



Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

Northbrook College

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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 Northbrook College carried out in November 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 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:

- staff engagement in the full range of higher education review processes clearly demonstrates a commitment to the ongoing quality improvement and appraisal of academic standards of higher education provision
- the informed and integrated approach adopted by the College and programme teams towards the use of the Academic Infrastructure clearly supports the maintenance of academic standards of higher education provision offered by the College on behalf of the University
- the clear commitment of the College and departments to promote and support the continuous professional development of all staff engaged in higher education programmes which supports the ongoing quality of learning opportunities
- the extensive range of well developed and integrated employer-related initiatives available clearly prepare students for their future career or study options.

Recommendations

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

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

- ensure the full integration of all Higher National programmes into the overarching higher education quality cycle, including compliance with College academic procedures.

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

- ensure that actions arising from external examiner summaries, and departmental and course boards, are formally reviewed and monitored
- implement fully the recently approved College minimum expectations on programme content information, available through the virtual learning environment, to support and enhance the quality of student learning
- review current information provided to placement providers and students to ensure they gain fully from these valuable opportunities.

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 Northbrook College (the College). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the College discharges its responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes which the College delivers on behalf of the University of Brighton (the University) and Edexcel. The review was carried out by Miss Maxina Butler-Holmes, Mrs Sue Miller, Mr Brian Whitehead (reviewers), and Mr Bob Saynor (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 and from inspections by Ofsted. 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. 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, 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 Northbrook College is a medium-sized further education college located at two sites in Worthing and one at Shoreham Airport. It also manages a Business Solutions Centre in central Worthing, and two skills centres in Littlehampton and Kingston Buci, in partnership with local schools. The College offers predominantly vocational courses from entry level to higher education. Higher education awards constitute approximately 25 per cent of all College provision.

5 The College has 9,827 students in total, equating to approximately 4,086 full-time equivalents. There are 910.5 full-time equivalent higher education students funded by HEFCE through a partnership agreement with the University of Brighton and as an Edexcel centre. These comprise 851 full-time and 121 part-time students. The higher education programmes are taught by 80 members of staff, whose commitment equates to 56 full-time equivalent staff. Curriculum development and delivery is carried out within five of the College's academic departments. At senior management level, higher education responsibility lies with the Vice Principal, supported by the Head of Higher Education. The College's mission is 'to be a centre of excellence for vocational and personal learning, helping people succeed and achieve their potential'.

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

6 The College has a formal single partnership agreement with the University of Brighton, with provision also offered through Edexcel. The Affiliated College status and single partnership agreement with the University of Brighton has been in place since 2005, prior to which a partnership agreement was also in place with the Open University Validation Service. All current students are registered on University of Brighton or Edexcel

awards. The list of current awards, with their awarding body and full-time equivalent student numbers in brackets, are as follows.

University of Brighton

- BA (Hons) Communication Design (30)
- BA (Hons) Contemporary Photographic Arts Practice (22)
- BA (Hons) Fashion Design (53)
- BA (Hons) Fashion Media & Promotion (65)
- BA (Hons) Fine Art (Awards in Fine Art/Painting/Printmaking/Sculpture) (78.5)
- BA (Hons) Music Business and Management (one year top-up) (13)
- BA (Hons) Music Composition for Film and Media (one year top-up) (9)
- BA (Hons) Music Performance (one year top-up) (14)
- BA (Hons) Music Production (one year top-up) (34)
- BA (Hons) Textile Design (35)
- BA (Hons) Theatre Arts (one year top-up) (53)
- FdEng Automotive & Motorsport Engineering (31)
- FdA Business (10)
- FdSc Computing (Games Design) (18)
- FdA Early Years Care & Education (8)
- FdA Graphic Design (13)
- FdA Illustration (31)
- FdA Journalism (13)
- FdA Moving Image (13)
- FdA Music Business & Management (13)
- FdA Music Composition for Film and Media (6)
- FdA Music Performance (16)
- FdA Music Production (77)
- FdA Photography (30)
- FdA Theatre Arts (Acting) (34)
- FdA Theatre Arts (Costume Design & Realisation) (22)
- FdA Theatre Arts (Dance) (18)
- FdA Theatre Arts (Makeup & Hair for Theatre and Media) (39)
- FdA Theatre Arts (Musical Theatre) (33)
- FdA Theatre Arts (Production Design & Realisation) (19)
- FdA Theatre Arts (Stage & Production Management) (23)
- PGCE Post-Compulsory Education (Art & Design) (16).

Edexcel

- HNC Electrical & Electronic Engineering (10)
- HNC Mechanical Engineering (11).

Recent developments in higher education at the College

7 Since the Developmental engagement the College has appointed a full-time Head of Higher Education. The post-holder has responsibilities to lead the College higher education strategy and oversee the development, delivery and quality of higher education. The Head of Higher Education is a member of the Senior Leadership Team and reports to the Vice Principal for matters relating to higher education. Since the Developmental engagement the College has made progress in embedding the recommendations

concerning the higher education committee structures, and a new version of the virtual learning environment has been introduced at the start of the 2011-12 academic year.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

8 Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the team. A student written submission was presented within the self-evaluation and summarised the findings of four focus groups which met in June 2011. The focus groups, consisting of a total of 55 students, represented Art, Design & Media, Theatre & Performing Arts, Health & Social Care, and Engineering & Technology. The topics covered included information the College publishes about itself; the student experience and quality of academic and personal support; the feedback students receive from tutors; the quality of learning resources and facilities available; the opportunities students have to take part in the management of their programmes; and the first-year learning experience. Reports were produced by the College's marketing department detailing the student responses. These were sent to two nominated student representatives to inform the written submission. A draft report was produced and forwarded to a higher education administrator who supported them to write the introduction. The final student submission was led by the student representatives, and included a brief introduction written by the College. The submission, together with the team's meeting with the students, provided a valuable basis for further enquiries.

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?

9 The College's responsibilities for the management of academic standards are articulated in the Memorandum of Cooperation with the University. There is a separate annex for programmes delivered through the consortium of colleges. The University has established the General Examination and Assessment Regulations within which the College operates effectively. The relationship with the University is strong and there is a collaborative approach towards the planning and development of programmes and increasingly in areas of research. The Partner College Review, conducted by the University in 2010, confirmed the quality of the provision. There is also a current agreement for Edexcel programmes.

10 The College has an established committee infrastructure which reflects the maturity of the higher education provision and the affiliated College relationship with the University. The responsibility for the management of academic standards is delegated through the University Academic Board to the Higher Education Review Board (HERB). This Board is responsible to the University Academic Board and is comprised of members from both institutions. The composition of this board includes two student members, and current nominations are awaited from departments. The HERB monitors programme and departmental actions through the Academic Health Review process and resulting action plans. The team confirm the effectiveness of the HERB in assuring academic policies and processes, and the dissemination of good practice.

11 For consortium awards, responsibility for operational management is delegated to the HERB but responsibility for academic standards resides with University faculty boards. Following the Developmental engagement, there has been an increased emphasis on the monitoring role of the HERB and more robust reporting on actions taken. For example the HERB also reports on a monthly basis to the College Senior Leadership Team. The HERB is chaired by the Head of Higher Education whose appointment since the Developmental engagement has clearly energised the development of coherent approaches towards the management and enhancement of academic standards within the College.

12 A recommendation arising from the Developmental engagement required the College to improve operational links with consortium partners. The Partner College Review in 2010 also identified actions to improve quality processes across consortium programmes. Progress has been made and there are effective working practices at subject level and through the nominated link tutors. The team also identified effective subject relationships in Business, Early Years, Education, and Motor Sport which includes the sharing of academic practices. In the area of Fashion, however, there is limited evidence of subject level partnership. The College has identified this as an area for improvement and it is being reviewed through the HERB.

13 All programmes are subject to periodic review by the awarding body. The FdAs in Music and Photographic Arts were successfully reviewed in 2011 with the proactive attention to programme development and assessment being commended. In the case of FdA in Music, curricula changes were informed by student feedback. Staff engagement in the full range of higher education review processes clearly demonstrated a commitment and shared ownership of regular critical appraisal of academic standards within the College. This was evident to the team through the quality of a number of programme and departmental annual review reports and the extensive evidence used by programme teams to formulate evidence-based judgements. The use of peer reviews also provided an internal quality verification system to support the process. The team identified this culture as good practice.

14 The recommendation following the Developmental engagement indicated that the Higher National quality processes should be aligned with the overarching quality cycle. The original recommendation related to examination boards; at the time of the summative review visit, however, there were some gaps in documentation, especially handbooks. The Technology Departmental Academic Health Review action plan does not contain specific actions to address this and nor does the college-wide action plan. The team identified inconsistencies in the full integration of Higher Nationals within the overarching higher education quality processes and systems. This includes limited staff involvement in research and scholarly activity and wider engagement in higher education initiatives. It is advisable that the College ensures the integration of all Higher National programmes into the overarching higher education quality cycle.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

15 Staff demonstrated a clear understanding of the Academic Infrastructure and provided many examples of engagement with elements of the *Code of practice*, the FHEQ, subject benchmark statements, and the *Foundation Degree benchmark statement* in both programme development and review. The increased awareness of the Academic Infrastructure has been supported by staff development activity which has seen the College develop a formalised approach to mapping its academic processes and practices against the relevant components into a calendar for reviews. The team are able to confirm that staff at all levels have a secure understanding of the Academic Infrastructure in programme design and in reviewing assessment practice.

16 Programme documentation includes appropriate aims, learning outcomes and assessment approaches. The work-based learning modules fulfil the requirements of the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning*. The team was impressed with the practical use of 'levelness' and the obvious integration with assessment practices, demonstrating a secure and comfortable engagement with the FHEQ and the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*. Staff and students clearly understand the progressive expectations in moving from level 5 to level 6. The team considers that the informed and integrated approach adopted by the College and programme teams towards the use of the Academic Infrastructure clearly supports the maintenance of academic standards of higher education provision offered by the College on behalf of the University, and constitutes 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?

17 Quality assurance procedures are aligned with the requirements identified in the formal partnership agreement. The Head of Higher Education represents the College on the University Partnership Committee. The HERB has a close monitoring role in promoting college-wide themes in relation to quality assurance and enhancement. Recent examples have included summaries of themes arising from both the Academic Health Review reports and external examiner feedback, which provide helpful guides to areas of strength and areas for development, and are published on the virtual learning environment.

18 The terms of reference for the Higher Education Forum have been revised since the Developmental engagement and there are fortnightly meetings which alternate between a formal structured agenda and informal peer-based discussion. This approach has been enthusiastically welcomed by all staff as developing a strong community of practice across subject areas. The Higher Education Forum is clearly promoting change, and was commended in the Partner College Review for the strong contribution towards enhancement. The team confirms the positive impact these recent changes are having on the academic management of higher education provision at the College.

19 External examiners, appointed by the awarding body, report that standards and quality of the provision are sound. For example, effective assessment processes were reported in Theatre Arts, Graphic Design and Fine Art. However, the external examiner for Communication Design noted the disparity of marks between first and second markers. The College has recently implemented an oversight process for the monitoring of external examiner comments. The process in which these reports feed into the HERB is described in paragraph 17.

20 The College Learner Voice Policy clearly describes the College's commitment to student engagement. There is effective staff and student consultation at programme level. However, there is variability across course board minutes and reports. The 2011 periodic review report made recommendations that the course board model required formalisation and greater consistency. The departmental boards of studies have become more formalised and are beginning to demonstrate a greater attention to actions being completed. The institutional action plan has identified a theme to achieve the embedding of consistent approaches towards quality assurance. It is desirable for the College to ensure that actions arising from external examiner summaries, and departmental and course boards, are formally reviewed and monitored.

21 Internal verification and moderation procedures are in line with the requirements of the awarding bodies. Staff on the BA (Hons) Textiles programme have mapped the internal

verification process with University regulations and sections on assessment particularly aligned with the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*. The Developmental engagement report identified the effective use of internal verification processes especially in Art, Design & Media, and examples of subsequent dissemination were provided. However, the comments on the academic health reports for music programmes note that internal verification processes require development to meet College targets. The College is committed to the sharing of good practice and the team considers that progress is being made.

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

22 The College has Investors in People accreditation, and the Continuous Professional Development Strategy articulates the role of scholarly activity relevant to higher education. In addition to professional updating, many staff participate in higher professional activity such as consultancy or are encouraged to retain active practitioner roles within the creative industries. All new tutors are mentored through assessment and grading processes by an experienced team member.

23 The College works closely with the University on a range of staff development activities to support and enhance the achievement of academic standards. This has included updating events on examination boards and academic regulations, in addition to programme design and assessment at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Staff attend University conferences and in some cases present specialist subject papers.

24 The dissemination of good academic practices within the College has been largely driven by the Higher Education Forum. The College has recently ensured that a common meetings time is scheduled which has enabled joint staff development opportunities to be held. Topics have included approaches to assessment and support for subject staff relating to internal verification. The College places great emphasis on peer-based review approaches; this is reflected in the ongoing staff development evidenced through the Higher Education Forum. The successful 2011 'Furthering Research' conference organised by the College represents the strategic intent to enhance its reputation. The team identified a significant number of examples across programme teams, which supported professional development to enhance standards, teaching, learning, and assessment 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?

25 The responsibilities and arrangements for managing and reporting on the quality of learning opportunities are described in paragraphs 9 to 11. The management arrangements at the College are effective in managing and supporting the quality of learning opportunities for its higher education provision, and are clear and understood within the College and by the University.

26 The College management structure demonstrates clear lines of responsibility for higher education. The terms of reference and membership for each of the committees are clearly stated and provide an overlapping structure for the overview of the programmes, with the delegation of responsibility for operational management at programme level.

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

27 Reporting within the College is through the well constructed and managed Academic Health Review process. This review process is well understood at team, department and College level. The review is undertaken at all levels and feeds through into the institutional report presented to the Senior Leadership Team and the University. The review process was revised following the Partner College Review and has been further refined as part of the response to the Developmental engagement. In the best examples there is comprehensive, evidence-based reporting at programme and departmental levels, and the team were able to identify where these feed into the overarching institutional report. However, the Business and Fashion reports had little critical analysis and action plans are vaguely articulated. The College has identified that action is required to improve the quantitative and qualitative content of annual reports. Staff overwhelmingly confirmed their commitment to the model as this provided coherence and meaning to the reporting cycle.

28 The team found evidence of the extensive work the College has undertaken to encourage the ethos of higher education, and of the ways in which higher education staff work together to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. This is particularly echoed by staff comments on the peer review of the academic health review reports. This cross-disciplinary peer review activity resulted in the production of a series of extracts taken from a range of reports. These reports provide an overview of issues, and identify common themes as well as encouraging debate and identification of collaborative solutions. The identification of good practice forms part of the terms of reference of all committees, and the sharing of good practice across programmes is managed by the Higher Education Forum.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

29 Details of the College engagement with the Academic Infrastructure are contained in paragraphs 15 and 16.

30 The College has in place detailed programme specifications which are approved at the time of validation. These indicate that appropriate reference has been made to the Academic Infrastructure. In keeping with the University's requirements, programme specifications are made available to students in programme handbooks. This ensures they are well informed about the overarching intended learning outcomes and the learning, teaching and assessment strategy of their individual programme. The team identified inconsistencies in the documentation available for the Higher National programmes.

31 Staff were able to explain how they have used aspects of the Academic Infrastructure, in particular relating to the use of assessment strategies in higher education, and supporting the development of peer assessment and mentoring guidelines. This work has had a positive impact upon retention and achievement and has proved particularly useful for progression of students from level 5 to level 6. The College is undertaking a mapping exercise of current practice in assessment on all programmes against the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*. The planned outcome will be to produce a good

practice resource on assessment practice, which will be used to improve the quality of learning opportunities and assessment.

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

32 All teaching staff are observed by a team of trained observers; however the current observation scheme is due for revision with an intention to include more use of peer review for higher education. Staff development events designed to improve teaching and learning are held regularly. All staff new to the College or to delivery of higher education undertake a formal induction and support is provided by a mentor. In addition, the College works to develop teaching and learning through the Teaching and Learning Development Managers group which meets fortnightly.

33 Regular course and departmental focus groups are managed by the marketing department, and students are encouraged to complete a range of feedback forms at module, programme and College level. Feedback to students on action taken as a result of their input is managed through the student representatives. Changes introduced as a result of student feedback have included adjustments to opening hours for the Learning Centre, flexible access to specialist resources, and rescheduling of assessment. Statistics are also collected through the National Student Survey, and results analysed. Students responded positively to the survey questions on teaching and learning. They confirmed that teaching was good, assessment varied and well managed, and that feedback on assessments was appropriate and very useful.

34 Minimum standards for the use of the virtual learning environment are audited by programme leaders and department heads, and sampled by the Head of Higher Education. Involvement of students in the use of the virtual learning environment is variable, and programme teams are using a range of strategies to increase student engagement. For example, music staff use the virtual learning environment to contact students rather than direct email. Prospective students for BA (Hons) Theatre Arts are issued with guest logins to the College intranet to familiarise themselves with the range of information available prior to induction.

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

35 The induction programme is generally well received by students and includes information on the availability of support and the role of the additional learning support team. Continuing students commended the annual induction that they receive at the start of each academic year, and confirmed that support for progression is informed and impartial.

36 All students have an allocated personal tutor. Regular meetings are held to review academic progress and address any non-academic issues which may inhibit progress. Students are able to access a range of support within the College and numbers accessing support have increased in recent years. Regular reports are submitted to the HERB analysing the range of formal support provided to students. Students were very positive about the effective support from tutors, and the wider College experience. All students confirm that they are encouraged and supported in becoming independent learners and that the research elements of their programmes are well managed by staff. Some programmes include opportunities for students to be involved in peer review; this is considered useful by students.

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

37 Opportunities for the continuing personal and professional development of staff are well developed. The Higher Education Forum provides an opportunity to discuss and share practice, and the higher education conferences held annually by the College provide a forum for the sharing of results from the extensive range of research and scholarly activities undertaken by staff. The culture of scholarly research is being fostered by the Research and Scholarly Activity Coordinator. Staff are supported in a range of projects and encouraged to share these through publication and conference presentations. Critical evaluation of the projects is well developed, and the impact on teaching and learning practice is identified in project reports and shared through the Higher Education Forum and HERB.

38 The Partner College Review commended the appointment of a Research and Scholarly Activity Coordinator post, and the Institutional Annual Academic Health report also referred to a 'vibrant culture of research and scholarly activity'. This was clearly evident and the team confirmed the good practice identified in the Developmental engagement. There is a clear commitment by the College and departments to promote and support the continuous professional development of all staff engaged in higher education programmes, which supports the ongoing quality of learning opportunities and continues to be good practice.

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?

39 Validation, periodic review and external examiner reports confirm that resources meet, and in many instances exceed, the minimum requirements of programmes. Resources are examined annually as part of the annual review process. The sharing of resources between departments has developed through collaborative access to resources. Students are aware of the opportunities to use specialist software and equipment normally used by other departments. Students are able to access the virtual learning environment externally and confirm that it provides a useful resource. Access to specialist online journals is available to students, which complement and support the range of published resources available at the College. Information on the library resource at the University is available to students and access to book stock is on a read-only basis.

40 Staff are well qualified and many are current practitioners within their fields. Their extensive network of industry contacts ensures that external speakers and live projects are incorporated into programme delivery. External resources are utilised including access to commercial music studios, and access to the University wind tunnel and commercial motor workshop facilities for Motor Sport. Specialist resources at the College are also used by students from the University who take up an elective module on stage lighting, and music students from Sussex University attend the College for specialist tuition in rock music.

41 Employer engagement and work-related learning is a key element in all programmes, and is well developed. This includes sponsorship of students by employers, live projects, internships, work placements, and visiting tutors. Motor Sport students work closely with a local company who provide industrial experience and expertise. The College is a member of the Joint Audio Media Education Services (JAMES), and music students take an active part in a major local music industry festival. Journalism is supported strongly through contacts with the local press and radio. The fashion department is a college member of the British Fashion Council which represents the leading fashion departments in universities and colleges throughout the UK. Members are selected for their exemplary

education standards and industry links. Fashion students are also able to undertake a period of work experience or internship with fashion companies. Most of these are London-based and provide a valuable experience in preparation for employment. Students take an active part in Graduate Fashion Week and have been among the award winners. The team identified the extensive range of well developed and integrated employer-related initiatives available to students to prepare them for their future career or study options as good practice.

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

Core theme 3: Public information

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

42 The College is responsible for all published information relating to the higher education programmes. The main initial source of public information is the higher education prospectus, which is produced both in hard copy and on the College website. Details from the prospectus are used to produce further marketing material such as individual programme leaflets known as course cards.

43 The College ensures that key information is made available to students to support programme delivery. This includes programme and module specifications, assessment briefs and schedules. Such information is currently available both as hard copy and on the virtual learning environment, although not all information is available in both formats. The College is encouraging staff and students to adopt a preference for the virtual learning environment as the main source of information. This has been delayed by the introduction of a new version in summer 2010; however, the team can report progress in this area.

44 The Head of Marketing has responsibility for information on the College website and the prospectus, and the student charter is signed off by the Head of Learner Services. The team confirm that the responsibilities for approving programme information were sound. The approval process involved programme leaders, heads of departments, and the Head of Higher Education with the HERB when agreeing programme specifications. This process complies with reports from Academic Partnership Committee meetings.

45 Students comment favourably on the accessibility and helpfulness of staff and the information they receive. Key information is made available to students in the programme handbooks and many students confirm receiving and using a handbook. However, others are unable to confirm having received a handbook. There was also some variability in the use of the virtual learning environment by students as the main vehicle for communications. Overall, the students did confirm that they were able to access the required information from a variety of sources to meet the requirements of their programme and were able to progress successfully in their studies.

**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?**

46 Information for the prospectus, course cards and the website is provided by the programme leaders and the head of department who are required to check the accuracy once these have been produced in draft form. The University provides a set of minimum expectations for public information and, as a result, a variety of programme handbooks have been developed which reflect the diversity of programmes on offer at the College.

47 The Vice Principal has overall responsibility for public information and signs off key documents. The heads of department have responsibility for the overall production and initial assurance of standards; however, the Head of Higher Education is supporting them to ensure consistency and completeness. Despite the fact that some inconsistencies remain, the team identified that good progress has been made and is confident in the reliability of information made available.

48 The Head of Higher Education provides regular reports to Corporation Board and the Senior Leadership Team on key public information. The Senior Leadership Team also receives reports from the heads of department on the current audits of programme handbooks. The Developmental engagement and review reports identified recommendations to improve the public information available in programme handbooks, details on assessment, and the content of the virtual learning environment. The College has introduced several important changes to its structures and operations and these are making important differences to the quality and completeness of public information.

49 The Head of Higher Education and heads of department have undertaken an audit of handbooks and information on the virtual learning environment and this was mapped against the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*. Feedback was then provided to programme leaders. The introduction of the Higher Education Forum has also been instrumental in bringing about changes to the public information. This has included undertaking an initial audit which has now been expanded to involve peer reviews of programme handbooks with the aim of introducing a generic programme handbook template.

50 The team found evidence of a concerted effort to improve the standard of information and use of the virtual learning environment. There has been an increased emphasis on the use of the virtual learning environment in providing key information to students, and also to enhance the learning experience. This is being supported through continuous professional development at College, departmental and individual level. However, there is some inconsistency in the use of the virtual learning environment, with some programmes not meeting the minimum expectations of programme content information. It is desirable that the College fully implements the recently approved College minimum expectations on programme content information, available through the virtual learning environment, to support and enhance the quality of student learning.

51 Higher education programmes provide a very wide range of valuable work experiences for the students, as covered in paragraph 40. However, the team found variations in the way the College communicated with employers and workplace providers, and the information made available to them. Communication is currently based on the ongoing good relationships between programme leaders, individual staff and employers, with very little formalised information. There are health and safety checks in line with College procedures, however information is inconsistent on work-related guidance, what the students can gain from the experience, or how the work experience contributes to the students' assessments. It would be desirable for the College to review current information provided to

placement providers and students to ensure both parties gain fully from these valuable opportunities.

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

52 The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in November 2010 and covered all the higher education provision. Three lines of enquiry were agreed with the College and ensured that all IQER core themes could be addressed. The lines of enquiry were:

Line of enquiry 1: How do the institutional systems support consistency of academic standards in relation to students meeting deadlines for the submission of work for assessment and the timing of feedback?

Line of enquiry 2: How do the assessment methods assure academic standards support and develop students' skills in independent learning?

Line of enquiry 3: To what extent does the information provided to students about summative and formative assessment methods enable them to achieve the appropriate standards?

53 The Developmental engagement team identified a number of areas of good practice. They included a clear commitment and engagement between the College and the University of Brighton, and effective practice, at departmental level, in the use of internal verification processes and peer and self-assessment activities. This supports the sharing of current practice and encourages consistency of assessment practice and feedback to students. The College has a commitment to support current and future higher education continuous professional development, and the information available to students clearly describes the differences between formative and summative assessment methods in a clear and appropriate way.

54 The team also made a number of advisable recommendations, as follows: to review relationships between the College and partners in the University of Brighton Consortium, and to implement improved operational links and communications at award level to support assessment processes; to implement an improved annual quality review cycle; implement procedures to quality-assure key public documents and award-specific information to ensure accuracy and consistency of approach relating to assessment; and implement procedures to ensure there is consistency of information on assessment requirements available to students contained on the College virtual learning environment.

55 The team also made a number of desirable recommendations, as follows: to align the Higher National quality processes and procedures with the overarching framework; to fully integrate the range of College higher education policies, processes and procedures into an overarching institutional higher education framework; to expand current activity associated with work-related learning which prepares students for independent working and an insight into future employment demands and opportunities; and to implement procedures that ensure consistency in the production and distribution of annual assessment planning

information available to students, in order to develop a progressive approach to students gaining independent study skills.

56 The team was able to confirm that progress has been made to address the recommendations and share the good practice identified during the Developmental engagement. Progress has been made on collaborative working with consortium partners, assessment processes, the raised profile of work-related learning, and improved information available on assessment and through the College virtual learning environment. However, further progress is required to ensure the full integration of the higher national programmes into the College quality processes, and the sharing of good practice in the internal verification processes across some programmes and departments.

D Foundation Degrees

57 The College has 25 named Foundation Degrees in partnership with the University of Brighton, mostly in the arts and creative industries sectors. The majority of Foundation Degrees have developed close working relationships with a wide range of employment related organisations and associations. Of the 461 students registered on Foundation Degrees, 16 are part-time and 445 are full-time. The College has progression routes to level 6 for the majority of Foundation Degrees and, if progression routes are not available at the College, there is support available to guide students to alternative providers or into employment.

58 A new FdA in Health & Social Care commenced in 2010-11 and builds upon a similar award originally offered in 2005, which was subsequently discontinued. The new programme has been updated and revised in response to an identified overseas market to meet local and regional demands. The College also has plans to develop new programmes in eBusiness and Creative Media. This growth is in partnership with Central Sussex College. The BA in Fashion was reviewed during 2010-11 and changes have been made to modify the credit values of modules. This will change assessment loadings and is in response to student and staff feedback.

59 The good practice and recommendations identified during the Summative review, which are listed in paragraphs 61 and 64, are common to Foundation Degree programmes.

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

60 The team has identified a number of features of good practice in the College's management of its responsibilities for academic standards, and for the quality of learning opportunities of the awards the College offers on behalf of its awarding bodies. This was based upon discussion with staff and students and scrutiny of evidence provided by the College and its awarding bodies, the University of Brighton and Edexcel.

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

- staff engagement in the full range of higher education review processes clearly demonstrates a commitment to the ongoing quality improvement and appraisal of academic standards of higher education provision (paragraphs 11 and 13)
- the informed and integrated approach adopted by the College and programme teams towards the use of the Academic Infrastructure clearly supports the maintenance of academic standards of higher education provision offered by the College on behalf of the University (paragraphs 15 and 16)

Integrated quality and enhancement review

- the clear commitment of the College and departments to promote and support the continuous professional development of all staff engaged in higher education programmes which supports the ongoing quality of learning opportunities (paragraphs 37 and 38)
- the extensive range of well developed and integrated employer-related initiatives available clearly prepare students for their future career or study options (paragraph 41).

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

63 The team considers that it is **advisable** for the College to:

- ensure the full integration of all Higher National programmes into the overarching higher education quality cycle, including compliance with College academic procedures (paragraph 14).

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

- ensure that actions arising from external examiner summaries, and departmental and course boards, are formally reviewed and monitored (paragraph 20)
- implement fully the recently approved College minimum expectations on programme content information, available through the virtual learning environment, to support and enhance the quality of student learning (paragraph 50)
- review current information provided to placement providers and students to ensure they gain fully from these valuable opportunities (paragraph 51).

65 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.

66 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.

67 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.

Northbrook College action plan relating to the Summative review: November 2011

Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<p>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:</p>						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> staff engagement in the full range of higher education review processes clearly demonstrates a commitment to the ongoing quality improvement and appraisal of academic standards of higher education provision (paragraphs 11, 13) 	<p>Higher education quality assurance cycle 2012-13 adopted; extend peer review framework for Academic Health Reviews for 2011-12 reporting cycle to ensure internal quality verification system; monitor departmental actions through Higher Education Review Board (HERB); continue to promote and engage in quality enhancement, eg continuous professional development in Quality Code and Review of HE in FE methodology; further develop curriculum</p>	<p>June 2012; May 2012; April 2012; Fortnightly; June 2012; March 2012</p>	<p>Head of Higher Education; higher education forum; HERB; continuous professional development activities; University of Brighton APC</p>	<p>Adoption of higher education quality assurance cycle by all programmes; positive partner review report; comprehensive, evidence-based reporting at course, departmental and IAHR process; extended sharing of practice through higher education forum and higher education staff-facing virtual learning environment</p>	<p>Vice Principal</p>	<p>Positive impact of review processes to improve learning experience, evidenced through National Student Survey, Boards of Study minutes etc, evaluated through Departmental Academic Health Reviews and IAHR, and reported through HERB; evaluation of IAHR for partner colleges at University of Brighton APC in December 2012</p>

	links with University of Brighton; publish higher education quality enhancement online resource					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the informed and integrated approach adopted by the College and programme teams towards the use of the Academic Infrastructure clearly supports the maintenance of academic standards of higher education provision offered by the College on behalf of the University (paragraphs 15, 16) 	Higher education audits continue to analyse approach to Academic Infrastructure; continuous professional development in Quality Code and Review of HE in FE methodology; continue to share practice at higher education forum and staff-facing higher education virtual learning environment; work with partner colleges through APC to share practice	March and June 12; June and September 2012; Fortnightly; June 2012	Head of Higher Education; University of Brighton; higher education forum	Positive external examiner commentary regarding the application of the Academic Infrastructure; positive commentary through partner college review in 2012-13; positive feedback throughout periodic reviews and validation events regarding the use of the Academic Infrastructure to enhance and maintain academic standards	Vice Principal	Evaluation of IAHR for partner colleges at University of Brighton APC; evaluation of external examiner reports by University of Brighton reported through HERB and APC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the clear commitment of the College and departments to promote and support the 	Ensure professional development and research and scholarly activity continues to enhance learning, teaching and	Ongoing; October and March 2012; September 2012	Research & Scholarly Activity Coordinator; Head of Higher Education; Head of	Active participation in R&SA across all curriculum areas disseminated at Northbrook and	Vice Principal	Evaluation of research and scholarly activities and report at HERB, higher education forum

<p>continuous professional development of all staff engaged in higher education programmes which supported the ongoing quality of learning opportunities (paragraphs 37, 38)</p>	<p>assessment practice; applications for funding for research and scholarly activity analysed biannually; Research Action Group continues to support, promote and extend research practice; publish staff research profiles onto college website</p>		<p>Marketing; higher education staff</p>	<p>University of Brighton research conferences; Northbrook staff continue to gain teaching fellowships with University of Brighton and inform higher education teaching, learning and assessment practice</p>		<p>and RAG; evaluation of research and scholarly activity and higher education continuous professional development by Head of Higher Education and Research & Scholarly Activity Coordinator at end of academic cycles</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the extensive range of well developed and integrated employer related initiatives available clearly prepare students for their future career or study options. (paragraph 41) 	<p>Continue to share practice through higher education forum and staff-facing higher education virtual learning environment; establish cross-college employer engagement and enterprise forum; analyse impact of employer engagement on learning experience and progression to employment</p>	<p>Fortnightly; April 2012; July 2012</p>	<p>Head of Higher Education; Head of Business Unit; forum members; Heads of Department; course leaders</p>	<p>Curriculum informed by employers and current industry practice; employer engagement articulated AHR process and practice shared through higher education forum</p>	<p>Vice Principal</p>	<p>Evaluation of impact of external examiner through AHR process; direct feedback from employers at employer engagement and enterprise forum; positive evaluations from students on placements</p>

Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is advisable for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure the full integration of all Higher National programmes into the overarching higher education quality cycle, including compliance with College academic procedures. (paragraph 14) 	Higher National programmes to follow higher education quality cycle; accessible and accurate handbook for September 2012 start; course and departmental action plans produced in a timely fashion reflect best practice across college; support for teams for continuous professional development and research activities	January 2012; June 2012; January 2012; January 2012	Head of Technology, Head of Higher Education and Higher National Course Leader	Higher National programme follows ongoing quality improvement and appraisal by academic standards	Vice Principal	Evaluation of AHR at all levels through HERB
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:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that actions arising from external examiner summaries and departmental and course boards are formally 	Monitor external examiner actions through HERB; Departmental Boards of Study and Departmental AHRs demonstrate attention to actions being	February 2012; April 2012; July 2012	Head of Higher Education; Heads of Department	Positive commentary from external examiners for 2011-12 cycle; 2010-11 matters arising actioned through 2011-12	Vice Principal	Evaluation of responses to external examiner commentary through HERB; evaluation of IAHR at University of Brighton

reviewed and monitored (paragraph 20)	completed and are reported through HERB			and enhance quality and have a positive impact on the learning experience		Reading Group and APC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> implement fully the recently approved College minimum expectations on programme content information available through the virtual learning environment to support and enhance the quality of student learning (paragraph 50) 	audits of higher education virtual learning environment at course, departmental and institutional levels; continuous professional development for beginner, intermediate and advanced levels; share practice through higher education and eLearning forums; innovation in information learning technology supported through research funds; seek external funding opportunities; course handbook content modularised and available online	March 2012; April 2012; Fortnightly; ongoing; May 2012	Blackboard Administrator; Heads of Department; Continuous Professional Development Manager; Head of Higher Education and higher education forum; Research & Scholarly Activity Coordinator	All courses adopt minimum standards for use of higher education virtual learning environment; positive commentary regarding use of virtual learning environment through student focus groups and National Student Survey in 2012	Vice Principal	Evaluation through eLearning Forum and higher education forum regarding the impact of use of higher education virtual learning environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> review current information provided to placement providers and students to 	Review current information to placement providers; review current information to students;	May 2012; May 2012; June 2012	Higher education forum, Heads of Department	Creation of accurate, accessible information for placement providers	Vice Principal	Evaluate the impact of revised information to placement providers; evaluate the

ensure they gain fully from these valuable opportunities. (paragraph 51)	agree information to be published through higher education forum					benefits to employers through offering placement opportunities
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Key:

- AHR: Academic Health Review
- APC: Academic Partnership Committee
- HERB: Higher Education Review Board
- IAHR: Institutional Academic Health Review
- RAG: Research Action Group
- R&SA: Research & Scholarly Activity

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