



# **Integrated quality and enhancement review**

**Summative review**

**Farnborough College of Technology**

**January 2012**

**SR 029/12**

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2012

ISBN 978 1 84979 508 1

All QAA's publications are available on our website [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)

Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

## **Preface**

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

## **Purpose of IQER**

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

## **The IQER process**

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

## **Developmental engagement**

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

The main elements of a Developmental engagement are:

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

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

## Summative review

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

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

## Evidence

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

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

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

- *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (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 Farnborough College of Technology carried out in January 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 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 Higher Education Working Group is a very effective forum for dealing with a range of standards-related matters, disseminating good practice, and maintaining awareness of external developments
- the annual programme self-assessment reports and quality improvement plans are well structured, provide rigorous evaluation of a wide range of data, and give clear evidence of actions taken in response to external examiner reports
- the Internal Verification Working Group and the system of quality reviews of assessment enable a clear overview of assessment processes, sustaining the rigour of assessment and the effectiveness of feedback to students
- the processes for internal and external validation ensure a thorough review of all aspects of proposed new programmes and that developments are rigorously underpinned by the Academic Infrastructure
- students are provided with extensive and integrated support on academic and pastoral matters from a range of sources including personal tutors, the Student Services Team, and the Skills Development Centre
- there is a comprehensive suite of handbooks available for students and employers, whose contents are rigorously controlled and which provide very clear and supportive guidance and links to overall policies and procedures.

### 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:

- actively pursue plans to increase utilisation of staff development opportunities provided by the University of Surrey
- further develop the e-learning strategy and its implementation to ensure more effective use of the virtual learning environment across programmes
- continue current arrangements for planning and monitoring the suitability of resources and review how students are kept fully aware of the resources on offer
- introduce measures to ensure greater consistency of format, accuracy and currency of the information provided in course leaflets.

## 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 Farnborough College of Technology (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, the quality of learning opportunities available to students and the accuracy and completeness of public information. The review applies to programmes which the College delivers on behalf of the University of Surrey (the University). The review was carried out by Ms Collette Coleman, Dr Heather Barrett-Mold, Mr Chris Davies (reviewers), and Dr Gordon Edwards (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 the University of Surrey, and meetings with staff, students and employers. There had been one previous Developmental engagement in assessment. 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 As part of its offering, the College provides 22 Foundation Degrees. These are included in the list below and are discussed in detail in Section D.

4 The College is a medium sized 'mixed economy' general further and higher education college. Programmes are delivered on the main site in the town of Farnborough and at the Aldershot College. The College has a long history of providing higher level technical education, tracing its roots back to 1913 when it was the forerunner of the Royal Aircraft Establishment Technical School. The College is strategically focused upon specifically vocational provision and seeks to enable students to progress from lower levels of vocational study onto the highest level they can achieve. The College serves the areas of Farnborough, Aldershot and the surrounding towns and villages of the Blackwater Valley. Although these areas experience comparatively low levels of unemployment, there are significant pockets of deprivation in the locality. In addition to the significant urban areas served by the College, learners are also drawn from rural communities across mid and North Hampshire and from the counties of Surrey and Berkshire. The College has a strong commitment to widening participation and the majority of higher education students are from non-traditional backgrounds and under-represented groups. The College is an accredited institution of the University of Surrey, which provides the College with delegated powers to validate undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes of study leading to awards of the University. The following higher education programmes are currently offered by the College in conjunction with the University. A total of 793.5 full-time equivalent students are currently studying on these programmes. Full-time equivalent student numbers on each programme are indicated in parentheses.

### University of Surrey

- FdSc Complementary Therapies (19.6)
- FdA Early Years: Childcare and Education (34)
- FdA Early Years: Childcare and Education (sector endorsed) (52)
- BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies (top-up) (16)
- BA (Hons) Early Years Practice (top-up) (22)
- FdA Public Services (uniformed) (25)

## Integrated quality and enhancement review

- FdA Social Care (4)
- FdSc Sport Performance and Personal Training (19.3)
- BSc (Hons) Sport Science (Exercise and Health Management) (43)
- FdA Salon and Spa Management (7)
- FdA Hospitality Management (21)
- FdA Business Management (51.6)
- BA (Hons) Business Management (top-up) (20.3)
- BA (Hons) Psychology and Marketing (17)
- BSc (Hons) Computing (50)
- BSc (Hons) Computing with Gaming (incorporated above)
- BSc (Hons) Computing with Networking (incorporated above)
- BSc (Hons) Software Engineering (incorporated above)
- FdSc Computing (26.3)
- FdA Tourism and Event Management (2)
- Professional Graduate Diploma Human Resource Management (17.6)
- Certificate in Education - Lifelong Learning (74)
- Professional Graduate Certificate in Education - Lifelong Learning (incorporated above)
- BA (Hons) Education (Early Years) (top-up) (5)
- BA (Hons) Education (Learning Support) (top-up) (24)
- BA (Hons) Education (Lifelong Learning) (top-up) (13)
- FdA Education (Lifelong Learning) (14)
- FdA Learning Support (29)
- BSc (Hons) Aeronautical Engineering (top-up) (13.6)
- FdEng Aeronautical Engineering (30.3)
- FdEng Motorsport Engineering (1)
- FdEng Engineering (10.3)
- BSc (Hons) Media Production (66.97)
- BSc (Hons) Media Production (Radio and TV Production) (top-up) (incorporated above)
- BSc (Hons) Media Production (Film and TV Production) (top-up) (incorporated above)
- BSc (Hons) Media Production (Music Production) (top-up) (incorporated above)
- BSc (Hons) Media Production (Graphic Design, Animation and Interactive Media) (top-up) (incorporated above)
- BSc (Hons) Media Production (Studio Engineering and Media Technology) (top-up) (incorporated above)
- BA (Hons) Media Production (Performance) (top-up) (incorporated above)
- BA (Hons) Media Production (Photography) (top-up) (incorporated above)
- FdSc Film and TV Production (16)
- FdSc Radio and TV Production (24)
- FdSc in Graphic Design, Animation and Interactive Media (25)
- FdSc Music Production (6)
- FdA Theatre, Dance and Film Acting (21)
- FdA Photography (26)

## Partnership agreements with the awarding body

5 In 2002 the College sought and was granted the status of 'accredited institution' of the University. This affords the College devolved powers to devise, validate and review undergraduate and postgraduate programmes of taught higher education under the validating authority of the University. Details of the College's accredited status and delegated



powers are set out in the original Instrument of Accreditation from 2002 and the more recent Statement of Agreement agreed in 2009. In brief, the Statement of Agreement sets out the following College duties and responsibilities:

- academic design of programmes
- seeking approval from professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs)
- periodic and interim review of programmes
- approval and modification of curriculum and assessment changes
- supplying students with programme information
- maintenance of programme documentation
- promotion of programmes to students and employers
- course management and monitoring
- teaching of programmes
- conduct of exams and assessment
- making responses to external examiner recommendations
- providing transcripts for students
- registration of students
- provision for the welfare of students.

## **Recent developments in higher education at the College**

6 In the last five years the College has developed a significant number of new degree programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate level. New Foundation Degrees have been developed in Salon & Spa Management, Hospitality Management, Public Services (uniformed), Performing Arts, Social Care, Complementary/Holistic Therapies, and a Postgraduate Diploma in Human Resource Management. In the last year an accelerated two-year honours degree in Psychology and Marketing has been developed and recruited its first cohort in September 2011.

7 A further two-year fast track BSc (Hons) Criminology and Psychology is planned for delivery from 2012 and additional new degree developments are underway in Accountancy, Design Engineering, Mechatronics, Studio Engineering & Media Technology, and Health & Social Care.

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

8 Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a written submission to the team. This was prepared and made available before the visit and proved very useful to the team. It was produced following a focus group meeting with a group of students from a wide range of courses at the College which was facilitated by an external consultant, who recorded the discussions and produced a record of the outcomes. The draft record was sent back to the student group to provide amendments and comments on accuracy and completeness. Representative groups of full-time and part-time students met the team during the visit. Students were also briefed by the review coordinator at the preparatory meeting.

## **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?**

9 The College has an integrated approach to the management of higher education and further education. It takes an active role in setting the strategic direction for higher education and monitoring delivery through the Curriculum and Standards Committee. Its membership includes two members from the University of Surrey and a higher education student. The College's higher education programmes are delivered in six schools, each managed by a head of school with responsibility for the operation of academic standards, supported by a number of programme managers. Each programme has a programme leader managed by the relevant programme manager. Overall management responsibility for higher education lies with the Vice Principal for Quality & Higher Education.

10 The College committee structure consists of an Academic Standards Committee reporting to the Academic Board, which then reports to the Corporation Board of Governors. This structure is underpinned by the Corporation Curriculum and Standards Committee and a Higher Education Working Group.

11 The Higher Education Working Group reports to the Academic Standards Committee and focuses upon operational matters involved in raising standards and ensuring consistency; its membership includes all heads of school. Its work has included reviewing how the College addresses current *Code of practice* expectations, monitoring new developments in this area, standardisation of assessment feedback, implementation of the Developmental engagement action plan, and improving management of the application process. The work of the group to proactively monitor developments around the new UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code), disseminate these internally and compile action plans in relation to this is particularly noteworthy. Overall, this working group is an effective forum for dealing with a range of standards-related matters, disseminating good practice, and maintaining awareness of external developments, and constitutes good practice.

12 The College has an annual cycle of monitoring and reporting with a strong culture of critical self-evaluation underpinned by data. The key quality assurance process is the annual self-assessment report and quality improvement plan, which are undertaken at programme level. The teaching team, led by the programme manager, is responsible for completing these documents, which are reviewed by heads of school three times a year. The self-assessment reports engage with a range of data including student and employer feedback, and are well structured to reflect on academic standards and quality of learning opportunities. For example, there is clear evidence in 2011-12 of evaluation of assessment feedback quality and timeliness, resulting in clear actions to enhance feedback content in some areas and improve timeliness. The reports also give clear evidence of actions taken in response to external examiner reports. Overall, the structure, coverage and rigour with which the annual self-assessment reports and quality improvement plans are produced and acted upon constitutes good practice.

13 Under the terms of its partnership agreement, the College's responsibilities cover all aspects of assessment design together with the conduct of examinations and assessments.

There is a range of evidence to indicate that the internal verification of assessment and moderation of student work ensures fair and transparent marking. As part of this, the operation of the cross-college Internal Verification Working Group and the system of assessment quality reviews enable a clear overview of these aspects of the provision and dissemination of good practices. This strongly sustains the rigour of marking and moderation processes and is good practice.

14 External examiners are appointed by the University of Surrey who provide them with a broad induction to their role. The College orientates external examiners at programme level and they provide annual reports to the College using the University of Surrey report template. Programme teams respond to external examiner comments within their self-assessment reports, with the relevant extracts then being sent to the external examiner. Recommendations arising are monitored and implemented through the quality improvement plan, and there is clear evidence that actions resulting from external examiner reports are addressed. The College Academic Registrar has overall responsibility for the operation of examination boards, which are organised within each school and report decisions to the College Examination Board. External examiner reports confirm the effectiveness of exam board processes and the standards of awards.

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

15 In all programmes the College has sought to align its assessment practices with the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*, and in 2010 all programme teams audited their assessment practices in relation to key precepts in the *Code of practice*. This highlighted areas of good practice and areas for development. Actions arising have fed into the annual review process. Tutors also use the FHEQ to ensure learning outcomes are set appropriately for the level of study and that assessments are clearly designed to test these outcomes.

16 Use of the Academic Infrastructure is clearly evident in both internal and external validation processes, and the College has mapped the majority of its processes to relevant sections of the *Code of practice*. Validation documentation including programme specifications reflect clear and proactive engagement with the FHEQ, subject benchmark statements, precepts of the *Code of practice*, and the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*. The thoroughness and understanding with which this is addressed in validation is good practice. When reviewing existing programmes, staff also make good use of both the relevant subject benchmark statements and, where appropriate, the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*, to ensure a clear focus on threshold standards. Overall, staff demonstrate a clear understanding and awareness of the Academic Infrastructure.

### **How does the College assure itself that it is fulfilling its obligations to ensure that the standards of higher education provision meet the requirements of awarding bodies?**

17 The College has delegated responsibility for both internal and external validation of programmes. The processes are clearly outlined in the Quality Assurance Manual. The College utilises the quality assurance processes and procedures provided by the University of Surrey, together with its own Quality Assurance Manual, which incorporates and interprets these procedures. These are clearly communicated to staff and students through the intranet and College Handbook for Higher Education.

18 The College's annual review processes, and the resulting self-assessment reports and quality improvement plans, assure it of the quality and standards of its provision. Reports feed into an annual review report which is considered by the Academic Standards

Committee, which has overall responsibility for standards. The Vice Principal for Quality & Higher Education is also responsible for completing an annual review report to the University, which summarises and evaluates higher education provision and is informed by the individual self-assessment reports. The University consistently praises the quality of this report and recommends it as good practice to other associate institutions. Feedback from the University is considered at the Academic Standards Committee. From the 2010-11 academic year, an action plan will be required by the University as part of the annual review report. The Higher Education Working Group focuses upon a variety of standards-related matters and is a key forum for sharing good practice and assuring the College that it is meeting University requirements.

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

19 The College provides a range of staff development opportunities to support achievement of academic standards in higher education and the Higher Education Working Group is involved in the planning of staff development days. The College provided a training day for all higher education staff in September 2010 to carry out an audit of assessment practice, and includes regular sessions for higher education staff on staff development days. All teaching staff are required to acquire qualified teacher status and carry out continuing professional development. Staff development requirements are identified through an annual appraisal process, and the effectiveness of staff development is evaluated through the self-assessment reviews and quality improvement plans within programmes.

20 The College has a Research Committee and staff can apply for funding to undertake scholarly activity in specialist areas to improve teaching and learning in higher education. A number of higher education staff are completing higher level qualifications. Some staff are external examiners for other institutions or take on membership of external validation panels. The University of Surrey provides staff development opportunities but these are under-utilised by College staff. This has been identified by the College as an action for the coming year, and it is desirable that plans are actively pursued to increase utilisation of staff development opportunities provided by the University.

**The team concludes that it has confidence in the College's management of its responsibilities as set out in its partnership agreement 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 organisational structure and responsibilities for managing the quality of learning opportunities in the College are the same as outlined in paragraphs 9 to 13.

### **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 status of the College as an accredited institution of the University of Surrey gives the College devolved powers to devise, validate and review undergraduate and

postgraduate programmes of taught higher education. There is a clear allocation of responsibilities between the College and the University. In its annual review report the College reports to the University on its quality assurance framework and the procedures and processes for assuring quality. The University considers these aspects to be of a high standard and appropriate to the maintenance of higher education quality. As part of programme approval, there is a rigorous internal validation process which includes a review of all aspects of proposed developments, including learning opportunities, prior to a full validation event. External specialists are used in the review of curriculum development proposals during internal validation. This rigorous internal validation process prior to the full validation event is good practice.

23 The Higher Education Working Group meets regularly, frequently sharing issues, good practice and new developments. It has an effective impact on the current and proposed provision and helps to support a consistency of approach to learning opportunities across the College. There is a clear strategic direction, in the annual self-assessment reports, which focuses on providing appropriate learning opportunities to support the success of students. The quality improvement plan is reviewed three times a year by the programme managers, and the delivery of actions is monitored by heads of school and the senior management team.

24 There are clear examples of the use of accreditation of prior learning which have allowed students to change from one organisation to another and use previously obtained credits to progress their learning with maximum efficiency.

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

25 The College seeks to inform all aspects of its management of learning opportunities with the expectations in the *Code of practice* and has mapped its provision against it. The internal validation process of any new programme development proposal ensures that the relevant elements of the *Code of practice*, relating to learning opportunities, are addressed. This is good practice. The Higher Education Working Group also considers developments in guidance provided by the Academic Infrastructure and is currently considering the Quality Code.

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

26 The teaching and learning strategy states that high quality teaching and learning are central, both to the experience of students at the College and to sustaining high levels of student success. The College is committed to the delivery and facilitation of a consistently excellent learning experience for all students. The core aims are about quality, accessibility, and the promotion of equality and diversity. This strategy is supported in part through a teaching observation scheme which has an annual cycle and which contributes to the identification of staff development needs. Although the observation scheme is cross-college, observations are made within the higher education context. Staff who are new to teaching at this level are supported by a mentoring scheme and by being incorporated into an experienced team. There is a peer observation process which gives new staff the opportunity to observe others and a developmental observation takes place in the first week. Support is also provided for writing and marking assignments.

27 Students are positive about their programmes and consider that the teaching quality is good. They consider their teachers to have good current understanding of the relevant academic discipline and relevant experience with many continuing to practise part-time in their own industry. In particular those who have progressed from further education feel

there is a definite intellectual progression, and understand and enjoy their progress within their profession.

28 The virtual learning environment was changed in July 2011 and staff and students have received training on its use. A working party is reviewing options and coordinating developments in this area. Both staff and students prefer the new virtual environment; it is being used and is valued. The current e-learning strategy for use of the virtual learning environment contains broad statements but there are no minimum standards set for the use or population of the virtual learning environment. Some programmes make far less use of it than others. One of the features available to students is that of identification of plagiarism software but some students are unaware of this facility. With the basic structure and functioning of the new virtual learning environment having been established, the working party has plans to increase use of the interactive teaching and learning elements and further develop the e-learning strategy by setting specific targets and minimum expected contents across College programmes. It is desirable that the e-learning strategy and its implementation is further developed in this way to ensure its more effective use and the spreading of good practice across programmes.

29 Students are able to take up issues relating to learning opportunities directly with their tutors, who respond quickly. Students also provide written feedback after induction, on completion of modules, and at the end of their programme. The views of students are also obtained through participation in course meetings, in the whole College Higher Education Forum, and representation on the Corporation Board. In addition, groups of students meet with all external panels for revalidation and review, which provides another valuable source of student opinion. The use of student evaluations is enhanced by the use of a national evaluation scheme, which provides a detailed analysis of data and the ability to benchmark the views of students. Students have expressed the need to prevent assignment deadlines bunching and tutors have responded positively. Feedback to students about actions taken is generally provided by the posting of minutes on notice boards.

30 There is good understanding among students of the assessment process and assessments are clearly explained. Students agree that assignments are stimulating and interesting, and with an appropriate level of challenge. Most feedback is returned within the 20 working days specified by the College and the quality of feedback continues to improve through the use of a new feedback form, which has recently been amended.

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

31 The College focuses on the delivery of programmes to relatively small groups of students. There are typically 15 to 30 students in a cohort which results in excellent individual support. All students are allocated a personal tutor and for most students regular tutorials are scheduled. Part-time students may have tutorial provision provided remotely although for some this provision is not present. Students also benefit from the use of the College's personal development planning system, which enables them to focus both on the development of their skills and on actions to be taken to enhance their learning.

32 Students' specific support needs on academic or pastoral matters can be identified through routine initial assessment or at any other point by staff or students themselves. Students use the services of the College's Skills Development Centre which provides advice and support in relation to specific learning difficulties, and the development of study skills and academic writing. The Student Services Team provides a core team for integrated 'one stop' student support alongside specialist advisers. The range of services includes counselling, help in finding accommodation, careers advice, health advice, and a chaplain. Financial assistance is provided through the finance team at the College. Students highly

value the level of support that they are given on academic and pastoral matters, and the overall integrated approach, including the 'one stop' philosophy, is good practice.

33 Relevant handbooks are provided to students during induction. The College's higher education handbook is comprehensive; it is available as hard copy and also on the College intranet. It includes academic regulations, policies and procedures. Individual programme handbooks for students are well structured and informative. In addition there are dissertation handbooks and handbooks for work placements, mentors and employers. Overall, this constitutes a comprehensive suite of handbooks which provides very clear, supportive and integrated guidance for all parties, and is good practice.

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

34 All teachers at the College are required to have or acquire qualified teacher status to maintain their fitness to practice and to carry out continuing professional development. This maintenance of currency advantages students through the standard of teaching as well as industrial links. Individual staff development needs are identified through the staff appraisal system but can also be identified subsequently at any time, for example through validation events or annual programme monitoring and quality improvement plans. General issues for groups of staff are also identified, and the College holds three staff development days internally with good opportunities for these to include higher education options such as the whole day session for all higher education staff on assessment.

35 The College, through the Research Committee, supports higher education teaching staff to examine ways to improve teaching and learning on higher education programmes. There are examples of collaborative work with teaching staff in other higher education institutions. All recipients of research funding are required to produce particular research outcomes, including the publication of their findings where appropriate.

### **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?**

36 There is no overarching strategy specifically for the management of higher education resources, although the Vice Principal for Quality & Higher Education chairs the teaching and learning resources committee, which includes provision for higher education. Staff are experienced in the delivery of higher education. The College operates a case-loading system for determining teaching hours. This means that academic schools and the staff within them are given additional time for preparation and scholarly activity when they are involved in the delivery of higher education programmes.

37 The identification of resource requirements comes from within schools and is then taken through the management structure as budgets are built. There is also an opportunity to bid for capital funding. In their written submission of November 2011, many students indicated the overall resources to be good, but there are also some misgivings expressed. These relate to opening times of the learning resource centre for part-time students, the currency of some book stock, access to journals, IT availability, and the standard of some specialist equipment. Similar sentiments were expressed by students who met the team on the visit. However, evidence presented by the College on its resource management processes indicates clear strategies for book purchase and IT provision, various planning and monitoring arrangements for overall resource usage, and a number of actions in response to student comments raised in 2010-11. The views of students may therefore be partly historical in nature and the College accepts the need to ensure all students are always

fully aware of the range of resources on offer so that their perceptions and expectations are accurate. It is desirable for the College to continue its current arrangements for planning and monitoring the suitability of resources and review how students are kept fully aware of the resources on offer.

38 Work placements or work-based learning are features of many programmes. The links with employers are effective. On some programmes the students are required to find their own placements, but students know that if they have difficulty their tutors will help them by suggesting one of their existing links. Employers will often provide a mentoring role within the workplace and will, on some programmes, be asked to contribute to assessment by commenting on a student's employability skills. Employer handbooks, briefings and ongoing input from academic staff support employers in these roles.

**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?**

39 The College is responsible for all programme promotion and information and for ensuring that promotional activities accord with the University's requirements. It publishes a full range of information including a prospectus, course leaflets, and student and employer handbooks.

40 The College's prospectus and website provide basic details of all higher education programmes and signposts users to further sources of information. Students also receive information during interviews, open evenings and taster days. Nearly all students agree that the information they receive gives them a good understanding of what to expect.

41 At enrolment students receive and sign for the College Handbook for Higher Education. It is comprehensive and offers useful advice and guidance. All programmes have a course handbook. These are user friendly and contain a range of useful information. Effective written guidance is provided to workplace mentors and supervisors in programmes which include a practice element and for employers providing placements.

42 Public information is consistent with the strategic intent of the College to widening participation. Much advice is given face-to-face and there is a dedicated staff member whose responsibility it is to encourage progression from further to higher education. Students with disabilities can receive a large font style for the prospectus and an audio link, and the website signposts a designated member of staff.

#### **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?**

43 There are clear and well understood lines of responsibility for the production of public information. Management responsibility for verifying the accuracy and completeness of college-level publications rests with the Vice Principal for Quality & Higher Education.



Heads of School control the information provided on the College intranet related to their own schools.

44 Information in the prospectus is prepared by the academic schools and the Handbook for Higher Education is drafted by the Registrar. These are approved by the Vice Principal for Quality & Higher Education. As a requirement of the programme validation process, a draft course handbook is prepared by the appropriate programme manager and submitted for scrutiny and feedback by an external panel. Placement and dissertation handbooks are prepared by course teams for review and validation events and agreed by the Vice Principal for Quality & Higher Education, acting as Chair of the Validation Panel. These arrangements result in rigorous control of contents.

45 Currently, course information leaflets are not addressed in the validation processes and are not listed by the College in the self-evaluation as part of its public information portfolio. Leaflets are updated annually and checked by heads of schools. These are important documents for prospective students but they do not follow a common format, and key information present in some leaflets is not present or inadequately summarised in others. Examples include information on accreditation of prior learning, vacation information in fast-track programmes, and descriptions of academic levels in higher education, which are out of date and inconsistent with the latest version of the FHEQ. It is desirable that measures are introduced to ensure greater consistency of format, accuracy and currency of information provided in course leaflets.

46 In the action plan from the Developmental engagement, the College undertook to review its policies in order to provide students with consistent access to electronic materials. This has resulted in all handbooks being available on the intranet and the new virtual learning environment being used for some learning materials. This is beginning to yield benefits. However, no minimum standards or procedures for population of the virtual environment, and control of the accuracy and completeness of the associated information, have yet been set. It is desirable that these developments take place to ensure the more effective dissemination and control of information on the virtual learning environment.

**The team considers that reliance can be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.**

## **C Summary of findings from the Developmental engagement in assessment**

47 The Developmental engagement is assessment took place in January 2011. The lines of enquiry reflected a broad range of assessment topics.

**Line of enquiry 1:** How does the College ensure that there are transparent, rigorous and fair mechanisms for marking and moderating work?

**Line of enquiry 2:** Does the quality of feedback to students promote learning?

**Line of enquiry 3:** Is the assessment information that is provided to students and others clear and accurate?

48 A total of 10 good practices were identified in the engagement. These included strategies for moderation of student work, the operation of the internal verification process,

the quality and consistency of written feedback to students, the use of personal development planning processes, and the assessment guidance in the suite of handbooks. A number of areas were identified where it was considered desirable for the College to take action to further enhance the provision. These included the more explicit use of learning outcomes in marking and feedback, ensuring timely feedback in all assessments, and review of the system for providing students with more consistent access to electronic materials related to assessment.

## D Foundation Degrees

49 The College offers the following Foundation Degrees as part of its provision:

- FdSc Complementary Therapies
- FdA Early Years: Childcare and Education
- FdA Early Years: Childcare and Education (sector endorsed)
- FdA Public Services (uniformed)
- FdA Social Care
- FdSc Sport Performance and Personal Training
- FdA Salon and Spa Management
- FdA Hospitality Management
- FdA Business Management
- FdSc Computing
- FdA Tourism and Event Management
- FdA Education (Lifelong Learning)
- FdA Learning Support
- FdEng Aeronautical Engineering
- FdEng Motorsport Engineering
- FdEng Engineering
- FdSc Film and TV Production
- FdSc Radio and TV Production
- FdSc in Graphic Design, Animation and Interactive Media
- FdSc Music Production
- FdA Theatre, Dance and Film Acting
- FdA Photography

50 All conclusions in Section E apply to the whole provision, including Foundation Degrees.

## E Conclusions and summary of judgements

51 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, students and employers and scrutiny of evidence provided by the College and its awarding body, the University of Surrey.

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

- the Higher Education Working Group is a very effective forum for dealing with a range of standards-related matters, disseminating good practice and maintaining awareness of external developments (paragraph 11)

- the annual programme self-assessment reports and quality improvement plans are well structured, provide rigorous evaluation of a wide range of data, and give clear evidence of actions taken in response to external examiner reports (paragraph 12)
- the Internal Verification Working Group and the system of quality reviews of assessment enable a clear overview of assessment processes, sustaining the rigour of assessment and the effectiveness of feedback to students (paragraph 13)
- the processes for internal and external validation ensure a thorough review of all aspects of proposed new programmes and that developments are rigorously underpinned by the Academic Infrastructure (paragraphs 16, 22 and 25)
- students are provided with extensive and integrated support on academic and pastoral matters from a range of sources including personal tutors, the Student Services Team and the Skills Development Centre (paragraphs 31 and 32)
- there is a comprehensive suite of handbooks available for students and employers, whose contents are rigorously controlled and which provide very clear and supportive guidance and links to overall policies and procedures (paragraphs 33, 41 and 44).

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

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

- actively pursue plans to increase utilisation of staff development opportunities provided by the University of Surrey (paragraph 20)
- further develop the e-learning strategy and its implementation to ensure more effective use of the virtual learning environment across programmes (paragraphs 28 and 46)
- continue current arrangements for planning and monitoring the suitability of resources and review how students are kept fully aware of the resources on offer (paragraph 37)
- introduce measures to ensure greater consistency of format, accuracy and currency of the information provided in course leaflets (paragraph 45).

55 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.

56 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.

57 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 programme it delivers.

Farnborough College of Technology action plan relating to the Summative review: January 2012						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
In the course of the Summative review the team identified the following areas of <b>good practice</b> that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the Higher Education Working Group is a very effective forum for dealing with a range of standards-related matters, disseminating good practice and maintaining awareness of external developments (paragraph 11)</li> </ul>	<p>Review the standing agenda items to include the higher education developments update</p> <p>Review terms of reference and membership of the Higher Education Working Group to maintain active participation and dissemination of information</p>	<p>June 2012</p> <p>September 2012</p>	<p>Academic Registrar</p> <p>Vice Principal (Quality &amp; Higher Education)</p> <p>Higher education coordinator</p>	<p>Timely responses to higher education initiatives</p> <p>Continued standardisation and consistency of approach to higher education initiatives across all schools</p>	<p>Academic Standards Committee</p>	<p>Higher education report to Academic Standards Committee</p> <p>Annual Review Report to the University of Surrey</p> <p>Programme self-assessment report/quality improvement plans</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the annual programme self-assessment reports and quality improvement plans are well</li> </ul>	<p>Review self-assessment report/quality improvement plan format and criteria to align with new QAA review</p>	<p>October 2012</p>	<p>Vice Principal (Quality &amp; Higher Education)</p>	<p>Quality assurance and enhancement review of self-assessment report/quality improvement plan meets sector</p>	<p>Academic Standards Committee</p>	<p>Course Results Review Meetings</p> <p>Self-assessment report/quality improvement plan</p>

structured, provide rigorous evaluation of a wide range of data, and give clear evidence of actions taken in response to external examiner reports (paragraph 12)	methodology Investigate the feasibility of central population of data for self-assessment report/quality improvement plan  Review the quality assurance audit process for self-assessment report/quality improvement plan			requirements  Standardised reporting of data and actions in self-assessment report/quality improvement plan		Higher education Working Party  Annual Review Report to the University of Surrey
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the Internal Verification Working Group and the system of quality reviews of assessment enable a clear overview of assessment processes, sustaining the rigour of assessment and the effectiveness of feedback to students (paragraph 13)</li> </ul>	Review the Internal Verification Working Group practice in relation to higher education programmes  Review the Quality Review of Assessment and Feedback process	September 2012	Chair of Internal Verification Working Group	Feedback within 20 working days  Quality of assessment feedback  Student progression and improvement through timely and high quality feedback	Vice Principal (Quality & Higher Education)	Student feedback (questionnaires, higher education forum)  Boards of Examiners (student achievement)  Academic Standards Committee report
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the processes for internal and external</li> </ul>	Update quality manual to reflect University of Surrey requirements	September 2012	Academic Registrar	Successful validations and reviews	Chair of Validation Panels	External validation and review

validation ensure a thorough review of all aspects of proposed new programmes and that developments are rigorously underpinned by the Academic Infrastructure (paragraphs 16, 22 and 25)	and Quality Code Integrate Expert Reader process into Internal Validation timetable  Ensure appointment of experienced validation panel members	September 2012  June 2012	Academic Registrar  Academic Registrar		Vice Principal (Quality & Higher Education)	Academic Standards Committee  Annual Review Report to the University of Surrey
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>students are provided with extensive and integrated support on academic and pastoral matters from a range of sources including personal tutors, the Student Services Team and the Skills Development Centre (paragraphs 31 and 32)</li> </ul>	Investigate the feasibility of implementing e-Personal Development Portfolios  Update higher education tutorial programme  Ensure staff and student awareness of the range of support provided by the Skills Development Centre and Student Services Team	September 2012  September 2012  September 2012	Director of Learning Quality and Learning Resource Centre Manager  Head of School with responsibility for tutorials  Skills Development Centre Manager	Revised format for higher education Personal Development Portfolios  Higher education tutorial programme standardised across all schools  Improved higher education student support	Teaching and Learning Resources Committee  Tutorial Working Group  Student Services Committee	Student feedback  Boards of Examiners (student achievement)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>there is a comprehensive suite of</li> </ul>	Review content of higher education Programme	June 2012	Higher education coordinator	Student retention and achievement	Validation and review panels	Student feedback  Employer

handbooks available for students and employers, whose contents are rigorously controlled and which provide very clear and supportive guidance and links to overall policies and procedures (paragraphs 33, 41 and 44).	Handbooks (Student Handbook, Placement Handbook, Employer Handbook, Dissertation Handbook)  Introduce higher education Study Skills Handbook  Update Handbook for Higher Education	June 2012  September 2012	Higher education coordinator  Academic Registrar		Higher education Working Party  Student Services Committee  Teaching and Learning Resources Committee	feedback  Validation and review panel outcomes  Boards of Examiners  Annual Review Report to the University of Surrey
<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>actively pursue plans to increase utilisation of staff development opportunities provided by the University of Surrey (paragraph 20)</li> </ul>	Identify University of Surrey staff development training opportunities  Disseminate University of Surrey training programme to staff  Investigate the feasibility of University of Surrey training sessions to be	September 2012  September 2012  September 2012	Human Resources Manager  Human Resources Manager  Vice Principal (Quality & Higher Education)	Annual higher education training programme  Higher education staff continuing professional development	Higher education Working Group  Teaching and Learning Resources Committee	Staff appraisals  Teaching and Learning Observations  Validation and Review documentation

	delivered to groups of staff at the College					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• further develop the e-learning strategy and its implementation to ensure more effective use of the virtual learning environment across programmes (paragraphs 28 and 46)</li> </ul>	Introduce minimum threshold expectations for materials in Moodle courses	April 2012	Heads of schools Programme Managers Learning Resource Centre Manager	Minimum expectations identified and published to all teachers	Performance review meetings with Vice Principal (Curriculum and Learners) Teaching and Learning Resources Committee	Moodle reporting tools identify courses meeting minimum expectations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• continue current arrangements for planning and monitoring the suitability of resources and review how students are kept fully aware of the resources on offer ( paragraph 37)</li> </ul>	Continue regular review of resource requirements for all degree programmes  Enhance clarity and frequency of information on available resources	September 2012	Heads of Schools  Learning Resource Centre Manager  Computing Services Manager	Positive evaluation of resource provision by students	Senior Management Team  Teaching and Learning Resources Committee  Student Services Committee	Student feedback via higher education Student Forum and module questionnaires and quality development plan surveys  Programme self-assessment report/quality improvement plans  Validation and Review documentation and panel events



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>introduce measures to ensure greater consistency of format, accuracy and currency of the information provided in course leaflets (paragraph 45).</li> </ul>	Determine standard content to be presented in higher education course leaflets	June 2012	Information and Communications Manager	Course leaflets are standardised and accurate	Higher education Working Party	Induction questionnaires
	Introduce a mechanism to ensure accuracy of leaflet information	June 2012	Vice Principal (Quality & Higher Education) and Academic Registrar		Information and Communications Group	Higher education Student Forum

**RG 866 04/12**

**The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education**

Southgate House  
Southgate Street  
Gloucester  
GL1 1UB

Tel 01452 557000  
Fax 01452 557070  
Email [comms@qaa.ac.uk](mailto:comms@qaa.ac.uk)  
Web [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)