

## **Integrated quality and enhancement review**

**Summative review**

January 2009

Loughborough College

SR16/2009

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2009

ISBN 978 1 84482 934 7

All QAA's publications are available on our website [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)

Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

## **Preface**

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

### **Purpose of IQER**

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

### **The IQER process**

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

### **Developmental engagement**

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

The main elements of a Developmental engagement are:

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

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

## Summative review

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

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

## Evidence

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

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

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

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

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

## Outcomes of IQER

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

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

provide evaluation and a conclusion. Summative review reports are published. Differentiated judgements can be made where a team judges a college's management of the standards and/or quality of the awards made by one awarding body to be different from those made by another.

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



## Executive summary

### The Summative review of Loughborough College carried out in January 2009

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

### Good practice

The team has identified the following good practice for dissemination:

- the College has clearly defined and robust structures and roles for ensuring the academic standards of its higher education provision and maintaining effective relationships with its range of awarding bodies
- the Academic Infrastructure is embedded within College procedures; staff are familiar with its components and use them across all aspects of the higher education provision
- the high attainment of many higher education students, notably on honours degree awards, is underpinned by the effective academic preparation and support of College staff
- the College support for a varied and extensive programme of staff development, with its formal link to staff professional review, ensures that higher education courses are taught by well qualified and suitably trained staff
- high-quality course handbooks are published for students in some areas, notably travel and tourism management, and sport, exercise and fitness.

### Recommendations

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

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

- ensure that matters raised through feedback are minuted and tracked more consistently, with actions, including communication back to those who have raised issues, clearly demonstrated within standard course reporting documentation
- ensure that communication with higher education students is more effective and complete in relation to industrial placements, support arrangements, the availability of resources and the content of course leaflets, so as to better manage student expectations.

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

- make students better aware of the comprehensive course handbooks that are published for all programmes
- consider the publication of a set of information that can be routinely provided for the wide range of employers who are involved in the management of work-based learning for students on Foundation Degrees.





## 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 Loughborough 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 Aston University, the University of Derby, Leeds Metropolitan University, the University of Leicester, Loughborough University, Nottingham Trent University, the University of Warwick, Edexcel and the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

2 The review was carried out by Mr David Fallows, Mr Colin Stanfield and Dr Amanda Wilcox (reviewers) and Mr David Lewis (coordinator).

3 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 extensive 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, undertaken in May 2008. 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.

4 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.

5 Loughborough College (the College) is a general further education college, founded in 1909 and based at its present Radmoor site since 1966. It shares a large campus with Loughborough University and the RNIB College Loughborough. The College has partnerships with a range of local companies and some provision is delivered on company premises. The College has a devolved academic structure in which teaching teams are organised as clusters within 19 curriculum teams. The higher education programmes are located within the curricular areas, alongside further education provision. The College has 3,439 further education students, of which 1,859 are full-time and 1,580 part-time. There are 1,102 HEFCE-funded higher education students, of which 425 are full-time and 587 part-time. A total of 40 College staff teach on the higher education programmes, including 11 who teach exclusively within the higher education provision.

6 The College has a long tradition of providing higher education, most of which is directly funded. A feature of the provision is that, with few exceptions, programmes are targeted at niche markets and are developed by the College before being validated with an awarding body partner. The College works with a range of awarding body higher education institutions, each of which brings relevant experience and curricular expertise to the process.

7 The higher education awards that are funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England are listed below, beneath their awarding bodies.

#### **Edexcel**

- HND/C Hospitality Management
- HND/C Leisure Management
- HND/C Engineering (Mechanical, Electrical Power, Electronic)
- HND/C Travel and Tourism Management
- HND Sport and Exercise Science
- HND Public Services

#### **Scottish Qualifications Authority**

- HNC Contracting Management

#### **Aston University**

- FD Power System Management +
- FD Electrical Power Engineering +

#### **University of Derby**

- FD Children's and Young People's Services
- Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector +
- Graduate Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector +

#### **Leeds Metropolitan University**

- FD Music Production and Performance

#### **University of Leicester**

- FD Health and Illness plus sub-pathway Clinical Imaging \* +

#### **Loughborough University**

- FD Sports Science
- FD Sports Science with Management
- FD Exercise and Fitness Management
- FD Sports Coaching
- FD Sports Performance (Motorsport Driving)
- FD Sports Performance (Football, Rugby, Athletics, Swimming)
- BSc (Hons) Applied Sports Science (top-up Degree)

### **Nottingham Trent University**

- FD Food Manufacturing Management
- FD Hospitality Management
- FD Tourism Management
- FD Event Management
- FD Leisure Management
- FD Leadership and Management (Late Night Entertainment)
- FD Human Biology and Health Sciences +
- FD in Human Biology and Medical Science +
- BA (Hons) Food Manufacturing Management (Top-Up Degree)
- BA (Hons) Hospitality Management (Top-Up Degree)
- BA (Hons) Tourism Management (Top-Up Degree)
- BA (Hons) Tourism Management and Events Operations (Top-Up Degree)
- BA (Hons) Tourism Management and Airline Studies (Top-Up Degree)
- BA (Hons) Leisure Management with Sports Development (Top-Up Degree)
- BA (Hons) Leisure Management with Events Operations (Top-Up Degree)
- BA (Hons) Leisure Management (Top-Up Degree)
- BA (Hons) in Leadership and Management (Late Night Entertainment) (Top-Up Degree)
- BA (Hons) Event Management (Top-Up Degree)

### **University of Warwick**

- Level 4 Certificate \*
- Level 4 Certificate in Adult Literacy and Numeracy \*

#### **Notes:**

\* These programmes did not have students enrolled at the time of the review

+ These programmes are indirectly funded

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

8 The College has formal partnership agreements with each of its higher education awarding bodies, as well as a standard agreement with Edexcel covering the Higher National awards. While the terms of the agreements vary in detail to reflect the nature of each, all are current with the responsibilities of both partners clearly defined. The agreement with Aston University is recent and is presently being finalised. The nature of the agreement with the University of Derby involves university-determined curricula and is more prescribed, with the awarding body assuming a greater degree of direct control in areas such as the chairing of

examinations boards and the content of programme-related publications. The arrangements are more devolved with other university partners, who nonetheless have clear mechanisms in place for maintaining a rigorous oversight of the provision.

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

9 The College has seen a substantial increase in higher education student numbers over recent years, mainly through new FD programmes and an increase in the proportion of part-time provision. Since 2002-03, there has been an increase of nearly 125 per cent in full-time equivalent students, from 309 to 692. Part-time students now account for 587, or 58 per cent of the total higher education numbers. Over the past year, the College has continued to add FDs to its higher education portfolio and curricular coverage, in line with the overarching strategy to pursue niche markets. The developments have involved new awarding partners in Leeds Metropolitan University and Aston University.

10 Plans are in place for a major new building scheme across the whole of the current site. The development is designed to reflect changes in approaches to learning and teaching and with particular consideration for the needs of the higher education learning environment. A new technology centre was opened in 2008. It supports the higher education engineering programmes, including the new FD in power engineering, as well as the substantial further education provision.

### **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. To facilitate the production of the submission, higher education students attended focus group meetings. The focus groups responded to a set of questions devised by Loughborough Students' Union and the Loughborough College Student Development Centre, which drafted the submission. The outcomes of the focus groups are summarised in the submission, with the results of recent higher education student satisfaction surveys appended. The written submission provided the Summative review team with a helpful, if limited summary of student views, with a significant overlap in content with that provided for the Developmental engagement. In addition, a group of current students from across the range of programmes offered very useful evidence in a meeting with the team.

## **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 The roles and delegated responsibilities for ensuring academic standards are well understood and implemented by staff at the College and by the awarding bodies, both higher education institutions and Edexcel. Within the College, curriculum managers take an active leadership role for the establishment and maintenance of standards. As noted in the Developmental engagement report, course teams have strong relationships with their awarding bodies, employers and representatives of relevant sector skills councils. The College Performance and Standards Manager and the Director of Curriculum Innovation

have clearly defined responsibilities for monitoring standards through regular reports and meetings. They are members of the recently established Higher Education Management Group, which reports directly to the Learning and Teaching Committee, the highest academic body within the College. The Higher Education Manager provides a key link between the awarding bodies and College staff.

13 Delegated responsibilities are clearly set out in the institutional agreement with each of the awarding bodies. Each awarding body has a set arrangement with the College for the periodic review of the provision and this takes place at least every five years. For Higher National awards, Edexcel external examiners formally monitor compliance with agreed programme specifications. The responsibilities of course teams for managing academic standards are explicitly defined in the College document 'Assessment regulations for Higher Education Courses, a guide for Curriculum Teams'.

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

14 The College has a rigorous design and development process for its higher education courses, involving close consultation with employers, where appropriate, and effective liaison with the agreed awarding higher education institution. Systematic account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure, as well as sector-skills council requirements and occupational standards where relevant. The College conducts its own internal approval process, prior to validation, through the office of the Performance and Standards Manager. Newly published revisions to the Academic Infrastructure are routinely shared with curricular areas and discussed within teams. The internal procedures apply to Higher National awards and Edexcel prescribed programme specifications ensure due attention to the Academic Infrastructure.

15 All programmes are subject to rigorous validation by the awarding body. The records of validation panels indicate that course intended learning outcomes are checked for alignment with the FHEQ, relevant subject benchmarks and the Foundation Degree qualification benchmark where relevant. The programmes are delivered and assessed in accordance with the precepts of the *Code of practice*. This is confirmed in the report of the Developmental engagement, which notes that the provision covered is wholly in line with the expectations of the FHEQ, subject benchmarks and the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*. The College offers helpful guidance on the Academic Infrastructure to curriculum teams, for example to ensure that the design of assessments reflects the precepts of the *Code of practice*. These internal arrangements apply to the Edexcel awards as well as those of higher education institutions.

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

16 Agreed reporting procedures are in place for the Edexcel Higher National awards. Evidence from course documentation and a representative from Edexcel confirm that they are operating effectively. The programmes validated by universities are subject to institutional agreements that clearly articulate the internal quality assurance processes that are expected of the College. The respective awarding bodies take ultimate responsibility for the academic standards in each of the programmes and representatives of all awarding bodies expressed their confidence in the College's management of their awards. The periodic review completed in November 2008 by Nottingham Trent University concluded that the College provision met all the requirements and expectations set out in the University's Academic Standards and Quality Handbook.

17 The College has an extensive system of course monitoring and review in place, which is closely overseen by the Performance and Standards Manager. Arrangements include monthly checks on standards through the monitoring of routine course data and biannual checks by the performance and standards review panel. Annually, the College produces course team reviews, overarching curriculum reports and monitoring reports for higher education awarding bodies. In general, the outcomes of these evaluations indicated a thorough and analytical approach to evidence. Summaries of strengths, areas for improvement and actions are provided and referenced to the evidence base. However, on one programme, the team found evidence of annual course reporting where the documented reflection on critical comments from student evaluations about a range of issues in industrial placements was less thorough. The College was able to provide evidence that the student concerns had been addressed, but the records of monitoring meetings are limited to issues in relation to assessment and do not make clear how actions have been communicated to students. Furthermore, the students met by the team were not clear whether any action had been taken in response to their concerns. In the light of this, it is advisable that the matters raised through feedback are minuted and tracked more consistently within course reporting documentation, with actions, including communication back to students, clearly demonstrated. There is extensive evidence to show that the College's quality arrangements enable the reports of external examiners to be carefully considered and acted upon.

18 The College has a clearly described and well-understood internal verification system for all of its assessment activities, which the Developmental engagement team judged to be operating effectively. The verification system links to the annual cycle of course development and delivery, with assignments identified and planned in June, and module handbooks, including assignment briefs, drafted and internally verified by September. All completed assessments are internally verified as they are submitted.

19 The Developmental engagement reported that the College sets and achieves high standards for its students, notably for dissertations and major projects. These expectations are reflected in the generally high attainment of students, including the attainment of First Class awards on a number of top-up bachelor's degrees. These achievements are underpinned by the effective academic preparation and support provided by College staff. The Loughborough University periodic programme monitoring review of 2006 noted the excellent results achieved by College students on their honours courses. This evaluation is endorsed by representatives of all the awarding bodies, including Edexcel, who commended the College for the achievements and approach to learning of its students.

20 The College has responded to the Developmental engagement action plan systematically and robustly. The proposed actions were developed through a number of College groups, overseen by the Higher Education Manager and Performance and Standards Manager, and approved by the Executive and Governing Body. An updated action plan offered evidence that good progress has been made against all of the conclusions listed in the Developmental engagement report. A notable feature has been the responsibility given to a senior member of academic staff to coordinate staff development within curriculum teams and promote the sharing of good practice.

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

21 The College staff training and development policy includes a strong commitment to continuing professional development as an investment in staff. The coherently planned range of opportunities provided for staff reflects the policy, as well as the College higher education strategic plan. The range of professional development is extensive and varied, and includes a number of priorities that directly support academic standards. These include a commitment and opportunities to increase higher-level qualifications, research and scholarly activity. The College has also taken advantage of opportunities provided by its awarding bodies to raise staff awareness of standards that apply to higher education. These include: Edexcel-led training within College on generic grading criteria; and the attendance by music staff at Leeds Metropolitan University to gain insight into awarding body expectations of FDs and the subject.

22 The College provides an induction for new staff, as well as the opportunity to work with an experienced mentor. For staff new to higher education, the induction covers the needs of assessment and the expectations of academic standards. For these staff, mentors oversee the setting and marking of assessments to ensure they are appropriate.

**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?**

23 The arrangements described in paragraphs 12 and 13 are also effective in supporting the College's management of the quality of learning opportunities. The devolved structure within the College gives significant responsibility at course level, through course teams and course leaders. Course teams understand and implement their responsibilities for monitoring quality, which include student attendance and retention, the observation of teaching and learning and internal verification. Monthly course reports, based upon the summary of routine course data, are produced and monitored by the College Executive. Teams produce annual course reports, which, with associated action plans, are considered by the Performance and Standards Review Team and the College Executive. The Quality and Performance Manager takes an oversight of all reports, identifying cross-college themes where appropriate.

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

24 The reporting mechanisms for academic standards described in paragraphs 16 to 18 also apply to the quality of learning opportunities. The scrutiny of partnership agreements confirms that the College has substantial delegated responsibility for the delivery and quality assurance of learning opportunities. There are clear reporting mechanisms in place between the College and each awarding body, with well-understood variations to reflect the particular relationship.

25 The Developmental engagement report acknowledged the strong collaborative relationships and reporting processes with awarding bodies. The representatives of awarding bodies, including those in new partnerships, affirmed the continuing strength of these relationships, and the arrangements supporting them, across the large number of partnerships.

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

26 All higher education programmes are subject to approval procedures that check their alignment to the Academic Infrastructure. The consideration of the FHEQ and benchmark statements in this process is evident in the records of College quality mechanisms, including course approval. The relevant sections of the *Code of practice* are considered, for example in relation to collaborative provision, admissions, placement learning and student support. Staff are well informed about all components of the Academic Infrastructure and consider them systematically across the higher education provision. The Academic Infrastructure is well embedded, a process that has been assisted by the College's development of its own higher education programmes, its internal system for pre-validation approval and close working with awarding bodies.

27 All programmes are underpinned by approved programme specifications. The Higher National specifications are produced by Edexcel, most others by the course teams working to guidance published by the College. The specifications contain a section on teaching and learning, which is used by curriculum team leaders and course managers to inform schemes of work and the range of learning activities to be used on each course.

28 The Developmental engagement reported a strong alignment between the College's FDs and the FD qualification benchmark. The report also confirmed the College's engagement with a wide range of employers. The periodic review undertaken by Nottingham Trent University similarly recognised the 'highly effective and extensive employer engagement' on the FD awards they validate.

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

29 The College publishes a clear and explicit teaching and learning strategy, and an associated leading learning strategy, which serves to promote student engagement and innovation. The commitment to effective teaching and learning is followed through at course level, where each team produces a strategy outlining its approach to teaching, learning and assessment. This useful information is made available to students. The College strategy has in place an appropriate set of mechanisms for meeting its Learners' Charter commitment to 'provide high quality teaching and support for learners'. These include a scheme for the observation of teaching, the deployment of learning champions and a learning improvement adviser.

30 Comprehensive and well-embedded arrangements are in place for the peer observation of teaching, with the requirement that all staff should be observed at least once each year. The observation outcomes are used to inform annual staff professional development reviews. Within the effective observation scheme, the specific needs of higher education are differentiated only by a set of expanded criteria.

31 Student evaluations and the results of teaching observations offer evidence to support the effectiveness of College arrangements. The overall level of satisfaction for Loughborough students is above the national benchmark score shown in the 2008 National



Student Survey. Although the evidence available in documentation is consistently positive, a number of students from different curriculum areas met during the review, commented on a lack of challenge in some facets of their teaching and learning. Also, despite the clear arrangements that are in place for industrial placements, some students questioned the value of their placements in providing suitable work-based learning.

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

32 A comprehensive range of student support mechanisms is in place, at curriculum, college and campus levels. There are arrangements in place on the wider Loughborough campus whereby higher education students at the College can access a range of support services offered by Loughborough University, subject to service-level agreements and any necessary payments by the College. The student support arrangements provided by the College are monitored and evaluated as part of annual course reporting and through internal and external student feedback. The College student services have been awarded the Matrix standard, the national quality standard for information, advice and guidance on learning and work.

33 At curricular and course team levels, student support is focused around a clear and well-documented progress tutoring system, which covers both academic and pastoral support. Progress files, with student guidance packs and individual learning plans, are available for use in hard copy and electronic form. The links with Loughborough University have enabled the College to use personal development files devised specifically for higher education.

34 The self-evaluation asserts that student support is good and cites a range of evidence in support. The student written submission also offers positive evidence. Students are consistent in their appreciation of the support from individual staff, although during the review visit some expressed concerns about the formal College support arrangements.

**The team concludes that these concerns are, in large part, the result of students not understanding the systems that are in place.**

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

35 It is clear from the partnership agreements with higher education institutions and the agreement with Edexcel that responsibility for professional development of staff lies with the College. The College has a thorough and effective staff training and development policy, which incorporates a staff development charter and is common to further and higher education. Academic line managers ensure that individual staff development is articulated with the outcomes of the annual staff professional reviews.

36 Professional development activities for higher education are extensive, coherently planned and linked directly to College priorities, notably teaching and learning. They include time and financial support for higher degrees, scholarly activity, industrial updating, employer liaison, joint development with awarding body partners and attendance at events arranged by the Higher Education Academy. Individual staff can benefit from longer-term development planning, involving the allocation of a mentor, an agreed training plan, joint module teaching and study for higher awards.

37 Staff records show a high take-up of the opportunities provided, with a significant focus on teaching and learning. A substantial number of staff have completed higher degrees, while currently four are studying for master's degrees and three for doctorates. Two of the master's awards, as well as a range of other formal activities, are linked directly to teaching

practices, for example distance or remote learning. A wide range of subject updating activities, including conference attendance, is supported and helps to ensure currency within teaching and learning. A diverse and growing range of scholarly activity is also informing teaching, for example in published articles relating to recreation.

**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?**

38 The College Strategic Plan 2006-11 and the Higher Education Strategic Plan 2008-11 identify the importance of providing high-quality resources for learners and staff. The sufficiency of learning resources, both human and physical, is systematically considered at course validation and through the College internal approval process. University awarding bodies check the qualifications and experience of designated teaching staff at validation and subsequently when new appointments are made. A scrutiny of staff records supports the results of internal College self-audits, which show that staff are well qualified and well trained for teaching on the higher education courses.

39 Physical resources are routinely considered in annual monitoring and Curriculum Area self-evaluations. This evidence indicates that higher education book stocks in the College learning resource centre vary significantly between areas. Library staff offered reassurance that mechanisms are in place to address shortcomings when they are identified. Higher education students at the College have access to the Loughborough University library and borrowing rights as external users, for which the College pays a fee. The two institutions have been unable to resolve licensing issues imposed by publishers, which prevent College students having use of electronic library resources. This was a matter of concern among students met by the team.

40 The review revealed further evidence to support the evaluation made in the Developmental engagement, that there is some high-quality use of the College virtual learning environment, notably in sport, exercise and fitness. Its use is still inconsistent in other curriculum areas, as noted in the Developmental engagement.

41 The feedback from students, in the written submission and in discussion with the team is critical of some features of learning resources. Student concerns relate variously to outdated specialist book stocks, some poor media resources to support teaching, and timely access to general computing facilities and specialist sport and fitness equipment. There is limited evidence from other sources to corroborate these concerns. However, the recurring nature and significance of them leads the team to conclude that students are insufficiently informed. It is therefore advisable that the College monitors its communication to ensure that all students have clear information and realistic expectations of the resources available and their access to them.

**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?**

42 The College is responsible for producing a range of information for applicants including the higher education prospectus, course leaflets and policy and procedure documents. These are available both in hard copy and through the College's website. A scrutiny of the publications showed the information to be accessible, current and accurate. In a meeting with the team, students who had used these sources of published information reported the content to be accurate and useful in helping them to make their admissions choices. However, in some cases the standardised course leaflets do not make explicit reference to the awarding body. The College makes programme specifications more accessible to students by publishing them, or a student-friendly version of the information contained in them, on its virtual learning environment.

43 For current students, the main sources of information produced by the College are the course and module handbooks, which are available to students in hard copy and electronically on the virtual learning environment. Course handbooks contain a wide range of useful information, including access to staff, guidance on course regulations and college policies. However, some of the students met by the team were unable to recall receiving a course handbook. Module handbooks are issued to students at the start of each module and are increasingly being published to a common format. They offer consistently clear and reliable information.

44 The College has a good range of employer links, but does not routinely publish any material directed at employers who are involved in the management of work-based learning on FDs, including student industrial placements. It might consider the publication of a set of employer information to articulate employer roles and responsibilities in relation to the structure, content and delivery of courses that involve learning, including placements within the workplace.

#### **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?**

45 There are clear and generally effective procedures for ensuring the accuracy and completeness of the information published by the College. The content of the College prospectus and course leaflets is the responsibility of the College Executive. The detailed content is the responsibility of course teams, but is checked by the Marketing Manager. The Marketing Manager must approve materials published on the College and external websites, as well as the publication of College policies and procedures. Checks on a sample range of publications confirmed that information is accurate and up to date, although with occasional inconsistencies in the content of course leaflets. College systems are generally effective in ensuring that the specific publication requirements of each awarding body are met, and that information is accurate.

46 College curriculum teams liaise closely with their contacts at partner universities and Edexcel to ensure that awarding body expectations in relation to course and module handbooks are understood and met. The Developmental engagement reported good practice in the high quality of the course handbooks published for Travel and Tourism Management. Some handbooks in sport, exercise and fitness are similarly clear and comprehensive. The College is building on this good practice to introduce common

templates for course and module handbooks and has recently introduced staff development to embed them. The College is encouraged to continue the process of developing a more standardised approach and to introduce systematic internal checks to promote consistency.

47 Student evaluation forms, including those at induction, specifically request feedback on the usefulness of the information provided for them by the College. The feedback, which has been positive to date, is analysed and used to inform subsequent amendments to the published material.

**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**

48 The College visit for the Developmental engagement in assessment took place in May 2008. Three Lines of enquiry for the engagement were agreed with the College in advance: assessment of dissertations and major projects; assessment of remote learners; and assessment to awarding body criteria (Edexcel and the University of Derby).

49 The Developmental engagement team identified a range of good practice across all three Core themes. The assessment of dissertations and final projects is set at an appropriately high standard, while the quality of student support for assessment is good. High-quality handbooks are published for dissertations and major projects, as well as for the HND Travel and Tourism Management, and offer further support for assessment. The College virtual learning environment is used effectively to support remote learning students in sport, exercise and fitness. The Developmental engagement team confirmed that the College has strong collaborative relationships with its awarding bodies and employers. These relationships are used to provide well-contextualised assessment criteria and a varied range of assessment activities. The involvement of employers is integral and sometimes innovative, and is reflected in the applied focus of many assessment tasks. These are notable features of the extensive FD provision.

50 The Developmental engagement team also made a number of recommendations, including the advisability of ensuring the timely return of assessment feedback to students. The team found that the provision could be enhanced by the better documentation and sharing of good practice in the assessment of dissertations and major projects. It suggested that handbooks might be developed more widely for project supervisors and that the assessment role of workplace mentors could be clarified and supported by additional training and development. The team reported that the College might benefit from encouraging a debate about the means of developing more effective assessment strategies for group work.

## **D Foundation Degrees**

51 The College has offered FDs since their inception in 2001 and has made a major strategic and resource commitment to their development, as well as to related progression opportunities. The first programmes were in sports science and sports management. The provision has increased to 14 awards, covering a range of curriculum areas. The degrees are offered in a variety of study modes in response to employer and student needs, including distance learning, block and day release. The most recent developments for 2008-09 are in applications of human biology to health and medical sciences, music,

and power engineering, involving partnerships with two new awarding body partners. Future developments are planned in creative media, retail automotive management and document storage and retrieval.

52 The development of FDs has been strategically driven and characterised by the meeting of niche market requirements. In support of this approach, the five awarding bodies that validate the degrees each bring specific expertise in the relevant curriculum area. The College has responded constructively and sometimes innovatively to employers and their needs, as confirmed in the recent periodic review undertaken by Nottingham Trent University. This responsiveness is evident in some highly distinctive degrees, such as the established course in Leadership and Management (Late Night Entertainment). This award has been developed directly with a major leisure company and delivered through distance learning to some 350 staff of the company. The College has a good range of constructive employer links, but does not publish any common material for employers who are involved in the management of work-based learning, including student industrial placements on the FD awards.

53 The conclusions listed in paragraphs 60 and 62 below apply to all of the higher education provision.

### **Conclusions and summary of judgements**

54 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Loughborough College's management of its responsibilities for academic standards and for the quality of learning opportunities of the awards the College offers on behalf of its awarding bodies. These are based upon discussion with staff and students and scrutiny of evidence provided by the College and its awarding bodies: Aston University, the University of Derby, Leeds Metropolitan University, the University of Leicester, Loughborough University, Nottingham Trent University, the University of Warwick, Edexcel and the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

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

- the College has clearly defined and robust structures and roles for ensuring the academic standards of its higher education provision and maintaining effective relationships with its range of awarding bodies (paragraphs 12 to 14, 23)
- the Academic Infrastructure is embedded within College procedures; staff are familiar with its components and use them across all aspects of the higher education provision (paragraphs 14, 15, 26 to 28)
- the high attainment of many higher education students, notably on honours degree awards, is underpinned by the effective academic preparation and support of College staff (paragraph 19)
- the College support for a varied and extensive programme of staff development, with its formal link to staff professional review, ensures that higher education courses are taught by well qualified and suitably trained staff (paragraphs 21, 22, 35 to 38)
- high-quality course handbooks are published for students in some areas, notably travel and tourism management, and sport, exercise and fitness (paragraphs 43, 46).

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

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

- to ensure that matters raised through feedback are minuted and tracked more consistently, with actions, including communication back to those who have raised issues, clearly demonstrated within standard course reporting documentation (paragraphs 17, 31)
- to ensure that communication with higher education students is more effective and complete in relation to industrial placements, support arrangements, the availability of resources and the content of course leaflets, so as to better manage student expectations (paragraphs 31, 34, 41, 42, 45).

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

- to make students better aware of the comprehensive course handbooks that are published for all programmes (paragraph 43)
- to consider the publication of a set of information that can be routinely provided for the wide range of employers who are involved in the management of work-based learning for students on Foundation Degrees (paragraph 44).

57 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.

58 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.

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

Loughborough College action plan relating to the Summative review: January 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 <b>good practice</b> that are worthy of wider dissemination within the college:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the College has clearly defined and robust structures and roles for ensuring the academic standards of its higher education provision and maintaining effective relationships with its range of awarding bodies (paragraphs 12 to 14, 23)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensuring that as new programmes and relationships are developed, the same high standards are maintained.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HE Manager</li> <li>Course teams</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All new programmes operating within the HEI and College quality assurance systems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Executive</li> <li>HE Strategic Management Group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continual review and updating of procedures</li> <li>Course reviews and action plans</li> <li>HEI Annual Monitoring reviews</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the Academic Infrastructure is embedded within College procedures; staff are familiar with its components and use them across all aspects of the higher education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensuring that course teams new to Higher Education and offering new courses are aware of the demands of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HE Manager</li> <li>Course teams</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New qualifications all written in line with the requirements of the Academic Infrastructure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HE Strategic Management Group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Courses validated according to the requirements of the Academic Infrastructure</li> </ul>

Loughborough College action plan relating to the Summative review: January 2009						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
provision (paragraphs 14, 15, 26 to 28)	the Academic Infrastructure					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the high attainment of many higher education students, notably on honours degree awards, is underpinned by the effective academic preparation and support of College staff (paragraph 19)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The sharing of good practice by current honours degree teams with teams new to honours level provision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As new programmes emerge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HE Manager</li> <li>Angela Edwards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good levels of attainment on new honours level programmes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performance and Standards Reviews</li> <li>Executive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good levels of attainment on honours programmes monitored and evaluated through the SAR and Performance and Standards Review process</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the College support for a varied and extensive programme of staff development, with its formal link to staff professional review, ensures that higher education courses are taught by well qualified and suitably trained staff (paragraphs 21, 22, 35 to 38)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The continued development and evaluation of staff development and such aspects as scholarly activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HE Manager</li> <li>People Development Manager</li> <li>Executive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More scholarly activity undertaken by all HE staff recording scholarly activity on CPD Record</li> <li>Staff development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HE Strategic Management Group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New measures of scholarly activity continually developed, reviewed and evaluated</li> <li>Minutes of HE Network meetings</li> </ul>



**Loughborough College action plan relating to the Summative review: January 2009**

Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
				activity shared across all curriculum teams via HE network meetings		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● high-quality course handbooks are published for students in some areas, notably travel and tourism management, and sport, exercise and fitness (paragraphs 43, 46).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The sharing of handbooks at HE Network Group</li> <li>● The production of high quality handbooks in all curriculum areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sept 2009</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● HE Manager</li> <li>● Curriculum Team and Course Leaders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Handbooks developed and in use</li> <li>● All HE students receive high quality handbooks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● HE Operational Management Group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Continual review and updating of handbooks in line with the latest and best practice</li> <li>● Student feedback collected on the quality of handbooks</li> </ul>

Loughborough College action plan relating to the Summative review: January 2009						
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team agreed a number of areas where the College should be <b>advised</b> to take action:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to ensure that matters raised through feedback are minuted and tracked more consistently, with actions, including communication back to those who have raised issues, clearly demonstrated within standard course reporting documentation (paragraphs 17, 31)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Responses and actions to issues raised through student feedback to be documented in course reviews and actions monitored</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>July 2009</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HE Manager</li> <li>Performance and Standards Manager</li> <li>Course team leaders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All issues raised through student feedback mechanisms included in all course reviews, course team meetings and action plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performance and Standards Reviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clear audit trail of student feedback issues and actions taken</li> <li>QA activity reviews whereby student feedback is obtained, monitored and actioned</li> </ul>

**Loughborough College action plan relating to the Summative review: January 2009**

Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● to ensure that communication with higher education students is more effective and complete in relation to industrial placements, support arrangements, the availability of resources and the content of course leaflets, so as to better manage student expectations (paragraphs 31, 34, 41, 42, 47).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Continual revisiting with students of the information available to them to ensure that awareness and expectations can be met by the available resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● July 2009</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Course teams</li> <li>● College Survey and Questionnaire mechanisms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Student concerns over course and resource issues fully documented and appropriate actions taken</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Performance and Standards Reviews</li> <li>● Course Team Reviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Students have clear perceptions and expectations of available resources and of actions resulting from issues raised.</li> <li>● QA activity reviews whereby student feedback is obtained, monitored and actioned</li> </ul>

Loughborough College action plan relating to the Summative review: January 2009						
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team agreed the following areas where it would be <b>desired</b> to take action:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to make students better aware of the comprehensive course handbooks that are published for all programmes (paragraph 43)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensuring that students are fully briefed at induction on the content of handbooks to ensure that best use is made of them.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>September 2009</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HE Manager</li> <li>Course Managers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Handbooks fully used and valued by students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HE Manager</li> <li>Performance and Standards Manager</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information for students more effectively used</li> <li>Student feedback collated and actioned</li> </ul>

**Loughborough College action plan relating to the Summative review: January 2009**

Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● to consider the publication of a set of information that can be routinely provided for the wide range of employers who are involved in the management of work-based learning for students on Foundation Degrees (paragraph 44).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The production of an employer guide on Foundation Degrees, work- based learning and all aspects of the employer role in programme delivery and evaluation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● September 2009</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● HE Manager</li> <li>● Curriculum teams</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Guide produced and distributed to employers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Performance and Standards Manager</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Guide in use and continually reviewed and updated</li> <li>● Employer feedback gathered, evaluated and actioned</li> </ul>

**The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education**  
Southgate House  
Southgate Street  
Gloucester  
GL1 1UB

Tel 01452 557000  
Fax 01452 557070  
Email [comms@qaa.ac.uk](mailto:comms@qaa.ac.uk)  
Web [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)

RG 418 04/09