



# **Integrated quality and enhancement review**

**Summative review**

**North East Surrey College of Technology**

**May 2012**

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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 (FHEQ)*, which includes descriptions of different higher education qualifications
- the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*
- 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 North East Surrey College of Technology carried out in May 2012

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

### Good practice

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

- the comprehensive external examination policy provides a clear framework for examiners' induction, responses to reports, and a College summary report with a regularly monitored action plan
- the staged annual programme monitoring and review process is embedded in a regularly updated live document, which is accessible electronically by programme staff and managers provides an effective tool for tracking actions, and ensures oversight and enhancement
- the comprehensive induction, mentoring and support processes which are provided for newly appointed members of staff
- the process of peer observation of teaching is used as a mechanism for supporting and evaluating innovative and experimental teaching methods
- there are wide-ranging and well embedded approaches to staff development and scholarly activity, including the annual higher education conference.

### 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:

- introduce a systematic process for reviewing its quality assurance policies and procedures to assess their impact, and to ensure consistent implementation across all programmes
- address the inconsistencies in the implementation of the policy on personal development planning to ensure that a minimum threshold is achievable in all programmes
- consider ways to more widely disseminate the activities undertaken as part of the self-managed staff development time
- ensure that the current process for reviewing curriculum area resources is effective in allocating resources in a targeted and prioritised manner
- monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the recently introduced protocol for the approval of published information.

## 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 North East Surrey College of Technology. The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the College discharges its responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes which the College delivers on behalf of the University of Kent, Kingston University, the Open University, the University of Surrey and Edexcel. The review was carried out by Mr Mark Cooper, Mr Jonathan Doney, Dr Amanda Wilcox (reviewers) and Mr Simon Ives (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, meetings with staff, students and awarding bodies, reports of reviews by QAA and from inspections by Ofsted. In particular, the team drew on the findings and recommendations of Developmental engagements in assessment, and support for students. A summary of findings from these Developmental engagements is provided in Section C of this report. The review also considered the College's use of the Academic Infrastructure, developed by QAA on behalf of higher education providers, with reference to the *Code of practice*, subject and award benchmark statements, The FHEQ and programme specifications.

3 In order to help 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 North East Surrey College of Technology is a medium-sized general further education college located in the London Borough of Epsom and Ewell. Most of the College's provision is based at the main site in Ewell in Surrey. In 2011-12, there were 9,800 students enrolled on a range of further and higher education and work-based learning programmes. More than 7,230 students are enrolled on further education programmes and 690 on apprenticeship programmes. The College currently offers courses in 14 of the 15 sector skills areas. The largest numbers of enrolments were in Preparation for Life and Work, Health, Public Services and Care, and Construction.

5 The College has delivered a range of higher education programmes since the early 1970s and works in conjunction with five partners: the University of Kent, Kingston University, the Open University, the University of Surrey, and Edexcel. The College first developed higher education in the area of biological sciences, which has resulted in a well established niche provision. In response to identified local and national needs the College has developed programmes which respond to its mission, and which appeal to employers and to non-traditional learners. In 2011-12, there are 284 students studying full-time and 104 studying part-time. The College currently delivers 18 higher education programmes at levels 4 to 7, including six Foundation Degrees.

6 The current higher education awards, with the relevant awarding bodies, (full-time equivalent student numbers in brackets) are as follows:

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### **University of Kent**

- Foundation Degree in Sports Therapy (24)

### **Kingston University**

- Foundation Degree Early Years (39)

### **Open University**

- Diploma in Psychodynamic Counselling (1)

### **University of Surrey**

- BSc (Hons) Applied Biomedical Science (8)
- BSc (Hons) Applied Biological Science (15)
- BSc (Hons) Biomedical Science (11)
- MSc Biomedical Science (1)
- BSc (Hons) Computer Studies (14)
- FdA Education Support (7)
- FdSc Healthcare Sciences (2)
- FdA Photo Imaging (27)
- FdA Teaching and Learning in the Lifelong Learning Sector (27)
- Diploma of Higher Education in Psychodynamic Counselling (13)
- BSc (Hons) Osteopathic Medicine/Master of Osteopathic Medicine (76)
- Postgraduate Diploma Perfusion Science (11)

### **Edexcel**

- Higher National Certificate/Diploma Computing (24)
- Higher National Certificate/Diploma Music Production (26)
- Higher National Certificate/Diploma Travel & Tourism Management (14)

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

7 The College is responsible for programme delivery, internal assessment and moderation, the quality of teaching and learning, application of the awarding bodies' standards, and regular internal monitoring of quality and compliance with awarding body requirements for annual evaluation and review. The College is consolidating its partnerships with its awarding bodies in order to work more extensively with its longest-standing partner, the University of Surrey. The partnership with the Open University is terminating in autumn 2012, as is the partnership with the University of Kent in 2014.

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

8 The College is currently revising its Higher Education Strategy to ensure that it reflects the changing needs of the higher education environment, in particular new funding regimes and student number allocations. The strategy is being realigned to ensure that its employer and employment-focused work continues to be responsive to local and regional needs. There have been no significant changes to the management or administrative structure for higher education at the College since the first Developmental engagement in 2010. One new Foundation Degree in Education Support has been validated and is being delivered in 2011-12.

## **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 team. A written submission was developed by members of the Student Council reflecting the views of students studying on higher education programmes at the College. Two focus groups considered the three core themes of the review and discussed a number of areas impacting on the student experience. These included advice and guidance, induction, published information, teaching quality, and assessment feedback. Students attended the preparatory meeting with the coordinator and a meeting with the team during the review visit, in which they were given the opportunity to expand on some of the points that were made in the submission. The team found these discussions with students helpful.

## **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's delegated responsibilities for academic standards are in alignment with the requirements of the regulatory frameworks of the awarding bodies, and the responsibilities set out in associated partnership agreements. These clearly articulate the responsibilities for the College, both at institution and programme level. Effective relationships between the College and its partners ensure that academic standards are maintained. College managers and teaching staff have a clear understanding of the requirements of the partnership agreements, and their responsibilities. For franchised provision delivered in partnership with Kingston University, the awarding body maintains a close operational responsibility for the management of academic standards. Key processes, such as programme and assessment design, are carried out by its own staff.

11 The responsibility for the management of academic standards in the College is clearly defined. The Deputy Principal, Curriculum Services and Higher Education has overall strategic responsibility for higher education and is supported by the Director of Faculty Higher Education who has operational oversight. The Senior Director of Quality, Higher Education has responsibility for quality assurance and enhancement.

12 Quality assurance processes and policies are embedded within a clear college-wide structure which provides effective oversight of provision. The Higher Education Academic Board, chaired by the Deputy Principal Curriculum Services and Higher Education, has overarching responsibility for strategic developments, standards and quality. The Higher Education College Management Group, which meets fortnightly, has active involvement with operational matters and monitors ongoing progress against action plans. These committees report to the Senior Management Team and to the College's corporation through its Quality and Standards Committee, whose membership includes senior staff from the higher education sector.

13 Within the College, Directors of Faculty and Heads of Department take an active leadership role in the establishment and maintenance of standards through membership of

the higher education committees. Their responsibilities in respect to quality assurance and enhancement are clearly set out in the Higher Education Quality Assurance Handbook, which provides the over-arching policy framework. Managers and staff are able to articulate their responsibilities and engagement with the various processes. The organisational structures for the management of academic standards are becoming well established and the oversight of higher education by the College is effective and well managed.

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

14 The various elements of the Academic Infrastructure are well understood and embedded in College policies and procedures. The process of programme development draws upon the Academic Infrastructure as a central reference point and this ensures that academic standards are set and maintained. The College and its university partners implement rigorous validation processes to ensure that programmes meet the expectation of the FHEQ the precepts of the *Code of practice*, subject benchmark statements, and the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*.

15 Staff discuss their use of the Academic Infrastructure, and raise awareness of changes to the various elements, at the Higher Education Practitioners Group. College staff spoke confidently of their familiarity with subject benchmark statements, the FHEQ and the *Code of practice*. These are used in the development of level descriptors and in the establishment of assessment and examination boards. Internal moderation and verification processes are well developed and meet the expectations of the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*.

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

16 In addition to the awarding bodies' validation procedures, the College has an internal process that assesses the suitability of all programmes to progress to external validation, prior to periodic review. Documentation from internal validation events and meetings with College staff demonstrated that this process provides clear guidance for programme teams, regarding the requirements for programmes to be validated, and is robust and effective. For programmes validated by the University of Surrey, an interim programme review is carried out to monitor recruitment, achievement, progression, resources and programme management. This ensures that any issues are expeditiously identified and resolved.

17 The College has a comprehensive set of policies and procedures which provide an overarching framework to support the management and review of all its higher education provision. The team was satisfied that the College had made some progress in introducing mechanisms which check that the implementation of these procedures is consistent across all curriculum areas, although there is no formal process for this. The team considers that it would be desirable for the College to introduce a systematic process for reviewing its quality assurance policies and procedures to assess their impact, and to ensure consistent implementation across all programmes.

18 The College has developed a comprehensive and well-understood internal verification and moderation system for all assessment activities. Assessment briefs are internally verified before being issued to students, and samples of completed assessments are internally verified following submission. In addition to the College's internal verification process, the University of Surrey appoints a moderator to each programme who, as well as general oversight of the quality of the programme, also has a role in the oversight of

assessment work, particularly of first year cohorts which fall outside of the remit of the external examiner.

19 External examiners for validated programmes are nominated by the College, and appointed by the awarding bodies. For the Foundation Degree Early Years, Kingston University nominates and appoints examiners. Following a recommendation of the Developmental engagement on assessment, the College introduced a policy on external examining. This provides a clear framework for examiners' induction, responses to reports, and a college summary report, with a regularly monitored action plan. The policy is being fully implemented across the College, and provides an excellent quality management tool. The team considers this to be good practice.

20 External examiners report that they are satisfied with the quality of the provision, and confirm that responses and action plans produced by course teams demonstrate how any issues arising are being addressed. Examiners' reports are managed by means of a robust procedure that ensures reflection at all levels and informs the annual programme reviews. The relevant Director of Faculty approves action plans arising from external examiners' reports and the Academic Registrar monitors progress against action plans. The College produces an external examiners' summary report, detailing clear recommendations suitably prioritised. Programme teams engage well with the process, submitting evaluative narrative, reflecting on matters for improvement and producing action plans that are well monitored to completion.

21 The College has an extensive process for annual programme monitoring and review, which is closely overseen by the Senior Director of Quality Higher Education. A quality resources and review meeting takes place annually, and provides an opportunity for senior managers to review programme performance. Programme level monitoring is reviewed at the Higher Education College Management Group, while cross-college consideration and analysis of the College Annual Monitoring Report is undertaken at Higher Education Academic Board.

22 Programme reports are available electronically, are regularly updated throughout the academic year and include the evaluation of programme data, student feedback and external examiners' reports. The process results in an ongoing action plan, which is monitored by both the Senior Director of Quality Higher Education, Directors of Faculty, and Heads of Department. Senior staff claimed that the process was both embedded and useful as a management tool, providing valuable information to support improvement. Following on from the Developmental engagement in support for students, the College has enhanced this process to address the recommendation that better use should be made of retention and achievement data to inform effective support for students. The staged annual programme monitoring and review process is embedded in a regularly updated live document, which is accessible electronically by programme staff and managers, provides an effective tool for tracking actions, and ensures oversight and enhancement. The teams consider this to be good practice.

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

23 The College has in place a comprehensive staff development policy that applies to both full and part-time staff. The Deputy Principal, Curriculum Services and Higher Education allocates an annual budget for staff development and training, following requests from Directors of Faculty and Heads of Department. Responsibility for the planning and evaluation of staff development is shared between human resources and quality teams.

24 Staff are well qualified for the teaching roles they undertake and are expected to be qualified to a level higher than that at which they teach. Staff who are appointed without a teaching qualification are required to undertake one within two years of taking up their post. Kingston University invite staff to regular events and these are well attended. The University of Kent extend an invitation to College staff to attend their annual associated colleges meeting. Events have included the development and delivery of foundation degrees, maintenance of academic standards, dissemination of good practice, and the assessment of master's degree level assignments. As required, the Kingston University liaison officer supports College staff delivering the Foundation Degree Early Years.

25 Moderators for each programme are appointed by the University of Surrey and provide valuable support to programme teams. Senior college staff attend seminars at the University concerning, for example, changes to or new regulations, or policy development. For staff on programmes validated by Surrey, the College is responsible for ensuring that staff development is available, and the Higher Education Practitioners Group plays a key role in identifying areas of training need.

26 New staff are provided with a thorough College induction, both to the College and to higher education teaching. Line managers are responsible for inducting staff into their department and, in addition, an academic staff induction programme is organised by the quality team every term for all new full and part-time academic staff. Attendance is mandatory and monitored during the probationary period and through an induction checklist. The College has recently introduced an effective new staff mentoring scheme. Mentoring support is provided by both a senior staff mentor, from outside their department, and a subject mentor from the subject area. There is no set time limit and mentees are allowed to determine the length of the mentoring process. New members of staff commented that they have been extremely well supported throughout this process and this has developed their confidence. The team considers the comprehensive induction, mentoring and support processes, which are provided for newly appointed members of staff, to be good practice.

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

## **Core theme 2: Quality of learning opportunities**

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

27 The responsibilities for managing the quality of learning opportunities, and the associated quality assurance and enhancement processes, reflect those for managing academic standards. These are described in paragraphs 10 to 13. The partnership agreements with the awarding bodies clearly identify the College's responsibilities at institutional and programme level delivery. There are proactive and close ongoing links between the College and its partners, which are regularly monitored through partnership review meetings.

28 The College has a clear management structure which provides effective support for the management of learning opportunities. Directors of Faculty liaise closely with Heads of Department and Programme Coordinators who manage the day-to-day running of

programmes. The management process, together with good communication within programme teams, is effective in supporting programme delivery.

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

The processes by which the College assures itself that it is fulfilling its obligations to its awarding body are described in paragraphs 16 to 22. The College's responsibilities for learning opportunities are clearly stated in the partnership agreements. An annual planning process includes a management review to confirm that the curriculum offer is appropriate. The Academic Registrar and Senior Director of Quality Higher Education collate data, external examiners' comments and student feedback, and prepare structured annual review documentation for each programme that feeds into the annual programme review.

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

29 The College's engagement with the Academic Infrastructure is outlined in paragraphs 14 to 15. The College Higher Education Quality Assurance Handbook provides a clear and detailed reference manual of quality practices, including policies and procedures, which are developed with reference to the *Code of practice*, the FHEQ, and subject benchmark statements. Teaching and support staff spoke confidently about how aspects of the *Code of practice* are relevant to their roles and responsibilities. Use of the *Code of practice* is clearly evidenced in policies on student induction, teaching, assessment, and additional support. There are explicit examples of the College mapping its' policies to the precepts of the *Code of practice*, such as *Section 10: Admissions to higher education*, in designing the student induction programme.

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

30 The College is currently consulting with staff on the development of a formal Learning and Teaching Strategy. The draft strategy is based on current good practice and includes professional development, and the teaching and learning observation process, as core elements. Staff are involved in the development of the policy through a project management team. Once the consultation period is complete the final draft will be presented to the Higher Education College Managers Group, and Curriculum and Quality Committee for ratification.

31 New staff are subject to formal graded teaching observations during their probationary period. All other staff are subject to peer observation, which is ungraded. For higher education observations the written evaluative commentary by the observer focuses on the effectiveness of learning and the development of students' higher level skills. A key feature of peer observation is the encouragement of innovative approaches to teaching and learning. Staff have experimented with a range of teaching methodologies, new technologies and ideas which have enhanced the students' learning experience. Staff spoke highly of the peer observation process, its benefit in enhancing their teaching practice, and the positive outcomes of sharing innovative approaches through the Higher Education Practitioners Group and on the staff electronic portal. Heads of Department compose a formal report on the quality of teaching and learning that feeds into the College quality processes. Where staff are identified as needing further support there are clear protocols in place for this to be provided. The process of peer observation of teaching, which is used as a mechanism for supporting and evaluating innovative and experimental teaching methods, is an example of good practice.

32 Student surveys indicate high levels of satisfaction with the quality of teaching and learning, and this was confirmed by students at a meeting with the review team. The student body is represented formally in the College by the Student Council, which is made up of programme representatives. In addition, students provide feedback through student surveys and the National Student Survey (NSS). They also attend course committee meetings twice a year. Module evaluation feedback is completed online or on paper and feeds into the College quality assurance processes. Students said that they have many opportunities to give feedback to the College, both formally and informally, and that issues they raise are responded to by the College, often very rapidly. Some students thought they were exposed to too many surveys, which are often repetitive in nature.

33 The College Higher Education Assessment Verification and Moderation Handbook guides and supports staff in all aspects of assessment policy and procedures. The Handbook includes guidance on the development of appropriate assessment tools and the provision of timely, developmental feedback to students on assessed work. Students are able to submit work and receive feedback on it electronically through the College's virtual learning environment. Students praised the timeliness and quality of feedback they receive. The comments annotated on their work and formal written formative and summative assessment provides students with clear pointers for improvement.

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

34 There is a comprehensive Learning Support Policy that details formal learning support processes. Responsibilities for the identification, management and delivery of academic guidance and pastoral support are clearly delegated through the management structure. This includes academic guidance such as assessment feedback, pastoral support, personal tutorial, and personal development planning. The Head of Learning Support and Inclusion oversees the process of identifying students' additional learning support requirements and assists in the application process. All College staff are active in ensuring that students have the support they require to support their learning. Students also access study skills support in the College learning resource centre, on a drop-in or individual basis. Students spoke very positively about the range and quality of support they receive.

35 Students undertake an extensive two day induction during which they are introduced to key College policies and procedures, and given programme information. Induction provides information on additional learning support, and there are introductory sessions on assignment design, module and unit structures, assessment strategies and use of the virtual learning environment. Students are also provided with a student handbook and are subject to a literacy and numeracy assessment at the start of their studies. Students find the induction process very intensive, but useful in preparing them for their studies. Staff complete a checklist to confirm that all students have been inducted and to identify any necessary support needs. In addition, students on the Foundation Degree Early Years franchised from Kingston University have a helpful university-based induction.

36 Students are entitled to a formal one-to-one tutorial each semester, where progress is discussed. Students find their tutorials informative and helpful. They also commented on the ease of access to tutors for additional tutorials, which are useful in providing further advice and support. Tutorial sessions include work on the students' personal development planning portfolios. Approaches to personal development planning are variable across the provision. In some programmes the use of personal development planning is well embedded, in others it is less so. An electronic portfolio is currently being piloted with first year students. This has proved challenging in some areas. Students offered mixed feedback on the usefulness of the personal development planning process, including the electronic

trial, but understood its potential value to reflective learning. The College is aware of inconsistencies in the formal implementation of personal development planning and is addressing issues departmentally and through the College quality assurance processes. The team considers it would be desirable for the College to address the inconsistencies in the implementation of the policy on personal development planning to ensure that a minimum threshold is achievable in all programmes.

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

37 The College's arrangements for staff development are outlined in paragraphs 23 to 26. The College allocates five mandatory days each academic year to staff development to meet strategic priorities and individual and organisational needs identified in the Staff Development Plan. In addition, the Higher Education Practitioners Group meets monthly to identify and share good practice, and discuss key issues related to higher education matters. The group also gathers requests from higher education staff relating to staff training needs and organises events to address them. The College holds an annual higher education conference and an annual teaching and learning fair, which showcase good practice to full and part-time staff.

38 Higher education teaching staff are encouraged to undertake research, scholarly activity, and industrial updating. Applications for support are discussed initially with line managers. A wide range of staff are currently supported by the College to pursue postgraduate qualifications and other subject updating. Staff provide feedback for dissemination on the effectiveness of training and development and its impact on knowledge, skills and performance. These outcomes feed into the overall annual evaluation of the College staff development plan. The team considers that the wide-ranging and well embedded approaches to staff development and scholarly activity, including the annual higher education conference, are good practice.

39 Additionally permanent teaching staff are expected to carry out up to 13 self-managed days a year to undertake scholarly activity or industrial updating. Applications for these are made to line managers and include an agreed date for feedback on the activities undertaken. However, there is no formal method for the wider dissemination of the staff development undertaken as part of the self-managed staff development time, and the team considers it desirable for the College to consider ways to more widely disseminate the outcomes of activities undertaken.

**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?**

40 The College produces an annual report on higher education work-based and placement learning. This evaluates the effectiveness of vocationally focused elements and draws together information gleaned by departments on the success of placements. The report details a range of good practice and also recommendations to be considered by senior managers, programme coordinators, and the Higher Education College Managers Group. The Developmental engagement in student support highlighted the effective collaboration between the College and workplace mentors. It also recommended that the College ensure the consistent implementation of the policy on work-based learning and the setting of a minimum entitlement for placement learning. The College put in place an action plan, which clearly identifies progress made to address these areas. Students and employers consider that the work placement support is well managed, and provides students with useful preparation for future employment.

41 Subject librarians undertake a comprehensive annual review of learning resource requirements. This includes a detailed review of existing resources by curriculum area that highlights strengths and areas for improvement. Resources available to students include a range of printed and electronic materials, including access to online journals and e-books, many of which are available from the College virtual learning environment. Students are very happy with opening times and access to the learning resource centre and the range of materials and support available.

42 The College has a well-established annual bidding process for allocation of funds to purchase and maintain resources. The annual curriculum planning process ensures that resource requirements can be met prior to the introduction of new programmes. Programme teams submit bids for resources through the departmental and faculty structure. Judgements about the sufficiency and accessibility of resources are regularly made taking account of views of staff, students and external examiners' comments. Interim and periodic reviews of validated programmes ensure that resource requirements are addressed.

43 The range of learning resources available to staff and students are clearly identified in programme handbooks, and are generally appropriate for the programmes offered. In addition, tutor demonstrators support teaching staff and students in the operation of technical equipment. In the written submission and at the meeting with the team, some students raised concerns about the availability, suitability and currency of technologies, specifically for the BSc (Hons) Computer Studies and FdA Photo Imaging programmes. Students confirmed that the College is responding positively to these concerns and a capital bid to improve resources has been submitted to the College Senior Management Team for approval. The team considers it desirable for the College to ensure that the current process for reviewing curriculum area resources is effective in allocating resources in a targeted and prioritised manner.

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

### **Core theme 3: Public information**

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

44 The College publishes a range of information about its higher education courses including a Higher Education Companion Guide. This gives potential students an overview of full-time higher education courses, and information on the full and part-time options available. The College website provides detailed information on programmes through a direct link on the home page. This includes information on student support, admissions, fees and potential employment. The website has recently been restructured to improve access, and provide support specifically for prospective higher education students.

45 The responsibility for maintaining the website rests with the Head of Marketing who reports to the Director of Learner Services, Marketing, and Advice and Guidance. Robust procedures are in place for ensuring that the web content is accurate and up to date, and staff are well versed in their knowledge of the approval processes involved. Other than

programme and College information, staff can request additional information to be posted on the website by submitting this to the Head of Marketing.

46 Programme specifications are made available to students in their handbooks. Students commented that they would find it helpful to have access to programme specifications and the information they provide prior to registration. The College may wish to consider how to make programme specifications more readily accessible to applicants in order to provide fuller information and to inform their application decisions.

47 Programme handbooks follow a standard template to which specific contextual information is added. As a result of a recommendation from the Developmental engagement in support for students, the College has taken steps to improve the accessibility of information provided in programme handbooks. The team found that the handbooks are comprehensive and provide a valuable source of key information for students, which is easily accessible. This has been aided by the use of electronic hyperlinks to ensure that appropriate awarding body academic regulations can be accessed easily. Students confirmed that they received programme handbooks during induction and were helpfully guided through their content by staff. For the Foundation Degree Early Years franchised from Kingston University, additional information is supplied by the awarding body.

48 The College has a well-established virtual learning environment, which is an integral and valuable part of the student learning experience. It is used to access core information, such as the programme handbooks. The virtual learning environment also hosts student discussion forums and e-book libraries. Students and staff spoke positively of the effectiveness of this as an information and teaching resource. Students stated that remote electronic access was very easy and frequently used. The Developmental engagement in support for students recommended that the College should ensure that the content of programme-related material on the virtual learning environment is appropriate and accurate. To meet this recommendation the College now has introduced a policy which has been effective in ensuring that the content of the virtual learning environment is monitored. This is reviewed each semester by the Higher Education College Management Group. Additionally, each course committee produces a report on the accuracy of the virtual learning environment for each module. Programme Co-ordinators develop and collate material for the virtual learning environment and are responsible for the overall currency, accuracy and appropriateness of all programme information.

49 The College publishes a range of information for work-based learning, both for students and placement mentors. Work-based learning handbooks are in place, which provide clear and comprehensive information for students, employers, tutors and mentors on key policies and procedures. One placement provider confirmed that the recently updated version of the placement handbook is a considerable improvement on previous editions.

50 The College has ensured that reasonable steps are taken to provide publications, both printed and screen based, in a range of alternative formats as required. For example, these include large print and audio versions of information, and outside agents are commissioned as required for translation purposes. Recently, the website has been subject to a successful compliance and accessibility audit.

**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?**

51 The partnership agreements clearly state that the College has overall responsibility for publishing information about the higher education courses it offers. However, university

partners require that the College submits for approval any information to be published concerning their programmes or using their logos. For Edexcel awards, responsibility is delegated to the College.

52 In its self-evaluation, the College states that some current publications contain inconsistencies and recognises that ensuring accuracy is an area for improvement. The College has recently developed a protocol for the approval of published information. This is intended to provide a robust procedure for scrutinising material prior to publication, and to ensure the accuracy and completeness of both printed and electronic information. The team considers that it is desirable for the College to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the recently introduced protocol for the approval of published information.

53 Programme handbooks are prepared by Programme Coordinators in consultation with their course teams and these are reviewed annually. Templates for programme handbook content are developed by the College, and programme staff add supplementary and contextual information. Heads of Department and Directors of Faculty approve handbooks for accuracy and completeness, and final checking takes place by the quality office, with feedback provided to programme teams where required.

54 The Developmental engagement in assessment recommended that the College should make more explicit the information it provides about the range of assessment and support available for students. The information now provided is comprehensive and accessible, and appears on the College website, the virtual learning environment, the College's intranet and in programme handbooks.

55 The College is increasingly aware of the value of obtaining student feedback, including eliciting views on published information and marketing materials. A recently created Head of Events and External Relations post has responsibility for formally gathering student feedback through learner voice and focus groups. This will inform the approaches to web-based and printed information from 2012-13 onwards. The College plans to evaluate the current publications and website information early in the autumn term to inform changes for the next cycle of publications.

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

## **C Summary of findings from the Developmental engagements**

### **Developmental engagement in assessment**

56 The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in May 2010. There were three lines of enquiry, which were as follows.

**Line of enquiry 1:** Do the internal verification and moderation processes across all programmes and awarding bodies ensure the maintenance of academic standards at an appropriate level?

**Line of enquiry 2:** Is feedback from external examiners used to improve assessment opportunities, practice and information to learners, as part of an annual process of monitoring and review?

**Line of enquiry 3:** Does the support provided for learners through the assessment process facilitates learner achievement?

57 The Developmental engagement team identified four areas of good practice. These included the development of processes and procedures to take appropriate action to address inconsistencies in assessment practice; the effective use external examiners' reports to improve assessment; the development of an overarching summary analysis of external examiners' reports, and action plan; the innovative and interactive approaches on some programmes to assessment using the virtual learning environment.

58 The team also made a number of recommendations. The team considered it advisable for the College to ensure the consistency of implementation of policies and procedures relating to assessment; to introduce a policy on the briefing and induction of external examiners; and to introduce and monitor a policy on the publication of assessment schedules and the return of assessed work. The team also considered it desirable for the College to ensure the standardisation of assessment documentation; to make more explicit the information about the range of support available for students; and to introduce an explicit tutorial entitlement.

## **Developmental engagement in support for students**

59 The Developmental engagement in support for students took place in June 2011. There were three lines of enquiry, which were as follows.

**Line of enquiry 1:** Is the range of academic guidance and pastoral support, at programme and College level, effective in supporting student achievement?

**Line of enquiry 2:** Are students supported in their learning through the effective integration of the virtual learning environment with other learning and studying activities?

**Line of enquiry 3:** Is student learning enhanced through effectively contextualised and vocationally relevant teaching and learning?

60 The Developmental engagement team identified three areas of good practice. These included the range and accessibility of pastoral support available to students; the extent of employer consultation and involvement in course development and review; and the highly effective collaboration between the College and work placement mentors.

61 The team also made a number of recommendations. The team considered it advisable for the College to make better use of retention and achievement data to inform the effective implementation of support and guidance for students; to ensure that the content of programme-related material on the virtual learning environment is appropriate and accurate; and to ensure the consistent implementation of the College policy on work-based learning. The team considered it desirable for the College to standardise documentation to provide a consistent approach to support assessment practice, and to make more explicit the information about the range of support available for students.

## D Foundation Degrees

62 There are currently 111 students studying on six Foundation Degrees: sports therapy; early years; education support; healthcare sciences; photo imaging; and teaching and learning in the lifelong learning sector. These are offered in partnership with the University of Surrey, the University of Kent and Kingston University. There are a number of internal progression routes for students wishing to continue honours level study at the College, along with opportunities for students to continue their studies at the validating universities or elsewhere. The conclusions listed in paragraphs 65 to 67 below above apply to all of the higher education provision, including Foundation Degrees.

63 Foundation Degree provision falls within the College's overarching higher education quality assurance and enhancement framework. The College has well established links with employers, who inform curriculum developments and are part of the validation process. This helps to ensure that programmes are aligned with the expectations of the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*. All areas of good practice and recommendations outlined below apply equally to the Foundation Degree provision.

## E Conclusions and summary of judgements

64 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in North East Surrey College of Technology's management of its responsibilities for academic standards and for the quality of learning opportunities of the awards the College offers on behalf of its awarding bodies. This was based upon discussion with staff and students and scrutiny of evidence provided by the College and its awarding bodies: the University of Kent, Kingston University, the University of Surrey, the Open University and Edexcel.

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

- the comprehensive external examination policy provides a clear framework for examiners' induction, responses to reports, and a College summary report with a regularly monitored action plan (paragraph 19)
- the staged annual programme monitoring and review process is embedded in a regularly updated live document, which is accessible electronically by programme staff and managers provides an effective tool for tracking actions, and ensures oversight and enhancement (paragraph 22)
- the comprehensive induction, mentoring and support processes which are provided for newly appointed members of staff (paragraph 26)
- the process of peer observation of teaching is used as a mechanism for supporting and evaluating innovative and experimental teaching methods (paragraph 31)
- there are wide-ranging and well embedded approaches to staff development and scholarly activity, including the annual higher education conference (paragraph 38).

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

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

- introduce a systematic process for reviewing its quality assurance policies and procedures to assess their impact, and to ensure consistent implementation across all programmes (paragraph 17)

- address the inconsistencies in the implementation of the policy on personal development planning to ensure that a minimum threshold is achievable in all programmes (paragraph 36)
- consider ways to more widely disseminate the activities undertaken as part of the self-managed staff development time (paragraph 39)
- ensure that the current process for reviewing curriculum area resources is effective in allocating resources in a targeted and prioritised manner (paragraph 43)
- monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the recently introduced protocol for the approval of published information (paragraph 52).

68 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, 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.

69 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, 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.

70 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, 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.

North East Surrey College of Technology action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2012						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
In the course of the Summative review the team identified the following areas of <b>good practice</b> that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the comprehensive external examination policy provides a clear framework for examiners' induction, responses to reports, and a College summary report with a regularly monitored action plan (paragraph 19)</li> </ul>	Review policy to assure currency and alignment with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) is maintained	May 2013	Director of Higher Education	Continued currency and implementation	Higher Education Curriculum Management Group	<p>External examination summary report</p> <p>Higher Education College Annual Management Report review of process</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the staged annual programme monitoring and review process is embedded in a regularly updated live document,</li> </ul>	Maintain annual programme monitoring to ensure it continues to be informed by the Quality Code and responds to themes for development as appropriate and as	October 2012	<p>Director of Higher Education</p> <p>Heads of Department</p> <p>Director of Faculty 3</p>	<p>Continued currency of documentation</p> <p>Continued high levels of engagement of staff with the review and</p>	Higher Education Curriculum Management Group	<p>Annual programme review documents</p> <p>Higher Education College Annual Management Report review of process</p>

<p>which is accessible electronically by programme staff and managers provides an effective tool for tracking actions, and ensures oversight and enhancement (paragraph 22)</p>	<p>identified by the College</p> <p>Continue effective implementation across the cycle to support enhancement of provision</p>	<p>October 2013</p>	<p>Programme Coordinators</p>	<p>enhancement process</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the comprehensive induction, mentoring and support processes which are provided for newly appointed members of staff (paragraph 26)</li> </ul>	<p>Review the induction, mentoring and support processes to assure continued effectiveness</p>	<p>May 2013</p>	<p>Director of Higher Education</p> <p>Director Human Resources</p>	<p>Continued staff satisfaction</p>	<p>Higher Education Curriculum Management Group</p>	<p>Evaluative review of induction, mentoring and support</p> <p>Staff performance review</p> <p>Staff probationary review</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the process of peer observation of teaching is used as a mechanism for supporting and evaluating innovative and experimental teaching methods (paragraph 31)</li> </ul>	<p>Continue to use the process of peer observation to facilitate sharing of innovative and experimental teaching methods to enhance the student experience</p>	<p>April 2013</p>	<p>Director of Higher Education</p> <p>Heads of Department</p> <p>Director of Faculty 3</p> <p>Programme Coordinators</p>	<p>Maintain current high levels of staff participation and engagement with peer observation</p> <p>Maintain current high levels of student satisfaction with the teaching on</p>	<p>Higher Education Curriculum Management Group</p>	<p>Peer observation implementation report</p> <p>Staff performance review</p> <p>Student satisfaction survey</p>

				their course (95.7% in 2012)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>there are wide-ranging and well embedded approaches to staff development and scholarly activity, including the annual higher education conference (paragraph 38).</li> </ul>	Sustain effective approaches to staff development and scholarly activity to continue to facilitate current and relevant curriculum development and delivery matched to local and national needs	July 2013	Director of Higher Education Heads of Department Director of Faculty 3 Programme Coordinators	Implemented schedule of events which reflect current and relevant staff development  Maintain current high levels of student satisfaction with staff knowledge of their subject (97.5% in 2012)	Higher Education Curriculum Management Group	Staff development evaluations Staff performance review Student satisfaction survey
<b>Desirable</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>Target date</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Success indicators</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
The team considers that it is <b>desirable</b> for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>introduce a systematic process for reviewing its quality assurance policies and procedures to assess their impact, and to ensure consistent implementation across all programmes (paragraph 17)</li> </ul>	Formalise policy implementation report schedule to encompass all policies over a three year cycle and include student contribution  Reports upon policy impact, implementation and recommendations for refinement of policy where appropriate	October 2012  March 2013	Director of Higher Education Heads of Department Student representative	Consistently implemented fit for purpose policies	Higher Education Curriculum Management Group	Discrete policy implementation reports by department  Collated summary report

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>address the inconsistencies in the implementation of the policy on personal development planning to ensure that a minimum threshold is achievable in all programmes (paragraph 36)</li> </ul>	<p>Formalise the specific mode of operation of personal development planning for each programme to accommodate the intentionally different strategies for engagement with reference to the research undertaken with students and staff in spring 2012</p> <p>Match intended programme mode with policy and amend as appropriate to ensure minimum threshold is achieved for each programme</p>	<p>October 2012</p> <p>April 2013</p>	<p>Director of Higher Education</p> <p>Heads of Department</p>	<p>Maintain current high levels of student satisfaction with personal development (87% in 2012)</p> <p>Maintain current high levels of student participation in personal development planning (85.5% in 2012)</p>	<p>Higher Education Curriculum Management Group</p>	<p>Head of Department delivery mode reports</p> <p>Summary implementation report</p> <p>Student satisfaction survey</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>consider ways to more widely disseminate the activities undertaken as part of the self-managed staff development time (paragraph 39)</li> </ul>	<p>Share self managed staff development at higher education conference summer 2012 and 2013</p> <p>Schedule for sharing of activities during 2012-13</p>	<p>July 2012</p> <p>July 2013</p> <p>October 2012</p>	<p>Director of Higher Education</p> <p>Programme teams</p>	<p>Good levels of staff participation in scheduled dissemination activities</p>	<p>Higher Education Curriculum Management Group</p>	<p>Higher Education conference staff satisfaction record</p> <p>Minutes of Higher Education Practitioners meetings</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensure that the current process for reviewing</li> </ul>	<p>In addition to established college process include review</p>	<p>October 2012</p>	<p>Director of Higher Education</p>	<p>High level of student satisfaction with technology</p>	<p>Higher Education Curriculum Management</p>	<p>Annual programme reviews</p>

curriculum area resources is effective in allocating resources in a targeted and prioritised manner (paragraph 43)	of appropriateness of existing resources in autumn annual programme review		Heads of Department Programme teams	and specialist resources maintained (92% in 2012)	Group	Head of Department resource requirement reports	
	Programme team to confirm learning opportunities for the current academic year are supported effectively with reference to existing resources. Team to plan for required resources with an appropriate timescale in particular unforeseen in year requirements	November 2012					Student satisfaction survey
	Heads of Department to collate annual programme review documents and present a report of the resource requirements for their Department for the current and future academic year	December 2012					
	Develop capital bids with reference to collated Department reports and higher education CMG support where appropriate	January 2013					

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the recently introduced protocol for the approval of published information (paragraph 52).</li> </ul>	Review implementation of protocol for the approval of published information	Sept 2012	Director of Higher Education	Maintain high levels of student satisfaction with advice and information available to assist in choice of course (93.7% in 2011-12)	Higher Education Curriculum Management Group	Interim progress report
	Review protocol implementation at the end of the cycle and refine protocol as appropriate	March 2013	Director of Learner Services, Marketing, Advice & Recruitment Heads of Department Programme Coordinators			Full cycle implementation report Student induction survey

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