



# **Integrated quality and enhancement review**

**Summative review**

**Bishop Auckland College**

**May 2011**

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## **Preface**

The mission of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications and to inform and encourage continual improvement in the management of the quality of higher education. As part of this mission, QAA undertakes reviews of higher education provision delivered in further education colleges. This process is known as Integrated quality and enhancement review (IQER).

## **Purpose of IQER**

Higher education programmes delivered by further education colleges (colleges) lead to awards made by higher education institutions or Edexcel. The awarding bodies retain ultimate responsibility for maintaining the academic standards of their awards and assuring the quality of the students' learning opportunities. The purpose of IQER is, therefore, to safeguard the public interest in the academic standards and quality of higher education delivered in colleges. It achieves this by providing objective and independent information about the way in which colleges discharge their responsibilities within the context of their partnership agreements with awarding bodies. IQER focuses on three core themes: academic standards, quality of learning opportunities and public information.

## **The IQER process**

IQER is a peer review process. It is divided into two complementary stages: Developmental engagement and Summative review. In accordance with the published method, colleges with less than 100 full-time equivalent students funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) may elect not to take part in Developmental engagements, but all HEFCE-funded colleges will take part in Summative review.

## **Developmental engagement**

Developmental engagements explore in an open and collegial way the challenges colleges face in specific areas of higher education provision. Each college's first, and often their only, Developmental engagement focuses on student assessment.

The main elements of a Developmental engagement are:

- a self-evaluation by the college
- an optional written submission by the student body
- a preparatory meeting between the college and the IQER coordinator several weeks before the Developmental engagement visit
- the Developmental engagement visit, which normally lasts two days
- the evaluation of the extent to which the college manages effectively its responsibilities for the delivery of academic standards and the quality of its higher education provision, plus the arrangements for assuring the accuracy and completeness of public information it is responsible for publishing about its higher education
- the production of a written report of the team's findings.

To promote a collegial approach, Developmental engagement teams include up to two members of staff from the further education college under review. They are known as nominees for this process.

## Summative review

Summative review addresses all aspects of a college's HEFCE-funded higher education provision and provides judgements on the management and delivery of this provision against core themes one and two, and a conclusion against core theme three.

Summative review shares the main elements of Developmental engagement described above. Summative review teams however, are composed of the IQER coordinator and QAA reviewers. They do not include nominees.

## Evidence

In order to obtain evidence for the review, IQER teams carry out a number of activities, including:

- reviewing the college's self-evaluation and its internal procedures and documents
- reviewing the optional written submission from students
- asking questions of relevant staff
- talking to students about their experiences.

IQER teams' expectations of colleges are guided by a nationally agreed set of reference points, known as the Academic Infrastructure. These are published by QAA and consist of:

- *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*, which includes descriptions of different higher education qualifications
- the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*
- subject benchmark statements, which describe the characteristics of degrees in different subjects
- guidelines for preparing programme specifications, which are descriptions of what is on offer to students in individual programmes of study
- award benchmark statements which describe the generic characteristics of an award, for example Foundation Degrees.

In addition, Developmental engagement teams gather evidence by focusing on particular aspects of the theme under review. These are known as 'lines of enquiry'.

## Outcomes of IQER

Each Developmental engagement and Summative review results in a written report:

- Developmental engagement reports set out good practice and recommendations and implications for the college and its awarding bodies, but do not contain judgements. Recommendations will be at one of three levels - **essential**, **advisable** and **desirable**. To promote an open and collegial approach to Developmental engagements, the reports are not published.
- Summative review reports identify good practice and contain judgements about whether the college is discharging its responsibilities effectively against core themes one and two above. The judgements are **confidence**, **limited confidence** or **no confidence**. There is no judgement for the third core theme, instead the report will provide evaluation and a conclusion. Summative review reports are published. Differentiated judgements can be made where a team judges a college's

management of the standards and/or quality of the awards made by one awarding body to be different from those made by another.

Colleges are required to develop an action plan to address any recommendations arising from IQER. Progress against these action plans is monitored by QAA in conjunction with HEFCE and/or the college's awarding body(ies) as appropriate. The college's action plan in response to the conclusions of the Summative review will be published as part of the report.

## Executive summary

### The Summative review of Bishop Auckland College carried out in May 2011

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 agreement, for the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of its awarding body. The team also considers that there can be **confidence** in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreement, for the quality of learning opportunities it offers. The team considers that reliance **can** be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

### Good practice

The team has identified the following good practice for dissemination:

- effective and positive relationships between the College and the University are enhanced by the additional student-centred support provided by the partnership liaison officers
- the extensive range of staff development, both formal and informal, through a managed staff remission process, and the overall staff participation in these opportunities, supports academic standards and the quality of teaching and learning within the College
- the Assistant Programme Leaders Sub Group is effective in sharing good practice in the operational management and consistency of higher education teaching and learning practice within the College
- the variety of methods used and systematic approach adopted by the College to capture the student voice, and the actions taken in response to student feedback
- effective support is provided to higher education students through tutorials, together with the dedicated support systems of the Higher Education Gateway
- the College management controls ensure that the presentation of marketing information is clear, accurate and well presented and is informed by consultation and feedback from a wide range of users
- clear and comprehensive student support information is available on the virtual learning environment.

### 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 **desirable** for the College to:

- as part of its planned review of policies and procedure documentation, make explicit reference to relevant sections of the *Code of practice* and other elements of the Academic Infrastructure
- review the procedures for the observation of teaching and learning to incorporate themes which are specific to higher education delivery
- formally audit and evaluate the programme-specific content information available through the virtual learning environment and implement minimum standards of content available to students.

## 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 Bishop Auckland College (the College). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the College discharges its responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes which the College delivers on behalf of the University of Sunderland. The review was carried out by Ms Rowena Beighton-Dykes, Mrs Catherine Fairhurst, Mr Bob Millington (reviewers), and Mr Bob Saynor (coordinator)

2 The Summative review team (the team) conducted the review in agreement with the College and in accordance with *The handbook for Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review* (the handbook), published by QAA. Evidence in support of the Summative review included documentation supplied by the College and awarding body, meetings with staff, students, and the partner institution, reports of reviews by QAA and from inspections by Ofsted. 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 Bishop Auckland College is located in south and west Durham and is the only further education college in that sub-region. The geographic remoteness from other institutions offering higher education provision has resulted in the College, in partnership with the University of Sunderland, creating a satellite centre to study franchised higher education programmes at the Bishop Auckland site. In 2009-10 the College had 1,463 full-time and 4,756 part-time students, mainly on vocational programmes in further education. For the academic year 2010-11, there are currently 237 HEFCE-funded higher education students, of which four are full-time and 233 part-time. There are currently 24 (8.4 full-time equivalent) staff who teach in higher education, which is delivered across four academic departments. The College's mission is 'to promote social inclusion, fulfil aspirations and develop the potential of individuals, communities and employers through excellence in teaching, training and learning'.

5 The College offers a broad vocational curriculum on its main campus in Bishop Auckland covering entry level through to BA (Hons) degree level. The College also operates learning centres in Barnard Castle, Crook, Newton Aycliffe and Spennymoor, as well as community venues throughout south-west Durham. The College's business training services facility is based at the Spennymoor campus and provides training opportunities for local and regional employers.

6 The higher education awards funded directly or indirectly by HEFCE are listed below, with full-time equivalent numbers of students for 2010-11 in brackets:

### **University of Sunderland**

- BA (Hons) Education and Training (6.7)
- FdA Applied Arts - year two only (4)
- FdSc Computing (10.7)
- FdA Counselling (24)
- FdA Education and Care (24)
- FdA Health and Social Care (12.7)
- FdA Leadership and Management (10.7)
- FdA Working with Young People (8)
- Professional Graduate Certificate in Education, Post Compulsory Education and Training (59).

### **Partnership agreements with the awarding body**

7 The College has a single formal partnership agreement with the University of Sunderland (the University). This has been in place since 2006, prior to which partnership agreements were also in place with the University of Teesside and the University of Bradford. All current students are registered on University of Sunderland programmes.

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

8 The College did not recruit a viable cohort for the FdA Music Technology or the FdA Applied Arts for 2010-11. It is intended that the FdA Applied Arts will run in 2011-12 and student numbers have already been allocated for this programme by the University. Although relatively few new programmes have been developed lately, College staff regularly engage in developing current programmes in partnership with the University or other partner colleges. Typically, this involves developments to assignment specifications in order to make them more related to their students' experience or needs. The FdA Education and Care underwent a full review in 2010, which created completely new modules and assignments for the programme.

9 Organisational structural changes have been approved during 2010-11 for full implementation in 2011-12. The responsibility for higher education at the time of the visit is with the Head of Faculty for Higher Education. In the new structure this will be subsumed within the post of Head of Faculty for Adult Learning and Higher Education.

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

10 Students studying higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the Summative review team. A student written submission was submitted in advance of the team visit. The submission was produced by 11 student representatives from a range of higher education programmes who had gathered feedback from each of their programmes focusing on eight key themes. These were: academic expectations; feedback from tutors; support from tutors and additional learning support; opportunities to take part in the management of higher education programmes; experience as students; the quality of learning resources and facilities; public information; and information relating to academic performance.



11 Once the feedback was obtained, the student representatives held a meeting to disseminate and discuss their views and opinions. In order to ensure impartiality, notes were taken by one of the partnership liaison officers to record the feedback. A further meeting was then held involving the Head of Faculty for Higher Education to clarify and support the completion of the process. The student representatives were then able to review and consolidate information for the final submission. In addition, students made useful contributions to the review in meetings with the team during the visit.

## **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?**

12 The College has a range of committees and groups relating to the management and coordination of higher education. These include the Higher Education Quality and Standards Committee and the Higher Education Working Group. The Higher Education Quality and Standards Committee reports directly to the Curriculum and Quality Committee of Governors, and to the University's Strategic Partnership Steering Group. Operational management of higher education programmes is assigned by the College to the Head of Faculty for Higher Education, who coordinates the provision through scheduled meetings of the designated committees and represents them at the senior management meetings and other working groups. The team is able to confirm that communications between the committees are effective and actions initiated and responded to in a timely manner.

13 The College's Quality Assurance Policy has been updated since the Developmental engagement. In addition, a number of committee and working group remits and memberships have been reviewed and clarified, including the Higher Education Working Group. These committees are responsible for evaluating the outcome of the recommendation from the Development engagement to fully utilise the Operations Manual and support consistent delivery of higher education within the College. Each programme has an agreed assessment process described on a matrix that outlines the key responsibilities of the College. These processes are agreed by the University, the College, and other colleges where network partnership activity exists. College staff show an increased confidence in the ownership of higher education awards since the Developmental engagement, and are proactive in directing the management and delivery of quality assurance processes.

14 Students are encouraged to participate in the management of the higher education awards. However, due to other commitments they do not always become involved, but it was clear to the review team that they are positive about their ability to communicate any concerns to staff. In response to student comments that academic protocols sometimes varied and that standardisation of referencing formats would be helpful, the College has put in place standard Harvard referencing across the programmes. This includes using standard referencing guidance located on the College virtual learning environment. Students welcome the resource and confirmed that they used the guidance frequently, demonstrating that this approach is clearly working.

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

15 Since the Developmental engagement, the College has reviewed its academic procedures. A range of College policies have been developed to relate to the quality assurance of higher education awards. Currently, the documents describing policies and processes are varied, and the College is to undertake a further review at the end of the 2010-11 academic year. The College reported that the review will allow revision of the content to ensure that all areas of the student population are represented, including higher education, and that related awarding body requirements are explicitly referenced.

16 Individually, the current policy documents vary in quality. For example, in the Assessment Policy there is no explicit reference to the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*, while the Teaching and Learning Policy refers only implicitly to a range of elements of the *Code of practice*. The internal verification procedure does not differentiate between further and higher education and is in a different format from other policies. References are made to external bodies relevant to further education but not higher education. The College's appeals process for assessment is supported by an overarching document from the University but does not clearly refer to the *Code of practice, Section 5: Academic appeals and student complaints on academic matters*. The team considers it desirable that, in the planned review of the College's policy documents, the relevant sections of the *Code of practice* and other elements of the Academic Infrastructure should be referenced, to support and strengthen College academic policies.

## **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 the validating partner and awarding body?**

17 Communications with the University of Sunderland are effective. Issues related to quality assurance raised by the College are met with a speedy response from University staff, allowing the College to respond appropriately. External examiner reports repeatedly refer to the good relationship between the College and the University and the associated benefits in ensuring standards are met. The College has two part-time partnership liaison officers, based in the central Higher Education Gateway, who help promote understanding of academic requirements prior to enrolment and during study. The post-holders help students navigate online resources and the University's quality-assurance-related materials. Annual monitoring and external examiner reports comment on the value of their work. It is clear that the roles are utilised by College teams and students to support understanding of academic protocols. The effective and positive relationship between the College and the University, and the additional student-centred support provided through the partnership liaison officers, is good practice.

18 Annual monitoring reports are prepared by course teams and from these the College Head of Faculty for Higher Education completes an overarching report for all College higher education awards. Reports are approved by the Quality and Standards Committee prior to submission to the University. The team was able to confirm that issues and actions are discussed and acted upon satisfactorily.

19 The University's periodic review reported full confidence in the College to deliver programmes on behalf of the University. A number of aspects were commended, including the ways in which the College is actively promoting a culture of higher education across programmes; the impact the College has made towards removing potential barriers to higher education; the support to enable staff to undertake scholarly activity; and the ownership of, and engagement with, relevant documentation such as operations manuals by teaching staff. These conclusions reflected those found by the team.

20 Cluster moderation meetings are undertaken to support cross and inter-college standardisation. Staff and external examiners confirm that these are successful in ensuring that standards are appropriate and equitable, and offer opportunities for sharing good practice. Standards for the teacher education awards are described as exceeding expectations for the level. The external examiner for the Professional Graduate Certificate in Education programme refers to the care taken to support staff through individual professional development. Paired 'buddying' further supports tutors in their understanding of the requirements of award standards, and new tutors confirm that support from peers is available formally and informally, ensuring that standards and protocols are supported by experienced staff. The team was able to confirm that the College's standards of assessment are in line with *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*.

21 Programme tutors have reviewed modules and evaluated student feedback, resulting in changes to modules on a range of programmes, for example in the FdA Education and Care and FdA Leadership and Management. The changes have led to improved content, mode of assessment and balanced workload for the students, while retaining the appropriate level and quality. This proactive approach indicates more confidence in managing the detail of award quality assurance.

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

22 The College has a Continuous Professional Development Policy for staff that is managed by a working group and reviewed annually. However, it does not appear to be reviewed holistically to consider sustainability. The leadership of this area is the responsibility of the Director of Curriculum. The policy embraces all College staff and provision, and it includes remission for tutors involved in teaching on higher education awards calculated according to cohort size. The College has two staff development weeks each year and, in addition, each member of staff is allocated five days for industrial updating. Staff have been involved in a range of events, meetings and training opportunities at the University.

23 Staff development activities are embedded in the management of higher education provision at the College. A full range of training sessions is available to support teaching and learning, some which have been specifically directed to higher education staff. Discussions with staff confirmed that opportunities have been taken to access the University's continuous professional development programme, as well as the scheduled partnership training days. Individual development records indicate that staff are engaging in appropriate continuous professional development, scholarly activities and vocational updating to support the delivery of the higher education programmes. The team is able to confirm that the extensive range of staff development, both formal and informal, through a managed staff remission process, and the overall staff participation in these opportunities, which supports academic standards and the quality of teaching and learning within the College, is good practice.

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

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

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

24 The responsibilities and arrangements for the management and reporting of the quality of learning opportunities are those described in paragraphs 12 to 14. The evidence available to the team confirmed that individual committees are effective in managing the quality of learning opportunities within the College.

25 The operational management of programmes within the College is delegated to assistant programme leaders. Responsibilities include regular liaison with the University's programme leaders, chairing team meetings, attendance at University boards of studies and producing the annual monitoring report. In preparation for the IQER process, the College established the Higher Education Assistant Programme Leaders Sub Group, with representation from all higher education programmes. The team found that the regular weekly meetings of the Sub Group are most effective in developing consistency across the provision and disseminating good practice. The overall effectiveness of this group is exemplified by the way it has been used to make progress with the recommendations identified in the Developmental engagement action plan. The success of this informal 'task and finish' group is good practice and the College is encouraged to maintain the work of this group formally within its committee structure.

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

26 The partnership agreement and associated Operations Manual for each programme set out the range of responsibilities that are delegated to the College to support the quality of learning opportunities. These include detailed procedures for student admissions; induction and support; the delivery of teaching, learning and assessment; and the supervision of work-based learning. In the University's Periodic Review, College staff were commended for their high level of awareness and ownership of relevant documentation including the Operations Manual. Following the Developmental engagement the College has carefully reviewed its compliance with the manuals at programme level and developed a more consistent approach to the contents of module guides.

27 Opportunities to review the success with which the College is meeting its obligations at programme level are provided in the annual monitoring reports that are submitted to the University and which inform the production of overarching partnership programme reports. The team confirms that the reports are effective in evaluating the quality of learning opportunities and in the drawing up of well-focused action plans.

28 The College also helps to maintain the vocational relevance and currency of its programmes through regular liaison with employers. Opportunities are taken to obtain views from employers and mentors on aspects of programmes during visits to support work-based learning. Recently, the College has mounted a business breakfast event, which attracted a large number of local employers to exchange views on the marketing, and future development of its vocational provision.

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

29 Programme specifications approved at the time of validation indicate that appropriate reference has been made to the Academic Infrastructure. In keeping with the University's requirements, programme specifications are made available to students in programme handbooks. This ensures that they are well informed about the overarching intended learning outcomes and the learning, teaching and assessment strategy of their individual programme.

30 The Academic Infrastructure continues to be embedded in the College through its inclusion on committee agendas and through staff attending a range of internal and external development events. Following the Developmental engagement, the opportunity has been taken to map the College's provision against the sections of the *Code of practice* to ensure appropriate alignment. The team found, for example, that recent revisions made to the *Code of practice, Section 8: Career education, information, advice and guidance* have been addressed by the College's Client Services team, and enhancements made to the careers provision reported to the Higher Education Quality and Standards Committee. The team concludes that appropriate reference is being made to the Academic Infrastructure and that it is being used effectively to maintain the quality of learning opportunities.

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

31 The College has an overarching Teaching and Learning Policy applicable to all levels of study. The emphasis that this places on the development of individualised learning and use of e-learning is relevant to the delivery of the higher education programmes. As part of its commitment to the continuous improvement of teaching and learning, the College has recently appointed a Teaching and Learning Manager, whose work will include the implementation of the policy.

32 There are thorough arrangements in place for the annual observation of teaching by all staff to ensure that teaching quality is both maintained and enhanced. A college-wide scheme is in place with grades contributing to the overall self-assessment of mainly further education provision, with few references to higher education. However, the scheme serves an important developmental function through the way individual plans for improvement are drawn up and subsequently implemented. Staff were able to provide useful examples of the way they were benefiting from peer observations on the education programmes outside the scheme. However, members of staff who had been formally observed delivering higher education, while fully supportive of the peer observation process, considered that the current observation methodology was not fully appropriate for the development of a higher education culture. The team considers that it is desirable that the College review the procedures for teaching observations to incorporate themes that are specific to higher education delivery.

33 Student feedback is gathered effectively and good use is made of it to monitor and enhance learning opportunities. The student voice is captured by a range of methods including questionnaires, consultation with student representatives, focus groups and the use of nominal group techniques on a number of programmes. Key strengths include the careful evaluation of student feedback at module and programme level and its incorporation in annual monitoring reports on the FdA Health and Care and BA (Hons) Education and Training programmes. Students also report the successful use of online messaging systems and notice boards, which are particularly effective in securing and maintaining their involvement whilst working off campus. The team considers that the wide-ranging and effective approaches that are taken to capture the student voice and to utilise this to

enhance the programmes and report on the way concerns are being addressed constitutes good practice.

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

34 Student support in the College is comprehensive and closely integrated with teaching and learning. There are regular opportunities for students to discuss academic progress and achievement through formative assessment feedback, personal tutorials, and also through telephone calls or emails when this is more convenient. Students on placement are supported by tutor visits. Where the need for additional support is identified to improve study skills or to address other personal or financial issues students are referred to specialist members of the Student Services team. An increasing amount of advice and guidance information is available for students to access through both the College's and University's intranets.

35 A distinctive feature of the provision is the availability of a number of staff dedicated to the support of higher education students. This includes access to a study support tutor, designated members of the careers and guidance team and the University's partnership liaison officers, all of whom are conveniently located within, or immediately adjacent to, the Higher Education Gateway centre. Students confirmed a high level of satisfaction with the personally focused support they had received from the College. They provided a number of examples of the care and attention they had received from staff in their progress through their programmes of study. The team considers that the focused tutorial support provided to higher education students, together with the dedicated higher education support systems available through the Higher Education Gateway, is good practice.

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

36 The College's staff development process is reported in paragraphs 22 and 23.

37 Recent initiatives to support the quality of learning opportunities include staff collaborating in two funded research projects with colleagues in universities. These focus on the effectiveness of e-resources to support higher education delivered in further education and on the evaluation of different methods of providing formative feedback. The outcomes of the projects have been disseminated more widely across the provision. Staff present a high level of awareness of the place of scholarship in the delivery of the provision. The team considers that the College has in place a high level of commitment to staff development and support for individual continuous professional development, scholarly activities and vocational updating. This contributes significantly to the quality of teaching and learning opportunities.

### **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?**

38 The sufficiency of both human and physical resources is considered at the time of programme approval and periodic review. The University routinely checks the qualifications and experience of staff at validations or when new appointments are made. Curricula vitae indicate that staff are well qualified to teach on the programmes and that 50 per cent of them have, or are working towards, a qualification at master's level or above. Physical resources are integrated within the College's annual budgeting cycle, with an additional ring-fenced allocation to maintain the level of resources available to higher education programmes.

Library staff also liaise regularly with teaching staff and the University to ensure the currency and accessibility of learning materials.

39 Students and staff benefit from the development of the new Higher Education Gateway. This provides a set of dedicated teaching rooms and study and social spaces for higher education students and has helped to promote a more distinct higher education ethos in the College. In addition to the wide range of materials that are available at the College in hard copy, or through its intranet, students are also making full use of the University's virtual learning environment. The partnership liaison officers at the College play an important role in supporting ongoing access for students to the University's e-learning materials and other available services such as financial support.

**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 body 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?**

40 Information about the College is provided in a variety of media and formats, which students find useful. This includes information for students prior to enrolment and during their studies. For prospective students, the Higher Education Guide and the individual programme leaflets clearly promote the College and University. They contain useful, well-presented facts about finance, application, progression opportunities and an overview of each programme. There are details of how to access further information by telephone, email or online. Students reported to the review team that they obtained information from a range of sources. These included extensive use of both paper-based and electronic sources, open days, and interviews before starting their programmes, and students found all to be accessible and useful.

41 Course handbooks are produced to reflect the nature of the subject and customised by the programme team in line with University protocols. These vary in format between programmes but they all include, or have links to, programme and module specifications, programme administration, study skills, assessment regulations and plagiarism. They are well received by the students, who find them informative and useful.

42 The College's website is attractive and user-friendly, with a link to the Higher Education Guide on the front page. There are navigation tabs for employers, the virtual learning environment and a student planner, which also defines higher education terminology and conventions. The information and procedures for prospective students and applicants align with the *Code of practice, Section 10: Admissions to higher education*. There is some pre-programme information in the Higher Education Guide covering learner support and how the entitlements of disabled students are met, in line with the *Code of practice, Section 3: Disabled students*. In addition, full information is available from the Higher Education Gateway in different formats and languages on request.

**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?**

43 The College's marketing team works with the University to ensure that programme-specific material, the use of the University logo, public relations information and website promotions are approved prior to their implementation. The Marketing Manager is accountable for the publication of the Higher Education Guide and website after consultation with the programme teams. The College has in place approvals procedures for the printing of public information to control quality and accuracy. Consultation, through questionnaires and focus groups, with a wide range of users including staff, students and employers is used to inform future marketing information. The team considers that the College's overall approach, the management controls and the clarity of presentation of information to external bodies and potential students, well informed by stakeholder feedback, is good practice.

44 The publication of programme handbooks, module guides and academic information on the virtual learning environment is the responsibility of the appropriate assistant programme leader. Since the Developmental engagement, the use of the virtual learning environment has grown and incorporates the University's academic regulation documents and provides links to its website for further details. A worthwhile recent initiative has been the development of the Higher Education Gateway portal with its procedures for access to both University and College materials from a single site. Information covering an extensive range of support available to students, including pages on the virtual learning environment, is accessible, clear, informative and comprehensive. The team identified the clear and comprehensive student support information available on the virtual learning environment and direct access to guidance and advice as good practice.

45 Programme-specific content is available on the virtual learning environment and allows students to be able to use the site as a learning tool. This content is evaluated informally at the Assistant Programme Leaders Sub Group meetings. However, the team identified inconsistencies and variability within, and between, programmes. It would be desirable for the College to formally audit and evaluate the programme-specific content available through the virtual learning environment to be able to implement minimum standards of information accessible to students.

46 The team was able to confirm that the College has in place public information which is useful, accurate, current, consistent and complete. The information is provided in a variety of media, which students find informative and welcoming. The team verified that the specific information on the College's website is managed and maintained on a regular basis to ensure it is up to date and accurate.

**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**

47 The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in May 2010 and covered all the higher education provision. Three lines of enquiry were agreed with the College and ensured that all IQER core themes could be addressed. The lines of enquiry were:

**Line of enquiry 1:** How does the College assure itself it is fulfilling the requirements of the awarding body in relation to assessment?

**Line of enquiry 2:** Are module guides proving useful for students in terms of supporting assessment outcomes?

**Line of enquiry 3:** How does the College ensure information it publishes about assessment is useful, accurate, current, consistent and complete?

48 The Developmental engagement team identified a number of areas of good practice. These included the comprehensive and effective partnership working between the College and University at a strategic and operational level and the investment the College is currently making to support higher-education-related continuous professional development activity, which contributed to staff engagement with higher education assessment practice. College information is provided in a variety of media and formats, which students find informative and welcoming. The module guides and associated information are available in a variety of forms, and formal systems and procedures are in place to approve public information about higher education awards available on the College website.

49 The team also made a number of recommendations, as follows. The team recommended that the College should: fully utilise the University's Operations Manual to ensure there is consistency of assessment information across programmes made available to students; continue to embed the recently introduced higher education committee and working group structure, including the review of the terms of reference, to ensure they contribute to higher education teams' understanding of higher education practice; introduce mechanisms to record and measure the impact resulting from the investment the College is making in higher-education-specific continuous professional development; agree a common approach to the contents structure used for the production of module guides across all programmes in line with University requirements; introduce a standard approach to the start of year for higher education students to ensure they receive a common understanding of academic standards and higher education terminology and conventions; and agree an institutional approach to the wording of key assessment-related topics and terminology which are common to all higher education awards.

50 The team was able to verify that progress has been made to address the recommendations and share the good practice identified during the Developmental engagement. The College has maintained positive and effective work with the awarding body and related support systems, particularly the effective links with the partnership liaison officers. The team was able to confirm that progress has been made in the use of the Operations Manual to inform College documentation and procedures. The College has undertaken work relating to understanding formative and effective feedback to students, with good projects cited. Students reported that they were able to confirm the variety of formative feedback methods used and its place in their development in a culture of independent learning. Consistency in the use of feedback and its value in the effective improvement of individual work are clear. The College is continuing to refine the higher education committee

structure and to set standards in the use of the virtual learning environment as a learning tool.

## D Foundation Degrees

51 The College currently offers seven Foundation Degrees. Of the 139 registered students on Foundation Degrees, 135 are part-time and four are full-time. The College offers Foundation Degrees in Applied Arts, Computing, Counselling, Education and Care, Health and Social Care, Leadership and Management, and Working with Young People.

52 The higher education strategy identifies Foundation Degrees as having strong potential for growth. The College has developed Foundation Degrees to support its widening participation agenda, particularly through providing students who might not otherwise have engaged with higher education opportunities to study. The College involves employers in programme and assessment design, and demonstrates a willingness to meet the needs of employees and students in terms of curricula, delivery and assessment support.

53 Due to low recruitment the FdA in Applied Arts did not recruit in 2010-11 and currently only has a second-year cohort. However, the College and University have agreed numbers for recruitment in 2011-12. Student numbers have also been approved by the University for the new FdA in Creative Technologies for Music and Performance. Due to changes to the sector requirements for the FdA in Working with Young People, there will only be second-year students in 2011-12, prior to the programme being replaced by a revised one in 2012-13.

54 The good practice and recommendations identified during the Summative review and listed in paragraphs 56 to 58 are common to these programmes.

## E Conclusions and summary of judgements

55 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Bishop Auckland College's management of its responsibilities for academic standards and for the quality of learning opportunities of the awards the College offers on behalf of its awarding body. This was based upon discussion with staff and students and scrutiny of evidence provided by the College and its awarding body, the University of Sunderland.

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

- effective and positive relationships between the College and the University are enhanced by the additional student-centred support provided by the partnership liaison officers (paragraph 17)
- the extensive range of staff development, both formal and informal, through a managed staff remission process, and the overall staff participation in these opportunities, supports academic standards and the quality of teaching and learning within the College (paragraphs 22, 23, 37)
- the Assistant Programme Leaders Sub Group is effective in sharing good practice in the operational management and consistency of higher education teaching and learning practice within the College (paragraph 25)
- the variety of methods used and systematic approach adopted by the College to capture the student voice, and the actions taken in response to student feedback (paragraph 33)

- effective support is provided to higher education students through tutorials, together with the dedicated support systems of the Higher Education Gateway (paragraphs 34, 35)
- the College management controls ensure that the presentation of marketing information is clear, accurate and well presented and is informed by consultation and feedback from a wide range of users (paragraph 43)
- clear and comprehensive student support information is available on the virtual learning environment (paragraph 44).

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

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

- as part of its planned review of policies and procedure documentation, make explicit reference to relevant sections of the *Code of practice* and other elements of the Academic Infrastructure (paragraphs 15, 16)
- review the procedures for the observation of teaching and learning to incorporate themes which are specific to higher education delivery (paragraph 32)
- formally audit and evaluate the programme-specific content information available through the virtual learning environment and implement minimum standards of content available to students (paragraph 45).

59 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 body.

60 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, and other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that it has **confidence** that, in the context of this Summative review, the College discharges its responsibilities effectively, as set out in the relevant partnership agreement for the management of the quality of learning opportunities to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

61 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, and other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that, 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.

<b>Bishop Auckland College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2011</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>effective and positive relationships between the College and the University are enhanced by the additional student-centred support provided by the partnership liaison officers (paragraph 17)</li> </ul>	<p>Emphasise identity, roles and potential functions of partnership liaison officers (PLOs) during student induction</p> <p>Advertise support opportunities in HE Gateway, HE Gateway course on Bishop Auckland College (BAC) Moodle virtual learning environment (VLE) and on 'news' sections of individual HE programme Moodle courses</p>	<p>September 2011</p> <p>From September 2011</p>	<p>During University of Sunderland (UoS) induction by PLOs</p> <p>PLOs, associate programme leaders (APLs)</p>	<p>Detailed and directing information available for HE students</p> <p>PLO support opportunities advertised</p>	<p>HE Working Group, HE Head of Faculty</p> <p>BAC HE Moodle Minimum Standards Task Group (see third bullet point in 'Desirable')</p>	<p>Staff and student induction feedback</p> <p>Task Group minutes</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the extensive range of staff development, both formal and informal, through a managed staff</li> </ul>	Work with UoS Academic Services Liaison and HE Associate Programme Leader (APL) Group and HE Head of	October 2011	HE Associate Programme Leader (APL) Coordinator and HE Head of Faculty	Planned, attended and reviewed joint continuing professional development (CPD) sessions	HE Quality and Standards Meeting	HE staff feedback and HE staff CPD reports

<p>remission process, and the overall staff participation in these opportunities, supports academic standards and the quality of teaching and learning within the College (paragraphs 22, 23 and 37)</p>	<p>Faculty to develop a 2011-12 CPD plan</p>	<p>October 2011</p>	<p>HE APL Coordinator</p>	<p>Detailed HE CPD on HE APL Group Minutes</p>	<p>HE Head of Faculty</p>	<p>HE APL Group minutes and HE Head of Faculty report</p>
	<p>CPD to remain a standing item on HE APL agenda</p>	<p>From October 2011</p>	<p>HE APL Coordinator</p>	<p>BAC HE staff attending HE in FE events at UoS</p>	<p>HE Head of Faculty</p>	<p>CPD report to HE Quality and Standards Group</p>
	<p>HE staff at BAC informed of HE in FE events at UoS and encouraged to attend</p>	<p>From September 2011</p>	<p>HE APL Coordinator and Learning Area Manager (LAM)</p>	<p>CPD ideas on HE APL Group agenda</p>	<p>HE Head of Faculty</p>	<p>CPD report to HE Quality and Standards Group</p>
	<p>HE staff to include CPD ideas and opportunities as a team meeting agenda item</p>	<p>From September 2011</p>	<p>College CPD Coordinator, Quality Manager, HE Head of Faculty, College advanced practitioners</p>	<p>Events scheduled and attended</p>	<p>HE Head of Faculty</p>	<p>CPD report to HE Quality and Standards Group</p>
	<p>HE CPD to be included in College's scheduled CPD events</p>	<p>From September 2011</p>	<p>College CPD Coordinator, Quality Manager, HE Head of Faculty, College advanced practitioners</p>	<p>Events scheduled and attended</p>	<p>HE Head of Faculty</p>	<p>CPD report to HE Quality and Standards Group</p>
	<p>HE Peer Observation Process based around HE tutors' reflections on practice development, with actions supported by HE peers and negotiated CPD</p>	<p>December 2011</p>	<p>HE staff, HE Head of Faculty, College advanced practitioners</p>	<p>Process developed and implemented</p>	<p>BAC Quality Manager</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the Assistant Programme Leaders Sub Group is effective in sharing good practice in the operational management and consistency of higher education teaching and learning practice within the College (paragraph 25)</li> </ul>	<p>HE APL Group to continue with development and review function for some operational HE processes and practices</p>	<p>From September 2011</p>	<p>HE APL Coordinator, HE APL Group (with APLs)</p>	<p>Academic Integrity and Observation development work completed</p> <p>Peer Review of programme information, handbooks and VLE course</p>	<p>HE Head of Faculty and BAC Quality Manager</p> <p>HE Head of Faculty and BAC Quality Manager</p>	<p>Development work implemented</p> <p>HE Working Group Review of Public Information</p> <p>Completeness and accuracy of information</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the variety of methods used and systematic approach adopted by the College to capture the student voice, and the actions taken in response to student feedback (paragraph 33)</li> </ul>	<p>Arrange early elections of HE cohort representatives and standardised 'HE Student Voice' document for BAC HE Team meetings and UoS Programme Board meetings</p> <p>College to generate 'Student Voice' component for BAC/ UoS induction process</p> <p>College to generate 'Student Voice' explanation piece for HE Student Handbook and Moodle VLE</p>	<p>September 2011</p> <p>September 2011</p> <p>September 2011</p>	<p>HE APL Coordinator, HE APL Group, PLOs, Quality Manager</p> <p>HE APL Coordinator, HE APL Group, PLOs</p> <p>HE APL Coordinator, HE APL Group, PLOs</p>	<p>All activities and documents in place</p> <p>All activities and documents in place</p> <p>Documents in place</p>	<p>HE Head of Faculty/HE Quality and Standards Group</p> <p>HE Head of Faculty</p> <p>HE Head of Faculty</p>	<p>Student feedback data</p> <p>Student feedback data</p> <p>HE Working Group Review of Public Information</p>

	Standardised use of common BAC/UoS Module Feedback Sheet	November 2011	HE APL Coordinator, HE APL Group, PLOs	Document produced and employed	HE Head of Faculty and BAC Quality Manager	Report to Quality and Standards Group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>effective support is provided to higher education students through tutorials, together with the dedicated support systems of the Higher Education Gateway (paragraphs 34 and 35)</li> </ul>	Ensure student entitlement for support and the systems available for academic and personal support are explained during HE induction process and an explanation piece generated for HE Student Handbook	September 2011	HE APL Coordinator, HE APL Group, PLOs	Activities, documents produced and employed	HE Head of Faculty	HE Working Group Review of Public Information
	Ensure BAC policies/guidelines pertaining to academic and personal support include HE-specific components	September 2011	Quality Manager, HE APL Coordinator, HE APL Group, HE Working Group	Identified BAC policies/guidelines revised	HE Quality and Standards Group	Identified BAC policies/guidelines revised, 'signed off', implemented and included in HE student information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the College management controls ensure that the presentation of marketing information is clear, accurate and well presented and is informed by</li> </ul>	Employ HE APL peer review of programme information procedure and continue to use 'sign off' sheets	From September 2011	Marketing Manager, HE Head of Faculty, HE APL Group	Accurate and comprehensible marketing information produced	HE Working Group/HE Quality and Standards Group	Public Information Review Report
	Access student feedback episodes and HE APL meetings		Marketing Manager	Feedback from current HE student cohorts on BAC HE public information	HE Working Group/HE Quality and Standards Group	Student feedback data

consultation and feedback from a wide range of users (paragraph 43)						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>clear and comprehensive student support information is available on the virtual learning environment (paragraph 44).</li> </ul>	Generate and publicise a 'Student Support' segment for the HE Gateway Moodle course - hyperlinked to policies and guidelines	September 2011	BAC Quality Manager, BAC Student Support Manager, HE APL Coordinator, PLOs and BAC Moodle Admin	Existence of hyperlinked segment on HE Gateway Moodle course	HE Head of Faculty, HE Quality and Standards Group	'Hits' on virtual 'BAC HE Student Support' segment
<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 is <b>desirable</b> for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>as part of its planned review of policies and procedure documentation, make explicit reference to relevant sections of the <i>Code of practice</i> and other elements of the Academic Infrastructure (paragraphs 15 and 16)</li> </ul>	Generate 'BAC Student Information' for HE Handbooks and hyperlinked section on HE Gateway Moodle Course - in particular a clear definition of responsibilities, available clear and accessible information, monitoring of policies, procedures and practices (plus HE staff support)	September 2011	Quality Manager, HE APL Coordinator, PLOs	Complete and accurate 'BAC Student Information' segment in handbooks	HE Head of Faculty	Student induction feedback



	<i>Code of practice, Section 2 - Preparation for UoS 'quinquennial' review of Collaborative Provision</i>	2011-12 (date to be arranged)	HE Head of Faculty, BAC Quality Manager, HE APL Group, HE Working Group	Self-evaluation report for UoS review team	UoS quinquennial review team	Successful review outcome
	<i>Code of practice, Section 2 - Part A on VLE, Part B emphasised in HE Handbooks</i>					
	<i>Code of practice, Section 3 - Review and publicise procedures for HE students with disabilities information</i>	October 2011	Student Services Manager, HE APL Group	Current and accurate information produced and distributed	HE Working Group/HE Head of Faculty	Student feedback
	<i>Code of practice, Section 4 - Ensure Further Action Forms completed and analysed for useful external examiner messages for BAC CPD or HE APL Group agenda</i>	September 2011	BAC Quality Manager, HE Head of Faculty	BAC report on external examiner messages	HE Working Group	Action plans signed off and CPD/HE APL agenda
	<i>Code of practice, Section 5 - Remit HE APL Group to promote academic integrity across BAC HE and to</i>	January 2012	HE APL Coordinator, HE APL Group, APLs	Academic Integrity policy and quote produced and distributed	HE Quality and Standards Group	Student feedback

	<p>develop and review policy for unacceptable academic practice and use this to guide students</p> <p><i>Code of practice, Section 6</i> - Generate a clear, comprehensible and explicit segment for each programme handbook on principles and procedures for, and processes of, assessment for that programme</p> <p><i>Code of practice, Section 7</i> - Work with UoS to use proposed 'Centre Leader' reports as basis for annual monitoring and review of BAC HE programmes</p> <p><i>Code of practice, Section 8</i> - Review take-up and outcomes from BAC HE Careers Education, Information and Guidance (CEIG) services and destinations data</p>	<p>September 2011</p> <p>From September 2011</p> <p>January 2012</p>	<p>APLs</p> <p>HE Head of Faculty, HE APL Group, UoS Quality Liaison</p> <p>Client Services Manager, Client Services HE Services Coordinator, HE APL Group</p>	<p>Assessment process segment in individual programme handbooks</p> <p>BAC HE Action Plans developed for programmes and College</p> <p>Report on HE CEIG services at BAC</p>	<p>HE APL Group, HE Head of Faculty</p> <p>HE Quality and Standards Group</p> <p>HE Working Group</p>	<p>Peer and student feedback</p> <p>Report to Corporate Board</p> <p>Report outcomes</p>
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	<i>Code of practice, Section 9</i> - As part of programme team meetings, review intended learning outcomes and assessment from student work-based learning, plus placement learning partners are supported	2011-12 BAC HE Programme Team Meeting cycle	BAC LAMs	Team meeting minutes	HE Working Group, HE Head of Faculty	Feedback from HE programme teams, workplace partners and students
	<i>Code of practice, Section 10</i> - Review processes and practice outcomes for revised BAC HE admissions and enrolment	November 2011	Client Services Manager, APLs, PLOs and HE student representatives	Positive review and student feedback	HE Working Group, HE Head of Faculty and HE APL Group	Annual Review of HE programmes at BAC
	Include QAA overview of positioning awards within the FHEQ and QAA qualification descriptors in HE programme information and on HE Gateway Course on Moodle VLE	September 2011	HE APL Coordinator	Positive student response in induction	HE APL Group, HE Head of Faculty	Student feedback
	Investigate integrating turnitin® into BAC Moodle	November 2011	BAC Quality Manager, HE APL Coordinator, BAC Learning Resources	turnitin® integrated into BAC Moodle	HE Working Group/BAC e-learning Group	Take-up of facility, staff and student feedback

	Review BAC HE complaints and appeals procedure	November 2011	Coordinator, BAC Moodle Administrator BAC Quality Manager, HE APL Coordinator	Procedure documents quality marked	HE Quality and Standards Group (HEQS)	HEQS Group minutes and student feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>review the procedures for the observation of teaching and learning to incorporate themes which are specific to higher education delivery (paragraph 32)</li> </ul>	Review HE lesson observation procedures and potentially develop an HE enquiry-based lesson observation pro forma/tool	December 2011	HE APL Group, BAC Quality Manager, APLs	Review outcomes and tool developed and tested	HE Working Group	Staff feedback, enquiry-based lesson observation outcomes informing HE staff CPD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>formally audit and evaluate the programme-specific content information available through the virtual learning environment and implement minimum standards of content available to students (paragraph 45).</li> </ul>	Organise task group for audit and evaluate HE content and minimum standards for HE programme courses on BAC Moodle VLE and review process  Publish minimum standards for HE programme courses on BAC Moodle VLE and review process	From September 2011  January 2012	HE APL Group, BAC Quality Manager, BAC Learning Resources Coordinator, BAC Moodle Administrator, APLs, UoS Library Services representative, student representatives	Publication of minimum standards and review process	HE Head of Faculty, HE Quality and Standards Group	Positive student feedback  Annual Review of HE Programmes at BAC  Minutes of HEQS Group meeting

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