



# **Integrated quality and enhancement review**

**Summative review**

**Grantham College**

**May 2011**

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## **Preface**

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

## **Purpose of IQER**

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

## **The IQER process**

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

## **Developmental engagement**

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

The main elements of a Developmental engagement are:

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

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

## Summative review

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

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

## Evidence

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

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

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

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

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

## Outcomes of IQER

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

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

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

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

## Executive summary

### The Summative review of Grantham College carried out in May 2011

As a result of its investigations, the Summative review team (the team) considers that there can be **confidence** in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreements, for the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of its awarding bodies. The team also considers that there can be **confidence** in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreements, for the quality of learning opportunities it offers. The team considers that reliance **can** be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

### Good practice

The team has identified the following good practice for dissemination:

- staff are actively involved in the application of the Academic Infrastructure, which has enhanced course design through the definition of appropriate academic standards, teaching and learning for different levels, and assessment guidelines for students
- the College management of staff development is embedded in the annual quality cycle, ensures the participation of all staff and stimulates reflection and sharing of good practice
- the College ensures that all new higher education teaching staff are appropriately qualified and well supported during their probationary period
- there is a high level of engagement and effective communication with employers in all aspects of programme design and delivery
- there is a coherent and well-implemented strategy for the use of integrated learning technology across all programmes
- the virtual learning environment is effectively managed to provide accurate and complete information for students.

### 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:

- consider ways in which the existing devolved style of management can be supplemented to provide a more strategic oversight and monitoring of the higher education provision.

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

- develop the existing documentation that gives an overview of the use of the Academic Infrastructure into an operational working tool to further enhance practice
- review module handbooks to ensure all students receive appropriate information on the relation between practical tasks and module learning outcomes and links between assessment criteria and intended learning outcomes

- consider ways to ensure the use of course journals is developed further to ensure that higher education features more prominently in self-assessment reports and review processes at curriculum and College levels
- ensure that student views on the quality of pre and in-course information they receive are formally collected.

## 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 Grantham 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 De Montfort University, the University of Lincoln and the University of Bedfordshire. The review was carried out by Ms Jane Durant, Mr John Holloway and Ms Susan Miller (reviewers) and Dr Gordon Edwards (coordinator).

2 The Summative review team (the team) conducted the review in agreement with the College and in accordance with *The handbook for Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review* (the handbook), published by QAA. Evidence in support of the Summative review included documentation supplied by the College and awarding bodies; meetings with staff, students, employers and partner institutions; and reports of reviews by QAA. 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 Grantham College is a small to medium sized general further education college serving a predominantly rural area and operating on five sites in Grantham and one in the neighbouring town of Sleaford. It was established over 60 years ago and there are approximately 5800 students currently enrolled at the College. The College's higher education provision is indirectly funded and operates through collaborative partnerships with three higher education institutions. The higher education provision mainly attracts students who are in employment in education, the health services and the armed forces, and those returning to education. There are currently 166 higher education enrolments, of which 154 are part-time. This is equivalent to 100.75 full-time students. The following higher education programmes are currently offered by the College. The HEFCE-funded full-time equivalent students on each programme are given in parentheses.

### De Montfort University

- FdSc/University Certificate of Professional Development Children, Families and Community Health (19.5)
- HND/C Electrical and Electronic Engineering (8.75)
- HND/C Mechanical Engineering (6.5)
- FdA Design Crafts (4)

### University of Bedfordshire

- FdSc Sports Coaching (11)
- HND Sports Science (2)



- PGCE/Certificate in Post-Compulsory Education (18)
- University Diploma Teaching Mathematics in the Lifelong Learning Sector (2)
- HND/C Electrical and Electronic Engineering (8.5)
- HND/C Mechanical Engineering (7.5)
- FdSc Children, Families and Community Health (5)

### **University of Lincoln**

- FdSc Complementary Approaches to Health and Social Care (8)

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

5 The responsibilities of the College are outlined in collaborative partnership agreements with the three awarding bodies. These place somewhat different management responsibilities on the College. To help ensure a common understanding in each case, the College has developed additional checklists to highlight detailed responsibilities across a range of academic processes and outputs. Programme managers in the College liaise with specific link tutors in the relevant university departments, and additional regular contacts are in place at other management levels.

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

6 In December 2009, De Montfort University notified the College of its intention to end the collaborative agreement but to honour its commitments to existing students who are now in years two and three. The HND/C engineering programmes and the Foundation Degree in Children, Families and Community Health have therefore been revalidated and transferred to the University of Bedfordshire for students enrolling in 2010-11. The HND/C Sports Science programme was replaced by the Foundation Degree in Sports Coaching for new enrolments at the start of the 2010-11 academic year, and the Foundation Degree in Design Crafts is no longer recruiting new students. In April 2010, the University of Lincoln also advised the College of its intention to end its partnership agreement in 2011.

7 One of the main objectives of the College's higher education strategy, which was drafted at the start of the 2009-10 academic year, is to 'extend provision at Levels 4 and 5 and widen access to higher education programmes in the area'. While this is still a long-term goal, the changes to collaborative arrangements, along with the cap on higher education student numbers, have resulted in an adjustment. Development activity in the short to medium term is now being focused on the revalidation of existing programmes with the University of Bedfordshire.

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

8 Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the Summative review team. A submission was prepared and made available before the visit. Its preparation was facilitated by an independent College staff member who led student workshops and visited student groups. The total number of students participating was 52, representing 32 per cent of the higher education students at the College. A representative group of students met the team during the visit and students were also briefed by the review coordinator at the preparatory meeting.

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

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

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

9 Executive responsibility for academic standards and quality of learning opportunities rests with the partner awarding bodies as specified in the relevant collaborative agreements. The College is responsible for ensuring compliance with the relevant awarding body quality assurance processes. Line management responsibility for all higher education collaborative arrangements rests with the Deputy Principal; higher education quality assurance management responsibility sits with the Director of Quality and the Higher Education Coordinator. Operational responsibility for individual higher education programmes is managed by a head of curriculum for each area.

10 The College manages the differing arrangements across the three awarding bodies in a range of ways, devolving many responsibilities to teaching staff. Liaison occurs between the module coordinators in the College and the module leaders within the awarding bodies. Curriculum managers have a significant role in monitoring liaison at course and module level, and also in advising senior staff about changes to the awarding bodies' academic regulations and procedures. Senior College staff also liaise with their awarding body counterparts over relevant matters.

11 Reporting connections within the committee structure that considers academic standards are laid out in a higher education management structure diagram. The College publishes terms of reference for the various committees and a calendar of the quality assurance activities. Responsibility within committees is delegated to the curriculum managers who report to the Higher Education Group, chaired by the Higher Education Coordinator. The Higher Education Group liaises with the Curriculum and Quality Group which meets fortnightly to consider operational management issues. Both of these groups liaise with the Standards Committee. This committee has an overview of academic standards of both higher and further education programmes. Its remit includes developing, monitoring and reviewing strategies to enhance academic standards, to set performance indicators, to monitor outcomes and to advise on the effectiveness of staff development expenditure.

12 The College puts an emphasis upon managing higher education standards at the level of curriculum areas and courses, which results in a close working relationship between the teaching staff and their counterparts at the three awarding bodies. The arrangements are appropriate for the oversight of academic standards at course level, particularly given the relatively small number of higher education students involved. However, this devolved approach does not ensure a full and proactive oversight of academic standards by higher management within the College, which is important for maintaining appropriate consistency of practice and action planning across the provision. The approach also tends to encourage the development of reactive processes. It is therefore advisable for the College to consider ways in which the existing devolved style of management can be supplemented to address these matters.

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

13 The three awarding bodies are responsible, as part of validation, for establishing academic standards that are consistent with those referred to in *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*. All College staff teams have members who have contributed to course development and validation. These staff have therefore considered and applied the Academic Infrastructure in the development of the programme specifications and module descriptors. An overview of the Academic Infrastructure is outlined in a recently produced College document entitled: *The Academic Infrastructure at Grantham College*. This defines the components of the Academic Infrastructure, and also provides references to enable staff to locate further information on the web and within separate college-produced documents. It is desirable that the document is now developed into an operational working tool to further enhance practice.

14 There is clear evidence that staff understand the Academic Infrastructure. For example, staff have recognised some issues around the matching of teaching and learning strategy to academic levels. These have been raised with the relevant awarding body and amendments made. An understanding of the Academic Infrastructure has also allowed staff to enhance some module handbooks following validation. For example, they have related practical tasks explicitly to learning outcomes, and provided information on enhancing student understanding of the links between assessment criteria and the learning outcomes. It is desirable that all module handbooks are reviewed and similarly enhanced. Overall, staff familiarity with and active involvement in the application of the Academic Infrastructure has enhanced course design and is good practice. It contributes strongly to the definition of appropriate standards at validation, teaching and learning needs at different levels, and the enhancement of assessment guidelines for students.

15 Assessments in the HNC/D engineering courses, the FD in Children, Families and Community Health and the FD in Complementary Therapies, have been designed by College staff in line with the collaborative agreements and the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*. In the case of the PGCE/Certificate in Post-Compulsory Education and University Diploma in Teaching Mathematics, assessments have been developed by the awarding body but with strong input from the College as one of the consortium partners.

### **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?**

16 The three collaboration agreements outline the basic areas of responsibility placed upon the College by the awarding bodies in respect of academic standards. The responsibilities are broadly similar but there are some differences, for example in regard to setting assessments. Here, the awarding body supplies assignment briefs in one case, and in other cases this is a College responsibility with subsequent awarding body verification. Awarding body representatives confirm that the College is meeting its obligations in relation to academic standards and in many cases exceeding them. For example, in the area of teacher education, a Grantham College staff member has contributed strongly to developing new ideas and the enhancement of assessment practices across all partner Colleges in the consortium.

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

17 As well as facilitating access to awarding body development days, the College places a strong overall emphasis on a regime of higher education-specific staff development

opportunities that are embedded into the annual quality cycle. These events, for which external expert facilitators are engaged, are mandatory for both full-time and part-time staff. Opportunities are given for staff to reflect on their own and best practice, and to share approaches across courses. A range of thematic sessions have been offered recently, covering the nature of higher education compared to further education, higher level learning and the development of independent learning. These sessions are well attended and follow-up sessions are organised by the Higher Education Coordinator or mentors as appropriate. The management of higher education-specific staff development is an area of good practice.

18 In accordance with its collaboration agreements and the College's higher education strategy, the College aims to ensure the suitability of all staff recruited to teach on the higher education courses. It checks that staff are appropriately qualified, or have considerable vocational experience, and provides mentoring by a staff member who is both suitably qualified and experienced. During their probationary period, staff who are new to teaching in higher education engage in professional discussions following the moderation of their work. They are also required to attend continuing professional development and review sessions that have a higher education focus. New staff are also encouraged to attend staff training and moderation events held by awarding bodies. In the past, the College has provided cover for staff to attend these events and has paid part-time staff to attend where necessary. These overall arrangements for the induction of new staff teaching on higher education programmes constitute good practice.

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

19 The responsibilities for the strategic and operational management of the quality of learning opportunities are broadly the same as those for managing the delivery of academic standards, outlined in paragraphs 9-12. Within the College, the Higher Education Coordinator and Director of Quality are responsible for assuring partner awarding bodies of the quality of learning experiences of students and for ensuring compliance with the universities' quality assurance processes. The Higher Education Coordinator has clearly defined responsibilities relating to higher education. Job descriptions for curriculum and programme heads subsume responsibilities for higher education into their roles. The Higher Education Coordinator devolves a significant amount of responsibility to the heads of curriculum for the management and monitoring of aspects of quality at programme level.

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

20 Following successful initial validation, dialogue on the quality of learning opportunities continues with awarding bodies in a number of ways, centred on the quality assurance cycle. A review of the effectiveness of these processes is undertaken by the Director of Quality and the Vice Principal, Curriculum and Quality. Processes include the

annual monitoring and self-assessment reports, external examiner reports, moderation of assessment, liaison with the university programme tutor and unit coordinator, and the multi-collegiate network meetings. The university assures the quality of the College staff working on the programme at initial validation and a subsequent review whenever a new member of staff is appointed.

21 Effective measures have been taken to address a range of actions arising from the Developmental engagement. These relate to centralised assignment submission, the timely return of assessed work and a pilot exercise for the use of plagiarism software. While clear actions have been taken in response to the Developmental engagement, the responsibility for monitoring progress on individual items is delegated. As a consequence, there has been no formal monitoring of the overall action plan to provide higher level management assurance of its successful progress. It is advisable for the College to consider ways in which this can be addressed.

22 There are established good practice groups in the areas of integrated learning technology and adult education. These comprise teachers and managers, and provide a core mechanism for the dissemination and sharing of good practice in teaching and learning. Group members are responsible for transferring good practice to departmental colleagues. These groups have the clear potential to be effective agents for the wider transfer of good practice across departments, although it is unclear whether they are fulfilling this role at present. The well regarded joint study days are an effective vehicle for sharing good practice between staff and their university colleagues on the teacher education programmes.

23 The College requires all course teams to maintain a course journal. This valuable management instrument provides evidence for tracking issues and actions undertaken to enhance the quality of learning opportunities on higher education programmes. The regularly updated journals include external examiner reports, internal review documents, monitoring reports and student feedback. For some courses the file also contains link tutor visit comments. These journals are regularly reviewed by the Higher Education Coordinator and the Head of Quality. Issues raised in course journals relating to higher education are then required to be fed into curriculum area self-assessment reports and the College self-assessment document. However, the higher education programmes are under-represented in these curriculum and College level self-assessments. In light of this, it is desirable for the College to consider ways to ensure that the use of course journals is developed further to ensure that higher education features more prominently in the self-assessment reports and review processes at curriculum and College levels.

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

24 Over the past three years the College has used the development, validation and revalidation of higher education programmes as a key mechanism to increase staff awareness of the application of the Academic Infrastructure to enhance the quality of learning opportunities. Many examples exist of the benefits of this awareness. For instance, the level of support arrangements made by the College for engineering students employed in the Armed Forces is noteworthy. These students can be deployed on military operations at short notice and for considerable lengths of time, but students confirm that this situation is managed effectively to avoid disruption to their studies. Other examples exist in relation to the planning of initial student interviews and assessments to give indication of particular needs, support for disabled sports students, and careers guidance built into taught modules.

25 There is a high level of employer engagement in the design and validation of many of the programmes, which is fully in line with the Foundation Degree qualification benchmark statement and the College ethos. Employers of College students, and College staff confirm the value of employer engagement. They cite examples including enhanced communication,

the identification of guest speakers, understanding non-standard entry opportunities, ensuring accessibility to meet differing needs and ensuring the positive and early benefit of higher education programmes to employers. The management of employer engagement across the programmes is good practice.

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

26 The College's Teaching and Learning Strategy provides a clear focus on the aspiration to provide high quality teaching and learning. A range of standard formal and informal practices is used to achieve this, including informal ongoing discussions, teaching and learning observations, student evaluation at modular and programme levels, the work of the Higher Education Group, annual visits from awarding body representatives and student surveys. The outcomes from student surveys and meetings are shared with partner awarding bodies through the annual monitoring reports.

27 Teaching observations completed within the College are one of the key data sets used to judge the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Graded outcomes are reported to and monitored by senior managers. For teachers, the outcomes of an observation are used to inform the appraisal process and professional development planning. The approach is currently aligned mainly with further education requirements. The College recognises that this is not fully appropriate, and is revising its approach to require observers to have more knowledge and awareness of higher education. The current profile of observation grades for higher education lecturers indicates that all observed sessions have been judged to be at least good. The teaching of guest lecturers is monitored informally by College staff.

28 Students have access to numerous opportunities to engage with College staff and give feedback on the standards of teaching and learning. Students express high levels of satisfaction with teaching. In the National Student Survey for 2009, 92 per cent of students agreed that teaching was good. The results of internal surveys support this high level of satisfaction. The student written submission confirms that teachers have good subject and industrial knowledge, and effective teaching skills. Where issues have been raised by students they have been addressed effectively through the Higher Education Group.

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

29 In accordance with collaborative partnership arrangements students are entitled to access awarding body and College support services. All students are allocated a personal tutor. Following initial assessment at the start of their programme, or should the need arise during the programme, students receive individual support as appropriate. A specialist tutor for study skills is available for individual or group support. The well-qualified College librarian and members of the Learning Resources Support Team are proactive in their support of staff and students, particularly in the use of learning technologies.

30 Staff and students confirm that levels of support are good and particularly value the additional study skills support which is delivered at the start of programmes to the majority of students. In 2009 some 90 per cent of students expressed satisfaction with academic support in the National Student Survey. The student written submission confirms their appreciation of the study skills support.

31 Annual Standards and Quality Evaluative Review reports verify the importance the College places on the careful recruitment of students to the programme. College staff apply standard university paperwork and admission criteria for the selection process. This is underpinned by guided question content. Students are informed of the opportunities to

access additional support through published information and through the interview selection process.

32 Programme teams analyse retention and completion data as part of the annual monitoring review cycle. Areas for improvement are identified and actions planned to address these. For example, the completion rates in sports programmes have been identified as a concern and appropriate actions taken. Individual student outcomes are systematically incorporated into the College's processes for monitoring key performance indicators and self-assessment.

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

33 The arrangements for staff development represent good practice. The annual College requirement for staff to undertake development is a minimum of 30 hours, and this is applied pro-rata for part-time staff. A key aim to increase staff development opportunities for higher education teachers is realised through the inclusion of at least one specific higher education event within the annual development programme. Examples of this have included critical thinking and referencing. In addition, the College has a stated intention to increase the number of staff who attend development events at partner universities.

34 In 2009-10, 17 of the 26 higher education staff participated in development sessions directly relevant to the enhancement of higher education. Many of these staff have also taken part in additional higher education staff development in 2010-11. The effectiveness of expenditure on staff development is included in the terms of reference for the Standards Committee. Over the past two years, the College has provided financial support to 37 members of staff for higher education study, including study at master's level.

**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 The College aims to provide appropriate staff and physical resources to facilitate the delivery of high quality programmes. The adequacy of College resources is assured initially by the awarding body as part of validation. Subsequently, in accordance with collaborative arrangements, the College submits information on new members of staff to the awarding body for approval.

36 A dedicated annual budget, for which the Higher Education Coordinator has responsibility, is allocated for higher education from the College's overall budget framework. Staff and students confirm resources, including library texts, are sufficient to ensure a good learning experience. In addition, students have access to learning resources provided by partner awarding bodies and acknowledge the value of this. This includes entitlement to use the universities' libraries, course specific e-learning materials, online texts and publications. Arrangements have also been made for students studying sports courses to access specialist equipment at the partner awarding body where it is not available at the College.

37 Students on many programmes confirm the standard of learning resources to be excellent. Concerns relating to resources raised by some other students centre mainly around the large class sizes in mechanical engineering, delays to equipment repairs and the sufficiency of resources for practical work. The College has investigated these points and interprets them as relating to the need to improve the management of expectations rather than one of low levels of investment in resources. The team concurs with this interpretation.

Issues raised by students at the Sleaford site relating to staff turnover, access to online databases, and access to the internet have been proactively addressed.

38 There is a well-considered strategy to embed and extend the use of integrated learning technologies within the virtual learning environment to form an interactive learning tool. The College stresses the importance of this in all programmes. The development of virtual classrooms, blended learning, new media and social networking technologies are emphasised to support both direct and distance learning. Students judge the College's virtual learning environment to be a very good resource. External examiners also commend its use, which has progressed significantly since the Developmental engagement. The strategy is driven and monitored by the Learning Resources Manager who makes effective use of a reward system, the identification of expert users, staff development and support. The manager also closely monitors standards and the extent of use. Where students have access to more than one virtual environment, the process is managed effectively to avoid any confusion. Overall, this coherent and well-implemented strategy is an example of good practice.

**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?**

39 The College lists, in its self-evaluation, a range of public information for which it is responsible. Central to this is the Higher Education Prospectus and the Adult Course Guide, which also details the higher education courses. A range of additional information is easily obtained from the website. This includes details of facilities and support services, as well as a range of policies, strategies and other information the College is required to publish to the general public. Links to this information are also readily found in the College virtual learning environment, where information of interest to enrolled students is published. The College prefers to publish public information electronically wherever possible.

40 In addition to the prospectus, course information sheets are available to download. These all follow a similar format, and provide information on entry requirements, course content, progression, details of the awarding body as well as contact details for Grantham course leaders. Responsibility for the content of these information sheets rests with the course leaders, with formatting controlled by the marketing team and approval given by the awarding body.

41 Students receive a range of handbooks which are produced in association with the awarding body and other participating colleges, but customized to include information specific to Grantham College. Validation processes require that these course and module handbooks are approved before issue. Although there is no overriding format for handbooks, the content is similar, providing information on the programme specifications, course structure, timetable and contacts. Details on assessment, submission arrangements, referencing, complaints and appeals is either provided or signposted. Students have ready access to the handbooks via the virtual learning environment for their course, where teaching and learning materials, schedules and assessment information are also available.



Students confirm the usefulness of the wide range of materials available and the benefits of access to both the College and university virtual learning environments.

42 Course teams provide information for the employers providing work placements and sponsoring students using a range of formats to support understanding. Employers confirm that they receive sufficient information to undertake their role as placement hosts and workplace mentors. Employers who sponsor students confirm that they receive a range of positive support and information which is often instrumental in their selection of the Grantham provision for their staff.

**What arrangements does the College have in place to assure the accuracy and completeness of information the College has responsibility for publishing?  
How does the College know that these arrangements are effective**

43 Responsibility for publications relating to the different partner universities varies with the specific agreements. But in each case the university retains a measure of control and requires marketing materials to be approved before use. The College marketing department maintains active links with counterparts at the universities, and routinely submits prospectus and course information for approval.

44 The College has a well-established procedure for the production and quality control of the Higher Education Prospectus, which involves the marketing team, the curriculum heads, the Higher Education Manager and the universities, as well as the design team. Student case studies are included in the prospectus. These are produced as a result of recommendation by course teams and interviews with the marketing team. Quality assurance of all website content is well managed by the marketing department, with regular audits of content involving the facility managers, curriculum managers and the quality team. A policy of having a single source for all items of information is being embedded to ensure all information published is up to date.

45 Information relating to courses is approved by the relevant awarding body, as detailed in the collaborative arrangements, and handbooks are approved as part of the validation process. Regular audits of course journals and documentation are carried out by the quality team and Higher Education Manager. Students confirm that the handbooks are accurate, comprehensive and useful. Student views on the pre-course information are gathered informally during interview and used to inform future publications. Link tutors consult with students on the content, accuracy and completeness of the course and module handbooks. The higher education student forums provide a further opportunity for students to express their opinions on the quality of the information they receive.

46 Students comment favourably on the accuracy of the pre-course information and the prospectus, and on the usefulness of the handbooks and virtual learning environment. This broadly aligns with findings in the National Student Survey, where students indicate high levels of satisfaction with the communication they receive relating to their course, changes in course arrangements, and the College facilities. The College also conducts an internal higher education survey. However, no specific questions are asked in the internal survey relating to the quality of information students receive. It is desirable to ensure that student views on the quality of pre and in-course information are collected formally.

47 The views of employers on the usefulness of information they receive are not routinely gathered. However the close contact which is maintained between employers and course teams allows for effective informal feedback on information quality. The successful employer forums provide another opportunity for employers to comment on the information they receive.

48 Developments in the use of the virtual learning environment to provide accurate and complete information for students are managed very effectively by the Learning Resources Manager. There is a minimum requirement for information on all College courses on the virtual learning environment, and higher education courses are, without exception, well in excess of this minimum. The content of virtual course information is the responsibility of the course teams. Support for the design and development of information sources is provided by the Learning Resources Manager. This manager also undertakes an audit of the content and use of the virtual learning environment in relation to student information and provides an opportunity to identify expertise and mentoring opportunities. Overall, the management of the virtual learning environment to provide accurate and complete information for students represents good practice.

49 The College has an effective procedure in place to manage the revision and update of its policies, strategies and procedures. This is managed by the quality team, who liaise with the policy owner and ensure that equality impact assessments are completed before confirmation and adoption of any revision or update. Policy revisions are reported in the College bulletin, on the virtual learning environment and in some instances directly to affected staff. Course teams ensure that any revisions to the information provided by the university partners is communicated quickly to students.

**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**

50 The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in December 2008. The lines of enquiry used were as follows.

**Line of enquiry 1:** Students are provided with appropriate and timely feedback on assessed work which promotes learning and facilitates improvement.

**Line of enquiry 2:** Appropriate academic conduct is adopted in assessment whilst students benefit from flexible arrangements.

**Line of enquiry 3:** Assessment criteria are clear and marking is fair and consistent across programmes in accordance with awarding body requirements.

51 Good practices identified included the timelines and constructive nature of written feedback to students, the early introduction of study skills teaching, the close engagement with awarding bodies on assessment matters, staff responsiveness to student comments and the use of the virtual learning environment to provide information on assessment timetables and study skills material.

52 The College was advised to fully embed the procedures for handing in assignments to the library, and to liaise with awarding bodies to ensure published information on grading criteria in handbooks is always appropriate to the specific award being studied. It was considered desirable for the College to address a number of other matters, including the use of plagiarism software, simplifying moderating procedures, closer alignment of feedback comments with learning outcomes and enhancing the processes for employer engagement in Foundation Degrees.

## D Foundation Degrees

53 The College currently offers Foundation Degrees in conjunction with all three of its awarding bodies. The subjects covered are children, families and community health; design crafts; sports coaching; and complementary approaches to health and social care. The Foundation Degree in Children, Families and Community Health has recently been revalidated and transferred from De Montfort University to the University of Bedfordshire for students enrolling in 2010-11. The Foundation Degree in Sports Coaching has replaced the HND/C Sports Science for new enrolments at the start of the 2010-11 academic year. The Foundation Degree in Design Crafts is no longer recruiting new students.

54 All conclusions and summaries of judgements in Section E relate to the whole provision, including Foundation Degrees.

## E Conclusions and summary of judgements

55 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Grantham 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: De Montfort University, The University of Lincoln and the University of Bedfordshire.

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

- staff are actively involved in the application of the Academic Infrastructure, which has enhanced course design through the definition of appropriate academic standards, teaching and learning for different levels and assessment guidelines for students (paragraph 14)
- the College management of staff development is embedded in the annual quality cycle, ensures the participation of all staff and stimulates reflection and sharing of good practice (paragraphs 17, 33 and 34)
- the College ensures that all new higher education teaching staff are appropriately qualified and well supported during their probationary period (paragraph 18)
- there is a high level of engagement and effective communication with employers in all aspects of programme design and delivery (paragraph 25)
- there is a coherent and well-implemented strategy for the use of integrated learning technology across all programmes (paragraph 38)
- the virtual learning environment is effectively managed to provide accurate and complete information for students (paragraph 48).

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

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

- consider ways in which the existing devolved style of management can be supplemented to provide a more strategic oversight and monitoring of the higher education provision (paragraphs 12 and 21).

## Integrated quality and enhancement review

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

- develop the existing documentation that gives an overview of the use of the Academic Infrastructure into an operational working tool to further enhance practice (paragraph 13)
- review module handbooks to ensure all students receive appropriate information on the relation between practical tasks and module learning outcomes and links between assessment criteria and intended learning outcomes (paragraph 14)
- consider ways to ensure the use of course journals is developed further to ensure that higher education features more prominently in self-assessment reports and review processes at curriculum and College levels (paragraph 23)
- ensure that student views on the quality of pre and in-course information they receive are formally collected (paragraph 46).

60 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 agreements, for the management of the standards of the awards of its awarding bodies.

61 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 agreements, for the management of the quality of learning opportunities to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

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

**Grantham College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2011**

| Good practice  | Action to be taken  | Target date          | Action by                       | Success indicators   | Reported to     | Evaluation              |
|--|---|----------------------|---------------------------------|--|-----------------|-------------------------|
| <p>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:</p>  |   |                      |                                 |  |                 |                         |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>staff are actively involved in the application of the Academic Infrastructure, which has enhanced course design through the definition of appropriate academic standards, teaching and learning for different levels and assessment guidelines for students (paragraph 14)</li> </ul> | <p>Incorporate information on Academic Infrastructure into new HE staff handbook to support new HE teaching staff</p> | <p>December 2011</p> | <p>Higher Education Manager</p> | <p>Generic component of new HE staff handbooks developed and shared with staff</p> | <p>HE Group</p> | <p>HE Group minutes</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the College management of staff development is embedded in the</li> </ul>   | <p>Produce annual programme of staff development incorporating two</p>  | <p>October 2011</p>  | <p>Higher Education Manager</p> | <p>HE continuing professional development (CPD) plan</p>                           | <p>HE Group</p> | <p>CPD evaluations</p>  |

|   |   |               |  |  |                                 |                              |
|---|---|---------------|--|--|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| annual quality cycle, ensures the participation of all staff and stimulates reflection and sharing of good practice (paragraphs 17, 33, 34)   | mandatory events per year   |               |  |  |                                 |                              |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the College ensures that all new higher education teaching staff are appropriately qualified and well supported during their probationary period (paragraph 18)</li> </ul> | Continue to recruit well qualified staff and develop a generic HE staff handbook based on good practice in Families Foundation Degree, and customise to individual areas as a means of supporting staff | December 2011 | Higher Education Manager<br><br>Heads of curriculum  | HE staff handbook  | HE Group                        | HE Group minutes             |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>there is a high level of engagement and effective communication with employers in all aspects of programme design and delivery (paragraph 25)</li> </ul>                   | Disseminate good practice in setting up and running employer forums to areas where this is underdeveloped   | April 2012    | Higher Education Manager<br><br>Head of Curriculum (Health and Care)<br><br>Head of Curriculum (Engineering) | New employer forum established in sports curriculum area | HE Group                        | Sport Employer Forum minutes |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>there is a coherent and</li> </ul>   | Continue to implement the ILT strategy  | Ongoing       | Learning Resources   | Use of ILT is integrated across all HE                   | Curriculum and quality managers | Curriculum and Quality Group |

|   |   |                    |   |  |  |  |
|---|---|--------------------|---|--|--|--|
| well-implemented strategy for the use of integrated learning technology across all programmes (paragraph 38)  | effectively   |                    | Manager   | programmes   |  | minutes<br>ILT awards  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the virtual learning environment is effectively managed to provide accurate and complete information for students (paragraph 48).</li> </ul>   | Continue the centralised management of the VLE  | Ongoing            | Learning Resources Manager                            | Accurate and complete information is provided on the VLE   | Curriculum and quality managers                        | VLE audit  |
| <b>Advisable</b>  | <b>Action to be taken</b>   | <b>Target date</b> | <b>Action by</b>                                      | <b>Success indicators</b>  | <b>Reported to</b>                                     | <b>Evaluation</b>  |
| The team considers that it is <b>advisable</b> for the College to:  |   |                    |   |  |  |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>consider ways in which the existing devolved style of management can be supplemented to provide a more strategic oversight and monitoring of the higher education provision</li> </ul> | <p>Clarify senior roles and responsibilities for HE quality</p> <p>Develop at least three central processes to manage the quality of higher education</p> | October 2011       | Deputy Principal<br>HE Manager<br>Director of Quality | <p>Comprehensive audit process</p> <p>HE self-assessment in curriculum</p> <p>Quarterly reporting of HE key performance indicators at Curriculum and Quality Group</p> | <p>Curriculum and quality managers</p> <p>HE Group</p> | <p>Self-assessment reports</p> <p>Minutes of Curriculum and Quality Group and HE Group</p> |

|   |  |                                   |                                    |  |  |   |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|--|---|
| (paragraphs 12 and 21).   |  |                                   |                                    |  |  |   |
| <b>Desirable</b>  | <b>Action to be taken</b>  | <b>Target date</b>                | <b>Action by</b>                   | <b>Success indicators</b>  | <b>Reported to</b>   | <b>Evaluation</b>   |
| The team considers that it is <b>desirable</b> for the College to:  |  |                                   |                                    |  |  |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develop the existing documentation that gives an overview of the use of the Academic Infrastructure into an operational working tool to further enhance practice (paragraph 13)</li> </ul>                                 | Develop HE staff handbook, incorporating existing Academic Infrastructure documentation for use by teams developing/ reviewing HE programmes | December 2011                     | HE Manager and heads of curriculum | Handbook developed and in use by teams   | Curriculum and quality managers<br><br>Standards Committee | Curriculum and Quality Group minutes<br><br>Standards Committee minutes |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>review module handbooks to ensure all students receive appropriate information on the relation between practical tasks and module learning outcomes and links between assessment criteria and intended learning</li> </ul> | Issue guidance to programme teams on linking learning outcomes to assessments within module handbooks<br><br>Audit handbooks                 | October 2011<br><br>February 2012 | HE Manager                         | Module handbooks contain information linking practical tasks to learning outcomes<br><br>Full audit compliance | Director of Quality  | HE internal audit report  |



|   |  |               |  |  |   |                             |
|---|--|---------------|--|--|---|-----------------------------|
| outcomes<br>(paragraph 14)  |  |               |  |  |   |                             |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>consider ways to ensure the use of course journals is developed further to ensure that higher education features more prominently in self-assessment reports and review processes at curriculum and College levels (paragraph 23)</li> </ul> | Incorporate HE self-assessment into annual curriculum area and whole College process | October 2011  | Heads of curriculum<br><br>Director of Quality | HE features in curriculum area and College summary self-assessment reports | Standards Committee                             | Standards Committee minutes |
|   | Include HE information in Principal's report   | April 2012    | HE Co-ordinator<br><br>Principal               | Principal's report contains HE data  | Corporation                                     | Principal's annual report   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensure that student views on the quality of pre and in-course information they receive are formally collected (paragraph 46).</li> </ul>   | Develop HE induction survey  | November 2011 | Director of Quality                            | Survey implemented and evaluated   | Curriculum and quality managers<br><br>HE Group | Survey report               |

**RG 777 08/11**

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