



Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

City College Birmingham

December 2010

SR 013

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2011

ISBN 978 1 84979 243 1

All QAA's publications are available on our website www.qaa.ac.uk

Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Preface

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

Purpose of IQER

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

The IQER process

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

Developmental engagement

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

The main elements of a Developmental engagement are:

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

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

Summative review

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

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

Evidence

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

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

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

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

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

Outcomes of IQER

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

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

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

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

Executive summary

The Summative review of City College Birmingham carried out in December 2010

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 responsibilities and reporting arrangements for managing and delivering academic standards are carefully articulated and effectively managed
- the annual review process is well designed, exceptionally rigorous and plays a key role in ensuring the effective management of the provision
- the mechanism for peer observation and team teaching has encouraged teachers and observers to reflect on and improve their own practice
- the College provides life-enhancing opportunities for its higher education students, carefully supports them and succeeds in raising their aspirations
- the high quality publications provide exceptionally clear and comprehensive information.

Recommendations

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

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

- ensure that all programme teams can meet the minimum requirements relating to the use of the virtual learning environment.

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

- ensure that the internal processes for programme design and approval are systematically aligned with the relevant components of the Academic Infrastructure
- continue to develop and monitor the higher education mentor system to help all students who are identified as being at risk.

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 City College Birmingham. 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 Edexcel, Aston University and the University of Birmingham. The review was carried out by Professor Paul Brunt and Mrs Trudy Stiles (reviewers) and Mr Robert Jones (coordinator).

2 The Summative review team (the team) conducted the review in agreement with the College and in accordance with *The handbook for Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review* (the handbook), published by QAA. Evidence in support of the Summative review included documentation supplied by the College and awarding bodies, meetings with staff, students and partner institutions, 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 City College Birmingham (the College) was established in August 1998, following the merger of East Birmingham and Handsworth Colleges. The College follows the long tradition of its founding colleges in prioritising widening participation and recruiting a high proportion of students from areas of economic and social deprivation, including disadvantaged groups and individuals, such as mental health service users, homeless people and asylum seekers. The College currently operates on six campuses in Birmingham.

5 In 2009-10, the College enrolled over 9,100 students, more than 80 per cent of whom were over the age of 18. Nearly two-thirds of students studied on a part-time basis. Nearly 60 per cent were female and over 60 per cent were from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. The College has a relatively small higher education provision. There are currently (2010-11) 120 HEFCE-funded higher education students, amounting to 89.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) students.

6 The higher education programmes at the College funded by HEFCE are listed below, under the awarding body and followed by the number of FTE students.

Edexcel

- HND Business, full-time (28)
- HNC Business, part-time (5)
- HND Fashion, full-time (13)

Aston University

- FD Logistics, part-time (13)
- FD Software Development, full-time (14)

University of Birmingham

- FD Islamic Studies, part-time (16.5)

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

7 The College has a longstanding partnership with Edexcel and has offered Higher National programmes since 1998 when the College was established. The College benefits from the partnership arrangements which have been established with Aston University and the University of Birmingham. The formal partnership agreements clearly define the responsibilities of both partners. The close working relationships which have been established between University and College staff mean that there are clear mechanisms for maintaining a rigorous oversight of the provision.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

8 Following the Developmental engagement in November 2009, the College implemented the action plan which was drawn up to address the recommendations contained in the report. A working group was established to address the recommendation relating to employer engagement. This group has reported to the College's Higher Education Board of Studies. College staff worked collaboratively with staff at Aston University to develop a Foundation Degree in Logistics, which was franchised from the University in May 2010. The HEFCE cap on student numbers, together with the proposal to increase higher education tuition fees, has impacted upon the College's plans to expand provision. The College's Higher Education Strategy outlines plans to expand the College's higher education provision in order to contribute to the regeneration of Birmingham by meeting the needs of local communities and employers.

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. Two students attended a training session organised by QAA for student representatives, subsequently briefed other students about IQER and took the lead role in coordinating work on the written submission. Representative students from the higher education programmes met for an intensive writing day and, after extensive consultation and debate, produced the submission. This was fully evaluative, clearly structured and was a considerable help to the team. In addition, the team had a productive meeting with representative students 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 College has relationships with three awarding bodies: Aston University, the University of Birmingham and Edexcel. The College's responsibilities for ensuring the standards of its higher education provision are specified in partnership agreements with Aston University and the University of Birmingham. Edexcel external examiners monitor standards for Higher National awards. The relationship with the awarding bodies is strong and they give full support to the College in the delivery of its responsibilities for the management of academic standards.

11 The powers delegated under the partnership agreements between the College and its awarding bodies are explained to staff by the Higher Education Quality Management and Enhancement Handbook. This handbook sets out for staff a clear and detailed account of the responsibilities and reporting arrangements for managing and delivering academic standards, the quality assurance framework, procedures for teaching and learning, assessment and verification and other guidance. In meetings with College staff and representatives of the awarding bodies, it was evident that all parties were clear about their particular roles and responsibilities.

12 The Principal and Vice Principal have key functions, supported by a Higher Education Manager. The College's Higher Education Board of Studies is chaired by the Principal, and is the main forum for higher education matters such as external examiners' reports, the enhancement of teaching and learning, student satisfaction and the approval of new procedures. It also receives the Annual Higher Education Quality Enhancement Plan, covering all higher education provision in the College. The College's Quality Improvement Group is chaired by the Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality and is responsible for the implementation of the College's quality assurance strategy. At a more operational level, the Higher Education Group, chaired by the Higher Education Manager, brings together programme leaders and other staff in matters concerned with the delivery of higher education. The College has identified clear terms of reference for these committees, and an analysis of the minutes of recent meetings indicated that all are operating consistently within them. Each higher education programme is required to have a separate Programme Board of Studies, responsible for the effective operation, management and quality enhancement of the programme in question. The team saw appropriate terms of reference and minutes of recent meetings, which indicated that they are working effectively. Issues and actions initiated by programme boards of studies are reported to the Higher Education Group. In their meetings with the team, staff expressed a high level of confidence in the working and interrelationships between these deliberative structures and a clear understanding of the terms of reference.

13 Overall, there is an effective reporting and communication mechanism and the College has established clear lines of responsibility for the management of academic standards within the higher education provision. Considerable thought and effort have gone into the development of the management system, which ensures that senior management are able to have a clear overview of the College's provision. This close involvement of senior management and the appointment of a Higher Education Manager are all the more

impressive in the light of the fact that higher education is only a very small proportion of the College's total provision. The effective management of this system has resulted in the production of reports, reviews and minutes across the provision as a whole that are of a consistently high quality.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

14 The team confirms the College's claim in its self-evaluation that the Academic Infrastructure is embedded in its practices, and noted examples of alignment in the design of programmes, in programme specifications, in its assessment strategy and in the conduct of examination boards. The Higher Education Manager has the specific responsibility of ensuring alignment with the Academic Infrastructure, updating the Higher Education Quality Management and Enhancement Handbook and arranging staff development sessions to inform staff when significant changes have taken place.

15 Staff stated that they found the Academic Infrastructure useful in the development of the College's higher education. They demonstrated familiarity with the Academic Infrastructure in their meetings with the team and in the documentation presented, commended the role of the Higher Education Manager and confirmed the helpfulness of the Higher Education Quality Management and Enhancement Handbook as a point of reference to assist their understanding.

16 Programme specifications are presented in definitive documentation, and summaries are included in student handbooks. The programme specifications are detailed and informative. The intended learning outcomes are carefully matched to subject benchmark statements and to the level of study. Subject knowledge and skills, assessments, and learning and teaching are clearly explained.

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?

17 The quality assurance process for higher education is based on the annual monitoring of individual programmes, which is closely overseen by the Higher Education Manager. Programme Boards of Studies have self-assessment agenda items as routine business, and each programme undertakes an annual Self Assessment Report and Quality Enhancement Action Plan. The exercise requires reflection on the quality of learning opportunities and feedback from students and from external examiners' reports. The analysis of these items is reflected in an action plan, together with an evaluation of progress made against the previous year's action plan. Programme Quality Enhancement Plans are reported to the Programme Board of Studies and are monitored by the Higher Education Board of Studies. In addition, programme-level plans are incorporated in the annual Higher Education Quality Enhancement Action Plan. An analysis of a sample of eight annual plans and the Higher Education Self Assessment Report for 2009-2010 found that all reports were detailed and provided an equivalent and appropriate level of analysis, reflection and critical comment. It was clear that the reports benefited from the monitoring and evaluation provided by the Higher Education Manager. In discussions with staff, the team came to the conclusion that the annual monitoring process is well-designed, exceptionally rigorous and plays a key role in the effective management of the provision. This conclusion is strongly supported by the fact that representatives of the partner universities confirmed that they were happy to accept the College's annual monitoring system, rather than requiring it to use their own systems.

18 An analysis of the reports of external examiners over the last three years confirms that the standards and quality of the provision are sound and that students are achieving the intended learning outcomes. The College makes good use of these reports to enhance the quality of the programmes as evidenced by the extensive discussion and comment in the programme boards of studies and the Higher Education Board of Studies, and through the annual reporting mechanisms. There are robust procedures and detailed documentation accompanying the receipt of and responses to external examiners' reports, the monitoring of progress in addressing concerns and signing off the completed actions.

19 The Higher Education Strategy 2010-14 identifies several areas of growth in the higher education provision that the College intends to deliver. In order to develop a new programme in partnership with an awarding body, the College has adopted internal procedures that match the development in question, prior to formal validation by the awarding body in accordance with the *Code of practice, Section 7: Programme design, approval, monitoring and review*. These included the setting up of a working group reporting to the Quality Improvement Group. The team considers that the current higher education provision has been through an appropriate internal approval process that is fit for purpose. However, as the College expands its provision, it will be desirable to undertake an evaluation of the internal approval processes for programme design and approval to ensure that they are systematically aligned with the relevant components of the Academic Infrastructure.

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

20 The College sets out its approach to staff development within its Professional Development Policy. A wide range of opportunities provided for staff reflects the policy and the College's higher education strategy. The range of professional development is varied, and includes a number of priorities that directly support academic standards. Some staff reported how the College had supported them in study for higher level qualifications and attendance at conferences for subject updating. Staff have also taken advantage of opportunities provided by the College's awarding bodies. These include Edexcel-led training on grading criteria and the attendance of Islamic Studies staff at research seminars at the University of Birmingham. The College provides an induction for new staff, covering the needs of assessment and the expectation of academic standards. The College is improving its oversight of staff development activity, but the team noted the financial challenges the College faced in meeting all requests for development.

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

21 Through the partnership agreements with the awarding bodies, the College has responsibility for the delivery of the higher education programme. The arrangements described in paragraphs 10 to 13 are also effective in supporting the management of the quality of learning opportunities. The day-to-day delivery of the higher education curriculum is managed by the programme leaders and monitored through the programme boards of

studies. The Higher Education Group, which includes programme leaders and cross-college staff, has responsibility for monitoring the organisational aspects of the programmes, including learner feedback, observation of teaching and oversight of management information on retention and progression.

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 process by which the College assures itself that it is fulfilling its obligations to its awarding bodies is described in paragraph 17. There is extensive liaison between the College and its partner universities, where each programme works closely with a collaborative provision visitor who is the immediate point of contact for operational or quality assurance matters, including those concerning learning opportunities. Programme leaders report that in all cases this has worked well.

23 Programme teams identify action necessary to address any issues raised by students or external examiners concerning learning opportunities as part of the programme's self-assessment process. The implementation of action plans is monitored by the Higher Education Board of Studies and the Higher Education Group.

24 The College acknowledges that retention on some programmes has been a problem, and as a result 'at risk' students are identified at the Programme Board of Studies and discussed at the Higher Education Group for direction to the appropriate source of help. For example, at the HND Business Board of Studies it was noted that informal mentoring by students had helped with first-year retention. Students have been trained as peer mentors in preparation for a scheme that is due to begin across the higher education provision in the spring. The team believes that this higher education mentor system will be helpful to all students who are identified as being at risk and would benefit from careful development and monitoring.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

25 The College's engagement with the Academic Infrastructure is described in paragraphs 14 to 16. The Developmental engagement team recommended that the College's Higher Education Group meet more regularly in order to share good practice and address quality assurance and enhancement requirements. Staff confirmed that they valued the opportunity to meet in order to enhance their knowledge and understanding of the Academic Infrastructure.

26 The team agreed that the College is complying with the precepts of the *Code of practice* and subject benchmarks. For example, the programme specifications clearly map lesson plans to learning outcomes and give detailed information on lesson content, teaching methods and activities, resources employed, transferable skills and personal development plans, together with the type of assessment involved.

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

27 The College has developed a peer observation process for higher education provision, the results of which are monitored by the Higher Education Board of Studies and the Quality Improvement Group. Staff confirm that the observation process is supportive and have valued the consequent sharing of good practice. In addition, programme teams are enthusiastic about the benefits of their well established team teaching and informal

observation system that they find encourages reflection and improvement in practice. This structured method was initiated by the HND Business team and adopted across the higher education provision as a whole. The teacher provides a detailed lesson plan that includes learning outcomes against timed teacher and learner activities. The observer records a commentary of the lesson together with strengths and areas for development. Prior to their feedback session, the teacher writes a self-evaluation of significant strengths and areas for development so that together they can produce an action plan. Staff valued the openness of their peers and confirmed that their teaching practice had noticeably improved through the processes of constructive scrutiny and reflection.

28 Feedback from students is actively sought at both programme and college level in order to inform the College's quality assurance processes. Student representatives attend the Principal's Question Time, the Higher Education Board of Studies, focus groups and student forums. Within programmes, all students complete end-of-module student evaluation questionnaires and can raise issues with their tutor at any time. Student representatives take issues raised by their peers to the appropriate forum. Feedback from students is positive and students report that they are very satisfied with the teaching they have received and their learning opportunities in general. National Student Survey results for 2009-10 were well above the national average, with 100 per cent of students stating that staff were good at explaining things and that the course was intellectually stimulating. The team found that students were satisfied that the College has responded promptly to their requests.

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

29 Responsibility for the recruitment of students rests with the College. In addition to direct progression from further education, the College attracts mature learners from the community and international students. All students have a college-wide induction, including an introduction to the virtual learning environment and academic writing skills by the Learning Resources Manager, with subject-specific elements. Students are assessed during induction to identify special needs such as dyslexia or problems with literacy and numeracy, which are then supported centrally through Learning Resources. Students found the induction process to be a positive experience which was informative regarding time management and the expectations of higher education.

30 There is a well established tutorial system which offers academic support and has a significant role in ensuring that students are supported from their initial acceptance on the programme to completion. One-to-one tutorials are a regular feature of the student experience and are highly valued. Tutors give clear, positive feedback on students' written assignments on a standard feedback sheet, supported by the annotation of scripts. Students stated that feedback to them was timely, constructive and helpful for improving their performance and grades. Both tutors and handbooks provide guidance on the level of work required in order to succeed. External examiners' reports confirm that students participate in an appropriate learning experience.

31 The FD Islamic Studies students emphasised the supportive nature of the timing of attendance, which was designed to fit in with school hours and term times. Students as a whole commented on the importance of the College to the local community, and some gave detailed accounts of how their lives had benefited through their interaction with the College. All confirmed that they greatly valued the life-enhancing opportunities which the College provides for students on higher education programmes. The College's higher education provision is successful in widening participation and raising students' aspirations.

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

32 The arrangements described in paragraph 20 are also effective in maintaining and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities. The College has a clear staff development policy which sets out a full programme during the year and outlines how staff are able to engage with the pedagogy of the discipline. This also takes account of peer observation and the College's Higher Education Strategy. The staff agreed that they were well supported by the College in their professional development.

How does the College ensure the sufficiency and accessibility of the learning resources the students need to achieve the intended learning outcomes for their programmes?

33 There is a clear and comprehensive Higher Education Learning Resources Policy which identifies the role the learning resources service plays in providing a full range of appropriate resources. The Vice Principal, Curriculum and Quality, and the Director of Planning consider the resource requirements for new programmes before validation. Validating universities undertake a pre-validation visit to look at resources as part of the validation and approval process. Edexcel's programme approval process includes attention to the resource requirements, while the provision of appropriate resources for Edexcel programmes is monitored by external examiners. The Learning Resources Manager, a member of the Higher Education Group, is notified of core text requirements prior to the start of new modules. Students complete an end-of-module questionnaire which requires them to comment on the provision of learning resources for the module. This is then analysed by the module leader who is required to confirm that action has been taken in response to the points raised by students. The annual Higher Education Self Assessment Report also requires programme teams to identify resource requirements. The students are satisfied that the resources are adequate for their learning. For example, the FD in Software Development students were provided with new personal computers following expressions of concern from them that the computing facilities were inadequate. The team concluded that the College had effectively identified and was successfully monitoring the learning resources required to support achievement of the intended learning outcomes of the programmes.

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?

34 The College is responsible for producing a range of information for applicants, including a brochure, programme leaflets and website information. The brochure is an uninviting publication containing very brief information about the College's entire provision. There is no discrete section for higher education, which is listed between Hairdressing and Hospitality. Staff confirmed that the College plans to present the contents of this brochure more attractively and to include a separate section for higher education provision. In contrast, there is already a well-designed and comprehensive section relating to higher education on the College's website. This comprises full information about the programmes, including a link to the programme specifications, and about student support, including

access to learning resources, guidance about fees and access to financial support, and information about the development of students' employability skills. Students valued the information contained on the website and were pleased that the section on student finance and fees had been expanded in response to a recommendation made in the student written submission. Staff confirmed that website information could be made available to applicants in a range of formats. In particular, copies of the programme specifications are contained in student handbooks and also available on the virtual learning environment.

35 For current students, the main source of information produced by the College is the programme handbook, which is issued to students during induction. Copies of the programme handbooks are also available on the virtual learning environment. They contain a wide range of useful information, including details of the programme team, guidance on programme regulations and College policies. Students on the HND Business and HND Fashion programmes also receive a module guide at the start of each unit. Students found these guides helpful in providing more detailed information about the unit. Staff confirmed that module guides are being developed for Foundation Degree programmes and that they will be issued to students at the start of the second semester.

36 The Developmental engagement identified the high quality of the Higher Education Quality Management and Enhancement Handbook (see paragraph 11) and a very helpful Student Guide to Assessment written by the Higher Education Manager. In response to a recommendation in the Developmental engagement, the College has subsequently developed a Higher Education Student Guide to Work Experience and an Employers' Guide to Higher Education Work Placements. Both documents provide guidance about student responsibilities while on work experience. The Employers' Guide also contains programme-specific information about the skills which students bring to the work placement. Together, this impressive body of publications that provide exceptionally clear and comprehensive information constitutes good practice.

37 Since the Developmental engagement, the College has increased the use of e-learning to support flexible delivery both on and off campus with the aim of ensuring that the virtual learning environment will form an integral part of the learning experience of every student. Guidelines state the expected format, minimum content and navigation requirements for programme virtual learning environments. A virtual learning environment presence has been established for each programme area. However, not all programme teams have met the requirements of the guidelines. This applies particularly to the FD Islamic Studies programme, where support, though planned, has not yet been fully implemented. The team believes that the College should take measures to ensure that all programme teams can meet the minimum requirements relating to the use of the virtual learning environment.

**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?**

38 There are clear and generally effective procedures for ensuring the accuracy and completeness of the information published by the College. Responsibility for signing off public documents lies with the Director of Planning and Information, with final overview and confirmation by the Senior Management Team. The detailed higher education content is compiled by programme teams and checked by the Higher Education Manager. The virtual learning environment is quality assured by the Learning Technology Manager, who acknowledged the team's assessment that further improvement to ensure consistency across all programmes was required.

39 Student focus groups are specifically requested to provide feedback on the usefulness of information provided for students by the College. The feedback is analysed and used to inform subsequent amendments to the published material. Evidence from the student meeting and analysis of minutes indicated that this is working effectively.

40 The awarding bodies review and check the accuracy of the programme information, and the College liaises effectively with them. Each has clear guidelines relating to publicity and marketing and there is explicit reference to the requirements within the partnership agreements. University partners are satisfied with the quality assurance procedures and reporting processes that assure the accuracy and completeness of published information.

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

41 The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in November 2009. There were three lines of enquiry:

Line of enquiry 1: the College's processes and procedures for external examining

Line of enquiry 2: the use of assessment data to secure standards and identify ways of enhancing learning opportunities

Line of enquiry 3: the feedback from external examiners' reports and how it is used to improve assessment opportunities, practice and information to staff and students.

It was agreed that these lines of enquiry should be given a broad interpretation.

42 The Development engagement team identified a number of areas of good practice. Assessment systems are sound, including an appropriate range of methods of assessment and well-designed assignment briefs. Feedback on student assignments is timely, positive and constructive and is given within the context of close tutorial support. Performance data is carefully analysed and there are systems in place to ensure that external examiners' reports are acted upon and monitored. Printed material provided for the students is of high quality.

43 The team also made a number of recommendations. The College should review employer engagement and its approaches to work-based learning, on the assessment of which it should produce written guidance for staff. It should also ensure that there is consistent interpretation and use of the Harvard referencing system. The team also found that the College might benefit from continuing and developing its current activities in enhancing the sharing of good practice, developing the use of the virtual learning environment and promoting student ownership of personal development plans.

D Foundation Degrees

44 The College offers a Foundation Degree in Software Development (14 FTEs), which is validated by Aston University, and a Foundation Degree in Islamic Studies (16.5 FTEs), which is validated by the University of Birmingham. The Foundation Degree in Logistics, which was franchised from Aston University in May 2010, has been endorsed by the Sector Skills Council for Logistics. The first cohort of students (13 FTEs) is completing a part-time,

employer co-funded, work-based programme. There is significant interest from other employers, and it is expected that the number of students recruited will increase over the next two years. The Foundation Degree in Islamic Studies was developed to address the recommendations contained in the Siddiqui report on Islam at Universities in England. College staff are members of the Higher Education Academy National Islamic Studies Network. The Network has identified the need to further develop provision in Islamic finance. College staff will support this initiative and collaborate on the development of modules which can be incorporated into the Islamic Studies Foundation Degree programme.

45 The above provision is closely integrated with the other higher education programmes by means of a common quality assurance process, and the areas of good practice and recommendations in paragraphs 47 to 50 apply equally to the Foundation Degrees.

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

46 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in City College Birmingham'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: Edexcel, Aston University and the University of Birmingham.

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

- the responsibilities and reporting arrangements for managing and delivering academic standards are carefully articulated and effectively managed (paragraphs 10 to 13)
- the annual review process is well designed, exceptionally rigorous and plays a key role in the effective management of the provision (paragraph 17)
- the mechanism for peer observation and team teaching has encouraged teachers and observers to reflect on and improve their own practice (paragraph 27)
- the College provides life-enhancing opportunities for its higher education students, carefully supports them and succeeds in raising their aspirations (paragraphs 30, 31)
- the high quality publications provide exceptionally clear and comprehensive information (paragraph 36).

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

49 The team also agreed the following area where the College is **advised** to take action:

- ensure that all programme teams can meet the minimum requirements relating to the use of the virtual learning environment (paragraphs 37, 38).

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

- ensure that the internal processes for programme design and approval are systematically aligned with the relevant components of the Academic Infrastructure (paragraph 19)

Integrated quality and enhancement review

- continue to develop and monitor the higher education mentor system to help all students who are identified as being at risk (paragraph 24).

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

52 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.

53 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.

City College Birmingham action plan relating to the Summative review: December 2010

Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<p>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:</p>						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the responsibilities and reporting arrangements for managing and delivering academic standards are carefully articulated and effectively managed (paragraphs 10 to 13) 	<p>Update Terms of Reference for HE Board of Studies, HE Group and Programme Board of Studies groups</p> <p>Update partnership agreements with university partners</p> <p>Ensure that all groups meet in accordance with the agreed schedule of meetings</p>	<p>27 May 2011</p> <p>1 June 2011</p> <p>1 July 2011</p>	<p>HE Manager</p> <p>Director of Finance and HE Manager</p> <p>Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality</p>	<p>Revised Terms of Reference for each group</p> <p>Revised partnership agreements</p> <p>Minutes of meetings and implementation of action points</p>	<p>Higher Education Board of Studies and Quality Improvement Group</p> <p>Higher Education Board of Studies and Quality Improvement Group</p> <p>Higher Education Board of Studies and Quality Improvement Group</p>	<p>Minutes of meetings and reports produced for the meetings</p> <p>Clear articulation of roles and responsibilities of partners</p> <p>Effective monitoring and enhancement of the College's higher education programmes</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the annual review process is well designed, exceptionally rigorous and plays a key role in the effective management of the provision (paragraph 17) 	Complete mid-year review of annual programme Quality Enhancement action plans	18 February 2011	Programme Team Leader and team	Action points implemented or revised	Higher Education Board of Studies and Quality Improvement Group	Updated action plans. Quality Enhancement of provision. Increase in student success rates
	Update proforma for Annual HE Programme Self Assessment Reports	15 May 2011	HE Manager	Revised proforma complies with best practice for self-assessment and quality enhancement	Higher Education Board of Studies and Quality Improvement Group	Completed reports identify strengths of provision and areas for quality enhancement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the mechanism for peer observation and team teaching has encouraged teachers and observers to reflect on and improve their own practice (paragraph 27) 	Implement programme of peer observations for 2010-2011 academic year	15 April 2011	HE Manager and HE Programme Leaders	All HE teaching staff have taken part in a peer observation of teaching and learning	Higher Education Board of Studies and Quality Improvement Group	Results of National Student Survey continue to show a high level of student satisfaction with teaching and learning and overall student satisfaction with their programme
	Produce a report on the results of the annual HE Peer Observation Process	1 June 2011	HE Manager	Dissemination of best practice in HE teaching and learning	Higher Education Board of Studies and Quality Improvement Group	Results of student end of module evaluation questionnaires and results of the National Student Survey

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the College provides life-enhancing opportunities for its higher education students, carefully supports them and succeeds in raising their aspirations (paragraphs 30, 31) 	Update the College's Widening Participation Strategy	15 May 2011	HE Manager	Widening Participation Strategy reflects government's priorities for widening participation in HE	Higher Education Board of Studies and Quality Improvement Group	Number of higher education college students recruited from WP backgrounds
	Implement revised College guidance on HE personal tutoring to support all students, especially those students who are at risk of withdrawal	1 February 2011	HE Personal Tutors and Student Services Team	Student feedback and increase in HE student retention rate	Higher Education Board of Studies and Quality Improvement Group	Increase in student retention and success rate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the high quality publications provide exceptionally clear and comprehensive information (paragraph 36). 	Update the Higher Education Staff Handbook, Student Handbooks and associated policy documents	30 June 2011	HE Manager and Programme Leaders	Staff and student feedback on usefulness of publications	Higher Education Board of Studies and Quality Improvement Group	Staff feedback, student feedback and results of National Student Survey

Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team agreed the following area where the College should be advised to take action:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that all programme teams can meet the minimum requirements relating to the use of the virtual learning environment (paragraphs 37, 38). 	Design an HE staff development programme to include use of virtual learning environment and implementation of the College's E-learning Strategy	25 March 2011	Learning Technologies Manager and HE Manager	Number of HE staff taking part in the staff development programme	Higher Education Board of Studies and Quality Improvement Group	Availability of resources on the virtual learning environment to support programme delivery
	Implement staff development programme	25 July 2011	Learning Technologies Manager and HE Manager	Staff and student use of the virtual learning environment to support programme delivery and formative and summative assessment	Higher Education Board of Studies and Quality Improvement Group	Effective use of the virtual learning environment to enhance programme delivery and assessment strategy
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team agreed the following areas where it would be desirable to take action:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that the internal processes for programme design and 	Consult with partner universities and develop an HE Programme Approval Process which meets the requirements	18 May 2011	HE Manager	Revised HE Programme Approval Process in place to support development of new	Higher Education Board of Studies and Quality Improvement Group	Number of new HE programme approvals

approval are systematically aligned with the relevant components of the Academic Infrastructure (paragraph 19)	of the Academic Infrastructure			HE programmes		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> continue to develop and monitor the higher education mentor system to help all students who are identified as being at risk (paragraph 24). 	Develop a HE Peer Mentoring Information Pack	31 January 2011	Student Services Manager and HE Programme Leaders	HE Student Mentoring Pack	Higher Education Board of Studies and Quality Improvement Group	Staff and student feedback
	Train Peer Mentors	28 February 2011	Student Services Manager and College mentoring team	Number of mentors trained and able to support students	Higher Education Board of Studies and Quality Improvement Group	Feedback from HE Peer Mentors
	Pilot Peer Mentoring Scheme with 20 students	1 March - 30 June 2011	Peer Mentors	Number of HE students supported. Student retention and success rates	Higher Education Board of Studies and Quality Improvement Group	Staff and student feedback from evaluation questionnaires
	Implement revised HE Peer Mentoring Programme for students at risk	1 October 2011	Peer Mentors and Programme Leaders	Number of HE students supported. Student retention and success rates	Higher Education Board of Studies and Quality Improvement Group	Staff and student feedback from evaluation questionnaires. HE programme performance data

RG 688 03/11

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

Southgate House
Southgate Street
Gloucester
GL1 1UB

Tel 01452 557000

Fax 01452 557070

Email comms@qaa.ac.uk

Web www.qaa.ac.uk