QAA

Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

Newham College of Further Education

March 2011

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Preface

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

Purpose of IQER

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

The IQER process

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

Developmental engagement

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

The main elements of a Developmental engagement are:

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

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

Summative review

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

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

Evidence

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

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

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

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

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

Outcomes of IQER

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

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

management of the standards and/or quality of the awards made by one awarding body to be different from those made by another.

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

Executive summary

The Summative review of Newham College of Further Education carried out in March 2011

As a result of its investigations, the Summative review team (the team) considers that there can be **confidence** in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreement, for the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of its awarding body. The team also considers that there can be **confidence** in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreement, for the quality of learning opportunities it offers. The team considers that reliance **can** be placed on the accuracy and 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's development of its own Regulatory Framework ensures that academic standards are consistently maintained across its higher education provision and are fully consistent with the Academic Infrastructure
- the College's staff development activities offer staff the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the requirements of higher education within further education and, for example, the Academic Infrastructure
- the active collaboration between the University and the College in the provision of support for Post Compulsory Education and Training students is effective and supports students' learning.

Recommendations

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

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

- identify, when the Higher Education Board agrees actions to be taken, who should be responsible for their implementation and a date by which the actions should be completed
- review the terms of reference of both the Higher Education Board and the Academic and Professional Development Board to ensure that each has a clear focus and understands its role so that activities are not duplicated
- encourage college staff to be in attendance at all examination boards, not only to ensure that their students were being treated consistently, but also to support the development of their understanding of the assessment process
- produce a standard questionnaire to collate student feedback to ensure consistency of response and action
- develop a comprehensive means of obtaining feedback from students on their experience of induction in order to gain a fuller understanding of the needs of students and how they might be met
- develop the Higher Education Forum for the virtual learning environment to enable a broader picture of the engagement with the virtual learning environment by both students and staff to be obtained by the College to facilitate enhancement

- ensure that the awarding body for all the higher education programmes the College offers is explicit on the website and in the prospectus
- consider collecting all information about higher education in one place so that students have a complete picture of the provision, enabling them to make an informed choice of course.

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 Newham College of Further Education (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 which the College delivers on behalf the University of East London. The review was carried out by Mr Maldwyn Buckland, Dr Richard Foyle (reviewers) and Dr Daniel Lamont (coordinator).

2   The Summative review team (the team) conducted the review in agreement with the College and in accordance with *The handbook for Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review* (the handbook), published by QAA. Evidence in support of the Summative review included documentation supplied by the College and awarding bodies, meetings with staff, students, employers and partner institutions and reports of reviews by QAA. In particular, the team drew on the findings and recommendations of the Developmental engagement in assessment. A summary of findings from this Developmental engagement is provided in section C of this report. This review was conducted as a desk-based study. The review also considered the College's use of the Academic Infrastructure, developed by QAA on behalf of higher education providers, with reference to the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (*Code of practice*), subject and award benchmark statements*, The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and programme specifications.

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

4   Newham College of Further Education is a large general college in the London Borough of Newham in east London. There are two main campuses, in East Ham and Stratford, and six local neighbourhood and specialist learning centres. In 2010-11 the College has 17,739 learners enrolled on courses. The College believes that its mission and strategy are rooted in a sound analysis of local conditions and needs and give tangible expression to the strategic commitment to innovation around students' needs. They aim to make the most effective response possible to these conditions, taking full account of local, regional and national priorities for young people, adult skills, and enterprise and business development. The College was inspected by Ofsted in 2009 and received an overall Outstanding (Grade 1) evaluation, including a Grade 1 for both capacity to improve and leadership and management.

5   The College's vision is to provide a learning and skills revolution encouraging full participation in learning, employment and enterprise; high skill levels, inward investment and economic growth; Newham's regeneration as an exemplary area for enterprise, ambition, social cohesion and economic inclusion. The College's mission is to provide learning skills and enterprise services for people and business that are highly responsive to individual, employer and community demand; enable achievement and progression for all, regardless of their starting point, through innovation and flexibility; increase and widen participation and lead to higher levels of success.

6   Currently, all of the College's HEFCE-funded higher education work is delivered via a collaborative arrangement with the University of East London to offer courses in education and business. There are a total of 22 full-time equivalent (FTE) students, of whom seven are

full-time and 30 part-time. The programmes, with their full-time equivalent student numbers in brackets, are as follows:

University of East London

- FdA Business (7)
- Certificate in Education (Cert Ed) Post Compulsory Education and Training (PCET) (7.5)
- Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) (PCET) (7.5).

The FdA Business is being discontinued after the current cohort has graduated.

Partnership agreements with the awarding body

7   The College has a formal partnership agreement with the University of East London. This is up to date and clearly defines the responsibilities of both partners. Partnership arrangements with the University are devolved with clear mechanisms in place for maintaining a rigorous oversight of the provision. There is a strong sense of partnership between the College and the University which is exemplified by the provision of documentation to support the partnership and the arrangement of relevant staff training events.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

8   The College took the strategic decision in 2009-10 to broaden its higher education provision to include a range of non-HECFE funded courses validated by the Open University and Leeds Metropolitan University. The College has established the University Centre Stratford to develop a single infrastructure and point of contact for all higher education students. It has responsibility for quality assurance, public information and the development of all higher education programmes across the College. University Centre Stratford is now in its second year of operation and there are currently around 250 FTEs enrolled on these degrees. There are plans to expand the higher education provision to include four new degree courses from September 2011 in psychology and business and management.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

9   Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the Summative review team. The students on each of the two courses made a written submission which was produced with the support of the College in calling meetings and in preparing the report. In addition, the review coordinator explained the Summative review process with student representatives at the preparatory meeting. The submission identified a number of issues that were useful to the team, and which were discussed in the meetings with students during the preparatory meeting.

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 developed its higher education provision, indirectly funded by HEFCE, through a partnership with the University of East London. The current Strategic Partnership Agreement with the University recognises the common aims and aspirations of both partners in collaborative working and sets out shared strategic aims and actions. Terms and conditions are clearly set out in the Memorandum of Co-operation. The College has a mature and genuinely collaborative partnership with the University. Arrangements for the management of higher education standards within the College are in keeping with its regulatory framework and accords with the *Code of practice.*

11   Overall management of the standards of the higher education courses is the direct responsibility of the Director of the University Centre Stratford in conjunction with the Senior Manager for Higher Education. The Director reports both to the College's Executive Board and Principalship on a regular basis. As a result of the College's internal restructuring, the Senior Manager for Higher Education has assumed direct responsibility for managing and monitoring the quality assurance of higher education provision and reports directly to the Director of the University Centre. The College confirmed that internal restructuring had resulted in the provision of a clear management structure for higher education. Academic staff clearly understand these changes and welcome the creation of the senior management post, which they find effective in providing a dedicated, focused resource for the management of higher education standards and quality. Operational management of higher education provision, in accordance with the Memorandum of Co-operation and the University's Academic Framework, is the responsibility of the College's programme managers, who coordinate and oversee curriculum delivery.

12   A series of boards and committees enable the College to discharge its responsibility for managing and monitoring the standards and quality of higher education. Those with primary responsibility for the consideration of higher education matters are the Academic Standards and Performance Committee, and the Academic and Professional Development Group which report to the Higher Education Academic Board, all of which are aligned within the College's Higher Education Regulatory Framework. In reviewing documentary evidence, the team found some confusion in the way the Higher Education Academic Board is referred to and identified. The College recognises this confusion and is addressing it.

13   The Higher Education Academic Board plays a key role in the Higher Education Regulatory Framework and, in accordance with the advisable recommendation arising from the Developmental engagement, now considers external examiner and annual monitoring reports as part of its overall remit in monitoring the delivery of higher education provision. Scrutiny of evidence confirms its function in leading and monitoring the higher education provision. The team agreed that this body has considerable potential in securing the future development and enhancement of the provision. The Board has recently agreed to include student and lecturer representation. The team noted that relevant discussion takes place and some actions are identified, but there is no evidence that these have been implemented or followed up. It is desirable for the Higher Education Academic Board, when it agrees

actions to be taken, to identify who should be responsible for their implementation and a date by which the actions should be completed.

14   Issues raised by both staff and students at programme team meetings are received and considered by the Academic and Professional Development Group, whose remit is to provide an ongoing forum for the discussion of quality and professional development issues. The team, however, could find no evidence of staff/student issues being addressed, although it did note that detailed scrutiny of the external examiners report for the FdA Business programme had been undertaken. There were also discussions about verification and the development of an annual quality cycle in support of annual monitoring. Reviewers expressed concern that there appeared to be duplication in the remit of the boards, resulting in a degree of overlap and, consequently, a lack of focus. Both groups appear to have responsibility for reviewing quality and standards, including receiving and reviewing external examiners' and annual monitoring reports. The College agreed that the committee structure had been revised and that the current system was being monitored to address any matters of overlap. The team agreed that the effectiveness of the committee structure could be improved by rationalising and clarifying the remit of each body, perhaps by reviewing the terms of reference of both the Higher Education Board and the Academic and Professional Development Board to ensure that each has a clear focus and understands its role so that activities are not duplicated.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

15   The College's Higher Education Regulatory Framework provides a single, consistent source of policy and regulatory guidance for the provision of higher education. In the development of this regulatory framework, the College has referenced the national standards aligned with the *Code of practice*. Continuous cross-referencing to the relevant sections of the *Code of practice* ensures that full account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure. Minutes of the Higher Education Academic Board (October 2010) noted that the mapping process of the Regulatory Framework against a revised *Code of practice* was in need of completion and this is now being undertaken. The College confirmed that, as a result of engagement with awarding body monitoring processes, it had updated the framework documentation relating to the sections of the *Code of practice* for careers and student disability. The College's development of its own Regulatory Framework ensures that academic standards are consistently maintained across its higher education provision and are fully consistent with the Academic Infrastructure.

16   The quality assurance arrangements in the Regulatory Framework have been developed through institutional validation with the Open University and are compliant with the *Code of Practice* and the FHEQ. The programme leader for the FdA Business confirmed that this degree was developed with reference to the *Foundation Degree benchmark statement* and general business and management subject benchmark statements.

17   The Higher Education Academic and Professional Development Group has agreed that the internal training of new staff will include the College's Higher Education Regulatory Framework and processes, the use of new learning methodologies and the Academic Infrastructure. There is extensive evidence to suggest that the Higher Education Regulatory Framework underpins a robust approach to the management and monitoring of higher education standards and this can be considered an area of good practice.

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?

18   Programme managers, in liaison with University of East London link tutors and external examiners, assure the standards and quality of higher education through the provision of module reports and the University's Annual Monitoring Review and Enhancement Report. It is, however, the role of the link tutor to write the formal response to external examiners. Academic staff confirmed that the positive relationship with link tutors was underpinned by a 'real presence' of the University within the College. The programme leader for the Post Compulsory Education and Training programme confirmed that University lecturers were part of the college delivery team and that the University Programme Director attended the annual programme induction at the College. In addition, the University extended the opportunity for college staff to attend the annual Away Day and a series of professional development days. The programme leader for the FdA Business confirmed a similar positive relationship with university staff. The Higher Education Board has noted that excessive documentation relating to the annual monitoring process was impacting on its ability to effectively discharge its strategic role in considering higher education matters. The team was pleased to see that it had agreed that a summative report on quality issues should replace the current practice.

19   External examiners, appointed by the University, report on the academic standards of the programmes. In the main, these reports confirm that standards of assessment and student achievement are appropriate to the level of study. Reports are considered by the Higher Education Board. The College has addressed the Developmental engagement recommendation to clarify the role of the Internal Verification Moderation Panel. The team agreed that the review of these procedures has strengthened the College's approach to verification and moderation. Although the university regulations permit college staff to attend the University's examination boards, the College confirms that it is not general practice for them to do so. The team agreed that it is desirable for college staff to be in attendance at all examination boards, not only to ensure that their students were being treated consistently, but also to support the development of their understanding of the assessment process.

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

20   As discussed in paragraphs 33-34, the College provides an extensive range of staff development activities and is in the process of developing a range of higher education training needs in response to issues identified through the annual monitoring process. The team confirms that the provision of staff development activities from both the College and the awarding body constitute an effective support mechanism for the successful achievement of academic standards.

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?

21   The responsibilities for managing the quality of learning opportunities and reporting arrangements reflect those for managing academic standards as described in paragraphs 10-14. The day-to-day management of individual higher education programmes is the responsibility of the programme managers who have a clearly defined role in the College's quality systems and who work closely with the Senior Higher Education Manager. The Higher Education Board has a key role in coordinating the process.

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

22   The programme annual monitoring report, which must be approved by the College Leadership Group, forms part of the overall college annual review. These reports, together with other internal reviews, enable the College to monitor the quality of learning opportunities and to ensure that they are properly managed. The outcomes of this process are reported to the Governing Body and to the University. In addition, the Annual Learning Audit has been maintained and is helpful in supporting the provision of appropriate learning opportunities. Annual monitoring is thorough and effective and ensures that any recommended actions are implemented.

23   While the team did not meet with employers, it learned that engagement with employers is effective and planned at a strategic level. The College is committed to involving and developing learners as individuals and allowing them to reach their potential. There is a clear and cohesive approach to the development and delivery of the curriculum in the College and is one of the means of focusing attention on the key priority areas. The team confirmed that there is currently appropriate employer input on each of the Foundation Degrees.

24   The Developmental engagement team recommended that it would be desirable for the College to review the quality of developmental feedback on all assessments. The College has addressed this and has agreed that the standard university feedback form will be used. Formative feedback will be monitored more effectively in the future as this has become a procedure within the Internal Verification Panel. Although the team was unable to determine from the minutes of the Interval Verification Panel whether this had been done, students confirmed that the quality of formative feedback on their work was full and constructive and enabled them to progress.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

25   As outlined in paragraphs 15-17, the team found that the Academic Infrastructure is embedded in the guidance provided to the College by the University, and constitutes the framework within which the College operates its higher education programmes. The team saw examples of programme specifications, which demonstrate the College's use of the *Code of practice* and also the relevant benchmark statements. Teaching and learning are appropriately designed to ensure that the programme specifications are achieved.

26   The course handbooks articulate the defining characteristics of Foundation Degrees and how these relate to the particular learning needs of students. The precepts of the *Code*

of practice, Section 9: work-based and placement learning are fully embedded in all the courses and personal development planning is situated within a structured framework throughout. Students reported that their learning is shaped and enhanced through their work-based tasks and assessments which clearly link theory with practice. Module handbooks clearly set out the opportunities for learning in the workplace.

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

27   The College has in place a number of processes for developing the quality of the learning experience. These include the Annual Learning Audit, which reviews the design of assessments and the quality and appropriateness of feedback to students. It also collects students' views on the quality of their learning, which the College takes very seriously. Feedback is actively sought through various means, such as questionnaires and learner consultation sampling. Programme boards include student representatives, thus providing a valuable two-way communication channel. Students reported that matters raised by them are promptly addressed and, where appropriate, action is taken. Peer observation of teaching is well established for sharing good practice and is welcomed by staff. Students commented enthusiastically on the accessibility of all staff and how they value the prompt responses to their questions and concerns. In addition, the Post Compulsory Education and Training team discusses learning and quality issues at its regular programme committees which include a course representative. End-of-module evaluations demonstrate high levels of student satisfaction with the quality of academic guidance and feedback. They also indicate that students consider that tutorials are helpful in developing their learning. The team concluded that these processes work well and that student concerns are fully taken into account and constitute good practice. Learning opportunities are of a high standard, which enable the students to progress academically and intellectually.

28   The FdA Business programme collects student feedback via module evaluation questionnaires. A summary of the results is presented in the Review and Enhancement report. These are different questionnaires from those used by Post Compulsory Education and Training. While this is not in itself a problem, it makes it more difficult for the College to have a consistent overview of the quality of their higher education provision. It is desirable for the College to produce a standard questionnaire to collate student feedback to ensure consistency of response and action.

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

29   The College's flexible learning centre (Flex) provides an induction to students to encourage independent learning and assist in the development of study skills, but the team was not able to judge its effectiveness. Some data is gathered, although it would also be helpful to have separate data from higher education students, as their needs may be different from those of further education students. The College recognises that information on induction is weak and needs some improvement. It is desirable for the College to develop a comprehensive means of obtaining feedback from students on their experience of induction, in order to gain a fuller understanding of the needs of students and how they might be met.

30   Students receive support from the Student Learning Advisor, although frequent changes of staff in this post have not been helpful. However, the College has confirmed that it is committed to this role and the changes to personnel were not related to any intention of the College to alter it. The FdA Business students commented that they value the support it provides while the Post Compulsory Education and Training students indicated that their tutors provided the support that they needed. The College has indicated that it intends to

gather student feedback on the Student Learning Advisor role. Such feedback will probably be valuable and the team encourages the College to persevere with this role as it is likely to be of benefit to the students.

31   Students are well prepared for the work experience element of their courses. There is a detailed work experience Service Level Agreement for the FdA Business. Students are found placements by the work experience team and are supported, if necessary, by the course team. There is a Placement Handbook for the Post Compulsory Education and Training courses which makes clear the expectations that a student should have. In addition, the students receive support from mentors in the workplace. This role is comprehensively explained within the Mentor Handbook. Students commented that work experience was one of the most positive aspects of their course. They agreed that they were well prepared for work experience and that the College staff were supportive and helpful in ensuring that they obtained maximum benefit from it.

32   Students and employers are provided with information on work placements through a number of supporting documents. These supply detailed information about the requirements of students, employers and mentors. Some students commented that work experience is one of the most positive aspects of their course. They agreed that they are well prepared for it and that the College's staff are supportive and helpful in ensuring that they obtain maximum benefit from it.

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

33   The College provides a series of staff professional development programmes focused on the development of practice in teaching, learning and assessment. The College is responsible for ensuring that the staff assigned to teaching on higher education programmes engage in continuous professional development or scholarly activity and research in order to maintain currency of expertise at a level above that which they are responsible for delivering. Staff particularly welcomed the staff development activity to support the use of information and learning technology. The team agreed that these arrangements for staff development represent good practice. The College has encouraged professional development to enable staff to understand the operation of higher education within a further education college and, for example, the Academic Infrastructure.

34   Professional development also takes place externally for relevant professional updating or in other role-related activities. For example, staff have access to appropriate events in the University's staff development programme and work with it on projects, visiting lectureships and course and curriculum development. For example, staff are able to attend the University's Lunchtime Good Practice Sessions. College staff access a range of good practice sharing opportunities, both in-house during higher education committee meetings, and externally by attending programme and assessment boards.

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

35   The College's flexible learning centre (Flex) offers an integrated learning environment that comprises information technology resources, study areas (general, group and silent), audio-visual facilities and printed materials. The Post Compulsory Education and Training students commented that the Flex supports their learning effectively. While the FdA Business students indicated that it was not being used as effectively as it might be in their programme, the Post Compulsory Education and Training course makes innovative and

interactive use of information technology, which helps the development of their professional competence. Although the College does not collect data on the effectiveness of the virtual learning environment, it has established a Higher Education Forum for the virtual leaning environment in order to monitor its effectiveness and consider its further development. The Forum held its first meeting in May 2010 but it has not met again since. Given the importance of the virtual learning environment in the delivery of higher education teaching and learning, the team agreed that the College could usefully develop further its consultation process. It is desirable for the Forum to develop further to enable the College to obtain a broader picture of the engagement with the virtual learning environment by both students and staff in order to facilitate enhancement.

36   Students on the Post Compulsory Education and Training programmes can access all of the University's learning resources, including the library, UEL Plus, the online facility for podcasting, blogging and tweeting, and an Academic English course. Students are invited to activities organised by the University, such as employability skills sessions, and to attend lectures given by visiting speakers. The Post Compulsory Education and Training course has continued to develop its use of the virtual learning environment and is setting up a blog to support trainees outside course hours. Students are guided how to use university resources through the induction they receive. The team agreed that the active collaboration between the University and the College in the provision of support for students, especially by means of the virtual learning environment, was effective and appreciated by students.

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 body, to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Core theme 3: Public information

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

37   The College produces a range of both printed and electronic material in support of its higher education academic provision. These include the full-time and part-time prospectuses, programme-specific handbooks and leaflets, website and virtual learning environment. Students confirmed that at induction and enrolment, the College provides induction and programme handbooks, both of which offer a comprehensive range of detailed information relating to specifications, expectations, academic study requirements and appeals procedures. Students were complimentary about the information they receive and welcome the support offered by these publications and electronic resources.

38   Both the College's website and the full-time college prospectus for 2011-12 contain higher education programme information. The Developmental engagement recommendation that the College should ensure that all programme handbooks contain full information about progression routes and requirements from Foundation Degrees to top-up honours degrees elsewhere has now been met. Full details about progression and about the transfer of credit and marks from the FdA Business are now contained in the course handbook. Students have access to programme specifications via the university website, but the FdA Business programme specification can only be accessed by existing students, as the programme is no longer recruiting.

39   The College's website, while it mentions other partners, does not identify the University of East London as a partner. Given the strength of the partnership, the team was

surprised that it was not included on the website. The College's prospectus does not mention any of the academic partners in the welcome or information sections, and higher education has a low profile. There is no mention of who awards the higher education qualifications. It is important for potential students to have this information and in future it should be included. However, it is clear on the college course information page of the website that the University of East London is the awarding body for the higher education courses. The team found that there were discrepancies between the website and the prospectus, but, between the two, all the information was available. The team agreed that it is desirable for the College to ensure that the awarding body for all the higher education programmes the College offers is explicit on the website and in the prospectus. It is also desirable for the College to consider collecting all information about higher education into one place, so that students have a complete picture of the provision and are better able to make an informed choice of the courses on offer.

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

40   The College produces programme handbooks using a standard university template. Handbooks are audited for quality and consistency by the Higher Education Manager and approved by the appropriate university programme leader. In addition, handbooks are updated, reviewed and reapproved annually. The team's analysis of electronic publications included the content of web pages and virtual learning environment, downloadable documents, and the procedures employed by the College to assure accuracy and completeness prior to release into the public domain. While web content is the responsibility of the College, approval of all marketing and academic material is in conjunction with the University Partnership Office.

41   There is a clear approval process for public information and for its approval by the University. Detailed course information is submitted by the College alongside validation documents, and is approved at that time. For broader issues, such as the use of the university logo, information for the prospectus is submitted to a designated person at the University for approval. The College has done this for the 2011-12 prospectus, but no reply has been received to date. Given printing deadlines, the College has had to go ahead with the new prospectus and has raised the matter with the University Quality unit.

> **The team considers that reliance can be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.**

C   Summary of findings from the Developmental engagement in assessment

42   The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in March 2010. The review included one institutional nominee. The lines of inquiry agreed with the College were as follows:

Line of enquiry 1: Does the College's management of assessment policies and practices, within its partnership agreements, ensure that awards are set and maintained at the appropriate level?

Line of enquiry 2: The effectiveness of the College's approach to providing written feedback and assessment-related support to promote and develop students' learning and academic development, especially for work-based learning.
Line of enquiry 3: The effectiveness of information concerning the College's assessment principles, procedures and processes and also of the mechanisms for publicising them in ways that are explicit, valid, reliable and fit for purpose.

43   The Developmental engagement team identified several elements of good practice: the provision of a Student Learning Advisor dedicated to higher education students; the annual learning audit, which reviews the design of assessments and the quality and appropriateness of feedback to students; the innovative and interactive use of information technology on the Post Compulsory Education and Training programmes, which facilitates the development of professional competence; the provision of generic level 6 grading criteria, which specify the difference in standards of achievement in the second year of the Professional Graduate Certificate of Education; the high quality of the handbooks for the Post Compulsory Education and Training programmes, which are clear and comprehensive and are valued by the students for supporting their learning.

44   The team made a number of recommendations. They considered that it would be advisable to develop the role of the Higher Education Board; and to ensure that all programme handbooks contain full information about progression routes and requirements from Foundation Degrees to top-up honours degrees elsewhere. The team also considered it desirable for the College to clarify how the internal verification panel fits into the college quality systems and develop further its role; ensure that the presentation of information is consistent across all modules so that all assignment briefs include the marks assigned to individual assessment tasks and refer to intended learning outcomes; review the quality of developmental feedback on all programmes; ensure that all students have access to programme specifications; and to ensure that all handbooks contain specific information on the grading of final Foundation Degree awards and the transfer of grades when students progress to honours degrees.

D   Foundation Degrees

45   The College offers a single Foundation Degree, the FdA in Business. This course is being discontinued and will not enrol any further students.

46   The conclusions given in paragraphs 48 to 50 apply to the FdA Business as well as to the other programmes.

E   Conclusions and summary of judgements

47   The Summative review team identified a number of features of good practice in Newham College of Further Education's management of its responsibilities for academic standards and for the quality of learning opportunities of the awards the College offers on behalf of its awarding body. This was based upon discussion with staff and students and scrutiny of evidence provided by the College and its awarding body, the University of East London.

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

•   the College's development of its own Regulatory Framework ensures that academic standards are consistently maintained across its higher education provision and are fully consistent with the Academic Infrastructure (paragraph 15)

- the College's staff development activities offer staff the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the requirements of higher education within further education and, for example, the Academic Infrastructure (paragraphs 33, 34)
- the active collaboration between the University and the College in the provision of support for Post Compulsory Education and Training students is effective and supports students' learning (paragraph 36).

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

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

- identify, when the Higher Education Board agrees actions to be taken, who should be responsible for their implementation and a date by which the actions should be completed (paragraph 13)
- review the terms of reference of both the Higher Education Board and the Academic and Professional Development Board to ensure that each has a clear focus and understands its role so that activities are not duplicated (paragraph 14)
- encourage college staff to be in attendance at all examination boards, not only to ensure that their students were being treated consistently, but also to support the development of their understanding of the assessment process (paragraph 19)
- produce a standard questionnaire to collate student feedback to ensure consistency of response and action (paragraph 28)
- develop a comprehensive means of obtaining feedback from students on their experience of induction in order to gain a fuller understanding of the needs of students and how they might be met (paragraph 29)
- develop the Higher Education Forum for the virtual learning environment to enable a broader picture of the engagement with the virtual learning environment by both students and staff to be obtained by the College to facilitate enhancement (paragraph 35)
- ensure that the awarding body for all the higher education programmes the College offers is explicit on the website and in the prospectus (paragraph 39)
- consider collecting all information about higher education in one place so that students have a complete picture of the provision, enabling them to make an informed choice of course (paragraph 39).

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

52   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.

53   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.

Newham College of Further Education action plan relating to the Summative review: March 2011						
Good practice	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
In the course of the Summative review the team identified the following areas of **good practice** that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
• the College's development of its own regulatory framework ensures that academic standards are consistently maintained across its higher education provision and are fully consistent with the Academic Infrastructure (paragraph 15)	Continue to develop use of regulatory framework					
	Additional committees/ meetings to develop the use of are: 1 Forum for student representatives (to share experience, knowledge of role, issues)	July 2011	Higher Education Senior Manager	Improved understanding by student representatives of their role	Higher Education Board	Student representative feedback
	2 Higher education student experience forum (to provide cross-college student feedback)	July 2011	Higher Education Senior Manager	Improved understanding by College of student issues and needs	Higher Education Board	Student feedback
	3 Research development and ethics committee (to increase research activity and monitor	July 2011	Higher Education Senior Manager	Development of research within UCS, and oversight of ethical issues	Higher Education Board	Lecturer feedback

	student research)					
	Formalise the annual quality cycle	June 2011	Higher Education Senior Manager	Improved planning and smooth running of committees	Higher Education Board	Director
• the College's staff development activities offer staff the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the requirements of higher education within further education and, for example, the Academic Infrastructure (paragraphs 33, 34)	Continue and expand staff development activities - coordinate with annual quality cycle and staff development plan	June 2011	Higher Education Senior Manager	Wide range of staff development activities	Academic and Professional Development Group Higher Education Board	Staff feedback
• the active collaboration between the University and the College in the provision of support for Post Compulsory Education and Training students	Continue collaboration for Post Compulsory Education and Training course with the University to ensure the quality of learning opportunities is maximised	July 2011- June 2012	Head of Learning Area, Continuing Professional Development for Teachers team and Programme Team at the University	Continued positive feedback on provision Continued high levels of support for trainees Continued excellence in	Higher Education Board	Trainee feedback

is effective and supports students' learning (paragraph 36).				provision of learning opportunities		
Desirable	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
The team considers that it is **desirable** for the College to:						
• identify, when the Higher Education Board agrees actions to be taken, who should be responsible for their implementation and a date by which the actions should be completed (paragraph 13)	Agree actions to be taken and responsibility during the meeting of the Board Track through minutes that record actions and outcomes	Next Higher Education Board	Higher Education Senior Manager/ minute taker	Follow up of actions	Higher Education Board	Higher Education Quality Report
• review the terms of reference of both the Higher Education Board and the Academic and Professional Development Board to ensure that each has a	Review terms of reference and identify roles and meetings dates for these boards in annual quality cycle	Next Higher Education Board	Higher Education Senior Manager/ Director	Terms of reference clarified	Higher Education Board	Higher Education Quality Report

clear focus and understands its role so that activities are not duplicated (paragraph 14)						
• encourage college staff to be in attendance at all examination boards, not only to ensure that their students were being treated consistently, but also to support the development of their understanding of the assessment process (paragraph 19)	Post Compulsory Education and Training team to attend examination boards (depending upon timings and other commitments) Note: for non-HEFCE courses, examination boards are held at Newham College and attendance more straightforward	Next examination board	Post Compulsory Education and Training team	Attendance at examination boards	Higher Education Senior Manager	Post Compulsory Education and Training team feedback
• produce a standard questionnaire to collate student feedback to ensure consistency of response and action	Develop standard questionnaire for end of module and end of year course feedback (check with the University that this is compatible with their processes) Put this form on virtual	January 2012	Higher Education Senior Manager	Use of questionnaires by students Improved consistency of data Use of data across college	Higher Education Board	Course Team feedback Higher Education Board feedback

(paragraph 28)	learning environment for convenience of collating data and monitor how this works					
• develop a comprehensive means of obtaining feedback from students on their experience of induction in order to gain a fuller understanding of the needs of students and how they might be met (paragraph 29)	Develop induction activities and feedback	September 2011	Higher Education Senior Manager	Revised induction processes and feedback	Higher Education Board	Course Team feedback Higher Education Board feedback
• develop the Higher Education Forum for the virtual learning environment to enable a broader picture of the engagement with the virtual learning environment by both students and staff to be obtained by the	Put meeting for this forum in annual quality cycle Also other mechanisms to meet this: – Higher Education Senior Manager invited to college Information, Learning, Communication and Technology Forum	June 2011 Sept 2011 Sept 2011	Higher Education Senior Manager ILCT forum/ Higher Education Senior Manager Course teams	Meetings of forums, use of virtual learning environment	Higher Education Board	Student feedback Staff feedback

College to facilitate enhancement (paragraph 35)	(ICLT) – Use of module and course feedback forms – Course meetings	Sept 2011	Course teams			
• ensure that the awarding body for all the higher education programmes the College offers is explicit on the website and in the prospectus (paragraph 39)	Organise how college prospectus is reviewed for higher education information	Sept 2011	Director/Sales and Marketing	Explicit information about awarding body	Higher Education Board	Higher Education Quality Report
• consider collecting all information about higher education into one place so that students have a complete picture of the provision, enabling them to make an informed choice of course (paragraph 39).	Use of higher education prospectus and website	Sept 2011	Director/Sales and Marketing	Improved higher education information	Higher Education Board	Higher Education Quality Report