



**QAA**

## **Integrated quality and enhancement review**

**Summative review**

May 2009

Askham Bryan College

SR27/2009

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ISBN 978 1 84482 997 2

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Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

## **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 Askham Bryan College carried out in May 2009

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

### Good practice

The team has identified the following good practice for dissemination:

- the mid-year visit from external examiners, which promotes opportunities for ongoing reflection and review of programmes
- the high quality of summative feedback on all types of assessment, which includes explicit reference to generic grading criteria, the learning outcomes and the subject-specific input
- the industry-related research on animal management and agriculture programmes, which enables students to engage in valuable primary research
- the provision of excellent industrial engagement and outstanding facilities for students' vocational learning
- the short-course voucher system that enables full-time students to gain industry-related skills and qualifications, which enhance employability.

### Recommendations

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

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

- ensure that the policies on assessment and placement learning are effectively disseminated and implemented
- further develop its strategy towards higher education staff development, paying particular attention to opportunities for scholarly activity
- confirm its strategy for development of the virtual learning environment and implement suitable action plans relevant to both the learning experience and to the dissemination of public information
- ensure greater availability of relevant books and journals, in order to further support student learning
- proceed with its planned review to update its policies so that only information that is current is made publicly available

## Integrated quality and enhancement review

- review and formalise its mechanisms for the checking of public information, to ensure completeness, accuracy and currency.

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

- extend the role of the Higher Education Management Committee, to provide a greater oversight of higher education provision
- produce an annual self-evaluation report and associated development plan covering all of its higher education provision.

## 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 Askham Bryan 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 Edexcel, Harper Adams University College, the University of York and York St John University. The review was carried out by Miss Maxina Butler-Holmes, Dr Elaine Hallet and Ms Jane Davis (reviewers) and Dr Peter Steer (coordinator).

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

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

4 Askham Bryan is a specialist land-based college offering courses in both further and higher education. It is located in the Vale of York. The College has five other sites offering further education courses, located across North Yorkshire and the Tees Valley, but these centres are not relevant to this review. The College also offers its specialist provision through innovative collaborations with three general further education colleges in North Yorkshire and West Yorkshire. The College reaffirmed its land-based philosophy in 2002 and since then has been awarded significant investment to amplify its regional reputation and thus attract more students. This has been a major factor in the maintenance of the focus of the College and has been recognised through the award of a Centre of Vocational Excellence in Food Chain Technology and the establishment of the National Beef Training Centre, developed with support from industry and sectoral bodies. Currently, there are 1,316 further education students on substantive programmes.

5 The College is divided into six sections: Animal Management; Engineering; Equine Management; Food and Farming; Horticulture and Landscape Industries; and Skills for Work and Life. The only section without a higher education offering is engineering. The College offers programmes from extended FDs to honours degrees and is directly funded by HEFCE. It is an inaugural member of the Higher York Lifelong Learning partnership and is a principal partner in the North Yorkshire Rural Academy. In 2007-08, the College enrolled 246 full-time equivalent learners onto higher education programmes, and in 2008-09, this figure is 243 full-time equivalents. The total number of students who enrolled is 301, with 208 being full-time and 93 being part-time.



The following programmes are offered by the College in conjunction with its higher education partners.

### **Edexcel**

- HNC Horticulture
- HNC Horticulture (Garden Design)
- Professional Development Diploma Social and Therapeutic Horticulture

### **Harper Adams University College**

- FD Agriculture (year 2)
- FD Agriculture with Land Management (year 1)
- FD Animal Management
- Extended FD Animal Management
- BSc (Hons) Animal Management (top up)
- BSc (Hons) Animal Management and Science
- FD Arboriculture
- FD Countryside Management
- BSc (Hons) Equine Management
- FD Equine Management
- Extended FD Equine Management
- Extended FD Food and Farming
- FD Horticulture
- Extended FD Horticulture and Landscape Industries
- FD Landscape and Garden Management
- FD Land Management (year 2)
- BSc (Hons) Sustainable Land Management (top-up)
- FD Sports Surface Management
- FD Veterinary Nursing

### **University of York**

- FD Sustainable Environmental Technology

### **York St John University**

- FD Business
- FD Food and Drink Management
- BA (Hons) Rural Business Enterprise.

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

6 The College's main validating partner in 2008-09 is Harper Adams University College, with whom the College has a very close relationship. Other courses are validated by Edexcel, the University of York and York St John University. All the agreements with awarding bodies allow considerable discretion over the nature of assessments, subject to awarding body supervision, and put the main responsibility on the College to provide the resources to support learning, although library access is available at the campuses of the higher education awarding bodies. All the partnership agreements provide clear guidance as to the responsibilities of the partners.

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

7 The number of students on higher education courses has been about the same in the last two years. In that period, there have been a number of changes in senior personnel at the College, both for all provision and directly related to higher education. There have also been significant structural changes at the College. Predominantly, higher education is currently offered from the Askham Bryan site, but the College has extended its higher education provision with a new development at the Guisborough Centre, located at Prior Pursglove College. Currently this involves only a small HNC provision, but it is planned to run the FD Animal Management in 2009-10, with validation provided by Harper Adams University College.

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

8 Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a written submission to the Summative review team and did so in February 2009. The document was compiled following a meeting of a focus group representative of higher education students. The group was facilitated by the Student Support Services Assistant, who prompted discussion in order to gauge the students' views and experiences. The discussion was recorded by the Assistant Director Student Support Services. Some students involved in the student written submission met the reviewers and agreed that it was an accurate representation of their discussions.

## **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 majority of the College's programmes are validated by Harper Adams University College, with only a very small number of students on programmes validated by other awarding bodies. Both institutions value their close relationship. The Memorandum of Cooperation clearly defines the responsibilities for validation, assessment and annual monitoring. An annual two-part partnership development review takes place at both strategic and operational levels, chaired by the Dean of Academic Affairs. The ongoing linkage between the institutions is provided through the role of the Harper Adams University College link coordinator, who reports to the Dean. The Head of Development and Quality Enhancement from Harper Adams University College chairs the course assessment boards. The operational part of the annual meeting provides the section leaders with a forum to discuss curricular matters, programme monitoring arrangements and opportunities for staff development. Staff met by the review team agreed that this was effective. The York St John University agreement covers two awards and an appointed subject-liaison individual provides a suitable link between the institutions. There are appropriate agreements with other awarding bodies.

10 Since the Developmental engagement in June 2008, a new Director of Higher Education and a Higher Education Operations Manager have taken up posts. A consultant has also been employed to advise on policy developments. The Higher Education Management Committee, chaired by the Director of Higher Education, has overall responsibility for the management of higher education programmes. The Committee meets on a termly basis and is clearly helpful in the supervision of higher education. The Committee does not currently commission an annual self-evaluation and development plan for all higher education and the team concludes from its consideration of the minutes that there are also other areas, like the supervision of external examiner reports, where it would be desirable for the role of the Committee to be strengthened. The higher education strategy has very recently been approved by the senior management team, however, this is not yet supported by an implementation plan.

11 Within the curriculum areas, section leaders have delegated responsibility for holding termly higher education committee meetings to their course managers and staff, with the Higher Education Operations Manager attending each of the sections' meetings. Actions are agreed. Scrutiny of the minutes identified several issues that could be discussed in a common forum. Each section produces an annual self-evaluation report for its higher education programmes. These are forwarded to the Director of Higher Education and are considered effectively on an individual basis.

12 The College Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan, produced under the Ofsted requirements, includes all provision. Some areas for improvement are identified for higher education, but these do not translate into a development plan and the quality improvement plans relate mainly to further education, so do not provide a major input into the oversight of higher education.

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

13 The College has developed a number of FDs and top-up honours degrees. This has involved a sustained engagement with several aspects of the Academic Infrastructure. Modules and programmes were reviewed as part of this process, with particular attention being paid to subject benchmark statements, relevant parts of the *Code of practice*, the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark* and the FHEQ. Involvement of employers and sector specialists included the Technical Advisory Committee and reference to the LANTRA Animal Care Industry Plan 2006. The College produces programme specifications as part of the programme design process and these are included in the student handbooks. The Developmental engagement produced some recommendations relating to assessment some of which relate to the new document 'Higher Education Assessment Policy and Practice', the content of which is to be introduced from September 2009 and which provides staff guidance on aspects of assessment. The comprehensive policy pays close attention to the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*. It refers to a normal 15 working days for the provision of written feedback to students. The Developmental engagement report contained an advisable recommendation that this feedback should be provided in a timely way although progress has been variable.

14 The College has recently produced a formal placement policy in line with the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning* guidance on a number of areas of interest to staff, students and employers not previously covered by documentation. This was identified as a desirable recommendation by the Developmental engagement team but has not yet been disseminated to employers. The team considers that it is advisable for the College to make more progress in ensuring that these policies, and those relating to assessment referred to in paragraph 13 above, are effectively disseminated and implemented.

### **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?**

15 There are productive and effective relationships between key staff at the college and the awarding bodies at course manager level, which are defined in scope by the partnership agreements. The annual monitoring reports feed into the partner institution academic boards. The Director of Higher Education attends the Academic Standards Committee at Harper Adams University College and actions are fed back to the relevant section within the College, but the team's scrutiny of the section quality improvement plans provided limited evidence of identification of action for higher education programmes.

16 The College self-evaluation notes the annual review and reporting process is being reconsidered following feedback from Harper Adams University College. This indicated that the process could be more effective and that a greater level of evaluative comment would be beneficial. The College is introducing a new format for next year.

17 The Developmental engagement recommended improving the quality of module evaluation by altering the nature of the questionnaires incorporating significant improvements. The new student questionnaires, which were approved by the Harper Adams University College Academic Standards Committee, are being used. When the results are collated for a complete cycle of use, there will be significant benefits in terms of the quality of student feedback.

18 All higher education programmes have external examiners appointed by the awarding bodies. The College then assumes a direct relationship with external examiners in relation to the setting of assessments and the sampling of student work, which is rigorously internally moderated. Examination boards are appropriately run for all awarding bodies. As recommended by the Developmental engagement, students are now properly informed about the opportunities to get feedback on their examination performance.

19 The team considered external examiner reports that show confidence in the academic standards at the College. The team confirms the good practice identified as part of the Developmental engagement regarding the high quality of summative feedback. The team also regarded as good practice the development by the College of a proactive relationship with its external examiners, including a mid-year visit to meet with both staff and students. Staff welcome this opportunity to evaluate their assessment experiences, get student feedback and progress changes more rapidly than would otherwise be possible if external examiners visited less frequently.

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

20 Since the Developmental engagement, additional staff development to support the higher education provision has taken place. Staff welcome this and the team confirms its usefulness in terms of effectively underpinning academic standards and in encouraging discourse with peers in other disciplines. The focus of an event in January was assessment, reinforcing the elements of the new policy. This is to be continued during the summer staff development week, with practical activities planned around marking to higher education levels 4 to 6 and moderation processes.

21 The Partnership Development Review meeting held in June 2008 emphasised the opportunities for College staff to attend staff development events at Harper Adams University College, and the importance of developing further subject-related scholarly activity in the context of significant financial constraints. The report of the validation of new provision at the Guisborough Campus in February 2009 indicates the College needs to design a staff development strategy for the relevant higher education teaching staff. It is advisable that the College further develops its strategy towards higher education staff development with an emphasis on subject-related aspects.

**The team concludes that it has confidence in the College's management of its responsibilities as set out in its partnership agreements, for the management and delivery of the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of its awarding bodies.**

## **Core theme 2: Quality of learning opportunities**

**How are responsibilities for managing the quality of learning opportunities for higher education programmes delegated within the management structure and what reporting arrangements are in place?**

22 The management of the quality of learning opportunities occurs within a strategic and operational management structure at college, section and programme-levels with clear reporting arrangements. Designated managers strategically and operationally manage the quality of learning opportunities for higher education programmes. Section leaders have a central role in the operational management of programmes and have access to a small devolved combined budget for further and higher education. Section leader meetings

provide a forum to raise higher education issues, which can be taken to the Director of Teaching and Learning. Generally there are no designated higher education budgets. Staff request resources based on identified needs. A science journal database was purchased at the request of students in this way. The Higher Education Operations Manager meets with students to ascertain their views, informing managers as appropriate. A strategy for higher education provides a framework for higher education provision. The Higher Education Management Committee provides higher education focus.

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

23 Arrangements for the consideration of higher education are described in paragraphs 9 to 11 and 15 to 19 above, and are relevant to all aspects of the quality of learning opportunities except those involving budgeting and resource planning. Hence staff, student and external examiner inputs are considered by section teams and then the Higher Education Management Committee, but aspects requiring additional resources are referred to the appropriate budget holders.

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

24 The College makes extensive use of the Academic Infrastructure to support the quality of the learning opportunities. Courses are validated by the awarding body using appropriate level descriptors, subject and award benchmarks, using common programme and module specification formats. The College provides clear information to employers and students concerning placements including industry-related health and safety requirements, in line with *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning*.

25 The Learning Support Manager provides effective specialist student support for students with learning and disability needs in line with the *Code of practice, Section 3: Students with disabilities*. For example, a student with particular needs has a work placement on a suitably appropriate organic farm.

26 The policies for the accreditation of prior learning, the accreditation of experiential learning and the accreditation of credited learning are appropriately implemented in liaison with the awarding bodies.

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

27 The quality of teaching and learning and its contribution to student learning is monitored regularly by the Observation Teaching and Learning Team, with some members having a specialist higher education focus. The staff appraisal system provides individual feedback to staff from the section head and allows individual staff development needs to be identified, with training provided as necessary. Observation feedback is given to the Director of Teaching and Learning, identifying strengths and areas for development, and informing cross-college staff development events. There is a system of module questionnaires that allows students to reflect on the quality of the teaching they receive. These are reviewed in the relevant section team. The College runs student focus groups, which have identified some areas for improvement that have been acted upon. Students value the teaching they receive and indicate that their concerns are usually acted upon, whether concerning learning and teaching or other areas.

28 Students affirmed that they are encouraged to be independent learners. The team judges as good practice the opportunities for students to engage in valuable industry-related research. This uses primary sources, and enhances student learning. It was particularly evident in animal management and agriculture. Employers and guest speakers from industry regularly talk to student classes about current industry developments. The College encourages this through its extensive links with employers. Employers feel that the preparation of students as part of the programmes and their close liaison with the College mean that the student placements provide valuable learning, with acquisition of skills highly relevant to employment. Employer and student placement handbooks provide detailed guidance about work placement requirements.

29 At no extra cost on top of their fees, full-time students can use a voucher scheme to access a variety of short courses and industry-recognised qualifications run by the College enabling them to gain skills relevant to employment. The team considers this to be good practice.

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

30 Academic support tutors effectively support students in their academic studies and with pastoral care. A cross-College team, managed by the Learning Support Manager, provides some specialist higher education academic support for students. The extended FD programmes provide academic study skills for supporting progression on to the FDs, promoting widening participation for non-traditional students and evidence of the College's commitment to the widening participation agenda.

31 Students have an effective induction to their study and are supported personally and responsively by tutors. The small-group sizes allow additional involvement and access to staff. Students know how to access support mechanisms and indicate they are effective.

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

32 A range of staff development opportunities is available for staff teaching on higher education courses in order to support the quality of learning opportunities, in addition to those identified in paragraphs 20 and 21. There are higher education away days in which generic higher education topics are discussed. These topics have included assessment, teaching styles and the use of the virtual learning environment. Staff attend industry-related conferences and field trips. Guidance to teaching and assessing higher education courses and college procedures are provided for new staff at induction. Staff can request to attend a staff development event as part of the appraisal process, and decisions are made on the basis of College priorities within the budget.

### **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?**

33 The College's specialist physical resources reflect its land-based philosophy, providing rich vocational learning opportunities for students, including for FD work placements. The recent investment of resources at the Guisborough Centre provides locally based facilities for students. Budgeting for resources is done on the basis of both further and higher education provision combined. External examiners and students indicate there have been shortages of learning materials, although this has improved with additional purchases, including a science journal database. Higher education books are not differentiated from

further education books on the library shelves, which students say makes book selection more onerous. Students have access to the nearby British Library and the libraries in York of the relevant awarding bodies, but using them is not easy for all students. Although improving, access to the virtual learning environment has been difficult at times and this has led to restricted use by staff and students. The team considers it advisable for the College to implement suitable action plans in relation to its strategy for developing the virtual learning environment, and to ensure a greater availability of relevant texts and journals.

34 The provision of higher education study space is beginning to develop a discrete supportive higher education environment in response to students' indication that the library is not quiet and conducive to study. There are six computers in this space, which is low for the number of higher education students. Student focus groups continue to provide information about the accessibility of resources and have resulted in a number of actions.

**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?**

35 The College is responsible for the publication of all regulations, policies and procedures relating to its higher education provision as referenced in formal agreements with awarding bodies. These include policies on academic misconduct, academic appeals, accreditation of prior (experiential) learning, complaints and appeals, programme handbooks and module specifications, as well as student financial support arrangements.

36 The College agrees to liaise with its partner universities with regard to external advertising and publicity relating to the agreed portfolio of programmes of study. The website provides details on the programmes on offer, with a description of their main characteristics and the location of study. Admissions requirements and procedures are suitably detailed. Detailed paper-based materials are also available, which often go into considerable detail regarding the features of the individual programmes.

#### **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?**

37 The College publishes a comprehensive range of policies and procedures as described in the relevant partnership agreements. Review dates are indicated on each published policy document in support of regular revision and updating, such activity being governed by the policy 'Producing and Circulating New College Policies and Procedures'. Review activity has not been undertaken according to schedule; the delay in the review process has not yet significantly detracted from the experience of most higher education students at the College, but the publication of these policies that are sometimes significantly past their review date means that opportunities for dissemination of information about recent sector-wide developments is missed. The list of College policies was considered during March 2009 with a recommendation made to the Director of Teaching and Learning for action to redress the situation, but this will take time. An updated version of 'Producing and Circulating New College Policies and Procedures' was developed during April 2009, to



underpin the holistic review process and to establish the process thereafter, supported by the establishment of the Curriculum and Quality Development Group to which the Director of Higher Education, or a representative, will be invited. The team considers it advisable that the College proceeds with its planned review to update its policies, so that only information that is current is made publicly available.

38 The College system for the management and production of marketing materials is described in the 'Policy for Production of Marketing Materials'. This policy is among those listed for update. There is recognition of the need to formalise the College activity in relation to marketing and the development and maintenance of the College website.

39 The College produces a wide range of paper-based marketing materials, providing high-quality literature about the programmes offered in the form of leaflets. The College works with 'Higher York' and is proactive in attending land-based events and progression activities. The College enjoys high turnout at its Open Days and expresses pride at the degree to which specialist tutors engage with stakeholders, thus providing detailed information. All applicants to the College are invited to interview, during which information is provided both relating to the programme and to the student experience, whether specialist or administrative.

40 Students receive large information packs during the admissions process, a valuable student handbook and induction materials. Students feel that they have all the information they need and use the information provided as reference material. Handbooks contain programme specifications, detailed module information, guidance on policies and regulations, appeals and complaints and subject specialist information. The College is in the process of reviewing the format and content of the handbooks, in order to support consistent and centralised collegiate information, as well as specialist course-related material. Students and employers receive comprehensive handbooks for placement learning, evidencing the College engagement with the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning*. Placement handbooks are seen to be helpful and informative by students and employers alike.

41 Recently the College has been developing a new virtual learning environment. Its usage is in the early stages and sometimes it has been difficult to access. The College acknowledges that further development is required. Use varies considerably between modules and subjects. The virtual learning environment is used partly as a repository for materials, though there has been no formal mechanism established for checking and updating content. The College commissioned a report to indicate the necessary action relating to information provided by the virtual learning environment.

42 The College website holds programme information, but is lacking in broader advice for higher education students and displayed outdated information at the time of the visit, including locations that no longer offer Edexcel higher education provision. Also much of the programme information related to last year. There is an overview of the course information provided to the marketing team by section leaders, but staff accept that the process for removing material is not robust. Programme information on the website has since been updated. The College has not used the website as its primary marketing tool; this strategy is under review.

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

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

43 The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in June 2008. It addressed the following lines of enquiry agreed with the College:

- to assure that there is an appropriate variety of assessment methods utilised within the assessment strategy to meet the needs of a diverse population of students
- the involvement of employers and the workplace in the assessment process of students, and publication of these methods through relevant College documentation
- the utilisation of feedback on assessment from tutors and students in informing future assessment policy and practice.

44 The main themes of the good practice identified during the Developmental engagement were the wide variety of appropriate assessments, which are effectively moderated with good feedback to the students, the system of placements, which is flexible and significantly enhances student learning and includes a full briefing for employers, the use of many case-studies based on real work situations, the annual compilation of student views through meetings with external examiners and the assessment of higher education students on some programmes based on their supervision of those on further education programmes.

45 The Developmental engagement indicated that it was advisable to take action to fully implement College policy on the provision of assessment schedules to students at the beginning of the year and the time taken for students to receive feedback, and also to develop modified student questionnaires in order to obtain more useful information. It was considered desirable that there is fuller use of the College intranet, that there is formal placement policy and that students are more aware of their right to see their examination papers and get feedback

## **D Foundation Degrees**

46 At present, the College runs 17 FDs including some that have an introductory year allowing entry by students with fewer previous qualifications. This number includes two programmes with students only on year two of their studies, which are being phased out and replaced by similar programmes. Overwhelmingly, FD students are studying on programmes validated by Harper Adams University College. Subject to fulfilling two conditions of the validation from Harper Adams University College, the College plans to run the FD Animal Management at its Guisborough site in 2009-10. The College is undertaking a review of its programme portfolio, which may lead to some adjustments in its FD provision, with a concentration on programmes where recruitment is high. The College works closely with employers to provide valuable placement opportunities and industry-related learning, and also high levels of employer involvement in many aspects of the FD programmes. The judgements, recommendations and good practice all apply to the FD provision at the College.

## E Conclusions and summary of judgements

47 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Askham Bryan College management of its responsibilities for academic standards and for the quality of learning opportunities of the awards the College offers on behalf of its awarding bodies. This was based upon discussion with staff and students and scrutiny of evidence provided by the College and its awarding bodies Edexcel, Harper Adams University College, the University of York and York St John University.

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

- the mid-year visit from external examiners, which promotes opportunities for ongoing reflection and review of programmes (paragraph 19)
- the high quality of summative feedback on all types of assessment, which includes explicit reference to generic grading criteria, the learning outcomes and the subject specific input (paragraph 19)
- the industry-related research on animal management and agriculture programmes, which enables students to engage in valuable primary research (paragraph 28)
- the provision of excellent industrial engagement and outstanding facilities for students' vocational learning (paragraphs 28, 33)
- the short-course voucher system that enables full-time students to gain industry-related skills and qualifications, which enhance employability (paragraph 29).

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

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

- to ensure that the policies on assessment and placement learning are effectively disseminated and implemented (paragraphs 13, 14)
- to further develop its strategy towards higher education staff development, paying particular attention to opportunities for scholarly activity (paragraph 21)
- to confirm its strategy for development of the virtual learning environment and implement suitable action plans relevant to both the learning experience and to the dissemination of public information (paragraphs 33, 40)
- to ensure greater availability of relevant books and journals, in order to further support student learning (paragraph 33)
- to proceed with its planned review to update its policies, so that only information that is current is made publicly available (paragraph 37)
- to review and formalise its mechanisms for the checking of public information, to ensure completeness, accuracy and currency (paragraph 42).

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

- to extend the role of the Higher Education Management Committee, to provide a greater oversight of the higher education provision (paragraph 10)

- to produce an annual self-evaluation report and associated development plan covering all of its higher education provision (paragraph 10).

48 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.

49 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.

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

Askham Bryan College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 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 mid-year visit from external examiners, which promotes opportunities for ongoing reflection and review of programmes (paragraph 19)</li> </ul>	<p>To continue to invite external examiners to mid-year visits during term time and to ensure that they meet with a wide range of staff and students.</p> <p>Any issues arising from these visits to be addressed by the HE Management Committee (HEMC)</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Course Managers</p> <p>HEMC</p>	<p>All external examiners undertake mid-year visits and meet with staff and students.</p> <p>Demonstrable action minuted at HEMC.</p>	<p>HE Management and validating partners</p> <p>HE Management and validating partners</p>	<p>At Annual Course Review</p> <p>At Annual Course Review</p>	

Askham Bryan College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2009						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the high quality of summative feedback on all types of assessment, which includes explicit reference to generic grading criteria, the learning outcomes and the subject specific input (paragraph 19)</li> </ul>	To continue this practice	Ongoing	HE teaching staff	Quality of feedback maintained and improved by new feedback sheets. External examiners continue to comment on high quality of feedback.	HE Management and validating partners	At Annual Course Review
	To ensure that all new staff are appropriately inducted.	Ongoing	HE Manager	New staff demonstrate ability to provide high quality feedback.	Section Leaders	Student Module Review
	Annual moderation of assessment event to reinforce good practice	July 2009 and each year thereafter	HE Manager	Consistency in feedback across HE programmes.	Director of Teaching and Learning	At Annual Course Review

Askham Bryan College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2009						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the industry-related research on animal management and agriculture programmes, which enables students to engage in valuable primary research (paragraph 28)</li> </ul>	To continue to pursue opportunities for primary research for both staff and students.	Ongoing	All HE staff	Maintenance of good practice and active participation in future research partnerships.	HE Management & SMT	Annual Partnership Review (Validating Body)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the provision of excellent industrial engagement and outstanding facilities for students' vocational learning (paragraphs 28, 33)</li> </ul>	To continue to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>hold technical advisory groups with employers</li> <li>use guest lecturers from industry</li> <li>support appropriate industry related visits</li> <li>provide excellent placement opportunities</li> <li>develop specialist</li> </ul>	Ongoing	Section Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-regular well attended meetings</li> <li>-wide variety of guest lectures</li> <li>-wide variety of industry related visits</li> <li>-successful placements</li> <li>-enhancement of specialist facilities</li> </ul>	SMT	Student Module Review & at Annual Course Review

Askham Bryan College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2009						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the short-course voucher system that enables full-time students to gain industry-related skills and qualifications, which enhance employability (paragraph 29)</li> </ul>	<p>facilities for vocational learning</p> <p>To continue to promote the availability of courses related to use of the vouchers to increase employability.</p>	Dec 2010 and thereafter	Course Managers and Vocational Placement Tutors	Students booked on to appropriate College courses. Feedback from employers.	HE Management & SMT	Course records Student Focus Groups



Askham Bryan College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2009						
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 <b>advised</b> to take action:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to ensure that the policies on assessment and placement learning are effectively disseminated and implemented (paragraphs 13,14)</li> </ul>	Dissemination at staff development event.	July 2009	HE Manager	Implementation of policies across all programmes. New documentation in use.	HE Management	Student Module Review & at Annual Course Review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to further develop its strategy towards higher education staff development, paying particular attention to opportunities for scholarly activity (paragraph 21)</li> </ul>	Encourage all staff to take advantage of the two scholarly activity days offered by the College. To promote an understanding of scholarly activity in its widest sense - and to encourage staff to participate	Ongoing Review July 2010 and thereafter	All HE staff	Staff use the scholarly activity days to undertake activities which promote learning. Staff take part in an increasing number of activities which may be described as 'scholarly activity'	Section Leaders and HR	Annual Course Review Annual Partnership Review

Askham Bryan College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2009						
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to confirm its strategy for development of the virtual learning environment and implements suitable action plans relevant to both the learning experience and to the dissemination of public information (paragraphs 33, 40)</li> </ul>	<p>in, for example: external examining, joint publication of research work with students, further study at postgraduate level.</p> <p>The College is in the process of developing its strategy for development of the VLE and funding is committed to improve staffing to support VLE activities and to train all staff in advanced user features. Relevant action plans to support these</p>	<p>October 2009 and review at six month intervals thereafter.</p>	<p>Director of Teaching and Learning</p>	<p>Strategy in place and communicated to all staff who are also aware of relevant actions to be taken. Increased use of VLE by staff and students.</p>	<p>Director of Teaching and Learning</p>	<p>ILT Strategy Group Student Module Review &amp; at Annual Course Review</p>

Askham Bryan College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2009						
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
	<p>processes will be developed.</p> <p>A new Head of MIS will be tasked with ensuring that the dissemination of public information is both accurate and timely.</p>	October 2009	SMT	Head of MIS appointed and relevant systems are in place.	SMT	SMT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to ensure greater availability of relevant books and journals, in order to further support student learning (paragraph 33)</li> </ul>	£10,000 investment in relevant books and journals.	September 2009	All HE Staff	New resources in place	Section Leaders	Student Module Review & at Annual Course Review

Askham Bryan College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2009						
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to proceed with its planned review to update its policies, so that only information that is current is made publicly available (paragraph 37)</li> </ul>	<p>To continue with the review of policies and to ensure that as they are updated, the old policy is removed from circulation and replaced by the new one.</p>	<p>Ongoing Determined by review dates for each policy</p>	<p>Director of Teaching and Learning</p>	<p>Only current information is publicly available</p>	<p>SMT</p>	<p>Curriculum and Quality Group</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to review and formalises its mechanisms for the checking of public information to ensure completeness, accuracy and currency (paragraph 42).</li> </ul>	<p>A new Head of MIS will be tasked with ensuring that the dissemination of public information is both accurate and timely.</p>	<p>October 2009</p>	<p>SMT</p>	<p>Head of MIS appointed and relevant systems are in place.</p>	<p>SMT</p>	<p>SMT</p>

Askham Bryan College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 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>to extend the role of the Higher Education Management Committee to provide a greater oversight of the higher education provision (paragraph 10)</li> </ul>	To review the role of the HEMC and how it will co-ordinate with the Curriculum and Quality Group and the new Academic Board (as proposed by Harper Adams University College at the Annual Review 2008-09).	September 2009	HE Manager & Director of Teaching and Learning	New terms of reference for the HEMC and the Academic Board are in place.	SMT	SMT	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to produce an annual self-evaluation report and associated development plan covering all of its higher education provision (paragraph 10).</li> </ul>	To produce a self evaluation report for HE which fits with the College's self-assessment of its provision.	October 2009	HE Manager	Self-evaluation completed and externally validated.	SMT	External body	

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RG 517 07/09