

Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

May 2009

Herefordshire College of Technology

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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 Herefordshire College of Technology carried out in May 2009

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:

- the College has robust arrangements for the maintenance of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities, based on its own internal structures and those of the awarding bodies
- staff development is proactive and effective in underpinning the maintenance of academic standards and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities
- highly motivated, enthusiastic and efficient programme teams provide many examples of effective induction, course administration and support for students
- the College makes imaginative use of the virtual learning environment in order to enhance teaching and learning and to meet the needs of a dispersed rural community
- the information that the College publishes about its higher education programmes, in electronic and printed form, including student handbooks and module contracts, is current, accurate and accessible
- the College responds to the needs of local, regional and national employers, and there are effective arrangements for employer liaison
- there are robust and efficient processes for the collection of student views, which are used effectively to enhance the quality of learning opportunities
- the provision and management of specialist facilities enhances the quality of the student learning experience.

Recommendations

The team has also identified one recommendation for the enhancement of the higher education provision:

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

- monitor carefully the provision of assessment briefs and the feedback arrangements for the return of student work, where new programmes are in the first year of operation, in order to maintain the quality of the student learning experience.

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 Herefordshire College of Technology. 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 Gloucestershire, the University of Warwick and the University of Worcester. The review was carried out by Mr Wayne Isaac, Ms Trudy Stiles, Dr Robert Wilkinson (reviewers) and Dr Richard Wheeler (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 and partner institutions, reports of reviews by QAA and from inspections by Ofsted. In particular, the team drew on the findings and recommendations of the Developmental engagement in assessment. A summary of findings from this Developmental engagement is provided in Section C of this report. The review also considered the College's use of the Academic Infrastructure, developed by QAA on behalf of higher education providers, with reference to the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, subject and award benchmark statements, *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and programme specifications.

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

4 Herefordshire College of Technology (the College) serves the City of Hereford and the rural county of Herefordshire. The College's mission is to provide high-quality vocational education and training across a wide range of curriculum areas, including construction, catering, equine studies, engineering, farrier and forestry. The total number of students is 5,461 of whom 1,576 are full-time and 3,885 part-time. The College is the largest provider of higher education in Herefordshire. There are 86 full-time and 162 part-time students (166 full-time equivalents) enrolled on higher education programmes funded by HEFCE. A total of 28 College staff contribute to the teaching of the higher education programmes.

5 From 1 August 2007, the College inherited a number of higher education programmes from a merger with the Pershore group of colleges. Programmes are principally provided at the Folly Lane Campus in Hereford and at the land-based campus at Holme Lacy, but also at training centres in the market towns of Leominster and Ross-on-Wye and in many rural venues throughout the county. Much of the student recruitment is local in origin. The higher education programmes are designed to meet the needs of local employers and to offer an opportunity for students to undertake higher-level study locally.

6 The higher education awards that are funded by HEFCE are listed below, beneath their awarding bodies:

University of Gloucestershire

- FD Information Communication Technology (full-time and part-time)

University of Worcester

- FD Health and Social Care (full-time)*
- HND Sustainable Woodland Management (full-time)
- BA Honours Outdoor Adventure Leadership and Management (full-time)
- FD in Learning Support (full-time)

University of Warwick

- Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (part-time)

Note:

* This programme did not have students enrolled at the time of the review.

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

7 The agreement with the University of Gloucestershire is the most recent, (November 2008), and refers to a single directly funded programme, the FD in Information Communication Technology, which is still in its first year of operation. The requirements of the University for maintaining the standards of the award are specified and the College is already working with the external examiner to establish appropriate standards. The agreement with the University of Worcester clearly states the responsibilities of the partners for the maintenance of academic standards and enhancement of this indirectly funded provision. These include arrangements for programme management, quality assurance and the entitlement of staff to participate in developmental activities at the University. The agreement with the University of Warwick refers specifically to the directly funded programme in teacher education in the lifelong learning sector and brings the College within the well-established partnership arrangements in this field, which also apply to eight other college providers.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

8 The College has recently changed its higher education institution partner for the delivery of the teacher education programmes, in order to embrace the new national qualifications for the lifelong learning sector. These programmes are now validated by the University of Warwick. Prior to this, the College delivered the Certificate in Education/PGCE (FE), in partnership with the University of Wales, Newport, but the new qualifications have not been adopted in Wales, thus the change of awarding body for the provision.

9 The College has discontinued the Higher National Certificate and Diploma in Mechanical/Electrical Engineering, validated by Edexcel, owing to declining learner numbers over the last two years. The decision has been taken, however, to place greater emphasis on the development of FDs, working closely with local employers. The College plans to introduce three new FDs in 2009-10:

- Counselling (University of Worcester)
- Leadership and Management (University of Worcester)
- Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (University of Warwick).

10 From 1 August 2007, the College inherited a number of higher education programmes from the merger with part of the Pershore group of colleges, based at the Holme Lacy Campus. The College has a £32 million new-build project at its Folly Lane Campus. Phase one of the project, incorporating the Learning Resources Centre, student refectory, and Business and Technology Centres has been completed. Phase two, to be completed in June 2009, includes a new teaching centre which incorporates facilities for counselling, health and social studies, leadership and management, learning support and teacher training.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

11 Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the Summative review team. The evidence for the student submission was gathered by student representatives at student focus group meetings. The document was drafted by a senior member of staff on the basis of this evidence. The student representatives validated the document prior to its finalisation. The team was able to meet a larger group of students during the review, who confirmed the validity of the student submission.

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?

12 Higher education programmes are delivered by curriculum teams and managed in the same way as the further education provision. Each award has a programme leader who reports to a curriculum team leader, who has responsibility for the management of programmes on a faculty basis. The curriculum team leaders report to one of the three assistant principals who are members of the College senior management team. The Deputy Principal has overall responsibility for the higher education provision. Faculty staff interact regularly with representatives of the awarding bodies, in order to ensure the maintenance of academic standards. The university partners operate well-defined arrangements, to which the College clearly adheres, for delegating responsibilities, and for effective monitoring and reporting. These arrangements represent good practice.

13 A cross-College quality curriculum review board, which meets once a term, chaired by the Deputy Principal, reviews all programme annual monitoring reports and external examiners' reports for both the further and higher education provision. This represents good practice. Reporting arrangements for the higher education provision are clearly identified within the overall report. The Deputy Principal attends the Board of Governors and presents an overall quality report.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

14 The Deputy Principal takes overall responsibility for ensuring that the Academic Infrastructure informs the planning, delivery and evaluation of the higher education provision. Programme leaders demonstrate appropriate awareness of the *Code of practice* and relevant subject benchmark statements. The College adheres, for example, to the precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distance learning (including e-learning)*, in the context of collaboration with the awarding bodies in the delivery of programmes.

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?

15 When a proposal for the development of a new programme is under consideration, there are well-established procedures for taking this forward. For example, in the case of the University of Worcester, the relevant academic department of the University works with the College, in conjunction with a strategic partnership planning group, to present the proposal and take the process through to validation, which represents good practice. There follows a five-yearly partnership review. The University of Warwick has a similar process. Given the very recent development of the new programme in information and communication technology, the College is in the process of embedding the requirements of the University of Gloucestershire within its structures.

16 Each awarding body provides a link tutor to whom the College can refer. The roles of programme leader and university link tutor are designed to ensure that quality standards and curricular developments are maintained and enhanced on an ongoing basis, which sustains good practice. The role of the external examiner complements that of the link tutor, providing an objective and informed view of the programme, approving draft examination papers, moderating scripts and coursework, and attending subject and examination boards, and reporting to the awarding body. The programme leader responds to the external examiner's report before both documents are included in the course review. The annual course reviews are forwarded to both the university partners and the College's higher education group; improvement plans are reviewed, and the annual reports are scrutinised by the awarding body.

17 External examiner reports go to the College from the awarding body through the quality office, and action plans are requested from the programme team. This feeds into the course review process. For example, at Worcester, the team leaders attend the examination board and issues arising from the external examiner reports are identified and actioned. The external examiner reports feed into the annual monitoring reports. Within the teacher education programmes, the external examiner reports apply across the partner colleges. The College uses the report selectively to ensure that any specific Herefordshire College issues are followed up. Samples of double-marked work are forwarded to the university programme team and external examiner for moderation. A moderation report then informs annual course monitoring. Issues arising from reviews go to the cross-College Quality Curriculum Review Board. The team concludes that in the maintenance of academic standards, the policy and procedures of the universities are applied for all programmes, and represent good practice.

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

18 A higher education cross-College group chaired by the Principal and comprising senior managers, curriculum team leaders and programme leaders is active in encouraging the full involvement of academic staff and managers in quality improvement and the sharing of good practice. It is the main forum for the communication and discussion of strategies, quality improvement and curricular development. Course tutors attend workshops to share best practice. The team noted considerable progress, since the Developmental engagement, in embedding the sharing of good practice relating to the higher education provision.

19 Further staff development occurs through the active participation of staff in validation events, examination boards, and through moderation activities with partner colleges. College staff also take part in university staff development and training events. All academic staff have teaching qualifications and further staff development needs are identified through annual appraisals.

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?

20 The arrangements described in paragraphs 12 and 13 are also effective in supporting the College's management of the quality of learning opportunities. At faculty level, operational management is the responsibility of programme teams, led by programme leaders, who report to the appropriate curriculum team leader. Faculties monitor the delivery of programmes through termly course review meetings, at which targeted improvements are reviewed as well as curricular development and student progress. The course review meetings take account of feedback from students, employers and external examiners. The thorough annual monitoring reviews feed into faculty and college self-assessment reports, which contribute both to internal college evaluation and to awarding body processes. Reporting procedures are clearly articulated and both students and external examiners comment that programmes are well managed and constitute an example of good practice.

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

21 Responsibility for the recruitment of students rests with the College, which has an applications and interview policy stating that all enquiries for information will be dealt with within three days and interviews arranged within 15 days. Appropriate guidance and counselling are offered at the pre-application stage. All students undergo a comprehensive one-week induction programme, which is well planned and informative. Those on the BSc Outdoor Education programme also participate in a three-day residential programme. The induction arrangements are perceived by students to be excellent, and make a significant contribution to ensuring that students understand the resources available and the expectations of higher education. This represents good practice.

22 At the beginning of their programme, students are issued with a detailed course handbook, available in written and electronic forms, that provides information on course aims and outcomes, course administration and assessment regulations, including those relating to academic misconduct and mitigating circumstances. At the beginning of each module, students are issued with a module contract that provides a rationale for the module, teaching schedule and details of the module assessment. Students are well informed about academic expectations, which represents good practice.

23 There are clear procedures on assessment deadlines and the quality of feedback is regarded by most students as professional, constructive and fair. The external examiner for the Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector describes feedback as 'positive, clear, individualised and encouraging'. The Developmental engagement team noted the provision of feedback as an area of good practice. However, on the new FD Information Communication Technology programme there has been some delay in the provision of assignment details and return of marked work to students, which the team identified as a matter of concern. The team was informed that the programme leader had sought reassurance on marking standards from the external examiner, who had subsequently confirmed that standards are appropriate for the programme. The team concludes that where new programmes are in the first year of operation, it would be advisable for the College to monitor carefully the provision of assignment briefs and the feedback arrangements for the return of student work, in order to maintain the quality of the student learning experience.

24 Student work is marked and second-marked internally and samples are sent both to the programme team at the validating university and external examiner for moderation. A university moderation report then informs the course review process. Course review meetings take place three times a year and an annual monitoring report is produced at the end of the year. These are used to inform the university self-evaluation reports required by validating partners and curricular self-assessment reports produced by curriculum leaders. At all stages, action plans are generated and progress is monitored by the Quality Curriculum Review Board. The course monitoring process is comprehensive and effective.

25 All programmes are demand-led, and respond to the needs of local, regional and national employers. Employers are consulted during the development of new programmes and all curriculum areas are informed by employer forums. All Foundation Degree programmes include work-based learning modules and employers are actively involved in assessment design, thus ensuring the currency and vocational relevance of learning. The same employers have a role in mentoring and in feedback to students. As most students are in full-time employment the mentor is often their line manager. All students are visited while in the workplace by their course tutor as required. For students on the BSc Outdoor Education programme, where this is impractical, the University of Worcester provides a comprehensive placement handbook detailing the roles and responsibilities of both students and employers. Tutors are also in regular contact with the programme manager by mobile phone. The team concludes that the extensive use of a well-developed employer network provides appropriate opportunities for vocationally relevant learning, and constitutes good practice.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure

26 Staff at all levels demonstrate awareness of the Academic Infrastructure, especially where they work closely with colleagues at the respective universities. The Academic Infrastructure has been used to inform all policies and procedures relating to quality of learning opportunities. It is well embedded in all areas of the College activity, for example, the positive role of employers set out in the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning*. Additionally, staff take note of national requirements as interpreted by the awarding bodies, for example, in teacher education the University of Warwick's Code of Practice on assessment for Initial Teacher Training Courses (Lifelong Learning Sector).

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

27 The College has comprehensive systems to ensure that the quality of teaching is maintained and enhanced, including a formal peer observation of teaching scheme that feeds into staff appraisal on an annual basis. Staff are highly motivated and enthusiastic, and course administration is efficient and effective. All higher education teaching staff are involved in the delivery of both further and higher education programmes. It is an expectation of the validating partners that those teaching at the higher level are qualified to at least the level at which they will be delivering, preferably at level 7 of the FHEQ. A variety of teaching and assessment methods is used to accommodate different learning styles and vocational areas, and teaching quality is rated highly. Students comment that staff are knowledgeable and that their programmes are academically sound and vocationally relevant.

28 The College has a robust system for ensuring that student concerns about the quality of teaching and learning are identified and acted upon. Student cohorts are relatively small and staff provide effective support for learning. All student groups appoint a course representative and student focus groups take place twice a year. In addition, students complete online mid-module and end-of-module evaluations that inform the course review process. These are effective mechanisms of quality assurance. Action taken as a result of student feedback includes the creation of a dedicated higher education quiet area in the library, removal of a server from a teaching room, and a changing pattern of module delivery. Most students feel that their views are heard and that action is taken. This represents good practice.

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

29 Each full-time group of students is allocated a personal tutor and 1.5 hours is allocated each week for group and/or individual tutorials. Group tutorials are conducted weekly and individual tutorials, where individual learning plans are reviewed, are conducted monthly. Students are also in regular contact with their course tutors and communicate through the virtual learning environment, email and text messages. They appreciate the personal tutoring system and the helpfulness and accessibility of staff.

30 The student support services are centrally managed and the Head of Student Services is a member of the Academic Board and Higher Education (HE) Group, thus facilitating communication and awareness of issues. A full range of student support services is provided and the College was awarded the **matrix** Standard for information, support and guidance in 2009. A diagnostic service is available early in each programme and, where needs are identified, assessment and subsequent support are arranged. Adult learners may also request a systematic assessment of their needs; referral arrangements are good and learners who require support receive it. The team concludes that learning support arrangements, representing good practice, are effective in assisting learners to achieve their learning goals.

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

31 The arrangements described in paragraphs 18 and 19 are also effective in maintaining and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities. The HE cross-College group, which has a specific remit for the identification and dissemination of good practice organised five events that included topics such as 'providing feedback to students', 'developing innovative work-related assignments' and 'using the virtual learning environment to develop learning and assessment'. A further series of events has been planned for 2009-10. The introduction of good practice forums has been well received by staff, has a positive effect on feedback provided to students and has extended the use of the virtual learning environment across curriculum areas.

How does the College ensure the sufficiency and accessibility of the learning resources the students need to achieve the intended learning outcomes of their programmes?

32 The new building at the Hereford Campus provides modern facilities, which support good practice for teaching and learning. All classrooms are equipped with smartboards and personal computers. Some of the teaching accommodation at the Holme Lacy Campus is adversely affected by noise from workshop equipment and is in need of modernisation. There are plans, however, to invest a further £10 million on redevelopment and modernisation. The curriculum areas are well supported by specialist facilities, with access to extensive woodlands and outdoor education resources at Holme Lacy, and excellent business, technology and computing resources at Hereford. In addition, electronic links are available to a range of library and learning resources provided by the universities. Students appreciate the range and accessibility of resources provided by the universities.

33 Students benefit from small class sizes which result in a high level of individual attention. External examiners comment positively on the quality of the learning experience provided. Imaginative and innovative use is made of the virtual learning environment, which provides students with access, either from the College or at home, to learning materials, discussion forums, and assessment tasks and feedback at any time. Different curriculum areas have adopted different systems, in order to meet the requirements of their students and subject areas. As identified in the Developmental engagement report, the College's use of the virtual learning environment to meet the needs of a disparate rural community continues to be an area of good practice.

34 The College operates an effective capital bidding system, to ensure that curriculum areas are adequately resourced. Resource requirements are identified by curriculum teams and submitted to the senior management for consideration through an annual bidding process. Staff and external examiners report that all curriculum areas are well resourced.

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

Core theme 3: Public information

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

35 The College is responsible for publishing a range of information for potential and existing higher education students that includes a higher education prospectus; course leaflets; web-based programme-related information; programme handbooks; programme and module specifications, and related documentation, and student application and induction materials. The information is current, accurate and accessible. Checks are made to ensure Disability Discrimination Act compliance, which has resulted, for example, in material in Braille for a visually impaired student. Students confirm the accuracy and helpfulness of published information in assisting them to make their choice of programme. The College marketing department is responsible for the higher education prospectus and any higher education-specific advertising materials. One feature of the advertising plan includes the use of occasional advertising 'wraps', which feature prominently in the local newspaper, highlighting the work of the College. There are plans to target employers through trade magazines, in order to enhance their understanding of the provision.

36 The student handbooks that learners receive at the start of, and during, their programmes are also accessible electronically. They provide a wide range of information, including access to staff, guidance on College policies, including course regulations, and access to additional learning support. Students are positive about the use of these documents as up-to-date reference materials. The Developmental engagement identified as good practice the provision of comprehensive and well-produced written assessment material at programme and institutional levels, which can also be accessed electronically. The team confirms the findings of the Developmental engagement in this respect.

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

37 The three assistant principals, as members of the senior management team, have overall responsibility for providing accurate public information. They apply established robust quality procedures, to ensure that both paper-based and web-based documentation is reviewed and checked for accuracy prior to publication. The College cooperates closely with its higher education partners to ensure that the validating universities are able to monitor and control the programme information that it publishes on their behalf. All three partnership agreements contain specific reference to the approval of publicity material relating to university-validated provision. The team was assured that all relevant material is referred by the College to the universities through different, but well-understood, processes. In turn, the College advises the universities as to the information it publishes concerning the higher education provision at the College. Checks made on a sample range of publications confirm that information is in the main accurate and up to date, although there are occasional inconsistencies in content of information in different documents. However, these are usually identified quickly and corrected.

38 Pre-course information is useful, accurate and accessible to all. Most of the students used the internet to find out about their course, prior to application through UCAS or directly through contact with the College. They commented positively on this experience, feeling that the pre-course information helped them to make the right choice and that the course was in line with their expectations.

39 Students who participate in the induction process find the information provided helpful, accurate, consistent and current. The induction handbook for the FD in Learning Support is particularly comprehensive and includes sections on student support groups, study-skills guidance, links with the workplace, ethical issues, course representation and other useful advice. As part of the induction to this course, second-year students also meet with those from year one to help develop confidence and offer support, a further example of good practice. This continues throughout the course and is highly valued by students.

40 Programme-specific information originates from the programme teams. Much of the course material is now in electronic format, including several good examples of published information on the virtual learning environment. Online resources are used as an integral part of the teaching and learning strategy on most higher education programmes. Programme teams have the responsibility for monitoring the accuracy and reliability of online and written information for students.

41 Generic information produced by the marketing department is circulated to appropriate staff for consultation before publication. Although the procedures for checking the accuracy and currency of information are not formally documented, they are well understood by all parties.

42 The team sampled programme handbooks, programme specifications, assessment briefs, marking criteria, information on progression and attainment and regulatory information. They conclude that documentation is generally clear, accurate and up to date, and informs students of the relevant assessment practices and procedures relevant to their studies. Much of this information is replicated in the virtual learning environment and this mode of access is valued by students and constitutes good practice.

43 The College's website has undergone redevelopment to ensure that it is more efficient, Disability Discrimination Act-compliant, up to date and modern. The new website went live in January 2008. There has been an increase of 238 per cent in the number of visitors to the website between September 2007 and September 2008. This medium is an increasingly important source of information for the public, as well as for current students. There is a specific section for higher education that allows prospective students to find out about the courses on offer and download information if required. A dedicated website developer has been employed in the marketing department to ensure that the College maintains the site effectively, to provide accurate relevant information for the public.

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

44 The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in June 2008. Three lines of enquiry were agreed with the College: the role of assessment in promoting effective learning; the extent to which systems of marking and moderation are communicated to and understood by learners; and the preparation of staff for higher education assessment.

45 The Developmental engagement team identified areas of good practice that included the productive working relationship between the College and the awarding bodies, with particular reference to assessment policy and practice, the range of innovative assessments

which promote effective learning, especially those that are work-related and relevant to the professional needs of students. The Developmental engagement team noted many examples of thorough and supportive feedback. It concluded that the quality of learning opportunities is enhanced by the imaginative, motivational, and innovative use of the virtual learning environment, including the provision of assessment information by means of electronic communication, with particular reference to the needs of a dispersed rural intake. This supplements the comprehensive and well-produced printed assessment documentation, which the College provides for students and other stakeholders.

46 The Developmental engagement team concluded that it would be advisable for the College to ensure consistency of practice in the speed and quality of feedback to engineering students, and the use of a common feedback form on all modules and programmes. It would be desirable for the College to take action to extend the virtual learning environment, to embrace all higher education programmes and to enhance the mechanisms for the identification and dissemination of all good assessment practice across the higher education provision. In responding to the recommendations arising from the Developmental engagement, it is evident that the College is making good progress towards strengthening the higher education ethos of the teaching staff who manage and deliver the current programmes.

D Foundation Degrees

47 The College offers Foundation Degrees (FDs) in Learning Support, Health and Social Care (not running this academic year), and Information Communication Technology which is in its first year of operation. The team confirms that the programmes are aligned to the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*. A strategic decision has been taken to expand the number of FD programmes in order to meet student demand in areas where the College has both expertise and resources. In September 2009, it is planned to introduce three new programmes: Counselling; Leadership and Management; and Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector.

48 The conclusions listed in paragraphs 50 to 54 below apply to all the higher education provision, including the FDs. There is much evidence of good practice as listed in paragraph 50. When the College introduces the planned new FD programmes, it is advised to take action to monitor carefully the provision of assessment briefs and the feedback arrangements for the return of student work, in order to maintain the quality of the student learning experience.

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

- the College has robust arrangements for the maintenance of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities, based on its own internal structures and those of the awarding bodies (paragraphs 12, 13, 15 to 17)
- staff development is proactive and effective in underpinning the maintenance of academic standards and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities (paragraphs 18, 19, 31)
- highly motivated, enthusiastic and efficient programme teams provide many examples of effective induction, course administration and support for students (paragraphs 20 to 22, 29, 30, 39)

- the information that the College publishes about its higher education programmes, in electronic and printed form, including student handbooks and module contracts, is current, accurate and accessible (paragraphs 22, 35, 42)
- the College responds to the needs of local, regional and national employers, and there are effective arrangements for employer liaison (paragraph 25)
- there are robust and efficient processes for the collection of student views that are used effectively to enhance the quality of learning opportunities (paragraph 28)
- the College makes imaginative use of the virtual learning environment, in order to enhance teaching and learning and to meet the needs of a dispersed rural community (paragraphs 31, 33)
- the provision and management of specialist facilities enhances the quality of the student learning experience (paragraphs 32 to 34).

50 The team also makes a recommendation for consideration by the College and its awarding bodies.

The team agreed one area where the College is **advised** to take action:

- to monitor carefully the provision of assessment briefs and the feedback arrangements for the return of student work, where new programmes are in the first year of operation, in order to maintain the quality of the student learning experience (paragraph 23).

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

51 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Herefordshire College of Technology'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, including the Universities of Gloucestershire, Warwick and Worcester.

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

- the College has robust arrangements for the maintenance of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities, based on its own internal structures and those of the awarding bodies (paragraphs 12, 13, 15 to 17)
- staff development is proactive and effective in underpinning the maintenance of academic standards and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities (paragraphs 18, 19, 31)
- highly motivated, enthusiastic and efficient programme teams provide many examples of effective induction, course administration and support for students (paragraphs 20 to 22, 29, 30, 39)
- the information that the College publishes about its higher education programmes, in electronic and printed form, including student handbooks and module contracts, is current, accurate and accessible (paragraphs 22, 35, 42)

- the College responds to the needs of local, regional and national employers, and there are effective arrangements for employer liaison (paragraph 25)
- there are robust and efficient processes for the collection of student views that are used effectively to enhance the quality of learning opportunities (paragraph 28)
- the College makes imaginative use of the virtual learning environment, in order to enhance teaching and learning and to meet the needs of a dispersed rural community (paragraphs 31, 33)
- the provision and management of specialist facilities enhances the quality of the student learning experience (paragraphs 32 to 34).

53 The team also makes a recommendation for consideration by the College and its awarding bodies.

The team agreed one area where the College is **advised** to take action:

- to monitor carefully the provision of assessment briefs and the feedback arrangements for the return of student work, where new programmes are in the first year of operation, in order to maintain the quality of the student learning experience (paragraph 23).

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

55 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, and other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that 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.

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

Herefordshire College of Technology action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2009						
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:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the College has robust arrangements for the maintenance of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities, based on its own internal structures and those of the awarding bodies (paragraphs 12, 13, 15, 17) 	Maintain robust arrangements for academic learning standards, based on College internal structures	September 2009	Deputy Principal	High academic standards and learning opportunities	Cross College HE Group	Student Feedback (student focus group) External Examiners Report
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> staff development is proactive and effective in underpinning the maintenance of academic standards and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities (paragraphs 18, 19, 31) 	Devise a CPD programme for HE staff. Focus on academic standards and enhancing learning opportunities	September 2009	Curriculum Team Leader - Education	Effective CPD for Higher Education staff	Cross College HE Group	EE Report Staff Appraisal CPD Records Student Feedback

Herefordshire College of Technology action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2009						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> highly motivated, enthusiastic and efficient programme teams provide many examples of effective induction, course administration and support for students (paragraphs 20 to 22, 29, 30, 39) 	Devise a CPD programme to share good practice of effective induction, course administration and support for all students	December 2009	Curriculum Team Leader - Education	Effective induction, course administration and support for all students	Cross College HE Group	Student Feedback (student focus group)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the College makes imaginative use of the virtual learning environment in order to enhance teaching and learning and to meet the needs of a dispersed rural community (paragraphs 31, 33) 	CPD programme to share good practice in the use of virtual learning and to meet the needs of a dispersed rural community	July 2010	Curriculum Team Leader - Education	Imaginative use of virtual learning environment which enhances teaching and learning across all HE programmes	Cross College HE Group	Student Feedback (student focus group)

Herefordshire College of Technology action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2009						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the information that the College publishes about its higher education programmes, in electronic and printed form, including student handbooks and module contracts, is current, accurate and accessible (paragraphs 22, 35, 42) 	Maintain accuracy of information published on HE programmes in electronic and printed format	July 2010	Deputy Principal	Accurate HE information published on Web site, handbooks and moodle	Cross College HE Group	Student Feedback (student focus group)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the College responds to the needs of local, regional and national employers, and there are effective arrangements for employer liaison (paragraph 25) 	Maintain close links with employers to design and develop HE programmes	December 2009	Assistant Principal's	New Foundation Degrees meeting employer needs, for example, Counselling and Management, Teaching and Learning	Cross College HE Group	Feedback from work place mentors

Herefordshire College of Technology action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2009						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● there are robust and efficient processes for the collection of student views that are used effectively to enhance the quality of learning opportunities (paragraph 28) 	<p>Maintain robust processes to collect student views to enhance the quality of learning experience</p>	March 2010	Director of Quality	Timely and appropriate feedback from learners which is used to enhance the quality of learning opportunities	Cross College HE Group	Learner analysis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the provision and management of specialist facilities enhances the quality of the student learning experience.(paragraphs 32 to 34). 	<p>Maintain up-to-date and specialist facilities to enhance the quality of the learning opportunity</p>	Dec 2009	Assistant Principal's	Modern and up-to-date specialist resources	Cross College HE Group	Student Feedback (student focus group)

Herefordshire College of Technology action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2009						
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<p>The team agreed one area where the College should be advised to take action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to monitor carefully the provision of assessment briefs and the feedback arrangements for the return of student work, where new programmes are in the first year of operation, in order to maintain the quality of the student learning experience (paragraph 23). 	<p>Ensure all student assessment briefs and feedback arrangements meet validation requirements of the awarding body</p>	<p>July 2009</p>	<p>Curriculum Team Leader - ICT</p>	<p>Timely assessment feedback</p>	<p>Cross College HE Committee</p>	<p>Module feedback HE Student Focus Group Feedback External Examiners Report</p>

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