



# **Integrated quality and enhancement review**

**Summative review**

**Oaklands College**

**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 1 and 2 (see Section B of this report), and a conclusion against core theme 3.

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.

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

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
- qualification benchmark statements which describe the generic characteristics of an award, for example Foundation Degrees.

## 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 1 and 2. The judgements are **confidence**, **limited confidence** or **no confidence**. There is no judgement for the third core theme; instead, the report will provide an 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 Oaklands College carried out in May 2012

As a result of its investigations, the Summative review team (the team) considers that there can be **confidence** in Oaklands College's (the College's) management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreement, for the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of its awarding 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 weekly Higher Education Team meetings promote the dissemination of information and effectively support quality assurance and enhancement
- the comprehensive and timely formative and summative feedback provided to students effectively supports student achievements
- the use of a house style ensures that all higher education programme information is consistent in format and key content
- rigorous processes are in place to ensure that materials are current and made available in a timely manner
- the development of the overarching virtual higher education community promotes awareness of the scope of higher education provision and enables sharing of effective practice across curricula.

### Recommendations

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

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

- ensure that formal College responses to Edexcel external examiner reports are embedded within the annual review process
- develop a common agenda for all Higher Education Programme Team meetings to ensure consistency of academic standards monitoring
- ensure clear and consistent procedures are produced for Higher National programme examination boards
- develop academic regulations for Edexcel programmes and include them in the programme handbooks to ensure parity of guidance for all students
- ensure procedures for assessment approval by external examiners for Higher National Certificates/Diplomas are consistent with those of other higher education programmes.

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

- review the format of programme logs for Higher National provision and include consideration of module evaluations in these logs

- develop a higher education-focused observation scheme to ensure that academic rigour and the development of graduate qualities are identified and promoted
- formalise mechanisms for enabling employer feedback on relevant published documents.

## 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 Oaklands 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 Hertfordshire (the University) and Edexcel. The review was carried out by Mr Liam Curran, Dr Richard Foyle, Dr Hayley Randle (reviewers) and Mrs Mandy Hobart (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 the portfolio of evidence supplied by the College; meetings separately with staff, including awarding body representatives, and students; the student written submission; QAA review reports; College policy documents; minutes of meetings; and external examiner reports. 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, the 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 Oaklands College is a general further education college located in Hertfordshire, covering the three districts of Hertsmere, St Albans, and Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield. The College has three major sites, comprising the Smallford Campus near St Albans and Hatfield, St Albans City Campus, and Welwyn Garden City Campus. There is also a small campus at Alban Park, which operates as an outreach centre. Higher education provision is located on the Smallford Campus and the Welwyn Garden City Campus. The College enrolled 7,518 students in 2011-12, of whom 407 are HEFCE-funded. There are 225 part-time and 182 full-time students in higher education, representing six per cent of the student population.

5 The College has worked as part of the Hertfordshire Higher Education Consortium since 2000, but has a long history of delivering higher education dating back to pre-incorporation, with a track record of engaging students from non-traditional groups and vocational backgrounds. The College states that its mission is to 'realise the potential of our communities', and this reflects the College's key values. While all Foundation Degrees and honours provision are validated by the University of Hertfordshire, the College also has a licence with Edexcel to offer HEFCE-funded Higher National Certificate (HNC) and Higher National Diploma (HND) programmes in construction and engineering.

6 The higher education programmes offered by the College comprise the following, with full-time equivalent numbers shown in brackets.

### Edexcel

- HNC Construction Management (13.125)
- HNC Civil Engineering Studies (20.625)

- HNC Engineering (Mechanical) (31.625)

### **University of Hertfordshire**

- FdA Media Production (Creative Enterprise) (32)
- FdSc Sports Studies (36)
- Extended Degree in Engineering (49)
- FdA Business (37)
- FdA Business with Information Systems (0)
- FdSc Animal Management (19)
- FdSc Equine Performance and Management (10)
- FdA Early Years (24)
- FdSc Construction Management (16.875)
- BSc (Hons) Construction Management (17.5)

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

7 Most provision is validated by the University of Hertfordshire and offered as part of the Hertfordshire Higher Education Consortium (the Consortium). The HNC in Construction Management is now run through the College's Edexcel licence rather than through the licence with the University, which is planning to terminate its Edexcel licence. The HNC remains linked to the Foundation Degree and offers direct progression for students to complete the Foundation Degree in Construction Management.

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

8 The terms of reference of the Higher Education Committee and the College's Board of Study were revised for the academic year 2011-12 to ensure they meet the quality assurance requirements of the College and the University. The Higher Education Committee is being chaired by the Principal, as the post of Vice-Principal of Enterprise is vacant. Changes have been made to the staff structure, and new Director of Faculty and Head of Department roles have been created to provide clear overviews of provision.

9 The College is reviewing its higher education provision, and several programmes, including Foundation Degrees in Information Technology and Business and Information Technology (Multimedia), were withdrawn in 2010 due to falling numbers of applicants. The Fine Art Practice programme was suspended in 2011 and will be revalidated to ensure it matches the changing needs of the sector. Revalidations are underway for Business, Early Years, Creative Enterprise and Construction Management for recruitment in 2012 and 2013. These programmes will offer full and part-time routes to enable programmes to be as flexible as possible to meet the changing needs of the market.

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

10 Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the team. The submission was drafted by two students on the BSc (Hons) Construction Management programme, with assistance from student representatives on five Foundation Degree programmes. The content was based on focus group meetings and class discussions. The resulting document provided a clear and informative commentary. Student representatives met with the coordinator during the preparatory meeting and the team during the review visit.

## **B Evaluation of the management of HEFCE-funded higher education**

### **Core theme 1: Academic standards**

#### **How are responsibilities for managing and delivering higher education standards delegated within the management structure, and what reporting arrangements are in place?**

11 Under the terms of the University of Hertfordshire partnership agreement, the University takes responsibility for the standards and quality of its awards. The College has direct responsibility for the achievement of standards and the quality of its higher education programmes, and for ensuring any weaknesses in the provision are addressed. In practice, the University sets the standards of the programmes and assessments at validation, and maintains them through the monitoring of student achievement at its examination boards, and through the Consortium quality process and the Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report process. The College is responsible for monitoring the standards of assessment for its Edexcel programmes, supported by the awarding body visits and external examiner reports.

12 The College has clear mechanisms for meeting its delegated responsibilities for standards. The Higher Education Manager liaises with programme managers and module leaders and reports to the Director of Enterprise, who chairs the Higher Education Committee, which has overall responsibility for higher education within the College. The Consortium Quality Handbook requires that all colleges have a Higher Education Committee and establishes the minimum terms of reference. The Higher Education Committee terms of reference were updated to provide a clearer focus on standards and quality monitoring, following a recommendation from the Developmental engagement. Programme managers produce Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Reports and action plans as required by the University, and these are reviewed by the Higher Education Manager and the Higher Education Committee. Edexcel programme leaders complete programme logs, which include subject review. However, the programme logs are long and sometimes repetitive. They would benefit from being more closely aligned to the format used for the Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Reports, and should include review of module feedback. It is **desirable** that the College review the format of programme logs for Higher National provision and include consideration of module evaluations in these logs.

13 The College does not operate common and consistent programme monitoring and evaluation procedures across all higher education programmes. External examiner reports for University-validated programmes are sent to the link tutors and programme managers for consideration via the University's virtual learning environment. External examiner reports are formally responded to by the chairs of assessment boards at the University, and are embedded into the Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Reports. For Edexcel programmes, a section on the external examiner report is included in the programme log, but this does not include the formal response to the external examiner report sent from the Quality Office. Specific action plans linked to the points raised by the external examiners are produced, and inform the quality improvement plan. However, these are not referenced back to the external examiner reports and are not evidenced within other College review processes. It is **advisable** that the College ensure that formal College responses to Edexcel external examiner reports are embedded within the annual review process.

14 Programme Committees for University-validated programmes meet at least twice a semester and include student representatives, though student attendance is inconsistent despite meeting times being varied to encourage student representation. Students on

University-validated programmes were unfamiliar with the term Programme Committee, though students reported that they are aware that programme meetings take place and that student representatives receive copies of minutes. Programme Committees are not run for Edexcel provision (but curriculum meetings are held for National and Higher National programmes) and as a result do not have a defined higher education focus. The College is **advised** to develop a common agenda for all Higher Education Programme Team meetings to ensure consistency of academic standards monitoring.

15 Examination boards are held for University-validated programmes, and review overall student performance. While examination boards are held for Edexcel programmes, they do not demonstrate the same clear and consistent approaches employed for University-validated provision. It is **advisable** that the College ensure that clear and consistent procedures are produced for Higher National programme examination boards.

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

16 The College has mapped the *Code of practice* against relevant College policies and procedures. The College is in the process of providing further clarification for staff on the use of the Academic Infrastructure and has produced a draft paper to be tabled at the next Higher Education Committee meeting in June 2012. The University has produced a comprehensive guide on assessment principles which informs College staff on the use of the Academic Infrastructure in supporting teaching and assessment. Staff are clear on how the Academic Infrastructure impacts on the validation of programmes and the production of the programme specifications.

### **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 Clear deliberative meeting structures support the monitoring of standards and ensure the requirements of the awarding bodies are met. The Higher Education Board of Study, chaired by the Head of Quality, reviews cross-college operational and quality issues, and minutes of meetings are sent to the Higher Education Committee - currently chaired by the Principal. Membership of the Board of Study includes representatives from all higher education programmes, the blended learning sub-committee representative, and the Higher Education Academic Tutor. The Board of Study provides an opportunity for programme managers and other staff to discuss matters of common interest and to share information.

18 The College management of academic standards for Edexcel programmes follows similar academic procedures to those used by the University-validated provision, including the use of examination boards. The College does not, however, have its own explicit academic regulations for Edexcel programmes, but rather applies monitoring systems across higher and further education qualifications. Student handbooks produced for University-validated programmes include information on academic regulations, appeals, exam boards and programme learning outcomes. The handbooks for Edexcel programmes do not include information on academic regulations, appeals or the process for the ratification of results, though these are provided during induction. It is **advisable** that the College develop academic regulations for Edexcel programmes and that these are included in programme handbooks to ensure parity of guidance all for students.

19 The procedures for approving the appropriateness of assignments for University-validated programmes are clear and robust, with all assignments also approved by external examiners prior to being given to students. The College has taken forward the good practice identified through the Developmental engagement and is developing a guidance document

for 2012 based on examples from programme teams. The procedure for Edexcel programmes relies on the College's internal verification process, with assignments also being sent to external examiners. However, the College's quality assurance procedures for internal verification identify only that assignments must be internally verified before being issued to students, and does not include reference to external examiner approval. It is **advisable** that the College ensure procedures for assessment approval by external examiners for Higher National Certificates/Diplomas are consistent with those of other higher education programmes.

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

20 The College supports the attendance of staff at continuing professional development activities and events run within the Consortium and by the University. This includes training on the University's virtual learning environment, blended learning and moderation. Staff may also apply to attend external events and conferences to support the currency of their knowledge.

21 The College has produced a Higher Education Staff Training Plan 2011-12, which identifies a number of activities delivered either by the University, or at the College by internal or external staff. The College further supports higher education professional development through its staff development policy, with staff able to apply for higher education-related staff development. Lecturers are also encouraged to apply for membership of the Higher Education Academy through engagement with Continuing Professional Academic Development Modules at the University.

**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?**

22 The clear College quality assurance mechanisms support consistent monitoring of programmes. The strategic oversight and management of the quality of learning opportunities resides with the Director for Quality and Staff Development and the Director of Learning Experience, who on a monthly basis report to the College's senior management team. Corporate audits are undertaken by senior managers of curriculum areas. These audits mirror the Ofsted inspection methodology and focus on teaching, learning, quality assurance, student attendance, retention and achievement, as well as tutor observations. The monitoring of the students' experience is based on the quality 'red, amber and green matrix' and all audits undertaken are reported to the College's senior management team.

23 The College has well-defined responsibilities for monitoring and reviewing the quality of learning opportunities, as outlined in paragraph 11. The memorandum of agreement requires that suitably qualified staff are approved by the University, and specifies procedures for the management of student admissions and student access to learning support. The College has been granted 'associate status' and is part of the University's

regionally formed consortium working to develop and extend the provision of higher education in Hertfordshire. The overall responsibility for the quality of learning opportunities rests with the Higher Education Committee, as discussed in paragraph 12. Actions and recommendations are monitored and supported by the Higher Education Manager. The College's membership of the Hertfordshire Higher Education Consortium ensures quality issues are considered by the Consortium Quality Committee based on reports from the University.

24 There is a consistent management structure across all the higher education programmes, with programme managers having responsibility for quality management and development. The programme manager reports to the head of department, who subsequently reports to the relevant director of faculty. Weekly higher education programme managers' meetings, chaired by the Higher Education Manager, provide a forum for discussion of curriculum, quality assurance and staff development, and facilitate timely responses. The weekly Higher Education Team meetings promote the dissemination of information and effectively support quality assurance and enhancement, and represent **good practice**.

25 The College's Higher Education Board of Study ensures regular review of quality across the provision. The membership includes the College's Higher Education Manager, programme managers, the Higher Education Blended Learning Champion and the Higher Education Academic Tutor. The role of this committee is to align the College's quality standards with the expectations of the Academic Infrastructure, and assure the quality of learning opportunities and clarity of public information. Operational higher education matters are monitored by the Board, which also promotes staff development, research and scholarly activities, and the dissemination of good practice. Programme reports, external examiner reports and student and employer feedback are also received by the Board of Study.

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

26 The College effectively implements its agreements with its awarding bodies, ensuring that the overall student experience meets the expectations of the University and Edexcel. The College is responsible for the quality of teaching and learning, student recruitment and induction, student support, library and learning resources, and accommodation, as well as arrangements for work-based learning.

27 The College has clear and robust processes for monitoring and reviewing the quality of learning opportunities. Liaison from programme level at the College to institutional level at the University ensures issues relating to learning opportunities are captured and appropriate action is taken. There are effective relationships with the link tutors, who also sit on the College's Board of Study. Link tutors from the University offer appropriate advice to ensure procedures are consistent and meet the University's general requirements. Centre Managers for Edexcel provision undertake review visits and liaise with programme managers and the Higher Education Manager to ensure awarding body requirements are met.

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

28 Programme specifications for Foundation Degree programmes are clear and explicit in embracing the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*, especially in their focus on work-based learning, which takes account of the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning*. Modules for Foundation Degrees are designed within the

University's framework, ensuring that they reflect the expectations of the Academic Infrastructure. The College has mapped the appropriate sections of the *Code of practice* to the relevant College policies, including admissions and assessment.

29 The University's Programme Developer's Handbook provides College staff with comprehensive guidance in preparation for validation and periodic review. This ensures that programmes are aligned to the Academic Infrastructure and informs subsequent management of quality assurance practice, teaching, learning and assessment. External examiner reports further inform the application of standards and quality.

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

30 The College's teaching and learning strategy has a significant focus on retention and achievement. The College recognises that there is a requirement for improvement in performance of programmes whose success rates are below the national average. A curriculum audit and the redesign of the curriculum portfolio aims to improve retention and achievement, and has been identified as a high priority within the College's strategic plan.

31 The sharing of good practice is actively encouraged by the College management. Through working collaboratively with three other Hertfordshire colleges, course teams meet regularly to share good practice. This includes deliberations on assessment design and moderation activities. A range of programme-based events further supports the development of teaching strategies. For example, the Foundation Degree in Equine and Animal Management team held an away day with the University link tutor to generate assessment ideas. This approach has been taken up by other programme teams. The construction team monitors colleges which achieve Ofsted grade 1 and arranges visits to gain new knowledge and view good practice.

32 External examiners' reports indicate there is a high level of student satisfaction with the assessment process, quality of teaching, learning support and pastoral care. Student feedback is also highlighted within the annual monitoring and evaluation process, and areas are identified for development in improving student support. Students appreciate their interaction with tutors and indicate that they benefit from small classes which create opportunities for informal discussions. Students are invited to feed back their views through a number of structured surveys, which include the National Student Survey, student representative meetings and module evaluations. Results from the National Student Survey indicate positive student satisfaction with teaching and academic support, with year-on-year trends indicating growing levels of satisfaction.

33 The College has a clear lesson observation scheme. Managers conduct lesson observations to support the quality of the learning experience. Staff receive support to continuously improve the quality of teaching, with action plans developed following each observation. Action plans also note good practice and how this can be shared. The observation scheme is also used to identify individual staff training and continuous professional development needs. However, the current lesson observation process is focused on the Ofsted criteria and offers little opportunity for reflection on higher level teaching requirements. It is **desirable** that the College develop a higher education-focused observation scheme to ensure that academic rigour and the development of graduate qualities are identified and promoted.

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

34 The College operates a standard induction process for students. Students on University-validated programmes receive programme handbooks which include academic regulations. All students are also provided with an induction to the learning resource centres, both at the College and the University, and to both virtual learning environments. Students confirmed that they receive a students' handbook provided by the University.

35 The College operates a comprehensive tutorial system, which is timetabled in a structured way. All students have a personal tutor for academic and pastoral support. Tutors use the time for seminar work, and group and one-to-one discussions. Students reported that the tutorial support is valuable in helping them to progress, set targets and resolve any difficulties of a personal or academic nature. There is significant flexibility in the tutorial system to accommodate the needs of part-time students, who confirmed that staff are always available to provide guidance and support. Additional learning support is in place and further services include personal and financial counselling, and careers and study skills support.

36 Information on assessment practices and ongoing support is clear and effective. Students reported that lecturers provide very clear explanations about how they are assessed and that formative and summative feedback is detailed, comprehensive and constructive. The College operates a four-week turnaround policy, in line with awarding body requirements, but in the majority of cases feedback periods are shorter; on occasion within one week of submission. Students find the feedback beneficial and very reassuring in supporting achievement and building confidence. The comprehensive and timely formative and summative feedback provided to students effectively supports student achievements, and represents **good practice**.

37 The College undertakes a first-impressions survey to ascertain students' perceptions of their initial experience on-programme, and ensures that student views inform developments. Information captured includes student views on the University's and College's information, the enrolment and admissions process, and support mechanisms and resources. The 2011-12 survey indicated high levels of satisfaction with the majority of induction information.

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

38 The College has a comprehensive staff development policy and procedure. Academic staff are able to apply for internal and external courses, as discussed in paragraphs 20 and 21, and three members of staff have been awarded professional status by the Higher Education Academy, with several staff also working towards gaining professional recognition. A distinction is made within the policy between staff development for a staff member's job role - such as health and safety or teacher training - and professional and continuous development such as conferences or workshops. Staff development is a standard agenda item for the Higher Education Committee meeting, team meetings and boards of study, and staff engagement and participation is encouraged and promoted.

39 The College works closely with the University, which offers opportunities for staff to participate in developmental activities. College staff teaching on higher level programmes can develop their teaching skills on a professional studies programme that enables credits to be gained at master's level through the University's School of Education's Continuing Professional Academic Development Programme. A number of College staff are undertaking

modules in areas of teaching and learning support, considering the student experience, linking pedagogic theory to practice, and understanding curriculum design and management. A Blended Learning Champion also supports staff in developing new teaching methods. Staff reported that the wide range of activities and regular higher education meetings have had a positive impact on the sharing of good practice and improving standards.

40 Standards of teaching on higher level awards are effectively supported by ensuring that staff are familiar with programme requirements. All teaching staff working on higher education provision complete a standard higher education teaching induction. Staff with limited teaching experience will be allocated a mentor to provide additional support, and senior advanced practitioner support is also provided to new staff members.

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

41 Clear mechanisms are in place to support the provision of higher education resources. Responsibility for identifying additional higher education resources lies with programme teams, the Higher Education Manager and Directors of Faculty, who review requirements as part of their annual staff utilisation and resource procedures. The strategic oversight of the student experience is the responsibility of the Director of Quality and Staff Development and the Director of Learning Experience, who both report on learning opportunities to the College's senior management team on a monthly basis. The senior management team monitors teaching and learning, quality assurance issues, attendance, retention, achievement and resources, and allocates budget accordingly.

42 Provision of resources is initially assured at the point of validation for University-validated provision and through centre visits by Edexcel Centre Managers. It is the responsibility of the College to ensure students are provided with appropriate and sufficient learning resources and facilities, including books, journals, access to computers, software and information services. Lecturers post teaching materials to the virtual learning environment, and the learning resource centre has higher education texts and networked computers. Students also value the access to the University's physical and electronic learning resources. The College provides flexible and responsive careers, learning support and advice and guidance services.

**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?**

43 The College has clear systems to ensure it meets its responsibilities for publishing a range of information about its higher education provision - including the prospectus, advertising campaigns and locally circulated editorials - in accordance with its communications policy. The College is also responsible for the production and distribution of internal material, including higher education course leaflets; programme, module and employer handbooks; assessment briefs and student support; and guidance publications. Information published about University-validated provision adheres to strict stipulations on

programme content, regulations and the use of the University's name and logo. Information published about the Edexcel programmes has a different set of guidelines. For example, unit specifications are only made available to students via the College's internal virtual learning environment and handbook content is not externally approved.

44 Handbooks and guidance materials are available both as hard copy and electronically. Beneficial use is made of the UCAS student profile area, using a collaborative University-led template. The College makes effective and contemporary use of social media, with controlled strategic issuing of information. The College also contemporaneously issues press releases, following rigorous internal processes with final sign-off by College senior management.

45 The public information for University-validated programmes is largely produced by the cognate University faculties, while the College is responsible for the production of information for its Edexcel provision. Through effective working with the University, the College has successfully developed a College public information house style which aligns with that of the Consortium. All Foundation Degrees have an Employer's Handbook to support work-based learning projects. This handbook provides comprehensive guidance and information about Foundation Degree qualifications, the work-based project, the assessment process, project supervision, health and safety issues, and how the employer contributes to the evaluation of the project. The use of a house style ensures that all higher education programme information is consistent in format and key content, and represents **good practice**.

46 The College Marketing Team ensures that information is accessible to all relevant audiences. An integrated function has been added to the website to allow potential applicants to produce a personalised prospectus. Procedures are in place to ensure that public information produced by the College is *Disability Discrimination Act*-compliant. This includes the ability to alter the format of materials to meet individual requirements. Electronic compliance is subject to regular audit and access validation checks.

**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?**

47 A rigorous and robust internal audit system closely controls the release of information produced and published by the College, and ensures that it is accurate and complete. Information generated for Consortium provision is approved by the University's Consortium Marketing Officer prior to distribution. Material for the Edexcel provision undergoes scrutiny by the College Marketing Team to ensure consistency with, and adherence to, the College house style. Content is also checked for accuracy and completeness by the Higher Education Manager. Although the College maintains that its thorough audit processes ensure that all information is accurate, concise and complete, some inconsistencies exist in programme materials, in particular the specifications and academic references for the Edexcel Higher National programmes.

48 Web-based materials for all higher education provision are also audited annually using the Consortium's Annual Website Review process. The Higher Education Manager is responsible for the resolution of any issues. The College benefits from the Marketing Manager's active role on the Consortium Marketing Group, which liaises closely with the Recruitment and Admissions Committee, before ratification by the College senior management team.

49 The views of the students and other stakeholders are regularly sought on the accuracy and helpfulness of information, to inform content reviews. Employers can contribute to information development through validation, employer forum meetings and through tutor visits to students within an employment setting. Student feedback has been positive. It is possible for employers to inform the development of materials such as work-based learning documentation. However, there is no formal mechanism for consistently gathering employer feedback. It is **desirable** that the College formalise mechanisms for enabling employer feedback on relevant published documents.

50 The production of clear and detailed course leaflets was highlighted as good practice during the Developmental engagement and has now been applied to all programmes. The College has successfully instigated a process which ensures that reading lists for all programmes are current and available through the virtual learning environment.

51 The virtual learning environment information available through both the College and University systems is valued by students. Students on University-validated programmes have full access to the University's online resources, through which they receive additional guidance and materials. Higher National students make use of the College's virtual learning environment to support their studies. Usage of both platforms is closely monitored by the Blended Learning Champion through audits each semester. Rigorous processes are in place to ensure that materials are current and made available in a timely manner, which represents **good practice**.

52 The Consortium has published minimum expectations regarding the use of virtual learning environments. Programme teams' use of the College's virtual learning environment is graded as bronze, silver and gold, which clearly identifies the quality of content and standards and encourages further improvements. The innovative development of an overarching virtual higher education community promotes awareness of the scope of higher education provision and enables sharing of effective practice across curricula. The College is also seeking to enhance the use of e-resources and the sharing of information across the College's higher and further education provision. It also enables students from further and higher education to gain a broader understanding of opportunities and available resources, and represents **good practice**.

**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**

53 The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in May 2011. The lines of enquiry allowed a very broad consideration of the management of assessment in the College. The lines of enquiry were as follows.

**Line of enquiry 1:** How effectively does the College maintain consistent academic standards through assessment methods?

**Line of enquiry 2:** How does the College ensure that students receive good quality formative feedback through the assessment process to promote student achievement?

**Line of enquiry 3:** How does the College ensure that published information on assessment is clear and understood by students?

54 Good practice was found in continuing development of the role of the Higher Education Manager, the use of practical assessments linked to professional standards and practice, and a well-established system for providing formative feedback on draft work. The use of reflective logs and progression tracking was found to provide clear and consistent support to students. Detailed course leaflets provide clear information on entry requirements and course content, which inform students in their choice of programme.

55 Recommendations included the further development of the Higher Education Committee in supporting consistency of standards, and the development of a cross-college standard for the provision of advice on student feedback in programme handbooks. The development of a consistent approach to course reviews and a common template for formative feedback, along with a set of clear standards for the quality of formative feedback on assessed work, were found to be desirable. The sharing of effective practice across provision in engaging with employers would further support the development of assessment and work-related learning, based on existing practices in Construction Management and Equine Performance Management. More consistent monitoring of the updating of reading lists would ensure their currency, and these should be made available through the virtual learning environment as well as in other formats.

## D Foundation Degrees

56 The College offers Foundation Degrees in Business, Media, Sports, Early Years and Construction Management. The College also has niche provision in Equine Performance Management and Animal Management. While Foundation Degrees have replaced most of the former HNC/HND provision, Engineering and Construction awards continue to be offered. The College is seeking to revalidate the Fine Art Practice programme suspended in 2011, along with Business, Early Years, Creative Enterprise and Construction Management, for recruitment in 2012 and 2013. Clear progression routes are detailed, with many offered by the University of Hertfordshire. The team found the College's management of the Foundation Degrees to be sound.

57 All conclusions on identified good practice shown in paragraph 60 also apply to Foundation Degrees. The following desirable recommendations also apply to the College's Foundation Degree provision.

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

- develop a higher education-focused observation scheme to ensure that academic rigour and the development of graduate qualities are identified and promoted (paragraph 33)
- formalise mechanisms for enabling employer feedback on relevant published documents (paragraph 49).

## E Conclusions and summary of judgements

59 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 - Edexcel and the University of Hertfordshire.

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

- the weekly Higher Education Team meetings promote the dissemination of information and effectively support quality assurance and enhancement (paragraph 24)
- the comprehensive and timely formative and summative feedback provided to students effectively supports student achievements (paragraph 36)
- the use of a house style ensures that all higher education programme information is consistent in format and key content (paragraph 45)
- rigorous processes are in place to ensure that materials are current and made available in a timely manner (paragraph 51)
- the development of the overarching virtual higher education community promotes awareness of the scope of higher education provision and enables sharing of effective practice across curricula (paragraph 52).

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

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

- ensure that formal College responses to Edexcel external examiner reports are embedded within the annual review process (paragraph 13)
- develop a common agenda for all Higher Education Programme Team meetings to ensure consistency of academic standards monitoring (paragraph 14)
- ensure clear and consistent procedures are produced for Higher National programme examination boards (paragraph 15)
- develop academic regulations for Edexcel programmes and include them in the programme handbooks to ensure parity of guidance for all students (paragraph 18)
- ensure procedures for assessment approval by external examiners for Higher National Certificates/Diplomas are consistent with those of other higher education programmes (paragraph 19).

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

- review the format of programme logs for Higher National provision and include consideration of module evaluations in these logs (paragraph 12)
- develop a higher education-focused observation scheme to ensure that academic rigour and the development of graduate qualities are identified and promoted (paragraph 33)
- formalise mechanisms for enabling employer feedback on relevant published documents (paragraph 49).

63 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.

64 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.

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, 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.

Oaklands College 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 weekly Higher Education Team meetings promote the dissemination of information and effectively support quality assurance and enhancement (paragraph 24)</li> </ul>	Weekly meeting agenda to be produced for the 2012-13 academic year	September 2012	Higher Education Manager	Programme of well-attended team meetings	Higher Education Committee	Termly feedback from higher education staff about the relevance and effectiveness of meetings, to be considered at the Higher Education Board of Study
	Set higher education-specific staff development sessions within the weekly meetings	September 2012	Higher Education Manager	Programme of monthly staff development activities	Higher Education Committee	Termly feedback from higher education staff about the relevance and effectiveness of staff development activities, to be considered at the Higher Education Board of Study

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the comprehensive and timely formative and summative feedback provided to students effectively supports student achievements (paragraph 36)</li> </ul>	Continue to monitor the turnaround of formative and summative feedback to students	October 2012	Programme Managers	Student feedback confirms continuing good practice	Higher Education Manager/Head of Quality	Termly feedback from higher education staff about the marking turnaround, to be considered at the Higher Education Board of Study
	Staff development activities to ensure that the provision of comprehensive feedback is maintained	January 2013	Higher Education Manager	Programme of well-attended staff development sessions	Director of Quality and Staff Development/Higher Education Committee	Feedback from higher education staff about the relevance and effectiveness of staff development activity, to be considered at the Higher Education Committee Meeting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the use of a house style ensures that all higher education programme information is consistent in format and key content (paragraph 45)</li> </ul>	Continue to monitor the production of all higher education published programme information	September 2012	Higher Education Programme Managers	Accurate information is continually produced for all programmes	Higher Education Committee	Completed audit reported to the Higher Education Committee of all higher education published programme information to ensure that it is comprehensive and fit for purpose

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>rigorous processes are in place to ensure that materials are current and made available in a timely manner (paragraph 51)</li> </ul>	Continue to monitor the use of StudyNet and Oaklearn for all higher education programmes	January 2013	Higher Education Programme Managers	Up to date materials continually available for all modules/ programmes	Higher Education Manager/Board of Study	An audit will be completed by programme managers, overseen by the Higher Education Manager, and reported to the January 2013 Board of Study
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the development of the overarching virtual higher education community promotes awareness of the scope of higher education provision and enables sharing of effective practice across curricula (paragraph 52)</li> </ul>	Pilot the use of the virtual Higher Education Academic Community across all higher education programmes for the 2012-13 academic year	March 2013	Higher Education Programme Managers	A well-used virtual Higher Education Academic Community with students from all programmes involved	Higher Education Manager/Board of Study	An audit will be completed by programme managers, overseen by the Higher Education Manager, and reported to the March 2013 Board of Study
<b>Advisable</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>advisable</b> for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensure that formal College responses to</li> </ul>	Confirm current practice and update to include provision of a	September 2012	Programme Managers	Effective reports produced for all Edexcel	Higher Education Manager/Head of Quality/Higher	To be evaluated via feedback from Edexcel external

Edexcel external examiner reports are embedded within the annual review process (paragraph 13)	formal response to all Edexcel external examiner reports			programmes	Education Board of Study	examiners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develop a common agenda for all Higher Education Programme Team meetings to ensure consistency of academic standards monitoring (paragraph 14)</li> </ul>	Produce a common agenda for all Higher Education Team meetings	September 2012	Higher Education Manager	Well-attended team meetings effectively covering all required agenda items	Higher Education Committee	An audit will be completed by programme managers, overseen by the Higher Education Manager, and reported to the January 2013 Higher Education Committee meeting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensure clear and consistent procedures are produced for Higher National programme examination boards (paragraph 15)</li> </ul>	Review the procedures for the Higher National exam boards and produce revised procedures for the 2012-13 academic year	September 2012	Higher Education Manager/Head of Quality	Effective examination boards held for all Edexcel programmes	Higher Education Committee	To be evaluated via feedback from Edexcel external examiners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develop academic regulations for Edexcel programmes and include them in the programme</li> </ul>	Review the development and application of academic regulations for the Edexcel Higher National programmes	September 2012	Higher Education Manager/Head of Quality	Student feedback demonstrates improved provision of academic regulation guidance	Higher Education Committee	An audit will be completed by programme managers, overseen by the Higher Education Manager, and

handbooks to ensure parity of guidance for all students (paragraph 18)	Staff development activities to be developed to share best practice relating to academic regulations guidance	February 2013	Higher Education Manager	Programme of well-attended staff development sessions	Higher Education Board of Study/Higher Education Committee	reported to the October 2012 Higher Education Committee meeting  Feedback from higher education staff about the relevance and effectiveness of staff development activity, to be considered at the Higher Education Board of Study
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensure procedures for assessment approval by external examiners for Higher National Certificates/ Diplomas are consistent with those of other higher education programmes (paragraph 19)</li> </ul>	Review the use and application of external examiner assessment approval for the Edexcel programmes	September 2012	Higher Education Manager/Head of Quality	Approved assignments are fit for purpose and demonstrate improved parity of assessment levels	Higher Education Board of Study/Higher Education Committee	To be evaluated via feedback from Edexcel external examiners and scrutinised through the internal College quality assurance systems

Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is <b>desirable</b> for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>review the format of programme logs for Higher National provision and include consideration of module evaluations in these logs (paragraph 12)</li> </ul>	Develop a revised Higher National programme log and include evaluation forms from all modules	January 2013	Higher Education Manager/Head of Quality	An improved Higher National programme log that better reflects the process of exception reporting and module evaluation	Higher Education Committee	Revised programme log to be reviewed at the January 2013 Board of Study
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develop a higher education-focused observation scheme to ensure that academic rigour and the development of graduate qualities are identified and promoted (paragraph 33)</li> </ul>	Review the current College observation scheme and assess the development for higher education including further inclusion of academic rigour and the development of graduate qualities	March 2013	Higher Education Manager/Head of Quality	Bespoke observation scheme for observed higher education sessions	Director of Quality and Staff Development/ Higher Education Committee	Proposal to be reviewed by the Higher Education Committee in March 2013; final findings and recommendations to inform future observation scheme planning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>formalise mechanisms for enabling employer feedback on</li> </ul>	Review current mechanisms to gain feedback on published documents	October 2012	Higher Education Manager	Implementation of revised mechanism and further feedback received	Higher Education Committee	Proposal to be reviewed by the Higher Education Committee in January 2013;

relevant published documents (paragraph 49)	Increase feedback from industry representatives on relevance of published documents	May 2013	Programme Managers	Employer/industry feedback on relevant published documents	Higher Education Manager/Higher Education Board of Study	final findings and recommendations to inform future mechanisms for obtaining feedback  An audit will be completed by programme managers, overseen by the Higher Education Manager, and reported to the June 2013 Board of Study meeting
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**The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education**

Southgate House  
Southgate Street  
Gloucester  
GL1 1UB

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