Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

Great Yarmouth College

April 2012

SR 085

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 Great Yarmouth College carried out in April 2012

As a result of its investigations, the Summative review team (the team) considers that there can be **limited 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:

- the comprehensive range of mechanisms for students to provide feedback to the College, including involvement in the self-assessment, review and evaluation process
- the extensive orientation and induction programme prepares students well for their studies
- the Document Health Checker provides an effective process for assuring the accuracy and completeness of public information.

Recommendations

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

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

- review its processes for the management and oversight of academic standards, to ensure that issues raised by external examiners are rigorously addressed, and that appropriate and rapid corrective action is taken.

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

- develop a planned programme of higher education staff development, and ensure that it is responsive to issues emerging from external examiners' reports
- review all assignment briefs to ensure that they provide full and consistent information, including assessment and grading criteria.

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 Great Yarmouth 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 the University of East Anglia and the University of Essex. The review was carried out by Mr Maldwyn Buckland, Ms Michelle Callanan, Dr Philip Davies (reviewers) and Mr Simon Ives (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, meetings with staff, students, employers and awarding bodies, reports of reviews by QAA and from inspections by Ofsted. In particular, the team drew on the findings and recommendations of the Developmental engagement in assessment. A summary of findings from this Developmental engagement is provided in section C of this report. The review also considered the College's use of the Academic Infrastructure, developed by QAA on behalf of higher education providers, with reference to the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (*Code of practice*)*,* subject and award benchmark statements*, The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), and programme specifications.

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

4   The College is a medium-sized provider of further and higher education, delivering courses in 14 subject sector areas. The College is located in a borough with the highest level of social deprivation in Norfolk, with a very low higher education participation rate. The majority of learners are on courses in preparation for life and work. Significant numbers of students are enrolled on health and care, engineering, construction, retail and commercial enterprise and visual and performing arts programmes. The mission of the College is to 'encourage all our learners and staff to achieve their full potential and make the most of their learning opportunities'. The College offers full and part-time learning from pre-entry to honours degree level. The College has around 2,146 learners of whom around 1,363 are aged 16 to 18 and 783 are adults. The majority of learners study full time. Around 398 learners are on employment-based courses and 187 pupils from local schools attend the college on a day-release basis.

5   The higher education courses are offered as part of the University Campus Suffolk and validated jointly by the University of East Anglia and the University of Essex. University Campus Suffolk is a joint venture between the University of Essex and the University of East Anglia, established on the basis of an equal partnership, and officially launched on 1 August 2007. The venture is conducted through the medium of a private company limited by guarantee (University Campus Suffolk Ltd), with the universities as the sole members.

6   Great Yarmouth College is one of five satellite centres delivering higher education as part of the University Campus Suffolk network. The higher education programmes at the College are marketed as 'University Campus Suffolk Great Yarmouth', to maintain the local identity within the university brand. The College has 264 higher education students, of whom 151 are full-time and 113 part-time, amounting to 194 full-time equivalents.

7   The current higher education awards, with the relevant awarding bodies, (full-time equivalent student numbers in brackets) are as follows:

University of East Anglia and the University of Essex (joint)
- FdSc Applied Computing (24)
- BA (Hons) Arts Practice (13)
- Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (Lifelong Learning Sector) (15)
- FdA Children's Care, Learning and Development (16)
- FdA Commercial Art and Design Practice (13)
- FdA Creative Music (5)
- FdSc Engineering (Electronic) (3)
- FdA Event Management with Hospitality (2)
- FdA Fashion and Textiles (14)
- BA (Hons) Person-Centred Counselling (38)
- BA (Hons) Photographic and Digital Media (3)
- BA (Hons) Professional Studies (4)
- FdA Social Care Practice (10)
- FdSc Sport, Health and Exercise (12)
- FdA Visual Media Production (22)

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

8   A University Campus Suffolk Framework Collaborative Agreement between the two awarding bodies, the University Campus Suffolk and its five learning network colleges defines the operational responsibilities of the College.The awarding bodies are responsible for programme approval and alignment with the Academic Infrastructure, validation, acceptance of applications, ensuring common standards, moderation, final assessment and award, regular meetings to monitor quality and the process of annual evaluation and continual improvement of academic outcomes. The College is responsible for programme delivery, assessment and internal moderation, the quality of teaching and learning, application of the awarding bodies' standards, regular internal monitoring of quality, and compliance with awarding body requirements for annual evaluation and review.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

9   The College has been through a period of significant institutional change, with re-structuring of the senior management team, and the appointment of an interim Principal in January 2011. Following a programme of restructuring, senior management responsibility for higher education now falls within the remit of a newly formed Faculty of Higher Education and Creative Studies. A successful institutional review of the University Campus Suffolk provision at Great Yarmouth College by the University of East Anglia and University of Essex took place in November 2011. In 2010-11, revalidations took place for three programmes: FdSc Engineering, FdA Creative Music, and FdA Hospitality and Event Management. A BA (Hons) Arts Practice level 6 progression route for the arts-based Foundation Degrees was newly validated in 2011.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

10   Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the Summative review team. The development of the student written submission was facilitated and coordinated by the Higher Education Leader and was based around a series of student forum discussions within curriculum areas. These considered the

three core themes of the review. Areas for discussion were distributed via the Higher Education Student Voice Forum and online social media. Compiled commentaries were submitted to the Higher Education Leader who collated the report. This was distributed to students via the course representatives. Comments from students were requested and incorporated in the final submission. Students attended the preparatory meeting with the Coordinator and during the review visit meeting with the team they were given the opportunity to expand on some of the points that were made in the submission. The team found these discussions helpful.

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?

11   A collaboration agreement between the two awarding bodies, University Campus Suffolk and its learning network of colleges clearly defines the operational responsibilities of the College for managing and delivering higher education standards. These responsibilities outline each partner's role in a range of processes and procedures for quality assurance, programme management, governance, student recruitment, admissions and support.

12   Specific College responsibilities are prescribed in a range of University Campus Suffolk policies, procedures and other documentation, for example, assessment and moderation policies and teaching and learning strategies. These policies and other documents have been developed in conjunction with the two awarding bodies and appropriately reflect the precepts of the *Code of practice*. Monitoring of the policies is carried out by the College through the self-assessment, review and evaluation process, and at the termly meetings of its Higher Education Quality Enhancement Board. Staff from University Campus Suffolk and the validating universities attend these meetings regularly. This monitoring process confirms that College staff generally adhere to, and implement, policies at all levels. Staff demonstrate a clear understanding of the College's strategic and operational responsibilities for the management and maintenance of academic standards, including the validation of programmes, quality assurance and review, student recruitment and admissions, programme delivery, assessment and external examination.

13   In response to the Developmental engagement in April 2011, the College reviewed its processes for the management of academic standards and quality assurance of higher education provision. This resulted in the re-focusing of the committee structure and the revision of the terms of reference for the three higher education committees. The Higher Education Quality Enhancement Board, as the senior committee, has strategic responsibility for assuring academic standards. The committee is chaired by the Director of Strategic Development, has clear terms of reference, and reports regularly on higher education matters to the executive team.

14   The Higher Education Curriculum Group, the Higher Education Administration and Support Group and the Higher Education Student Voice Forum are the principal operational forums for monitoring provision. The Higher Education Curriculum Group, chaired by the Higher Education Leader, meets monthly and membership includes all course leaders. The Higher Education Curriculum Group has a key operational management role with responsibility for the communication and monitoring of policies and procedures. It produces

a monthly enhancement report, which is received and considered by senior management and the Higher Education Quality Enhancement Board.

15   Monitoring of quality assurance activities throughout the academic year is conducted through the newly introduced Quality Audit Tracker and Document Health Checker. These are aligned with the University Campus Suffolk calendar of course activities, and are monitored by the Higher Education Administrator. This model ensures that there are clearly planned agendas for the monthly meetings of the Higher Education Curriculum Group, and that course leaders are kept abreast of quality monitoring requirements. Feedback from staff, and the recent institutional review report, confirm that these processes enable the higher education committees at the College to take a greater local responsibility for quality issues.

16   Following recent management restructuring, senior management responsibility for higher education lies with the Director of the Faculty for Higher Education and Creative Studies. Operational management is undertaken by the Higher Education Leader, supported by an administrator, admissions officer and a careers and higher education adviser.

17   The College has regular engagement with University Campus Suffolk. The Joint Academic Committee of University Campus Suffolk oversees the management and quality of academic standards across University Campus Suffolk. The Director of the Faculty of Higher Education and Creative Studies represents the College on this committee, and outcomes are reported to the senior management team. A College representative attends University Campus Suffolk Learning, Teaching and Assessment Group meetings. This group discusses and makes recommendations for the development and delivery of teaching and learning, which are disseminated to course teams at staff development events and through University Campus Suffolk's Academic Partnerships team. The University Campus Suffolk Academic Board, a senior academic committee of the Joint Academic Committee, also monitors academic standards through its oversight of the self-assessment review and evaluation process, and through institutional reports. The Director of the Faculty of Higher Education and Creative Studies is the College representative on the committee. The College is represented at monthly meetings of the Strategic Management Group by the Principal. Any concerns are fed back to the senior management team for action.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

18   The College's engagement with the Academic Infrastructure arises largely from its use of University Campus Suffolk's policies and procedures. These have been developed in conjunction with the two awarding bodies and the network colleges, and are mapped to the *Code of practice*. The University Campus Suffolk Policy and Procedures Working Group, a subgroup of its Joint Academic Committee, reviews these policies according to an agreed schedule with the two awarding universities. College staff are provided with regular academic updates by the University Campus Suffolk Educational Developer, and are fully aware of expectations of the various elements of the Academic Infrastructure. Staff are able to articulate how they use the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark,* the FHEQ and subject benchmark statements when preparing course validations and in periodic review.

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   The College's self-evaluation confirms that along with the formal committee functions, the annual self-assessment review and evaluation process is central to the management and maintenance of academic standards. Self-assessment reports are

produced for all programmes, drawing on evidence from external examiners, course committee minutes, student module evaluations, and data on retention and achievement. The College confirms that external examiners' reports are intended to provide key evidence in the development of individual course self-assessment reports and action plans, although there is little evidence to demonstrate that this is undertaken consistently.

20   The course self-assessment reports are drawn together and reviewed in an annual college event, which contributes to the production of an overarching College self-assessment, review and evaluation report. College and University Campus Suffolk staff, awarding body representatives and students attend the event, contributing to the self assessment process. A higher education manager from another network college provides a wider external perspective and acts as a critical friend. The overarching College report is developed by the Higher Education Leader, following the self-assessment event. The report contains areas for further development, an action plan for the coming year, and establishes the requirements for continuing professional development. However, the team notes that while there are some encouraging statements in the recent 2011-12 external examiners' reports, key emerging issues from 2010-11 are insufficiently addressed through the self-assessment process. There is little evidence of improvements having taken place as a direct response to deliberate and planned actions taken by the College.

21   Some aspects of the self-assessment process are thorough and provide a valuable review of provision. However, the team found significant weaknesses in the annual self-assessment, review and evaluation process, at both course and College level. Particular concerns focus on the oversight and responses to issues raised by external examiners. Scrutiny of external examiners' reports for a number of courses demonstrate that a series of significant issues, requiring serious action to assure academic standards, were not formally addressed through the College's quality assurance processes.

22   The report of the external examiner for the FdA Children's Care, Learning and Development highlighted a number of substantive issues, including over-generous marking, out of line with the FHEQ level 4 and 5 descriptors, inadequate levels of tutor feedback, and inappropriate assessment grading. The report recommended that urgent discussions be held to address these concerns, and further examine teaching and learning resources before students re-enrolled in September 2011. The 2010-11 programme self-assessment review and evaluation report for FdA Children's Care, Learning and Development provides only minimal responses to the examiner's concerns, a cursory acknowledgment of the issues raised, and an inadequate action plan for improvement. However, the 2011-12 external examiner's report confirms that improvements have been implemented by the course team. The assessment and moderation procedures have been carried out in line with University Campus Suffolk regulations and requirements, and assessment boards have been well attended and documented. However, it is not clear how the College managed these developments.

23   The 2010-11 external examiner's report for the FdA Commercial Art and Design Practice also contained a wide-ranging series of observations and concerns about academic standards. The report identified a lack of students' conceptual development, unsuitable work for study at this level, a lack of critical feedback on student assessments, and the high levels of referrals and deferrals. The course team's response, while acknowledging some of the issues raised, fails to provide a robust action plan to rectify these serious issues. Subsequently, an external adviser was appointed by the University of Essex in November 2011, on behalf of the awarding bodies, to provide an independent overview of the situation. The adviser's report in February 2012 confirmed many of the original external examiner concerns. The College's response in April 2012, however, still failed to address many of the key issues related to academic standards and the level of students' work. The external examiner's report for 2011-12 highlights the need for more consistent critical engagement

and experimentation to enable more students to achieve grades in the higher achievement bands. The report confirms that standards of student work are now comparable to those on similar courses at other institutions and that internal moderation and feedback processes are generally effective. However, the external examiner states that, although developmental assessment feedback given to students is useful, it would be strengthened by more detailed descriptions of the issues and the provision of clear action plans.

24   In 2010-11, the external examiner for FdSc Engineering raised a number of issues regarding the inadequacy of assessment procedures, feedback on student work, and the lack of attendance by College staff at the assessment board. The College was unable to provide robust evidence to assure the team that these matters have been formally addressed. In the 2010-11 external examiner's report for FdA Fashion and Textiles concerns were raised about students' work being passed when it was not of an appropriate standard. The 2011-12 external examiner's report for FdA Fashion and Textiles continues to highlight concerns over the capability of current students to meet the challenge of higher level study. The report states that a significant number of students would find it difficult to achieve at levels 4 and 5. In both these cases, although limited remedial action was taken, there is insufficient evidence of oversight or intervention by College managers to ensure that robust actions ensued.

25   College management and review processes have been ineffective in dealing with external examiners' concerns about academic standards across a range of programmes. There is insufficient evidence that swift remedial action is taken to ensure that academic standards meet the requirements of the awarding bodies. The College's quality assurance and self-assessment process, and the key committees, the Higher Education Curriculum Group and the Higher Education Quality Enhancement Board, do not demonstrate how examiners' concerns are addressed effectively. It is essential for the College to review its processes for the management and oversight of academic standards, to ensure that issues raised by external examiners are rigorously addressed, and that appropriate and rapid corrective action is taken.

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

26   The Higher Education Leader is responsible for planning and managing specific higher education continuing professional development. In 2011-12 the College instigated a programme of higher education-specific staff development. However, there is no identification of how higher education staff development is prioritised, planned and delivered. Staff development needs are identified through the Centre self-assessment review and evaluation report, and staff agree that this has a positive effect on improving learning opportunities and is valued by them.

27   The College shares some development activities within the University Campus Suffolk network, especially with Lowestoft College. The College supports a wide range of external opportunities, including attendance at conferences, seminars and workshops, and events provided by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, the Higher Education Academy, the Association of Colleges in the Eastern Region and the Joint Information Systems Committee Regional Support Centre. College staff are given the opportunity to attend University Campus Suffolk teaching and learning events, and have access to the Corporate Development Programme, although take-up for these is low. The programme of staff development needs to be more extensive, and there is limited evidence to suggest that the staff development plan is responsive to key issues and areas of good practice emerging in external examiners' reports. It is advisable for the College to develop a

planned programme of higher education staff development, and ensure that it is responsive to issues emerging from external examiners' reports.

> **The team concludes that it has limited 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?

28   The responsibilities for managing the quality of learning opportunities, and the associated quality assurance and enhancement processes, reflect those for managing academic standards. These are described in paragraphs 11 to 17. The Joint Academic Committee, the Academic Board and the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Group have specific responsibility for learning opportunities.

29   Teaching staff are aware of the management and reporting structures and play a full role in monitoring the quality of learning opportunities. University Campus Suffolk provides an Academic Staff Handbook that clarifies the role and duties of academic staff. In addition, the College provides its own Programme Pack that staff find particularly helpful.

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

30   The processes by which the College assures itself that it is fulfilling its obligations to its awarding bodies are described in paragraphs 19 to 25. The College's responsibilities are identified clearly in the University Campus Suffolk document, *Core Responsibilities of the Centre in delivering Higher Education.* These obligations include all aspects of the student experience. Adherence to these policies and procedures by teaching staff at the College is monitored through the Higher Education Quality Enhancement Board.

31   There is effective liaison between the College, University Campus Suffolk and the partner universities at course level. University Campus Suffolk issues guidelines for the production of an annual self-assessment review and evaluation report to enable it to assure the quality of the student learning experience.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

32   Engagement with the Academic Infrastructure is outlined in paragraph 18. The Academic Infrastructure is considered and embedded as part of programme approval, validation and delivery. Intended learning outcomes are appropriate, and are assessed in accordance with the FHEQ and the *Code of practice.* Awarding bodies are responsible for monitoring the quality of provision in accordance with the expectations of the *Code of practice,* and appoint external examiners to oversee this process. All staff are aware of the Academic Infrastructure and its relation to quality processes. Staff are introduced to the Academic Infrastructure through induction and are guided on how to use this through the Programme Pack. Sections of the *Code of practice* are mapped to College documentation, and the expectations of the FHEQ are well understood by teaching staff.

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

33   The quality of teaching and learning is monitored through a well embedded management process of annual lesson observations. This provides a specialist higher education focus. Observation feedback is collated by the Higher Education Leader to identify strengths and areas for development. These are used to inform cross-college staff development events.

34   The College has recently implemented a peer observation system for the sharing of good practice and enhancing learning opportunities. Information and standardised documentation is provided to staff in the Programme Pack. The peer observation process follows the guidelines produced by University Campus Suffolk. The team support the College's stated intention to update and improve the process to establish more cross-team observations. Plans are being introduced to ensure greater oversight by the Higher Education Curriculum Group, and a more consistent approach to identifying and sharing good practice.

35   Staff teaching on higher education programmes are well qualified, and are formally approved by University Campus Suffolk. Many have postgraduate qualifications, and all are expected to have a teaching qualification, or be working towards one. Staff new to higher education receive an induction to teaching and assessing at this level. They have a mentor who may be from outside the specialist area, but experienced in higher education.

36   There is a comprehensive set of mechanisms for capturing the student voice that provide feedback on the quality of the teaching. All courses have student representatives who attend meetings with course and College managers. Students are fully represented on course committees, and consider them to be effective in addressing matters they raise. Students are directly engaged with the annual self-assessment and review process at course and College level.

37   The Higher Education Student Voice Forum provides an opportunity for cross-college discussion, and is effective in ensuring that students have an input into College decision-making processes. Chaired by a student, the Forum is attended by College managers and the student governor, who feeds back to the corporate governing body. The Chair of the Higher Education Student Voice Forum sits on the Higher Education Quality Enhancement Board. There are also opportunities for students to comment on their teaching in regular module surveys and through the National Student Survey. Students value these opportunities and indicate that the College is responsive to their concerns. The comprehensive range of mechanisms for students to provide feedback to the College, including involvement in the self-assessment, review and evaluation process, is good practice.

38   Following the Developmental engagement, University Campus Suffolk introduced an Assessment and Feedback Framework and a Teaching and Learning Framework. In line with this framework the College introduced an assessment feedback policy with a maximum turnaround time of 15 working days, although there is no mechanism for monitoring adherence to this. Feedback on assessed work is provided on a standardised form used on all courses, and also in one-to-one discussions with students. The quality of the feedback is monitored by the team in course committees, and through module evaluations. Students confirm that assessment feedback is generally timely, constructive and aids improvement, and that tutors are highly supportive.

39   Course specifications and module guides are made available to students both in hard copy and through the virtual learning environment. Students confirm that they understand the role of course specifications and value the clarity of information on their course's intended learning outcomes and curriculum. The Developmental engagement recommended that it would be advisable for the College to review all assignment briefs to ensure that all students receive full information, including assessment and grading criteria. There is evidence of some improvement in the quality of assignment briefs and the provision of assessment information, especially where staff use the standard template. However, standard templates are not used consistently, and some assignment briefs have no assessment criteria, or criteria that are poorly phrased, although these are often available in handbooks and module guides. It is advisable for the College to review all assignment briefs to ensure that they provide full and consistent information, including assessment and grading criteria.

40   Work-based learning features in many of the courses, and reflects the expectations of the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning*. The College has extensive links with employers and encourages their participation in courses to enhance the teaching and learning opportunities offered to students, although some employers feel they could contribute more to course design. A range of work-related learning opportunities is provided through work placements, live projects and work-based assessments. Employers confirm that students are well prepared prior to their work placements, and are well equipped with appropriate specialist transferable skills, highly relevant to employment.

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

41   Students have an effective induction to their study and are supported personally and responsively by tutors. The College hosts an Orientation Day for students at the start of a three-week induction programme. Students receive an Induction Pack, information relating to University Campus Suffolk assessment procedures, and guidance on how to access the virtual learning environment. The induction programme focuses more specifically on the course, including assessment schedules and module details. The induction programme includes exercises in marking sample assignments, to introduce students to level expectations. An induction review is carried out by the College, which includes input from staff and students. Students confirm that the information provided at orientation and induction is clear, comprehensive and valuable. The team considers this to be good practice.

42   The College's range of support mechanisms for students are well embedded. Each student is allocated a tutor who assists them in developing skills of self-evaluation and reflection, and monitors their progress through the course. The College has recently enhanced its tutorial delivery through staff development, and providing clearer guidelines in the Programme Pack. Students confirm that the tutorial process works well, they feel well supported in their studies, and they praised the accessibility of staff. Students know how to access support mechanisms and indicate that these are effective.

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

43   The College's arrangements for staff development to maintain and enhance the quality of learning opportunities are described in paragraphs 26 and 27. The College staff development programme is published at the start of the academic year. Events run by the College are well attended. Staff are not allocated specific time for scholarly activity, although there is an expectation that staff will engage in this. The College also runs a two-day annual staff conference, focused on higher education matters, which provides a valuable opportunity for sharing good practice.

44   A comprehensive Programme Pack available for College staff on the virtual learning environment contains full information on the operation of higher education courses. This includes the Academic Infrastructure, assessment guidelines and templates, external examiner information, course management documentation and all strategy documents relating to teaching, learning and assessment and student support. Staff consider this to be a valuable resource.

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?

45   The College supports the resourcing of new courses, and validation events confirm the sufficiency and availability of resources. An annual business planning process prioritises resource allocations, which are managed at directorate level. Some specific resource allocations are made to support higher education, although there is no explicit policy for this process. Students stated that course resources are limited, and this is confirmed in the National Student Survey where the College result is 28 per cent below the national benchmark. However, students and staff gave examples of where resource concerns had been raised at course committees and the Higher Education Student Voice Forum, and identified how the College has responded, for example by providing greater timetabled access to specialist resources. Students confirm that while resources and access to information technology could be improved, they had not been disadvantaged in their learning by a lack of resources.

> **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?

46   The College is responsible for publishing a range of publicity materials and course-based information, and substantial online material. Information is developed in accordance with the Framework Collaboration Agreement and University Campus Suffolk Validation Handbook. The higher education prospectus is produced by University Campus Suffolk, although the College has responsibility for producing general study information for students. There are comprehensive student handbooks, which are produced by the College using a standardised template provided by University Campus Suffolk. Clear information relating to work-based learning, mentoring and work placements, specific to programme areas, is also provided.

47   The College website provides general information on open days, financial packages for students and careers guidance, and provides a direct link to an area dedicated to University Campus Suffolk higher education. There are links to the University Campus Suffolk and the awarding bodies' websites, which provide extensive course information. Prospective students have access to an applicant portal through the website, which provides specific course aims and intended learning outcomes, and guidance for prospective students on the type of assessment they can expect. Students confirm that the information on the website is clear and useful.

48   The online Student Information Directory is accessed through the newly launched MyUCS intranet portal. MyUCS is highly valued by students as a useful repository of course and other material, although some students found the portal difficult to access and resources hard to find. The information directory provides general information on University Campus Suffolk provision, as well as college-specific information. Information on the virtual learning environment is clear, and includes all University Campus Suffolk policies and procedures relating to tutorials, academic misconduct, mitigating circumstances, preparation and conduct of examinations, academic appeals and undergraduate assessment regulations. Students confirmed that they found the comprehensive information available on the virtual learning environment to be accessible and useful.

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?

49   The system for checking the accuracy and completeness of all College documentation and information is articulated within the College's Quality Audit Trail document. This process includes the recently introduced Document Health Checker, a formalised system of confirming that public information, course documentation and student handbooks are checked prior to publication. The Document Health Checker uses a traffic light system to confirm the status of published documents, and provides a timely and effective way of monitoring the accuracy and completeness of information. Regular reports on the status of documents are made to the Higher Education Curriculum Group. Staff demonstrate a clear understanding of this system. The team considers that the Document Health Checker provides an effective process for assuring the accuracy and completeness of public information, and is an example of good practice.

50   A member of the College marketing team attends the University Campus Suffolk's Communications Group meetings to ensure that the College's Head of Higher Education and staff are kept informed of University Campus Suffolk's requirements. University Campus Suffolk must approve all information before it is published, and spot checks are also undertaken by the awarding bodies. Student handbooks are prepared by course leaders, and are proofread and ultimately signed off for publication by the Higher Education Leader. Module specifications provide appropriate intended learning outcomes in a consistent format, and are approved at validation. Changes to modules are made through a formal process, including agreement by the course committee and approval by external examiners. All marketing and publicity information is ratified though a monthly marketing meeting and must comply with the University Campus Suffolk Publicity Protocol.

51   The Developmental engagement commented that there was no clear process by which the College ensures that assessment information provided for students was appropriate, accurate and complete. The College responded by developing a standardised assessment task sheet and feedback sheet for use on all higher education courses. Students and staff confirm the value of these standardised reports, although it is clear that these are not used consistently.

52   The College is also responsible for publishing a range of information on the virtual learning environment. This often contains comprehensive course material, including lecture notes, schemes of work, assessment briefs and links to further reading and other sources of relevant information. The College has a minimum requirement for information provided on the virtual learning environment, and course leaders are responsible for checking that all module teams have met the minimum requirement. This process is reviewed by the Higher Education Curriculum Group.

53   The maintenance and updating of the College website, and the College's pages on the University Campus Suffolk website, is carried out by the marketing team. Content accuracy is monitored by University Campus Suffolk, and by the two awarding bodies. The use of links from the College website to information provided by University Campus Suffolk assures consistency of course information across all University Campus Suffolk Colleges. As part of an annual review process, all course information on the website and Applicant Portal is initially checked and approved by course leaders, through the use of a standard template, with further checking by the Higher Education Leader, before it is forwarded to the Marketing Department.

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

54   The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in April 2011. There were three lines of enquiry:

Line of enquiry 1: How effective are policies and procedures for assessment and moderation in ensuring that academic standards are met across programme areas?

Line of enquiry 2: Do assessment and feedback strategies allow students to achieve the intended learning outcomes for each programme?

Line of enquiry 3: To what extent is information for students on assessment accurate, complete and supportive of learning?

55   The Developmental engagement team identified four areas of good practice. These were the self-assessment review and evaluation process; the extensive opportunities for student representation; the Programme Pack provided for staff; and the student Orientation Day.

56   The team also made a number of recommendations. The team considered it advisable for the College to publish full annual assessment schedules for students; introduce a policy on the timescale for feedback to students on assessed work, and to review all assignment briefs to ensure that all students receive full information. The team considered it desirable for the College to clarify the focus of the three higher education committees; review the implementation of the tutorial policy; and ensure that programme handbooks contain accurate and complete information on assessment.

D   Foundation Degrees

57   The College offers 10 Foundation Degrees to 121 students, in a wide range of subject areas. It believes that Foundation Degrees offer a valuable progression route for students, and meet the needs of local employers. Foundation Degrees are offered in conjunction with University Campus Suffolk, and are validated jointly by the University of East Anglia and the University of Essex.

58   Foundation Degree provision falls within the College's overarching higher education quality assurance and enhancement framework. The College has well established links with employers, who inform curriculum developments and are part of the validation process. This helps to ensure that programmes are aligned with the expectations of the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*. All areas of good practice and recommendations outlined in section E apply equally to the Foundation Degree provision.

E   Conclusions and summary of judgements

59   The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Great Yarmouth 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, University Campus Suffolk and its awarding bodies the University of East Anglia and the University of Essex.

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

- the comprehensive range of mechanisms for students to provide feedback to the College, including involvement in the self-assessment, review and evaluation process (paragraph 37)
- the extensive orientation and induction programme prepares students well for their studies (paragraph 41)
- the Document Health Checker provides an effective process for assuring the accuracy and completeness of public information (paragraph 49).

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

62   The team considers that it is **essential** for the College to:

- review its processes for the management and oversight of academic standards, to ensure that issues raised by external examiners are rigorously addressed, and that appropriate and rapid corrective action is taken (paragraph 25).

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

- develop a planned programme of higher education staff development, and ensure that it is responsive to issues emerging from external examiners' reports (paragraph 27)
- review all assignment briefs to ensure that they provide full and consistent information, including assessment and grading criteria (paragraph 39).

64   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 **limited 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.

65   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.

66   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.

Great Yarmouth College action plan relating to the Summative review: April 2012						
Good practice	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
In the course of the Summative review the team identified the following areas of **good practice** that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
• the comprehensive range of mechanisms for students to provide feedback to the College, including involvement in the self-assessment, review and evaluation process (paragraph 37)	1 Series of focus groups to be held Dec 2012/Jan 2013 to discuss issues raised in National Student Survey with students	31 Jan 2013	Higher Education Leader/ Vice-Principal, Learning and Quality	3 focus group sessions arranged and successfully carried out	Principal	Evaluation of meetings shared with Principal and Higher Education Quality Enhancement Board
	2 Increasing involvement of University Campus Suffolk Union in Higher Education Student Voice Forum and training for course representatives	30 Nov 2012	Higher Education Student Voice Forum/University Campus Suffolk Union	Minutes, Higher Education Student Voice Forum and course representative training in place	Higher Education Leader	Through Higher Education Student Voice Forum administration and reporting to Higher Education Quality Enhancement Board
	3 Training for Higher Education Student Voice Forum officers in preparing, running and minuting meetings	By 31 Jan 2013	Higher Education Student Voice Forum/University Campus Suffolk Union	Training sessions arranged	Higher Education Leader	Effectiveness of Higher Education Student Voice Forum meetings; Higher Education Achievement Record claims for

						Higher Education Student Voice Forum officers
	4 By membership of University Campus Suffolk Great Yarmouth Campus Officer on the University Campus Suffolk Student Experience Committee	17 Sept 2012	Union Campus Officer, supported by Higher Education leader	Attendance of Campus Officer at Student Experience Committee meetings	Higher Education Leader	Campus Officer reports to Higher Education Student Voice Forum at Great Yarmouth
	5 Campus Officer to represent students at 2012 Centre self-assessment, review and evaluation event	22 Oct 2012	Higher Education Leader/ Campus Officer	Attendance list, Centre self-assessment, review and evaluation event	Higher Education Leader	Campus Officer contribution to event and subsequent Centre self-assessment, review and evaluation
• the extensive orientation and induction programme prepares students well for their studies (paragraph 41)	Development of 'Induction Pack' to develop critical/ reflective/academic skills for delivery in 'week zero' 2012	18 Sept 2012	Higher Education Leader/Course teams	Improved student engagement, semester 1	Higher Education Leader	Student evaluations of induction
• the Document Health Checker provides an effective process for assuring the	Monitoring Document Health Checker for currency following publication of University Campus	31 Oct 2012	Higher Education Leader/Progress Development Manager	Revision/ monitoring check completed	Higher Education Curriculum Group	Effective synchronisation of course management and quality activities

accuracy and completeness of public information (paragraph 49).	Suffolk Calendar of Course Activities 2012-13					
Essential	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
The team considers that it is **essential** for the College to:						
• review its processes for the management and oversight of academic standards, to ensure that issues raised by external examiners are rigorously addressed, and that appropriate and rapid corrective action is taken (paragraph 25).	1 Comprehensive review of all quality tracking mechanisms	31 Aug 2012	Higher Education Leader/ Development Process Manager	Full procedural documentation produced	Principal	Involvement of higher education, Faculty and College management in quality processes
	2 Periodic action plan monitoring meetings between higher education management, learning manager and course leader established	Dec 2012 Feb 2013 April 2013	Higher Education Leader/Course Leader with involvement of Learning Manager	Course Quality Improvement Plan periodic updates	Vice-Principal, Learning and Quality	Tracking process of actions taken throughout academic year
	3 All higher education actions monitored and updated through College Higher Education Quality Improvement Plan with schedule of meetings	31 Oct 2012	Course teams	Comprehensive tracking of actions and responsibilities accessible	Executive Team	Inclusion of higher education actions within existing College quality mechanisms
	4 External examiner reports summarised via External Examiners	24 Sept 2012	Course Leader	Concise summary of external examiners' reports	Higher Education Leader/Higher Education	Contribution made to Higher Education Quality

	Report Course Review, which includes examiner's advice and identification of good practice (produced within one week of receipt of report)			presented to Higher Education Curriculum Group; common themes (actions, advice, good practice) identified for self-assessment, review and evaluation process	Curriculum Group/ Higher Education Quality Enhancement Board	Enhancement Board process and Centre self-assessment, review and evaluation report
	5 Cross-college discussion of reports and monitoring of progress via Higher Education Curriculum Group meetings (September and February agendas)	24 Sept 2012 25 Feb 2013	Higher Education Leader/course leaders	Summary of actions identified and taken; indication where further action/ assistance is necessary; Sign off of action plan content and completed actions	Higher Education Quality Enhancement Board	Reporting structure from Curriculum Group to Higher Education Quality Enhancement Group
	6 Higher Education Quality Enhancement Board maintains oversight and approval of all higher education course action plans	26 Nov 2012 18 Mar 2013 10 June 2013	Higher Education Quality Enhancement Board	Higher Education Quality Enhancement Board minutes show robust monitoring	Executive Team/ Principal/University Campus Suffolk Academic Partnerships/ validating universities	Effectiveness and transparency of process throughout academic year
Advisable	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
The team considers that it is **advisable** for the College to:						

• develop a planned programme of higher education staff development, and ensure that it is responsive to issues emerging from external examiners' reports (paragraph 27)	Course and Centre self-assessment, review and evaluation reports to identify issues in external examiner reports, National Student Survey, University Campus Suffolk Internal Student Survey data, and module evaluations; identification of common themes to be addressed by staff development activities	By 30 Nov 2012	Higher Education Leader/Vice-Principal, Learning and Quality	Staff development programme in place as part of Centre self-assessment, review and evaluation report	University Campus Suffolk Quality Enhancement, awarding bodies	External examiner reports, student surveys, staff evaluations of development activities
• review all assignment briefs to ensure that they provide full and consistent information, including assessment and grading criteria (paragraph 39).	1 Staff development session, Higher Education Conference July 2012 (using assessment documentation and criteria)	2, 9, 10 July 2012	University Campus Suffolk Educational Developer Academic Development, facilitator; course teams	National Student Survey data, external examiner reports	Higher Education Leader	Attendee evaluation of session
	2 Advice document on appropriate use of assignment brief templates and categories to course leaders	4 Oct 2012	Higher Education Leader	Internal pre-issue moderation procedures and documentation	Higher Education Leader	External examiner reports to assessment boards
	3 Improved documentation of pre-issue moderation	Oct 2012	Course teams	Course assessment files	Higher Education Leader	External examiner interim reports, semester 1

	procedures					assessment boards and final reports
	4 External examiners to be sent all assignment briefs prior to launch (Centre self-assessment, review and evaluation event decision, Oct 2012)	Nov 2012	Course leaders	All assignment briefs despatched to external examiners	Higher Education Leader	External examiner reports to assessment boards and final report