Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

Bromley College

June 2012

SR 077/12

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* (FHEQ), which includes descriptions of different higher education qualifications
- the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (*Code of practice*)
- 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 Bromley College carried out in June 2012

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

Good practice

The team has identified the following good practice for dissemination:

- the comprehensive systems which support placements and workplace learning on part-time programmes
- the flexible and accessible tutorials across all the higher education provision which ensure parity of support for full and part-time programmes
- the innovative use of online resources in supporting HNC Construction Management continues to offer high-quality information and guidance to students in the workplace.

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:

- clarify how the information from the diverse internal reporting mechanisms ensures clear oversight of its management of quality of standards
- develop a more robust and standardised approach to ensure that full-time students have access to placement and work-based learning opportunities and that appropriate use is made of simulation and workplace visits where placements are unavailable.

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

- provide clear guidance to staff on the current status of policies and procedures along with timely notification of new policy implementation which support the management of academic standards
- develop staff development activities which support the delivery of teaching and learning at subject level for its higher education provision
- develop minimum content and presentation requirements for programme and course information on the virtual learning environment
- develop mechanisms to ensure the consistency and content of public information on the virtual learning environment across all provision.

A   Introduction and context

1   This report presents the findings of the Summative review of higher education funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) conducted at Bromley 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 Canterbury Christ Church University and the University of Greenwich. The review was carried out by Mr Graham Brotherton, Mr Kevin Burnside and Mrs Saundra Middleton (reviewers), and Mrs Mandy Hobart (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 the self-evaluation and the portfolio of evidence supplied by the College; meetings separately with staff, including the awarding bodies' representatives and students; the students' written submission; QAA review reports; the College policy documents; minutes of meetings and external examiners' reports. In particular, the team drew on the findings and recommendations of the Developmental engagement in assessment**.** A summary of findings from this Developmental engagement is provided in Section C of this report. The review also considered the College's use of the Academic Infrastructure, developed by QAA on behalf of higher education providers, with reference to the *Code of practice,* subject and award benchmark statements*,* the FHEQ and programme specifications.

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

4   Bromley College is a medium-sized general further and higher education provider situated in Bromley, which is London's largest geographical borough, with excellent transport links to central London. The College merged with Orpington College in August 2011. In partnership with the University of Greenwich for degrees, Foundation Degrees and HNC/Ds, the College offers a wide range of vocational provision. Teacher Training programmes are validated by the University of Greenwich and Canterbury Christ Church University. The College has two main campuses, in Bromley Common and in Orpington town centre. Higher education provision is mostly located on the Bromley campus. The College enrolled 9,496 students in 2011-12. Higher education enrolments were 720, of which 170 are funded by non-HEFCE contributions. Of the 534 HEFCE-funded students, 211 full-time, 283 are part-time, and 40 are on distance learning programmes. Higher education represents 8 per cent of the learner numbers.

5   The College has worked in partnership with universities for over 40 years, responding to student and employer needs by developing curriculum in science, counselling, construction, business, computing, education, health and social care and early years. Their unique local provision is science, which has grown and developed because of specialisms in biomedical, pharmaceutical and forensic science, which fulfils the needs of employers from East Kent through to London and Essex. The College vision is 'to be recognised, valued and respected in the community as listening responsive and relevant' with a mission to 'deliver real skills and knowledge for the real world'.

6   The higher education programmes offered by the College include the following programmes with full-time equivalent numbers shown in brackets:

Canterbury Christ Church University
- Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (5.5)

University of Greenwich
- FdSc Biomedical Science (24.75)
- FdA Business and Management (22.25)
- FdSc Care Management (2.25)
- FdSc Counselling (11.875)
- FdSc Digital Media (22)
- FdA Early Years (54.5)
- FdSc Forensic Science (6.875)
- FdSc Health and Social Care (Care) (18)
- FdSc Health and Social Care (Early Years) (24.5)
- FdSc Integrative Counselling (22)
- FdA Learning Support (18)
- FdEng Network Computing (18.5)
- FdSc Pharmaceutical Science (20.75)
- FdA Supporting Teaching and Learning (15)
- FdA Travel Operations Management (4)
- BSc (Hons) Biomedical Science (53.25)
- BA (Hons) Business (33)
- Postgraduate Certificate in Education (21.5)
- HNC Building Surveying (3.125)
- HND Business (5.875)
- HNC Construction Management (13.75)
- Foundation year for Science (22)

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

7   All Foundation Degrees and HNC/D provision is validated by the University of Greenwich. The teacher training qualifications previously offered by Orpington College continue to be validated by Canterbury Christ Church University. The partnership agreements with both universities require that programmes are subject to the quality assurance procedures of the respective universities. Link tutors are appointed and work with programme teams to ensure effective management of quality assurance and academic standards.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

8   The merger of Bromley and Orpington Colleges in August 2011 has resulted in travel operations being included in the portfolio of provision. The College management of higher education comes within the remit of the Director of Higher Education. A cap on new full-time numbers resulted in the College bidding for additional numbers and 75 new places were awarded in 2011. Demand has been high for the applied science and business programmes. The College has recently revalidated Foundation Degrees in digital media, education, supporting teaching and learning and integrative counselling. The FdA Applied Professional Studies and the Higher Apprenticeship in Business Administration have recently been validated. New programmes are being developed in social work, motor sport and sport science.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

9   Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the team. The written submission was produced by a higher education student on the business programme, based on 21 questionnaires sent to student representatives and two workshops. The resulting document provided a clear and informative commentary. Students met with the coordinator during the preparatory meeting and the team during the review 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?

10   The awarding bodies retain overall responsibility for the quality and standards for their programmes, with the management of the delivery of standards delegated to the College. The College has clearly set out responsibilities for the management of academic standards, with the Director of Higher Education having oversight on behalf of the College. The relationship with the University of Greenwich is articulated through the Generic Partnership Agreement, the Financial Memorandum and the Bilateral Statement which is uniquely created for each partnership and subject to an annual review. The relationship with Canterbury Christ Church University is articulated through the memorandum of Agreement and the Operational Annex. The College Director of Higher Education attends the university partner forums, and sends a representative to the Collaboration Sub Committee. The College produces annual programme and institution reports which are submitted to the designated university departments.

11   In accordance with the conditions of the partnership agreement with the University of Greenwich, the College holds a Higher Education Forum chaired by the Director of Higher Education once per term. The Higher Education Forum is attended by programme directors, the University Partnership Manager and link tutors with a remit to oversee the management of quality and standards. In addition, the College Principal attends the Principals' Strategic Planning Committee, chaired by the Vice Chancellor. The College Director of Higher Education and link tutors attend the Partnership Development Group, chaired by the Head of Regional and Academic Partnerships to discuss developments, share good practice and provide updates. The Canterbury Christ Church University requires the College to nominate a Higher Education Manager who liaises with the University's Programme Director/Head of Department on areas such as recruitment, quality assurance, funding, strategic development, and resources. The Director of Higher Education fulfils this role, which ensures consistent oversight of all higher education provision. A programme coordinator liaises on the operational management of the collaborative partnership for the teacher training provision.

12   The College clearly articulates its plans for the future development of its higher education provision and the management of its current programmes through the College Higher Education Strategy. This strategy sets out the roles and responsibilities of individuals and groups, but does not reflect the recently instituted role of the Director of Performance and Standards. The College's operational oversight of its responsibilities for quality and

standards is shared between the Director of Higher Education and the Director of Performance and Standards.

13   The Higher Education Development Group effectively monitors the standards of higher education delivered by the College and reports both to the Senior Leadership Team and to the College Quality and Standards Committee. The Group chaired by the Director of Higher Education reviews a range of evidence, including Programme Improvement Board minutes, monitoring of target reports, student feedback, curriculum and teaching and learning issues. The membership includes all programme directors and quality managers, curriculum managers, the Vice-Principal for Planning and Resources and the Vice-Principal for Curriculum and Quality, marketing and communications staff and the Higher Education Advisor. The appointment of quality managers within each directorate of the College is a recent innovation to further assure quality. The curriculum managers create Quality Improvement Plans which identify areas for development. Reports are monitored by the College Quality Manager and inform discussions within programme teams and the Higher Education Development Group. The Director of Higher Education and the vice-principals are all members of the Senior Leadership Team and feed back to this body on matters related to the quality and standards of higher education provision. Recently, the Director of Performance and Standards has also extended his remit to include attendance at these meetings to support consistency of review across all College provision. It was unclear, however, how information from the Programme Improvement Boards, Quality Improvement Plans and Self-Assessment Report action plans differentiate evidence for the management of the higher education provision. It is advisable that the College clarifies how the information from the diverse internal reporting mechanisms ensures clear oversight of its management of quality and standards.

14   Due to the current period of transition following the College merger in August 2011, the life of some policies and procedures from each institution has been extended for the current year. There was some confusion over which policies were still current, as for example in the case of the Information Technology policies. It is also not always clear to staff what replacement policies are being developed. It is desirable that the College provides clear guidance to staff on the current status of policies and procedures along with timely notification of new policy implementation which support the management of academic standards.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

15   The Academic Infrastructure is embedded in programmes through the validation process. Subject benchmark statements and the FHEQ are reflected in the programme specifications and in the development and approval of assessment strategies. The College uses its appraisal process and the outcomes of meetings, such as the Higher Education Forum and the Higher Education Development Group, to identify staff development needs in respect of the Academic Infrastructure. In addition, engagement in activities with higher education partners, including programme validation and review events, the Higher Education Forum meetings, and cluster meetings, provide opportunities for engagement with the requirements of relevant sections of the Academic Infrastructure. The University of Greenwich Higher Education Forum, for example, received a presentation by the Director of Quality on the Academic Infrastructure which was later rolled out at the Higher Education Development Group meeting. The validation and review of the institution's higher education programmes follows a two-tier process. The College's own Learning Development Committee carries out an initial review and approval of new programmes, and where approval is forthcoming, programme proposals are put forward to the partner higher education institution. Programmes that are designed and developed by the College, or in partnership with other colleges, comply with these procedures, which ensure that the requirements of the Academic Infrastructure are met.

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?

16   The programme directors are responsible for the day-to-day management of their own programmes and clearly demonstrate management of standards through programme monitoring reports. Programme teams are charged with the oversight of a range of activities, including curriculum delivery, assessment and examination arrangements, quality assurance processes, and reporting back to the partner higher education institutions. The programme teams are represented on the Joint Higher Education Forum of the University of Greenwich. The Forum provides a channel for wider discussions on issues which arise during the operation of the programmes and enables the sharing of good practice. Similar arrangements are in place for the Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector at the Canterbury Christ Church University.

17   The College is required to use the same processes and procedures as the respective university schools when validating and reviewing programmes. All programme directors produce a programme monitoring report annually, which is forwarded to the relevant awarding bodies once approved by the Director of Higher Education. The College also produces an Annual Institution Report for all its University of Greenwich provision, in accordance with the University's requirements. The Director of Higher Education receives copies of all external examiners' reports and grades the outcomes against a set scale in order to ensure that they meet the satisfactory standard. The recommendations and associated action plans are monitored by the Director of Higher Education and by the programme and curriculum boards through the Quality Improvement Plans, Programme Improvement Boards, the Self-Assessment Reports and action plans.

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

18   The College has clear arrangements for meeting its responsibility for enabling its higher education staff to undertake appropriate scholarly activity and staff development. The College supports staff in attending professional development activities at the universities and other external events, including those that enable vocational updating.

19   The College's Continuing Professional Development Manager liaises with the partner institutions in respect of staff development requirements and coordinates the professional development activities run by the College. The College also carries out teaching observations, which, together with staff appraisals, inform the higher education staff development programme. Specific training on the Academic Infrastructure, for example, was run to ensure all staff are up to date and to share best practices, as set out in paragraph 15. The College Professional Development Calendar and the continuing professional development activities offer a wide range of development opportunities, though few were overtly identified as focusing on higher education requirements. While much of the in-house staff development is generic to further and higher education, an annual higher education conference is held to address identified priorities informed by new developments and staff observations and appraisals. The College does, however, need to consider how its scholarly activity might more fully support higher education teaching requirements. The College systems do not currently monitor the wider range of subject updating elements to ensure the maintenance of the quality of teaching and learning. Discussions with staff indicated that there is limited opportunity for subject-related staff development. It is desirable for the College to consider developing staff development activities, which support the delivery of teaching and learning at subject level, for its higher education provision.

> **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?

20   The College has a well defined structure for the management of the quality of learning opportunities. The management structure and key responsibilities and arrangements are the same as those identified in paragraphs 10 and 11 for the management of academic standards. The day-to-day responsibility for the management of learning opportunities is undertaken by the programme directors. The programme directors review student feedback, the outcomes of teaching observations, external examiners' reports and programme statistics to inform their programme monitoring reports, quality improvement plans and self-assessment reports. Programme directors ensure that action plans are developed and monitored in accordance with recommendations made by external examiners, consortium reviews and College and partner university committees.

21   The Higher Education Development Group has clear responsibilities for reviewing the quality of higher education provision across the College, as set out in paragraph 13. Link tutors from the two partner universities provide the key day-to-day contact for programme teams and College staff reported that this system works effectively in ensuring that the College meets its obligations. Programme committees and consortium groups provide opportunities to discuss developments and share good practice. The role of Quality Improvement Leader has recently been introduced to work within directorates. However, as yet, there is little evidence of the impact of this role.

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

22   The College effectively implements its partnership agreements and ensures the quality of learning opportunities meets the expectations of students and the universities. The College has a well developed assessment strategy and individual programmes use a wide variety of assessment methods that promote effective learning. The assessments are internally verified, approved by a university link tutor and externally examined. External examiners have indicated that the standards seen at the College match those seen at other higher education institutions. External examiners and students also commented favourably on the quality and timeliness of feedback given.

23   The College has a thorough induction process covering the programme structure and content, tutor support, assessment processes and access to both the College and the partner universities' learning resources. Students reported that they were well supported through the induction process and receive responsive and helpful support from the Learning Resource Centre and learning support staff. The College utilises the Higher Education Forum to review reports from external examiners and programme teams, to ensure that the quality of management is consistent and meets the requirements of the awarding bodies, as outlined in paragraph 17.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

24   Staff have been provided with training on the Academic Infrastructure and this clearly informs the development of validation and programme review documentation. However, in respect of work-based learning and placements, the team identified that the College does not fully reflect the precepts in the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning* for its full-time Foundation Degree programmes. The arrangements to support students with work-based learning and placements on part-time courses are good, with well developed systems for mentoring and support, and clear and appropriate documentation. The College provides comprehensive placement and work-based learning handbooks for employers and mentors, particularly for part-time programmes. However, students were not always aware of these. Tutor visits ensure that learning objectives are made clear to employers and students. The comprehensive systems to support placements and workplace learning on part-time programmes represent good practice. However, students on full-time programmes, were uncertain about placements and work-related learning, and the College's own self-assessment acknowledges difficulties in establishing suitable placement links with employers in subject areas, including science. The good practice evident in part-time provision is not reflected in the range and quality of advice given to full-time Foundation Degree students in the handbooks for work-based learning. For example, there was little evidence of innovative simulated work-based learning opportunities where relevant employment or work placements are not available. It is advisable for the College to develop a more robust and standardised approach to ensure that full-time students have access to placement and work-based learning opportunities and that appropriate use is made of simulation and workplace visits where placements are unavailable.

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

25   The College has appropriate procedures for assuring the quality of teaching and learning. All staff have an annual appraisal and are observed in the classroom at least once a year. The form and processes used are common across both further and higher education programmes, although the College acknowledges that the observation pro forma needs to be used flexibly when observing higher education teaching. The teaching observation form includes a section for recording student feedback.

26   The College makes effective use of both National Student Survey data and internal surveys to inform itself about the quality of its provision. External examiners' reports and teaching observation data are used to identify support for development of teaching and learning. Programme team action plans are linked to the Programme Monitoring Reports, which are in turn monitored through team reviews and the setting of targets. Identified good practice is disseminated as part of the College's Higher Education Conference.

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

27   The College has a clear and well structured teaching and learning handbook that sets out the support to be provided to students. Tutorials are timetabled for all higher education programmes and cover both academic and pastoral issues. Guidance for staff is contained in the Tutorial Policy. Staff are given scope to adapt tutorials to fit the needs of the groups and individuals, especially part-time learners. The good practice identified at the Developmental engagement in the flexibility of tutorial support continues to be implemented and students reported a high level of satisfaction with the guidance and advice they received, both formally and informally. In addition to timetabled tutorials, students are able to make appointments with tutors and to access support by email and telephone. Students

reported that tutors are responsive and willing to provide support at all times. The issue of timeliness of feedback identified in the Developmental engagement has been addressed effectively. The team identified that the flexible and accessible tutorials, across all the higher education provision, ensures parity of support for full and part-time programmes and represents good practice.

28   Retention on all higher education programmes is good. The College has well established progression arrangements from its Foundation Degrees, with the majority of students from Foundation Degree programmes choosing to progress to honours degree top-up provision. Students receive effective induction, as set out in paragraph 23, and good quality tutorial support, as discussed in paragraph 27. Student feedback, gathered through surveys and from meetings with student representatives, confirms that students feel they are effectively supported.

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

29   The College has a clear staff development policy and supports staff in undertaking professional development and scholarly activities, as outlined in paragraph 19. While all academic staff are on the same teaching contract, the shorter teaching year in higher education is used to provide time for staff to undertake professional or scholarly activity. The College has a clear process for staff to access development activities provided by the partner universities.

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?

30   There is a well established College system for the purchasing of learning resources coordinated by the Learning Resource Centre Manager. Both staff and students reported satisfaction with the level of resources available in the College. Students are able to access resources provided by the partner universities, both by visiting the campuses and online, but some students reported uncertainty about how to access resources electronically. Most students were offered the opportunity to visit the partner campuses, but the nature and timing of these visits varied widely.

31   The innovative use of online resources in supporting HNC Construction Management students, identified during the Developmental engagement, continues to offer high quality information and support to students in the workplace, and continues to represent good practice. Students are able to access information through their mobile phones, as well as through other electronic media, which supports the learning needs of students in full-time employment.

32   The College's virtual learning environment is widely used by students, but information and guidance is inconsistent and at times confusing. Key documents, such as programme and course handbooks, are not always easy to locate. The use of additional resources such as handouts, session outlines and links to external resources vary widely, as does the way in which the resources are presented and organised. While the team found examples of sound practice in the nature and range of online resources in the science and network computing areas, this was not the case across all programmes. It is desirable that the College develops minimum content and presentation requirements for programme and course level virtual learning environment information. This would support the accessibility and transparency of the virtual learning environment for all students.

The team concludes that it has confidence in the College's management of its responsibilities for the quality of the learning opportunities as required by the awarding bodies to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Core theme 3: Public information

What information is the College responsible for publishing about its HEFCE-funded higher education?

33   The College effectively manages its responsibilities for the information it publishes. Responsibilities for the production of all higher education marketing, handbooks and other materials related to higher education programmes are set out in agreements between the College and the partner universities. Handbooks for the University of Greenwich programmes are drafted by programme directors based on templates provided by individual schools within the University. Handbooks are approved by link tutors and the University marketing department before publication. Although the format of handbooks varies considerably according to requirements of the host school at the awarding body, the College has made some attempt to standardise their presentation. The Canterbury Christ Church University programme handbooks are produced by the University, along with all guidance on assessment. All materials produced by teams are approved by the Director of Higher Education and the partner university prior to publication.

34   The College has an attractive user-friendly website with a section dedicated to higher education programmes. Programmes offered are clearly labelled and the College provides further detail on the partner universities, programme content, fees and progression routes. The website also contains current student handbooks which offer prospective students useful programme information. This includes details of programme and course structures, assessment strategies, and the availability of College and awarding bodies' student support and facilities, together with profiles of recent students' experiences. The College has developed a procedure for the control of higher education public information, which ensures that required approval processes are recorded. Students were confident that the information provided is both accurate and complete.

35   On induction, students are issued with printed programme handbooks and generally have access to electronic copies of programme and course handbooks through the College virtual learning environment. Students were particularly appreciative of hard copies of programme handbooks, which they found useful for easy reference. All programme handbooks contain information on academic conventions, College and university policies, extenuating circumstances, and appeals procedures. Links are also provided to the awarding bodies' academic regulations and information on College and university services. Programme specific information, such as specifications, programme and course overviews, are included throughout. These provide a useful guide for students on what to expect during their studies, including the teaching and learning mechanisms, counselling and financial support. The Developmental engagement included a recommendation that the College develops a policy to promote and ensure the consistency of information provided in student handbooks. To date, progress has been limited with considerable variation in handbook content as a result of the requirements to comply with university formats.

36   The College virtual learning environment contains a range of online resources. These include access to the College and awarding bodies' online resources, and advice and guidance materials on how to use these. Although students also have access to virtual learning environments and resources provided by the partner universities, these are used to

a varying extent across the programmes. Students reported that they sometimes find university resources difficult to access.

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

37 The College responsibility for public information, including the management of website information, leaflets, advertising and student handbooks, lies with the Director of Planning and Communications and is subject to the oversight of the Director of Higher Education. Public information relating to the University of Greenwich awards is produced by the College and approved by the University marketing department before publication. The Canterbury Christ Church University requires all documentation to be sent to its Department of Marketing for approval prior to publication. The College has recently put in place a public information approval process which ensures that all new and amended information is subject to a rigorous checking and approval prior to publication. This ensures that there is consistency across the College and awarding bodies' websites, as well as across hard copy marketing materials.

38 The structure, format and content of the College virtual learning environment at programme and course level is defined and populated by individual programme teams and added to in response to student feedback. Oversight of programme and course content is undertaken by programme directors and the Director of Higher Education. Although there is an expectation that all staff will use the virtual learning environment, there are no minimum requirements or expectations specified by the College. There is limited evidence of oversight of content and consistency of information across programmes. It is desirable that the College develops mechanisms to ensure the consistency and content of public information on the virtual learning environment across all provision.

39 The extent and sophistication of the virtual learning environment varies considerably between programmes. The College has developed an Information Learning Technology Strategy to address this inconsistency. As part of the merger of the virtual learning environments of the two former colleges, proposals have been made to improve the skills of staff. Staff development to help take forward the development of the virtual learning environment has been put in place.

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

40 The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in March 2011 at Bromley College and May 2011 at Orpington College prior to the merger. The lines of enquiry allowed a very broad consideration of the management of assessment in the Colleges. The lines of enquiry were as follows.

Bromley College

Line of enquiry 1: How evaluative are the mechanisms that the College uses to ensure that assessment is appropriate and supports the standards of the awards and promotes effective learning?

Line of enquiry 2: How does the College ensure that the feedback provided to students on assessed work is timely, appropriate and effective?

Line of enquiry 3: How are assessment procedures and information concerning assessment communicated to students and how is accuracy, currency and consistency ensured?

Orpington College

Line of enquiry 1: To what extent does the College have robust systems for the management of quality and standards across its awarding bodies in relation to assessment?

Line of enquiry 2: To what extent does the assessment of work-related experience enable students to achieve their programme's intended learning outcomes?

Line of enquiry 3: To what extent does the information provided by the College about assessment accurately reflect students' assessment experience?

41   Good practice was identified at Bromley College in the innovative work-based learning opportunities and the effective use of mentors. Tutorial provision for full and part-time students was found to be supportive and flexible with good quality developmental feedback being provided to support effective learning. The well developed procedures for obtaining student feedback clearly inform improvements. The innovative use of the College virtual learning environment was particularly effective in supporting HNC Construction Management and Foundation Degree Network Engineering students.

42   Good practice was identified at Orpington College in the effective use of distance learning assessment for the Foundation Degree Travel Operation Management and comprehensive formative feedback provided to students on the Foundation Degree Supporting Teaching and Learning. Printed information for all programmes was comprehensive and the considerable investment in the website provided effective support for student learning and assessment experiences.

43   Recommendations at Bromley College included the sharing of the effective written feedback used in health and social care with other programme areas, along with the contextualization of grading criteria. The review of the participation of employers in the evaluation of work-based learning assessment and the review of employer participation in the evaluation of work-based learning assessment was considered desirable. The good practice in formative assessment and tutorial support, along with clear guidelines for the use of formative advice, would further support the consistency of practice across programmes. The College was advised to develop a policy and procedures to promote the consistency of information in student handbooks and to review guidance to students on academic skills.

44   The Orpington College recommendations included the provision of greater clarity in the distinction between the Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector and the Postgraduate Certificate in Education, and ensuring that good second marking was applied across all provision. The team considered it desirable that the College establishes

more clearly the links between the learning outcomes and the feedback in Foundation Degree programmes.

D   Foundation Degrees

45   The College offers Foundation Degrees in business, travel operations management, digital media technology, computing, health and social care, including counselling and early years. The College also has niche provision in pharmaceutical, forensic and biomedical sciences. While Foundation Degrees have replaced most of the former HNC/D provision, the College continues to offer provision in construction management and building surveying. The College has obtained 75 new entry control numbers and has recently validated the Foundation Degree Applied Professional Studies. The College is also exploring the development of new provision in social work, motor sport and sport science. Clear progression routes are in place for all Foundation Degrees, mainly to the University of Greenwich degree programmes. The College's management of Foundation Degrees is effective.

46   The conclusions and recommendations identified in paragraphs 48 to 51 also apply to Foundation Degrees, with the exception of the good practice identified in the use of electronic resources which support HNC Construction Management.

E   Conclusions and summary of judgements

47   The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Bromley College's management of its responsibilities for academic standards and for the quality of learning opportunities of the awards the College offers on behalf of its awarding bodies. This was based upon discussion with staff and students and scrutiny of evidence provided by the College and its awarding bodies, Canterbury Christ Church University and the University of Greenwich.

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

- the comprehensive systems which support placements and workplace learning on part-time programmes (paragraph 24)
- the flexible and accessible tutorials across all the higher education provision which ensure parity of support for full and part-time programmes (paragraph 27)
- the innovative use of online resources in supporting HNC Construction Management continues to offer high-quality information and guidance to students in the workplace (paragraph 31).

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

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

- clarify how the information from the diverse internal reporting mechanisms ensures clear oversight of its management of quality of standards (paragraph 13)
- develop a more robust and standardised approach to ensure that full-time students have access to placement and work-based learning opportunities and that appropriate use is made of simulation and workplace visits where placements are unavailable (paragraph 24).

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

- provide clear guidance to staff on the current status of policies and procedures along with timely notification of new policy implementation which support the management of academic standards (paragraph 14)
- develop staff development activities which support the delivery of teaching and learning at subject level for its higher education provision (paragraph 19)
- develop minimum content and presentation requirements for programme and course information on the virtual learning environment (paragraph 32)
- develop mechanisms to ensure the consistency and content of public information on the virtual learning environment across all provision (paragraph 38).

52   Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that it has **confidence** that, in the context of this Summative review, the College discharges its responsibilities effectively, as set out in the relevant partnership agreement for the management of the standards of the awards of its awarding bodies.

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

54   Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, 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.

Bromley College action plan relating to the Summative review: June 2012						
Good practice	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
In the course of the Summative review the team identified the following areas of **good practice** that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
• the comprehensive systems which support placements and workplace learning on part-time programmes (paragraph 24)	Implement similar systems (processes) on all appropriate full-time programmes, using induction to raise student awareness and share good practice from processes used in part-time programmes	October 2012	Full-time programme leaders	Increased engagement with work-based experience by full-time students	Higher Education Development Group	Student feedback at programme committees
• the flexible and accessible tutorials across all the higher education provision which ensure parity of support for full and part-time programmes (paragraph 27)	Support the tutorial process through improved resources, both human and financial, resulting in improved retention and success rates	September 2012	Director of Higher Education	Improved success rates	Senior Leadership Team	Performance indicators listed in the annual Programme Monitoring Reports Student feedback from National Student Survey
• the innovative use of online resources in	Cascade the use of online facilities as an alternative method of	February 2013	Continuing Professional Development	Increased use of advanced features (for example	Higher Education Forum	Trebly evaluation of virtual learning environment

supporting HNC Construction Management continues to offer high-quality information and guidance to students in the workplace (paragraph 31).	communication to all programmes in order to maintain good communication links with part-time students		manager and the construction team	blogs) on the virtual learning environment		usage reports in March 2013 and June 2013 across all programmes
Advisable	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
The team considers that it is **advisable** for the College to:						
• clarify how the information from the diverse internal reporting mechanisms ensures clear oversight of its management of quality of standards (paragraph 13)	Create a Higher Education Quality Group that meets at least three times a year to collect, collate and report to senior management on key aspects, including performance indicators	October 2012	Director of Higher Education	Regular reports and action plans produced for the Senior Leadership Team	Senior Leadership Team	Improvements made as a result of action planning
• develop a more robust and standardised approach to ensure that full-time students have access to placement and work-based	Provide full-time students with information on work placements and opportunities at induction, including partner university services	October 2012	Programme leaders	Increased number of full-time students participating in work placements	Higher Education Development Group	Increased participation rate identified at programme committees

	Produce a directory of companies that we engage with, who could provide work placement, host visits or provide visiting lecturers	February 2013	Higher Education Registrar	Increased number of full-time students participating in work placements	Higher Education Development Group	Increased participation rate identified at programme committees
learning opportunities and that appropriate use is made of simulation and workplace visits where placements are unavailable (paragraph 24).						
Desirable	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
The team considers that it is **desirable** for the College to:						
• provide clear guidance to staff on the current status of policies and procedures along with timely notification of new policy implementation which support the management of academic standards (paragraph 14)	Higher education newsletter to be produced termly to inform and guide staff	October 2012, February 2013 and May 2013	Higher Education Registrar	Raised staff awareness	Higher Education Development Group	Analysis of a "usefulness " survey attached to each newsletter Focus groups held regularly with higher education staff
• develop staff development activities which support the delivery of teaching and	Identify staff specific needs during appraisal, record needs on a professional development	December 2012	Line manager and Continuing Professional Development Manager	Subject specific training in place	Senior Leadership Team	Staff development activity reported at the mid-year review in February

learning at subject level for its higher education provision (paragraph 19)	pro forma and develop an appropriate professional development programme in conjunction with our awarding bodies					
• develop minimum content and presentation requirements for programme and course information on the virtual learning environment (paragraph 32)	Create a virtual learning environment 'Higher Education content' minimum specification	October 2012	Director of Higher Education	Minimum content adhered to	Higher Education Development Group	Evaluation of the virtual learning environment content audit report
• develop mechanisms to ensure the consistency and content of public information on the virtual learning environment across all provision (paragraph 38).	Create a procedure that monitors the public information stored on the virtual learning environment Audit content three times a year	October 2013 October 2012, February 2013 and May 2013	Director of Higher Education Higher Education Registrar	Public information is current and consistent Public information is current and consistent	Higher Education Development Group Higher Education Development Group	Evaluation of the virtual learning environment content audit report Evaluation of the virtual learning environment content audit report