



Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

City College Plymouth

March 2011

SR 44/2010

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ISBN 978 1 84979 299 8

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 Plymouth carried out in March 2011

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

Good practice

The team has identified the following good practice for dissemination:

- the creation of a dedicated Faculty of Higher Education, with a very high percentage of staff who teach solely on higher education programmes, has embedded a positive and enthusiastic higher education ethos and identity and demonstrates the College's commitment to the standards and quality of its higher education provision
- the strong working relationship between the College and the awarding body is particularly effective in supporting staff to assure the academic standards and quality of higher education provision
- an extensive programme of staff development opportunities supports staff effectively to maintain and enhance academic standards and their professional development
- the College's initiative in creating a log to monitor the cumulative effect of permitted changes to modules ensures consistency across programmes and continued adherence to intended learning outcomes
- the College has effective mechanisms, such as the Higher Education Teaching and Learning Group and the peer observation system, which enable staff to share good practice and enhance teaching and learning
- well-established close working relationships with a wide range of employers make a significant contribution to the planning, design, approval, assessment, monitoring and evaluation of higher education programmes
- the extensive and effective use of the virtual learning environment, including the Higher Education Community site for staff, is valued by staff and students and clearly enhances teaching and learning
- higher education student ambassadors and student associates contribute positively to the College's widening participation agenda and to informing, guiding and supporting students in their transition from further to higher education within and beyond the College.

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:

- develop a more systematic approach to identifying study support needs and ensure that these needs are met early in the programme.

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

- develop a faculty-wide strategy to ensure that the current effective delivery of personal development planning is maintained within future provision
- review the processes by which the College ensures that reading lists are current so that students are aware of the most up-to-date resources.

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 Plymouth (the College). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the College discharges its responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes which the College delivers on behalf of the University of Plymouth. The review was carried out by Mr Fazal Dad, Ms Ann Hill, Mr Colin Stanfield (reviewers) and Dr Susan Hill (coordinator).

2 The Summative review team (the team) conducted the review in agreement with the College and in accordance with *The handbook for Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review* (the handbook), published by QAA. Evidence in support of the Summative review included documentation supplied by the College and awarding body, meetings with staff, students, employers and representatives from the awarding body, 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 Plymouth is a large general further education college and is the largest provider of further education and skills training in the Plymouth area. The College was first established in 1887 when it was a school of science and art. It became Plymouth College of Further Education in 1969 and rebranded in 2007 to become City College Plymouth. There are two main campuses, one at Kings Road (where the majority of higher education provision is delivered) and the other at Saltash Road. Higher education has been offered at the College since the early 1990s.

5 During 2009-10 the College had some 25,000 enrolments. This included 1,007 higher education students of whom 401 were part-time. This equated to 885 full-time equivalents (FTEs). Part-time higher education provision is an important route into higher education for adult learners. The number of higher education students at the College grew significantly each year until the introduction of student number controls. Approximately 18 per cent of higher education students come from outside the European Union. In 2010-11, the College enrolled 554 full-time and 299 part-time higher education students and 33 students on higher education short course or continuing professional development courses.

6 The College currently provides the following higher education programmes in conjunction with the University of Plymouth:

- FdA Accounting and Finance (152 FTE)
- FdA Administrative Management (10 FTE)
- FdA Applied Audio Production (30 FTE)
- FdA Business (31 FTE)
- FdA Business (Management) (71 FTE)

- FdA Business (Marketing) (6 FTE)
- FdA Human Resource Management (20 FTE)
- FdA Live Sound (30 FTE)
- FdA Public Services (46.22 FTE)
- FdSc Civil Engineering (12 FTE)
- FdSc Complementary Health Studies (8.55 FTE)
- FdSc Construction (9.77 FTE)
- FdSc Culinary Arts (0.77 FTE)
- FdSc Early Years (Sector Endorsed) (9 FTE)
- FdSc Electrical and Electronic Engineering (6.22 FTE)
- FdSc Electrical Engineering and Renewable Energy (34 FTE)
- FdSc Forensic Science (27 FTE)
- FdSc Hospitality Management (50 FTE)
- FdSc Legal Studies (16 FTE)
- FdSc Marine Engineering (1.55 FTE)
- FdSc Mechanical Design and Manufacture (13.21 FTE)
- FdSc Software Development (12.77 FTE)
- FdSc Sports Therapy (39 FTE)
- FdSc Strength Conditioning and Sports Coaching (43 FTE)
- FdSc Tourism (7 FTE)
- HNC Civil Engineering (14.67 FTE)
- HNC Construction (24.67 FTE)
- HNC Electrical and Electronic Engineering (19.34 FTE)
- HNC Hospitality Management (8 FTE)
- HNC Marine Engineering (10 FTE)
- HNC Mechanical Design and Manufacture (1.33 FTE)
- Certificate in Education (3 FTE)
- Postgraduate Certificate in Education (2.5 FTE)
- Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (5 FTE)
- CPD Awards (47.5 FTE)
- HE Short Courses (4.2 FTE)

Partnership agreements with the awarding body

7 Higher education provision at the College is developed and delivered in partnership with the University of Plymouth (the University) through its University of Plymouth Colleges Faculty. The Academic Cooperation Agreement between the University and the College defines the responsibilities for the management, development and quality assurance of higher education within the College.

8 As a result of significant changes to the funding of higher education, combined with reductions in student numbers, the University announced in June 2010 that it would be conducting a wide-ranging strategic review of its provision. The review includes the whole of the partnership network, covering issues such as the future number of partners, the number of programmes and modules offered, the cost of delivery and administration and the number of students on each programme and module.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

9 Following extensive internal and external consultation, the College established a Faculty of Higher Education in September 2009, which for the first time consolidated responsibility for all higher education provision within one faculty. The new Faculty has

created a responsive structure for the future management of higher education provision at the College. Improvements are already evident, especially in relation to the creation of a higher education identity.

10 In conjunction with the establishment of the Faculty of Higher Education, the College and the University of Plymouth invested in the dedicated Higher Education Centre to incorporate a further lecture theatre and a reception area to provide a central point of contact for student queries, submission of work, collection of university cards and portal information, and other general information, advice and guidance. This is highly valued by students. In response to feedback from part-time students, late night opening once a week has been introduced.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

11 Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the Summative review team. Higher education students, both full and part-time, drafted the student written submission following a student away day supported by the Students' Union officers from the University of Plymouth Partner Colleges Faculty. In addition to discussions with students, the written submission considered responses from higher education student focus groups, a specifically designed IQER questionnaire, results from the National Student Survey and Student Perception Questionnaire, and minutes of student representatives at programme committees. The team found the written submission a helpful document and the meeting with students broadly confirmed the statements contained in it.

B Evaluation of the management of HEFCE-funded higher education

Core theme 1: Academic standards

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

12 The overall management of higher education academic standards within the College is delegated to the Head of the Faculty of Higher Education (the Faculty) who reports directly to the Deputy Principal (Corporate Development and Students). Higher education provision is organised into three distinct academies, each managed by a head of academy who has specific cross-college leadership responsibilities, including employer engagement, international developments, and the effective and efficient use of resources. Within each academy, programme leaders have responsibility at programme level and report to the head of academy. Programme teams are supported by the University's academic link tutors and subject forum chairs, which fosters positive relationships at programme level. The work of programme teams supports the development of common systems and the sharing of good practice.

13 The Higher Education Forum comprises the Head of Faculty, heads of academy and programme leaders and meets monthly to discuss matters arising from a small number of higher education focus groups, such as the Higher Education Teaching and Learning Group. Its recommendations are subject to the approval of the Joint Board of Studies. Staff confirmed that all programme committee minutes, programme action plans, external examiners' reports, written responses to external examiners' reports and the draft college

action plan are received for consideration and approval by the College's Joint Board of Studies. The Joint Board of Studies also receives for consideration new programme proposals and proposals for permitted changes to existing programmes. This provides a locally-based mechanism for quality assurance and enhancement and for initiating discussions on College developments. The higher education management structure is a coherent and comprehensive framework.

14 As stated in paragraphs 9 and 10, the creation of a dedicated Faculty of Higher Education has already brought improvements across the provision. The Faculty has a high percentage of staff who teach solely on higher education programmes. This has embedded a positive and enthusiastic higher education identity for students and staff and demonstrates the commitment that the College has to the standards and quality of its higher education provision. This is good practice.

15 There is an effective working relationship between the College and the University which facilitates a shared understanding of the College's responsibilities relating to the management of standards and quality. The strength of this relationship and the support provided by the University were clearly evident in meetings between the team and college and university staff. Programme teams, overseen by the Head of Faculty, clearly implement the University's comprehensive quality assurance processes. The team finds that the College has strong and highly effective links with the University of Plymouth Colleges Faculty.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

16 The College shares the responsibility for taking account of the Academic Infrastructure with the awarding body. There are jointly provided staff development events related to the Academic Infrastructure and university academic link tutors play an important role in liaising with and updating college tutors in respect of the Academic Infrastructure and amendments to it. Such amendments are also disseminated directly across the Faculty using the Higher Education Community site on the virtual learning environment. The College has adhered to the University's Assessment Policy, which aligns with the relevant precepts of the *Code of practice*.

17 The FHEQ is used as a reference point for all new programme approvals. The FHEQ is mapped at programme level and detailed in student handbooks. Engagement with the Academic Infrastructure is most apparent during the approval process of new programmes, when direct references are made to the FHEQ, subject benchmark statements and the *Code of practice, Section 7: Programme design, approval, monitoring and review*. Programme specifications are contained within student handbooks in accordance with the University's template and are updated to reflect any changes, such as entry requirements. All FDs offered by the College are aligned with the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark* and informed by subject benchmark statements, where applicable. External academic and professional advisers take part in the University's approval process to ensure subject standards and industry relevance.

18 The University has been active in providing further opportunities for staff development relating to aspects of the Academic Infrastructure. Programme leaders have attended workshops relevant to the Academic Infrastructure, such as those on the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students* and an 'Introduction to the Academic Infrastructure'.

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?

19 The College recognises the need for effective liaison with its awarding body and has established a close working relationship at all levels. The relationship provides opportunities to enhance curriculum design, teaching and learning, and standards in assessment and this is clearly demonstrated by the staff's active engagement with the University of Plymouth Colleges Faculty. The strong working relationship between the College and the awarding body is particularly effective in supporting staff to assure the academic standards and quality of higher education provision. The team considers this a feature of good practice.

20 The provision is regularly monitored, evaluated and supported using the University's well-established procedures. Since establishing the Faculty of Higher Education, the Senior Management Team and higher education managers have been able to monitor programmes more effectively. In particular, the introduction of the Faculty has resulted in improved reporting of recruitment, retention, achievement and attendance. The in-year programme retention data for 2010-11 shows a significant improvement compared with the previous academic year. For example, the retention rate for FdSc Software Development is 90 per cent compared to 72 per cent in the previous year. External examiner reports confirm that the standards and quality of the provision are sound and student achievement is at an appropriate level.

21 The College has robust and effective quality assurance procedures which include an annual higher education self-assessment review, involving individual programme and module evaluations. Self-assessment reviews include consideration of student feedback, analysis of learner performance data, employer engagement activities, feedback from external examiners, areas for improvement, and good practice. The higher education self-assessment report and individual programme review reports demonstrate the comprehensive involvement of all higher education stakeholders within the college quality review processes. The College's responses to external examiner comments are a key part of annual monitoring, with clear action points identified and followed up. For example, the external examiner for FdA Public Services commented on limited evidence of reading in most modules; this action point has now been fully addressed.

22 Modifications to programmes, which are normally generated through annual monitoring discussions, are addressed through the University's permitted changes process, and reported through the Higher Education Forum to the Joint Board of Studies. Modifications usually take the form of amendments to individual modules in order to adapt and update the programmes and keep them fit for purpose. The College identified the need to log and monitor permitted changes, particularly where more than one programme is involved, and has implemented a robust internal system to track permitted changes. The College's initiative in creating a log to monitor the cumulative effect of permitted changes to modules ensures consistency across programmes and continued adherence to intended learning outcomes. The team considers this good practice.

23 The Academic Cooperation Agreement between the College and the University clearly states where responsibilities lie regarding assessment. Annual subject assessment panels and award assessment boards consider students' achievement and academic progression and all marks are confirmed. These panels and boards have proved to be excellent mechanisms for the maintenance and enhancement of academic standards. Following the Developmental engagement, the College fully considered and addressed the good practice features and recommendations relating to academic standards. For example,

the College now operates a robust internal verification process across all higher education provision which is centrally managed by the Faculty to ensure consistency.

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

24 The College is clearly committed to the development of staff and has recently updated its Staff Training and Continuing Professional Development Policy which applies to all further and higher education staff. The Faculty has a comprehensive staff development plan which reflects strategic priorities, development needs identified from the formal cycle of performance reviews, and curriculum development plans. The plan is monitored systematically at regular intervals throughout the academic year.

25 The College provides a broad range of staff development activities which are keenly taken up by staff. College training days, held approximately five times a year, have higher education-specific activities, such as higher education assessment and utilising Higher Education Academy resources. Staff have also attended partner college conferences and subject-specific events, as well as attending and presenting at external conferences. Partner college events enable programme teams to share good practice across the network. A number of staff are members of the Higher Education Academy. The establishment of the Faculty has increased the opportunities for staff in different subject areas to exchange ideas and this allows staff to share good practice and address common areas for improvement. The extensive programme of staff development opportunities is particularly effective in supporting staff to maintain and enhance academic standards and their professional development and this represents good practice.

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 body.

Core theme 2: Quality of learning opportunities

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

26 Overall responsibility for managing the quality of learning opportunities lies with the Head of Faculty in liaison with the three heads of academy and with programme leaders as described in paragraphs 12 and 13.

27 The Higher Education Teaching and Learning Group reviews, monitors and informs the key themes of the University's Teaching and Learning Strategy and seeks to promote excellence in teaching and learning. Staff confirm that the group plays a valuable role in promoting debate about, and improvements to, teaching and learning across the Faculty. For example, the group has championed the innovative use of information learning technology and the structured use of assessment for learning. Students confirm that tutors use a range of stimulating and challenging approaches to teaching and learning. There is a clear reporting structure within the Faculty which allows managers to act upon the flow of information from meetings relating to and observations of the quality of teaching and learning. The group reports termly to the Higher Education Forum. The team finds that

the Higher Education Teaching and Learning Group is an effective means of enhancing learning opportunities.

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

28 The arrangements through which the College assures the quality of learning opportunities are described in paragraphs 21 and 22. The establishment of the Faculty has significantly enhanced the speed and clarity of communication between the College and the University and in so doing has promoted the assurance of learning opportunities.

29 The College uses a range of strategies to promote employer engagement in teaching and learning and to inform the higher education curriculum. For example, employers contribute to groups where proposals for new courses are considered and developed. Employers actively engage with the College to provide work-based learning opportunities. The college-wide Employer Endorsement Scheme acts as a formal vehicle, agreeing, implementing and disseminating all aspects of employer engagement. At their meeting with the team, employers were enthusiastic about their collaboration with staff and the role they play in many programmes, from the early planning stages to delivery. Employers confirmed that their feedback is utilised productively to enhance the provision. Staff emphasised the positive impact that the extensive employer engagement has in ensuring that they remain current in their vocational subjects. Furthermore, employer engagement provides opportunities for curriculum innovation and development. Students were equally positive about the role that employers have in their programmes and the opportunities available to gain valuable work experience. The well-established, close working relationships with a wide range of employers make a significant contribution to the planning, design, approval, assessment, monitoring and evaluation of higher education programmes and are a feature of good practice.

30 The College has a comprehensive system for gaining feedback from students which is effective in contributing to the College's assurance of the quality of learning opportunities. There is a range of mechanisms by which the College seeks to ensure that students are able to contribute to the enhancement of learning opportunities. Such mechanisms include a system of course representatives which includes student representation on key college committees, such as the Higher Education Teaching and Learning Group. In addition, student perception surveys inform curriculum development. Students indicated that their views are both sought and, where possible, acted upon. For example, students on the FdA Public Services had asked for and received further support and guidance with regard to the use of specialist software for their Personal Professional Development module.

31 The College has made good progress in responding to the good practice identified and recommendations made in the Developmental engagement to enhance learning opportunities. For example, the good practice demonstrated by the Public Services Team in the engagement of employers in assessment practice has been extended across the Faculty. Sharing of best practice in teaching and learning was also a feature of note in the Developmental engagement and this has been extended and strengthened by, for example, the activities of the Higher Education Teaching and Learning Group.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

32 The arrangements for taking account of the Academic Infrastructure in relation to the quality of learning opportunities are as outlined in paragraphs 16 to 18.

33 The Higher Education Teaching and Learning Group has explored the development of teaching and learning for higher education with reference to the Academic Infrastructure by considering the FHEQ when it developed guidance and support for those engaged in the College's formal line management lesson observation and peer observation procedures. Such guidance has helped to focus the attention of tutors and observers on the distinct nature of teaching and learning in higher education at the levels defined in the FHEQ. Students confirm that they recognise the increasing challenge that they experience as they progress through their programmes of study.

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

34 In addition to the college-wide line management lesson observation scheme, the College has comprehensive systems specifically to ensure the quality of teaching and learning in higher education, based on a formal peer observation procedure which informs a system of individual staff review and development. The Teaching and Learning Observation Procedure is mapped to the University's Teaching and Learning Strategy and is fully embedded within the Faculty. All staff are observed by their peers at least once during the academic year. The procedure is successful in promoting an ethos of peer support and sharing good practice, and has successfully engaged both observers and the observed in a consideration of the differences between teaching in higher education and in further education. Staff were able to give clear examples of how such peer observation and support had contributed to enhanced teaching and learning. For example, the Public Services Team has benefited from the active support of colleagues in the development of the use of information learning technology.

35 Advanced teaching practitioners with higher education experience form part of the formal college-wide line management lesson observation team and have undertaken staff development to enable them to perform this role. The College recognises the elements of teaching and learning that are particularly relevant to higher education. This is reflected in the differentiated protocol and documentation for higher education observations. Staff confirm the value of the process in enhancing the quality of teaching and learning.

36 Students confirm the quality of teaching and learning and the knowledge and enthusiasm of staff. Students gave numerous examples of innovative teaching and stated that they felt academically challenged and stimulated. For example, students on the FdA Live Sound spoke enthusiastically of their learning experiences during their involvement in live commercial performances. Students on the FdSc Strength Conditioning and Sports Coaching programme valued the use of work with elite athletes in assessing the impact of training and fitness regimes. The College's mechanisms for assuring the quality of teaching and learning, such as the Higher Education Teaching and Learning Group and the peer observation system, enable staff to share good practice and enhance teaching and learning and constitute good practice.

37 The College's virtual learning environment is actively promoted to support teaching and learning and its use has been audited against a set of minimum standards. Staff and students confirm that it is a valuable tool in supporting students and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities. The College encourages innovation in the use of the virtual learning environment and staff provided excellent examples of such innovation, including the use of video and Skype. The College, in partnership with the University of Plymouth, has recently appointed a Technology Enhanced Learning Advocate who provides enthusiastic and effective support to staff to develop their use of electronic media in teaching and learning.

38 The Faculty has established a comprehensive Higher Education Community site on the College virtual learning environment, which includes very useful elements related to teaching and learning and promotes the sharing of best practice among staff. For example, there is a well used discussion forum relating to assessment. The Higher Education Community site is effective as a central point where information about teaching and learning is captured, as a source of staff development information and as a forum for discussion of practice. The extensive and effective use of the virtual learning environment, including the Higher Education Community site for staff, makes a significant contribution to the enhancement of teaching and learning and is a feature of good practice.

39 Currently, personal development planning is undertaken within the Work-Based Learning and Personal and Professional Development modules or Professional Practice module. Students confirmed that they receive guidance and support with regard to developing personal development planning portfolios, some of which are supported further by web-based packages. Samples of these files indicate good development of the skills and evidence associated with effective personal development for employment and career progression. The University's Skills Plus Policy has been used to promote personal development planning for college higher education students. This development is being taken forward through the use of information learning technology and the College has used feedback from students to inform this development. As a consequence of funding changes, the majority of University of Plymouth programmes from 2011-12 will no longer have a separate personal development planning module and the skills and knowledge will be embedded within programmes. The College has worked closely with the University, external examiners and employers to plan for this, but the team considers it desirable that the College develop a faculty-wide strategy to ensure that the current effective delivery of personal development planning is maintained within future provision.

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

40 All students are allocated a personal tutor and a college policy sets out the expectations for the delivery of tutorials. Some programmes adopt a more direct approach to this than others and provide a structured, scheduled series of personal tutorial meetings. Other programmes adopt a less formal approach requiring students to seek appointments and support from their personal tutors. However, students that the team met spoke positively about the support that they receive, whether formal or informal, which confirmed the views of the student written submission.

41 To support teaching teams and personal tutors, a group profile for each cohort is developed by personal tutors and the programme leaders which is used to inform tutors of the needs of individuals and of groups. It is also used in the observation process to put each observed session into the context of the specific needs of the group and individuals within it. The team agrees with staff that the profile is a helpful tool in supporting students.

42 The College's Disability Coordinator liaises both internally and with the University to manage the support for those students in receipt of the Disabled Students' Allowance. The success rate of students in receipt of such support is high at 80 per cent. The Faculty does not adopt a single comprehensive approach to the early identification of students with learning difficulties. However, course teams adopt a range of mechanisms, including computer and paper-based systems, to ensure that appropriate support is made available. The College's response to student feedback in respect of students with disability indicates that it is aware of, and responsive to, the needs of such students. In their meeting with the team, students gave clear examples of how the College had responded to the particular learning needs of students and had put effective support in place.

43 The College has sought to enhance the study skills of students through the development of teaching and learning resources to support these skills along with the integration of study skills into induction sessions. The College has also actively developed study skills for students making the transition to higher education by working with Aimhigher to develop and deliver a Step up to Higher Education programme. However, some students commented that they had not had sufficient guidance on giving presentations and using some specific software in advance of summative assessments that required competence and confidence in the use of these core skills. Some programme leaders were able to indicate how the early identification of the study skills and learning difficulty needs of students was undertaken. However, not all were able to do so. The team considers it advisable for the College to develop a more systematic approach to identifying study support needs, and ensure that these needs are met early in the programme.

44 A team of higher education student ambassadors and higher education student associates help with student information, guidance and support in respect of the transition to college higher education programmes and subsequent progression to university. Higher education student ambassadors and student associates make a significant contribution to the College's widening participation agenda and to informing, guiding and supporting students in their transition from further to higher education within and beyond the College. This represents good practice.

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

45 The College identifies staff development needs to support learning opportunities, in part through line management lesson observations and peer observation of teaching and learning. The University provides a wide range of staff development events for college higher education tutors, and some college staff are undertaking the Teaching and Learning in Higher Education module. Staff agreed that their pedagogic development has had a notable impact on their approach to teaching and learning.

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?

46 The College's Higher Education Strategy aligns with its Strategic Plan and informs the allocation of resources. Heads of academy are responsible for identifying resource requirements, including staffing. The Faculty manages higher education funding, which is ring-fenced, and higher education managers and the Finance Team meet monthly to monitor the resources budget. Students confirm that subject-specific and specialist resources are excellent, in some cases leading-edge, and they greatly value the access that they have to these.

47 The College's Learning Resources Service supports teaching and learning through the provision of sufficient, appropriate and readily accessible books and other reference materials. The Learning Resources Service team consists of a number of subject librarians who provide a valuable service in bringing to the attention of subject staff the latest information and articles that are relevant to their subject.

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

Core theme 3: Public information

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

48 The College publishes an extensive range of documents to support its higher education provision. Its prospectus, the Higher Education Directory, is a high quality publication. Content is accessible and informative and is enhanced by the use of student and employer case studies. It contains relevant information about course requirements, assessment methods, career potential and progression to other programmes of study. The prospectus clearly states student entitlements to university resources and facilities and this information is helpful to potential students. The prospectus can also be downloaded from the College's website. Students confirm their satisfaction with the information provided in the prospectus, joining instructions and on the college website.

49 Employers make an effective contribution to the prospectus which supports and endorses the College's educational and training opportunities. In addition, there is a well publicised Employer Endorsement Scheme Fact Sheet and Employer Charter. The College is currently finalising a Staff Employer Engagement Handbook. This should provide a helpful source of information to employers engaged with FD provision about their roles and responsibilities, particularly with regard to procedures and expectations relating to work-based learners.

50 At induction, students receive student programme handbooks which are also available on the College's virtual learning environment. The handbooks generally contain clear and comprehensive information, including, for example, programme specifications, the complaints procedure and how to access learning resources at the University. They also contain information about equality and diversity matters, and the College's commitment to this area is evidenced throughout its public information.

51 The College's website is easy to navigate and accessible. A wide variety of pages contribute to the student learning experience and students confirm that they find the information helpful. Students can contribute to the continuous improvement of the website through focus groups.

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?

52 Overall, the College has clear and effective procedures for checking the accuracy of published information. For example, at annual programme planning days organised by heads of academy, joining instructions are checked and agreed before being sent out to students. Course information on the website is monitored regularly and is audited termly by the Higher Education Office. The higher education prospectus is systematically updated and changes are implemented through a rigorous quality assurance process carried out by the Marketing Department which ensures its accuracy.

53 The accuracy and completeness of course-level information, such as module information and assignment briefs, is checked by module leaders and external examiners. Programme teams are responsible for the accuracy of the content of student programme handbooks and fellow programme leaders/teams check the information at higher education planning days. However, the team noted that a number of reading lists, such as those for FdSc Electrical Engineering and Renewable Energy and FdSc Hospitality Management contained books which are not the latest edition, and some of the generic reading lists for

study skills were outdated. The team considers it desirable for the College to review the processes by which the College ensures that reading lists are current so that students are aware of the most up-to-date resources.

54 There is a comprehensive process for updating and assuring the accuracy of the college website and key staff have the ability to update information using a content management system, which is quality assured and monitored by the Marketing Department. Amendments relating to course information and the prospectus are produced by programme teams. Programme leaders are responsible for assuring the overall accuracy of course information and version control at programme level and for notifying the Higher Education Office of any necessary amendments. Audits take place each term to ensure that the content of the website is accurate and up to date and reports are monitored by heads of academy. The College also has clear and effective processes for the production and auditing of material published on the virtual learning environment.

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

55 The Developmental engagement took place in April 2009 and covered all higher education provision. Three lines of enquiry were agreed with the College and ensured that all IQER core themes could be addressed. The lines of enquiry took the form of the following questions:

- to what extent do assessments and marking practice effectively measure student achievement of the intended learning outcomes?
- to what extent does feedback on assessment support the learning of students?
- how effectively is information concerning assessment communicated to students?

56 The Developmental engagement team identified a range of good practice across all three core themes. The close alignment of the College's assessment policies with those of its main awarding body, the University of Plymouth, ensures that assessment procedures take due account of the relevant precepts of the *Code of practice*. The public services programme team has extensive and continuing engagement with the public services sector, which enhances standards and learning opportunities. Students receive good quality feedback on their work through a variety of mechanisms which helps them to learn and improve in future assessment. Furthermore, the quality of feedback to students is enhanced through a variety of opportunities for sharing good practice. In one case, the HNC/D Music Production, good use is made of the virtual learning environment to provide detailed and readily accessible electronic feedback. The use of the virtual learning environment by this programme team provides a very effective way of communicating assessment information to students. The best examples of module guides provide easily accessible and comprehensive assessment information in a single document, which students value.

57 The team made one advisable recommendation: that the College should embed the rigorous internal verification procedures and ensure that they are applied consistently across the provision. In addition, there were four desirable recommendations to enhance the provision further. The team recommended that there needed to be a consistent approach

to clear and concise assessment criteria and a clear linear flow between learning outcomes for modules, for assessments, marking schemes and criteria and feedback to students. Furthermore, the College needed to ensure that all students were able to retain their marked work and feedback and also needed to standardise higher education assessment information published on the virtual learning environment.

D Foundation Degrees

58 Foundation Degrees represent the major portion of higher education programmes provided by the College and currently number 25 programmes. In partnership with the University of Plymouth, five new FDs were approved in preparation for a September 2009 start. However, due to the capping of student numbers, the College was only able to recruit to two of the new programmes in 2009-10. In response to changes within the sector, the HNC/HND Music Production awards were changed from Edexcel accreditation to the FdA Live Sound and the FdA Audio Music Production which were validated by the University of Plymouth in 2009-10.

59 The College has well-developed procedures for the design, approval, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of its FD programmes, which have been created to address employer and student demand. Many of the College's FDs have strong links to professional bodies and professional qualifications are embedded in a number of programmes. FDs are validated with due reference to the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*, relevant subject benchmark statements and other elements of the Academic Infrastructure. The distinctive nature of FDs is recognised by the College and work-based learning and personal development planning modules are currently a key feature. The College is seeking to ensure that these elements retain their importance as new programme structures are developed.

60 All FDs at the College enjoy strong employer engagement. For example, the local Police Authority, Fire Service and Police Force contribute to course design, delivery and assessment in the FdA Public Services, while the FDs in Civil Engineering and Construction benefit from a close working relationship with high profile construction companies and projects.

61 All of the conclusions listed in paragraphs 63 to 66 relate equally to Foundation Degree provision.

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

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

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

- the creation of a dedicated Faculty of Higher Education, with a very high percentage of staff who teach solely on higher education programmes, has embedded a positive and enthusiastic higher education ethos and identity and demonstrates the College's commitment to the standards and quality of its higher education provision (paragraphs 9, 10, 14, 20, 25, 28)

- the strong working relationship between the College and the awarding body is particularly effective in supporting staff to assure the academic standards and quality of higher education provision (paragraphs 15, 16, 19)
- an extensive programme of staff development opportunities supports staff effectively to maintain and enhance academic standards and their professional development (paragraphs 16, 25, 45)
- the College's initiative in creating a log to monitor the cumulative effect of permitted changes to modules ensures consistency across programmes and continued adherence to intended learning outcomes (paragraph 22)
- the College has effective mechanisms, such as the Higher Education Teaching and Learning Group and the peer observation system, which enable staff to share good practice and enhance teaching and learning (paragraphs 27, 31, 34 to 36)
- well-established close working relationships with a wide range of employers make a significant contribution to the planning, design, approval, assessment, monitoring and evaluation of higher education programmes (paragraph 29)
- the extensive and effective use of the virtual learning environment, including the Higher Education Community site for staff, is valued by staff and students and clearly enhances teaching and learning (paragraphs 37, 38)
- higher education student ambassadors and student associates contribute positively to the College's widening participation agenda and to informing, guiding and supporting students in their transition from further to higher education within and beyond the College (paragraph 44).

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

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

- develop a more systematic approach to identifying study support needs and ensure that these needs are met early in the programme (paragraph 43).

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

- develop a faculty-wide strategy to ensure that the current effective delivery of personal development planning is maintained within future provision (paragraph 39)
- review the processes by which the College ensures that reading lists are current so that students are aware of the most up-to-date resources (paragraph 53).

67 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.

68 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.

Integrated quality and enhancement review

69 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 Plymouth action plan relating to the Summative review: March 2011						
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:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the creation of a dedicated Faculty of Higher Education, with a very high percentage of staff who teach solely on higher education programmes, has embedded a positive and enthusiastic higher education ethos and identity and demonstrates the College's commitment to the standards and quality of its higher education provision (paragraphs 9, 10, 14, 20, 25, 28) 	Review the existing structure of the Faculty of Higher Education to ensure it continues to deliver in the changing higher education in further education landscape and that staffing commitments remain fit for purpose	Feb 2012	Head of Faculty of Higher Education	Positive and enthusiastic higher education ethos and identity is maintained and the standards and quality of the College's higher education provision continues to improve	Deputy Principal and Joint Board of Studies	Faculty of Higher Education review paper and structure/ Annual Programme Monitoring (Joint Board of Studies minutes) Staff and student feedback

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the strong working relationship between the College and the awarding body is particularly effective in supporting staff to assure the academic standards and quality of higher education provision (paragraphs 15, 16, 19) 	<p>Monitor and maintain effective working relationship with partner university</p> <p>Continue to engage with Subject Forum Chairs and academic equivalents to assure academic standards and the quality of provision</p>	<p>Nov 2011 onwards</p> <p>Nov 2011 onwards</p>	<p>Heads of Academy</p> <p>Programme Leaders/Module Leaders</p>	<p>Efficient and effective lines of communication maintained</p> <p>Quality systems continue to assure the high quality of the College's higher education provision and academic standards</p>	<p>Head of Faculty Higher Education Forum/Joint Board of Studies</p> <p>Programme Committees</p>	<p>Annual Programme Monitoring/ Academy and Programme level self-evaluation documents</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> an extensive programme of staff development opportunities supports staff effectively to maintain and enhance academic standards and their professional development (paragraphs 16, 25, 45) 	<p>Monitor Faculty of Higher Education staff training and development needs.</p>	<p>Oct 2011</p>	<p>Head of Faculty/Heads of Academy</p>	<p>Programme of staff development activities and staff engagement in their professional development which effectively maintains and enhances academic standards.</p>	<p>Human Resources Manager</p>	<p>Annual Higher Education Staff Development Plan</p> <p>Academy self-evaluation documents</p> <p>Staff development records</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the College's initiative in creating a log to monitor the cumulative effect 	<p>Train all higher education administrators in the use of the system and demonstrate the</p>	<p>Dec 2011</p>	<p>Higher Education Officer</p>	<p>Increased awareness of the benefits and utilisation of the system to assure</p>	<p>Higher Education Forum</p> <p>Higher Education Admin Team</p>	<p>Staff feedback and informed permitted changes</p>

of permitted changes to modules ensures consistency across programmes and continued adherence to intended learning outcomes (paragraph 22)	benefits more widely to the programme teams within the Faculty of Higher Education			consistency across programmes is maintained	Meeting	Higher Education Forum minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the College has effective mechanisms, such as the Higher Education Teaching and Learning Group and the peer observation system, which enable staff to share good practice and enhance teaching and learning (paragraphs 27, 31, 34 to 36) 	Encourage increased participation from lecturing staff in faculty working groups to maintain the effectiveness of such meetings	Sept 2011 onwards	Heads of Academy/Programme Teams	Effective and efficient dissemination of good practice and enhanced teaching and learning	Higher Education Forums	Minutes/Terms of Reference of Faculty working groups/ Higher Education Forums
	Maintain 100 per cent staff engagement in the peer observation system	April 2012	Lecturers		Heads of Academy/ Learning & Development Team	Peer observation reports and analysis of outcomes Mid Term Review documentation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> well-established, close working relationships with a wide range of employers make a significant contribution to the 	Develop and implement an Higher Education Employer Engagement Strategy and review annually	Oct 2011	Head of Academy	Development of a clear and comprehensive Higher Education Employer Engagement Strategy	Head of Faculty/Director of Employer Engagement	Higher Education Employer Engagement Strategy Employer

<p>planning, design, approval, assessment, monitoring and evaluation of higher education programmes (paragraph 29)</p>	<p>Maintain established employer relationships and review employer engagement activities to continually encourage further developments, as appropriate</p>	<p>Oct 2011</p>	<p>Heads of Academy/Programme Leaders</p>		<p>Head of Faculty/ Higher Education Forum</p>	<p>feedback Annual Programme Monitoring/ Programme self-evaluation documents</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the extensive and effective use of the virtual learning environment, including the Higher Education Community site for staff, is valued by staff and students and clearly enhances teaching and learning (paragraphs 37, 38) 	<p>Regularly monitor the use of the virtual learning environment and embrace advancements in associated technologies</p>	<p>Sept 2011 onwards</p>	<p>Higher Education Technology Enhanced Learning Advocate Programme Teams Learning Technologist</p>	<p>Upgraded virtual learning environment within the Faculty of Higher Education and an increase in the range of use of the virtual learning environment to support learning</p>	<p>Head of Academy/Head of Faculty</p>	<p>Staff and student feedback and demonstrations Audits of programme virtual learning environments</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> higher education student ambassadors and student associates contribute positively to the College's widening participation agenda and to 	<p>Continue to recruit, train and develop a team of higher education student ambassadors to promote progression from further to higher education and mentor students through their learner</p>	<p>Oct 2011</p>	<p>Higher Education Officer/ Higher Education Admin Team</p>	<p>Successful team of student ambassadors supporting a range of widening participation and progression activities; supporting the College's</p>	<p>Higher Education Forum Higher Education Student Focus Groups</p>	<p>Student feedback Participation in the Student Ambassador Scheme Higher Education</p>

informing, guiding and supporting students in their transition from further to higher education within and beyond the College (paragraph 44).	journey Investigate possible alternative funding streams to maintain the roles of Student Associates, previously funded via Aimhigher	Sept 2011	Higher Education Officer/Head of Faculty	ambitious targets for internal progression		Strategy
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:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop a more systematic approach to identifying study support needs and ensure that these needs are met early in the programme (paragraph 43). 	<p>Include an initial diagnostic assessment in the induction schedule for all new students to determine any study support needs early in their programme of study</p> <p>Incorporate study skills sessions in to the introductory weeks of all higher education programmes and establish a pilot timetable of drop-in study skills sessions throughout the academic year</p>	<p>Sept 2011</p> <p>Sept 2011 onward</p>	<p>Programme Leaders/Higher Education Officer</p> <p>Programme Leaders Learning Resource Service and Higher Education Officer</p>	Effective and efficient identification of study support needs through a more systematic approach at the start of the student experience	<p>Heads of Academy/ Higher Education Forum</p> <p>Heads of Academy Higher Education Forum and Student Focus Groups</p>	<p>Induction schedules and assessment outcomes</p> <p>Student feedback</p> <p>Publicised schedule of study skills sessions and uptake by students</p>

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:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop a faculty-wide strategy to ensure that the current effective delivery of personal development planning is maintained within future provision (paragraph 39) 	Establish and implement a clear faculty-wide strategy for the delivery of personal development planning to ensure that its effective delivery is maintained across all higher education provision	Sept 2011	Head of Faculty/Programme Leaders	Successful integration of personal development planning across all curriculum areas	Higher Education Teaching and Learning Group/Joint Board of Studies	Faculty of Higher Education personal development planning strategy Staff and student Feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> review the processes by which the College ensures that reading lists are current so that students are aware of the most up-to-date resources (paragraph 53). 	Conduct a review of current processes for ensuring students are aware of the most up to date resources and institute an annual checking and sign-off process to ensure all documentation is updated accurately	Aug 2011	Higher Education Officer/Deputy Head of Learner Resource Service	Revised process that ensures accuracy in the reading lists issues to students	Higher Education Forum	Annual audit of student handbooks Current student handbooks and module guides
	Ensure all programme documentation contains accurate and up to date reading lists	Aug 2011	Programme Leaders	All programme documentation contains accurate and up to date reading lists	Heads of Academy	Student feedback

RG 734 06/11

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