



# **Integrated quality and enhancement review**

**Summative review**

**Gateshead College**

**September 2010**

**SR001/2010**

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2010

ISBN 978 1 84979 229 5

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

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

## Outcomes of IQER

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

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

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

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

## Executive summary

### The Summative review of Gateshead College carried out in September 2010

As a result of its investigations, the Summative review team (the team) considers that there can be **confidence** in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreements, for the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of its awarding bodies. The team also considers that there can be **confidence** in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreements, for the quality of learning opportunities it offers. The team considers that reliance **can** be placed on the accuracy and/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 College's Guidelines for the Assessment of Students are clearly written and offer precise and comprehensive guidance to staff for assessing students
- the range and breadth of employer engagement supports the development of outstanding opportunities for work-based and placement learning and underpins the vocational nature of the courses
- the use of memory-sticks, which has been extended across the provision, enables students and staff to access information and is especially beneficial to students, who are able to submit assignments and receive prompt feedback on their work.

### Recommendations

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

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

- ensure that all its annual self-evaluations are more evaluative and specifically focused to enable them to be used more effectively in the management of higher education
- develop a learning and teaching strategy for higher education based on the strategies identified by the awarding bodies
- develop a more systematic and transparent method for the gathering, analysing and use of student opinion through questionnaires and encouraging greater student involvement in the higher education quality processes and ensuring students receive feedback on their opinions.

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

- unify its quality processes in the form of an annual quality cycle and calendar to make the system clear and accessible to all stakeholders
- review all of its strategic and operational documentation and produce a coherent cross-college higher education operations manual aligned to the Academic Infrastructure that is readily accessible to all stakeholders

- ensure that records are kept of all professional/industrial updating and scholarly activity and evaluate the impact of activities on the maintenance of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities provided
- continue with the development of more standardised student handbooks.

## 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 Gateshead 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 Northumbria University, the University of Sunderland and the University of Teesside. The review was carried out by Mr Kevin Burnside, Ms Jane Davis and Mr Mark Langley (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 awarding bodies, 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. A summary of findings from this Developmental engagement is provided in Section C of this report. The review also considered the College's use of the Academic Infrastructure, developed by QAA on behalf of higher education providers, with reference to the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, subject and award benchmark statements, *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and programme specifications.

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

4 The College is a general further education college located in Gateshead with a new main campus on the quayside completed in 2008. There are two other sites based in Gateshead's largest business park and a purpose-built Academy for Sport based at the Gateshead International Stadium. For its higher education provision, the College works with Northumbria University, Teesside University and the University of Sunderland. There are 526 students enrolled on higher education programmes. They are made up of 456 full-time and 61 part-time students, making a total of 494.5 full-time equivalent students (FTEs).

5 The College's mission is to 'provide success for all through learning' and is committed to working to a set of values: Excellence, Respect, Purposefulness, Partnership and Positivity. In line with the College's higher education strategy, the College has developed Foundation Degrees, which involved consultation with employers to ensure these meet the needs of the industry and service sectors. The College is in its initial stages of creating a centralised structure for the management of its higher education provision. The higher education courses are delivered in seven departments - Creative Industries, Business and Information Technology, Sport, Construction, Engineering and Manufacturing, Health, Care and Early Years Development, and Leadership and Management.

6 The following programmes are offered by the College with FTEs for each programme in brackets:

### Northumbria University

- BA (Hons) Contemporary Popular Music Year 3 (Top Up) (11)
- BA (Hons) Performing Arts (37)



- FdA Popular Music (23)
- FdA Playwork (part-time) (21)

### **Teesside University**

- BA (Hons) Leadership, Management and Organisation Year 3 (part-time) (42)
- FdA Business Management (part-time) (75)

### **University of Sunderland**

- FdSc Building Services (part-time) (15)
- FdSc Digital Applications Development (part-time) (25)
- FdSc Digital Forensics (part-time) (13)
- FdEng Engineering (Mechanical/Electrical) (part-time) (26)
- FdSc ICT Support (part-time) (24)
- FdA Creative Technologies for Music and Performance (part-time) (32)
- FdA Education and Care (part-time) (35)
- FdA Health and Social Care (part-time) (35)
- FdEng Operations Improvement Year 2 only (part-time) (8)
- FdEng Maintenance Engineering Year 1 only (part-time) (8)
- Cert Post Compulsory Education and Training (30.5)  
(Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills Sector) (QTLS) (part-time)
- FdSc Sports Coaching (19)
- FdSc Exercise, Health and Development (15)

## **Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies**

7 The College has developed links with its three awarding bodies, the University of Sunderland (partnership initiated in 1991); Northumbria University (2003) and the Teesside University (2006). There are clearly articulated memoranda of agreements. There was a Collaborative Review by University of Sunderland in 2009. In meetings with the team, College staff and University representatives alike commented positively on the strength of these relationships.

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

8 As one of its strategic goals, the College completed a process of phasing out the delivery of Edexcel HNC programmes in 2009, replacing them with vocational specific Foundation Degrees with the awarding bodies and employers. There are proposals to offer Foundation Degrees in Fraud Management and Lean Healthcare. A new programme in Creative Industries with Northumbria University is being developed. The College has produced a Higher Education Strategy and established a system for the management of its higher education provision.

## **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 Summative review team. A group of 18 students submitted a video wherein students addressed key points regarding their experiences, including assessment, support, learning resources and learning and teaching. The views expressed were positive and helpful to the team. In their two meetings with the team, those students who had seen the video confirmed they agreed with the views expressed in the video.

They also provided the team with useful information about the general student experience of the higher education programmes.

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

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

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

10 In response to the Developmental engagement and as a part of its continuing strategic development, the College has reorganised its management structure for higher education. At Executive Team level, the Deputy Principal Curriculum and Quality has overall responsibility for the College's Higher Education Strategy. The Assistant Principal for Adult Skills and Higher Education manages the strategic development of higher education on behalf of the Deputy Principal and is the point of contact with the universities on strategic matters. In addition, a half-time Higher Education Coordinator oversees delivery and activities across all departments.

11 Heads of departments manage both further and higher education programmes. They are clear about their responsibilities and spoke positively about the new system for the management of higher education. Course leaders manage the delivery of individual courses and work with, and report to, the leader of the university parent course. With Sunderland University, a College course leader can act as either an assistant or programme leader depending on the model of collaboration. In certain models of collaboration, the programme leader is based at the University. Programme leaders are required for all programmes validated by Northumbria University and Teesside University, which have similar operational arrangements. Teaching staff confirm that the mature relationships with university colleagues and managers are effective and highly supportive.

12 The reporting process involves course leaders completing an annual report for the validating university, the titles and format of which vary between institutions. They also complete a College self-evaluation report. The Assistant Principal and Higher Education Coordinator review the course self-evaluations and other sources, for example, National Student Survey results, prior to meetings with departmental teams at the Higher Education Review Panel. Here the focus is on extracting over-arching themes from each course to inform the development of higher education at departmental and cross-college levels. The Assistant Principal writes a comment on the self-evaluation to indicate that it has been agreed upon and collates the information into the College's annual Higher Education Self-Evaluation Report. Alongside chairing the Higher Education Review Panel, the Higher Education Coordinator also chairs the Higher Education Forum as a practitioner-based platform for discussion that focuses on higher education themes.

13 The Deputy Principal chairs the College's Higher Education Quality Board, which reviews the Higher Education Self-Evaluation Report, feedback from the Forum and the Curriculum Review. The College introduced this process in November 2008 to improve its internal review process and to monitor the student experience. It draws on cross-College observations of teaching and learning and an online student survey. The Deputy Principal reports the findings of the Higher Education Quality Board to the College's Academic Standards Committee, which is a subcommittee of the College's Board of Governors. Schematic diagrams of the management and reporting structures, meeting schedules for the Higher Education Quality Board and Review Panel, along with calendars of the quality cycle

provided in university manuals clarify roles and responsibilities and place key quality events with a timeframe. However, the College has not collated these in one coherent form. Information about the College's higher education quality cycle could be clearer for staff and students. The team considers it desirable for the College to unify its quality process into an annual quality cycle and calendar that makes quality systems clear and accessible to all stakeholders.

14 Since the Developmental engagement, the College has not yet completed a full academic cycle and therefore has yet to review the effectiveness of its new structures and processes. The management structure and reporting mechanisms for higher education rely on the quality of the self-evaluations. In the collaborative review with the University of Sunderland, one of the recommendations was to examine University and College 'reporting templates to determine if these need to be modified to prevent potential duplication of requirements'. Collaboration with three partner universities makes this difficult to achieve, consequently, the College has chosen to design its own higher education-specific template aligned to the IQER three core themes. The team conducted a close analysis of all these reports and notes that the content of many of the self-evaluations is not sufficiently evaluative. If the College is to embed the management and delivery of higher education standards across its provision, the self-evaluations need to be more evaluative and critical, and show more reflective thinking. The team considers that it is advisable that the College ensure that all its annual self-evaluations are more evaluative and specifically focused to enable them to be used more effectively in the management of higher education.

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

15 In line with the requirements of the validating universities, the College demonstrates its engagement with the Academic Infrastructure throughout the programme design and approval stages. Each university approves all programme documentation, ensuring it reflects the FHEQ, subject benchmark statements and the *Code of practice*. Programme specifications are presented in operation manuals and summarised in student handbooks. The programme specifications are detailed and informative and confirm that the College uses the Academic Infrastructure effectively in the development of programmes. The terms of reference for the Higher Education Forum, Review Panel and Quality Board, and job descriptions for the Deputy Principal, Assistant Principal, and Higher Education Coordinator also refer to how the Academic Infrastructure should be considered. In meetings with the team, staff explained how they referred to the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark* when developing new programmes. It is clear the College has embedded the Academic Infrastructure within the roles and systems responsible for higher education quality and performance.

16 Given the complexity of the relationships with the validating universities and recent College restructuring, and while acknowledging the ongoing development of the College's electronic systems, the College has not yet consolidated its policy and procedure documents into a cross-college higher education operations manual. This would ensure parity across the provision and ownership by the higher education staff. The College has produced some policy and strategy documents, and aligned them to the relevant *Code of practice*, but as yet these have not been unified in a single source, or in a clearly defined online repository. The team considers it desirable for the College to review all of its strategic and operational documentation and produce a coherent cross-college higher education operations manual aligned to the Academic Infrastructure that is readily accessible to all stakeholders.

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

17 The College has clearly articulated Memoranda of Agreements with two universities and a Memorandum of Understanding with Northumbria University. These and other procedural handbooks or operations manuals detail responsibilities and reporting arrangements for managing and delivering higher education standards. For Northumbria University, while differing programmes share certain features, these handbooks are course specific. Teesside University revises its Operations Manual annually and uses it in conjunction with its Quality Manual, the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and Threshold Quality Standards. These are available on the University website. For the University of Sunderland provision, the Memorandum of Agreement and its annexes detail the responsibilities of the College, which are specific to the type of validation rather than the programmes. While the range of documentation is varied, their requirements share a common approach to the delivery of higher education. The Review of the Collaboration with University of Sunderland in 2009 reaffirms the partnership with the College. Northumbria University reviewed its collaborative partnership in June 2009 in line with its six-year institutional review cycle, and reviews its validated programmes every three years. Being still within its first cycle, there has not yet been a review with Teesside University.

18 The College relies on the process of annual review and self-evaluation described in paragraphs 12 and 13. In producing these reports, course leaders draw on external examiners' reports and student feedback. Action points raised by examiners inform the course self-evaluation action plan and all action points from the previous year are discussed in the overview of that report, although the resolutions could be clearer in the self-evaluations. Regular meetings take place between course leaders in the College and universities.

19 External examiners' reports state that the College's internal verification process is rigorous and consistently identifies areas of good practice in assessment. As noted in the Developmental engagement, 'the internal verification of setting and marking assignments is thorough and carefully documented to ensure assignments are clear to students and set at the appropriate level. Assignments are double-marked and moderation is documented.' Following the Developmental engagement, the College has produced Guidelines for the Assessment of Students which aligns with the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students* and the requirements of the validating universities. These guidelines address what the latest self-assessment report regarded as inconsistencies in assessment practice that exist across programmes. The guidelines are clear and comprehensive. The College's Guidelines for the Assessment of Students are clearly written and offer precise and comprehensive guidance to staff for assessing students and are good practice. It is an example of how the College could unify all of its higher education policies and procedures.

**What are the College's arrangements for staff development to support the achievement of appropriate academic standard(s)?**

20 All teaching staff are members of the Institute for Learning and therefore must complete some development activity each academic year. The College's self-evaluation report notes that there are some developmental activities that are not recorded or classified as scholarly activity and that many aspects of scholarly activity are not formally recorded but contribute to the professional development of teaching teams. Documentary evidence presented to the team confirms this, and the forthcoming launch of the College's new online resources should enable the College to track the range of activities clearly and effectively.

21 The Developmental engagement made an advisable recommendation for the College to schedule a Continuing Professional Development Programme for all course teams. The College's Higher Education Strategy states that 'all staff are given a framework of support, development and reward in order to be creative, and to perform to their very highest standard in line with the College's strategic aims and objectives'. One of those objectives is to 'agree a Continuing Professional Development programme that achieves and promotes scholarly activity and continuous industrial and professional expertise within delivery teams', which the College has done and has delivered through the Higher Education Forum and other College-based developmental activities. University partners also provide staff development opportunities, which records show that staff attend. For example, the Postgraduate Certificate in Education staff shared internet safety training with University of Sunderland colleagues, and Teesside University offers induction and development training to keep staff fully abreast of programme developments. The Higher Education Coordinator mentors all new staff.

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

## **Core theme 2: Quality of learning opportunities**

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

22 Responsibilities for managing and reporting on higher education are discussed in paragraphs 10 to 14 of this report. The team found that responsibilities are managed effectively and that a range of learning opportunities is available.

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

23 Teaching staff are aware of elements of the Academic Infrastructure as it relates to learning opportunities, but have little explicit awareness of the way in which it forms a framework for good practice underpinning the student learning experience. There is, however, an implicit engagement with all relevant sections of the *Code of practice*, for example, as required by partner universities, through development of effective work placement practices, the development of student support services and development of assessment for learning.

24 This question is also discussed under Core theme 1 in paragraphs 15 and 16.

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

25 The Head of Teaching and Learning has responsibility for ongoing development of teaching and learning across the College and has engaged with and gained College approval for the Teacher Effectiveness Enhancement Programme (TEEP) and its adoption by staff. TEEP is being taken forward by the College across both further and higher education programmes, but it was not always clear to the team how appropriate this is for higher education. The College's existing Teaching and Learning Strategy is a very brief document. It was written in 2006 by the previous Deputy Principal of Quality and Curriculum, and is due for review in November 2010. The Strategy does not relate directly to ongoing developments to improve learning and teaching for higher education. The College is advised

to develop a learning and teaching strategy for higher education based on the strategies identified by the awarding bodies.

26 The main quality tools for assessing the quality of learning and teaching are the self-evaluations for each course, elements of the Curriculum Review and the Procedures for Observation of Learning and Teaching. Some higher education provision is observed as part of each Curriculum Review, with sessions being identified and suitable observers with higher education teaching experience identified from the Advanced Lecturer Team. The documentation for this is generic across further and higher education, but includes references to the appropriateness of level, pace and independent learning activity.

27 As noted in the National Student Survey (2010) and in the meetings with the team, students show that they are satisfied with the quality of learning and teaching in terms of delivery, content and vocational emphasis. Staff make use of both formal and informal contacts with students to gather feedback. The opportunity is appreciated by students who said that staff act promptly to sort out any problems with learning and teaching. Numerous methods of student feedback are used and informal feedback informs day-to-day interaction at programme level. Students were complimentary about their opportunities for personal development and support provided by the College. Some departments use a 'traffic light' system to prioritise actions for staff to implement and all departments use group tutorials to keep students informed of developments. There are student representatives on course committees. The College's self-evaluation notes that mechanisms to collect student feedback are 'varied and diverse' and not all the responses are collected centrally. Also, students said that they did not understand how the issues they raise through formal processes, such as questionnaires, are dealt with by the College. They also told the team that they were unaware of the higher education management processes and their part in them. The terms of reference for the Higher Education Forum list student representatives as members, although to date there is no record of students attending any meetings. It is recommended as advisable that the College develops a more systematic and transparent method for the gathering, analysing and use of student opinion through questionnaires and encouraging greater student involvement in the higher education quality process and ensuring students receive feedback on their opinions.

28 Excellent employer links are well established across all courses. All Foundation Degrees have work-based or work-related learning opportunities as appropriate to the nature of the industry. Employers are enthusiastic about opportunities that support their contribution to both course design and delivery. They also provide an outstanding range of learning experiences, such as guest talks, placements and mentoring, for example, in sports coaching and music. The range and breadth of employer engagement support the development of outstanding opportunities for work-based and placement learning and underpins the vocational nature of the courses.

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

29 The College has established an effective and appropriate range of support services for students. The effectiveness of these support areas for higher education students are assessed and documented through the Customer Services Higher Education Self Assessment and in self-evaluations and through the use of student surveys. Customer and Learners Services documentation demonstrates an engagement with appropriate sections of the *Code of practice* such as *Section 3: Students with disabilities*, *Section 8: Career education, information and guidance* and *Section 10: Admissions to higher education*. Students told the team that they are very satisfied with the level and quality of support they receive.

30 Students on placement are supported through workplace mentors and/or ongoing employer/tutor liaison as appropriate. The monitoring and management of work-based learning and placement are effective. Course teams have effectively documented the learning requirements and expectations of work-based learning in the Placement Handbook. This contributes to the positive experience of students and employers alike.

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

31 Teaching staff undertake a range of activities that have the potential to contribute to the effective organisation and delivery of the courses. Recorded examples include higher education course management and assessment, preparation for validation and subject-specific events such as attendance at the Playwork Professional Workforce Development Conference. Staff also have the opportunity to take part in development events hosted by partner universities. Examples were provided of industrial and/or professional updating and some ongoing scholarly activity, but this is neither consistent nor evaluated in terms of impact on the student learning experience. The College does not collate details of scholarly and professional activity. It is recommended as desirable that the College ensure that records are kept of all professional/industrial updating and scholarly activity and evaluate the impact of activities on the maintenance of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities provided.

**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?**

32 In 2008, the College moved to new premises in the Gateshead Quays. Higher education students have access to a specialist sports academy based at the Gateshead International Stadium and a purpose-built construction academy. The College, with funding from the University of Sunderland, opened a Higher Education Centre in 2009-10. The general accommodation and facilities for students are excellent and well-managed. Resource allocation, though not higher education specific, is reviewed in the annual planning cycle. This process involves a collation of bids and subsequent reconciliation against strategic priorities.

33 Library resources effectively support the student learning experience, being enhanced by the provision of electronic resources and e-books. Opening hours are appropriate to allow students access to facilities. Where gaps in library provision have been found, there has been a rapid resolution to the problem. All reading lists are received by the library and stock is updated.

34 The College is investing heavily in the development of technology-enhanced learning and e-resources, these being predominantly used as information repositories. Students expressed a high level of satisfaction with the information technology resources. For example, the Music Department has developed an innovative e-portfolio framework which is highly valued by students. There is also the use of a new facility whereby staff can access management information. The use of memory sticks, which has been extended across the provision, enables students and staff to access information and is especially beneficial to students, who are able to submit assignments and receive prompt feedback on their work. This is good practice as identified in the Developmental engagement. All staff and students spoke positively about the benefits of using this in learning and teaching and in assessing students.

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

### **Core theme 3: Public information**

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

35 Details of the publications for which the College is responsible are clearly articulated in the partnership agreements. The College is required to have all such information about its higher education provision, including programme handbooks and website material, approved by its partner institutions. The College's Marketing and Communications Department has responsibility for all publicity materials, including programme information and the external website content. Public documents include the Higher Education Guide, which includes clear information on finance, support and general information about the College. The case studies here highlight the success of students who have completed their studies. The Welcome Handbook contains accurate information on assessment issues such as appeals and plagiarism. There are clear procedures for checking, publishing and gaining the appropriate approval for these documents. Programme leaders and Heads of Department have responsibility for ensuring the accuracy of the content of publicity materials and course information, such as the Course Information Sheets, and their compliance with the requirements of the awarding bodies. The College's Higher Education Strategy shows careful planning and thought about how it is to be achieved.

36 Information for students on the website is covered by the College's publications procedure and includes details of student facilities, careers support and student advice and guidance on financial and academic issues. Through a combination of handbooks, tutorial support and web-based materials, students are well informed regarding the support, advice and guidance that is available to them and how to access it.

#### **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?**

37 The College is in the process of developing an ambitious, bespoke web-based College Information System designed to integrate the publication and dissemination of programme information and other publicity materials with the management of enquiries and applications. This will be subject to the same rigorous publication and proof-checking procedures that currently apply.

38 Programme Handbooks are prepared and checked by Heads of Department and the Higher Education Co-ordinator prior to submission for approval with the partner universities. The College's Student Handbook Review Process Flowchart offers clear guidance for this process. An additional facility is the innovative Higher Education Course Online website, which is being embedded across the College. This is accessible to programme leaders and departmental heads to share good practice across the higher education provision and ensure a consistent approach to the preparation and approval of public information. Staff can access their own and other programme information, for example, handbooks, programme specifications, operation manuals, module descriptors and employer links. Course handbooks generally identify key staff, summarise the relationship of the College to the relevant awarding body, describe course and module aims and content,



teaching, learning and assessment strategies and clarify the academic regulations that apply to each programme. Good practice regarding the explanation of the contribution that assessment and feedback can make to students' learning identified in the Developmental engagement has been adopted by several other programmes. The recently established Higher Education Review Panel is charged with reviewing programme information in student handbooks with a view to standardising these in a college-wide template. Funding has been allocated towards its development and implementation. It is recommended as desirable that the College continue with the development of more standardised student handbooks.

39 The issue of this information to all first-year students on memory sticks is now standard practice across all higher education provision in the College. The same information is also made available to students through the virtual learning environment. Although handbook content relating to general information on student welfare and academic support, regulations around mitigating circumstances affecting assessment and guidance on issues such as plagiarism is presented in various ways, in the handbooks, it is clear that students are aware of this information and are able to locate and access it when needed.

40 The availability of the DigitalDash staff intranet and the Teacher and Learner Portals provide ready access to the College's virtual learning environment. These have undergone further development since the Developmental engagement and now also provide access to Academic Regulations of partner institutions.

41 Students are well informed regarding the opportunities available to them on completion of their Foundation Degrees with information regarding progression routes to Bachelor degree and beyond communicated to them during pre-enrolment interviews, in presentations by the awarding bodies, in tutorials and through the College website.

42 In summary, the team found the information published for higher education students in the College to be accurate. Based on its analysis of the College's self-evaluation and other documentary evidence, and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that in the context of this Summative review, reliance can be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the courses it delivers.

**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**

43 The Developmental engagement took place in December 2009. The lines of enquiry were as follows:

**Line of enquiry 1:** Academic standards are maintained through effective assessment practice across programmes, departments and validating/awarding bodies.

**Line of enquiry 2:** Effective learning is promoted and encouraged through both formative and summative feedback on assessment.

**Line of enquiry 3:** Information on procedures for assessment and grading is accurate, valid and complete, matching learning outcomes to assessment methods.

44 Five areas of good practice were identified. The memory sticks supplied to students on the music programme provided extensive and accurate guidance on assessment. Also for music students in the Foundation Degree, the use of e-learning portfolios enabled students to receive prompt, detailed and extensive formative and summative feedback. The work-based learning on the FdEng programme was well-organised with College staff and employers working together to design assignments which develop skills and knowledge acquired during the placements to reflect 'real-world situations'. The handbook for the FdA Playwork provided students with clear explanations regarding the contribution of assessment and feedback to their learning, particularly in relation to the students' work with children. Finally, students on the FdEng Operational Improvement were provided with focused feedback on their 'real-world' assignments that is directly related to their work tasks.

45 There were three advisable recommendations. It was recommended that the College continue to develop its quality management system with the Forum, Review Panel and Quality Board having terms of reference and meetings recorded. Related to this, College staff needed to have a comprehensive understanding of the new quality management system so that it becomes embedded and used to monitor the assessment process. For work-based learning, it was recommended that the various types of work-based learning be identified and there was an overview of the associated assessments and the roles of employers and mentors in the process. There was one desirable recommendation to ensure that intended learning outcomes are identified in all assignments and that written feedback clearly addresses how far students have achieved the outcomes.

## **D Foundation Degrees**

46 The College offers 15 Foundation Degrees in a range of areas such as business, engineering, education, music and forensics. Foundation Degrees are the main development in the College's higher education strategy. All the courses have a strong vocational emphasis embedded in the design, delivery and assessment practices. The College has worked closely with employers to develop the Foundation Degrees. There is an awareness to ensure that employers are involved in the planning and in the management of the student experience through a range of highly relevant work-based learning and placements. All the programmes are recruiting well and have high completion rates. There are proposals to offer Foundation Degrees in Fraud Management and Lean Healthcare. A new course in Creative Industries with Northumbria University is being developed.

47 The team findings and conclusions relate to all the College's higher education provision, including Foundation Degrees that it offers on behalf of its awarding bodies.

## **E Conclusions and summary of judgements**

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

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

- the College's Guidelines for the Assessment of Students are clearly written and offer precise and comprehensive guidance to staff for assessing students (paragraph 19)
- the range and breadth of employer engagement supports the development of outstanding opportunities for work-based and placement learning and underpins the vocational nature of the courses (paragraph 28)
- the use of memory-sticks, which has been extended across the provision, enables students and staff to access information and is especially beneficial to students, who are able to submit assignments and receive prompt feedback on their work (paragraph 34).

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

51 The team also agreed a number of areas where the College is **advised** to take action:

- to ensure that all its annual self-evaluations are more evaluative and specifically focused to enable them to be used more effectively in the management of higher education (paragraph 14)
- to develop a learning and teaching strategy for higher education based on the strategies identified by the awarding bodies (paragraph 25)
- to develop a more systematic and transparent method for the gathering, analysing and use of student opinion through questionnaires and encouraging greater student involvement in the higher education quality processes and ensuring students receive feedback on their opinions (paragraph 27).

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

- to unify its quality processes in the form of an annual quality cycle and calendar to make the system clear and accessible to all stakeholders (paragraph 13)
- to review all of its strategic and operational documentation and produce a coherent cross-college higher education operations manual aligned to the Academic Infrastructure that is readily accessible to all stakeholders (paragraph 16)
- to ensure that records are kept of all professional/industrial updating and scholarly activity and evaluate the impact of activities on the maintenance of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities provided (paragraph 31)
- to continue with the development of more standardised student handbooks (paragraph 38).

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

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

## Integrated quality and enhancement review

management of the quality of learning opportunities to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

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

<b>Gateshead College action plan relating to the Summative review September 2010</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 College's Guidelines for the Assessment of Students are clearly written and offer precise and comprehensive guidance to staff for assessing students (paragraph 19)</li> </ul>	Review the effective use of assessment guidelines by staff	July 2011	HE Coordinator	Feedback from learners Feedback from staff through HE Forum	HE Quality Board HE Review Panel	NSS New Internal Student Satisfaction survey (ISS)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the range and breadth of employer engagement supports the development of outstanding opportunities for work-based and placement learning and</li> </ul>	Continue to embed employer engagement & best practice for work-based and placement learning across HE programmes, create case studies to promote examples of best practice	January - March 2011	HE Coordinator working with programme teams Marketing & Communications Director	Case Studies to be included in the HE Prospectus for 2011-12	HE Review Panel	HE Prospectus Programme SEs

underpins the vocational nature of the courses (paragraph 28)						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the use of memory-sticks, which has been extended across the provision, enables students and staff to access information and is especially beneficial to students, who are able to submit assignments and receive prompt feedback on their work (paragraph 34).</li> </ul>	Embed this area of good practice into induction across all existing and new programmes	September/October 2011	HE Coordinator Heads of Department Programme Leaders	Improved feedback from learners; full access and understanding of their programme of study	HE Review Panel	Programme SEs
The team agreed a number of areas where the College should be <b>advised</b> to take action						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensure that all its annual self-evaluations are more evaluative and specifically focused to enable</li> </ul>	Establish CPD & sharing of best practice for programme leaders on production of effective programme	January - November 2011	HE Coordinator working with programme leader	Clearly focused evaluative and reflective content of course based self-evaluation reports	HE Forum HE Review Panel HE Quality Board ASC	Programme SEs HE SAR

them to be used more effectively in the management of higher education (paragraph 14)	self-evaluations					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develop a learning and teaching strategy for higher education based on the strategies identified by the awarding bodies (paragraph 25)</li> </ul>	Work with University partners on the development of a College-based learning and teaching strategy for its HE programmes	April 2011	HE Coordinator Head of Quality & Innovation	Strategy produced and in place informing consistency of practice across teams	HE Quality Board	Curriculum Review Programme SEs HE SAR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develop a more systematic and transparent method for the gathering, analysing and use of student opinion through questionnaires and encouraging greater student involvement in the higher education quality process and ensuring students receive feedback on their opinions (paragraph 27).</li> </ul>	Implement the newly developed College-based survey. Feedback on actions to be published within the HE Prospectus. Module and programme feedback to be collated by programme and actions published through programme handbooks and virtual learning network Student representatives to be invited to attend HE quality committees	January - July 2011  April 2011	HE Coordinator working with Programme Leaders AP: AS&HE  AP: AS&HE HE Coordinator	Publication of learner feedback and actions taken Improving learners' awareness of actions taken in light of their feedback  Student representatives in place on all HE quality committees	HE Review Panel HE Forum HE Quality Board	Programme SEs HE SAR

<p>The team agreed the following areas where it would be <b>desired</b> to take action:</p>						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>unify its quality process into an annual quality cycle and calendar that makes quality systems clear and accessible to all stakeholders (paragraph 13)</li> </ul>	<p>Produce an annual quality calendar and publish it on the College Intranet, making it accessible to all stakeholders through programme handbooks</p>	<p>July 2011</p>	<p>AP: AS&amp;HE Head of Quality &amp; Innovation HE Coordinator</p>	<p>Annual calendar in place and published</p>	<p>HE Quality Board</p>	<p>HE SAR</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>review all of its strategic and operational documentation and produce a coherent cross-college higher education operations manual aligned to the Academic Infrastructure that is readily accessible to all stakeholders (paragraph 16)</li> </ul>	<p>Produce a College-based Operations Manual for staff and stakeholders</p>	<p>June 2011 November 2011</p>	<p>AP: AS&amp;HE HE Coordinator</p>	<p>HE Operations Manual in place and published on the College Intranet</p>	<p>HE Quality Board</p>	<p>HE SAR</p>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensure that records are kept of all professional/ industrial updating and scholarly activity and evaluate the impact of activities on the maintenance of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities provided (paragraph 31)</li> </ul>	Implement a centralised system to log staff engagement professional/industrial updating and scholarly activity	April - November 2011	DP: C&Q AP: AS&HE Director of HR HE Coordinator	Centralised system in place and utilised to log activities and measure levels of engagement across teams	HE Quality Board	CPD Records Programme SEs HE SAR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>continue with the development of more standardised student handbooks (paragraph 38).</li> </ul>	Provide programme teams with good practice template for student handbooks in line with HEIs guidance	May 2011	HE Coordinator Programme Leaders	Template in place, approved by HEIs and utilised by programme leaders	HE Review Panel	Programme SEs

**RG 677 11/10**

**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)