



QAA

Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

May 2007

Gloucestershire College

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Preface

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

Purpose of IQER

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

The IQER process

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

Developmental engagement

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

The main elements of a Developmental engagement are:

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

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

Summative review

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

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

Evidence

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

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

IQER teams' expectations of colleges are guided by a nationally agreed set of reference points, known as the Academic Infrastructure. These are published by the 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 Gloucestershire College carried out in May 2007

As a result of its investigations, the Summative review team considers that there can be confidence in the College's discharge 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. The team also considers that there can be confidence in the College's discharge of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreements, for the management and assurance of 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 planning process for the substantial increase in Foundation Degree awards has been underpinned by a rigorous marketing analysis and undertaken with two of its partner higher education institutions
- the system of quality accounts gives senior College management a clear and regular oversight of issues across the higher education provision
- a risk-analysis approach to student and cohort monitoring, Statistics for Student Academic Review, has been locally developed
- the College has an energetic approach to improving its engagement with the Academic Infrastructure
- there is a constructive approach to partnership, in concert with responsive awarding higher education institutions and Edexcel
- the roles of the Teaching and Learning Quality Improvement Managers, Advanced Practitioners and the Higher Education Practitioners Group are effective agents for enhancement whose work would now benefit from increased coordination
- the three-stage literature approval process and initiatives requires approval by key stakeholders before a document goes into final production to ensure its wider dissemination and application.

Recommendations

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

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

- develop its oversight of provision such as to focus more clearly on specific issues in higher education, enabling them to be readily identified and addressed
- strengthen the participation of students in the operation and monitoring of their academic programmes.

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

- continue working with its higher education institution partners towards developing a common framework for the management of their partnerships
- foster a stronger higher education learning culture among students that promotes more interaction between academic disciplines
- explore ways of providing future support for staff to benefit from professional development, scholarly activity and professional updating. This should take account of the existing range of effective initiatives and their coordination.

A Introduction and context

1 This report presents the findings of the Summative review conducted at Gloucestershire College. The purpose of the review was 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 for programmes it delivers on behalf of Edexcel, the University of the West of England, Bristol, the University of Gloucestershire and the University of Worcester. The review was carried out by a team of reviewers, comprising Professor Paul Luker, Dr Mark Mabey and Dr Sarah Shobrook (reviewers) and Mr David Lewis (coordinator).

2 The Summative review team (the team) conducted the review in negotiation with the College and in accordance with *The handbook for a pilot study of an integrated quality and enhancement review*, published by QAA. Evidence in support of the Summative review included a range of documentation from the College and awarding bodies, in advance of, and during, the visit. During the visit, the team was also able to meet groups of staff, students and former students, as well as representatives of all partner higher education institutions and Edexcel. The College provided a demonstration of its virtual learning environment. The team had access to recent external reports, including those of QAA reviews and inspections by Ofsted. In particular, the team drew extensively on the findings and recommendations of the Developmental engagement in assessment. A summary of findings from the 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 the higher education sector, with particular reference to the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, subject and award benchmarks, *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)* and programme specifications.

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

4 Gloucestershire College is the largest further education college in Gloucestershire. It has its main campus along with four other sites in Gloucester, plus a modern campus in Cheltenham. The College is moving into a new, purpose-built Gloucester campus in the dockland regeneration area in readiness for the 2007-08 academic year. At the time of the review, the College had some 21,500 further education student enrolments overall, or about 6,000 full-time equivalents. The higher education provision comprised 114 full-time and 390 part-time students, many of whom are adults on Higher National Certificates (HNCs). The higher education programmes are located within academic centres, alongside further education provision. The HEFCE-funded higher education provision at the time of the review, together with the awarding bodies, comprised the following programmes:

Edexcel

- HNC Computing (delivered by the Royal Forest of Dean College)
- HNC Computing (General)
- HNC Spatial Design (Interiors)
- HNC Stitched Textiles (Distance learning)

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- HNC Stitched Textiles
- HNC Stitched Textiles
- HND 3D Spatial Design (Interior Design)
- HND Performing Arts
- HND Graphic Design Multi-Media
- HND Media Production
- HND Media Performance
- HNC Music Production
- HNC Performance
- HNC Graphic Design/Multimedia
- HNC Business
- HND Business
- HND Business Conversion
- HNC Computing (Software Development)
- HND Computing (Software Development)
- HNC Computing (Systems Support)
- HND Computing (Systems Support)
- HND Computing Conversion
- HNC/D Conversion Construction
- HNC Construction
- HNC Civil Engineering
- HND Engineering (Manufacturing)
- HND Conversion Manufacturing Eng
- HNC to HND Mechatronics
- HNC Electronic Engineering
- HND Engineering (Electrical/Electronic)
- HND Mechanical Engineering
- HND Manufacturing Engineering Conversion
- HNC to HND Mechatronics
- HND Conversion Electronic Engineering

University of Gloucestershire

- FD Early Years

University of the West of England

- Certificate in Education (FE)
- Postgraduate Certificate in Education (FE)

University of Worcester

- BSc Psychology Year 1

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

5 Currently, the large majority of higher education students is enrolled on Edexcel Higher National awards. The partnership agreements with the three higher education institution awarding partners are at different stages of maturity. The College has a longstanding agreement with the University of the West of England, Bristol to deliver the Certificate in Education and Postgraduate Certificate in Education (FE). Following a review, this agreement was updated in 2006. The agreement with the University of Worcester, for the first year of the University's BSc (Hons) Psychology, was signed in 2005. The College gained approval from the University of Gloucestershire to deliver the FD in Care and Early Years in 2003. It is planned to sign a formal partnership agreement with the University of Gloucestershire in June 2007.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

6 Higher education enjoys a high profile within the strategic thinking of the College and is in a dynamic stage of development. The pace and thoroughness of the action planning following the Developmental engagement offers evidence for the importance attached to the development and enhancement of the higher education provision. Other indicators include the development, with the three higher education institution partners, of a wide range of FDs, five of which are to commence in 2007-08. The ambitious plan is to increase the number of FD awards offered at the College from just one currently recruiting to around 30 by 2010. The planning for this major development has included a rigorous marketing analysis undertaken with the University of the West of England and the University of Gloucestershire. An in-depth feasibility study, funded by HEFCE and the South West Regional Development Agency, has been undertaken with the two universities for the establishment of a designated HE Academy in Gloucester. These developments are taking place in the context of a decision to strengthen the management oversight of the higher education curriculum. This has resulted in the College's higher education strategy, which confirms a commitment to be responsive to employment and skills needs within the county and the surrounding area. A new three-year strategy will be put in place following formal agreement of the feasibility study.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

7 Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the team. Despite encouragement from senior college staff and an extended submission deadline, no submission was produced. Nevertheless, current and former higher education students made a valuable contribution to the review, as they did for the Developmental engagement through meetings held with the team. The views of current students were also available through the results of College student questionnaires.

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?

8 Since 2004 there have been a number of significant changes designed to strengthen the management of higher education in the College. The management and strategic development of higher education is now the responsibility of the Vice Principal (Corporate Services), while responsibility for quality and standards rests with the Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality. In recognition of the increasing volume of higher education provision at the College, a full-time Director of Higher Education will take on the responsibility of managing the higher education portfolio from 2007-08. A Partnership Manager has been appointed specifically to manage the higher education academy project with the Universities of the West of England, Bristol and Gloucestershire, the post being jointly funded by the three institutions.

9 A significant recent change to the College's academic structure has been the establishment of the Learning and Teaching Standards Board to replace the previous Academic Board. The Board, which is chaired by the Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality, has a role to advise the College management Team and the Board of Governors about the standards, planning and oversight of the academic work of the College, both further and higher education. Membership of the Board includes a representative from each of the three partner universities. The Developmental engagement advised that the Learning and Teaching Standards Board be set up as soon as possible and its inaugural meeting was held in April 2007. A scrutiny of the minutes reveals that the meeting drew effectively on the experience and contributions of higher education institution partners.

10 The HE Practitioners' Group was established in 2006. It serves as a forum for all higher education subject tutors and managers, where good practice can be identified and disseminated and common practices established. There is intended to be a clear relationship between the group and the Learning and Teaching Standards Board, to which it will report each term. A member of the group sits on the Learning and Teaching Standards Board and it was reported that the Board will refer specific issues and tasks to the HE Practitioners for deliberation, advice and recommendation. The group has already contributed to the strengthening of the higher education provision. For example, it has developed a standard programme specification template for the College's higher education programmes where the format is not specified by the awarding body. The chair of the group, who is one of the College's Advanced Practitioners, is leading a project to look at assessment practices across different disciplines with a view to ensuring more consistency.

11 The College's procedures for the management of quality and standards of all its provision are explained for staff in the Quality Manual 2006-07. The College has produced a curriculum responsibilities checklist that clearly identifies responsibilities for key aspects of course management. There are explicit procedures for assessment, internal validation, and internal verification and moderation.

12 The College franchises two Edexcel HN programmes to partner colleges. Following a successful validation, the Royal Forest of Dean College began delivery of the HNC Computing programmes in September 2005. They are now in their last year of operation.

In meetings with the team, staff from the Royal Forest of Dean College confirmed that Gloucestershire College had provided appropriate support and oversight of the programmes. An HNC/D in Computing is offered using the College's HEFCE-funded student numbers at New College, Swindon. This New College programme is closely monitored by the College, through attendance at examination boards and an annual audit. The team was able to confirm that issues arising at an examination board in 2006 had been followed up and effectively resolved.

13 The importance of external examiners is recognised within the College and there are clear mechanisms for ensuring that their reports receive proper scrutiny. Incoming reports are firstly checked by the Principal and Vice Principal (Curriculum and Quality). They are then passed to the Quality Improvement Manager, who has responsibility for highlighting good practice for commendation and wider dissemination, in addition to following up issues raised in the reports and ensuring that appropriate action plans are developed and enacted.

14 An additional and notable feature of the College's quality arrangements is the system of monthly quality accounts for academic programmes. These accounts incorporate outstanding actions from external examiners' reports, complaints and their handling, and issues and good practice identified from teaching observations. They are presented to the College Management Team for consideration and action. The arrangements appear effective and are clearly communicated to teaching staff, who acknowledged their value in meetings during the Developmental engagement. The Learning and Teaching Standards Board will now assume responsibility for monitoring key points arising from the quality accounts, as well as final course results. The team considers that the system of quality accounts, by giving senior College management a clear and regular oversight of issues across the higher education provision, is an example of good practice.

15 Currently, unit and module data are collected locally and held in a variety of formats, which, as the College has recognised, makes it difficult to apply consistent analysis. The difficulties that this can cause for examination boards were confirmed in the Developmental engagement report. Consequently, the College is working closely with the developer of its management information system to ensure that more consistent data reports can be generated. All programmes are monitored termly against a set of key performance indicators that include retention, achievement and attendance. The Vice Principal (Curriculum and Quality) meets with directors of centres each month to review progress on programmes that the indicators show are underperforming. The College makes use of a diagnostic information tool called Statistics for Student Academic Review to generate individual student risk profiles. The effectiveness of the tool, which was developed in-house, was demonstrated during the Developmental engagement. The College was able to report significant progress with the diagnostic tool, which has been enhanced since the Developmental engagement and now provides cohort analysis. The risk-analysis approach to student and cohort monitoring represented by the Statistics for Student Academic Review tool is, the team concludes, an area of good practice.

16 The College reviews its quality assurance policies and procedures annually to ensure that they remain fit for purpose. The Learning and Teaching Standards Board will oversee all future evaluation and revision of policies and procedures as well as monitor key performance indicators from all of its provision to detect anomalies and problems. Higher education partners confirmed that their own annual monitoring processes would identify any issues that might need following up. In a meeting with the team, representatives of Edexcel and two of the partner higher education institutions strongly endorsed the College's close partnership working to ensure that the different procedures align well.

17 The College's arrangements for managing its higher education provision are appropriate for the current provision. However, with the imminent and significant growth of the higher education portfolio and increased engagement with its different higher education institution partners, the Learning and Teaching Standards Board and College Management Team will need a more focused oversight of higher education. This was recognised at the inaugural meeting of the Learning and Teaching Standards Board in a proposal to establish a higher education subcommittee. The College is therefore advised to consider ways of strengthening its oversight of the provision, such as to focus more clearly on higher education specific issues, enabling them to be readily identified and addressed. The team is of the view that this may be achieved without losing the synergies between further and higher education practice within the College. In keeping its management and quality structures under review, the College will also need to monitor the resources required for the effective oversight of its higher education provision to ensure that they remain appropriate for purpose.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

18 The Developmental engagement in assessment concluded that it was desirable to raise staff awareness of the Academic Infrastructure, including its purpose, application and how it had already been extensively mapped within the quality assurance systems of the College. The energetic manner in which the College is now engaging with the Academic Infrastructure is an example of good practice. In order to raise awareness, the College invited QAA to lead a workshop for staff teaching higher education in April 2007. The workshop was well attended and the College is now building on the event through further management dissemination and the updating of the information available to staff. A site for the Academic Infrastructure has also been set up on the College's virtual learning environment and is being visited frequently. The clearly designed site includes materials to promote general understanding, as well as links to pertinent sections of the QAA website. Early priorities for the College have included the more systematic use of the infrastructure to inform course design and validation procedures. Programme specifications and evidence of alignment to subject benchmark statements are now required as part of the validation scrutiny process.

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

19 It is a general requirement of the partnership agreements that programmes leading to awards from each partner higher education institution subscribe to the systems and procedures of that institution. The team is assured that these university procedures have been suitably informed by the Academic Infrastructure. The College's links with its partner higher education institutions are being actively developed and closer working relationships are being established. While the level of engagement varies, the College recognises and is appreciative of the constructive and supportive attitude of each partner higher education institution. The College is now seeking to agree a common framework for the management of its higher education provision with all three higher education institution partners. The team supports this initiative as an important underpinning feature of the College's proposed expansion of its higher education provision. The team recommends that the College continues to work constructively with the three higher education institutions towards the development of a common framework for the management of their partnerships. The College has well-established procedures for ensuring academic standards on its Edexcel awards. As confirmed during the Developmental engagement, the 2005-06 reports of external examiners provide assurance that standards are being maintained.

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

20 The College devotes significant funding to support internal and external staff development opportunities, some of which are mandatory. A Training Committee determines the topics that are covered in the College's own staff development programme. The choice of topics is informed by national initiatives, issues arising from quality assessments, and staff appraisal. Some priorities, such as the attainment of teaching qualifications, are determined by teaching and learning needs, and are covered in Core theme 2 of this report.

21 The maturing links with partner higher education institutions are leading to a range of staff development opportunities for College staff. This is evident in the invitation by the University of Worcester for College staff to attend training events coordinated by their teaching and quality units. More widely, College staff have also served as members of university validation panels. In one case, a member of College staff has served on an interview panel for an appointment to a partnership position in the higher education institution. These initiatives enhance the links between the College and partner higher education institutions. They also provide opportunities to strengthen staff awareness of the expectations of the awarding higher education institutions. The College also has a positive and longstanding working relationship with Edexcel. Overall, the team concludes that the College is working actively and effectively with its partners, the awarding higher education institutions and Edexcel, on a range of matters relating to the management and delivery of academic standards. This constructive approach to partnership is good practice and should be encouraged and developed.

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 The College has a clearly articulated management structure and well-defined responsibilities for the quality of learning on further and higher education programmes. The Quality Improvement Manager oversees all validations, awarding body nominees, external examiner and verifier reports, internal inspection, teaching and learning observations and college-wide self-assessment. The evidence available to the reviewers, including document trails, shows these procedures to be effective.

23 The impending appointment of a Director of Higher Education is an important development that will strengthen and help define the management of higher education within the College structures. It is pivotal to the ambitious plans to expand higher education provision, largely through the introduction of a raft of new FD awards. The planning for this expansion of FD awards is an example of good practice, having been underpinned by a rigorous marketing analysis, undertaken with the University of the West of England, Bristol and the University of Gloucestershire. There are two other key roles for the management of the quality of learning opportunities, both operating across further and higher education. The directors of academic centres oversee strategic curricular development and monitor standards and quality, while the Teaching and Learning Quality

Improvement Managers have responsibility for the enhancement of teaching and learning within academic centres.

24 An annual staff appraisal system reports on performance against job responsibilities and performance targets, taking account of teaching and learning observations. College staff are made aware of the requirements of awarding higher education institution partners through published collaborative working handbooks. The two HN awards franchised by the College operate through clear arrangements that reflect the guidance provided by Edexcel.

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

25 Representatives from partner higher education institutions confirmed to the team that the College is fulfilling its obligations in an effective and professional manner. The College-based programmes are subject to the same rigorous scrutiny through annual monitoring as those operating within the partner higher education institutions. The Quality Improvement Manager acts as the quality nominee for all Edexcel programmes.

26 The arrangements for dealing with external reports, including those of external examiners, ensure that they receive proper scrutiny. The College has responded promptly and thoroughly to the Developmental engagement report. The team was provided with a copy of the completed action plan and evidence of the progress already made in addressing some of the report's key recommendations. The responsiveness of the College has been impressive, given that the review visit took place fewer than five weeks after the College received the Developmental engagement report.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

27 The College's current engagement with the Academic Infrastructure is described in paragraph 18. The College internal validation process also includes clear procedures for testing the proposed learning opportunities, including improved checks to ensure alignment with the expectations of the Academic Infrastructure and the requirements of the relevant validating partner. This process is aided by a published validation checklist, which has been mapped to reflect the precepts of the relevant sections of the *Code of practice*. The system of quality accounts, described in paragraph 14 of this report, provides a rigorous process for ensuring that actions from validation reports are implemented and monitored. Student admission and support arrangements reflect the precepts of the relevant sections of the *Code of practice*.

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

28 The College is committed to providing high-quality teaching and learning across all of its higher education programmes. In direct response to requests from staff teaching higher education programmes, it is piloting a new teaching observation scheme, designed specifically for the higher education provision. The pilot scheme is using experienced higher education staff from within the College as observers and includes as one of its aims that it will lead to a full peer observation scheme in the future. The pilot is based on a model developed by Solihull College and is identified as good practice. It is intended that the new scheme will, for the higher education provision, replace existing College arrangements that

operate across further and higher education. It combines the objective evaluation of sessions, including a grade, with self-reflection and a development plan on the part of the teacher being observed. In addition, sets of observations will be used to produce a subject teaching overview report. The outcomes of individual sessions feed into the appraisal process, while the overview report will generate themes to be taken up in annual course reviews. The scheme is well documented, with clear guidance for participants. The higher education teaching observation scheme is still at the pilot stage, but its design and documentation have been very well considered and have the potential to develop as good practice. It has been further refined in direct response to recommendations made in the Developmental engagement report.

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

29 Students are supported through both academic and pastoral tutorials. Full-time students receive a greater allocation of tutorial time than part-time learners. The College provides guidance about the support students might expect to receive, but the method by which it is delivered is decided by the academic area. Programmes validated by a partner higher education institution are subject to the support requirements of that institution. For the HN awards, some areas operate a flexible drop-in system, while others have a more structured tutorial timetable. Students are appreciative of the additional informal support they receive from staff, who they regard as accessible and helpful. Staff in some areas are developing the use of online feedback and support. While this has considerable future potential, part-time students highlight the email communication with staff as being a particularly successful feature of the present arrangements.

30 The College provides encouragement for all courses to have student representatives, but the take-up is inconsistent. The representatives have a brief to bring the views of their group to discussions with the staff team and are invited to course meetings. In a meeting with the reviewers, current higher education students expressed satisfaction that their views are welcomed and acted upon, but were not all clear about the role of their representatives in the process. While acknowledging the efforts already made, the team recommends that the College should look at ways to strengthen the participation of students in the operation and monitoring of their academic programmes. This might include more structured support and training for student representatives, to ensure they are better prepared to undertake the role. Regular student perception surveys take place at course and college levels. The outcomes are analysed at appropriate levels, including, in future, at the Learning and Teaching Standards Board. The College has reflected on the reasons why students did not produce a written submission and is looking at ways to strengthen the organisation of higher education students and the channels of communication with them.

31 A further perception of students and former students is that they feel little sense of a clear higher education learning culture. They report that there are few opportunities for general interaction or to undertake academic work with higher education students from other areas. This reflects the views expressed by some students during the Developmental engagement. As a consequence, it is recommended that the College give consideration to how it might promote an increased sense of higher education identity for students that fosters more interaction between academic disciplines. In making this recommendation, the team recognises that the College is in a phase of significant development, with its plans for higher education growth, campus relocation and the consideration being given to an HE Academy.

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

32 The positive approach taken by the College to staff development is underpinned by the work of the Teaching and Learning Quality Improvement Managers and Advanced Practitioners. The Teaching and Learning Quality Improvement Managers take a leading role in initiating developments, with the intention of enhancing the quality of teaching and learning. The nine Advanced Practitioners work across the College, in further and higher education. The Developmental engagement report acknowledged their work in supporting individual staff to develop their practice in teaching, learning and assessment, and in promoting good practice. It was reported to the team that the College is now considering the appointment of an Advanced Practitioner specifically for higher education. The work of the Teaching and Learning Quality Improvement Managers and Advanced Practitioners, as well as that of the HE Practitioners Group described in paragraph 10, is effective in promoting enhancement. The good practice that it clearly represents might be further developed through increased coordination between the higher education roles of the different groups.

33 The team received confirmation that all staff who deliver higher education have a formal teaching qualification, many having attended the College-taught internal Certificate in Education or PGCE (FE). The College allocates funds to support staff to pursue higher qualifications. It is encouraging that a number are undertaking study for doctoral and master's awards at partner higher education institutions. Academic staff are also required to keep themselves updated professionally and to maintain a record of these development activities which contributes to the annual appraisal process. During the College administration weeks, staff are encouraged to spend time in industry as part of their skills updating. A research forum has recently been established to support those staff who wish to continue with or undertake research and other scholarly activity. Although still at a very early stage, this is a welcome development, as is the College's wish to enhance the role of the forum.

34 Overall, the College commitment to the professional and academic development of its staff is evident in the range of activities and opportunities that are available. The team regards the expansion of the higher education provision and continuing demands on staff time as likely to put increased pressure on the provision of such support. Given its importance for the quality of the higher education provision, the College is encouraged to explore ways of providing support for staff to continue benefiting from staff development, scholarly activity and professional updating. This might include further consideration of ways in which the many existing initiatives can be better coordinated.

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?

35 There are a number of procedures for ensuring that learning resources are sufficient for the programmes and accessible to students. At the validation stage, whether this is by the awarding body or conducted internally, consideration is given to the human and physical resources required. The team was able to track this process within validation documentation. In the case of awards of partner universities, routine monitoring includes the production of annual monitoring reports, collaborative reports and annual meetings with programme teams. All of these procedures include a consideration of the necessary human and physical resources. The College's internal procedures offer similar monitoring checks, including the opportunity for students to comment in feedback questionnaires. The reports of QAA subject review show that resources were appropriate in each of the subject areas visited.

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?

36 The general information that is published by the College and used by prospective students consists mainly of the higher education prospectus and the course information leaflets, which are available in printed form and electronically. Mainly for use on-course, the College produces programme specifications for its higher education courses, as well as unit specifications. The programme specifications are supplemented and sometimes subsumed by comprehensive and detailed course handbooks. In addition, module guides, assignment briefs and schedules, and formal programme induction documents are all provided at the subject level. Overarching published information includes relevant college policies and procedures, and internal validation strategies. The College Management Team is responsible for the College's Student Charter, which is centrally published and updated annually.

What arrangements do 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 Developmental engagement acknowledged the rigorous 'three-stage literature approval process' as a feature of good practice. The process requires approval by key stakeholders before a document goes into final production and includes explicit checks on accuracy at the second and third stages. The team welcomes the fact that since the Developmental engagement, this good practice in literature approval is being extended beyond publications that are within the remit of the College public relations department. With oversight by the HE Practitioners Group, it is now being adopted to ensure the accuracy of course handbooks and programme specifications. The three-stage literature approval process is confirmed as good practice and the team welcome its wider dissemination and application.

38 The College is developing a new website, with the intention of improving its appearance and making it more user-friendly, particularly for students. It is being developed by an external company, but to a specification that has been informed by student feedback. The site will incorporate a 'Google-style' search facility that better reflects student expectations. Public relations and information technology staff offered assurance that the three-stage literature approval process will be used for published College information on the new site.

39 There are appropriate mechanisms in place to ensure the reliability and accuracy of information published in association with other institutions. For the further education college offering a Gloucestershire College programme, the content of published materials has been checked by staff of the College through the link arrangements. For information published by the College about the awards of partner higher education institutions, there are formal checks, supported by guidance. The core information to be published is agreed as part of the approval and validation process. The partnership agreements and supporting documents provide overarching guidance on the nature and style of what can be published. The agreement with the University of the West of England, Bristol offers quite detailed guidance and the College is seeking to build a similar level of specificity into other

agreements.

40 During the Developmental engagement, students from across different areas of the higher education provision confirmed that the published information available to them prior to enrolment and during induction is reliable and accurate. However, a small number, all mature entrants, reported some difficulties. These related to initial difficulties encountered at the point of initial contact with the College, whether through the telephone switchboard or in navigating the website. All confirmed that information was readily provided once contact had been made with appropriate staff in the relevant academic school. A further development of published marketing information has resulted in a move in 2006 to an electronic (web-based) system of course information sheets. This is seen by the College as being more responsive and easier to keep up to date than the printed format used previously. The College recognises the importance of providing explicit information on formal progression routes and opportunities as its portfolio of FDs grows. It is currently undertaking a mapping exercise with this in mind.

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

41 The on-site activities for the Developmental engagement in student assessment were completed in March 2007. It was structured around the following lines of enquiry agreed with the College:

- How does the College assure itself that it is fulfilling its obligations to ensure that the standards of assessment decisions in arts and media, education and engineering programmes meet the requirements of the validating partner (University of the West of England) and the awarding body (Edexcel)?
- How does the College assure itself that it is fulfilling its obligations to record and document student academic progress in programmes for arts and media, education and engineering?
- To what extent does the College provide varied and appropriate formative assessment opportunities for students of arts and media, education and engineering?
- To what extent does the College provide timely, individual, empowering, developmental feedback to students? To what extent is a variety of appropriate feedback mechanisms used?
- Can reliance be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about student assessment?

Based upon discussion with staff and students and scrutiny of evidence provided by the College, the Developmental engagement concluded that, in the context of the scope of the engagement, the College discharges its responsibilities effectively, as set out in the relevant partnership agreement, for the management and delivery of the standards and the quality of learning opportunities for the awards it offers on behalf of its awarding bodies. The Developmental engagement also concluded 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.

42 In the course of the Developmental engagement, the team identified much good practice that it judged was worthy of wider dissemination. This included the system of quality accounts used for quality assurance monitoring and the role of Advanced Practitioners as agents for change and enhancement. The engagement found that assessment is enhanced in some areas by the use of innovative formative assessments and the involvement of external professional practitioners. A College-devised system for identifying students at risk and the rigorous three-stage literature approval process for published information were also judged to be examples of good practice.

43 The most significant recommendations identified in the Developmental engagement related to the need to establish the Learning and Teaching Standards Board and to address the bunching of student assignments in one academic area. Other recommendations were largely focused on building upon existing initiatives. These included raising staff awareness of the Academic Infrastructure and improving consistency in such areas as programme documentation and the use of student progression data. The Developmental engagement also encouraged the introduction of more diverse assessment approaches and further refinement of the assessment feedback given to students, the high quality of which had been commended by external examiners.

D Foundation Degrees

44 The College currently runs one FD, in Early Years, validated by the University of Gloucestershire. It has ambitious plans to expand the provision substantially by 2010. A strategic approach to FD development has been facilitated by the feasibility study into a designated HE Academy in Gloucester, in partnership with the University of Gloucestershire and the University of the West of England, Bristol. The College is also working closely with the University of Worcester in specific niche areas such as criminology. The areas identified for FD development are those that meet the priorities of the regional economic strategic plan. The demand-led approach to sector priorities is appropriate for ensuring strong employer engagement. There are currently six FDs undergoing validation for 2007-08, in mechanical engineering, creative pathways, higher-level teaching assistants, construction, holistic therapies and hospitality management. A further 14 new programmes are planned for 2008-09 and eight more for 2009-10.

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

45 The Summative review team 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 offered on behalf of its awarding bodies. This was based upon discussion with staff and students and scrutiny of evidence provided by Gloucestershire College and its awarding bodies Edexcel, the University of the West of England, Bristol, the University of Gloucestershire and the University of Worcester.

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

- the planning process for the substantial increase in FD awards, which has been underpinned by a rigorous marketing analysis, undertaken with two of its partner higher education institutions (paragraphs 6, 23)
- the system of quality accounts, which gives senior College management a clear and

regular oversight of issues across the higher education provision (paragraph 14)

- the locally developed Statistics for Student Academic Review, a risk-analysis approach to student and cohort monitoring (paragraph 15)
- the College's energetic approach to improving its engagement with the Academic Infrastructure (paragraph 18)
- the constructive approach to partnership, in concert with responsive awarding higher education institutions and Edexcel (paragraph 21)
- the roles of the Teaching and Learning Quality Improvement Managers, Advanced Practitioners and the Higher Education Practitioners Group. They are effective agents for enhancement whose work would now benefit from increased coordination (paragraph 10, 32)
- the three-stage literature approval process and initiatives to ensure its wider dissemination and application (paragraph 37).

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

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

- to develop its oversight of provision such as to focus more clearly on higher education-specific issues, enabling them to be readily identified and addressed (paragraph 17)
- to strengthen the participation of students in the operation and monitoring of their academic programmes (paragraph 31).

The team also agreed a number of areas where it would be **desirable** for the College to take action:

- to continue working with its higher education institution partners towards developing a common framework for the management of their partnerships (paragraph 19)
- to foster a stronger higher education learning culture among students that promotes more interaction between academic disciplines (paragraph 31)
- to explore ways of providing future support for staff to benefit from professional development, scholarly activity and professional updating. This should take account of the existing range of effective initiatives and their coordination (paragraphs 20, 21, 32 to 34).

48 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.

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

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

50 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.

Gloucestershire College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2007						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
In the course of the SR, the review team identified the following areas of good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the planning process for the substantial increase in Foundation Degree awards, which has been underpinned by a rigorous marketing analysis, undertaken with two of its partner HEIs (paragraphs 6, 23) 	<p>Continue to work closely with all three partner universities</p> <p>Joint meetings to be set up to continue to identify Foundation Degrees for development</p>	<p>Over the next three years</p> <p>Throughout 07/08 and 08/09</p>	<p>Senior Management Team</p> <p>Director of HE Partners</p>	<p>Establishment of a suite of Foundation Degrees that meet the local social and economic needs</p>	<p>LTSB</p> <p>Governors</p> <p>SMT</p>	<p>Annual Review against targets set in strategic plan</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the system of quality accounts, which gives senior College management a clear and regular oversight of issues across the higher education provision (paragraph 14) 	<p>Continue to collate the information for quality accounts</p> <p>Consider separating the</p>	<p>Throughout the academic year</p>	<p>Quality Improvement Manager</p>	<p>Actions completed against target dates</p> <p>Good practice shared throughout the</p>	<p>LTSB</p> <p>Governors</p> <p>SMT</p>	<p>Annual review for SED will consider effectiveness of the accounts system</p>

Gloucestershire College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2007						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
	higher and further education sections			organisation		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the locally developed Statistics for Student Academic Review, a risk analysis approach to student and cohort monitoring (paragraph 15) 	Continue to develop the system - adding some more details on target setting	September 2007	Director of Information systems	Evidence that students are receiving support as a result of the system	LTSB SMT Governors	Annual Review of student progress, through exam boards will consider use of STARS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the College's energetic approach to improving its engagement with the Academic Infrastructure (paragraph 18) 	Ensure that all staff who are new to the college and are working on HE receive an introduction to the Academic Infrastructure during induction Run regular cross-college update sessions during staff	Start September 2007 October 2007 June 2008	Training Officer Quality Improvement Manager	Staff can answer questions on what the Academic Infrastructure is Documents are designed to reflect the Academic Infrastructure	LTSB SMT Governors	Quality of documents and the SED

Gloucestershire College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2007						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
	development days Task the HE sub committee to recommend ways of continuing raising the profile					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the constructive approach to partnership, in concert with responsive awarding HEIs and Edexcel (paragraph 21) 	<p>Continue to work closely with all three partner universities</p> <p>Joint meetings to be set up to continue to identify areas where collaboration can be brought to bear</p>	<p>Continuously</p> <p>Over the next three years</p>	<p>Senior Management Team</p> <p>Director of HE</p> <p>HE Partners</p>	<p>Positive feedback from course review and SEDs which reflect the positive feeling</p>	<p>LTSB</p> <p>SMT</p> <p>Governors</p>	<p>Quality of SED</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the roles of the Teaching and Learning Quality Improvement 	<p>Continue to develop the role of the</p>	<p>June 2008</p>	<p>VP Curriculum and Quality</p>	<p>Improvement in the quality of teaching at HE level</p>	<p>LTSB</p>	<p>Grade profile improves</p>

Gloucestershire College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2007						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
Managers, Advanced Practitioners and the HE Practitioners Group. They are effective agents for enhancement whose work would now benefit from increased coordination (paragraph 10, 32)	Teaching and Quality Improvement Managers and the Advanced Practitioners. Steer the focus of at least one Advanced Practitioner to look at HE Continue to develop the work of the Higher Education sub-group and give at least one action to focus on HE delivery	June 2008	Director of HE	Positive actions from the meetings	SMT	Success rates improve Actions drive improvement

Gloucestershire College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2007						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the three-stage literature approval process and initiatives to ensure its wider dissemination and application (paragraph 37) 	<p>Ensure that all documents for publication are submitted through the three stage process</p> <p>Use the Higher Education sub committee to work with the departments to ensure that the internal documents go through the three-stage process</p>	<p>June 2008</p> <p>June 2008</p>	<p>Director Marketing and Student Services</p> <p>Director HE</p>	<p>All documents are accurate</p> <p>Consistency of approach to documents within the college</p>	<p>LTSB</p> <p>Governors</p> <p>SMT</p>	<p>No complaints received about accuracy of material</p> <p>Positive feedback from staff and students</p>

Gloucestershire College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2007						
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The review team agreed upon a number of areas where the College should be advised to take action:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to develop its oversight of provision such as to focus more clearly on HE-specific issues, enabling them to be readily identified and addressed (paragraph 17) 	<p>The main focus will be to open an HE Centre close to the Gloucestershire College campus in Gloucester</p> <p>Support services to be clearly defined with an HE focus</p> <p>Clear HE branding</p> <p>Confirm appointment of a full time HE partnership</p>	<p>September 2008</p> <p>September 2008</p> <p>September 2007</p> <p>August 2007</p>	<p>All College Managers</p> <p>Director Marketing and Student Services</p> <p>Director Marketing and Student Services</p> <p>Vice Principal</p>	<p>A successful vibrant Centre which is full of students</p> <p>Good feedback from students on the support they receive</p> <p>A brand that is recognisable at home and abroad</p> <p>Successful appraisal for this member of staff, which</p>	<p>LTSB</p> <p>SMT</p> <p>Governors</p> <p>HEIs</p>	<p>Student and staff focus groups carry out annual review to evaluate the progress being made with the ethos and culture. This to be reflected in the SED</p>

Gloucestershire College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2007						
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
	<p>manager</p> <p>The establishment of an HE sub-committee by the Learning and Teaching Standards Board</p> <p>Staff conditions of service will be reviewed particularly teaching and CPD for staff delivering HE programmes, endeavouring to become more in line with the Universities</p>	<p>October 2007</p> <p>June 2008</p>	<p>Director of HE</p> <p>Vice Principal</p>	<p>reflects positive outcomes for the role</p> <p>Positive actions that confirm the HE brand arise from this group</p>		

Gloucestershire College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2007						
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to strengthen the participation of students in the operation and monitoring of their academic programmes (paragraph 31) 	<p>Establish an HE Student Union</p> <p>This will be supported by one of the HEIs</p>	January 2008	Director of Marketing and Student Services	<p>Thriving student union with good membership and activities</p>	<p>LTSB</p> <p>SMT</p> <p>Governors</p>	<p>Monitoring of student feedback</p>
	<p>Student representatives to be nominated for each course</p> <p>Student forums to be established</p>	October 2007	Director HE	<p>All courses to have a nominated active rep</p> <p>Positive outcomes from these forums which result in a better student experience</p> <p>Evidence that students have had an input into assessment vehicles or design of course</p>	<p>Students' Union</p>	<p>Student contribution to the SED will reflect their commitment and views of the college</p>
	<p>Students to be encouraged to help in design of programmes</p>	September 2008				

Gloucestershire College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2007						
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
	<p>Students Facebook to be established to help exchange ideas and services</p> <p>Pro Monitor to be investigated for use with HE students to track academic progress. Regular reporting mechanism to be established</p>	<p>September 2007</p> <p>September 2008</p>	<p>Director of Systems</p>	<p>Evidence that students are using this for the intended purpose</p> <p>Evidence that the system is in active use and evaluation from staff that it is of benefit to them</p>		

Gloucestershire College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2007						
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The review team agreed the following areas where it would be desired to take action:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to continue working with its higher education institution partners towards developing a common framework for the management of their partnerships (paragraph 19) 	Series of meetings to be established to design a series of protocols which make up a framework that all parties can agree to	June 2008	Quality Improvement Manager Higher Education Partnership Manager Director of HE Reps from HEIs	A framework that is agreeable to all parties Systems that are common and make delivery easy for staff	LTSB Governors SMT	Simplicity of systems are reflected in course review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to foster a stronger higher education learning culture among students that promotes more interaction between academic disciplines (paragraph 31) 	See Advisable recommendation 1 The actions will meet this recommendation					

Gloucestershire College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2007						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to explore ways of providing future support for staff to benefit from professional development, scholarly activity and professional updating. This should take account of the existing range of effective initiatives and their coordination (paragraphs 20, 21, 24, 32 to 34) 	<p>Staff will be able to access CPD at all partner HEIs</p> <p>Whole college training day will be devoted to staff training. There will be inputs from HEIs on this day</p>	<p>For the duration of the partnerships</p> <p>October 2007</p>	<p>VP with responsibility for HE</p> <p>Director of HE</p>	<p>Improved profile of staff CPD with a focus on HE</p> <p>Positive evaluations and staff achieving new skills</p>	<p>LTSB</p> <p>SMT</p> <p>Governors</p>	<p>Annual Review should show increase in staff qualifications.</p> <p>This will be reflected in the SE</p>
	<p>Development of master's qualifications at UWE and UofG which Gloucestershire College can access</p> <p>Review of terms and conditions for staff who teach HE in FE</p>	<p>January 2008</p> <p>June 2008</p>	<p>Director of HR</p>	<p>Majority of staff who are working on HE are achieving at master's level</p> <p>Staff have conditions which allow for research and development</p>		

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