



Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

Richard Huish 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 Richard Huish 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 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:

- good two-way communications have created strong and supportive partnerships with both awarding bodies
- the rigorous self-assessment cycle ensures the identification of quality management and enhancement issues at module and course level
- the robust and effective marking scheme, which includes a significant proportion of double marking, provides an effective mechanism for the security of academic standards at course level
- the responsiveness of teaching and managerial staff to issues raised by the higher education student body fosters a positive learning environment
- enthusiastic and accessible teaching staff provide excellent support for students' academic progress
- timely and detailed assessment feedback, with informative and comprehensive annotation of student work, clearly indicates ways in which it can be improved
- central support staff provide dedicated help and guidance in study skills, clearly focused on the needs of students
- the FdA Sports Development and Coaching course placement handbooks and accompanying documentation are comprehensive and provide excellent guidance to students and placement providers.

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:

- continue to explore with the University of the West of England the possibility of external examiner reports providing specific information on the College's provision in order to promote course development.

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

- review the activities of the Higher Education Board to ensure that it retains and strengthens its strategic function

- strengthen its strategic oversight of the planning, monitoring and tracking of higher education staff development activities and increase the opportunities for scholarly activity in preparation for the introduction of a new top-up honours degree
- prepare formal guidance and documentation to underpin the College's teaching and learning observation programme in order to support staff in the provision of a distinctly higher education experience
- formalise the review of the higher education content of the virtual learning environment to ensure the completeness and consistency of its generic and module-specific information.

A Introduction and context

1 This report presents the findings of the Summative review of higher education funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) conducted at Richard Huish 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 the West of England, Bristol, and University College Plymouth, St Mark and St John. The review was carried out by Mrs Viki Faulkner, Mrs Maz Stewart (reviewers) and Mr Robert Jones (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 and a report from an inspection 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 was conducted by a desk-based study. The review also considered the College's use of the Academic Infrastructure, developed by QAA on behalf of higher education providers, with reference to the *Code of practice*, subject and award benchmark statements, the FHEQ, and programme specifications.

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

4 Richard Huish College was originally established in the 1870s as a grammar school for boys. In 1979 it became a sixth-form college open to both sexes. Based in the county town of Taunton, it is the largest provider of A-level programmes in Somerset. The College draws students from across Somerset, Devon and Dorset. There were 1,875 students enrolled on AS and A-level full-time programmes of study in September 2011. The FdA Business and Management was the first degree to be offered by the College in 2007. This was followed by the FdA Sports Development and Coaching, which was first offered in 2009. The total number of students on these two programmes is currently 44 (30 full-time and 14 part-time), comprising 39 full-time equivalents. There are also 194 students on higher education courses who are studying for professional qualifications in accountancy, which are not funded by HEFCE and are therefore outside the scope of this review.

5 The College states that its aims for higher education are:

- to respond to the ever-increasing need to equip the communities we serve with higher education-level knowledge and skills so that they are able to contribute effectively and play as full a role as possible in the development and growth of the local and regional economies
- to ensure that progression pathways are available for our core learners who choose not to leave home to 'go to university', so enabling talented young people who remain within our catchment area not to become disadvantaged in terms of career development.

6 The higher education awards at the College funded by HEFCE are listed below, followed by the number of full-time equivalent students in brackets.

University of the West of England

- FdA Business and Management (15)

University College Plymouth, St Mark and St John

- FdA Sports Development and Coaching (24)

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

7 The College has partnership agreements with the two awarding bodies listed above. The agreement with the University of the West of England dates from 1 September 2006. The agreement with University College Plymouth, St Mark and St John is more recent, dating from 1 September 2009.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

8 At the time of the review the College intends to offer a top-up honours degree year for both its Foundation Degrees from September 2013. It also intends to expand the FdA Sports Development and Coaching to include part-time provision. The plans for the FdA Sports Development and Coaching have subsequently been approved by University College Plymouth, St Mark and St John.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

9 Students studying on higher education courses at the College were invited to present a submission to the team. Students from each course held separate meetings at which they completed a questionnaire on key topics. These two documents were then collated by members of staff into a draft student written submission, which was circulated to all students, amended where necessary, and signed off by eight student representatives. In the preparatory meeting for the review, the coordinator had a productive meeting with students drawn from both courses. Both the submission and the meeting were useful sources of evidence.

B Evaluation of the management of HEFCE-funded higher education

Core theme 1: Academic standards

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

10 The College has clear and effective structures for managing the standards of its higher education. Two higher education course managers are responsible for the day-to-day operational management of the FdA Business and Management and the FdA Sports Development and Coaching. The course managers report to the Higher Education Coordinator who, in turn, reports to the Assistant Principal, Curriculum and Business Development, who is directly accountable to the Principal. Internal systems have been strengthened further since the Developmental engagement by the establishment of a Higher

Education Board and the development of the new post of Higher Education Coordinator, providing a dedicated focus on higher education.

11 The Higher Education Board, chaired by the Assistant Principal, Curriculum and Business Development, is the body responsible for monitoring higher education within the College. Initiated in October 2011, this Board has enabled the College to make a clearer distinction between the management of issues relevant to higher and further education respectively and provides a direct line of communication to the College Senior Management Team and Governing Body. While a key aim in establishing the Higher Education Board was to strengthen the strategic oversight of higher education, much of the work of this Board in its initial phase has been operational. The College needs to review the activities of the Board to ensure that it retains and strengthens its strategic function.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

12 The College engages with the Academic Infrastructure through the validation, delivery and evaluation of higher education programmes offered in partnership with its awarding bodies. Courses are aligned with the Academic Infrastructure at the time of validation. Staff on the FdA Business and Management worked in collaboration with the University of the West of England on the production of this course and have clear engagement with and understanding of relevant sections of the Academic Infrastructure.

13 The College works within the academic frameworks of its awarding bodies, and the external examiner reports for both courses demonstrate that the College staff apply the frameworks and make use of the appropriate academic standards. The FdA Sports Development and Coaching receives a detailed, individual external examiner report, which contains useful feedback on student work. However, as noted at the Developmental engagement, external examining at the University of the West of England operates on a field basis and looks at modules or groups of modules across the University as a whole including the Federation of Colleges, as opposed to courses run by individual colleges. Occasional oral feedback on an informal basis remains the main mechanism for feedback to individual colleges. In practice, the FdA Business and Management has not received specific written feedback from an external examiner. The Developmental engagement team expressed the view that the course would benefit from the kind of specific feedback given by the external examiner for the FdA Sports Development and Coaching and that this possibility should be explored. Subsequent to the Developmental engagement, the College pursued this with the university both formally and informally but had not received a reply until, at the request of the Summative review team, it approached the university again. The response from the university made it clear that a great deal of attention had been paid to the question of external examiner reports, but that the particular issue raised by the College subsequent to the Developmental engagement had not been resolved.

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 awarding bodies?

14 Course Managers complete annual monitoring reports which are submitted to the relevant awarding bodies and subject self-assessment reports which are used to inform the College's own internal quality assurance processes. Both reports are wide-ranging and benefit from a range of inputs, including feedback from students, statistical data reflecting retention and achievement, and detailed module-level evaluations completed by module leaders. The College has a rigorous quality improvement cycle. Quality management and enhancement issues are identified at module and course levels and inform the course-level action plans. Course reports are monitored through thorough meetings with College senior

managers. Action plans are formally reviewed twice yearly by the Higher Education Coordinator and discussed at course team meetings.

15 The College has a robust and effectively structured double marking scheme. This samples approximately half of all marked work and ensures a good coverage of all staff, students and modules on each course. The College works in collaboration with both awarding bodies and, in the case of the FdA Business and Management, with other federated colleges on cross-moderation activities to ensure parity of grading and student achievement. This process supports the acquisition of subject knowledge and the attainment of academic skills, and provides an effective mechanism for the security of academic standards at course level.

16 External examiners, appointed by the awarding bodies, confirm that assessments are appropriate to the level of the courses. They also confirm that marking is consistent and fair and that students are achieving at levels comparable to those at other institutions. The course manager for the FdA Sports Coaching and Development sends a copy of the external examiner's report to the Higher Education Coordinator when it is received in the College. However, on the FdA Business and Management there are no formalised procedures at College level for the receipt of and monitoring of actions arising from external examiner reports, because of the different nature of these reports (see paragraph 13). The College does not systematically feedback the key points from external examiner reports to students. However, they are discussed at course team meetings and used to inform action plans.

17 The Higher Education Coordinator is the main point of contact for awarding bodies at operational level and the Assistant Principal, Curriculum and Business Development provides the strategic link. This enables the College to adopt a consistent approach to relationships with awarding bodies and a clearly defined line of decision making. The Higher Education Coordinator role has enabled a dedicated manager to spend more time working directly with the higher education course managers. She attends regular course team liaison meetings, and is responsible for coordinating the sharing of good practice between courses and for overseeing the delivery of a new access agreement, resulting from the College's being awarded directly funded numbers from HEFCE for the first time.

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

18 College staff regularly attend partnership meetings at both awarding bodies, which provide opportunities to be updated on both operational and strategic levels. Communication between the College and its awarding bodies is strong and effective and a number of staff have attended subject-specific staff development events, the results of which are then cascaded through course team meetings. The strong partnerships the College has with its awarding bodies support good internal and external quality assurance procedures.

19 The College runs an annual performance review and monitoring scheme, common across both further and higher education, and this provides the mechanism through which requests for training can be raised and actioned. While there are many examples of staff development activities taking place, including one member of staff on the FdA Sports Coaching and Development studying for a higher degree, most needs are identified at individual or course team level. There appears to be a lack of strategic planning, monitoring or tracking of these activities to ensure that the future needs of higher education on a college-wide basis are covered. Scholarly activity is an area that is under development and the College is seeking to improve this area of work as it moves towards offering a top-up honours degree.

20 Both courses have a small and stable staff team and the College has a clear induction process in place for new staff. The developmental peer observation process provides an opportunity for staff interested in moving into higher education to gain a greater understanding of teaching at that level.

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

Core theme 2: Quality of learning opportunities

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

21 The responsibilities for managing the quality of learning opportunities reflect those for managing academic standards as described in paragraphs 10 and 11. Academic staff are clear about their responsibilities for teaching and learning. The Higher Education Coordinator is responsible for the quality assurance of the learning environment in accordance with the partnership agreements and the College's policies and procedures.

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

22 The comprehensive partnership agreements between the awarding bodies and the College ensure that the delegated responsibilities for the creation of a positive learning environment are effective and efficient and in accordance with the *Code of practice* and the FHEQ.

23 The process by which the College assures itself that it is meeting its obligations to its awarding partners is described in paragraph 14. In particular, the College has thorough and well-established processes for gathering and analysing course delivery and the quality of the student experience. A key component of internal reviews is an analysis of student end-of-module and course feedback data. The College is proactive in responding to issues raised by students. Student feedback is actively sought and responded to by the course teams. Student comments, both positive and negative, form part of the set cycle of team meetings, partnership meetings and the Higher Education Board. In addition, there is a staff/student focus group on each course which provides an effective forum for the expression of student views. The staff/student focus group representatives have an annual schedule of meetings. Feedback from these groups has resulted in, for example, additional support being provided to students in the form of a dedicated higher education study/social space, and a wider choice of research and learning materials in the Learning Resource Centre. Another striking example of managerial responsiveness is that student complaints resulted in an investigation which led to a tutor being withdrawn from teaching on one of the courses.

24 The awarding bodies have strong operational links to the Foundation Degrees through the pivotal roles of the awarding bodies' link tutors in monitoring the quality of provision, liaising with the course managers, and promoting parity of experience between students of the College and of the awarding bodies.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

25 As described in paragraph 12, courses are aligned with the Academic Infrastructure at the time of validation. In addition, the operating agreements between the awarding bodies and the College are reviewed annually to ensure continued alignment with the Academic Infrastructure. At course level, the College is proactive in ensuring attendance at partnership meetings to discuss issues relating to course management, delivery and quality assurance. The effective liaison with the link tutors enables course team members to resolve any issues relating to the quality assurance of their course. Course team meetings, which are attended by central support staff as well as academic staff, are an effective means of disseminating knowledge and understanding of the Academic Infrastructure.

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

26 Higher education teaching staff are familiar with and make use of a range of teaching and learning strategies designed to enhance the learning environment and develop students' academic and employability skills. Both Foundation Degrees are now proactive in sharing good practice to enhance the student experience and extend the team members' range of teaching strategies.

27 The lesson observations of higher education courses at the College mirror the procedures for further education lesson observations. They comprise three different types of observations: formal observation, developmental observation and peer observation. There is evidence from paired awarding body and College observers that higher education staff are creating appropriate learning environments through academic and practical activities that enable students to develop the academic and practical skills identified in the FHEQ level 4 and 5 descriptors. External examiner reports confirm that students are achieving at appropriate levels of attainment. However, the College does not have a formalised structure, policy or any guidance to differentiate observations of higher education and further education lessons. Such guidance would enable the College to assure itself that the observations contain an appropriate focus on the development of higher level skills.

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

28 The main mechanisms which the College has in place to assure itself that students are supported effectively are described in paragraph 23.

29 All students have a designated tutor with identified tutorial times available. However, because of the relatively small numbers on each course, most tutorial work is done informally, with tutors being happy to stay and talk after lessons and to use email contact if that is what students prefer. Students made a special point of praising the benefits of their small group teaching and the enthusiasm, helpfulness, accessibility and expertise of their tutors. This nurturing process increases students' self-esteem, as well as their knowledge and understanding, and plays a key role in supporting their academic progress.

30 A variety of feedback methods is used, communicated by means of standard coursework report documentation. Feedback is provided both orally to the group and individually using assignment front sheets. Student work is clearly and comprehensively annotated and, in combination with the oral feedback, clearly indicates ways in which the work can be improved. Module leaders from the awarding bodies assess the feedback sheets as well as the scripts and marking schedules as part of the moderation process. At the time of the Developmental engagement, some students complained about severe

delays before they received their feedback. The College has taken action to remedy this and students now praise the speed with which they receive their feedback.

31 There is excellent learning support available for students from the College central support services, which is highly valued by students. Both Student Services and the Learning Resources Centre have a member of staff whose specific function is to provide support for higher education students. Because of exceptionally close cooperation with subject staff, central support staff identify additional student needs at an early stage and implement a range of very successful support mechanisms, which are clearly focused on the needs of the individual student. Students on both courses have had individual and small group help from specialist Student Services staff before assessment deadlines, including guidance on essay and report writing and referencing. During induction, both programmes include informative sessions from Learning Resources Centre staff on researching, referencing and resources in preparation for individual assessments.

32 The placement and work-based elements of both Foundation Degrees are highly valued by students, and enable them to make critical links between theory and practice, and application to the workplace environment. Both courses have effective methods to support these activities.

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

33 There is a dedicated budget for the staff development of higher education teaching and support staff, managed by the Higher Education Coordinator. Each year, a number of staff development training days focus on teaching and learning enhancement. Staff also benefit from the development opportunities offered by the awarding bodies. An FdA Sports Development and Coaching course representative attends the partner's Staff Development Conference. The FdA Business and Management team have access to staff development opportunities at the annual Federation Conference. Specific staff development activities at the Federation Conference may be requested by member colleges. Course team meetings provide an effective forum for the dissemination of the results of staff development activities.

34 The College is taking active steps to develop staff involvement and usage of its virtual learning environment to support the student learning experience. The Learning Resources Coordinator champions this development and leads the Virtual Learning Environment Users Group, in which both Foundation Degree teams are actively involved. In addition to course documentation, both teams are developing teaching and learning activities for posting on the virtual learning environment.

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

35 Course budgets are used to support the purchase of books and other learning materials for the Learning Resource Centre in hard copy and in the form of online resources. As mentioned in paragraph 23, the College has increased the materials in the Learning Resource Centre, which the students acknowledged. However, they still thought that there was a need for improved resources, particularly books.

36 All students have access to their respective awarding body's learning resources, in hard copy and online. Induction activities at the College and at the partner institution introduce students to the learning resources available and are accessible to College students. While some second-year FdA Sports Development and Coaching students still

report difficulty in accessing the online learning resources of the awarding body, most other students find that the College and the partner online learning resources are essential aids to study. Students greatly value the resources available to them in the new Higher Education Centre.

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?

37 The awarding bodies produce programme specifications, assessment schedules, assessment regulations and financial information for both of the College's Foundation Degrees. The responsibility for programme and module information available to students lies with the awarding body as set out in the partnership agreements.

38 The College website provides information and guidance on its higher education courses. It has a dedicated area for higher education which provides clear introductory information on the Foundation Degrees. Both course entries specify contact staff who will respond to prospective student enquiries. This is supplemented by course information leaflets, which are available as hard copy for recruitment events. All information that the College publishes about its courses is created in conjunction with the relevant awarding body and agreed with it before publication.

39 The College is responsible for the production of course handbooks, module guides and placement documentation. Handbooks contain clear, comprehensive and accessible information about the staff team, learning outcomes and assessment details. Academic guidance, aimed at supporting students on their programme of study, includes information on accessing online library resources at the awarding bodies. Students receive handbooks during induction and additional copies are made available through the virtual learning environment. The FdA Sports Development and Coaching course placement handbooks are detailed and comprehensive, and provide excellent guidance both to students and placement providers. They contain tripartite agreement pro formas, which ensure that all parties have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and support the mentoring process.

40 The College has a virtual learning environment which is the main repository for course-level information for students. Links to complementary information, such as online libraries at the awarding bodies, are made appropriately. Use of the College virtual learning environment is currently being developed and includes a modest amount of teaching and learning activities.

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?

41 There are effective internal and external procedures for ensuring the accuracy of advertising materials for the Foundation Degrees. All higher education marketing materials bear the joint logos of the awarding body and the College. Both Foundation Degrees have

their own marketing practices designed to ensure appropriate student recruitment. These individual marketing practices comply with the College's policy for higher education publications, which guides the internal procedures and identifies the Director of Admissions and Marketing as having overall responsibility for advertising and marketing. All marketing materials are approved at senior management level. The awarding bodies' partnership agreements with the College clearly state that all marketing materials relating to the Foundation Degrees must be approved prior to release, including marketing material placed on the College website. Similarly, changes to any validated module and procedural information requires awarding body approval.

42 Following the Developmental engagement, the course handbooks now use standardised formatting and content. Course Leaders are responsible for ensuring the accuracy of course-level information. The Higher Education Coordinator reviews and signs off the course handbooks before approval by the Director of Admissions and Marketing. The same procedure applies to information before it is uploaded to the College's website.

43 Course Managers are responsible for checking the virtual learning environment sites. However, there is some inconsistency in the content and presentation of generic and module-specific information on the course-level virtual learning environments. For example, not all module guides were present on the FdA Sports Development and Coaching site. These inconsistencies detract from the development of the virtual learning environment as a powerful course-level learning resource for students. There is no formal review or oversight of the virtual learning environment to identify and resolve inconsistencies of content and presentation.

44 The College ensures that higher education students make a meaningful contribution to the preparation and effectiveness of its marketing and promotional materials. Course Managers elicit students' views on the effectiveness of marketing materials through staff/student focus group meetings. Student comments on the quality of marketing course-level information and the attractiveness of their presentation feeds into the College's Quality Cycle.

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

45 The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in June 2011. There were three lines of enquiry, as follows.

Line of enquiry 1: How does the use made by the College of the internal and external quality assurance methods ensure the maintenance of appropriate academic standards?

Line of enquiry 2: How far do the assessment methods used and the assessment feedback given to students effectively support the student learning experience and enable the achievement of learning outcomes?

Line of enquiry 3: How does the College ensure the accuracy and completeness of information on assessment provided to students and employers?

46 The Developmental engagement team identified a number of areas of good practice. There are strong and supportive partnerships between the College and its awarding bodies and the annual monitoring reports are exceptionally rigorous. Members of academic staff provide expert guidance to students, including detailed and constructive assessment feedback. This is supplemented by help and guidance from central support staff. The FdA Sports Development and Coaching has strong partnerships with local and regional sports organisations.

47 The team also made a number of recommendations. It advised the College to approach the University of the West of England to explore the possibility of external examiner reports providing specific information on the College's provision. It should continue to develop formal structures to support higher education and ensure that written feedback to students was provided within the agreed timescale. It should ensure that consistent information about assessments was provided and produce a standard template for the student handbooks clearly indicating the information required. The College might also benefit from encouraging students to access the online resources of the University College Plymouth, St Mark and St John; from continuing to develop the use of the academic skills grid, currently in development in the FdA Business and Management; and from building on the use of the virtual learning environment.

D Foundation Degrees

48 The College offers two Foundation Degrees, the FdA Business and Management, validated by the University of the West of England and the FdA Sports Development and Coaching, validated by University College Plymouth, St Mark and St John. At the time of the review, the College intended to offer a top-up honours degree year for both its Foundation Degrees from September 2013. It also intended to expand the FdA Sports Development and Coaching to include part-time provision. The plans for the FdA Sports Development and Coaching have subsequently been approved by University College Plymouth, St Mark and St John.

49 The areas of good practice and recommendations identified during the Summative review are common to the whole provision. These are listed in the main conclusions, paragraphs 50 to 57.

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

50 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 the West of England, Bristol, and University College Plymouth, St Mark and St John.

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

- good two-way communications have created strong and supportive partnerships with both awarding bodies (paragraphs 12, 15, 18 and 24)
- the rigorous self-assessment cycle ensures the identification of quality management and enhancement issues at module and course level (paragraph 14)
- the robust and effective marking scheme, which includes a significant proportion of double marking, provides an effective mechanism for the security of academic standards at course level (paragraph 15)

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- the responsiveness of teaching and managerial staff to issues raised by the higher education student body fosters a positive learning environment (paragraph 23)
- enthusiastic and accessible teaching staff provide excellent support for students' academic progress (paragraph 29)
- timely and detailed assessment feedback, with informative and comprehensive annotation of student work, clearly indicates ways in which it can be improved (paragraph 30)
- central support staff provide dedicated help and guidance in study skills, clearly focused on the needs of students (paragraph 31)
- the FdA Sports Development and Coaching course placement handbooks and accompanying documentation are comprehensive and provide excellent guidance to students and placement providers (paragraph 39).

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

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

- continue to explore with the University of the West of England the possibility of external examiner reports providing specific information on the College's provision in order to promote course development (paragraphs 13 and 16).

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

- review the activities of the Higher Education Board to ensure that it retains and strengthens its strategic function (paragraph 11)
- strengthen its strategic oversight of the planning, monitoring and tracking of higher education staff development activities and increase the opportunities for scholarly activity in preparation for the introduction of a new top-up honours degree (paragraph 19)
- prepare formal guidance and documentation to underpin the College's teaching and learning observation programme in order to support staff in the provision of a distinctly higher education experience (paragraph 27)
- formalise the review of the higher education content of the virtual learning environment to ensure the completeness and consistency of its generic and module-specific information (paragraph 43).

55 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.

56 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.

57 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.

| Richard Huish College's action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2012 | | | | | | |
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| Good practice | Action to be taken | Target date | Action by | Success indicators | Reported to | Evaluation |
| In the course of the Summative review the team identified the following areas of good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College: | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> good two-way communications have created strong and supportive partnerships with both awarding bodies (paragraphs 12, 15, 18 and 24) | Schedule of regular meetings between the Higher Education Coordinator and Higher Education Institutions and the Course Managers with their Higher Education Institution link personnel | October 2012 | Higher Education Coordinator and Higher Education Institution admin Course Managers with Higher Education Institution link personnel | Annual schedules created and monitored | Higher Education Coordinator for Quality Assurance checklist; Higher Education Board | Self-Assessment Reports, Annual Programme Reports |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the rigorous self-assessment cycle ensures the identification of quality management and enhancement issues at module and course level (paragraph 14) | Ongoing monitoring of modules for accuracy, currency and fitness for purpose by College and Higher Education Institutions | Ongoing throughout the year | Course Managers with their Higher Education Institution link personnel | Revised module specifications as necessary | Higher Education Coordinator for Quality Assurance checklist | Module reports; External Examiner Reports; Self-Assessment Reports; Annual Programme Reports; Internal Quality Assurance Inspection |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the robust and effective marking scheme, which | Ongoing monitoring of the effectiveness of marking schemes and | Ongoing throughout the year | Course Managers with module leaders and team | Set of accurate and effective marking schemes | Higher Education Coordinator for Quality Assurance | Module Reports; Field Board Reports; |

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| | includes a significant proportion of double marking, provides an effective mechanism for the security of academic standards at course level (paragraph 15) | double marking processes with any changes as necessary | | of double markers | and a robust double marking schedule | checklist | Student feedback; Internal Quality Assurance Inspection |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the responsiveness of teaching and managerial staff to issues raised by the higher education student body fosters a positive learning environment (paragraph 23) | Course Handbooks updated with policies and procedures for concerns clearly outlined; comprehensive records kept of all issues and how these have been managed | September 2012 Ongoing | Course Managers working with Higher Education Institutions Higher Education Coordinator working with tutors or Course Managers | Updated Course Handbooks Complete set of records | Higher Education Coordinator for sign off and Quality Assurance checklist Assistant Principal for Higher Education | Self-Assessment Reports; Annual Programme Reports; Risk Management Action Plan for Higher Education; other reports may be given depending on the nature of the issue |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> enthusiastic and accessible teaching staff provide excellent support for students' academic progress (paragraph 29) | The recruitment process for new higher education staff will ensure suitably qualified and experienced staff are appointed; a stronger focus on appropriate Continual Professional Development for | As required during each year December 2012 During 2012-13 | Higher Education Coordinator, Assistant Principal for Higher Education and Personnel; Higher Education Coordinator with Assistant Principal for Student Support; | Appropriately staffed courses Schedule of Continual Professional Development for higher education teaching staff; tutorial system | Higher Education Board and Higher Education Institutions Course Managers and Higher Education Board Higher Education | Self Assessment Reports; Annual Programme Reports ; Risk Management Action Plan for Higher Education; Internal Quality Assurance Inspection |

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| | higher education staff; development of the tutorial system for higher education students | | Course Managers with Assistant Principal for Student Support and College Information Systems | developments with a higher education focus implemented | Coordinator for Quality Assurance checklist and Higher Education Board | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> timely and detailed assessment feedback, with informative and comprehensive annotation of student work, clearly indicates ways in which it can be improved. (paragraph 30) | Monitoring of tutor feedback on an ongoing basis | After each module is completed | Course Managers | Timely and detailed feedback for all modules with evidence of checking | Higher Education Coordinator for Quality Assurance checklist | Module Reports; Self-Assessment Reports; Annual Programme Reports; Internal Quality Assurance Inspection |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> central support staff provide dedicated help and guidance in study skills, clearly focused on the needs of students (paragraph 31) | Ensure that any specific learning needs are identified early before enrolment; ensure sufficiency and appropriateness of staffing relating to student support | September 2012 September 2012 | Course Managers working with support staff Higher Education Coordinator with Course Managers and Assistant Principal for Student Support | Individual Learning Plans for each student that include additional support needs Effective timetable of support needs with appropriate staff | Higher Education Coordinator for Quality Assurance checklist Higher Education Coordinator for Quality Assurance checklist | Student Support records; student feedback; Self-Assessment Reports; Internal Quality Assurance Inspection; Risk Management Action Plan for Higher Education |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the FdA Sports Development and Coaching course placement handbooks and | Update the handbooks and employer guidance documents as necessary where legislative or module | September 2013 | Course Manager working with Higher Education Institution and Assistant | Updated handbooks and documentation | Higher Education Coordinator for sign off and Quality Assurance checklist | Feedback from students and workplace providers; Risk Management |

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| accompanying documentation are comprehensive and provide excellent guidance to students and placement providers (paragraph 39). | changes may need to be made | | Principal for Student Support | | | Action Plan for Higher Education |
| 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"> continue to explore with the University of the West of England the possibility of external examiner reports providing specific information on the College's provision in order to promote course development (paragraphs 13 and 16). | <p>Meeting with the Assistant Dean and Federation Manager</p> <p>Request for updates as agenda item until resolved</p> | <p>June 2012</p> <p>As necessary</p> | <p>Higher Education Coordinator and Assistant Principal for Higher Education</p> <p>Higher Education Coordinator</p> | External examiner reports with specific feedback for individual institutions | Course Managers and Higher Education Coordinator for Quality Assurance checklist | Self-Assessment Report; Annual Programme Report; Higher Education Board update and minutes |

| Desirable | Action to be taken | Target date | Action by | Success indicators | Reported to | Evaluation |
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| The team considers that it is desirable for the College to: | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> review the activities of the Higher Education Board to ensure that it retains and strengthens its strategic function (paragraph 11) | Reconsideration of the Terms of Reference and membership of the Higher Education Board | October 2012 | Higher Education Coordinator and Assistant Principal for Higher Education | Revised Terms of Reference and membership | Higher Education Board members - new and old | Risk Management Action Plan for Higher Education; Higher Education Board update and minutes |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> strengthen its strategic oversight of the planning, monitoring and tracking of higher education staff development activities and increase the opportunities for scholarly activity in preparation for the introduction of a new top-up honours degree (paragraph 19) | Create and maintain a register of Higher Education Continual Professional Development; use register of Continual Professional Development as a basis for staff annual reviews; create a task group to explore ways of improving the undertaking and recording of scholarly activity within higher education and the College in conjunction with partner Higher Education Institutions; join the Higher | <p>September 2012</p> <p>Prior to each review</p> <p>November 2012</p> <p>July 2012</p> | <p>Higher Education Office Manager</p> <p>All higher education line managers</p> <p>Higher Education Coordinator, Course Managers and other volunteers with Higher Education Institution personnel as required; Course Managers and teaching teams</p> | <p>Register of Continual Professional Development; Higher Education Continual Professional Development included in annual review notes; task group minutes and scholarly activity records</p> <p>Higher Education Association membership attained and</p> | <p>Higher Education Coordinator for Quality Assurance checklist</p> <p>Higher Education Coordinator for Quality Assurance checklist and Personnel Higher Education Board</p> <p>Assistant Principal for Higher Education; Higher Education Coordinator for Quality Assurance</p> | <p>Self-Assessment Reports; Annual Programme Reports; Internal Quality Assurance Inspection; Task group report to Senior Management Team/Higher Education Board</p> |

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| | Education Academy and make good use of their training opportunities and materials. | | | training undertaken | checklist | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> prepare formal guidance and documentation to underpin the College's teaching and learning observation programme in order to support staff in the provision of a distinctly higher education experience (paragraph 27) | Create new higher education specific guidance, training and documentation for observations of higher education teaching and learning; undertake sharing of good practice with Higher Education Institutions and negotiate for the use of Higher Education Institution experts for teaching and learning observations | November 2012 November 2012 | Course Managers with Assistant Principal for Quality and Higher Education Institutions Higher Education Coordinator with Assistant Principal for Quality and Higher Education Institutions | New guidance, training and documentation Evidence of sharing of good practice and expert observations | Higher Education Board; Higher Education Coordinator for Quality Assurance checklist Higher Education Board | Internal Quality Assurance Inspection; Self-Assessment Reports; Annual Programme Reports |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> formalise the review of the higher education content of the virtual learning environment to ensure the completeness and consistency of its generic and module-specific information (paragraph 43). | Develop a system for the regular review of higher education courses on the College virtual learning environment (Moodle) | December 2012 | Course Managers with College Moodle support technician | Policy document for the monitoring, review and updating of higher education course details | Higher Education Coordinator for Quality Assurance checklist | Self-Assessment Reports; Risk Management Action Plan for Higher Education |

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