Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

Kidderminster College

June 2010

SR96

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 Kidderminster College carried out in June 2010

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

Good practice

The team has identified the following **good practice** for dissemination:

- relocating the higher education provision within an area separate from the further education provision, in which the higher education courses are in close proximity
- effective academic, pastoral and learning support for students provided by tutors and the Learning Resources Centre staff
- a well-designed virtual learning environment, which provides access to a wide range of services through its hub and enhances communication between staff and students.

Recommendations

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

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

- review the frequency of its Higher Education Forum meetings to ensure its more regular consideration of higher education developmental and operational issues, and to rewrite its remit to reflect more fully its expanding role in monitoring and enhancing programme delivery
- review its higher education Quality Assurance Policy and processes to make their operation more transparent and to ensure that the timing of the internal and external quality processes between the College and the University are better aligned
- engage with the University to clarify and formalise the duties and responsibilities of the link tutors, with a view to enhancing further the College's quality assurance processes
- review its procedures for ensuring consistency in the quality and content of written feedback to students on their assessments.

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 Kidderminster 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 Worcester (the University). The review was carried out by Mr Tom Cantwell and Mrs Anne Hill (reviewers) and Mr Robert Hodgkinson (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 the University, a meeting with College staff and University representatives and with students during the preparatory meeting. There was no Developmental engagement, and the review was conducted by a desk-based study. 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   Kidderminster College is a small, general further education college situated in north-east Worcestershire. It offers a range of further education and work-based learning programmes. The College is based at a purpose-built site in Kidderminster town centre, which opened in 2003. The College's further education provision numbers 4,500 students, of whom 1,250 are full-time. For the academic year 2009-10, there are currently 59 HEFCE-funded higher education students, all of whom are full-time. Eighteen staff teach the higher education provision, of whom seven are full-time, and 11 are part-time. The College's mission is to 'deliver high quality education and training to the community it serves'.

4   The College delivers its courses within the Creative Industries Department. It offers the following higher education courses:

University of Worcester
- HND Dance (13 full-time equivalents)
- HND Film Making (19 full-time equivalents)
- HND Urban and Electronic Music Production (27 full-time equivalents).

Partnership agreements with the awarding body

5   The College has a formal partnership agreement with the University of Worcester for its higher education provision. The University is 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; quality of teaching and learning; application of the University's standards; regular internal monitoring of quality; and compliance with the University's requirements for annual evaluation and review.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

6   Following the appointment of a new Principal for the College in 2010, there have been changes in the overall management of higher education and the senior management

team has been reorganised. The former Head of Lifelong Learning's role, which incorporated higher education, has been redesignated as the Director of Learning. This integrates the roles of Director of Quality, Learning Services, Curriculum and Head of School. A new Curriculum Area Manager (Section Manager, Creative Industries) has also been appointed. The changes have been made to strengthen the ongoing strategic oversight and management of the higher education provision. The University has recently withdrawn the HEFCE numbers for the HND Film Making. The programme will terminate at the end of the academic year 2010-11.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

7   Students studying on the College's higher education programmes were invited to present a submission to the Summative review team. They nominated two representatives from each course to write their submission. An independent member of staff was nominated by the students to assist them in the writing and compilation of the submission. The students' submission is based on their responses to a questionnaire that they compiled. The results are helpful in understanding students' views and contain comments on course information, college facilities, feedback and student support. During the preparatory meeting the students met the coordinator and expanded some of the points that they made in the submission. Their evidence was of value to the review.

B   Evaluation of the management of HEFCE-funded higher education

Core theme 1: Academic standards

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

8   The College manages the standards of its higher education provision in accordance with the University's requirements. The University prescribes the policies, assessments, regulations and responsibilities. The respective responsibilities of the College and the University are clearly specified in well-articulated course agreements for each of the programmes. Staff at both institutions are aware of their responsibilities and link tutors from the University and course leaders from the College reinforce this. They are responsible to their respective institutions for ensuring the day-to-day maintenance of the standards and delivery of the programmes. The agreements are comprehensive and contain an award map that specifies the modules to be delivered for each programme, together with related information that has been agreed at course approval. The College is expected to adhere to the University's procedures for quality assurance and enhancement. These are identified in the latter's academic regulations and procedures.

9   The College manages the standards of its higher education provision through a limited number of committees and simple management structures that reflect the small size of its provision. There are clear responsibilities and reporting arrangements within the College. The Director of Learning has overall responsibility for the strategic planning and management of the higher education provision and is expected to ensure the implementation of the University's policies and procedures. There is a comprehensive reporting structure. The Section Manager for Creative Industries reports directly to the Director of Learning. The Section Manager is accountable for programme delivery and course leaders are responsible for the subject areas and their operational management. The Director of Learning has weekly meetings with the Principal at which higher education is considered as a standing agenda item. The governors of the College are kept informed of matters relating to its higher

education provision. The College's committee structure includes a Higher Education Forum, the purpose of which is to oversee the quality and standards of the provision. Membership includes course leaders and the Director of Learning. It reports to the College's Senior Management Team and to the Management Forum. The Higher Education Forum considers a wide range of operational issues that impact on the provision, including the course annual evaluative reports, external examiner reports, external quality audits and reviews. It acts as a focus for sharing institutional development priorities. A key responsibility is to update and maintain a three-year rolling strategic plan of programme developments and collaborative initiatives that it undertakes with the University. However, its terms of reference are limited and insufficiently specific and do not fully reflect its central and expanding role in monitoring the quality and standards of the provision. They need to be rewritten. In view of the operational importance of the Higher Education Forum and the fact that it meets just once each semester, the College needs to determine whether the frequency of its meetings is sufficient. More frequent meetings would encourage the more regular consideration of higher education developmental and operational issues.

10   The College has all the components expected of a quality assurance system that reflects the small size of the provision. However, its Quality Assurance Policy, which is generic to its further education and higher education provision, could be developed further to identify and more explicitly explain the operation of its higher education quality processes, their timing and their alignment with the University's quality procedures. This would ensure that their operation is more transparent.

11   In accordance with the course agreements, link tutors are expected to play a central role in liaising with the College's course leaders to ensure that the College adheres to the University's quality assurance and enhancement procedures. Together with the course leaders, link tutors are responsible for ensuring the maintenance of the standards and the delivery of the programmes. They are expected to produce an annual report on the functioning of the provision, to be shared with the College. Their only formal commitment is to attend the course committee each semester. The University and the College acknowledge that the discharge of the role of link tutor varies across the provision and that their activities should be developed more formally and applied more consistently. With a view to enhancing the provision, consideration should be given to the expansion of the remit to include representation on the College's Higher Education Forum and its Higher Education Practitioners' Forum. The former focuses on quality assurance and the latter on encouraging the sharing of good practice and monitoring peer observation and continuous professional development. The Practitioners' Forum also provides a platform for discussions regarding resource purchases and accommodation planning. Outcomes feed into the Higher Education Forum. The team concludes that it is desirable for the College to engage with the awarding body to clarify and formalise the duties and responsibilities of the link tutors, with a view to enhancing further the College's quality assurance processes.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

12   All of the programmes are designed by the College and have been the subject of programme approval by the University. The University provides a set of design principles in its Curriculum Design Policy to which the validated programmes are subject. The application of these principles ensures that the programmes engage with the *Code of practice,* are aligned with the FHEQ and the relevant subject benchmark statements, and constitute academically coherent and appropriately balanced courses.

13   The impact of the Academic Infrastructure is evidenced in procedures relating to the design, approval and delivery of the three programmes and in the documentation supplied to students. There is clear reference to the subject benchmark statements within course and student handbooks and students are made aware of the importance of the Academic Infrastructure. Following its consideration of written and oral evidence, supporting documentation, scrutiny of the partnership review of the College's provision and its annual

evaluative review process (as described in paragraph 16), the team confirms that engagement with the Academic Infrastructure is firmly embedded in the College's systems and procedures.

14   Course handbooks contain module specifications which are comprehensive and informative. Intended learning outcomes are matched to subject benchmark statements and the assessment methodologies and grading criteria are clearly explained. Students are subject to the University's assessment regulations, which are closely aligned with the Academic Infrastructure. Programme specifications are current, well expressed and accurate. The University verifies them, with close attention given to the Academic Infrastructure. During the review of student work the team identified examples of summative feedback to students on their assessments that did not make full use of the newly introduced feedback templates. The feedback did not always map student achievement to intended learning outcomes. The university partnership review also identified inconsistencies in the quality and content of written assignment feedback, as did some students.

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   Effective systems ensure that the standards of higher education at the College meet the University's rules and regulations. The College fulfils its obligations for ensuring standards by the attention that is paid to the content of external examiners' reports. External examiners are appointed by the University to monitor the standards of the College's higher education programmes. Their reports are received by the University, which forwards them to the Director of Learning at the College. Students have access to the external examiner reports at course committee meetings. Course teams produce action plans for matters requiring attention, which are forwarded to the University where they are monitored. The Section Manager at the College assists course teams in responding to and resolving resourcing or academic matters arising from the reports. The action plans are incorporated into the course annual evaluation reports where they can be progressed and monitored. The team concludes that the processes are transparent and robust.

16   The University provides the College with guidance on the operation of the annual evaluation process. Formal approval has been given for the College to use its own annual monitoring report template and this is normally complemented by reports from link tutors that are shared with the College's Higher Education Manager. Programme teams produce course annual evaluation reports, which integrate feedback from students and other college-wide sources relating to the academic health of the programmes. The reports are evaluative and result in an action plan for current matters and detail progress made in response to the previous year's action plan. The reports are presented to the University's Institute Quality Committee for monitoring and approval. These processes engage with the precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 7: Programme design, approval, monitoring and review* and are effective.

17   Following a review of the partnership arrangements between the University and the College, the course agreements have been ratified for a further five years. They are subject to a satisfactory response to the partnership review action plan. Both institutions monitor the responses to the action plan. The partnership review has helped to reinforce the college staff's awareness of their obligations and has strengthened their links with the University.

18   Students are subject to the University's assessment regulations, including those relating to late and non-submission of work, mitigating circumstances, academic misconduct and appeals, failure and re-assessment. Detailed arrangements for assessment are set out in the course agreements. Information on assessment regulations, including assignment

briefs, is published in the University student handbook, the College course handbooks and module outlines.

19   There is evidence of liaison and effective exchange of information between the College and the University at operational and strategic levels. These links help the College to fulfil its obligations and meet the requirements of the University. For example, the College is represented at senior management level on strategic groups at the University, including its Higher Education Managers Forum. Representing the College, the Director of Learning presents papers to staff on the Forum's outcomes.

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

20   The College has a comprehensive and wide-ranging staff development policy from which an annual staff development plan is produced and mapped against the College's strategic priorities. The staff development programme is planned and coordinated by the Director of Learning. The college calendar makes provision for scholarly activity and time is allocated to its pursuit in college staff development days. The University Academic Development and Practice Unit operates a series of scheduled events and activities to meet the existing and emerging requirements of higher education practitioners. These include sessions to improve staff's understanding of the Academic Infrastructure. In addition, the University provides training for staff new to higher education. The HND Dance course leader has led a staff development session at the University on the new validation process for University and partner staff. This demonstrates the close working relationship that exists between the College and the University and is an example of the sharing of good practice.

21   College staff provided examples of the variety of ways in which they engage with and make use of staff development opportunities. Staff benefit from these opportunities to update their knowledge and to increase their awareness of academic standards. Participation in the Higher Education Forum and Higher Education Practitioners' Forum also helps staff to understand the factors that affect academic standards and the implications of the *Code of practice*.

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

Core theme 2: Quality of learning opportunities

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

22   The arrangements described in paragraphs 8-11 are effective in supporting the quality of learning opportunities. The University's course agreements with the College define clearly the expectations for the delivery of and quality of learning opportunities on the higher education courses at the College. The Director of Learning has overall responsibility for the strategic management of the teaching and learning opportunities, with operational and resource issues delegated to the Section Manager. The course leaders lead the curriculum team and ensure the delivery of the programmes.

23   The programme teams are expected to comply with the regulations, policies and procedures prescribed by the University. These are embedded in programme handbooks written by the course teams and approved by the awarding body. These prescribe the range of learning opportunities for the programmes that underpin the framework for the delivery of

the courses within which all tutors operate. The range of methods used to ensure the quality of teaching and learning is well articulated in the College's self-evaluation. For example, course committees, comprising elected student representatives and teaching teams, meet each semester to review teaching and learning, its delivery, and the organisation and assessment of each course. In advance of each meeting students are expected to canvass the views of their peers.

24   Key elements of the management structure underpinning student learning are the Higher Education Forum and the Higher Education Practitioners' Forum, as described in paragraphs 9 and 11, respectively. The small size of the provision and the common membership on the higher education committees ensures that the management of the quality of learning opportunities is well understood by the college staff, from the level of the programme through to senior management, and between the College and the University.

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

25   The arrangements and reporting mechanisms described in paragraphs 8 and 15-18 apply equally to the quality of learning opportunities. Attendance at university committee meetings and the relationship of the course leaders with link tutors supports the College staff in the implementation of university policies and procedures governing the delivery of the provision. As part of the partnership review process, the College's learning resources are scrutinised for their adequacy, and students are entitled to access the full range of the University's Learning and Information Support Services and to apply for financial support. College tutors supplement the book stock by referring students to podcasts, resource packs and the virtual learning environment. Websites are often used as an extra source to supplement the general library stocks. In addition, the College continues to encourage course teams to share resource solutions between one another and with the University. Access to learning resources allows the College to offer a wide range of learning opportunities to students which enhance their studies.

26   The number of the College's higher education programmes is small compared with the size of its further education provision. Recognising this, the College has chosen to relocate its higher education provision within a single area, which is separate from its further education provision. Students and teaching staff welcome this initiative as the proximity of the higher education programmes to one another creates an atmosphere that is more conducive to higher education teaching, learning and self-directed study and is considered good practice.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

27   The arrangements described in paragraphs 12-14 also apply to the quality of learning opportunities. They take account of the Academic Infrastructure in underpinning the quality of leaning opportunities for students. In meetings with the team, the College higher education course teams and support managers articulated their awareness of the *Code of practice* and its more recent revisions. The team is satisfied that College staff engage with the Academic Infrastructure when supporting the delivery of learning opportunities for students.

28   Changes to the *Code of practice* and other elements of the Academic Infrastructure are monitored by the University and by the College's Director of Learning. The latter ensures that copies of revised sections of the *Code of practice* are distributed to course teams. The Director of Learning was able to demonstrate familiarity with the precepts and awareness of the need for engagement with the Academic Infrastructure, as it applies to the quality of learning opportunities. College staff attended University staff development sessions that

focused on enhancing their understanding of the Academic Infrastructure. Many of the policies and procedures referred to in the University's student handbooks and programme handbooks inform students and engage with the relevant precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 3: Disabled students*, *Section 5: Academic appeals and student complaints on academic matters* and *Section 9: Work-based and placement learning.*

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

29   All the full-time higher education tutors have a teaching qualification. All part-time or fractionally employed staff involved in the delivery of the programmes have either a teaching qualification or are working towards one. It is the College's policy that all staff will attain a teaching qualification. The course agreements confirm that all staff teaching higher education programmes must be approved by the University. All tutors are expected to have professional industry experience. Tutors are encouraged to engage in scholarly activity and continuous professional practice opportunities. Learning is enriched by visiting lecturers and links with employers and industry. Interactive teaching methods, including video recording of practical work, enhance students' learning and facilitate self-reflection. For example, the HND Dance programme handbook lists various methods for evaluating and improving the quality of teaching and learning. These emphasise the value of student consultation as a source of monitoring the effectiveness of the teaching and learning. The expanding use of the virtual learning environment promotes additional learning opportunities and is welcomed by students. In particular, the new higher education hub website provides a cluster of options for students to show their work, engage in interactive dialogue with peers and with tutors and link with the student online learning environment.

30   The Higher Education Practitioners' Forum, as outlined in paragraph 11, is effective in facilitating discussion on best working practices and continuing professional development. Its remit is to review the teaching and learning and the organisation, delivery and assessment of each programme. Its outcomes are reflected in the annual monitoring process and are received at senior management team meetings. The course agreement indicates the important role of the link tutors and the significance of their relationship with the course leaders in maintaining and enhancing teaching and learning.

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

31   Personal development planning is well developed and is a key process by which students acquire the skills of self-evaluation and self-reflection and monitor progress through their programmes. All students receive an effective induction to the services offered by the College and the University. This includes an introduction to support services and health and safety issues likely to be experienced in the teaching and learning environment. The College provides a wide range of opportunities that includes support for improving study skills and research techniques. In addition, the College uses its virtual learning environment, in conjunction with the support offered by its Learning Resource Centre, to enhance student skills. Additional support is available through the University.

32   The tutorial system works effectively and is responsive to student needs. The College provides a range of academic and pastoral support. This includes weekly group tutorials of which half of the time is allocated to improving students' study skills. Tutorial time is also allocated to discuss each assignment, either on a one-to-one or group basis. Each student can book time with tutors, as required. The College has recently introduced a standard reporting template for all tutorials. This is in response to student feedback, gathered through various surveys and questionnaires. Student views are sought by means of end-of-module evaluations to determine the adequacy of the support provided by the tutors during the delivery of each module. There is a variety of methods available to elicit feedback from students and systematic processes for responding to their views. Students confirm that staff listen and respond to them. However, some student representatives are not fully aware of the

College committees which they are entitled to attend or the role of the link tutor. The College may wish to address these issues. The team concludes that the formal opportunities for feedback from students, in the main, operate well and encourage them to express their views.

33   The students are impressed by the commitment of course teams and indicate that staff are supportive. The student written submission concludes that the College is strong in all aspects of support, with some areas described as excellent. This strength of support is evident in senior management decisions, for example in the allocation of a separate area for the higher education provision. Overall, students welcome the high level of academic, pastoral and learning support and consider that they receive plenty of individual attention. Tutors consider that the College has a 'good higher education ethos' and that pastoral support is readily available to students at College and course team levels. The self-evaluation cites the close working relationships between staff and students. The feedback mechanisms encourage the course teams to identify enhancement opportunities, to which the tutors can respond quickly. The Learning Resource Centre is also responsive to students' needs. In conjunction with course tutors, it has developed a range of strategies to mitigate the impact of any shortage in books. A learning resource facilitator helps students to understand the Harvard referencing system, so that their referencing is accurate and facilitates the conduct of literature searches. A range of software is also available to assist students in the development of study skills.

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

34   The arrangements for staff development described in paragraphs 20 and 21 apply equally to the quality of learning opportunities. A staff development policy document and the course agreements indicate the entitlement of course teams to staff development and continuous professional development. The College and the University are working towards providing greater developmental, scholarly and research opportunities for staff and to maximise the benefits from complementary areas of expertise. The remission time allocated to teaching staff depends on the amount of higher education teaching undertaken. It is felt that given the expansion of course teams, more time will be become available to take advantage of these opportunities. As part of this process, staff development days encourage course teams to disseminate good practice. There are programme-based activities, including a visiting lecturer programme, which ensures that practitioners are kept to up to date with professional practice and the latest technologies. The College recognises that there is more work to be done to measure the effectiveness of staff development activities on enhancing the quality of learning opportunities.

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

35   The course agreements state clearly that the College is expected to provide library, computer, information technology and other facilities compatible with the decisions made at course approval. All students are entitled to use the facilities of the University's Information and Learning Services, which includes access to electronic resources. The job description for the Section Manager indicates that the role has a specific responsibility for resources relating to the delivery of the curriculum areas. During their induction, programme students are introduced to all the physical and virtual resources available at the College. The HND Dance students would welcome more time spent during the induction on explaining the range of facilities available at the University. During the next academic year's induction, course teams plan to make more use of the university resources and facilities. The programme handbook for the HND Dance identifies the accommodation, including space for practical sessions and workstations that is available. The self-evaluation details the methods by which students can

provide feedback on a wide range of matters, including the adequacy of learning resources. Feedback from students, action plans and other documentation indicate that the College is responsive to students' views on the adequacy of resources and attempts to find solutions within the constraints of its budget. The students admit that they do not make full use of the university resources. The College and the University are exploring ways of encouraging students to use the University resources to supplement those available at the College. Outside contact hours, the College has been responsive in providing access to specialist facilities. For example, the HND Dance students are provided with early morning and evening access to the dance studio. The students indicate that the social spaces could be improved and more attention paid to defining an area separating them from the further education students.

36   The Learning Resource Centre is responsive to students' needs. As well as planning to allocate further resources for more multiple texts, it has introduced a shorter loan period and students and staff have been encouraged to return books more promptly. However, some students were unsure whether the initiatives were working properly. The purchase of books is based on the recommendations of members of staff.

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?

37   The College publishes a full-time student prospectus, which includes brief details of its higher education programmes. In addition, a College leaflet details the additional learning support that is available to students. Both documents are clear and attractive. The College's external advertising and publicity, including web-based marketing relating to the programmes, is developed under the course agreements and agreed jointly with the University. The College's arrangements for publicity and marketing include entries on UCAS, the Lifelong Learning initiatives, the Peer Mentoring Scheme, the Summer School, Widening Horizons, the Kidderminster College and the University's undergraduate prospectus and websites. Marketing materials are published to support advertising and events, in accordance with the College's corporate style. Materials to support the advertising and marketing of the programmes are either supplied by the University or agreed with it in advance.

38   All materials published by the College are subject to the University's approval. The College is responsible for publishing various items that relate to the University's policies and regulations, which are governed by the relevant University course agreements. All higher education students receive a student handbook provided by the University. Student handbooks are comprehensive and wide-ranging, containing extracts from the University academic regulations and procedures. The handbooks are drafted by the College's course teams but approved at validation and partnership review events. Course fact sheets posted on the College website, are produced by the College, but are required to be approved by the University.

39   The design of the college website is effective in providing access to its virtual learning environment and to a cluster of facilities through its hub, including its higher education provision documentation. Through the hub students can gain access to a wide range of services that aid communication. These include student links and the display of student work; email; student support services; the facility to check computer availability and to engage in dialogue with other students and staff via 'chat' rooms; checking library stock

availability; obtaining key skills guidance; accessing University online services for feedback and the results of assignments. There is also a link to the Creative Industries Department and through this access to the higher education course material, including student handbooks and module feedback data. Students can also access the University's virtual learning environment and find its content to be helpful, clear and accurate. Some students indicate that access to this virtual learning environment for research purposes is invaluable.

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?

40   The course agreement documents for each of the programmes set out a clear system for the approval and monitoring of public information. The accuracy and completeness of published information with respect to course handbooks, programme specifications, and course regulations, as articulated by the College, is confirmed at the validation stage by the University. All publicity and promotional materials are submitted for approval to link tutors before publication and are reviewed annually by the University's Academic Quality Unit. Amendments or changes suggested by the College are made through the link tutor and confirmed by the University's Institute Quality Group. The College's Marketing Manager is responsible for checking the accuracy, completeness and quality of the content of all publicity for the provision, including the website. The prospectus is updated annually by course leaders and formally approved by the Marketing Manager. After consultation with course teams the website is updated by the Section Manager and signed off by the Marketing Manager. The latter represents the College at a newly convened University marketing managers' group. This additional structure is designed to assure further the consistency and accuracy of the public information. The content of information that is to be placed on the College's virtual learning environment is agreed by the course teams and checked by the Section Manager. As part of the validation of the programmes, the University agrees the website entry and contacts the College annually to agree changes. Recent instances of out-of-date content on the virtual learning environment have led the College to identify specific dates for reviewing its currency. In addition, the College is planning to incorporate the formal signing off of such information at the Higher Education Forum, at which all staff will be present.

41   The students indicate that the course handbooks are accurate and clear. The University provides all induction material. Students say that the College's online information is accessible and up to date and that assignment briefs are clearly written. The team confirms that the arrangements instil confidence, are effective and ensure that the information is accurate and complete.

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

42   As the total full-time equivalent students funded by HEFCE at the College is less than 100, in accordance with the published review method, the College elected not to take part in a Developmental engagement.

D   Foundation Degrees

43   The College does not offer Foundation Degrees.

E   Conclusions and summary of judgements

44   The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Kidderminster 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 body. This was based upon discussion with staff and students and scrutiny of evidence provided by the College and its awarding body, the University of Worcester.

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

- a well-designed virtual learning environment, which provides access to a wide range of services through its hub, and enhances communication between staff and students (paragraphs 25, 29, 39)
- relocating the higher education provision within an area separate from the further education provision, in which the higher education courses are in close proximity (paragraph 26)
- effective academic, pastoral and learning support for students that is provided by tutors and the Learning Resources Centre staff (paragraph 33).

46   The team also makes some recommendations for consideration by the College and its awarding body.

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

- to review the frequency of its Higher Education Forum meetings to ensure its more regular consideration of higher education developmental and operational issues, and to rewrite its remit to reflect more fully its expanding role in monitoring and enhancing programme delivery (paragraph 9)
- to review its higher education Quality Assurance Policy and processes to make their operation more transparent and to ensure that the timing of the internal and external quality processes between the College and the University are better aligned (paragraph 10)
- to engage with the University to clarify and formalise the duties and responsibilities of the link tutors, with a view to enhancing further the College's quality assurance processes (paragraph 11)
- to review its procedures for ensuring consistency in the quality and content of written feedback to students on their assessments (paragraph 14).

47   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 body.

48   Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, and other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that it has **confidence** that, in the context of this Summative review, the College discharges its responsibilities effectively, as set out in the relevant partnership agreement, for the management of the quality of learning opportunities to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

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

Kidderminster College action plan relating to the Summative review: June 2010						
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:						
• a well-designed virtual learning environment, which provides access to a wide range of services through its hub and enhances communication between staff and students (paragraphs 25, 29, 39)	Continue to ensure that the virtual learning environment is constantly reviewed and revised, in particular the Higher Education Hub to offer an outstanding learning experience	July 2011	Section Manager	The growth in additional learning opportunities. The expansion in the number of students engaging in interactive dialogue with peers and tutors	Higher Education Forum	The positive comments from students/employers/ tutors and external bodies
• relocating the higher education provision within an area separate from the further education provision, in which the higher education courses are in close proximity (paragraph 26)	Continue to invest in the College's bespoke higher education facilities	July 2011	Director of Resources	The scale of the College's investment to improve facilities for students	Higher Education Forum Senior Management Team	The extent of the positive comments on the facilities that support the curriculum and its delivery from students/employers and external bodies

• effective academic, pastoral and learning support for students that is provided by tutors and the Learning Resources Centre staff (paragraph 33).	Maintain current arrangements for students ensuring that they all receive their individual tutorial entitlement	July 2011	Course Leaders	Positive outcomes to student support from internal surveys and course representatives meetings	Higher Education Forum Senior Management Team	A minimum of 85% progression rates on all higher education programmes
	Maintain current arrangements for support for students from the Learning Resource Centre staff	July 2011	Learning Resource Centre Manager	Positive outcomes to student support from internal surveys and course representative meetings		The views of students that are fed into Course Committee meetings
Desirable	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
The team agreed the following areas where it would be **desirable** for the College to take action:						
• to review the frequency of its Higher Education Forum meetings to ensure its more regular consideration of higher education developmental and operational issues, and to rewrite its remit to reflect more fully its expanding role in monitoring and enhancing programme delivery (paragraph 9)	Review the frequency of meetings and produce a revised schedule for 2010/11	October 2010	Director of Learning (Higher Education Manager)	The increased frequency of scheduled meetings of the Higher Education Forum	Higher Education Forum	The more regular consideration of higher education developmental and operational issues as reflected in the minutes of the Higher Education Forum
	Rewrite terms of reference to fully reflect the role of the Higher Education Forum in quality enhancement	October 2010		New terms of reference published		New terms of reference fully reflect the role of the HE Forum in monitoring and enhancing programme delivery

• to review its higher education Quality Assurance Policy and processes to make their operation more transparent and to ensure that the timing of the internal and external quality processes between the College and the University are better aligned (paragraph 10)	Review of the policy and processes	December 2010	Director of Learning (Higher Education Manager)	The newly-introduced and approved quality assurance policy, which ensures that the College's and awarding body's quality processes are aligned	Higher Education Forum	Quality assurance processes that are more transparent to all The closer alignment of the timing of internal and external quality processes and the recognition of this recognised by all staff
• to engage with the University to clarify and formalise the duties and responsibilities of the link tutors, with a view to enhancing further the College's quality assurance processes (paragraph 11)	Meet with the University to identify the outcomes of the recent thematic audit, with a view to exploring the role of the link tutor Disseminate the outcomes of the audit to all staff teaching on higher education programmes	October 2010 December 2010	Director of Learning (Higher Education Manager) Director of Learning (Higher Education Manager)	Link tutor role clarified - clear responsibilities communicated to course leaders. Link tutors represented on the Higher Education Forum and Higher Education Practitioners' Forum	Higher Education Forum Higher Education Practitioners' Forum	The improvement in understanding of the higher education College staff understanding of the University's procedures and the enhancement of quality assurance processes
• to review its procedures for ensuring consistency in the	Continue to ensure high standards of assessment practice, including the consistency and quality of	December 2011	Course Teams	External examiner reports on assessment practice that are positive	Higher Education Forum	Student surveys and external examiners' reports that confirm greater

quality and content of written feedback to students on their assessments (paragraph 14).	written feedback to students. In doing so clarify what students need to effect improvements in their assessments					consistency in the quality and content of feedback on students' assessments across all the programmes
	Implement the updated procedures provided by the University of Worcester Academic Quality Unit	October 2011	Course Teams	Positive comments on the effectiveness of the internal moderation process		

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