



# **Integrated quality and enhancement review**

**Summative review**

**Darlington College**

**May 2012**

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

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

## Outcomes of IQER

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

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

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

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

## Executive summary

### The Summative review of Darlington College carried out in May 2012

As a result of its investigations, the Summative review team (the team) considers that there can be **confidence** in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership 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/or 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 role and activities of the Higher Education Coordinator support the processes in the revised system for the management of higher education
- the mapping of the Academic Infrastructure onto programmes and especially with reference to the professional body awards is thorough and detailed
- the contribution of the Staff Coach is highly supportive of the developmental activities for staff
- the academic and personal support for students, especially part-time and recently unemployed students, is exceptionally well organised and effective
- the handbooks for placement learning are particularly effective in providing detailed and comprehensive information for staff, students and employers.

### Recommendations

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

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

- monitor the effectiveness of the recently devolved management of the higher education provision to ensure that the new system is effective
- ensure that programme leaders' reports are more evaluative to enable them to be used to monitor the provision more effectively
- work with the University to disaggregate comments on good practices and recommendations in external examiner reports to enable the reports to be used to enhance the provision
- continue with efforts to enable more staff to attend the Higher Education in Further Education Conference provided by the University.

## 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 Darlington College (the College). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the College discharges its responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes which the College delivers on behalf of Teesside University (the University). The review was carried out by Dr Glenn Barr, Dr Ann Kettle, Mr Brian Whitehead (reviewers) and Mr Philip Markey (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 its awarding body, meetings with staff, students, employers and partner institutions, reports of reviews by QAA and from inspections by Ofsted. In particular, the team drew on the findings and recommendations of the Developmental engagement in assessment and a second Developmental engagement in learning and teaching. A summary of findings from both Developmental engagements is provided in Section C of this report. The review also considered the College's use of the Academic Infrastructure, developed by QAA on behalf of higher education providers, with reference to the *Code of practice*, subject and award benchmark statements, the FHEQ and programme specifications.

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

4 Darlington College is a vocationally oriented further education college with 12,000 students. Of these, there are 436.46 full-time equivalent higher education students. Of these, 69 are full-time and 367.46 are part-time. The College's mission statement is 'to provide excellence in education for learning, life and work'. It has close links with local industry and the service sector.

5 Higher education programmes are offered in all of the seven curriculum areas of the College. Within the College there is a University Centre, opened in 2007. Most of the higher education is delivered here, including areas such as engineering, catering, information technology and journalism. Students also have access to the Teesside University Darlington Campus which is located on the College site.

6 The programmes offered by the College are shown below with full-time equivalent student numbers shown in brackets.

### Teesside University

#### Full-time programmes

- FdA in Journalism (33)
- FdSc in Computing (Networking) (23)
- PGCE (13)

#### Part-time programmes

- BA Business Management (Hospitality) (4.5)
- BA (Hons) Education Studies (31)
- PGCE (29.5)

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- Certificate in Education (23.5)
- FdA in Business Management (24)
- FdA in Counselling (15)
- FdA in Culinary Arts & Management (8)
- FdA in Early Years (Sector Endorsed) (49)
- FdA in Hospitality Management (16)
- FdSc in Project Control/Management (13)
- FdSc in Sports Coaching and Exercise (34)
- FdA in Web Design (5)
- FdA in Working with Children and Young People (18)
- HNC Building Studies (16.91)
- HNC/D Electrical & Electronic Engineering (21.16)
- HNC/D Manufacturing Engineering (6.08)
- HNC/D Mechanical Engineering (36.15)
- HNC/D Mechatronics (16.66)

## Partnership agreements with the awarding body

7 With four other colleges in the region, Darlington College is part of the Higher Education Business Partnership (the Partnership) with Teesside University. This is a collaborative entity in terms of programme development, the management of standards, and quality and support. The agreement with the University was renewed in March 2011. The College has arrangements with the University for higher education students to use one-third of the new Teesside University Darlington building for the next 50 years.

## Recent developments in higher education at the College

8 Prior to August 2011, the higher education provision was managed through a Directorate of Higher Education with a Director and Assistant Director who were responsible for all staff teaching on higher education programmes. The Higher Education Management Group monitored and managed the standards and quality of the provision. In August 2011, the management of higher education was devolved to curriculum areas. A Director of Curriculum has strategic responsibility for all curriculum areas and is supported by a Higher Education Coordinator.

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

9 Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the team. The submission produced for the review was based on a questionnaire which was used to gather qualitative data only. Ten student representatives attended a meeting with the Higher Education Coordinator. Students analysed the results of the questionnaire to identify common themes, areas of good practice and areas for development. The final report was shared with all students and posted on the College website. The submission was helpful to the team in forming an agenda for the review. Items raised in the submission were discussed with students during the visit.

## **B Evaluation of the management of HEFCE-funded higher education**

### **Core theme 1: Academic standards**

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

10 Since the two Developmental engagements, the management structure at the College changed substantially in August 2011. The management of higher education programmes is now devolved to the College's seven curriculum directorates. The Director of Curriculum was appointed in August 2011 and has strategic responsibility for the curriculum across the College. The seven curriculum areas have an Assistant Director who has responsibility for the operational management of programmes, providing strategic development, support and quality monitoring. Within each curriculum area, responsibility for programmes lies with the programme leaders who have responsibilities for both higher and further education programmes. Programme leaders of higher education programmes all have experience of teaching on higher education programmes.

11 The main committee responsible for the higher education programmes is the Higher Education Management Group, which includes the assistant directors of the curriculum areas which offer higher education, as well as higher education staff, and student and University representatives. This group meets twice per term and focuses on strategic planning and the monitoring of standards, and is chaired by the Director of Curriculum. The Director of Curriculum also chairs weekly meetings with the assistant directors dealing with the ongoing management of programmes for both higher and further education. In February 2012, a Higher Education Coordinator, reporting to the Director of Curriculum, was appointed, whose remit includes supporting curriculum areas, developing new programmes, ensuring effective working relationships with the University and partner colleges, and supporting new staff teaching on higher education programmes. The role also involves leading the Higher Education Forum in disseminating good practice in teaching, learning and assessment. The role and activities of the Higher Education Coordinator are well defined to support the operation of the devolved system for the management of higher education, and is good practice.

12 The rationale behind the changes to the management structure is to reduce any unnecessary barriers between further education and higher education, provide clear progression routes for students, and encourage further education staff to participate in the delivery of higher education. The new system is showing early signs of success, exemplified by improved retention rates and a reported increase in further education staff showing an interest in teaching on higher education programmes. Nevertheless, to ensure that the new system is effective in managing academic standards, it is recommended as desirable that the College monitors the effectiveness of the devolved system for managing higher education.

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

13 The application and awareness of the Academic Infrastructure is embedded in programmes by several processes. All new programmes, and revisions to existing programmes, are presented to the Teesside University Academic Quality and Standards Committee, which requires clearly identified references to programme specifications, subject and qualification benchmark statements and the *Code of practice*. Staff are clear

in their understanding of the Academic Infrastructure. This understanding has been acquired through staff development events, based at both the College and at the University. These sessions have been supported with explanatory briefing notes for all higher education staff and assistant directors. A particularly good example of these briefing notes details the inter-relationship between the Academic Infrastructure and programmes. These briefing notes indicate the thorough and detailed process used by the College to align programmes with the Academic Infrastructure. The document represents good practice, and is particularly robust with reference to the professional bodies' assessment and awarding processes.

**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 body?**

14 The Developmental engagements noted the high quality of the collaboration between the College and University. The College and University have a clear and supportive relationship to ensure the management of academic standards. The relationship is guided by the University's Quality Handbook and the Threshold Quality Statement. The Principal is a member of the Partnership and also liaises closely with the Vice-Chancellor of the University. College programme leaders work closely with staff in the Schools of the University. Additionally, the newly created post of Higher Education Coordinator provides an effective link between the University and the College.

15 The College has a rigorous internal process for monitoring new programmes and changes to existing programmes. Each curriculum area has a Curriculum Area Lead who has time allocated to work in a supportive role to ensure staff are fully aware of the University's regulations for the approval of new programmes. Curriculum Area Leads also work in a supportive role to complete validation documents. The programme is then scrutinised by the College's validation group which is chaired by the Director of Curriculum. This group considers the viability of the programme in terms of potential demand, alignment with the needs of industry, resource implications and staff expertise. This is an effective process to ensure that programmes offered to the University are ready for approval.

16 The monitoring and reviewing of programmes is in line with the Teesside University Quality Handbook and the Threshold Quality Standards. Annual self-assessment activities include module leader's reports which contribute to the annual module review. These form part of the programme leaders' reports along with external examiners' reports and student feedback. These programme reports, along with further information from the University's Annual Quality Monitoring Visit reports contribute to the Collaborative Provision Annual Monitoring Report. This is produced by the Director of Curriculum for review by the College and the University. Efforts are being made by the Higher Education Management Group to improve the quality of programme leader reports and make them less descriptive and more reflective. The team agrees with the College which has identified that some programme reports are lacking reflection and constructive comments. It is recommended as desirable that the College ensures the continued improvement of programme leaders' reports to make them more evaluative to enable them to be used to monitor the provision more effectively.

17 Assessment within the College is managed in line with the Quality Handbook and the Threshold Quality Statement and the requirements of the relevant Schools at Teesside University. There is clear and detailed information about assessment requirements which programme teams follow. The University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy includes guidelines for first and second marking, and the verification/moderation processes. The College's own strategies are based on this. Assessment processes are secure and robust.

18 External examiners' reports are received by programme leaders and copied to the Performance and Standards Manager who notes any recommendations and good practices. The response to external examiners' comments is the responsibility of the University. Programme leaders provide the initial responses to the University. Comments and action plans are copied to the Performance and Standards Manager who logs which programmes have been dealt with and produces a summary report of issues and action plans. This system ensures that the reports are viewed by teaching staff and management. A recommendation from the first Developmental engagement was that students and employers should have access to the reports. This opportunity is now available. However, where programmes are shared by several colleges across the Partnership, most external examiner reports do not disaggregate comments. It is recommended as desirable that the College works with the University to provide external examiner reports which identify specific colleges when making recommendations and good practices. This would ensure that reports can be used more effectively to enhance the provision.

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

19 The College is very supportive in providing opportunities for staff development. Individual staff development needs are identified through the appraisal system or from discussions with the appropriate Assistant Director. Events are arranged within the College and staff are also encouraged to attend the University's annual Higher Education in Further Education events, although some staff have had difficulty in attending as they were timetabled within the College. Staff are encouraged to update their professional experience and skills and, where applicable, are supported to undertake higher degrees. For example in construction, staff participate in industrial experience during the summer months. Additionally, major employers such as Balfour Beatty are invited to use the College's facilities for their annual conferences, to which all staff are invited.

20 Additional staff development is provided by the recently appointed Staff Coach who works with new staff on a one-to-one basis to advise on teaching at different levels and appropriate assessment practices. The Staff Coach also offers two staff development sessions a week covering a range of subjects relating to teaching and learning. The sessions also include advice on teaching in higher education. The Staff Coach also produces detailed reports on activities, which provide a helpful record and enable good practices to be recorded and shared. The contribution of the Staff Coach to developmental activities for teaching staff is 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?**

21 The responsibilities for the management of the quality of learning opportunities and how these are delegated within the management structure is similar to those identified in paragraphs 10 to 12. The recommendations also apply to the management of the quality of 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?**

22 The methods the College uses to assure itself that it is fulfilling its obligations to its awarding body to ensure that students receive appropriate learning experiences are identified in paragraphs 14 to 18. In addition, the University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and the Quality Manual provides the framework for College teaching staff to ensure appropriate learning opportunities for higher education students. Staff understand the need to focus on learning outcomes that identify the knowledge and skills students need to develop in order to achieve the levels of their awards. Staff have the expertise to develop complementary learning, teaching and assessment strategies for individual programmes to enable the achievement of learning outcomes. The substantial number of the College's further education students progressing to higher education, together with the improved progression, retention and achievement rates of its higher education students, is a further indication of the provision of appropriate learning opportunities.

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

23 The way the College takes account of the Academic Infrastructure is explained in paragraph 13. In addition, the remit of the Higher Education Coordinator includes the promotion of good practice by ensuring that all staff teaching on higher education programmes fully understand the Academic Infrastructure. Staff met by the team confirmed that knowledge and understanding of the precepts of the *Code of practice* is having a positive impact on the quality of provision. Intended learning outcomes are made clear in handbooks and assignment briefs. Students met by the team confirmed that they were aware of the requirements to achieve their awards.

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

24 The College's Teaching and Learning Strategy was recently revised to ensure that it is appropriate to be applied to all levels of learning. A section has been added to the strategy on 'Teaching Higher Education in Further Education' for the benefit of staff who may aspire to teach on higher education programmes. All staff are observed using the College's Teaching and Learning Observation procedure, which includes additional guidelines for observations of staff teaching at higher education levels. Higher education staff also participate in peer observation, including the use of 'teaching squares'. These are processes whereby staff can discuss teaching observations and share good practice. Following a recommendation in the report of the Developmental engagement on assessment and an evaluative report by the Director of Curriculum, the College intends to expand the use of 'teaching squares' across all programmes.

25 Staff teaching on higher education programmes are scrutinised and approved by the University, either when programmes are approved or when staff start to teach on programmes. New staff are provided with mentors and the Staff Coach supports all teaching staff to deliver teaching by means of individual activity sessions and demonstrations of outstanding teaching and learning. The National Student Survey (2011) and internal student surveys and evaluations report satisfaction with the high quality of teaching and learning. Students met by the team confirmed that they receive stimulating teaching materials from staff. They also said that teaching was challenging and interesting.

26 Assessment practices clearly contribute to students' learning and have been further enhanced since they were identified as good practice during the Developmental engagement in assessment. The student written submission highlighted students' satisfaction with the College's assessment practices, including the exceptional timeliness of feedback on assignments, which is highly supportive of their learning. This was confirmed by students who met the team.

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

27 The College has a variety of ways of obtaining formal and informal feedback from students on their learning experience, including module evaluation questionnaires, student representatives, national and internal student satisfaction surveys, tutorials and workshops. These processes enable the College to identify how well students are supported. Student feedback is analysed by the College's Quality Team and reports are distributed to assistant directors of curriculum areas to share with higher education staff. Students are informed of actions taken as a result of their concerns and of the outcomes of those actions. There is an appropriate complaints procedure in place. It was reported in the student submission, and confirmed by students who met the team, that opportunities for student feedback are available. The thorough process of providing responses to student feedback is testimony to the support students receive.

28 Student feedback indicates widespread satisfaction with the quality of academic and personal support offered to higher education students by the College. Students are provided with personal tutors and students met by the team were highly appreciative of the accessibility of staff and of the individual help and support that they provide. It was noted in the student submission that the support offered to all students is exemplary, 'with many students believing it to be above and beyond their expectations'. Most of the College's higher education students are part-time and efforts are made to ensure that they receive the same support and access to student services as those studying full-time.

29 Students are effectively supported in the workplace by robust arrangements to monitor and manage the quality of work-based learning. Work-based learning handbooks, which were identified as good practice in the Developmental engagement in assessment, make clear the requirements in assessing work-based practice and competencies. There are regular meetings between students, mentors or supervisors, and tutors to explore the development of the students' practice and learning experience and ensure that employers have a role throughout the programme. Schemes are in place to support students and allow them to finish their programme should they become unemployed. For example, a simulated work environment was created to enable a student to complete their work-based project, and other students on becoming unemployed were provided with extra tutorials and voluntary teaching hours in the College. The Developmental engagement in learning and teaching identified as good practice the well-organised academic support for learning that was particularly appropriate for employed part-time students. The exceptional academic and personal support for students, in particular for those studying part-time or those who are newly unemployed, is good practice.

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

30 Arrangements for staff development are noted in paragraphs 19 and 20. Attendance at continuing professional development activities offered by the University is restricted for some staff by timetabling considerations, especially for the Higher Education in Further Education Conference. It is recommended as desirable that the College continues to work to ensure that more staff are able to attend this conference.

### **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?**

31 The College has high quality accommodation for student learning. The learning resources used to support students to achieve the intended learning outcomes for their programmes are managed and reviewed by the College Executive. New programme approval procedures require that resource implications are addressed and assistant directors present annually proposed curriculum changes and related resource requirements to ensure that resource implications are met. High quality learning resources are available, where appropriate, in the University Centre, the main College Building or the University's new campus in the College's grounds. The National Student Survey (2011) returns and the student written submission indicate high levels of satisfaction with learning resources available on the three sites. Recently, the College has taken steps to respond to some issues over the availability of books and computers reported in the student submission.

32 The College effectively manages its specialist learning resources for programmes in engineering, sport and computing. There are well-defined procedures for maintaining and renewing these facilities. The facilities are of industrial standard, enabling students to produce work-related projects.

**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?**

33 The College is responsible for a range of materials relating to the marketing of the higher education portfolio in general, and materials specific to each programme. Materials include a prospectus, published jointly with the University, which covers higher education provision at the College and at the adjacent University site. A training guide, designed for employers, lists the professional courses at the College. The prospectus and detailed programme fact sheets for both university-level and professional programmes are available on the College's website. Electronic links provide access to University programme details, application forms and procedures. The College website also contains extensive information on welfare and support facilities, including counselling, clinics and careers. Students also have access to the University's website.

34 Programme and module handbooks follow a variety of formats, in common with programmes at the University and partner colleges delivering the same

programmes. Programme handbooks contain common headings and standard text with reference to the website location of the University academic regulations and procedures. Prospective students are not able to access the programme specifications prior to entry or from College sources but receive module specifications in module handbooks. The first Developmental engagement recognised the placement handbooks for students and employers as good practice. These continue to be particularly detailed and comprehensive.

35 Electronic sources of information available to students include a student intranet, and College and University virtual learning environments. The intranet is an effective channel of communication between the College and students, providing information on welfare, support, resources, participation and news. Students confirm that the site is effective in keeping them informed of College activities. A well-populated and well-used College virtual learning environment supports teaching and learning, with handouts, presentations and resources. Module handbooks and the virtual learning environment both provide intended learning outcomes for each module. A recently introduced policy document governs use of social media sites by staff and students. The policy is detailed and informative but not yet fully disseminated.

**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?**

36 The College works in collaboration with the University on the production of publicity information related to its programmes. This is coordinated centrally in the College through its marketing function. Extensive internal checking procedures ensure that information provided to students is accurate and complete. Well-documented procedures clearly identify responsibilities for the checking and authorisation of both the prospectus and marketing materials. The College is required to seek approval from the University for programme handbooks, and the process of checking at the College is thorough. Changes to programme titles have also to be approved through the University approvals procedures, for example the title of the Foundation Degree, FdSc Project Control, recently changed to FdSc Project Management.

37 The College has responded to the recommendations of the Developmental engagement by including more information on learning and teaching in its fact sheets. The College prospectus and website contain no information on entry requirements for prospective students whose first language is not English. The University site contains relevant information but there is no link to the section from the College website. FdA Early Years and FdA Working with Young People students who met with the team confirm that they received clear information on requiring Criminal Records Bureau checks. The College's 2012 prospectus and electronic application form both identify the need for the check, but the website entry for the two programmes does not mention the check or its cost in the 2012 prospectus, website or online application form.

38 The College obtains feedback on the completeness and accuracy of its public information from students, through module evaluations, questionnaires and meetings. Students confirm that programme and module handbooks, the student intranet and the virtual learning environment are informative and accurate. Students who met with the team stated that their experience of the programmes matches or exceeds expectations arising from the information provided prior to enrolment.

**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 engagements**

### **Developmental engagement in assessment**

39 The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in March 2010. It covered all the five colleges in the Partnership. It addressed the following lines of enquiry agreed with the colleges.

**Line of enquiry 1:** How do the colleges in the Partnership assure themselves that they are fulfilling the requirements of the awarding body in relation to assessment?

**Line of enquiry 2:** Are the requirements for feedback on assessed work being understood by all to support the achievement of the intended learning outcomes?

**Line of enquiry 3:** How does each college in the Partnership ensure the accuracy and consistency of information it publishes on assessment?

40 The Developmental engagement identified a number of areas of good practice applicable to the College. These include the collaborative arrangements between the College and its awarding body for the assessment process and for the internal approval processes for new programmes prior to consideration by the University. The assessment exercises used in the induction period help students to understand plagiarism. Where similar programmes are delivered across the colleges, the robust and secure assessment processes ensure consistency and comparability. Staff development in assessment is strengthened by the use of 'teaching squares'. There is an efficient system for returning assignments which supports student learning. The assessment details in the programme specifications and information sheets are especially clear and demonstrate the close collaboration between the College and University. The work-based learning handbooks for students and employers are particularly detailed and comprehensive, especially the information on assessment.

41 The team made eight desirable recommendations, all of which have been implemented by the College. Students, employers and work-based mentors now have access to external examiner reports. There are details in handbooks on the agreed policy for the reading of drafts of summative assessments. Written feedback now refers more to intended learning outcomes. These are now checked to ensure that they are consistent across all documents. Word-processed feedback is now provided on the feedback sheets, and the recommendation that there should be more annotations on student assignments has been achieved. Information on assessment and progression routes for Foundation Degrees is provided to students. Programme handbooks and module guides provide the information identified in the University's Threshold Quality Standards document.

## Developmental engagement in learning and teaching

42 The second Developmental engagement took place in March 2011. It covered all the five colleges in the Partnership. It addressed the following lines of enquiry agreed by the colleges.

**Line of enquiry 1:** How do the colleges ensure that the standards of teaching and learning on the higher education programmes meet the requirements of the awarding body?

**Line of enquiry 2:** How do the colleges ensure that higher education learners have access to a wide range of learning opportunities?

**Line of enquiry 3:** Do the colleges publish informative and accurate information about teaching and learning on their programmes?

43 This Developmental engagement identified four areas of good practice relating to the College. The Partnership's continuing professional development strategy and its provision of opportunities for higher education staff to gain postgraduate qualifications and/or industrial experience strengthens learning and teaching. The Partnership demonstrates the sharing of good practice in learning and teaching across many programmes, especially in the FdA Early Years programme. Academic support for learning is well organised and is particularly appropriate for part-time students. The College has extensive links with local industry and services, which serve to enhance students learning through the opportunity for work placements and the development of work-related skills.

44 The five desirable recommendations included producing an explicit and documented learning and teaching strategy aligned with the awarding body's 'Priorities of the Strategy' in its Threshold Quality and Standards. It was also recommended that College should ensure that all staff are more familiar with the application of the Academic Infrastructure, especially regarding any updates. The College should also ensure that all programmes build on existing practices and make greater use of the virtual learning environment. Learning and teaching strategies should include reference to making the best use of the higher education centre to enhance the learning opportunities for students. More general information should be provided on learning and teaching in pre-enrolment documentation and, in on-programme documentation, to make more reference to the range and types of learning and teaching in the College.

## D Foundation Degrees

45 The College offers nine part-time and two full-time Foundation Degrees in a wide range of programme areas including business, computing, counselling, early years, hospitality and journalism. They have been developed in line with the Higher Education Strategy and with the support of local employers.

46 All the Foundation Degrees recruit well and have high completion rates. Students are well supported and staff maintain strong links with employers. Most students are part-time and in employment. They make effective use of their work placements to complete projects which enable them to relate theory and practice. The College provides highly detailed and helpful documentation, in the form of placement handbooks, to support students and employers. All good practices and recommendations apply to the Foundation Degrees.

## E Conclusions and summary of judgements

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

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

- the role and activities of the Higher Education Coordinator support the processes in the revised system for the management of higher education (paragraph 11)
- the mapping of the Academic Infrastructure onto programmes and especially with reference to the professional body awards is thorough and detailed (paragraph 13)
- the contribution of the Staff Coach is highly supportive of the developmental activities for staff (paragraph 20)
- the academic and personal support for students, especially part-time and recently unemployed students, is exceptionally well organised and effective (paragraph 29)
- the handbooks for placement learning are particularly effective in providing detailed and comprehensive information for staff, students and employers (paragraph 34).

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

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

- monitor the effectiveness of the recently devolved management of the higher education provision to ensure that the new system is effective (paragraph 12)
- ensure that programme leaders' reports are more evaluative to enable them to be used to monitor the provision more effectively (paragraph 16)
- work with the University to disaggregate comments on good practices and recommendations in external examiner reports to enable the reports to be used to enhance the provision (paragraph 18)
- continue with efforts to enable more staff to attend the Higher Education in Further Education Conference provided by the University (paragraph 30).

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

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

53 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that, in the context of this Summative review, reliance **can** be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

<b>Darlington College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2012</b>						
<b>Good practice</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>Target date</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Success indicators</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
In the course of the Summative review the team identified the following areas of <b>good practice</b> that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the role and activities of the Higher Education Coordinator support the processes in the revised system for the management of higher education (paragraph 11)</li> </ul>	Continue to support all higher education staff in teaching, learning and assessment activities, curriculum development work and partnership arrangements with Teesside University and colleges	Ongoing, and review every three months with line manager	Higher Education Coordinator	Enhanced higher education ethos, maintenance of high academic standards, effective continued professional development, informative meetings at team level, and through Higher Education Forum and Higher Education Management Group	Director of Curriculum	Minutes of meetings, attendance at higher education specific continued professional development events, programme development, delivery outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the mapping of the Academic Infrastructure onto programmes and especially with reference to the professional body</li> </ul>	Promote further understanding of the links between Academic Infrastructure and higher education programmes,	Ongoing and review every three months with line manager	Higher Education Coordinator	Successful approval, re-approval and periodic review events with Teesside University	Director of Curriculum	Records from programme approval, re-approval and periodic review events with Teesside

awards is thorough and detailed (paragraph 13)	support staff through continued professional development individual and team meetings, and with curriculum development and validation events			Positive external examiner feedback on academic standard for all higher education programmes		University  Minutes from Higher Education Business Partnership Coordinators meetings  External examiner reports  Student feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the contribution of the Staff Coach is highly supportive of the developmental activities for staff (paragraph 20)</li> </ul>	<p>Staff Coach to continue to work with staff who are both established in teaching higher education and also those who are new to teaching higher education</p> <p>Work towards appointing an additional staff coach</p>	Ongoing and review every six months with line manager	Staff Coach	The standard of teaching will be good or better in higher education and best practice will be shared; independent learning of students to be further encouraged	Director of Curriculum	Observation of Teaching and Learning grade profiles and feedback; continuing professional development records; Best Practice Sharing Events; student feedback on quality of teaching, learning and assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the academic and personal support for students, especially part-time and recently unemployed</li> </ul>	<p>Continue to fully support all students both academically and personally</p> <p>Ensure all staff are knowledgeable about</p>	Ongoing, and review every six months with line manager	Assistant Directors and Key Managers	<p>Positive student feedback</p> <p>Improved retention, progression and success outcomes</p>	Director of Curriculum	<p>National Student Survey Results</p> <p>Student comments/ complaints</p>

students, is exceptionally well organised and effective (paragraph 29)	university regulations, and are able to support students effectively					Retention, success and progression data  Employer feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the handbooks for placement learning provide detailed and comprehensive information for staff, students and employers (paragraph 34)</li> </ul>	Maintain high standard of information supplied to students and employers involved in work placements	Ongoing, and review every three months with line manager	Assistant Directors	<p>Positive feedback from students and employers involved in work placement provision</p> <p>Threshold Quality and Standards requirement from Teesside University will be met/exceeded</p>	Director of Curriculum	<p>National Student Survey Results.</p> <p>Student and employers feedback</p> <p>Comments/ complaints</p> <p>Records from programme approval, re-approval and periodic review events with Teesside University</p>
<b>Desirable</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>Target date</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Success indicators</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
The team considers that it is <b>desirable</b> for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>monitor the effectiveness of the recently devolved management of the higher</li> </ul>	Review and evaluate College structure and higher education management arrangements	November 2012	<p>Higher Education Coordinator</p> <p>Assistant Directors</p>	Effective higher education provision across all curriculum areas; high recruitment,	College Executive	<p>Executive Meeting Minutes</p> <p>Human Resources Records</p>

<p>education provision to ensure that the new system is effective (paragraph 12)</p>	<p>Consult with key managers, staff and students to ensure it is fit for purpose</p>		<p>Director of Curriculum</p>	<p>retention, success and progression data</p> <p>Positive student, employer and staff feedback</p>		<p>Organisation Structure Charts</p> <p>National Student Survey Results</p> <p>Student comments/ complaints</p> <p>Retention, success and progression data</p> <p>Staff comments</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensure that programme leaders' reports are more evaluative to enable them to be used to monitor the provision more effectively (paragraph 16)</li> </ul>	<p>Provide continued professional development on writing more reflective and evaluative Programme Leader Report</p> <p>Clarify evidence required to substantiate judgements made about the quality of provision</p>	<p>October 2012</p>	<p>Higher Education Coordinator</p>	<p>Evaluative and evidenced Programme Leader reports to Assistant Directors to complete a Quality Improvement Plan; detailed annual report for Teesside University</p>	<p>Director of Curriculum</p>	<p>Annual Report</p> <p>Programme Leader Reports</p> <p>Assistant Directors' improvement Plans</p> <p>Continued professional development records</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>work with the University to disaggregate comments on good practices and</li> </ul>	<p>Discuss with Higher Education Business Partnership colleges and Teesside University ways in which more focused</p>	<p>August 2013</p>	<p>Director of Curriculum</p>	<p>College specific feedback from external examiner reports</p>	<p>Higher Education Management Group; Higher Education Business Partnership</p>	<p>External examiner reports</p> <p>Higher Education Business Partnership;</p>

<p>recommendations in external examiner reports to enable the reports to be used to enhance the provision (paragraph 18)</p>	<p>feedback can be gleaned from external examiners' reports</p> <p>Teesside University to work with external examiners to set out requirements for the reports</p>					<p>Coordinators' Minutes</p> <p>Teesside University information</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>continue with efforts to enable more staff to attend the Higher Education in Further Education Conference provided by the University (paragraph 30).</li> </ul>	<p>Encourage and support all higher education teaching staff to attend relevant continued professional development at both the College and Teesside University</p>	<p>August 2013</p>	<p>Higher Education Coordinator</p> <p>Staff Development &amp; Equalities Manager</p>	<p>Increased attendance by staff at continued professional development events</p>	<p>Director of Curriculum</p>	<p>Continued professional development records</p> <p>Staff appraisal records</p> <p>(6 July 2012 - 26 staff attended the Higher Education Conference at Teesside University - a significant increase on the previous year)</p>

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