the programmes delivered at the College.

4 The College, founded in 1962, is a medium-sized general college of further education. The College is situated close to the centre of Aylesbury in Oxford Road. The College provides an essential service to its local and wider community. It is the single provider of 16 to 18 year-old full-time education and training in Aylesbury and the second largest provider of apprenticeship programmes in the county. The College also services the wider community of Buckinghamshire and its border areas, parts of Bedfordshire and Oxfordshire. The College has formal strategic partnerships with Buckinghamshire New University and Oxford Brookes University for its joint provision of higher education. The College has made significant investment in new premises, with some support from the Learning and Skills Council, and moved into new premises in 2006-07.

5 In 2008-09, the College had a total enrolment of 5,500 students of whom 200 were studying full-time. In the same year, 157 students (134.5 full-time equivalents) were following HEFCE-funded higher education programmes. Provision at the time of the review was as follows:

### Buckinghamshire New University

- Foundation Degree (FD) Business Management (8)
- FSc Computing (13)
- FD Spa and Therapy Management (9)
- FD Early Years (29)

- FD Working with Children and Young People (23)
- FD Hospitality Management (7)
- Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (17.5)
- Certificate in Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (5)

### **Oxford Brookes University**

- FD Classroom Support (23).

### **Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies**

6 Buckinghamshire New University is the College's main partner and awards the majority of the higher education programmes offered. Oxford Brookes University awards the FD Classroom Support. All programmes, apart from the FD Spa and Therapy Management and the FD Hospitality Management, are also offered at other partner colleges of the universities. The College is responsible for the day-to-day operation, administration and management of the programmes in accordance with the partnership agreements and the awarding bodies' operations manuals.

### **Recent developments in higher education at the College**

7 Higher education student numbers have increased by 50 per cent since 2006-07 in response to local market demand in health and care settings and teacher training. As a result, the College introduced FDs in Early Years, Classroom Support, and Working with Children and Young People, as well as the Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector. The three Foundation Degrees accounted for 59 per cent of HEFCE-funded numbers in 2008-09. The College plans to expand its Foundation Degree provision over the next 10 years.

### **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 team, but elected not to do so. However, the College provided notes from focus groups where students had discussed their programmes. The coordinator met and discussed the team's queries with two students at the preparatory meeting.

## **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 overall management of higher education academic standards within the College is delegated to the Deputy Director of Teaching and Learning who, in the role of Higher Education Coordinator, is supported by the Director of Quality and Learner Services and the Vice Principal Teaching and Learning. The Deputy Director reports to both the College Directorate through the Vice Principal Teaching and Learning and to partner institutions.

10 As a result of an internal wider review of governance, a member of the governing body has agreed to work with the Deputy Director of Teaching and Learning to raise the profile of higher education within the College through the development of the new Higher Education Strategy. The governor has a specific remit to look at higher education matters. The team found that the recruitment of a higher education governor of the College is an innovative means of supporting the development of higher education in the College and is an example of good practice.

11 The College's higher education provision is organised into seven curriculum areas and managed by heads of curriculum who have responsibility for the management and coordination of curriculum and quality improvement plans. Each curriculum area within the College aligns with the appropriate faculty of the College's partner universities.

12 The College's committee structure includes a range of strategic and operational groups. Curriculum team meetings, chaired by the heads of curriculum, monitor curriculum area quality improvement plans each month. Heads of curriculum take overall responsibility for the management of the quality assurance of higher education programmes, systems and processes, and ensure that all actions to be addressed are included within the quality improvement plan. Quality assurance procedures are implemented in line with the requirements of the College higher education curriculum calendar and the Buckinghamshire New University course operational timeline. Both the calendar and timeline documents confirm key deadline dates for quality assurance processes such as external examiner visits, moderation scheduling and the annual review and evaluation. The curriculum team meeting also provides a valuable forum for the exploration and discussion of a range of other higher education issues, such as the academic review day at the College, provided by staff from Buckinghamshire New University.

13 Course leaders within curriculum areas are responsible for the operational management of individual programmes and report to heads of curriculum. A key responsibility for course leaders is the chairing of course committee meetings, which occur once a term and comprise the Deputy Director of Teaching and Learning, course team members, awarding body representatives and student representatives. An example of the work of this group is to consider course leader reports and give, at appropriate stages, an overview of the annual review and evaluation report and responses to external examiner reports. Outcomes of the course committee meetings are reported to heads of curriculum and partner university faculties. The course committee meetings are effective in monitoring academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities at programme level, and the committee reports to the Higher Education Group.

14 Heads of curriculum have one-to-one meetings with the Vice Principal, Teaching and Learning, to monitor issues within quality improvement plans. While this is a useful process, the team considers that individual discussions preclude a wider input from academic staff and may result in missed opportunities to share good practice more widely.

15 The Higher Education Group, a cross-college subcommittee of the curriculum management team, meets on a monthly basis and is chaired by the Deputy Director of Teaching and Learning. Terms of reference for this cross-college group confirm that one of its key responsibilities is to monitor the effectiveness of the higher education provision.

16 Minutes of the Higher Education Group, however, indicate that there is some disparity between the terms of reference and the discharge of its duties, with no indication that issues arising from course committee meetings are systematically considered, evaluated and reported to the curriculum management team. The team found evidence that issues from

the Higher Education Group are reported directly to the College Directorate through the Deputy Director of Teaching and Learning, rather than being discussed formally in a wider forum. The team considers it advisable for the College to review the effectiveness of the committee structure, particularly the remit of the Higher Education Group, to ensure the full consideration of higher education matters and the dissemination of good practice.

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

17 At programme level the use of the Academic Infrastructure, often applied under the guidance of partner awarding bodies, is embedded in the design, validation, approval and delivery of all higher education programmes. Examples of this collaboration can be seen in the production of programme specifications and assignment briefs. The *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark* has clearly been taken into account in the design of modules and assessment tasks in, for example, the FD Hospitality Management.

18 Staff articulating with the Higher Education Group have had the opportunity to participate in a series of workshops relating to the *Code of practice*, published by QAA. For example, a workshop on assessment and external examining, as part of an academic review day at the College, was developed and delivered by academic staff from Buckinghamshire New University.

### **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?**

19 The College has representation at management level on strategic groups of its partner institutions. The Deputy Director of Teaching and Learning, in addition to internal College responsibilities, actively participates in a range of partner institution groups and committees. Attendance at faculty boards, the Course Academic Subcommittee, boards of examiners and the Academic Planning Committee, has facilitated the development of a clear understanding of awarding body requirements, and further strengthened the overview of the College's higher education provision in relation to the management of standards and quality.

20 Partnership agreements outline the College's responsibilities as defined by its two awarding bodies, where links have been consolidated on the basis of both College and university staff subject expertise in relevant academic areas. All higher education programmes delivered by the College are supported by university liaison tutors. Close working relationships have developed between College and awarding body staff, and this has supported the production and approval of a range of collaborative projects including, for example, the development of programme specifications and assignment briefs. These close working relationships between College higher education staff and the awarding bodies are a strength that contributes to the currency of the programmes.

21 Systems for standardising, moderating and internally verifying student work and assessment procedures for higher education programmes are implemented effectively within the College. Moderation procedures meet the requirements of the awarding bodies and contribute to the maintenance of academic standards. This is confirmed by external examiners who have commented favourably on the thoroughness of the internal verification process.

22 The University has overall responsibility for the moderation of the assessment process, with consideration of student work undertaken by university-appointed external examiners. Each programme receives two visits from an external examiner on a yearly basis. The external examiner provides the awarding body with a detailed report which is passed to the College and feeds into programme and curriculum-level quality improvements.

23 External examiner reports for the FD Early Years confirm that the assessment and moderation process is rigorous, and marking is fair and consistent. In addition, external examiners for the Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector programme commented on the application of a thorough and robust internal verification system. All student portfolios were identified as correctly assessed, with relevant and appropriate feedback provided to students.

24 The team confirmed that the processes for managing the internal verification of higher education programmes are comprehensive and effective, and agree with external examiners that programmes afford appropriate challenge for students. The team concluded that the College's procedures for, and implementation of, internal verification are successful in ensuring academic standards, and that this is an example of good practice.

25 Central to the quality assurance of higher education provision is the annual review and evaluation process through which the College confirms that it is fulfilling its responsibilities to its awarding bodies. Course leaders prepare evaluative annual course reviews, incorporating external examiner reports, student feedback and performance data. These result in action plans that draw on responses made to the preceding report. In the FD Hospitality Management, recommendations from external examiners to improve the quality of the induction on academic writing to new students have been effectively implemented and monitored. In the FD Spa Management, the course leader's report included a review of the annual review and evaluation, staffing, assessment and recruitment and retention. Course reviews feed into the curriculum area self-assessment and quality improvement plan, while the annual review and evaluation feeds into the College and awarding body self-assessment reports.

26 Annual review and evaluation at programme level is evaluative and effective in the maintenance of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. However, above programme level, reference to higher education was not always clear, and the team considers it advisable for the College to review mechanisms so that higher education matters are clearly reported on at all levels of the quality cycle to minimise the potential for higher education issues to be overlooked. The College may wish to consider the introduction of an annual higher education self-assessment report as a means of having a clear overview of higher education provision.

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

27 The College's Higher Education in Further Education Strategy confirms that it provides appropriate opportunities for academic staff working on higher education programmes to undertake scholarly activity in accordance with awarding body requirements. The College and validating partners actively participate in the provision of staff development opportunities in support of the achievement and maintenance of academic standards. Teachers involved in the delivery and assessment of learning are able to access staff development opportunities with both partner institutions. For example, University experience days on the Academic Infrastructure and assignment writing have been held at Buckinghamshire New University.

**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?**

28 Responsibilities for managing and reporting on higher education are discussed in paragraphs 9 to 16 of this report. The team found that responsibilities are managed effectively and that a range of learning opportunities is available.

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

29 The College is responsible to its awarding bodies for ensuring that the quality of the student experience and the academic standards of the courses are comparable with equivalent courses at the universities. This includes arrangements as detailed in the awarding bodies' operations manuals for nomination and approval of the College's tutors, for the admission, registration and enrolment of students and for monitoring programmes, including student feedback and annual review and evaluation. The College Quality Improvement Strategy is aligned to the awarding bodies' quality assurance procedures as outlined in the awarding bodies' operations manuals. The College works closely with its partners to check, for example, timetables and learning resources; and formal course committee meetings, held once a term with attendance from partner university colleagues and student representatives, ensure that learning opportunities are being provided in line with awarding body requirements.

30 This question is also discussed under Core theme 1 in paragraphs 19, 20, 25 and 26 of this report.

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

31 The awarding bodies require that courses delivered at partner colleges meet university regulations and the *Code of practice*. The College engages with the *Code of practice* through the development of higher education programmes. Specifically in relation to learning opportunities, under guidance from its partner universities, the College takes account of the precepts for work placement practice, workplace mentors and supporting students with disabilities. Programme specifications are used to inform and develop course handbooks, schemes of work, assessment schedules, assessment practice and learning plans.

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

32 The College's Teaching and Learning Strategy is written in generic terms and would benefit from including a greater focus on higher education programmes. The main focus of the strategy is on further education delivery and pedagogy.

33 The College has a robust internal learning Observation Scheme which includes higher education teaching. The Learning Observation Scheme is managed by the Director of Quality and Learner Services. Teaching staff are observed twice each year, with at least one

of these being undertaken by their head of curriculum. Learning observations are seen as an important vehicle for the continuous professional development of teaching staff and integral to the Quality Improvement Strategy of the College. Graded learning observations are undertaken prior to the annual staff performance and development review so that the outcome of the learning observations can be discussed as part of the review.

34 In September 2007, the College invested in an advanced practitioner model with the purpose of raising the standard of teaching and learning, and enhancing the learner experience. Seven advanced practitioners are managed through the Quality Team led by the Teacher Education and Professional Development Leader and deployed to curriculum areas according to need and expertise, with their teaching remaining within their own curriculum specialism. Each advanced practitioner has undertaken a range of training and development to fulfil the role.

35 Advanced practitioners undertake a minimum of one developmental observation on each teacher within their curriculum area. The focus is on encouraging teachers to be innovative and creative in their teaching and learning. Advanced practitioners successfully provide coaching and mentoring to individual teachers to secure improvements in teaching and learning.

36 In the 18 months since the advanced practitioner model was introduced, there has been a significant improvement in teaching and learning and the student learning experience. The role is valued by teaching staff and future developments include the expansion of the Subject Learning Coach programme. The use of advanced practitioners supports the enhancement of higher education teaching and learning through the range of support and guidance the advanced practitioners provide. This is an example of good practice.

37 The College is also part of a consortium with the Colleges of Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire. The consortium provides external verification of teaching and learning standards through an independent body of trained observers and quality assurance professionals. The College is an active member of the Westminster Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training, which supports staff to develop and disseminate teaching and learning practice. The team finds that the College has a number of mechanisms that are effective in assuring the quality of teaching and learning.

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

38 The College recognises the importance of tutorial support for all students. Tutorial provision plays a key role in encouraging student retention and success. The skills, commitment and relationship between student and course/personal tutors are central to successful learning and a positive learning experience. All students are entitled to a programme of tutorial support appropriate to their needs and to the demands of the course. From the meeting with students and the student focus group notes, it is apparent that students are satisfied with the support they receive.

39 The College has an excellent Learner Services team who are easily accessible and, where appropriate, refer students to external support agencies; students mainly confirmed that they were able to access these services. The College also provides an additional learning support service for learners with a range of additional needs. The service can provide support for learners with a learning difficulty, disability, medical condition or mental health condition. Support may include extra tutorials, extensions for assignments, copies of all notes in advance, specialist equipment and examination access arrangements. The College Additional Learner Support Manager works proactively with the College Higher Education Group to

inform staff of available support. Students are made aware of the additional support, which is available to them at interview, through the prospectus and at induction.

40 The team found that the College ensures all students are supported effectively through its embedded internal policies and procedures.

41 Students' views are sought through module evaluations, course committee meetings, group tutorials, the College learner survey and the College comments and complaints procedure. In the Quality Improvement Plan, the College actively seeks and acts upon the views and opinions of students to improve the student learning experience. Surveys of the student experience are conducted three times a year, is systematically evaluated and improvements actioned.

42 There is evidence of student feedback being acted upon. For example, feedback from the Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector in 2007-08 requested that module content/delivery reflected more clearly the needs of vocational further education staff. This was resolved through the awarding body away day for the teacher education team and resulted in an approved change to the programme specification and module outline. The action taken was fed back to students at the next course committee meeting.

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

43 The College provides all staff with a comprehensive portfolio of professional development opportunities, although not many are higher education focused. However, staff also have opportunities to take part in university experience days at Buckinghamshire New University. For example, staff in the initial teacher training area have attended staff development workshops on mentoring as part of a Buckinghamshire New University familiarisation process. Academic staff delivering on the Certificate in Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector and Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector programmes, are also able to access a range of opportunities through the Centre of Excellence in Teacher Training with the Westminster Institute of Education.

44 In addition, academic staff have been involved in research projects in partnership with awarding bodies. During the current academic year, development work has been undertaken on the Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training Research Project relating to the emotional wellbeing of students. Preparation and planning meetings have established appropriate research methods and activity aligned with agreed timelines. College staff have participated in designing and developing questionnaires and have undertaken a series of scheduled interviews.

45 The College ensures that all teaching staff are registered with the Institute for Learning. All teaching staff are reviewed for compliance with the Institute's requirement for the minimum of 30-hours continuous professional development as part of the annual staff performance and development review. This activity is recorded in a personal e-CPD (electronic continuing professional development) portfolio and these are monitored independently by the Institute.

46 Through the College's performance reviews and continuous professional development, the College ensures all staff recognise the importance of critically reflecting upon the professional practice of themselves and others, that staff evaluate their own and others' performance, and identify opportunities for their personal and professional development through performance measures, reviews and self-assessment. All new staff are supported, developed and assessed through the induction and probation period.

47 However, it is unclear how the College identifies and addresses staff development needs across the higher education teaching team as a whole, rather than for individuals, in order to support the teaching and learning of its higher education provision and disseminate good practice. The team considers it desirable for the College to formalise and record procedures for identifying and addressing higher education staff development needs across the provision.

**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?**

48 The sufficiency and accessibility to learning resources is a requirement for the validation of all higher education programmes. Resources are checked and approved by the relevant awarding body and monitored by university liaison staff. The College Learning Centre provides regular updates for curriculum teams on new resources available and supports teams to source additional learning resources for specific programmes. The College has access to a virtual learning environment at both universities, and is working with the innovation team at Buckinghamshire New University to explore how to use the latest information and communications technology applications when delivering higher education.

49 Student meeting notes confirm that resources in the College are very good. The Learning Centre has recently been upgraded to provide relevant texts and comprehensive reading lists are provided. Opening hours are generally satisfactory and students have good access to computers.

**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?**

50 The College is responsible for publishing accurate information on its HEFCE-funded higher education programmes in the form of programme specifications, student course handbooks and module information. However, its awarding bodies provide the structure and templates for these documents and require the College to follow their procedures. For both awarding bodies, marketing materials must be approved by them prior to publication.

51 The College's Marketing Coordinator works in the Directorate of Marketing, Communications and Recruitment at the Buckinghamshire New University Campus one day a week. This working relationship supports the development of appropriate and accurate published information and is an example of good practice.

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

52 Course leaders prepare programme specifications, module information and course handbooks in accordance with awarding body requirements, which are then checked by heads of curriculum. However, the College relies on its awarding bodies to ensure completeness and accuracy of the information it provides.

53 Awarding bodies' staff contact the Deputy Director of Teaching and Learning direct if there are any queries regarding public information or materials submitted for approval to ensure efficient and accurate resolution, as outlined in the relevant operations manuals. The Deputy Director of Teaching and Learning makes regular checks on the College website and ensures that all marketing materials are approved by the awarding bodies prior to distribution.

54 Feedback from students states that 'public information available on courses is accurate and although there have been discrepancies between some printed and online sources, these have been quickly highlighted and addressed by lecturers'. While these discrepancies were addressed, a more robust system of checking information might be beneficial, particularly given the planned expansion of the College's higher education provision. This system could be embedded within the Higher Education Curriculum Calendar to ensure an overview of higher education-relevant public information. The team considers it desirable for the College to introduce a more formal system to check the accuracy and completeness of public information.

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

## **C Summary of findings from the Developmental engagement in assessment**

55 As the total full-time equivalent students funded by HEFCE at the College is less than 100, in accordance with the published review method, the College elected not to take part in a Developmental engagement.

## **D Foundation Degrees**

56 In 2008-09, the College offered eight Foundation Degrees validated by Buckinghamshire New University and Oxford Brookes University. However, the FDs in Computing, Spa and Therapy Management, and Hospitality Management, will not recruit a new first-year intake in 2009-10 due to capped HEFCE-funded numbers. The College has plans to expand its higher education provision and is exploring the possibility of developing new programmes with additional awarding bodies. In 2008-09, there were 112 full-time students on the programmes, with projected figures of 151 full-time students for 2009-10.

57 The College has an employer engagement strategy with the aim of providing training provision that is responsive to the needs of employers within the business community served by it. This fits in well with the College's move to offer more Foundation Degrees. The College consults widely on any proposed new programme, as evidenced by consultation findings for proposed programmes in Construction Management and Professional Floristry.

58 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.

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

- the recruitment of a higher education governor is an innovative means of supporting the development of higher education in the College (paragraph 10)

- the thoroughness with which internal verification processes are carried out is highly effective in ensuring academic standards (paragraphs 21 to 24)
- the use of advanced practitioners supports the enhancement of higher education teaching and learning through the range of support and guidance the advanced practitioners provide (paragraphs 34 to 36)
- the College's Marketing Coordinator spends one day a week working at the Buckinghamshire New University Campus, and this facilitates and supports the development of appropriate and accurate information within the College (paragraph 51).

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

61 The team agreed two areas where the College is **advised** to take action:

- to review the effectiveness of the committee structure, particularly the remit of the Higher Education Group, to ensure full consideration of higher education matters and the dissemination of good practice (paragraphs 14 to 16)
- to review mechanisms so that higher education matters are clearly reported on at all levels of the quality cycle to minimise the potential for higher education issues to be overlooked (paragraphs 25, 26).

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

- to formalise and record procedures for identifying and addressing higher education staff development needs across the provision (paragraph 47)
- to introduce a more formal system to check the accuracy and completeness of public information (paragraph 54).

## **E Conclusions and summary of judgements**

63 The team has identified a number of features of good practice in the 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, Buckinghamshire New University and Oxford Brookes University.

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

- the recruitment of a higher education governor is an innovative means of supporting the development of higher education in the College (paragraph 10)
- the thoroughness with which internal verification processes are carried out is highly effective in ensuring academic standards (paragraphs 21 to 24)
- the use of advanced practitioners supports the enhancement of higher education teaching and learning through the range of support and guidance the advanced practitioners provide (paragraphs 34 to 36)

- the College's Marketing Coordinator spends one day a week working at the Buckinghamshire New University Campus, and this facilitates and supports the development of appropriate and accurate information within the College (paragraph 51).

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

66 The team agreed two areas where the College is **advised** to take action:

- to review the effectiveness of the committee structure, particularly the remit of the Higher Education Group, to ensure full consideration of higher education matters and the dissemination of good practice (paragraphs 14 to 16)
- to review mechanisms so that higher education matters are clearly reported on at all levels of the quality cycle to minimise the potential for higher education issues to be overlooked (paragraphs 25, 26).

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

- to formalise and record procedures for identifying and addressing higher education staff development needs across the provision (paragraph 47)
- to introduce a more formal system to check the accuracy and completeness of public information (paragraph 54).

68 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 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.

69 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 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.

70 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 the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Aylesbury College action plan relating to the Summative review: September 2009						
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 <b>good practice</b> that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the recruitment of a higher education governor is an innovative means of supporting the development of higher education in the College (paragraph 10)</li> </ul>	<p>Ensure the Higher Education governor is fully introduced to the higher education provision at the College</p> <p>Engage higher education governor in the development of the HE in FE Strategy</p>	<p>January 2010</p> <p>January 2010</p>	<p>Deputy Director Teaching &amp; Learning Curriculum Teams</p> <p>Deputy Director Teaching &amp; Learning Vice Principal Teaching &amp; Learning</p>	<p>Higher Education Governor's awareness of higher education provision at the College</p> <p>Approved HE in FE Strategy</p>	<p>College Directorate</p> <p>College Directorate Governing Body Corporation</p>	<p>Continual review and updating with the higher education governor</p> <p>HE in FE Strategy used across the College to manage and develop new higher education provision</p>

Aylesbury College action plan relating to the Summative review: September 2009							
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation	
	Ensure that higher education matters are raised and discussed with the higher education governor	Ongoing	Deputy Director Teaching & Learning Vice Principal Teaching & Learning	Raised profile of higher education at senior level within the College	Governing Body College Directorate	Regular reviews of Higher education scheduled and monitored by Governing Body	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the thoroughness with which internal verification processes are carried out is highly effective in ensuring academic standards (paragraphs 21 to 24)</li> </ul>	Ensure College and partner HEI's processes are adhered to through rigorous monitoring at all levels	Ongoing	Curriculum Teams HE Manager	Annual Review & Evaluation Reports External Examiners reports	College Directorate	Course reviews and action plans	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the use of advanced practitioners supports the enhancement of higher education teaching and learning through the range of support and guidance the advanced practitioners provide (paragraphs 34 to 36)</li> </ul>	Ensure Advanced Practitioners continue to support, enhance and develop higher education teaching and learning	Ongoing	Teacher Education & Professional Development Leader HE Manager	Continued enhancement of teaching and learning	College Directorate	Continual review and development of higher education teaching practice	

Aylesbury College action plan relating to the Summative review: September 2009						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
	through links with partner HEI's Sharing good practice across curriculum areas	Ongoing	Teacher Education & Professional Development Leader Advanced Practitioners		Heads of Curriculum College Directorate	Included as part of Quality Improvement Planning and self assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the College's Marketing Coordinator spends one day a week working at the Buckinghamshire New University Campus and this facilitates and supports the development of appropriate and accurate information within the College (paragraph 51).</li> </ul>	Ensure the relationship with Buckinghamshire New University continues to develop to support the higher education marketing activity	Ongoing	Director of Commercial Services HE Manager	Greater awareness of systems for ensuring accuracy of documentation and public information	College Directorate	Student and employer feedback gathered, evaluated and actioned

Aylesbury College action plan relating to the Summative review: September 2009						
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<p>The team agreed a number of areas where the College should be <b>advised</b> to take action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● review the effectiveness of the committee structure, particularly the remit of the Higher Education Group, to ensure full consideration of higher education matters and the dissemination of good practice (paragraphs 14 to 16)</li> </ul>	<p>Review terms of reference for Higher Education Group, updating terms of reference reflecting full consideration of higher education matters</p> <p>Higher education Group to produce termly review and recommendation reports to ensure full consideration of higher</p>	<p>October 2009</p> <p>Termly</p>	<p>Higher Education Group HE Manager</p> <p>Higher Education Group HE Manager</p>	<p>All staff aware of reporting and committee structure</p> <p>Wider discussion of HE matters</p>	<p>College Directorate</p> <p>College Directorate Awarding Bodies</p>	<p>Continual review, evaluation and updating of higher education practice across the College</p> <p>Higher Education delivery staff have access to input and review reports</p>

Aylesbury College action plan relating to the Summative review: September 2009						
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
	education matters Higher Education Group to identify and disseminate good practice through HE newsletter (to be available on VLE)		Higher Education Group HE Manager	HE Newsletter (to be available on VLE)	Higher Education teaching staff College Directorate	Staff feedback on HE newsletter Continual review and updating of HE newsletter
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the College should review mechanisms so that higher education matters are clearly reported on at all levels of the quality cycle to minimise the potential for higher education issues to be overlooked (paragraphs 25, 26)</li> </ul>	Ensure clarity of reporting mechanisms for Higher Education matters by publishing roles and responsibilities for all teams involved in Higher Education management and delivery	January 2010	Director of Quality and Learner Services HE Manager	All staff aware of reporting mechanisms on relation to the quality cycle	College Directorate Awarding Bodies	Key stakeholders understanding of roles and responsibilities within the College for Higher Education

Aylesbury College action plan relating to the Summative review: September 2009						
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
	Review all cross College policies to ensure higher education matters are fully addressed	April 2010		College policies clearly reference higher education matters		

Aylesbury College action plan relating to the Summative review: September 2009						
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team agreed the following areas where it would be <b>desired</b> to take action:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>formalise and record procedures for identifying and addressing higher education staff development needs across the provision (paragraph 47)</li> </ul>	To develop and evaluate staff development needs for higher education staff	February 2010	Director of Quality & Learner Services Deputy Director of Teaching & Learning	Improved access to staff development activities for higher education staff	College Directorate Awarding Bodies	Review of staff development/C PD records
	To formalise procedure for	April 2010	Director of Quality &	Formal process agreed for	College Directorate	

Aylesbury College action plan relating to the Summative review: September 2009						
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
	addressing and recording higher education staff development needs in liaison with Awarding Bodies		Learner Services Deputy Director of Teaching & Learning	addressing higher education staff development needs Recorded scholarly Activity undertaken by higher education staff	Awarding Bodies College Staff	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>introduce a more formal system to check the accuracy and completeness of public information (paragraph 54).</li> </ul>	Develop formal process to check accuracy and completeness of public information in liaison with Awarding Bodies	March 2010	Director of Commercial Services HE Manager	Formal process published and distributed to all staff for checking accuracy and completeness of public information. Shared responsibility for public information across higher education staff	College Directorate Awarding Bodies	Process in use, continually reviewed and updated in line with awarding body requirements

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