



**QAA**

## **Integrated quality and enhancement review**

**Summative review**

May 2007

Mid Kent College

SR10/2008

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2008

ISBN 978 1 84482 845 6

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

*Printed copies are available from:*

Linney Direct

Adamsway

Mansfield

NG18 4FN

Tel 01623 450788

Fax 01623 450481

Email [qaa@linneydirect.com](mailto:qaa@linneydirect.com)

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 Mid Kent College carried out in May 2007

As a result of its investigations, the Summative review team (the 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 but not on the 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 effective partnerships, with robust frameworks, for setting and verifying appropriate standards for its higher education provision
- key programme managers are full members of their validating university's Faculty Board and thus participate in appropriate discussions concerning the College's activities on behalf of the University
- the newly designated Higher Education Director reports directly to the senior management team every six weeks, thus supplementing the quality cycle with an up to date and continuous review of the quality of teaching and learning
- In meetings with reviewers, students on two campuses expressed strong support for the quality of teaching and learning. They endorsed the staff's view that there was an 'open-door' policy for personal support, be it pastoral or academic
- the College has made effective arrangements for the induction, mentoring and training of newly appointed staff and those taking on the delivery of new programmes of study.

### 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 the College-wide strategy for learning, teaching and assessment in higher education is developed and that it flows naturally from the higher education strategy
- locate the Higher Education Group within the governance structure of the College and given clear terms of reference, so that matters relating to higher education provision are formally reported to and considered by the Academic Board and other bodies such as the Academic Standards and Quality Committee
- develop and embed quality assurance and enhancement processes specifically related to higher education, to take more account of the particular requirements of the higher education programmes and their relationship to the Academic Infrastructure

- ensure that it is in a position to take immediate and effective action in any future cases where standards and quality are believed to be at risk
- draw on the best examples of student handbooks and intranet facilities and electronic information to ensure that there is consistent high quality information to students across the higher education provision
- adopt a more consistent approach to the collection and analysis of feedback from students on the higher education programmes
- establish a more consistent basis for collecting employer feedback
- ensure that the information published for higher education students is more directly applicable to them and includes comprehensive information, including financial advice, for part-time higher education students.

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

- develop a more proactive and centrally managed engagement with the Academic Infrastructure
- create a clearer overall strategy for staff development for higher education staff. This should systematically inform the opportunities made available to staff teaching on higher education programmes in accordance with the needs of the College and the requirements of the validating higher education institutions
- differentiate higher from further education in terms of the student input into the College's quality processes
- establish with its higher education institution partners more consistent approaches to information on websites regarding college-based programmes
- establish the Higher Education Marketing Subcommittee within the committee structure of the College and enable it to take on a role promoting its higher education provision and monitoring promotional material.

## 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 Mid Kent College (the 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 that the College delivers on behalf of Canterbury Christ Church University and the University of Kent. The review was carried out by Professor Reginald Davis, Ms Angela McGuire, Mr Nick Wiseman (reviewers) and Mr Alan Nisbett (Coordinator).

2 The Summative review team (the team) conducted the review in negotiation with the College and in accordance with *The handbook for a pilot study of an integrated quality and enhancement review*, published by QAA. Evidence in support of the Summative review included documentation supplied by the College and awarding bodies, meetings with staff, students and partner institutions, reports of reviews by QAA and from inspections by Ofsted and other external bodies. In particular, the team drew on the findings and recommendations of the Developmental engagement in assessment. A summary of findings from the 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 the higher education sector, with reference to the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, subject and award benchmark statements, *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)* and programme specifications.

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

4 The College is one of seven further education colleges in the Learning and Skills Council area covering Kent and Medway. The College has three main centres: Oakwood Park in Maidstone, Horsted at Chatham and City Way in Rochester. Plans to relocate the two Medway campuses on to a single new site adjacent to the 'multiversity' campus at Chatham Maritime by 2009 are well advanced. The College is situated in two areas of Kent: Maidstone and the Medway Towns. While both have areas of deprivation and of prosperity, there are, between the two, some distinct features in terms of socioeconomic characteristics.

5 In 2001, the take-up rate of higher education in Medway was one of the lowest in the country, prompting government investment in the area through the Universities for the Medway project, which comprises the University of Kent, Greenwich University, Canterbury Christ Church University and Mid Kent College. Before 2001, the College offered degree programmes as well as Edexcel Higher National Certificates and Diplomas. In September 2001, the decision was made for the College to focus on further education while still providing sub-degree provision and professional qualifications. The College became an associate college of the University of Kent. All Higher National programmes, FDs other than Education programmes, and the legacy Higher National programmes are validated by the University of Kent and go through its validation and quality procedures. Education programmes are validated by Canterbury Christ Church University, although, numbers and funding are allocated by the University of Kent.



6 The number of students enrolled on higher education programmes for the year 2006-07 is 618. HEFCE-funded higher education provision at the time of the review comprised the following programmes:

- BSc (Hons) Construction
- Foundation Degree in Civil Engineering
- Foundation Degree in Construction
- Foundation Degree in Tourism Management
- Foundation Degree in Business and Management
- Foundation Degree in Information Technology
- Foundation Degree in Childhood Studies
- Licensed HND in Information Technology,
- Licensed HND in Applied Science
- Licensed HND in Music Technology and Engineering
- Licensed HNC in Building Services
- Licensed HNC in Engineering Business
- Licensed HNC in Information Technology
- Licensed HNC in Electronic Engineering
- Licensed HNC in Civil Engineering
- Licensed HNC in Construction
- Licensed HNC in Housing
- Licensed HNC in Technology and Management of Paper and Board Making
- Licensed HNC in Plant and Process Engineering
- Certificate in Education.

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

7 The College has a Memorandum of Association with the University of Kent. This outlines the schedule of agreed programmes offered by the College and the management procedures associated with them. There is also a Memorandum of Agreement for collaborative arrangements between the College and Canterbury Christ Church University, which, together with the academic schedules, sets out the working arrangements for delivery of programmes. These arrangements are reviewed annually at a forum attended by senior members of both the College and the University. Additionally, there are regular collaborative provision meetings held to which the College contributes at both operational and strategic level. These meetings are attended by all colleges within the consortium. Common issues are discussed, as well as those specific to a particular college. The College has a strong working relationship with both universities and regular contact with the Partnership Development Officer at the University of Kent. The Partnership Development Officer meets regularly with higher education deliverers within the College and reports

monthly to the Higher Education Director on progress that has been made on agreed issues. The Partnership Development Officer also attends the higher education group meetings. Similarly, there are regular meetings with the Collaborative Partnership Manager at Canterbury Christ Church University at operational and strategic levels.

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

8 Higher education programmes are delivered on two sites, with just over 50 per cent on the Chatham Maritime Campus, which has excellent facilities for higher education students. The remaining higher education is delivered at the Horsted Campus in Chatham, but this provision will be moving to the new College building in 2009. Within the College, strategic responsibility for the oversight of higher education is held by the Higher Education Director, who is also the Director of the Business and General Education division. The quality of the programmes remains the responsibility of the director of the relevant curriculum division.

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

9 Students from the higher education provision at the College were invited to present a written submission to the team but none was forthcoming. However, the students' written submission prepared for the Developmental engagement in assessment contained some useful general comment and the team was able to gather the views of students in meetings during the review visit.

## **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?**

10 The College has separate partnership agreements with each higher education institution, which form the basis of the processes for the delivery of the programmes and the management of the academic standards of the awards. The team considers these to be effective partnerships, with robust frameworks for setting and verifying appropriate standards for the College's higher education provision.

11 The College has recently adopted a higher education strategy. The team learnt from staff that a learning, teaching and assessment strategy specifically for higher education is planned and believes it is advisable that this College-wide strategy is promptly developed, and that it should flow naturally from the higher education strategy. Overall responsibility for the College's higher education provision is vested in the Higher Education Director and the Higher Education Manager. These are newly created posts and are held by senior College staff. The Higher Education Director is a member of the College's senior management team, to which she reports regularly. However, the Higher Education Group is not currently a formal part of the College's structure. The team considers it to be advisable that the Higher Education Group is located more securely within the governance structure of the College and is given clear terms of reference. This would ensure that matters relating to higher education provision are formally reported to and considered by the Academic Board and other bodies, such as the Quality and Academic Standards Committee.

12 The College's proposals for new programmes are subject to each higher education institution's rigorous validation processes. Proposals are considered by validation panels constituted by the higher education institution in question. The panels include representatives external to both the College and the higher education institution. The College has recently established a separate internal process for the initial scrutiny of new proposals before submission to the higher education institution. This is carried out by the newly formed Programme Approvals Group. The College may wish to consider that the Programme Approvals Group be given clear terms of reference and located in the College's governance structure in a manner similar to that of the Higher Education Group referred to above.

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

13 From discussions with College staff and higher education institution representatives, the team concludes that, at programme level, both College staff and their higher education partners take account of the Academic Infrastructure in developing and validating programmes. The team also recognised that part of the remit of the Programme Approvals Group is to encourage alignment with the *Code of practice*, published by QAA, and subject benchmarks in the programme specifications of new proposals. However, the team believes that it is advisable for the College's Senior Management Team and its Quality Unit to develop a more proactive and centrally managed engagement with the Academic Infrastructure.

### **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?**

14 All programmes approved by both higher education institutions are subject to periodic review and revalidation. Each higher education institution requires the College to provide an annual monitoring report for each programme. The team viewed the current annual reporting mechanisms as generally working well. However, it is desirable that the College develops and embeds quality assurance and enhancement processes specifically related to higher education. This might take more account of the particular requirements of the higher education programmes and their relationship to the Academic Infrastructure.

15 Following its review of assessment, the Developmental engagement team was satisfied that students encountered a wide range of robust assessment methods. Assessments are effectively matched to intended learning outcomes enabling appropriate standards to be set and attained. There was evidence that most assessment meets the expectations of the relevant precepts of the *Code of practice*, but this is not uniformly embedded across the higher education provision.

16 The Developmental engagement team came to the view that marking, and in most cases second marking, is carried out in a rigorous fashion to ensure that students reach appropriate standards. However, the team fully endorses the view of the Developmental engagement team that there is scope for a more consistent approach to second marking across all relevant programmes.

17 Examination boards are chaired by a member of the validating higher education institution, and are attended by the College teaching team and the external examiner. External examiners maintain contact with the teaching team throughout the academic year. They periodically attend teaching team meetings, as well as monitoring internal verification and assessment systems. They also independently examine student work before the examination boards.

18 The large majority of external examiners' reports are very positive, commenting favourably on the standards achieved by the students. They also recognise the thoroughness of the assessment processes and the clarity of assessment briefs, which are linked to clearly articulated intended learning outcomes and grading criteria. All external examiners' reports are submitted to and scrutinised by the higher education institutions. They are also fully considered by the College as part of the self-assessment report process. The Developmental engagement team considered the use of clearly articulated intended learning outcomes and the rigour of the external examining process to be features of good practice.

19 In only one discipline, music, has an external examiner raised serious concerns regarding assessment processes and the standards being achieved by students. The College has now adopted a programme improvement plan for this area. The team noted that the College and the higher education institutions had made sufficient progress for standards no longer to be at risk. However, the team believes it to be advisable for the College, in collaboration with the higher education institutions, to ensure that they are in a position to take immediate and effective action in any future cases where standards and quality are believed to be at risk.

20 Marks and grades arising from assessments are systematically maintained by the programme leaders. Results and decisions arrived at by examination boards are entered onto a spreadsheet, which is signed off by the chair of the board and the external examiner. These are entered onto the validating higher education institution's data system. Once verified by the higher education institution, this information is transmitted to the College and is entered on its own data system, ProAchieve. College staff can interrogate the system to obtain information for statistical purposes, such as informing the self-assessment report process.

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

21 The self-evaluation describes comprehensive staff development opportunities being made available by the College and the higher education institutions. The Unit for Enhancement of Learning and Teaching at the University of Kent offers College staff the opportunity to follow a module concerned with teaching higher education programmes in predominantly further education institutions. Canterbury Christ Church University offers staff teaching in collaborating colleges a programme leading to associate lectureship of the University. The College has recently held a staff development focus day on assessment for both higher and further education programmes. However, the team did not find any College-based staff development events specifically focused on higher education.

22 Timetable remission is made available to staff teaching on higher education programmes in order to allow them time to liaise with the higher education institutions about programme management, to benefit from higher education-related staff development and to engage in research and scholarship. In discussions with heads of department, the team found that, in principle, remission is rigorously and equitably granted to all staff teaching on higher education programmes. Commendably, the College also uses some of its more experienced staff as teacher coaches in order to mentor its staff, particularly those new to teaching. The team found this to be an effective mechanism for sharing good practice in teaching, learning and assessment. However, as a result of its reading and of discussions with College staff, the team believes it is desirable to create a clearer overall strategy for staff development for higher education staff.

23 As a result of its engagement with the College and the validating higher education institutions described above, the team concludes that there are a number of features of practice related to the higher education provision that are not being consistently applied across schools and teaching teams. Nor are such features of good practice being systematically disseminated across the higher education provision. The team considers it to be desirable that the College establishes a mechanism, perhaps based on the Higher Education Group, for more effective dissemination of good practice and for ensuring more consistent practices across the higher education provision.

**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?**

24 Responsibilities for the quality of learning opportunities are devolved from the Senior Management Team and Academic Board to the heads of schools, the newly instituted Higher Education Director, a strategic role, and the Higher Education Manager, an operational role, and from them to the teaching teams delivering programmes of study. Oversight of the quality of classroom delivery is the responsibility, in the first instance, of the teaching teams themselves. Inputs into the process outlined below include external examiners, students through their questionnaire surveys, school classroom observations, external bodies where appropriate, as well as quality reviews such as the IQER Developmental engagement and self-assessment report exercises.

25 The team, in discussions with staff, was presented with the College annual higher education self-assessment cycle in diagrammatic form. This clearly shows the links between the College's Quality Office, the schools' self-assessment reports and improvement plans, which are validated by the Senior Management Team. The resulting aggregated College self-assessment report and improvement plan goes to the Quality and Academic Standards Committee, a subcommittee of the Academic Board. Once approved, the resulting action plans are monitored at the local level by schools and programme teams, thus feeding into the annual monitoring reports that are sent to the Quality Office and the relevant validating university. Overall, this process provides for the quality cycle to be completed.

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

26 There are three principal methods through which the College assures itself that it is fulfilling its obligations to awarding bodies. Annual monitoring reports are sent to and validated by the relevant faculty board of the university responsible for the programme being reviewed. Secondly, school self-assessment reports and improvement plans are also considered at boards of study within the College, wherein all further and higher education programmes are considered and opportunities for good practice disseminated, primarily at school level. Finally, key programme managers are full members of the relevant University of Kent Faculty Board, and thus participate in appropriate discussions concerning the College's activities with their University colleagues. The team judges this to be good practice.

27 Issues of retention and achievement have been of specific concern to the College. Success in these crucial areas of quality control has been varied. The team learned that evidence from the teaching and learning surveys has been used to examine the underlying causes of success and attempts have been made to spread effective practice. Data covering three cohorts have been used for this purpose. Where evidence has shown that there is an issue to be resolved, suitable action has been taken. For example, in part-time study of computing, where retention was poorer than in the full-time equivalent, more support for learners was introduced.

28 The team found a good example of collaboration with local employers in the development of a new programme with industrially relevant learning opportunities. The College has recently developed an FD in Laboratory Technology and Manufacturing. The programme, which is validated by the University of Kent, will be delivered by the College at Kent Science Park, with the support of various regional bodies and local employers, mainly pharmaceutical companies.

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

29 The College takes appropriate account of the Academic Infrastructure in developing appropriate and effective learning opportunities for students. For example, full account is taken of the sections of the *Code of practice* on assessment and external examining in order to ensure that students have clear guidance about the relationship of assessment to learning outcomes. This also ensures that comments from external examiners on the quality of learning opportunities, as evidenced in student work, are appropriately considered. The *Code of practice* sections on placement learning and student disabilities also inform the provision of effective learning opportunities.

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

30 College schools conduct regular classroom observation programmes that inform the appraisal cycle, and thus the staff development activities that stem from it. The newly designated Higher Education Director reports directly to the senior management team every six weeks. This is good practice, in that it supplements the quality cycle with an up-to-date and continuous review of the quality of teaching and learning as it progresses through the academic year. At present, these formal arrangements are supported by the Higher Education Group.

31 The College is well aware that, as a predominantly further education institution, it has to make an effort to maintain and enhance the quality of learning and teaching in its higher education programmes. It is doing this by locating much of its higher education provision on the Chatham Maritime site, alongside the delivery of the Access to Higher Education programmes. This is also the site where the new 'multiversity,' involving several higher education institutions, is being developed. The development has the potential to provide an appropriate learning environment for higher education study.

32 The team found that the longer-term nature of the student experience is being actively developed and enhanced. For example, the College has recently joined the Kent and Medway Lifelong Learning Network with other colleges and higher education institutions in the area. This will help to shape the future of higher education within the College, as more credit attracting modules are developed that could be used as stand-alone units or as bridging programmes. This offers the possibility of improved progression and recruitment into Level 4 programmes.

33 The involvement of employers in programme design and operation is patchy. In the best examples, employers are intimately involved, but this is usually in the case of part-time programmes on which their employees are students. An example is the HNC in the Technology and Management of Paper and Board Making. This programme was established at the request of a local employer who was involved in its design. The employer provides continuing input into student assessment and project work.

34 There is a major growth of electronic facilities in schools in which the students may gain employment, as well as in wider society. In recognition of this development, it is advisable for the College to implement a more consistent approach to ensuring that students across its higher education provision benefit from exposure to the virtual learning environment, intranet and internet facilities. The team views the best examples of student handbooks and intranet facilities as features of good practice, but it also judges that it is advisable for the College to draw on these to ensure that there is more consistent high-quality support to students across its higher education provision.

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

35 The team notes that at present, the student input into the quality process does not differentiate higher education from further education. The different schools and validating universities also have a variety of formats for generating and evaluating student feedback. Although there are employer forums providing advice and guidance for some programmes, a more consistent approach to the collection of this important feedback is advised.

36 Students who met the team on two of the campuses were very supportive of the quality of teaching and learning that they enjoyed. They endorsed the staff's view that there was an 'open door' policy for personal support, both pastoral and academic. Students approach staff directly for support on the curricula and assessment, even though much of the required information is available on the student intranet.

37 Current developments for part-time students, for example the HNC in Housing, involve a review of blended learning and the use of a virtual learning environment as an online support device. Canterbury Christ Church University routinely use another virtual learning environment as their intranet platform and this is also available to College students. The College's computing department has its own online support systems.

38 Students experiencing personal difficulties and illness are dealt with appropriately with respect to assessment deadlines. In all cases, there are clear procedures for dealing with extenuating circumstances that ensure equity of treatment for all students on the higher education programmes. The University of Kent requires a statement in writing, as well as supporting evidence sent to its examination board. Canterbury Christ Church University allows online submissions for extenuating circumstances through their intranet facility.

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

39 The College has made effective arrangements for the induction, mentoring and training of newly appointed staff and those taking on the delivery of new programmes of study. For example, a member of staff in construction mentors staff who are new to teaching in higher education. The validating institutions look at the curricula vitae of staff due to teach on their programmes. Canterbury Christ Church University require all such staff to either hold a master's level qualification in a cognate area, or be working towards one.

40 Staff development is enhanced through the close liaison enjoyed by the College staff and their opposite numbers in the universities' schools and departments. These liaisons extend to participation in university seminars and staff development days. On programmes validated by the University of Kent, members of the College's teaching staff are invited to faculty learning and teaching boards. There are also incentives to encourage staff development with, in particular, a staff awards evening, where success is celebrated.

**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?**

41 Resources to support higher education developments are identified in the annual budget round. In particular, capital bids are dealt with separately. Recurrent spending can be allocated at school level, for example, to cover staff costs and learning resources. More recently, the Higher Education Director has been allocated a budget for generic higher education resources. Use of this budget has included a small marketing campaign to raise the profile of the higher education offer within the College's three sites.

**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 arrangements do 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?**

42 The College publishes a prospectus totally devoted to its full-time higher education programmes. For each programme, it includes a list of the constituent modules, a general description of teaching, learning and assessment, entry requirements, employment and progression opportunities and any additional costs over and above the programme fees. The prospectus makes it clear that all full-time programmes are validated by the University of Kent. There is information on the progression routes available at the University, as well as a summary of student life there. A separate part-time prospectus covers both higher and further education provision. This gives a summary listing of all part-time higher education programmes and refers the reader to details contained in separate programme leaflets which are accessible through the College's website. The leaflets can also be accessed by those visiting the College through electronic information kiosks in the reception area of each site or can be requested by telephone. The part-time prospectus gives the information about the University of Kent described above.

43 The education programmes are validated by Canterbury Christ Church University and are described as such in the part-time prospectus, except for the FD in Childhood Studies. This is described as being offered in conjunction with the University, which might be confusing for applicants. There is no explanation of this in the prospectus or the programme leaflet. Neither the prospectus nor the programme leaflets explain that all education programmes are jointly taught by College and University staff, or that they are part of a wider consortium arrangement involving the University and a number of regional colleges. The College may wish to address this in the next edition of the prospectus.



44 The self-evaluation noted that the College considers the lack of a part-time prospectus covering higher education programmes to be a shortcoming. It acknowledges that this is an area for development and intends to include part-time higher education programmes in the separate higher education prospectus in order to facilitate promotion of the whole higher education provision. Programme leaflets are presented in a standard format and contain much useful information about the programme in question and the general facilities of the College. Application forms can be downloaded from the appropriate programme leaflet screen on the College's website.

45 The College's website has recently been updated and is easy for users to navigate. It allows the user to choose a subject area of interest and the preferred mode of attendance and will list the relevant programmes available. Access to the appropriate programme leaflet screen is then available. When the website is used in conjunction with the hard copy prospectuses, there is a facility to use a numerical programme code given in the latter to directly access a programme leaflet screen on the website. At the time of the review, this facility worked well for part-time programmes but did not give any access to programme leaflets for the full-time programmes. Such access could be gained by the alternative means described above. The website provides links to those of both validating higher education institutions. However, neither of the higher education institution's website gives consistent coverage of the programmes validated and offered at the College. The College and each validating university may consider the desirability of establishing a more comprehensive approach to information on their websites regarding College-based programmes.

46 Both validating universities monitor the material in the prospectuses and programme leaflets. Since the College website is currently constructed to reproduce the hardcopy prospectuses and leaflets, this monitoring also covers those pages of the website. However, the team was not made aware of any wider monitoring of the website by either University. Nor was the team made aware of any specific mechanism employed by the College to assure itself of the accuracy and completeness of the information published in its prospectuses and on its website. The self-evaluation makes reference to a Marketing Subcommittee of the Higher Education Group, whose specific remit is concerned with all aspects of the marketing of the higher education provision. In discussion with the team, staff spoke of the need for further development of this subcommittee. The team judges it to be desirable for the Higher Education Marketing Subcommittee to be properly established within the committee structure of the College and that it take on a role for promoting the higher education provision and monitoring promotional material.

47 The College provides students with course guides for their programmes of study. These documents are accessible to students and contain comprehensive information on matters such as fees, operational arrangements, tutor support assessment resources and learning styles. Some are particularly strong in their coverage of assessment and student performance. The self-evaluation describes most programme literature as making reference to the validating higher education institution's code of practice. However, the team did not find such references in any of the programme handbooks or in the prospectuses. A minority of handbooks contain a section on quality assurance, in which details of the internal quality assurance policy of the department are described.

48 Students also receive handbooks and other documentation from the appropriate validating higher education institution. The team particularly notes the helpful information provided for students following education programmes, which are validated by Canterbury Christ Church University and taught at the Medway Multiversity Campus. They receive a college handbook, a Canterbury Christ Church University handbook and a University of

Kent welcome pack, which gives an introduction to the facilities available on the campus.

49 The College's embodiment of its commitment to students is published in its College Charter. This is aimed at its further education students in the 16-18 age group. There is no reference to higher education students, although much of the commitment given by the College is applicable to all students. The College also publishes four student-centred policy documents covering race equality, equal opportunities, disability equality and anti-bullying and harassment. These are clearly applicable to both higher and further education students. Similarly, documents dealing with plagiarism and malpractice are made available to both groups. The four policy documents referred to above, but not the College Charter or the plagiarism and malpractice documents, are available on the help and advice pages of the College website. The website also contains pages concerned with careers advice, learning support and the counselling services made available by the College. The descriptions on these pages are generic and of use to both higher and further education students. However, the page on adult learners is aimed entirely at those seeking Access to Higher Education programmes. The pages concerned with financial advice give information for both home and international full-time higher education students regarding fees and student financial support. There is no financial advice for part-time higher education students on the website. The help and advice pages also give direct links to the websites of the two validating higher education institutions. Overall, it is advisable that the information published for higher education students is focused more explicitly on their particular needs.

50 In summary, the team found the information for higher education students published by the College to be accurate and to display some features of good practice. However, there is a need for those features of good practice to be embraced by all parts of the College responsible for higher education provision, and for an increased focus on the needs of higher education students in much of the generic information published by the College. Until this is addressed, the published information cannot be said to be complete.

**The team considers that reliance can be placed on the accuracy but not the 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**

51 The on-site activities for the Developmental engagement in student assessment were completed in March 2007. The Developmental engagement was structured around the following lines of enquiry agreed with the College:

- Quality of feedback to students; is it clear, timely and in accordance with published information, criteria and the QAA *Code of Practice*? Does it enable students to attain appropriate standards and improve performance?
- Involvement of employers in assessment? Where this is required, is it incorporated into the assessment of students in an appropriate and effective way?
- Planning of assessment. Are assessment schedules clear and appropriate in enabling standards to be met and learning outcomes properly and effectively assessed?

52 In the course of the Developmental engagement, the team identified much good practice that it judged was worthy of wider dissemination. This included the strong,

positive relationship between individual College departments and cognate higher education institution schools/departments that informs the development of assessment strategies, methods and standards. The rigour of the external examiner process and that of internal verification and assessment process in the majority of cases were also deemed to be good practice. Other areas of good practice noted included the clear articulation of learning outcomes, well planned and supportive feedback and the use made by the computing/information technology department of the College intranet to publish comprehensive information on assessment.

53 One of the most significant recommendations identified in the Developmental engagement relates to the need to embed fully an overall higher education strategy within which a discrete higher education learning, teaching and assessment strategy can be developed and fully implemented. Another is the need for the College, in collaboration with its partner higher education institutions, to take immediate and effective action where standards are found to be at risk. Other recommendations included the need to ensure that the guidelines given in handbooks are consistent with the appropriate University regulations.

## **D Foundation Degrees**

54 The College currently offers FDs in the following programme areas: civil engineering, construction, tourism management, business and management, information technology and childhood studies. The College has recently developed an FD in Laboratory Technology and Manufacturing. The programme, validated by the University of Kent, will be delivered at Kent Science Park with the support of various regional groups and local employers, mainly pharmaceutical companies. The course will be mostly taught by the College, with Canterbury Christ Church University providing some specialist input. There are no definite plans at the present time to enlarge the FD provision, although the College is alert to the potential these degrees offer by way of extending participation.

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

55 The Summative review team identified a number of features of good practice in the 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 were based upon discussion with staff and students and scrutiny of evidence provided by the Mid Kent College and its awarding bodies, the University of Kent and Canterbury Christ Church University.

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

- the College has effective partnerships in place, with robust frameworks for setting and verifying appropriate standards for the higher education provision (paragraph 10)
- key programme managers are full members of their validating university's faculty board and thus participate in appropriate discussions concerning the College's activities on behalf of the University (paragraph 26)
- the newly designated Higher Education Director reports directly to the senior management team every six weeks, thus supplementing the quality cycle with an up to date and continuous review of the quality of teaching and learning (paragraph 30)

- in meetings with the team, students from two campuses were very supportive of the quality of teaching and learning that they enjoyed. They endorsed the staff's view that there was an 'open door' policy for personal support, be it pastoral or academic (paragraph 36)
- the College has made effective arrangements for the induction, mentoring and training of newly appointed staff and those taking on the delivery of new programmes of study (paragraph 39).

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

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

- ensure that the College-wide strategy for learning, teaching and assessment in higher education is developed and that it flows naturally from the higher education strategy (paragraph 11)
- locate the Higher Education Group within the governance structure of the College and give it clear terms of reference, so that matters relating to higher education provision are formally reported to and considered by the Academic Board and other bodies such as the Academic Standards and Quality Committee (paragraph 11)
- develop and embed quality assurance and enhancement processes specifically related to higher education. These need to take more account of the particular requirements of the higher education programmes and their relationship to the Academic Infrastructure (paragraph 13)
- ensure that it is in a position to take immediate and effective action in any future cases where standards and quality are believed to be at risk (paragraph 19)
- draw on the best examples of student handbooks, intranet facilities and electronic information to ensure that there is consistent high quality information to students across its higher education provision (paragraph 34)
- adopt a more consistent approach to the collection and analysis of feedback from students on their programmes (paragraph 35)
- establish a more consistent basis for collecting employer feedback (paragraph 35)
- ensure that information published for higher education students is more directly applicable to them and includes explicit information, including financial advice for those studying part-time (paragraph 49).

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

- develop a more proactive and centrally managed engagement with the Academic Infrastructure (paragraph 14)
- create a clearer overall strategy for staff development for higher education staff (paragraph 22)
- differentiate higher education from further education in terms of the student input into the College's quality processes (paragraph 35)
- establish with its higher education institution partners more consistent approaches to information on websites regarding College-based programmes (paragraph 45)

- establish the Higher Education Marketing Subcommittee within the committee structure of the College and to enable it to take on a role promoting its higher education provision and monitoring promotional material (paragraph 46).

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 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.

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

61 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, and other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that, in the context of this Summative review, reliance **can** be placed on the accuracy but not the completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Mid Kent College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2007						
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>there are effective partnerships in place, with robust frameworks for setting and verifying appropriate standards for the College's higher education provision (paragraph 12)</li> </ul>	<p>Production of a teaching, learning and assessment strategy for HE</p> <p>Establishment of terms of reference for Programme Approvals Group</p>	<p>Sept 07</p> <p>Sept 07</p>	<p>Quality Improvement Manager</p> <p>HE Director</p>	<p>A TL &amp; A strategy which complements the HE strategy</p> <p>Minuted meetings of Programme Approval Group</p>	HE Director	Both these indicators will be evaluated through annual self assessment

Mid Kent College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2007						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>key programme managers are full members of their validating university's Faculty Board and thus participate in appropriate discussions concerning the College's activities on behalf of the university (paragraph 29)</li> </ul>	<p>Production of Action Plans attached to Annual Monitoring Reports</p> <p>Review of key managers on Faculty Boards to ensure continuity</p>	<p>Sept 07</p> <p>Sept 07</p>	<p>Heads of Schools</p> <p>HE Manager</p>	<p>Improved retention and achievement data</p> <p>Key Strength maintained</p>	<p>HE Manager</p> <p>HE Manager</p>	<p>Through annual self assessment</p> <p>Through annual self assessment</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the newly designated HE Director reports directly to the Senior Management Team every six weeks, thus supplementing the quality cycle with an up to date and continuous review of the quality of teaching and learning as it progresses through the academic year (paragraph 33)</li> </ul>	<p>HE Director continues to report to SMT</p> <p>Formalise support by the HE Group in its terms of reference</p>	<p>Sept 07</p>	<p>HE Director</p> <p>HE Manager</p>	<p>Minutes of SMT</p> <p>Minutes of HE Group</p>	<p>SMT</p> <p>HE Director</p>	<p>Through annual self assessment</p> <p>Through annual self assessment</p>

Mid Kent College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2007						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>students who met with the reviewers, on two campuses, were very supportive of the quality of teaching and learning that they enjoyed. They endorsed the staff's view that there was an 'open door' policy for personal support, both pastoral and academic (paragraph 39)</li> </ul>	<p>Include some questions specific to HE students in the teaching and learning survey</p> <p>Include HE students in the College's Learning Involvement Strategy</p>		<p>Quality Improvement Manager</p> <p>Quality Improvement Manager</p>	<p>More information relating specifically to HE students is gained</p> <p>Learner Involvement Strategy reflects both FE and HE community</p>	<p>SMT</p> <p>SMT</p>	<p>Through Teaching and Learning Survey</p> <p>Through annual self assessment</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the College has made arrangements for the induction, mentoring and training of newly appointed staff and those taking on the delivery of new programmes of study (paragraph 42)</li> </ul>	<p>All new teaching staff to have the opportunity to have a Teacher Coach</p> <p>College Learning and Development Manager to liaise with counterparts at UK and CCCU to further improve access to CPD at HEIs</p>		<p>Learning and Development Manager</p> <p>Learning and Development Manager</p>	<p>65% of lesson observations of new staff are good or better</p> <p>Increased staff participation in CPD activities outside of home institution</p>	<p>SMT</p> <p>Teaching and Learning Committee</p>	<p>Through annual lesson observation report</p> <p>L&amp;D Manager's annual report</p>



Mid Kent College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2007							
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 locate the HE Group within the governance structure of the College and given clear terms of reference, so that matters relating to higher education provision are formally reported to and considered by the Academic Board and other relevant bodies (paragraph 13)</li> </ul>	Re-write terms of reference, agree with SMT/AB Members to include representatives from Quality and Finance as well as curriculum staff	Oct/Nov 07	HE Director	Meetings in scheduled slots in college calendar and formal reporting schedule agreed	Academic Board	Minutes of HE group meetings reported/recorded at Academic Board meetings	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to ensure that the College-wide strategy for learning, teaching and assessment in higher education is developed and that it flows naturally from the higher education strategy (paragraph 13)</li> </ul>	A new Teaching Learning and Assessment Policy relating to higher education to be written	October 07	Quality Department	Separate policies relating to higher education within the college to be published	HE Director/ Manager	Policy adopted by the HE Group	

Mid Kent College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2007						
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to develop and embed quality assurance and enhancement processes specifically related to higher education which take more account of the particular requirements of the higher education programmes and their relationship to the Academic infrastructure (paragraph 15)</li> </ul>	<p>Separate action/improvement plans attached to the Annual Monitoring reports. Separate SAR relating to higher education</p>	July 08	Quality Office HE Manager	HE Self Assessment Report HE Improvement plan	HE Director	Monitored and evaluated by the HE group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to ensure that it is in a position to take immediate and effective action in any future cases where standards and quality are believed to be at risk (paragraph 21)</li> </ul>	<p>HE Group to monitor improvement plans and university Learning and Teaching Board minutes termly</p>	December 07	Divisional Curriculum Directors/Quality Co-ordinators within each division	Absence of "at risk" programmes	HE Director	Minutes of HE group/ Status of action on improvement plans

Mid Kent College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2007						
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to draw on the best examples of student handbooks and electronic information to ensure that high quality information is more consistently provided to students across its higher education provision (paragraph 37)</li> </ul>	<p>Review of existing handbooks and course literature to ensure standardisation of information</p>	June 08	Quality Co-ordinators	Improved quality of information to students and spread of good practice	HE Director/ Manager	Feedback from students Survey responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to adopt a more consistent approach to the collection and analysis of student feedback for the higher education programmes (paragraph 38)</li> </ul>	<p>Separate survey for higher education programmes</p>	June 08	Quality Department	Improved KPIs on higher education programmes	SMT	Annual quality report and divisional curriculum reports to SMT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to establish a more consistent approach for collecting employer feedback (paragraph 38)</li> </ul>	<p>Establishment of employer forum/mechanism for collecting employer feedback</p>	June 08	Business Development unit and HE group	Interim feedback in SAR	HE group	HE SAR

Mid Kent College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2007						
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to ensure that information published for higher education students is more directly applicable to them and includes more explicit material, including financial advice for part-time higher education students (paragraph 49).</li> </ul>	<p>Include information about where financial advice can be obtained on the website</p>	February 08	Marketing department	Advice located on website	HE group	Student feedback

Mid Kent College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2007						
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 develop a more proactive and centrally managed engagement with the Academic infrastructure (paragraph 16)</li> </ul>	<p>Arrange training session with UK to familiarise staff with AI.</p> <p>Curriculum sub group of HE group to monitor continued engagement with AI</p>	<p>Oct 07</p> <p>June 08</p>	HE Director/HE group and managers	Greater engagement transparent in new programme proposals	SMT/governing body	Through the HE SAR and evaluation at programme proposal meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to create a clearer overall staff development strategy for higher education staff (paragraph 25)</li> </ul>	<p>CPD programme to include some specific training for HE staff including Focus days</p>	January 08	Learning and Development Manager MKC and UK/CCCU staff development offices	Increased participation in HE activities including liaison with university programmes	VP/ HE Director	Part of Focus day specifically for HE staff activities

Mid Kent College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2007							
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to implement a more consistent approach to collecting higher education student input into the College's quality processes, differentiating between the needs of higher and further education (paragraph 38)</li> </ul>	New HE SAR	November 07	HE Manager	Incorporate HE SAR into the college SAR	HE Director/ Director of Quality	More focussed and clearer indication of the quality of HE provision	
to establish with its HEI partners more consistent approaches to information on websites regarding College-based programmes (paragraph 45)	Liaison on regular basis with partnership representatives of HEIs	October 07	Marketing sub committee of HE Group	More, accurate and better quality information on the website and prospectus	HE Group/ HE Director and Manager	Through HE group	
to establish the HE Marketing Sub-Committee within the committee structure of the College and to consider its potential role in promoting the higher education provision and monitoring promotional material (paragraph 46)	Establish sub group of HEG - re-write terms of reference to form sub committee	September 07	HE Director through the HE Group	Increased marketing materials and opportunities	HE main group and Academic Board	Acceptance as formal committee by Academic Board	

**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 375 06/08