



## **Belfast Metropolitan College**

Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review,  
Northern Ireland: Summative Review  
by the Quality Assurance Agency  
for Higher Education

March 2014



## 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, Northern Ireland (IQER NI).

## Purpose of IQER NI

Higher education programmes delivered by further education colleges (colleges) lead to awards made by higher education institutions or Pearson. 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 NI 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 NI focuses on three core themes: academic standards, quality of learning opportunities and public information.

## The IQER NI process

IQER NI is a peer review process. It is divided into two complementary stages: Developmental engagement and Summative review. In accordance with the published method, all DEL-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 student submission by the student body
- a preparatory meeting between the college and the IQER NI coordinator several weeks before the Developmental engagement visit
- the Developmental engagement visit, which normally lasts 2.5 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 DEL-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 NI coordinator and QAA reviewers. They do not include nominees.

## Evidence

In order to obtain evidence for the review, IQER NI review 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 NI review teams' expectations of colleges are guided by a nationally agreed set of reference points, known as the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code). This is published by QAA and consists of three main parts:

- Part A: Setting and maintaining threshold academic standards
- Part B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality
- Part C: Information about higher education provision.

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 NI

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 NI. Progress against these action plans is monitored by QAA in conjunction with DEL and/or the College's awarding bodies 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 Belfast Metropolitan College carried out in March 2014

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 and organisations. 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 cross-College functions of the quality assurance and coordinators' groups, the Standards Improvement Unit and the Centre for Curriculum Quality Assurance and Performance Development serve, effectively, to take a holistic view of standards (paragraphs 12-14)
- the College puts strong emphasis on employer engagement and vocational learning and provides an excellent range of enhancement activities to increase employability skills in line with its strategic objectives (paragraphs 17, 48 and 49)
- the College has fully embraced the Quality Code and has invested much staff development time in implementing its indicators, with evidence of its impact across the provision in terms of staff understanding (paragraph 21)
- sharing good practice is well developed and exchange moots, for example, provide opportunities to discuss experience on a multidisciplinary basis (paragraph 30).

### 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 its website checking procedures to promote greater diligence in ensuring the accuracy and completeness of public information (paragraph 68).

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

- further develop student engagement to enhance academic standards (paragraph 15)
- review the use of tutorial time to ensure its effectiveness (paragraph 50)
- ensure that students are fully apprised of the availability of specialist facilities and resources that will enable them to achieve their intended learning outcomes (paragraphs 57 and 58)
- involve higher education students more directly in the development of public information (paragraph 70).

## A Introduction and context

1 This report presents the findings of the Summative review of higher education funded by the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) conducted at Belfast Metropolitan College (the College). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the College discharges its responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes which the College delivers on behalf of Accounting Technicians Ireland, the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants, the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply, the Chartered Management Institute, the Chartered Institute of Marketing, City and Guilds, the Institute of Leadership and Management, Manchester Metropolitan University, Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, the Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examination Body, Pearson, Queen's University Belfast, and the universities of Cambridge, Dundee and Ulster. The review was carried out by Dr Heather Barrett-Mold, Mr Mark Cooper, Mr Jonathan Doney, Ms Dorothy McElwee, Mrs Patricia Millner, Mr Colin Stanfield (reviewers) and Dr John Barkham (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, Northern Ireland* (the handbook), published by QAA. Evidence in support of the Summative review included documentation supplied by the College and awarding bodies and organisations, meetings with staff, students, employers and partner institutions, reports of reviews by QAA and from inspections by The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI). 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 Quality Code, developed by QAA on behalf of higher education providers.

3 In order to assist DEL in gaining information to assist with the assessment of the impact of foundation degree awards, section D of this report summarises details of the foundation degree programmes delivered at the College.

4 Belfast Metropolitan College was established in August 2007 following the merger of Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education and Castlereagh College. The College has campuses at Titanic Quarter, Millfield, Castlereagh, Tower Street, Whiterock and Springvale and is the sixth largest College in the UK. The College's mission 2013-16 is 'to deliver outstanding education and skills, while transforming lives and contributing to the economic success of Belfast and Northern Ireland.' The College delivers a wide range of education and training courses. It recognises the importance of its higher education provision in its Curriculum Strategy published in 2012. Higher education provision includes higher national certificates and diplomas, foundation degrees, degrees, postgraduate qualifications and a wide range of professional and vocational courses. It is delivered within seven schools located across three faculties.

5 The full-time higher education provision is currently capped at 1,444 places with currently 1,438 full-time and 1,380 part-time enrolments in 2013-14. The College attracts students from across Northern Ireland due to the diversity of its curriculum offer and is working to develop further cross-border and international links. This is underpinned by the Higher Education Strategy for Northern Ireland and wider draft Economic Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011-21.

6 The following higher education courses are provided by the College under the headings of their awarding bodies and organisations. Numbers of full-time (FT) and part-time (PT) students are given in brackets for each course:

**Association of Chartered Certified Accountants**

- Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (24 PT)

**Accounting Technicians Ireland**

- Accounting Technicians Ireland (103 PT)

**City and Guilds**

- Level 4 Award Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice (9 PT)
- Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Children's Care Learning and Development (Management) (23 PT)
- Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Health and Social Care Services (15 PT)
- Level 5 Diploma in Playwork (NVQ) (14 PT)

**Chartered Institute of Marketing**

- CAM Digital Marketing (23 PT)
- Level 4 Professional Certificate in Marketing (20 PT)

**Chartered Institute of Management Accountants**

- Certificate Business Accounting (4 modules) (26 PT)
- Professional (24 PT)
- Strategic Level (10 PT)

**Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development**

- Level 5 Intermediate Diploma Human Resource Management (16 PT)
- Level 7 (29 PT)

**Chartered Institute of Purchasing & Supply**

- Level 4 Diploma Procurement and Supply (29 PT)
- Level 5 Advanced Diploma Procurement and Supply (8 PT)
- Level 6 Professional Diploma Procurement and Supply (5 PT)

**Chartered Management Institute**

- Level 5 Diploma Management and Leadership (28 PT)

**Institute of Leadership and Management**

- Level 5 Award Leadership and Management (206 PT)

**Manchester Metropolitan University**

- BSc (Hons) Fashion Management (64 FT)

**Ministère de l'Éducation nationale**

- DALF French C1 - Advanced (10 PT)

**Oxford, Cambridge and RSA examinations body**

- OCR Level 4 Award Administration (Business Professional) (7 PT)

**Pearson**

- HNC 3D Design (11 PT)
- HNC Aeronautical Engineering (52 PT)
- HNC Building Services/Civil Engineering (51 PT)
- HNC Business (60 PT)
- HND Business (184 FT; 23 PT)

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- HNC Computing and Systems Development (22 PT)
- HND Computing and Systems Development (68 FT)
- HNC Electrical and Electronic Engineering (15 PT)
- HNC Manufacturing Engineering (41 PT)
- HND Manufacturing Engineering (25 PT)
- HNC Sport (42 FT; 53 PT)
- HND Sport (45 FT; 14 PT)
- HND Health and Social Care (43 FT; 70 PT)
- HND Art and Design Fine Art (8 FT; 10 PT)
- HND Hair and Beauty Management (26 FT; 27 PT)
- HND Animal Management (38 FT)
- HND Applied Biology (38 FT)
- HND Applied Chemistry (29 FT)
- HND Civil Engineering (9 FT)
- HND Creative Media Production (113 FT)
- HND Electronic Engineering (36 FT)
- HND Graphic Design (31 FT)
- HND Interactive Media (13 FT)
- HND Music (31 FT)
- HND Performing Arts (48 FT)

### **Queens University Belfast (QUB)**

- FdA Early Childhood Studies (36 FT)
- FdA Health and Leisure Studies (23 FT)
- FdSc Mechanical Engineering (32 FT)
- FdSc Product Design and Development (18 FT)

### **University of Cambridge**

- Certificate in English Language Teaching for Adults (CELTA) (8 PT)

### **University of Dundee**

- BA Professional Development (34 PT)

### **University of Ulster**

- Certificate Higher Education Combined Social and Behavioural Science (63 PT)
- Certificate Counselling Studies (35 PT)
- Certificate Higher Education Counselling Skills (53 PT)
- FdA Counselling Year 3 (32 PT)
- FdSc Graphic Communications (17 PT)
- FdSc Event Management for the Tourism Industry (42 FT; 12 PT)
- FdSc Hospitality and Tourism Management (40 FT; 23 PT)
- BSc (Hons) Business Studies and Business with Accounting (9 FT)
- BSc (Hons) Social Work (60 FT)
- FdSc Architectural Technology with Sustainable Design (27 FT)
- FdSc Building Services and Renewable Energies (28 FT)
- FdSc iMedia (33 FT)
- FdSc Property Planning and Housing (26 FT)
- FdSc Software Engineering (94 FT)
- FdSc Sustainable Construction (25 FT)
- FdSc Accounting (23 FT)
- FdSc Marketing (22 FT)
- FdSc Travel and Tourism Management (34 FT)



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

7 The College has partnerships with a wide range of commercial and higher education organisations. The partnership agreement with the University of Ulster sets out the arrangements for the delivery of its provision at the College. The College is represented on both its Strategic Steering Group and its Collaborative Partnership Forum. There is a Memorandum of Agreement for each of the Queen's University Belfast courses which outlines the arrangements for course management, staffing, assessment, resourcing and quality assurance, supported by the Department of Academic and Student Affairs Manual on Collaborative Provision. Agreements for foundation degrees are articulated through collaboration with the University of Ulster and Queen's University Belfast. Degrees are offered through similar partnerships with Manchester Metropolitan University and the University of Dundee. Higher national certificates and diplomas are validated by Pearson whose agreement is in the form of their Standard Note that seeks to support and ensure effective assessment. The College also delivers a number of national vocational and professional qualifications through agreements with a range of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (see paragraph 6).

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

8 The College continues to review its higher education curriculum and replace where suitable current higher national diplomas with appropriate foundation degrees as an individual College and as part of consortia. The FdA Health, Sport and Leisure Studies was validated for intake in September 2013 through a partnership with Stranmillis University College and St Mary's University College. A FdEng Civil Engineering is undergoing validation with Queen's University Belfast for intake in September 2014-15. In 2013-14, further foundation degrees are being developed with Queen's University Belfast for chemistry, biological sciences and aeronautical engineering. The College also continues to investigate and develop foundation degrees as the knowledge aspect of the new higher apprenticeship courses in information technology (infrastructure) and management, finance and accounting. There are newly-established programmes in FdSc Marketing and FdSc Accounting in partnership with the University of Ulster. The College is a member of the 157 Group, the first College to hold membership outside England. Through this, the College seeks to share its experience, as well as being involved in policy development with other strategic leaders in this group.

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

9 Students studying on higher education courses at the College were invited to present a submission to the Summative review team. A total of 71 full and part-time higher education students from across four campuses participated in seven focus groups in November 2013 to generate the content of the submission. Participants represented the diverse range of courses available at the College. Students were briefed by the Students' Union and the College's Research and Insights Officer. They were provided with QAA materials to highlight the importance of their submission. The findings from the October 2013 survey of over 700 students were also shared with these students. The reviewers found the submission helpful in providing a starting point for their review. Student views were amplified by those met by the Coordinator at the preparatory meeting and by those met by the reviewers during their visit.

## **B Evaluation of the management of DEL-funded higher education**

### **Core theme 1: Academic standards**

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

10 The responsibilities for managing higher education standards are clear and effective and enable the College to identify good practice and areas for development. There are robust structures in place to ensure that standards are monitored, maintained and enhanced across this complex provision.

11 The strategic development and management of the College's higher education provision is set in the context of its overall corporate plan and curriculum strategy 'Skills Matters'. This is underpinned and informed by the College's strong links with regional and national bodies and has been developed in relation to the Higher Education Strategy for Northern Ireland. Staff at all levels have a good understanding of the wider context within which their provision is set.

12 The quality assurance and coordinators' groups provide a valuable cross-faculty function. The Assistant Chief Executive, who is also the Director of Curriculum, has overall responsibility for higher education standards, while delivery is delegated to heads of school and of faculty. Within each school, curriculum area managers with vocational specialisms take responsibility for the delivery of both higher and further education courses. The Higher Education Coordinator based in each school plays a valuable role supportive of the Curriculum Area Manager and Head of Faculty. The establishment of the Higher Education Coordinators Group has helped to ensure that coordinators have a wider perspective and can share good practice. Additionally, the Curriculum Quality Assurance and Performance Development Manager and the Curriculum Area Manager for Higher Education, the latter based in the College's Standards Improvement Unit, function on a cross-College basis, challenging higher education teams to develop and maintain academic standards across higher education courses.

13 The Curriculum Quality Assurance and Performance Development Team is rigorous in auditing the provision, including for instance the verification and moderation processes, while the Curriculum Area Manager for Higher Education works productively with teams where areas for improvement are identified. There are, therefore, clear and direct lines of responsibility for the maintenance and enhancement of academic standards. The cross-College functions of the Standards Improvement Unit and the Centre for Curriculum Quality Assurance and Performance Development provide an effective and holistic view of standards. This is good practice. Overall, these quality assurance arrangements demonstrate substantial and effective progress since the Developmental engagement.

14 A number of committees, with clearly articulated terms of reference, oversee academic standards. Ultimately these all report to the College Executive Team and Governing Body. These committees play a valuable function in monitoring standards and the implementation of strategies for improvement. In particular, the Higher Education Quality Forum and the Higher Education Coordinators Group provide a strong focus for the enhancement of standards. This is **good practice**. Each course is managed by a course director or coordinator and delivered by the course team. Course teams meet on a

scheduled basis and minutes of meetings are thorough and effective, being based on a useful template and guidelines for such meetings.

15 There are extensive mechanisms in place to capture student feedback. They are used proactively to enhance the student experience. For example, curriculum changes were made to the BSc (Hons) Fashion Management as a result of student feedback. A number of higher education students sit on the Student Council and there is a student governor. The Assistant Chief Executive holds regular meetings with course representatives. The College recognises that there is a need to further develop student engagement to enhance academic standards and is therefore seeking to introduce student representation on the Higher Education Quality Group. It would be **desirable** for the College to further develop student engagement to enhance academic standards.

16 The College has developed a quality cycle for the review, maintenance and enhancement of academic standards. Annual self-evaluation takes place at course level and is informed by the key performance indicators of enrolment, attendance, retention and success, and by staff/student consultative committees, student surveys and external examiner reports. The use of key performance indicators to monitor and enhance standards is effective and the College has seen its higher education academic performance increase to above DEL benchmark level in recent years, while at the same time maintaining its approach to widening participation.

17 Employer engagement and student employability are strong. In the Developmental engagement, the team recommended that the College systematically capture the range and richness of employer engagement for the benefit of higher education in the College as a whole to provide examples of good practice that can be disseminated. The College has achieved much in the intervening two years. Employers speak highly of the students' capacity to work flexibly and productively in placement and that the majority possess those technical and soft skills required in the modern workforce. The Scholarship Fund that enables the provision of support for student placement is innovative and successful. These are indicators of **good practice**. The College puts strong emphasis on employer engagement and vocational learning and provides an excellent range of enhancement activities to increase employability skills in line with its strategic objectives.

18 Course self-evaluations are collated within each school and inform its self-evaluation report. These are brought together in the production of the College's Quality Improvement Plan, which incorporates the higher education provision. The College is in the process of piloting a Self-Evaluation Review Panel to monitor the process more rigorously and to drive up standards. The College recognises that a more detailed reporting of its higher education courses is an area for development. While external examiner reports inform the self-evaluation of higher education courses, they are additionally monitored through the College's Centre for Curriculum Quality Assurance and Performance Development where progress with responses and actions is tracked. Consequently, the College can identify and respond to good practice themes or recurring areas for development. Where support and resource requirements are required to address issues identified in external examiner reports, they are actioned through the Quality Performance Group or the Standards Improvement Unit. Where areas of poor performance are identified through key performance indicators below target, or there are other significant issues raised by students, external examiners or awarding bodies and organisations, course teams and managers are required to implement a recovery plan. The recovery plan is operational for a minimum of one year. During this time, the course team is required to report on a monthly basis to the school's management team. There are currently three recovery plans in place to address issues that were identified by both the College and current students.

## **What account is taken of the Quality Code?**

19 The College takes account of the Quality Code in the management of academic standards through compliance with validating body processes which have been developed with reference to the Quality Code. The College maintains its effective partnerships with validating bodies through regular contact, consultations, reviews and meetings.

20 The Quality Code has been used to develop, validate and revalidate foundation degrees. Documentation includes reference to subject benchmark statements and the foundation degree qualification benchmark. Programme specifications, handbooks, assessment and internal verification plans have been standardised, with the assessment guidelines effectively updated to reflect direct reference to the Quality Code. The Quality Code is incorporated into the delivery of higher education support and through the dissemination of good practice. There are staff development events addressing the Quality Code.

21 The College is undertaking a final review and mapping exercise in 2014-15 of all higher education policies to ensure that they align with the Quality Code and support delivery. Currently, chapters are disseminated to internal working groups for consideration and action. As partners review their procedures, these are communicated to the Curriculum Quality Assurance and Performance Development Manager for distribution to teams and for inclusion in future staff development events. The College has fully embraced the Quality Code and has invested much staff development time in implementing its indicators, with evidence of its impact across the provision in terms of staff understanding. This is **good practice**.

## **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?**

22 There are clear and effective processes for monitoring and assuring that the College is fulfilling its obligations to its awarding bodies and validating partners with respect to standards of higher education. They ensure that students receive appropriate learning opportunities. The College works with a large number and wide range of awarding bodies and validating partners. Its strong relationships are built around a series of memoranda and partnership agreements and the Pearson Standard Note. The College is represented on awarding body groups at various levels, including the Strategic Steering Group and Collaborative Partnership Forum of the University of Ulster and at Queen's University Belfast, and at operational level in consortia, course team and annual monitoring meetings.

23 The Centre for Curriculum Quality Assurance and Performance Development is responsible for liaison with awarding bodies, organisations and validating partners and has established a common quality assurance system across the College's provision. Additionally, it monitors College quality reports, such as the annual self-evaluation reports, in order to identify cross-College strengths and areas for development. The College works within the remit of its agreements with its awarding bodies. These remits themselves are subject to quinquennial review. The success of the College's approach is illustrated by it securing Institutional Approval from the University of Ulster in 2012.

24 Importantly, the College has well established and productive management arrangements with its awarding bodies and organisations which support the maintenance and enhancement of academic standards. For example, subject partnership managers at the University of Ulster and link university coordinators at other validating higher education institutions all work well with College teams to ensure that awarding body requirements are understood and met. Relationships with other awarding bodies and organisations are equally

productive. For example, a number of college staff work with awarding organisations such as Pearson or the Chartered Management Institute to bring this expertise to the College. The College works closely with these awarding bodies, both to monitor provision and, where necessary, to deliver support for improvement. For example, Pearson has delivered training for internal verification arising out of needs identified in external examiner reports.

25 Where courses are delivered within higher education consortia, the College plays a proactive role in ensuring that the academic standards of its awarding bodies and organisations are met. Consortia meet regularly to moderate summative assessments, to agree grades, review student feedback, review and develop assessments and to undertake joint staff development activities.

26 The quality assurance of assessment is sound. For franchised provision, the College adheres to the verification and moderation processes of the awarding body and additionally assures itself that assessments are appropriate to its students. The College undertakes internal verification and moderation of assessments and assessment decisions through a formally audited process. Employers often contribute to the design and delivery of assessment and contribute to assessment decisions. Students confirm that assessments are both challenging and stimulating, providing them with good opportunities to demonstrate that they have met the intended learning outcomes. Feedback to students is effective and valued by students as it allows them to identify their good practice and areas for development.

27 Assessment policy has been reviewed and assessment schedules are in place. A minority of students indicate that, while schedules are in place, dates were often changed, leading to work overload at certain periods. Staff provide feedback which the majority of students confirm as timely and useful. There is an effective mix of verbal and written feedback. The subject teams make written responses to the external examiner reports and share these with students.

28 Assessment decisions are confirmed at examination boards which take place under the backing of higher education institutions for franchised provision or by the College for other awarding bodies and organisations. In both cases, college staff undertake appropriate training to perform this function. External examiner reports confirm that assessment procedures and outcomes are fair and that grading is commensurate with *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ). The College collates all external examiner reports in order to identify common themes and to monitor actions taken in response to the reports. The Senior Executive Team and College Quality Group receive the collated report.

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

29 The formal staff development process is managed by the Organisational Development Team within the Department of Human Resources to support the achievement of appropriate academic standards. An extensive range of mechanisms informs staff development decisions, including the Staff Development Policy, annual college training needs analysis, business planning processes and the appraisal scheme, including teaching observations. Additionally, the College uses external reports, performance reviews, audits, self-evaluations, learner feedback, and recommendations from subject network meetings and industry needs to provide development opportunities for staff. The outcomes from these inform future staff development and the menu of academic standards support which is available for delivery by the Standards Improvement Unit. Actions are scrutinised by the College's Quality and Performance Group which may result in referrals for staff development activities through the Curriculum Area Manager for Higher Education or the Human Resource Department.

30 Sharing good practice is well developed and exchange moots, for example, provide opportunities to discuss experience on a multidisciplinary basis. This is **good practice**. They have been introduced to consider a number of matters pertinent to academic standards such as the use of technology-enhanced learning, cross-curriculum opportunities, employer input, integrated assignments, the learner voice, the Quality Code and scholarly activities. There is a higher education area on the College's intranet as a reference point for staff. On a sectoral basis the College is represented on the Northern Ireland Higher Education Forum to share good practice.

31 New staff are mentored, with reduced teaching hours in their first year and supported to undertake their teaching qualification. Classroom observations are carried out through the probation period and part-time staff can take the opportunity of the new pilot teaching module at the University of Ulster.

32 Staff are supported to attend conferences, seminars and networking events at subject level regionally, nationally and internationally. There is a college annual conference for higher education, good practice exchange workshops and opportunities for business development staff to share their experiences from industry, bringing added value to their role. Staff benefit from the support and good practice of their collaborative partner institutions.

33 Staff CVs are reviewed as part of the validation and revalidation processes to ensure they are appropriate for course delivery. Staff teaching on higher education partner courses are invited to become associate lecturers or recognised teachers of the universities through submitting their details. This gives them access to university resources. It is valuable that the associate lecturers for the University of Dundee have recently been bestowed the accolade of honorary lecturers in recognition of student feedback. This accolade enables the staff to teach at the University of Dundee in addition to their own College. Appointments are made in recognition of excellence in teaching, research, professional practice or contribution to public life.

34 Significantly, the College instigated regional membership of the Higher Education Academy for the sector. This will facilitate staff in making applications for Fellowship. Additional higher education events are planned on a sectoral basis through the higher education cross-sector forum. The College is actively working with the University of Ulster to formally accredit a module which will offer credit towards master's progression at the University for those undertaking the College Industry Initiative.

**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?**

35 As with Core theme 1, the responsibilities for managing higher education standards are clear and effective and enable the College to identify good practice and areas for development. Responsibilities for managing the quality of learning opportunities are the same as those for academic standards (see paragraphs 10-18). The College is responsible

for student recruitment, induction, teaching, learning and assessment and for work-based learning, physical and staffing resources.

36 Management responsibility for physical resources to support teaching and learning lies with the College's Chief Operating Officer through the Department of Learning Services and for information technology through the Department for Estates and Facilities. Managers of these departments sit on the College's Quality and Performance Group and therefore can take a holistic and strategic approach to servicing higher education courses.

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

37 There are effective processes in place to liaise with partner higher education institutions to ensure that the College is aware of its responsibilities and meets them (see paragraphs 22-28). For example, a number of college managers sit on university committees and on consortia groups. Resources are a key consideration in partner and awarding body validation and revalidation processes.

### **What account is taken of the Quality Code?**

38 The College is effective in embracing the Quality Code (see paragraphs 19-21). The guidelines for the management of higher education, new curriculum, benchmark statements, programme specifications, course handbooks and the materials to support the delivery and evaluation of learning all take account of the Quality Code. These ensure students are aware of pertinent information on the course's college intranet site and also through tutorials. Students confirm that they are aware of relevant and appropriate information for their courses with regard to learning opportunities.

39 A master mapping database has been developed of all policies, procedures, processes and guidelines. The database notes versions and documents which still need alignment to the Quality Code. This effectively assists the College in monitoring progress.

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

40 The College operates a comprehensive policy for the observation of teaching and learning. While the policy applies to all of the College's provision, it is sufficiently flexible to meet the particular nature of teaching and learning on its higher education courses. The College has found significant strengths emanating from the observation process, including strong student engagement and a positive learning environment. The outcomes from the observation process can be specifically analysed for higher education and are used to enhance the quality of learning opportunities by, for example, identifying and sharing best practice and putting supportive actions in place where aspects of development are found. The majority of students speak highly of their experience of teaching, learning and assessment and have a range of opportunities to give their views. They are particularly positive about the extent to which tutors use their current or recent sector experience to enhance teaching, learning and assessment. However, the College acknowledges the need for more differentiation of teaching strategies and greater variety in the use of technology-enhanced learning. This is being addressed through a partnership arrangement with an international software company for digital learning.

41 The College follows a classroom observation process common to the regional colleges which ensures all members of staff, whether full or part-time, are formally assessed on the quality of their teaching every two years. A large group of trained managers form the

observation team. The collated findings detail a range of good practice and areas for improvement and these are analysed separately for higher education provision. Key strengths identified include how lecturers use a range of teaching methods and learning resources and how they effectively contextualise learning within the context of the overall course, assignment, employer and examination requirements.

42 The College has developed a three-year strategic Improving Teaching and Learning programme, clearly differentiating higher education, with the fundamental aim of supporting teachers in improving their teaching practice. Although the programme is born out of the College Skills Matters Curriculum Strategy, which details the aspirations of the whole College, it also distinguishes the College's intentions for higher education specifically. It contains detail about the development of a formal peer observation programme. Peer observations currently take place mostly on an informal basis and only formally through the College's mentoring system for new staff. In the second and third year of the Improving Teaching and Learning programme, it is planned that the peer observation process will recognise good quality teaching and share key aspects of identified good practice across the College.

43 The College recognises that areas for development include the need for more peer-to-peer assessment opportunities and how lecturers could utilise a greater variety of technology-enhanced learning resources in their sessions. The outcomes of observation are formally reported to the Quality Performance Group and provide the basis of staff development at various staff development days. In addition, the College uses outcomes of staff appraisal, self-evaluation reports, performance reviews, audits, external examiner reports, and continuing professional development activities as some of the key mechanisms to effectively assure the quality of teaching and learning. Students commented positively on the quality of teaching across courses, citing varied teaching strategies employed to help them achieve learning outcomes

44 Staff employed to teach on higher education courses are required to have a qualification at least one academic level higher than the course they teach. When they are first employed, they are carefully inducted through a process that considers college-wide policies and procedures. There is a new induction course specifically for higher education staff that covers internal and external quality processes. Every new member of staff is also assigned a mentor with higher education experience who supports them through the remainder of their probationary period.

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

45 There is a comprehensive range of systems in place to support students and it ensures continuous improvement through ongoing monitoring of services. The College has full responsibility for all aspects of student support. Appropriate management arrangements inform it of the quality and adequacy of its student support activities and the accessibility of the provision for students at all campuses.

46 The College's student support services are well managed within the Department of Learner Services and include admissions, careers and guidance, financial information, counselling and additional support. Services are available at all campuses. Specialist staff rotate between sites to provide their support at allocated times which are clearly signposted to students. They are well advertised through a wide variety of communications, such as the Student Support Handbook, induction processes, poster advertising, Student Services flyers, Students' Union, social media, and the virtual learning environment.



47 There is a rigorous admissions process that offers pre-enrolment advice and guidance events for which there is a high take-up and students find useful. Students are able to disclose needs for additional support at any time from pre-admission through induction to on-course. The Centre for Inclusive Learning within Learner Services successfully assesses and meets the needs of higher education students. Learning support officers review each identified student biannually and can provide appropriate support from a comprehensive range of assistive technologies and other forms of help. Through careful data collection, the Centre shows that success rates for higher education students using the service had increased by two per cent for 2012-13 compared with the previous year. After an assessment with a member of the Inclusive Learning Team, students who are not entitled to a Disabled Student's Allowance are able to gain curriculum support for which no additional financial cost is incurred.

48 The Centre for Careers and Employability has gained the Matrix Quality Standard and encompasses the three areas of student finance, counselling, and careers information, advice and guidance. This Centre plays an important role in providing opportunities for students to increase their employability skills. For example, it supports all aspects of job application, such as with finding and evaluating placements, developing work briefs and real life projects with companies. The Head of Learner Services maintains an appropriate overview of the out-sourced counselling provision through quarterly meetings. Effective oversight of Learner Services is maintained by the Senior Management Team which holds performance reviews twice each year. These are informed by self-assessment reports of individual areas, external examiner reports and, most importantly, by outcomes of the twice-yearly learner surveys.

49 The College sets a strong emphasis on vocational learning including work-based learning and provides an excellent range of enhancement activities to increase employability skills. This is **good practice**. Students benefit greatly from free additional classes including, for example, computer-aided design, languages and a 'Business Extra' Institute of Leadership and Management qualification at level 5 to provide students with a competitive edge in the employment market. Other enterprises include 'showcase events' where students carry out live performances, fashion shows and competitions. Students also have the opportunity to take part in a competitive application for a bursary from the Trust Scholarship scheme to engage in activities to widen their experiences and improve their future job prospects. International placements are particularly encouraged. One previous recipient travelled to Paris to study acoustic guitar and another started their own successful bakery business. The College offers further extracurricular activities to promote students' personal development. This is the new HExtra course which has been designed in consultation with the Students' Union and includes health-related topics, finance and budgeting, academic study skills and students' rights.

50 Assessment feedback is detailed, constructive and mostly provided within the policy guideline of 21 days. Students are satisfied that the written and verbal feedback they receive helps them to improve grades. Each student has an Advisor of Study who plays an important part in induction and ongoing guidance and support. Students are able to discuss their academic progress with module tutors and their Advisor of Study during individual tutorial sessions. Timetabled tutorial sessions in all full and part-time courses provide appropriate pastoral and academic support. However, there is variability in the use made of group tutorials. Students reported that some provide structured activities including study skills, while others were extensions of module work or had no proper focus. It is **desirable** that the College reviews the use of tutorial time to ensure its effectiveness. Students on part-time courses without timetabled tutorials are able to contact their tutors easily and some have the opportunity to drop in to see staff prior to or following their lesson.

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

51 The strategic approach to staff development for the quality of learning opportunities is outlined in the arrangements for staff development for the management of academic standards (see paragraphs 29-34). The College has a dedicated budget for staff training which provides for a significant range of development opportunities.

52 Good practice events showcase innovative teaching and assessment. A number of staff development events have taken place with a focus on teaching and learning, including internal verification, assessment and feedback, and validating partner input on the Quality Code, while staff have the opportunity to attend training at partner events.

53 Appraisal is informed by the observation process, with supportive measures available through the Organisational Development Team or the Standards Improvement Unit. Staff involved as observers for the appraisal process are trained for their role and support is available for staff in need of further observation. The observation process is organised through a systematic electronic system which allocates, logs and tracks scheduled observations. Observations are undertaken by managers who have been selected for their specific curriculum knowledge.

54 Staff keep abreast of new developments through strong employer engagement, Business Development staff and the College Industry Initiative. In liaison with stakeholders, including DEL, the College has acknowledged the skills gap in Northern Ireland in the information technology sector and has up-skilled six members of staff to deliver a suite of qualifications in cloud computing as a rapid conversion course for non-information technology graduates. Staff currency is developed and maintained through such engagements with sound alignment of provision to industry needs. The outputs from the range of staff development undertaken is brought back into the curriculum through the development of new provision, materials, teaching strategies, case studies, guest speakers and visits. Students confirm that staff are knowledgeable in their subjects and have good employer links with a number of staff continuing as practitioners in their industry.

### **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?**

55 Major capital and physical resources are exemplary and represent industry standards, and beyond in some cases. However, a minority of students comment that at course level, resource allocation can be less than satisfactory and has had a negative impact on their learning experience. The College is aware of these issues through its effective monitoring processes and has taken steps to resolve them and to communicate with students the action it has taken.

56 Resource requirements are appropriately determined at validation events and from self-evaluation reports course-by-course, based on the learning outcomes for each. Twice each year, course coordinators also request resources as part of the Performance Review Process. These are then prioritised by the Centre Manager and Head of School. Library resources are allocated through a central budget in response to requests arising from validation and the Performance Review Process

57 The College provides high-quality specialist spaces, resources and equipment to support delivery. These are aligned to the following college strategies: Curriculum, People, Information Technology and Estate. However, some students commented that access to specialist resources and appropriate teaching spaces is inconsistent. For example, HND

Performing Arts students have had to use their own personal communication devices to record evidence for their work. Ten cameras were purchased two years ago following student requests but were not completely fit for purpose. HND Hair and Beauty Management students have been taught in the library for some units where a practical space was required.

58 The College's e3 campus, based in West Belfast, is a College centre for innovative curriculum delivery and contains state-of-the-art equipment such as a very large composite autoclave, television studios and numerous computer-training suites. This centre links directly with industry partners to match higher education-level skills with employer needs in the region. Students that succeed in accessing the facility, such as those in HND Business, find the resources and equipment available to them helpful in contextualising their learning. However, some students from other courses met by the team explained that access to this specialist provision is often inconsistent, not planned for or planned for and then not realised. It would be **desirable** for the College to ensure that students are fully apprised of the availability of specialist facilities and resources that will enable them to achieve their intended learning outcomes.

59 Students following different modes of study, full-time, part-time and work-based, have adequate access to the library and good access to a range of electronic journals, e-books and printed resources, with an acceptable ratio of copies per book per student. The majority of students confirmed that the opening hours for the campus libraries are appropriate for their needs. However, some work-based and part-time learners state they would prefer later opening times and access at the weekend.

**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 DEL-funded higher education?

60 The College's responsibilities for publishing information about its higher education are clearly stated in relevant partnership and cooperation agreements. University partners provide source documentation which the College adapts for its own use. Documents are returned to the university for approval before publication. For Pearson courses, the College has sole responsibility for the compilation and publication of course information and publicity but there is an informal arrangement with the external examiner to check material before publication. The College's Public Information Management Policy and Approval Procedures provides the operational framework for ensuring compliance.

61 The College publishes a general full-time prospectus which contains both further and higher education courses. This is available in hard copy and online. Part-time courses are promoted through an online prospectus and a widely-distributed newspaper. There is no separate higher education prospectus and the College has no plans to produce one. Existing publications are complemented by a number of other handbooks and guides which include a Student Support Handbook, a student class representatives' handbook and prospectuses for international students. The College publishes a lively and informative quarterly newsletter promoting its work-based learning activities which is distributed to employers, placement providers and other stakeholders.

62 A range of other material is produced, including guides for staff and students on student services, assessment appeals, extenuating circumstances and complaints. Feedback from student surveys highlighted the need for more information and guidance on non-academic matters. The College has responded with the annual publication of HExtra which provides dates and locations for bookable workshops on topics such as careers, finance, health, learning support, accommodation and extra curricula activities. This is managed by Student Services and distributed through the student portal. Information and publicity flyers for other events are produced when required.

63 Feedback from students through an online survey and focus groups indicated that the majority use the website as their primary source of information. In response to this, and recognising that the current website contained a number of inaccuracies, the College has introduced a phased redevelopment and redesign of it during 2013-14. The new website will include a dedicated higher education section and a student from the FdSc iMedia will be invited to join the design team during its development.

64 Course teams are responsible for producing course-specific information including course specifications. Teams use either a standardised template or specifications provided by the appropriate awarding body to meet specific course and awarding body needs.

65 The Developmental engagement recommended the College promote the consistent and regular distribution of employer packs to employers across the provision. A new and comprehensive range of documentation has been developed to support placements and work-based learning opportunities. This is being introduced to employers throughout 2014 as students go out on placement. The Curriculum Area Manager for Higher Education ensures that course teams follow a standardised format for these documents. Students on placement confirmed that they had received this information and found it informative and useful.

66 An audit of the College's public information led to the formation of the Public Information Group. Chaired by the Equality, Compliance and Risk Centre Manager, this group meets monthly to review all publications and publicity. In addition, the Research and Insights Officer collects feedback from a wide variety of sources, including students, to inform the College's marketing and publicity activities. The College uses data obtained from website traffic monitoring (analytics) to measure the effectiveness of its digital marketing and website activity. College learner surveys are also used to inform marketing activities.

67 The team endorsed the College's confidence in its ability to provide published material in alternative formats. The College cited recent examples where the Equality and Goods Relations Officer was able to provide these. The Accessibility statement on the College's website confirms that it meets standard guidelines ensuring enhanced accessibility.

**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?**

68 Publication of information is supported by a new policy for those involved in its development. The policy covers both electronic and paper-based formats, relevant legislation and best practice guidelines. It is well understood by staff and reflects current practice. The website is checked regularly, with the frequency of checks for different elements varying according to need. However, at the team's visit some minor errors were apparent. It is **advisable** that the College reviews its website checking procedures to promote greater diligence in ensuring the accuracy and completeness of public information.

69 Each prospectus is developed effectively with the support of a project plan which identifies roles, accountabilities, timelines, and approval by awarding bodies and organisations. Heads of school are responsible for providing accurate course information and for gathering pre-publication approval from the relevant awarding body. This material is then checked by the Curriculum Area Manager. In the case of higher national certificate and diploma courses, the external examiners review the information at their next visit. Once material is agreed, publication becomes the responsibility of the College's Corporate Communications and Marketing Centre within the Department of Corporate Development.

70 The majority of students do not actively contribute to publicity material. Some students have been asked their opinion of the information made available to them and at least one international student helped with the international prospectus. During the planning stages of the prospectus publications, the College conducts focus groups with a small random sample of higher and further education students to obtain their feedback on the front cover concepts. The student voice is used in particular to inform the development of the Learner Services Handbook, in terms of content and ease of use. However, it would be **desirable** for the College to involve higher education students more directly in the development of public information.

71 There is clear version control of key documents which is managed by the Public Information Group who maintain a schedule which includes the owner and review date. At each review the document is checked against the Quality Code and the definitive version is kept on the website, with previous iterations being removed.

72 Students find that the College information available to them is relevant, accurate and reliable. Students consider the content of materials on the virtual learning environment is helpful, although access can be difficult at times. At the point of enrolment, satisfaction surveys are completed by learners. Evidence provided in the 2013 survey showed that 94 per cent of higher education students stated that they had all the information needed before they applied for their course, and, almost 90 per cent were aware by the start of their course of the student support services available to them.

73 Social media is widely used by students and staff in relation to their courses. There is a useful staff protocol and code of conduct which covers its use but there is no equivalent for students. Use of social media is covered in the induction of students and there are materials on the virtual learning environment to support this work. Student representatives are given guidance from the Students' Union on the use of social media. A Digital Marketing Officer makes checks on student use within the various College sites and has administrator rights.

**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**

74 The provision consisted of 85 courses within the scope of the engagement, regulated by 17 awarding bodies. Within this large provision, the Developmental engagement team identified seven features of good practice: programme specifications contain reference to moderation so that students are informed about the process; where assessed work is from tutors new to higher education there is an initial requirement

that a 100 per cent sample is moderated; the feedback sheet used in the HND Music and other courses within the School of Creative and Service Industries provided an opportunity for students to reflect on their performance and for the tutors to give feedback on the assessment criteria; employers made a significant contribution to curriculum design in the FdSc Software Engineering, FdSc Architectural Technology and the BA (Hons) Fashion Management; there was an impressive range and breadth of employer engagement in assessment, fully in line with the College's strategic objectives; in response to the problems of providing placements in some curriculum areas, staff made commendable efforts to assist students in completing the learning outcomes of their courses; and the work-based learning packs that have so far been developed and produced in collaboration with higher education institutions were comprehensive and worthy of dissemination across the provision.

75 In their recommendations, the Developmental engagement team reported that it is **advisable** for the College to: ensure that the recently instituted quality management groups develop their relationship with the Centre for Quality Assurance and the School of Academic Support so that the College can consistently identify both strengths and areas for development across all subject areas; act on the current review of the way in which recommendations in external examiners' reports are implemented, in time for the responses to reports from the 2011-12 academic year; improve the consistency with which staff inform students of, and adhere to, the schedule for the timely return of students' marked work; and ensure that monitoring the accuracy of the information available on the virtual learning environment is a scheduled and regular activity.

76 The Developmental engagement team also reported that it would be **desirable** for the College to: systematically capture the range and richness of employer engagement for the benefit of higher education in the College as a whole to provide examples of good practice that can be disseminated; close the feedback loop in order to inform students of the College's response to their concerns to ensure they know that an appropriate response has been made; promote the consistent and regular distribution of employer packs to employers across the provision; consider drawing up an ethics policy to provide guidance in the case of students on some courses creating new products during their courses which raise issues of intellectual property rights; monitor the overarching strategy to review the College's public information to assure its accuracy, completeness and consistency.

## D Foundation degrees

77 There are currently 19 foundation degrees taught by the College. Four of these are part-time (Counselling, Graphic Communications, Event Management for the Tourism Industry, and Hospitality and Tourism Management) with 84 students and validated by the University of Ulster. The remaining 15, with 503 students, are full-time courses, four of which are validated by Queen's University Belfast (Early Childhood Studies, Health and Leisure Studies, Mechanical Engineering, and Product Design and Development). The remaining 11 are the responsibility of the University of Ulster and include Architectural Technology with Sustainable Design, Building Services and Renewable Energies, iMedia, Property Planning and Housing, Software Engineering, Sustainable Construction, Accounting, Event Management for the Tourism Industry, Hospitality and Tourism Management, Marketing, and Travel and Tourism Management.

78 The College has a large and varied foundation degree provision in line with its mission. It vigorously explores new ideas for foundation degrees with due regard to industrial, commercial and employment needs in Northern Ireland and in association with its partners, Queen's University Belfast and the University of Ulster. It is well placed to continue to do so.

## E Conclusions and summary of judgements

79 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Belfast Metropolitan 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 and organisations. This was based upon discussion with staff and students and scrutiny of evidence provided by the College and its awarding bodies and organisations: Accounting Technicians Ireland, the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants, the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply, the Chartered Management Institute, the Chartered Institute of Marketing, City and Guilds, the Institute of Leadership and Management, Manchester Metropolitan University, Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, the Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examination Body, Pearson, Queen's University Belfast, and the universities of Cambridge, Dundee and Ulster.

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

- the cross-College functions of the quality assurance and coordinators' groups, the Standards Improvement Unit and the Centre for Curriculum Quality Assurance and Performance Development serve, effectively, to take a holistic view of standards (paragraphs 12-14)
- the College puts strong emphasis on employer engagement and vocational learning and provides an excellent range of enhancement activities to increase employability skills in line with its strategic objectives (paragraphs 17, 48 and 49)
- the College has fully embraced the Quality Code and has invested much staff development time in implementing its indicators, with evidence of its impact across the provision in terms of staff understanding (paragraph 21)
- sharing good practice is well developed and exchange moots, for example, provide opportunities to discuss experience on a multidisciplinary basis (paragraph 30).

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

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

- review its website checking procedures to promote greater diligence in ensuring the accuracy and completeness of public information (paragraph 68).

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

- further develop student engagement to enhance academic standards (paragraph 15)
- review the use of tutorial time to ensure its effectiveness (paragraph 50)
- ensure that students are fully apprised of the availability of specialist facilities and resources that will enable them to achieve their intended learning outcomes (paragraphs 57 and 58)
- involve higher education students more directly in the development of public information (paragraph 70).

82 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

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responsibilities effectively, as set out in the relevant partnership agreement for the management of the standards of the awards of its awarding bodies and organisations.

83 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.

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



<b>Belfast Metropolitan College action plan relating to the Summative Review March 2014</b>						
<b>Good practice</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>Target date</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Success indicators</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
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 cross-College functions of the quality assurance and coordinators' groups, the Standards Improvement Unit and the Centre for Curriculum Quality Assurance and Performance Development serve, effectively, to take a holistic view of standards (paragraphs 12-14)</li> </ul>	Continually review the participants on the College Quality Groups to ensure the effectiveness of the groups	End of each semester	CAM HE / CQAPDM	Minutes of meeting reflecting the effectiveness of meeting is dealing with Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement issues	Sinead Walsh/Gillian Magee	Review of the minutes of groups and actions taken
	Ensure that there is student representation on the HE Quality group (1 full-time/1 part-time)	30/09/14	CAM HE	A minimum of 50% attendance by students sitting on quality group (Minutes)	HoS - SIU/CQAPDM	Review of the minutes of groups and actions taken
	Hold bi-monthly meetings between SIU & CQAPDM to discuss current Higher Education priorities	01/09/14	HoS - SIU/CQAPDM	Minutes of meeting reflect the changing priorities and collaboration between Standards	Sinead Walsh / Gillian Magee	Review of the minutes of meetings and actions taken

	Reorganise the format of the Higher Education Coordinators Group to best reflect the extensive and varied College awarding bodies	30/09/14	CAM HE/CQAPD	Improvement Unit/Curriculum Quality Assurance and Performance Development Manager  Terms of reference for new group(s) structure(s)	HoS - SIU/Gillian Magee	Evaluation of the Terms of Reference for each group and review of minutes of meetings held
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the College puts strong emphasis on employer engagement and vocational learning and provides an excellent range of enhancement activities to increase employability skills in line with its strategic objectives (paragraphs 17, 48 and 49)</li> </ul>	Share good practice and SR Report through the Cross Sector HE Managers Group and via the 157 Group	30/06/14	CAM HE	Minutes of meetings. Dissemination of good practice and adoption of ideas by other Colleges	HoS - SIU	Review of the minutes of managers group and actions taken. Minutes of 157 Group
	Share good practice throughout the College through Staff Development Events on engaging employers	30/06/15	Donna O'Connor	Staff Development calendar of events. Adoption of strategies by other School in College	ACEO	Audit of the Staff Development activities undertaken by HE staff
	Hold a DEL supported Employer breakfast to engage	30/06/15	Michelle McCaughley	Engagement of new employers	Gillian Magee	Audit of the feedback and follow ups with

	new employers in STEM areas					employers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the College has fully embraced the Quality Code and has invested much staff development time in implementing its indicators, with evidence of its impact across the provision in terms of staff understanding (paragraph 21)</li> </ul>	Completion of the document linking all College policies, processes and procedures and ensuring each is in line with the Quality Code chapters	30/12/14	CAM HE	Single source document, identifying all College policies, processes & procedures with links to Quality Code and dates for review	HoS - SIU / CQAPDM	Annual audit of the linking document and documents updated
	Dissemination of updated Policies processes and via Staff Development Activities	30/16/15	Donna O'Connor	Staff knowledge of the UK Quality Code and how College documentation has been created to comply with the same	Gillian Magee / ACEO	Analysis of documents, versions and dissemination dates
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sharing good practice is well developed and exchange moots, for example, provide opportunities to discuss experience on a multidisciplinary basis (paragraph 30).</li> </ul>	Hosting of a minimum of 2 College based HE moots per academic year	30/06/15	CAM HE	Improved collaboration between Schools and CAM Areas (minutes of moots)		Scrutiny of the Moot notes and good practice shared through IntraMet
	Hosting of a cross sector HE moot each year	30/06/15	CAM HE	Improvement in collaboration between Colleges and sharing of ideas (minutes of moots)		Scrutiny of the moot notes and good practice shared through collaboration  Feedback obtained from

						attendees
<b>Advisable</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>Target date</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Success indicators</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
The team considers that it is <b>advisable</b> for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>review its website checking procedures to promote greater diligence in ensuring the accuracy and completeness of public information (paragraph 69)</li> </ul>	<p>Review procedures by formally documenting including the creation of a process chart</p> <p>Website checking procedure documented, reviewed by College Public information Group and signed off</p> <p>College Public Information Group to review mechanism for sign off by information owners certifying the accuracy and completeness of their public information</p> <p>Audit schedule of web pages to reflect increased review/resource in August/September 2014 and thereafter</p>	<p>01/05/14</p> <p>01/05/14</p> <p>30/06/14</p> <p>Every month</p>	<p>Managers for Corporate Communications &amp; Marketing</p> <p>Managers for Corporate Communications &amp; Marketing</p> <p>Managers for Corporate Communications &amp; Marketing</p> <p>Head of Corporate Communications and Marketing</p>	<p>Process chart created</p> <p>Process documented and approved</p> <p>Best practice features identified and incorporated</p> <p>Schedule created and monitored</p>	<p>Public Information Project Group</p> <p>Public Information Project Group</p> <p>Public Information Project Group</p> <p>Public Information Group</p>	<p>Analysis of the minutes of Project Group meeting</p> <p>Independent audit of the website and associated links</p> <p>Review of the mechanism and feedback from staff involved</p> <p>Analysis of the schedule and review of changes applied</p>

	<p>monthly reviews. Results of audit to be fed directly to Public Information Group for review and action as necessary</p> <p>In the medium term new content management system due to be implemented early 2015 will require overhaul of above system as centralised upload will no longer be required</p>	30/01/15	Project sponsor (Head of Corporate Development Department)	Project team created following business case approval	Public Information Group	Evaluation of feedback from end users and staff
<b>Desirable</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>Target date</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Success indicators</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
The team considers that it would be <b>desirable</b> for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>further develop student engagement to enhance academic standards (paragraph 15)</li> </ul>	Head of Student Support to represent the college initially at QAA student engagement conference and to report back as to best practice	16/05/14	Head of Department Learner Services	Identification of additional student engagement initiatives to enhance academic standards. Implementation of additional student engagement initiatives/ improvements to	College Quality Group	<p>Annual Review and update of Annual Operating Planning Document/ Students Union</p> <p>Student feedback</p>

	To have student representation on all academic quality assurance committees	30/10/14	Lorraine Lavery to advise re committees for students to be represented on. Learner Services and the Students Union to source and train in co-operation with the curriculum	current operational procedures  To have identified, training and placed appropriate students to advise on quality assurance committees across the college by October 2014	Head of Department Learner Services	Annual Review and update of Annual Operating Planning Document/ Students' Union  Minutes of Meetings Student feedback on success of the initiative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>review the use of tutorial time to ensure its effectiveness (paragraph 50)</li> </ul>	Devise a set of HE tutorial guidelines for full-time and part-time staff	30/12/14	HOF - Leadership, Science & Service Industries	Guidelines in place for all HE staff and students	ACEO	Analysis of student surveys and SER's
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensure that students are fully appraised of the availability of specialist facilities and resources that will enable them to achieve their intended learning outcomes</li> </ul>	Update Induction materials to identify the College specialist facilities  Staff to identify during Induction what facilities will be used during the period of	30/08/14  30/09/14	Nuala Boyle - Learner Services  All Programme Co-ordinators	Updated Induction materials available for all staff & students  Student Surveys / course specific induction packs	Head of Department Learner Services  All CAM's	Audit of induction materials. Analysis of student feedback  Analysis of student surveys

(paragraphs 57 and 58)	study					
	Update Course Handbooks to incorporate specialist facilities that will be used during the period of study	30/06/14	CAM HE	New Course handbook available to staff	HoS - SIU / CQAPDM	Programme audits and Analysis of programme and module surveys
	Provide a repository for HE case studies of innovative use of specialist facilities	30/06/15	CAM HE	Innovative use of facilities disseminated to all HE Co-ordinators	HoS - SIU / CQAPDM	Audit of the use of specialist facilities by HE staff and students and Analysis of surveys
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>involve higher education students more directly in the development of public information (paragraph 71).</li> </ul>	Higher Education Focused consultation group on Public Information through the analysis of all public information documents	30/06/14	Organised by Students Union, Facilitated by Corporate Communications & Marketing	Improvements identified by students to enhance the provision/format of distribution of public information	Gillian Magee	Annual Review and update of Annual Operating Planning Document/ Students Union
	Provision and request of student feedback as to how to improve public information	30/06/14	Corporate Communications & Marketing	Improvements identified by students to enhance the provision/format of distribution of public information	Gillian Magee	Minutes of Meetings  Student feedback on success of the initiative

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Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786