



Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

City of Bath College

March 2011

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Preface

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

Purpose of IQER

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

The IQER process

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

Developmental engagement

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

The main elements of a Developmental engagement are:

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

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

Summative review

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

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

Evidence

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

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

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

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

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

Outcomes of IQER

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

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

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

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

Executive summary

The Summative review of City of Bath College 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 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 detailed and analytical annual monitoring and review process at programme and college level which provides a sound vehicle for quality enhancement
- the peer observation process which enhances teaching and learning practice
- the use of learning technologies as part of an interactive approach to learning and teaching on the FdA Music Production and FdA Digital Design provides students with a broad experience of industry-standard technologies
- the extensive and well-established links with employers in supporting high-quality learning opportunities.

Recommendations

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

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

- review the terms of reference for the Higher Education Steering Group to provide more explicit focus on the management of academic standards and engagement with the Academic Infrastructure
- establish examination boards for Higher National programmes which have clear terms of reference, constitution and membership, and which clarify the role of the Higher National Board of Studies
- establish a set of clear and unambiguous policies and procedures for Higher National programmes to ensure that all staff and students understand the academic assessment regulations
- review the range of information provided to higher education students to ensure that it is appropriate and consistent and provides a coordinated approach
- introduce a clear process for ensuring that programme handbooks are consistent, accurate and complete.

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

- align all College higher education operations and documentation to the Academic Infrastructure to ensure that it is fully embedded and understood
- introduce an annual overview of external examiners' reports as part of the higher education self-assessment review process
- clarify the policy on tutorial support for higher education students to provide a consistent basis for the regular review of student progress
- clarify the terms of reference and membership of programme committees and publish an annual schedule to ensure that student representatives can attend and contribute
- consider how the Higher Education Forum can be more effective in creating a community of higher education practitioners.

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 of Bath 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 Bath, Bath Spa University, the University of the West of England and Edexcel. The review was carried out by Ms Maggie Carroll, Mrs Catherine Hill, Dr Sarah Shobrook (reviewers) and Mr Simon Ives (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, discussions with employers, 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 of Bath College is a medium-sized general further education college which annually recruits around 6,000 learners, 2,000 of whom are full-time. The College is located in the centre of the city on several sites, and serves Bath and the surrounding rural area of north-east Somerset. The College's vision is for City of Bath College to be a responsive and strong college providing high-quality skills, learning and training, in state-of-the-art facilities, to a diverse customer base of learners and employers. The College's mission is to raise skills and improve life chances.

5 The College enrolls higher education students on 20 programmes of study, and currently has four higher education partners. These include the University of Bath, Bath Spa University, and the University of the West of England. The College continues to offer HNC/D programmes through its longstanding relationship with Edexcel. Higher education programmes are delivered in six of the College's nine departments, with a range of qualifications at levels 4, 5 and 6 of the FHEQ. These programmes include some that are delivered as part-time courses in order to meet the needs of local employers.

6 The overall number of higher education students has increased by 36 per cent over the last five years. In the current academic year, 359 students are enrolled on higher education programmes, taught by 30 staff. Currently, eight per cent of all students come from minority ethnic backgrounds, 16 per cent of students have a disclosed disability, and 52 per cent are female.

7 The higher education awards at the College funded by HEFCE are listed below followed by the number of full-time equivalent students.

Bath Spa University

- FdA Fashion and Textile Design Skills, full-time (32)
- FdA Digital Design (Photography and Motion Graphics) (24)
- FdA Digital Design (Interactive Design) (9)
- FdA Music Production (27)
- FdA Heritage Management (18)
- FdEd Early Years, full-time (26)

University of Bath

- FdSc Sport (Coaching) (43)
- FdSc Sport (Health & Fitness) (27)
- FdSc Applied Computing (40)
- BSc (Hons) Applied Computing (14)
- BSc (Hons) Sports Coaching, full-time (16)
- BSc (Hons) Sport Health and Fitness, full-time (6)

University of the West of England, Bristol

- FdA Business with Management (18)

Edexcel

- HND Building Services Engineering (6)
- HND Construction (2)
- HND Business Management (5)
- HNC Construction and Built Environment (Building Services Engineering) (23)
- HNC Construction and Built Environment (Construction) (17)
- HNC/D Mechanical Engineering (6)

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

8 The College has partnership agreements with three local universities: the University of Bath, Bath Spa University and the University of the West of England. Some programmes delivered by the College are franchised to a range of further education colleges, others are delivered in consortium with the universities' partners, and other programmes are validated for delivery only at the College. The College offers a range of Higher National programmes in partnership with Edexcel.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

9 A new post of Higher Education Manager, responsible for developing the College's quality assurance of higher education, was established in January 2010. In 2010 the College ended a partnership with the University of Bedfordshire (through the National Validation Council) which validated one programme. In 2009-10 the College established a new partnership with the University of the West of England for one award. No new programmes have recently been introduced, although the College is looking to develop niche programmes

in suitable areas. A new higher education centre, opening in October 2011, is being developed as part of a new-build programme at the College.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

10 Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the team. Their written submission was based on feedback form students gathered through an online survey. Responses were received from 57 per cent of eligible students and the results of the survey were further discussed with student representatives, who provided additional commentary. During the review the team held a productive meeting with students from a wide range of programmes.

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?

11 Arrangements for managing higher education standards within the College are in keeping with the regulatory frameworks of the awarding bodies and the responsibilities set out in associated partnership agreements. Close and effective relationships have been established with the three university awarding body partners, which provide significant support to the College. Managers and staff within the College are clear about their shared responsibilities for assuring the academic standards of the programmes delivered by the College.

12 Responsibilities for strategic management of the provision of higher education in the College rest with the Director of Curriculum, a member of the College's Strategic Leadership Group. The Director of Performance and Standards has oversight of the College's quality management systems. The Higher Education Manager, who reports to the Director of Curriculum, oversees quality assurance arrangements and coordinates activities at an operational level. Strategic developments and issues relating to academic standards are reported to College governors through the Corporation Quality Standards Sub Committee. Governors, some of whom have experience in the higher education sector, play an active role in the quality improvement strategy.

13 Higher education is delivered in six of the curriculum departments. Heads of department are responsible for maintaining and improving academic standards in their own curriculum areas. There has been a strong focus since the Developmental engagement on formulating and implementing an overarching framework for the review and monitoring of the College's higher education programmes. This framework has not yet seen a full academic cycle, but has already resulted in improvements to the programme monitoring and college-wide review and evaluation through the annual higher education self-assessment report.

14 There are two cross-college groups exclusively concerned with higher education; the Higher Education Steering Group and the Higher Education Forum. The Higher Education Steering Group, chaired by the Director of Curriculum, discusses the direction, implementation and progress of the higher education strategy, and contributes to the

development of a quality assurance framework for higher education provision in the College. The introduction of the Higher Education Steering group has had a positive impact on the way in which higher education is managed within the College, and has been instrumental in devising and implementing the new quality framework. The group has been actively involved in developing the College's higher education strategy, which has been ratified by the governing body. College managers and staff confirmed that they have found that this recently established group has provided a much needed focus to coordinate activity related to higher education across the College. However, the terms of reference for the Higher Education Steering Group lack specific focus on the management of academic standards, the review of the annual monitoring process, external examiners' reporting and engagement with the Academic Infrastructure. The team considers that it would be advisable for the College to review the terms of reference for the Higher Education Steering Group to provide more explicit focus on the management of academic standards and engagement with the Academic Infrastructure.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

15 Academic standards are set and maintained through engagement with all aspects of the Academic Infrastructure. The College and its university partners implement rigorous validation processes to ensure that programmes meet the expectation of the FHEQ, the precepts of the *Code of practice*, subject benchmark statements, and the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*.

16 The College has responded positively to the desirable recommendation following the Developmental engagement for the College to ensure that higher education staff engage more fully with the Academic Infrastructure. Many staff demonstrated a much improved understanding of this following some focused staff development provided by the University of Bath. Knowledge of the Academic Infrastructure is good where staff have been involved with course development and review, or writing new modules or assessment instruments. This has required them to have a sound understanding of the key elements of the Academic Infrastructure. However, meetings with staff confirmed that, although progress has been made, there is still significant variability in understanding among staff, especially where they have not been involved in programme development. It would be desirable for the College to align all College higher education operations and documentation to the Academic Infrastructure to ensure that it is fully embedded and understood.

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 External examiners appointed by the awarding bodies confirm that programmes achieve the appropriate academic standards. Reports indicate that College staff are aware of the required level of assessment and fully meet the expected learning outcomes of the programmes. Programme teams respond appropriately to the comments and suggestions of external examiners as part of the annual monitoring process. Curriculum staff from the College are active participants in various committees established by the awarding bodies which address academic standards.

18 University partners have a significant role in reviewing all the external reports. However, the College does not undertake any cross-college analysis to draw together emerging themes and provide a strategic overview. This would ensure that good practice is collated and shared and would provide a more coherent vehicle for identifying areas

for improvement. The team considers it desirable for the College to introduce an annual overview of external examiners' reports as part of the higher education self-assessment review process.

19 External examiners' reports confirm that the College's assessment processes are sound. Clear responsibilities are set out in the partnership agreements with the awarding bodies. These include the process for the setting and moderation of assignments and for ensuring that assessments are set at the appropriate level. Reports also verify that academic standards are being met. There is a draft College assessment strategy which relates to all levels of delivery and is yet to be ratified.

20 Examination boards for the University of Bath provision are held at the College and chaired by a member of the College staff. The College holds examination boards for Edexcel Higher National qualifications under the title of Board of Study. These are properly constituted and minuted when undertaking an assessment role, and are sometimes attended by external examiners. However, there are no explicit terms of reference, constitution or membership for these boards. There is confusion among staff about the role of the Board of Studies, and the Higher National programme handbooks refer to student representatives being entitled to attend. While it is clear that no students attend the board when they are making assessment decisions, it is important for this to be clarified. It is advisable for the College to establish examination boards for Higher National programmes which have clear terms of reference, constitution and membership, and which clarify the role of the Higher National Board of Studies.

21 The College's higher education Course Evaluation and Review process is well established and effectively managed by programme leaders. All the College's higher education provision is subject to this robust process of annual programme monitoring. The College and its university partners have worked closely to integrate quality review systems at programme level to ensure they meet the requirements of both parties. Programme leaders draw on external examiners' reports, student and tutor feedback, and comments from link tutors at the relevant university. A detailed action plan is produced for each programme which includes targets to assess how improvements are effective. The attention to detail and the thoroughness of the reports has produced an honest evaluation of strengths and areas for improvement. Programme leaders have ensured that actions are taken and managers have monitored these rigorously. Programme reviews inform departmental self-assessment reports, which cover a range of levels of provision in a curriculum area, and feed into the cross-college self-assessment.

22 Following a recommendation from the Developmental engagement, the College has introduced an overarching framework for the review and monitoring of its higher education programmes as part of its quality review cycle. In 2009-10 the College produced a Higher Education Self Assessment Report. This collated and evaluated strengths and areas for development across the provision. The report provides a detailed analysis of data and student achievement. The Higher Education Development Plan identified three programmes which required specific improvement. These were the FdSc Sport, FdSc Applied Computing and FdA Digital Design. A range of interventions were undertaken including the introduction of a study skills unit, more structured formative assessment and feedback, rigorous attendance monitoring and regular tutorials. There is evidence through the action plan review that student retention and achievement has improved following this remedial action. The team considers that there is good practice in the detailed and analytical annual monitoring and review process at programme and college level, which provides a sound vehicle for quality enhancement.

23 Students confirmed that they understand the academic regulations for their programmes. For university-validated programmes handbooks provide, or have electronic

links to, clear procedures relating to extensions, mitigation, plagiarism, and appeals. However, academic regulations for the Edexcel Higher National programmes are confusing. There is a lack of clarity about students' right to appeal against grading decisions and potentially request to have work re-marked, and the College does not have a comprehensive set of procedures to address requests for mitigation. The team considers that it is advisable for the College to establish a set of clear and unambiguous policies and procedures for Higher National programmes to ensure that all staff and students understand the academic assessment regulations.

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

24 The College has a comprehensive system for supporting staff development on higher education programmes. All staff are made aware of this entitlement through the Organisational Development Strategy, which provides a commitment to support for staff training and development needs, in order to enhance the student learning experience. A main focus is on the improvement of staff skills, knowledge and qualifications, while capturing good practice to motivate staff and improve organisational performance. Staff development records are held centrally by Human Resources, and by relevant heads of department, and these provide useful data for college-wide and individual development needs.

25 The College has a formal arrangement to allow a reduction in contact hours for staff teaching on higher education programmes to allow time for scholarly activity. Activities undertaken during this time are agreed with the relevant head of department, and outcomes are reviewed termly. Staff have engaged in a range of academic and professional development activities. Examples of these are undertaking postgraduate qualifications, writing for publication, practising professionally in specialist fields, attending and presenting at academic conferences, and developing academic practices for students in conjunction with their university partners. The College's annual self-assessment Development Plan 2010-11 acknowledges that postgraduate study for higher education staff should be better promoted, as should higher-education-specific staff development in general, and the College is making progress in addressing this.

26 All teaching staff are members of the Institute for Learning and complete a required 30 hours of professional development activity each academic year. There is a formal staff appraisal process that includes an evaluation of the types of scholarship undertaken and its impact on higher education delivery and student experience. There is also a good range of staff development provided by the university partners, which is well attended and much valued by the staff of the College. Most staff involved in delivery are involved in cross-marking and validation exercises with partner colleges and universities, which ensure that marking and assessment is conducted to maintain academic standards at the appropriate level.

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

Core theme 2: Quality of learning opportunities

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

27 The responsibilities for managing the quality of learning opportunities, and the associated quality assurance and enhancement processes, reflect those for managing academic standards. These are described in paragraphs 11 to 14. There is a clear management structure for higher education. Roles and responsibilities are understood by staff and are effective in ensuring that learning opportunities are well managed. There is an emerging role for the Higher Education Steering Group and the Higher Education Forum as the key committees engaged with reviewing and enhancing higher education learning opportunities. The Director of Curriculum, in liaison with the HE Manager, has responsibility for promoting high-quality learning, and assisting in determining the strategy and direction of higher education.

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

28 The processes by which the College assures itself that it is fulfilling its obligations to its awarding bodies are described in paragraphs 17 to 23. The annual programme review process, data from teaching observations and positive reports from external examiners provide evidence of good-quality teaching and learning across all programmes. It also provides a robust mechanism for ensuring that aspects of learning opportunities are addressed. Students attest to the high quality of the teaching and to the expertise of the teaching staff. They value the opportunities they have to apply their learning to work-based situations, and appreciate highly the support they can access outside formal taught time and the enthusiasm of the staff.

29 Students are provided with a clear schedule of assessments. Assessment criteria and processes are clear and well understood by students, who feel they are fair. Assessment methodology is appropriate, and a broad range of assessment tasks are used across all programmes. The tasks set are varied, and enable the learners to achieve at the correct level. Students report that formative and summative feedback on their assignments is very helpful and developmental. Following the Developmental engagement the College has introduced a clear policy on timeliness of feedback to students and the return of assessed work. The timescale for feedback is three working weeks, and most students confirmed that this policy is consistently applied.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

30 Engagement with the Academic Infrastructure is outlined in paragraphs 15 and 16. Programmes are aligned with the Academic Infrastructure at the time of validation and institutional approval. External examiners' reports confirm that the quality of learning opportunities is informed by an understanding by teams of the expectations of the requirements of the Academic Infrastructure. Appropriate consideration of the FHEQ, the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark* and relevant sections of the *Code of practice* supports the quality of learning opportunities, but there is scope for this to be articulated more clearly in relevant sections of the programme handbooks.

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

31 The College has embedded its approach to learning and teaching in a range of policies, although there is no overarching teaching and learning strategy. The College's strategic intentions statement 'Entitled to Excellence' identifies teaching and learning as areas for improvement. This document includes a strategy for management and self-assessment, a strategic curriculum review, and an assessment policy. College policies also cover the use of information learning technologies and student involvement.

32 A rigorous programme of graded and themed lesson observations is undertaken, and a supportive improvement strategy addresses underperformance. Observations are monitored by the Director of Performance and Standards and managed by the Strategic Leadership Group. Reports on teaching quality are discussed at the Corporation Quality Standards Sub Committee.

33 All staff are observed formally at least once a year by a member of the observation team, which includes the Higher Education Manager. The outcomes of the observations are used for discussion between the member of staff and his/her line manager in the staff performance review process. Teaching staff can take advantage of individual coaching, and as members of the Higher Education Forum can use the site on the College virtual learning environment to access support for their teaching. The observations are thorough and offer effective feedback to staff as well as ensuring that teaching quality is improved.

34 The recently appointed Quality Improvement Coordinator is active in promoting staff development in teaching and learning, and a peer observation process has been developed. Staff observe each other's teaching, and discuss the outcomes together, along with a learning coach. More than half the higher education teaching staff have engaged with this new initiative. Observation training includes the opportunity to discuss distinctive higher education learning and teaching approaches. This work is driving forward the College's commitment to improve the quality of teaching for students. The team considers that there is good practice provided in the peer observation process which enhances teaching and learning practice.

35 The College virtual learning environment provides a vehicle for communication with students and staff. Teaching material is uploaded systematically by staff. On some programmes, there is evidence of dynamic and interactive approaches to learning and teaching using industry-standard technologies. For example, in the the FdA Music Production, using social networking, the students' work was published as an Excellence Gateway case study for exceptional e-learning in music. Similarly, students' self-directed projects in the FdA Digital Design created an exhibition site which showcased students' creative work. The use of learning technologies as part of an interactive approach to learning and teaching on the FdA Music Production and FdA Digital Design is good practice and provides students with a broad experience of industry-standard technologies.

36 Work-based learning features in all the programmes under review, and reflects the expectations of the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning*. Student feedback reveals high levels of satisfaction with the way their learning is shaped and enhanced through the work-based elements. The College engages well with employers to enhance the students' learning, and to provide opportunities for applied learning in the workplace. Employers often advise on the content of programmes and deliver specialist aspects of some programmes.

37 Opportunities for work-related learning are clearly set out in programme handbooks and show how assessment tasks will augment students' learning and provide a record of their personal development. On some programmes, for example the FdA Digital Design and FdEd Early Years, students are required to keep reflective journals. Where relevant, students secure work placements in a range of contexts in the public and private sectors. Placement supervisors are effective in ensuring that placements are appropriate, and that good opportunities for assessment exist with the placement providers. Supervisors are not involved directly in the assessment of students but their views on student performance are taken into account.

38 There are varying levels of engagement with employers. These are relevant to the programmes of study, and enhance the learning opportunities for students. For example, in the HNC Construction, HND Construction & Built Environment, HNC/D Mechanical Engineering and FdEd Early Years programmes, students are employed in the industry. In the FdSc Applied Computing students undertake live commissions for companies, guest lectures are given by leading experts in the field and one student is working on a major project with Devon County Council. Similarly, in the FdA Music Production, extensive employer links are established that include guest lectures and visits to music studios and factories. In the FdA Fashion and Textiles Design Skills there is strong evidence of national and international links and students showcase their work at an international textiles fair. The extensive and well-established links with employers in supporting high-quality learning opportunities are considered to be good practice.

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

39 External examiners and students confirm that effective support is provided. The National Student Survey in 2010 revealed a high overall College satisfaction rate of 87 per cent for the quality of teaching, academic support, learning resources and the provision the College makes for personal development. All students have induction programmes at the College and the relevant university.

40 The Director of Student Experience, and the Student Participation and Well Being Team, work closely with the Higher Education Manager. They ensure that students are appropriately supported, and have established a Higher Education Focus Group for students to determine which enhancement activities and support they require. Other support staff include student mentors and counsellors, and the chaplaincy, nurse and sports coordinator. The high-quality information, advice and guidance team and careers guidance counsellors support students' progression effectively. An Information Literacy Strategy sets out the principles which will enable students to learn independently. The activities, delivered by both learning resources staff and teaching staff, consist of one-off sessions early on in students' programmes, and then as timely interventions as more advanced skills become necessary.

41 Further support for learning is provided by the Skills for Life team. Students progressing within the College from level 3 to higher education programmes are advised about the support offered. All other applicants who disclose a learning disability are tracked from application to ensure their needs are monitored and addressed. The team's higher education link tutor liaises effectively with programme leaders. With student support workers they provide well-coordinated support, and signpost access to other agencies. Partner universities also provide additional support for students on the franchised programmes, and work closely with the College.

42 The College's Strategic Intentions 2011-2014 document states that there is a commitment to academic tutoring. Students consider staff to be helpful and accessible and good at explaining things, and value the informal drop-in sessions offered. Tutorials on

higher education programmes are delivered in a variety of models which vary across across programmes. These include one-to one sessions, group meetings and end of assignment critiques. However, some students are unclear about the tutorial process and their entitlement, and how they might be used to provide a formal review of progress. The team concludes that it is desirable for the College to clarify the policy on tutorial support for higher education students to provide a consistent basis for the regular review of student progress.

43 Personal development planning is evident in various forms across all programmes. This offers students a useful vehicle for reflecting on their learning and setting targets for further personal development. There is more opportunity for staff to share their approaches to personal development planning, and to review the range of practices currently offered

44 The College's self-evaluation acknowledges the importance of the student voice and of collecting and acting on student opinion. A range of strategies, both formal and informal, ensure that student feedback is captured, addressed and reported back to the students. These include end-of-module questionnaires, meetings with staff, cross-college surveys, liaison committee meetings with the university partners, and cross-college student representatives' meetings. Course representatives from the full range of programmes meet formally with the Higher Education Manager twice a year. Here issues are addressed, followed up and actions reviewed.

45 Staff/student liaison committees held regularly by the university validating partners include student members. These are responsive to students' views and clear actions emerge which are followed through effectively. However, there is a lack of clarity about the role, constitution and timetabling of the programme committees that operate within the College, especially those for the Higher National programmes. The team confirmed that it would be desirable for the College to clarify the terms of reference and membership of programme committees and publish an annual schedule to ensure that student representatives can attend and contribute.

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

46 The College's arrangements for staff development to maintain and enhance the quality of learning opportunities are outlined in paragraphs 24 to 26. Following the Developmental engagement the College established a Higher Education Forum, which is in an early stage of development. The Higher Education Forum's terms of reference include a requirement to discuss, formulate and implement strategies for the sharing of good practice across the provision, and the development of a community of discourse for higher education practitioners. There is some evidence of the emerging role in sharing good practice to enhance the provision, and staff confirmed that they value the activities of the forum. A well-attended cross-college staff development day held in July 2010 included specific events on the Academic Infrastructure, the use of specialist plagiarism software, marking at levels 4 and 5, and developing programme handbooks. The forum meets irregularly but has an increasing presence on the virtual learning environment. The team confirms that they consider the developing role of the forum to be a valuable addition to supporting staff development and sharing good practice. However, the team considers it to be desirable for the College to consider how the Higher Education Forum can be more effective in creating a community of higher education practitioners.

47 Staff who are new to teaching on higher education programmes are effectively inducted into the demands of their teaching. The Induction Policy sets out a framework for ensuring that new staff become confident in their duties. Staff are mentored by a senior

colleague in the department, often sharing planning, teaching and assessment. New staff reported that they had been very well supported in this process.

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?

48 An annual business planning process identifies and allocates resources based on the requirements of each department. Programme teams discuss requirements with the relevant head of department, who then makes a proposal to the strategic leadership team who determine financial allocation. For university-validated provision resource requirements are determined at programme validation. The partnership agreements with awarding bodies detail particular expectations of the College in terms of staffing and general resource provision.

49 Arrangements for the appointment of staff to teach on the programmes are rigorous. They are in line with both the College's employment strategy and with the awarding bodies' requirements to approve such appointments. Curricula vitae of staff teaching on the higher education programmes indicate that their qualifications and expertise are appropriate for the teaching at FHEQ levels 4-6.

50 Physical resources in the individual curriculum areas are, in most cases, of a high standard. External examiner reports attest to this, and student feedback indicates that the resources available are sufficient to enable them to succeed. In some areas, such as building, construction and engineering, employers have donated industry-standard equipment. Sports students use the high-quality facilities at the University of Bath for practical coaching.

51 The Learning Resources Manager is a member of the Higher Education Steering Group and the Higher Education Forum, and so is able to contribute strategically to discussions about resource requirements. Students have access to the libraries both at the College and the validating universities, and are inducted into using these at the beginning of their programmes, and are provided with refresher sessions. The Learning Resources Manager liaises effectively with staff at the partner institutions, and accompanies students to their induction at the relevant university. The College library is well-stocked and supports the higher education programmes effectively. The recent decision to purchase e-books for the Edexcel programmes has enabled those students to access a similar level of resources available to students on university validated 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?

52 The College publishes an appropriate range of information for students. The published materials include the annual higher education prospectus, the College website, course-specific brochures, press releases, student handbooks and module handbooks. Students are also provided with general information about the College. The

College publishes work placement handbooks for some programmes and a mentors' handbook. 'Aim Higher', a regular bulletin for higher education students, is published several times a year.

53 The higher education prospectus is published in hard copy and on the College website. It is developed jointly by the College and its university partners. There is a sign-off procedure for the prospectus with clear stages that ensures the accuracy of the information being published. The production schedule includes sign-off from within the College at programme level and by the marketing department. The University of the West of England, the University of Bath and Bath Spa University are all sent information by the Higher Education Manager that relates to their specific courses. This is then checked and signed off for accuracy and completeness. Information on Higher National qualifications is taken directly from the Edexcel website, and contextual College information is provided. Accuracy of this information is checked by the College, and overall this procedure is working well.

54 The College produces programme-specific brochures that provide more detailed information. These are produced by programme leaders, checked by the higher education manager and are reviewed for corporate identity and layout by the marketing department. Although there is no documented process for ensuring accuracy of the course brochures, information published is accurate and corresponds to that provided in the higher education prospectus.

55 Programme specifications are published at the approval stage of a programme. They provide clear and detailed information for prospective and current students and employers. For Higher National programmes validated by Edexcel information is gathered from the Edexcel website on the units to be offered. This is contextualised to the College and programme specifications are embedded in the student handbooks.

56 All higher education students receive programme handbooks. These contain general course information. Programme handbooks are produced to common formats for each awarding body. Handbooks are distributed to students electronically through the virtual learning environment and in hard copy at induction. Students report that the handbooks give them relevant information about teaching, learning and assessment, and that generally they find them clear and helpful. The content of module handbooks is confirmed during the validation process and reviewed annually by the programme leader in conjunction with the awarding body. These provide detailed information on curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment. On some programmes, work placement and mentor handbooks are provided which are informative and provide helpful guidance to students and employers.

57 The College virtual learning environment has electronic copies of the student handbooks along with relevant module information and is updated annually. Staff confirmed that not all information is given to students in hard copy, and students are increasingly directed towards the virtual learning environment. Bath Spa University in particular encourages staff and students to use electronic resources when possible.

58 There is some inconsistency about the information made available to students at the start of the year, and this varies from course to course. Students on University of Bath and the University of the West of England programmes have information made available to them from their respective universities at the start of the year. Students on University of Bath programmes are given a comprehensive student handbook with general information on the university, resources, and student support. Staff at the meeting with the team described a range of information given to students at induction, and this varied significantly. Some students are also provided with the College's general information folder, which is aimed at further education students. While much of the broad College information is helpful, it is not tailored to the requirements of higher education students. It is advisable for the

College to review the range of information provided to higher education students to ensure that it is appropriate and consistent and provides a coordinated approach.

**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?**

59 The College and its awarding bodies recognise the need to monitor the reliability of information and have procedures to ensure that there are regular reviews of documentation and electronic information sources. There is a set procedure for publishing information such as course brochures, the prospectus and College website, and this is working effectively.

60 Following the recommendation of the Developmental engagement there has been some improvement in the processes for assuring the accuracy and completeness of the information provided in student handbooks. A staff development workshop on writing programme handbooks was held in summer 2010 and College staff worked with colleagues whose courses were validated by the same awarding body. These groups then collectively wrote new programme handbooks to a template common for each awarding body. The workshop was well attended and new handbooks were developed. All handbooks went through a process of checking and signing off to ensure that they were consistent, accurate and complete. However, although this process improved the overall quality of programme handbooks, the team found inconsistencies in information and terminology used to describe level of study.

61 Handbooks for Edexcel-validated programmes are produced by the College. The quality of these has been improved since the Developmental engagement and they now contain information on plagiarism and mitigating circumstances. As stated in paragraph 23, information about the students' role in the in the Boards of Study is confusing and contradictory. Despite the improvements undertaken since the Developmental engagement, the team considers it advisable for the College to introduce a clear process for ensuring that programme handbooks are consistent, accurate and complete.

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

62 The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in February 2010. There were three lines of enquiry:

Line of enquiry 1: The College's management of assessment processes and practices, within the terms of its partnership agreements, to ensure the maintenance of academic standards at an appropriate level.

Line of enquiry 2: The College's monitoring and improvement of the quality of assessment practice across its higher education provision.

Line of enquiry 3: The extent to which the feedback to students on assessed work, both formative and summative, is appropriate, timely and facilitates improvement and student achievement.

63 The Developmental engagement team identified a number of areas of good practice: the strong partnership arrangements; the College's commitment, and the proactive involvement of higher education partners, in supporting staff development and scholarly activity for staff; the rigorous approach to marking and moderation on the Foundation Degree Education Studies: Early Years; the accessibility of staff; the good use of formative feedback across all programmes and the high quality of summative assessment feedback provided on most programmes.

64 The team also made a number of recommendations. It considered that it would be advisable for the College to: review all programme handbooks to ensure that the information provided to students is consistent, accurate and complete; introduce an overarching framework for the review and monitoring of its higher education programmes; and introduce a clear policy on timeliness of feedback to students and the return of assessed work. The team also felt it would be desirable for the College to: ensure that all College higher education staff engage more fully with the Academic Infrastructure; develop a community of higher education practitioners and establish clear mechanisms for identifying and sharing good practice; and introduce cross-college procedures for gathering and responding to feedback from students to assist in the improvement of assessment practice.

D Foundation Degrees

65 The College offers 10 Foundation Degrees across a number of curriculum areas including creative arts, business and management, computing and sport. It strongly believes that they form a valuable progression route for students wishing to progress from further to higher education study in vocational areas within the College. In some curriculum areas there are opportunities for students to progress internally to FHEQ level 6 study. The College is considering the development of additional Foundation Degrees to meet the needs of employers within specific subject areas.

66 Foundation Degree provision comes within the overarching quality assurance and enhancement framework the College has in place for all its higher education programmes. The team confirmed that the College has well-established links with employers, who inform curriculum developments and are part of the validation process, which ensures that programmes are aligned with the expectations of the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*. The review team also identified the use of interactive learning technologies on the FdA Music Production and the FdA Digital Design as an area of good practice. All other areas of good practice and recommendations, apart from the two advisable recommendations which relate specifically to higher national programmes, apply equally to Foundation Degree provision.

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

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

Integrated quality and enhancement review

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

- the detailed and analytical annual monitoring and review process at programme and college level which provides a sound vehicle for quality enhancement (paragraph 22)
- the peer observation process which enhances teaching and learning practice (paragraph 34)
- the use of learning technologies as part of an interactive approach to learning and teaching on the FdA Music Production and FdA Digital Design provides students with a broad experience of industry-standard technologies (paragraph 35)
- the extensive and well-established links with employers in supporting high-quality learning opportunities (paragraph 38).

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

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

- review the terms of reference for the Higher Education Steering Group to provide more explicit focus on the management of academic standards and engagement with the Academic Infrastructure (paragraph 14)
- establish examination boards for Higher National programmes which have clear terms of reference, constitution and membership, and which clarify the role of the Higher National Board of Studies (paragraphs 20 and 45)
- establish a set of clear and unambiguous policies and procedures for Higher National programmes to ensure that all staff and students understand the academic assessment regulations (paragraph 23)
- review the range of information provided to higher education students to ensure that it is appropriate and consistent and provides a coordinated approach (paragraph 58)
- introduce a clear process for ensuring that programme handbooks are consistent, accurate and complete (paragraph 61).

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

- align all College higher education operations and documentation to the Academic Infrastructure to ensure that it is fully embedded and understood (paragraph 16)
- introduce an annual overview of external examiners' reports as part of the higher education self-assessment review process (paragraph 18)
- clarify the policy on tutorial support for higher education students to provide a consistent basis for the regular review of student progress (paragraph 42)
- clarify the terms of reference and membership of programme committees and publish an annual schedule to ensure that student representatives can attend and contribute (paragraph 45)
- consider how the Higher Education Forum can be more effective in creating a community of higher education practitioners (paragraph 46).

72 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.

73 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.

74 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 of Bath College 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 detailed and analytical annual monitoring and review process at programme and college level which provides a sound vehicle for quality enhancement (paragraph 22) 	Ensure all higher education (HE) programmes apply the HE quality framework to provision.	15 July 2011	Director of Performance and Standards	Evaluative course reviews	Strategic Leadership Group (SLG)	Sampling of course reviews
	Update guidance on course reviews to include referencing to Academic Infrastructure	30 June 2011	Director of Curriculum	Evidence based HE self-assessment report	SLG*	College validation panel for SAR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the peer observation process which enhances teaching and learning practice (paragraph 34) 	Build on the good practice in peer sharing by increasing the sharing of good practice through the HE forum	July 2012	Director of Performance and Standards	75% of staff teaching on HE programmes take part in peer sharing	SLG	Feedback from participants
	Share the practice on these programmes and evaluate how it can be applied to other programmes	01 Dec 2011	Director of Performance and Standards	Review of the use of learning technologies on all HE programmes	HE Steering Group	'Themed' lesson observations on HE programmes

FdA Music Production and FdA Digital Design provides students with a broad experience of industry-standard technologies (paragraph 35)						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the extensive and well-established links with employers in supporting high-quality learning opportunities (paragraph 38). 	Maintain current links and ensure good links with employers are built into new programmes	30 Sept 2011	Director of Curriculum	Good links with employers on all programmes	HE Steering Group	Self-assessment reports
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"> review the terms of reference for the Higher Education Steering Group to provide more explicit focus on the management of academic standards and engagement with the Academic Infrastructure (paragraph 14) 	Revise terms of reference for HE Steering Group	26 May 2011	Director of Curriculum	Terms of reference agreed	SLG	HE self-assessment report

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> establish examination boards for Higher National programmes which have clear terms of reference, constitution and membership, and which clarify the role of the Higher National Board of Studies (paragraphs 20 and 45) 	<p>Draft of Examination Board terms of reference, constitution and membership for HN programmes to HE Steering group</p>	26 May 2011	Director of Performance and Standards	Examination Boards take place for HN programmes in accord with agreed procedures in summer 2011	SLG	HE self-assessment report
	<p>Publish structure of relationship between committees</p>	30 Sept 2011	Director of Performance and Standards	Staff and students understand committee structure	SLG	HE self-assessment report
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> establish a set of clear and unambiguous policies and procedures for Higher National programmes to ensure that all staff and students understand the academic assessment regulations (paragraph 23) 	<p>Revise and implement policy and procedure on mitigating circumstances and appeals</p>	30 June 2011	Director of Performance and Standards	Policy in place and effective in dealing with mitigating circumstances and appeals	SLG	Analysis of appeals/mitigating circumstances
	<p>Review assessment policies and procedures and amend if required</p>	30 June 2011	Director of Performance and Standards	Assessment policies meet requirements of awarding bodies	HE Steering Group	HE self-assessment report
	<p>Update course handbooks to ensure they include information about assessment regulations</p>	30 June 2011	Director of Curriculum	Course handbooks include necessary information	HE Steering Group	HE student focus group
	<p>Introduce standard internal verification (IV) process across the College's HE programmes</p>	01 Dec 2011	Director of Performance and Standards	High-quality IV decisions and feedback	SLG	Sampling of IV by Quality and Performance team

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> review the range of information provided to higher education students to ensure that it is appropriate and consistent and provides a coordinated approach (paragraph 58) 	Produce a generic College information pack for all HE learners and remove such information from individual course handbooks	01 Sept 2011	Director of Student Experience	High-quality HE handbook	HE Steering Group	HE self-assessment report
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> introduce a clear process for ensuring that programme handbooks are consistent, accurate and complete (paragraph 61). 	Revise handbooks for HN courses to ensure they provide accurate information about the role of Examination Boards and Staff-Student Liaison Committees	15 July 2011	Director of Curriculum	High-quality, accurate course handbooks	HE Steering Group	HE self-assessment report
	Review sign off process for handbooks and implement changes	15 July 2011	Director of Curriculum			
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"> align all College higher education operations and documentation to the Academic Infrastructure to ensure that it is fully embedded and understood 	Review documentation for HN programmes and, where appropriate, reference to Academic Infrastructure (AI)	April 2012	Director of Curriculum	All staff to use AI appropriately and reference AI in all relevant documents	HE Steering Group	HE self-assessment report
	Provide annual training for staff teaching on HE programmes on AI	Dec 2011	Director of HR	All staff receive annual training		

(paragraph 16)	Review end of module and end of course feedback to ensure questions are cross referenced to <i>Code of practice</i>	July 2012	Director of Curriculum	Feedback from students identifies areas for further development in implementing <i>Code of practice</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> introduce an annual overview of external examiners' reports as part of the higher education self-assessment review process (paragraph 18) 	Collect external examiner/external verifier (EE/EV) reports centrally and produce annual report	July 2011	Director of Performance and standards	Effective analysis of quality indicators in EE/EV reports	SLG	Quality and Performance report on external verifiers/ examiners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> clarify the policy on tutorial support for higher education students to provide a process for the regular review of student progress (paragraph 42) 	Review entitlement to tutorials and inform students of this entitlement	01 Sept 2011	Director of Student Experience	Common entitlement to tutorials implemented	HE Steering Group	HE student focus group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> clarify the terms of reference and membership of programme committees and publish an annual schedule to ensure that student representatives can attend and contribute (paragraph 45) 	Review and publish the terms of reference and membership of programme committees Establish Staff Student Liaison Committees (SSLCs) for all HN programmes with clear terms of reference, constitution and membership.	30 June 2011 30 Sept 2011	Director of Performance and Standards Director of Curriculum	Programme committees take place in accord with agreed procedures in summer 2011 SSLCs meet termly	SLG HE Steering Group	Quality and Performance report Learner feedback

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> consider how the Higher Education Forum can be more effective in creating a community of higher education practitioners (paragraph 46). 	Produce schedule of development events for HE staff through consultation with staff	30 Sept 2011	Director of HR	Good range of peer activities for HE staff	HE Steering Group	HE self-assessment report
	Further promote use of online HE forum	Sept 30 2011	Director of Curriculum	Use of online forum increases in 2011/12 by 100% compared to 2010/11		

* The person identified as responsible for each action is the SLG lead manager. He or she will oversee the action but will delegate some to other staff in their department.

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