

## **Integrated quality and enhancement review**

### **Summative review**

March 2010

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

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

## Outcomes of IQER

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

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

Differentiated judgements can be made where a team judges a college's management of the standards and/or quality of the awards made by one awarding body to be different from those made by another.

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



## Executive summary

### The Summative review of Salford City College carried out in March 2010

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

### Good practice

The team has identified the following good practice for dissemination:

- the Higher Education Standards Group that oversees the College's higher education courses, which has a broad and expanding remit to ensure that the provision engages with the *Code of practice for the assistance of academic quality and standards in higher education*, monitors standards and moderates the courses
- the practice of including an independent person and a student representative on the panel of the HNC Construction Assessment Board, which lends objectivity and transparency to its decisions
- the electronic student information portal that enhances communication and contains up-to-date information on each student's attendance records, assessment outcomes and progress, with the provision for access by employers, tutors and by individual students
- the practice of forwarding the HNC Construction student assignments to employers for their comments and to check their vocational relevance
- for those students who have indicated a disability or learning difficulty during the application process, the opportunity for a formal assessment of need by certified College practitioners and assistance with an application for a disabled students' allowance.

### Recommendations

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

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

- review student needs for access to library texts through the internet and provide guidance on the use of appropriate and less time-consuming search strategies
- develop an information technology strategy that provides guiding principles and a framework for the integration of the virtual learning environment with its teaching, learning and assessment policies.





## 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 Salford City 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 Bolton. The review was carried out by Mr John Hawthorn and Mrs Sue Miller (reviewers), and Mr Robert Hodgkinson (coordinator).

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

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

4 In January 2009 Salford College merged with Eccles College and Pendleton College to form Salford City College (the College). The College is a general further education college and its higher education provision is delivered at the Lissadel Street and Worley Campuses. In the academic year 2009-10, the College's further education provision numbered approximately 12,000 students. The HEFCE-funded higher education provision comprises 153 students, of which 12 are full-time. Eight staff teach the higher education provision. The College's mission statement is to 'inspire people to create opportunities and enrich lives through learning'. It is characterised by the following values: a focus on learners; transparency; integrity; respect; inclusivity; unconditional pursuit of excellence; leading by example; partnership and collaboration.

5 The College delivers its courses in three curriculum areas: Professional Construction, Childcare, and Professional Studies. It offers the following higher education courses with full-time equivalent student numbers:

### University of Bolton

- Post Graduate Diploma and Certificate in Education (in service) (30.5)
- Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (12)
- Foundation Degree Early Years Childhood Studies (28.6)

## **Edexcel**

- HNC Construction (18.5).

### **Partnership agreements with the awarding body**

6 The College has a formal partnership agreement with the University of Bolton (the University) for its higher education provision. The University is responsible for programme design and alignment with the Academic Infrastructure; validation; acceptance of applications; ensuring common standards; moderation; final assessment and award; regular meetings to monitor quality; and the process of annual evaluation and continual improvement of academic outcomes. The College is responsible for programme implementation; recruitment; assessment and internal moderation; quality of teaching and learning; application of the University's standards; regular internal monitoring of quality; and complying with the University's requirements for annual evaluation and review.

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

7 The College's higher education provision has fluctuated but mainly declined over the past 17 years. Its focus has been on the teacher education provision, but more recently the HNC Construction and the Foundation Degree Early Years Childhood Studies. It is unlikely that the portfolio for its directly-funded provision will increase. The opportunities for the expansion of its higher education provision, as outlined in its Higher Education Strategy, have been curtailed as a consequence of the withdrawal of funding for new capital building projects and the lack of additional funding for students. The College is working with the Greater Manchester Strategic Alliance, the University of Bolton and Salford University to develop its provision to meet the needs of local employers and potential students. Although the College has a low number of applicants from the University Applications and Clearance System for its higher education programmes, there are increasing numbers of students wishing to study locally.

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

8 Student views were sought from focus groups comprising 72 students drawn from three different courses, including the Post Graduate Diploma in Education, the HNC Construction and the Foundation Degree Early Years Childhood Studies. A member of the College's Student Services led the focus groups and explained their purpose to students and the method of recording their responses. The College identified a list of questions that was used to ensure that key areas were addressed and that only questions relevant to the cohort were included. Five themes were explored in the focus groups. The results were helpful in understanding students' views and contain comments on how well students learn, are guided and supported. During the visit the students were given the opportunity to expand on some of the points they made in the submission. Their evidence was of value to the review.

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

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

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

9 Although the College's policies focus on its further education provision, they are also appropriate to its higher education courses, particularly the HNC Construction. The College's generic policies and procedures and the framework prescribed by the awarding bodies for its higher education programmes are broadly compatible. The College's teaching staff are aware of and follow the guidelines contained in the College's Corporate Manual. Franchise agreements with the University of Bolton prescribe the responsibilities for three of the College's programmes. The quality of higher education provision is managed as specified by the awarding institution, which prescribes the policies, assessments, regulations and responsibilities. Each programme has a link tutor, who is responsible for liaison between the College and University. The HNC Construction is aligned with Edexcel's guidelines. The College adheres to Edexcel's guidelines, but remains responsible for many of the HNC Construction policies and procedures. In some cases, to promote consistency between the College's courses, the tutors have chosen to align the policies with those of the University of Bolton. The team concludes that this is appropriate.

10 In response to the Developmental engagement in assessment action plan, the College has developed a Higher Education Strategy that identifies new proposals for the development of its level 4 provision to meet local needs. It aligns with the College's Corporate Manual and the individual programme delivery strategies contained within its programme handbooks. To ensure that the College self-assessment report more readily reflects the higher education provision, the College has incorporated a section that specifically includes opportunities for feedback from its higher education course reviews.

11 The College manages the standards of its higher education provision through an effective committee and management structure that reflects the size of the provision. In so doing, it fulfils the expectations set out in its partnership and training agreements with the University. The course tutors, curriculum leaders, heads of department, assistant principals, and ultimately a Vice-Principal, manage the higher education provision. The responsibility for the delivery of its higher education courses is founded within three divisions. At course level the management of standards is undertaken by each Curriculum Leader, with the heads of department responsible for teaching standards. Heads of department and assistant principals are expected to monitor closely all higher education academic standards. A key committee is the Higher Education Standards Group, which has a specific remit to oversee standards across all the higher education courses. It reports to the College's Standards Scrutiny Board and the Senior Management Team. It has a broad remit to ensure that the provision engages with the *Code of practice*, monitors standards and moderates the provision. For example, it is responsible for sharing good practice, encouraging more teaching observation of the higher education courses and reviewing student feedback. Its additional responsibilities are a response to the Developmental engagement in assessment action plan. An examination of the minutes of its meetings and meetings with staff leads the team to conclude that its activities represent good practice. The College's current structure encourages clear lines of communication that distinguish centres of authority with appropriate responsibility. In doing so the organisational structure aids the delivery of its higher education provision and serves to underpin academic standards.

12 For the College's franchised higher education courses an end-of-year course evaluation is completed as a university requirement. These evaluations are monitored by the Higher Education Standards Group prior to transmission to the University. The College tutors produce course reviews that are updated three times during the academic year to allow new information on achievement, feedback and other statistical data to be considered and acted on soon after it becomes available. At the end of the academic year, and halfway through the year in the case of the HNC Construction, College assessment panels are held. The team concludes that the staff know and apply the responsibilities and freedoms of action afforded by the *Code of practice* and the Edexcel guidelines.

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

13 With the exception of the HNC Construction, the programmes are written and validated by the partner university in accordance with the *Code of practice* and engage with other requirements of the Academic Infrastructure, reflecting relevant subject benchmark statements. Most elements of the Academic Infrastructure are embedded within the course documents, and each awarding body has validated these. Alignment with the Academic Infrastructure is checked regularly by external examiners and through the College's internal approval processes. The HNC Construction course team takes the Academic Infrastructure into account when undertaking the design of student assessments. In addition, the Edexcel units are designed to engage with the Academic Infrastructure. Changes in the Academic Infrastructure are monitored by the University and by the College's Marketing Department. The latter ensures that changes are discussed with curriculum leaders. The University provides the franchised courses' teaching staff with copies of all relevant University documentation. College staff have access to the University staff development opportunities, which include consideration of the Academic Infrastructure.

### **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?**

14 The College fulfils its obligations for ensuring standards in a number of ways, one of which is the attention paid to external examiners' reports. External examiners are appointed by the University to monitor the franchised courses. They provide reports covering the whole of the collaborative scheme. In response to the Developmental engagement in assessment action plan, for the Foundation Degree Early Years Childhood Studies, the University has amended the design of its external examiner's report to include a section that allows specific commentary on the College's franchised provision. Although there is no specific section in the teacher training reports, the College tutors confirm that the external examiners for the provision provide individual verbal feedback, including identifying areas of good practice for each college. In addition, the centre leaders from the University meet on a monthly basis with the Teacher Training Manager to discuss student achievement and retention. This ensures that standards across the collaborative provision are comparable and underpins the integrity of the provision. The University forwards the reports to each college, expecting them to address any action points. The reports are used to inform the College Higher Education Standards Group which monitors the provision. In the interests of transparency, copies of the reports and action plans can be deposited in the College's electronic portal for sharing staff communications. The three curriculum areas are expected to generate action plans, based on external examiner comments, with the Higher Education Standards Group monitoring progress against these plans. The College is required to consider the external examiner reports as part of its annual monitoring process and to address any general and college-specific issues in its course reviews.

15 The College's internal verification process ensures that all assessment briefs are verified before use and assessment decisions sampled as appropriate. This also ensures that they satisfy the requisite standard and engage with the Academic Infrastructure. In the main, the assessments sampled by the team are appropriate and align with the intended learning outcomes and Edexcel's guidelines. Their results are monitored on a regular basis, as is the progress of individual students. For the HNC Construction this is undertaken through termly course reviews. Formal assessment panels for the HNC Construction are held annually, with all members of the teaching staff attending. In addition, the practice of including an independent person and a student representative on the panel of the HNC Construction Assessment Board lends objectivity and transparency to its decisions. This engages with the guidance provided in the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students* and represents good practice.

16 With the exception of the HNC Construction, all assignments are produced and moderated by the University. First-marking is carried out by College tutors and internal moderation by second-marking of a sample of students' work. The University also arranges cross-scheme moderation meetings involving staff from all partner colleges. At these events the standardisation of marking is also undertaken. With the exception of the Foundation Degree Early Years Childhood Studies, course assessments are subject to internal verification by College tutors. A steering group led by the University internally verifies the Foundation Degree Early Years Childhood Studies assignments. External examiner reports confirm that assessment decisions are fair and consistent and set at the appropriate level. The Chief External Examiner Report for the teacher training courses states that the 'assessments were appropriate and decisions were reliable and moderation systems effective'. The team confirms that assessment processes and practices are rigorous and fair. The external examiners, who highlight the quality of the supporting moderation processes, support this.

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

17 The higher education teaching staff's curricula vitae demonstrate a good range of vocational experience and qualifications, both academically and in curriculum-related skills. The complementary skills of the teaching teams ensure that there is a pool of expertise upon which to draw. Staff regularly participate in curriculum-based staff development and, through professional journals, in appropriate subject updating. Most of the franchised course tutors participate in the University's continuous professional development programmes. The College also has a policy of expecting staff to engage in a minimum 30 hours per year of staff development, which aligns with the requirements of the Institute for Learning (Post Compulsory Education and Training). This encourages staff to update their vocational knowledge and skills on a continuous basis. In particular, the team was impressed by the development and advanced use of the virtual learning environment, demonstrated by one tutor, to enhance the quality of students' learning. Although the College has no arrangements for the professional updating of staff, staff appraisal is used to ensure that they engage in appropriate staff development congruent with the needs of the courses. Regular staff appraisal is used to match staff development needs to the curriculum and to address weaknesses. The students indicate that teaching is 'supportive and vocationally credible'. The team concludes that the College's arrangements for developing staff skills and professional development are compatible with the needs of its courses and the requirements of the University. They are well matched to deliver the courses and underpin academic standards.

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

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

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

18 The arrangements described in paragraphs 9, 10, 11 and 12 also apply in supporting the quality of learning opportunities. For the franchised courses, the University's training agreements define clearly the expectations for the delivery and quality of learning opportunities. The College has an Assignment and Assessment Policy, which is a component of the College's Corporate Manual and covers all its learners. Teaching staff confirm their awareness of the policy's content and some course teams have undertaken related staff development to ensure that they understand its principles. In addition, the HNC in Construction is expected to operate within Edexcel's guidelines, and the Foundation Degree Early Years Childhood Studies and the teacher training courses in accordance with the framework provided by the University. Linked to the Assignment and Assessment Policy are policies for internal verification and moderation and academic misconduct. These policies, together with the guidelines provided by the awarding bodies, underpin the framework for the delivery of the courses within which all tutors operate.

19 The quality of higher education programmes at the College is delegated to the course teams and managed effectively by the Higher Education Standards Group. Quality reports relating to the higher education courses are considered and monitored by the Higher Education Standards Group, which reports on them separately to the Senior Management Team and Governors. The processes and procedures implemented for higher education closely align with the quality management processes operating for the College's further education programmes. In addition, the University exercises oversight over the Foundation Degree Early Years Childhood Studies and the teacher training courses. Edexcel, through its external examiner system, has oversight over the quality of learning opportunities for students undertaking the HNC Construction.

20 The College has a well-developed quality review system, which is applied to all its programmes, including the higher education courses. All undertake a comprehensive course review, as detailed in paragraph 12, which is central to the evaluation and enhancement of the provision. College staff from each of the franchised courses are expected to attend regular meetings with the other partner colleges and the University. The meetings focus on managing and enhancing the quality of the provision, sharing good practice and curriculum development. The team concludes that they strengthen the quality of the provision and enhance the quality of learning opportunities for the College's higher education students.

21 Operational management and evaluation of the courses is delegated to the course teams, who hold regular meetings to review retention, progress and achievement. The meetings address any issues relating to the quality of learning opportunities, including matters raised by students, staff or employers, and progress on actions arising from the course reviews, external examiner reports and feedback from the collaborative provision meetings.

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

22 The arrangements described in paragraphs 9, 10, 11 and 12 also apply in supporting the quality of learning opportunities. The franchise arrangements with the University, the documentation supplied by them and the programme approval process with Edexcel define the obligations of the College for the delivery of its higher education courses. Membership of the university programme management and steering group processes by the College's tutors ensures that the course teams understand these obligations. Regular visits by University link tutors strengthen this understanding and support College staff in the implementation of University policies and procedures for the delivery of the provision. The College is able, through the process of internal reporting to the Higher Education Standards Group, to assure itself of the quality of learning opportunities on the franchised courses. The relationship between the HNC Construction team and the Edexcel external examiner provides a more limited opportunity. The expanding use of the virtual learning environment to promote additional learning opportunities is welcomed by students. For example, for the HNC Construction, teaching staff make innovative use of the virtual learning environment to deliver the detailed curriculum and offer students the opportunity to extend and broaden the scope of their studies.

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

23 The arrangements described in paragraphs 9, 10, 11 and 12 also apply in supporting the quality of learning opportunities. They take account of the Academic Infrastructure. For the HNC Construction, Edexcel designs the programme specifications. However, the course team has the responsibility and discretion to select appropriate modules in designing the course. They also have discretion regarding the course's assessment and delivery, which is expected to engage with the Academic Infrastructure and the *Code of practice*. In meetings with the team, the College higher education course teams and support managers articulated their awareness of the *Code of practice* and its more recent revisions. The team is satisfied that, in supporting the delivery of learning opportunities for students, College staff engage with the Academic Infrastructure.

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

24 The College has a well-documented scheme for the observation of teaching, which is integrated with its staff appraisal process. Senior managers and curriculum managers trained in grading teaching and learning according to Ofsted criteria undertake the lesson observations. Until recently much of this observation has focused on further education teaching. Recently instigated by the Higher Education Standards Group, the observation of teaching and learning has been extended to ensure that teaching staff delivering the higher education provision are similarly observed in that capacity. The separately collated reports for higher education show that teaching staff are achieving consistently high grades for their teaching. Students confirm that the quality of teaching on all of the higher education courses is high and that a variety of methods of delivery are used. Students on the teacher training and the Foundation Degree Early Years Childhood Studies courses complete an evaluation at the end of each module. The team concludes that the College provides an effective framework for managing students' learning that is compatible with the University's requirements and enhances the quality of the provision.

25 The College has introduced an electronic student information portal to enhance the communication among stakeholders on each student's progress. This contains up-to-date information on student attendance, assessment outcomes and progress, with provision for access by employers, tutors and by individual students. It can also be used to inform students about the preparation needed for future tutorials. It allows staff to rapidly access and address issues. The students and tutors endorse its value and the team concludes that the electronic student information portal, which allows student performance to be monitored, demonstrates good practice.

26 For the Foundation Degree Early Years Childhood Studies and the teacher training courses, effective liaison between course teams and the workplace mentors ensures that employer feedback on the quality of the programmes is collected, albeit informally. Comments are considered at team meetings and, where appropriate, are reported at the relevant University collaborative meetings. For the HNC Construction, liaison with employers is developing, with student assignments being forwarded to employers for their comments and to check their vocational relevance. This process represents good practice. In addition, employers are invited to attend final-year project presentations and express their views. Employer access to the student information portal is very recent, but has the potential to make more effective the liaison between course tutors and construction industry employers. The Developmental engagement in assessment action plan identified that liaison with employers was an area in need of development. In response, the College has published an employer charter that details the expectations of stakeholders. It is too early to evaluate its effectiveness.

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

27 The College ensures that all students have an effective induction to their programme and that this incorporates a series of assessments, which ensure that additional learning support needs are addressed. For those students who have indicated a disability or learning difficulty during the application process, there is the opportunity for a formal assessment of need by certified College practitioners and assistance with an application for a Disabled Students' Allowance. This facility is available at any point during students' period of study at the College and is particularly helpful to those progressing to the University at the commencement of their new course. The team concludes that this facility, underpinned by an assessment of need undertaken by the College certified practitioners, represents good practice.

28 The successful inclusion of regular small-group tutorials for all students and the opportunity it presents for individual contact is particularly well regarded by the students. The workplace mentors and workplace tutor visits provide a high level of individual support for each student undertaking work-based learning. The learner voice processes are used effectively to ensure the College that appropriate support is provided to students. The opportunity for the part-time students to contact staff using the virtual learning environment or email is also considered a strength by students. Student views are sought using end-of-module evaluations, focus groups facilitated by an independent member of staff, and through forums that use the virtual learning environment for communication. Course teams and the Higher Education Standards Group collate this feedback and use it, for example, to make changes to the course delivery schedule and College facilities. Students welcome the opportunities for discussion and feedback offered through the focus groups. Personal development planning is well embedded and is a key process by which students develop skills of self-evaluation and can reflect on and monitor their progress through the course and during teaching observation. The team concludes that the formal opportunities for feedback from students operate well and encourage them to express their views.



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

29 The arrangements described in paragraph 17 also apply in supporting the quality of learning opportunities. The College uses information derived from the observation of teaching and learning linked to its staff appraisal process to monitor and identify individual staff development needs. A programme of College-based training is also arranged to address generic needs and teaching staff are encouraged to participate in the range of continuous professional development opportunities offered by the University. The team reviewed tutors' staff development records and conclude that the range and variety of courses completed by teaching staff are appropriate and have the capacity to enhance the quality of learning opportunities.

**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?**

30 The University validates the franchised courses. As part of this process, it requires the College to ensure that sufficient resources are made available to discharge its responsibilities. The adequacy of resources for the HNC Construction is considered during visits made by the Edexcel external examiner. Most courses undergo a College approval process, which includes an assessment of the adequacy of staff and physical resources to deliver the courses. In the main, students are satisfied by the adequacy of the resources, but comment on the limited supply of books in the library for some areas of study. The College learning resources centre has recently addressed this concern by providing student access to electronic books and a single sign-on access and identity service to the online resources, databases and journals, to which the College has subscribed.

31 Students are satisfied with the access they have to the College's libraries and learning resource centre. However, they are frustrated by the difficulties that they experience when they need to access the internet in the College, and to undertake research using the library's reference texts. Often, students need to leave their computers to find texts identified by their web search. When they return, their web access, which is time-limited, may have automatically logged off, leaving them to re-access the website that they are using. This is time-consuming and inhibits the student learning process. The team recommends that the College review student needs for access to library texts through the internet and provide guidance on the use of appropriate and less time-consuming search strategies.

**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?**

32 In response to the Developmental engagement in assessment action plan, the College has reviewed the information available to prospective higher education students. The College now publishes an adult prospectus in which brief details of its higher education courses are included. The College website has a separate section that provides clear and detailed information about its higher education provision, although there is limited information about the study support for students and facilities that are available. A range

of marketing materials is published to support advertising and events, with all published materials produced to accord with the College's corporate style. Materials to support the advertising and marketing of the franchised courses are either supplied by the University or agreed with it in advance. All higher education students receive a College Student Handbook. The HNC Construction students receive course and module handbooks and assignment briefs published by the College. Students and employers for franchised courses are provided with programme-specific documentation approved and provided by the University.

33 The College's Learner Handbook covers both its further and higher education courses and contains clear and concise information about the services that can be used to cater for individual student needs. The handbook is available electronically on the College's website and is provided in the College induction pack. The team concludes that the Learner Handbook contains clear and unambiguous statements on what students can expect from the College and what it expects of them and is a strength of the provision.

34 For the franchised and the HNC courses the content of programme specifications is reflected in the course handbooks and in the module and assignment supplements provided by the awarding body. They are also accessible online in the virtual learning environment. The HNC in Construction course and its modules are prescribed by the guidance and unit content of the BTEC Higher National Certificate and Diploma in Construction, with the intended learning outcomes linked to teaching units. For the Foundation Degree Early Years Childhood Studies, the programme specification aligns clearly with the *Guidelines for preparing programme specifications*, published by QAA. The University of Bolton's programme specification template ensures a concise description of each course's intended learning outcomes. In the case of the teacher training courses, much of the content expected of a programme specification is embedded in the module and assignment supplements, which provide greater flexibility in style of presentation and are more readily geared to the needs of tutors and students.

35 An examination of the course documentation confirms that material published by the College either comes directly from the awarding body or is adapted by course teams from Edexcel's guidance and units. All appropriate information, including that for complaints and appeals, is covered. The University of Bolton compiles the majority of the material for the students on their franchised programmes. All the handbooks and materials produced for students are checked for accuracy and currency by individual course tutors and approved at the Higher Education Standards Group meetings. The students are well satisfied with the documentation that they receive about their programmes. The overall quality of the information is to an acceptable standard commensurate with the size of the higher education provision. The use of the model documentation provided by the University of Bolton, principally course handbooks, is considered by College staff to be helpful in ensuring the equivalence of standards across participating providers.

**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?**

36 The College holds a Matrix Award indicating a standard of quality and commitment to providing accurate information, advice and guidance to its students and staff. It has well-defined procedures for ensuring that published information is accurate and complete, with final approval for publishing confirmed by the College's Marketing Department in conjunction with curriculum leaders and senior management and, where appropriate,

with the University. In the memorandum of cooperation between the partners there is no formal mention of the University's role in vetting information prior to publication. However, in practice, paper-based and web-based documentation is reviewed and checked for accuracy by the University's Collaborative and Business Partnership Section, prior to its publication. At the College, the Curriculum Leader is ultimately responsible for checking the accuracy of the information, in particular for the HNC Construction. The reviews by the University of Bolton of the Foundation Degree Early Years Childhood Studies and the Post Graduate Diploma/Certificate in Education, prior to their redesignation, ensured that course documentation is clear, appropriate and engages with the Academic Infrastructure. Given the limited number of courses for which the College is responsible and the significant role played by the University of Bolton, the arrangements made for checking and monitoring the information of the franchised courses with the College are an adequate response compatible with the size of the provision.

37 The use of the College's virtual learning environment is expanding and moving from a repository of information to one that encourages interaction with tutors and learners and fosters electronic learning opportunities. It contains extensive information about the courses and regulatory information governing students' assignments. At present, it is used to keep students informed about their courses and to provide guidance and feedback on assessment. The College's Corporate Manual contains detailed policies on assessment and teaching and learning, which are reflected in course handbooks and module guides. The College's virtual learning environment is not integrated clearly with these policies. As its use expands to underpin student learning and communication, it requires a guiding strategy to ensure that its implications and opportunities for teaching and learning and assessment are fully considered. Given the virtual learning environment's importance in underpinning the quality of student learning, the team recommends that it is desirable for the College to develop an information technology strategy that provides guiding principles and a framework that is integrated with its teaching, learning and assessment policies.

**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**

38 The Developmental engagement in assessment for Salford City College was undertaken in January 2009. There were three lines of enquiry as follows.

**Line of enquiry 1:** How is the College assured that its assessment strategy underpins academic standards and engages with the Academic Infrastructure?

**Line of enquiry 2:** How effective is the College strategy for engaging stakeholders in its assessment practice?

**Line of enquiry 3:** Can reliance be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information published about assessment?

The lines of enquiry covered the implementation of the awarding body regulations on assessment across the courses and the responsibilities of the College in these processes. The scope of the Developmental engagement in assessment covered all of the higher education courses offered by the College.

39 The Developmental engagement identifies a number of areas of good practice. The inclusion of an independent person and a student representative on the panel of the HNC Construction Assessment Board is confirmed as strengthening the objectivity and transparency of its decisions. In addition, the HNC Construction tutors provide thorough developmental feedback and opportunities for self-reflection on students' assessed work. Academic standards are underpinned by a robust system of monitoring acting upon external examiners' reports. The student information portal provides access to data for the stakeholders and the virtual learning environment presents an effective forum for dialogue on assessment between tutors and students. The public information represented in the College's Learner Handbook presents clear statements on what can be expected from the College and its students.

40 The report identifies as advisable recommendations that academic standards would benefit from the development of an overarching higher education strategy and the further development of the central role of the Higher Education Standards Group in monitoring standards. Furthermore, it is desirable to engage in dialogue with the awarding body to secure more distinctive information about its courses from external examiners' reports. Similarly, information presented to prospective students should be reviewed to ensure that it better serves their needs. In each case the College has responded with appropriate solutions compatible with the size of the provision. In particular, the Higher Education Standards Group has evolved to play a key role in securing standards and improving the quality of learning opportunities for students.

## **D Foundation Degrees**

41 As of June 2008, there is one Foundation Degree, as follows:

- Foundation Degree Early Years Childhood Studies (University of Bolton).

42 In January 2009 Salford College merged with Eccles College and Pendleton College to form Salford City College. Following the merger it planned to provide more Foundation Degree courses over the next three years. It is now unlikely that the portfolio for its directly funded provision will increase. The opportunities for the expansion of its higher education provision, as outlined in its Higher Education Strategy, have been curtailed as a consequence of the withdrawal of funding for new capital building projects and the lack of additional funding for students. The College is working with the Greater Strategic Manchester Alliance, the University of Bolton and Salford University to develop its provision to meet the needs of local employers and potential students.

43 In its evaluation of the Foundation Degree Early Years, the team identified the following areas of **good practice**:

- the Higher Education Standards Group that oversees the College's higher education courses, which has a broad and expanding remit to ensure that the provision engages with the *Code of practice*, monitor standards and moderate the courses (paragraph 11)
- the electronic student information portal that enhances communication and contains up-to-date information on each student's attendance records, assessment outcomes and progress, with the provision for access by employers, tutors and by individual students (paragraph 25)
- for those students who have indicated a disability or learning difficulty during the application process, the opportunity for a formal assessment of need by certified

College practitioners and assistance with an application for a disabled students' allowance (paragraph 27).

The team identified the following areas where it would be **desirable** for the College to take action:

- review student needs for access to library texts through the internet and provide guidance on the use of appropriate and less time-consuming search strategies (paragraph 31)
- develop an information technology strategy that provides guiding principles and a framework for the integration of the virtual learning environment with its teaching, learning and assessment policies (paragraph 37).

44 The outcome of the Foundation Degree's review by the University of Bolton in 2007 confirms that appropriate structures are in place to deliver academic standards and that student learning experiences are appropriate, as required by the University. Since then, in conjunction with the collaborative partnership, the course has continually been developed and enhanced. In its evaluation of the courses, the review team finds that it has confidence in the framework of policies and procedures that underpin the academic standards of the courses, which are continually being improved. Similarly, it has confidence that Salford City College is discharging its responsibilities to an appropriate standard, as required by the University of Bolton, in offering an acceptable range and quality of learning experiences to its students. In addition, the review of documentation available as public information to stakeholders and the structures that control its verification confirm 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.

## **E Conclusions and summary of judgements**

45 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Salford City 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 body, the University of Bolton.

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

- the Higher Education Standards Group that oversees the College's higher education courses, which has a broad and expanding remit to ensure that the provision engages with the *Code of practice*, monitors standards and moderates the courses (paragraph 11)
- the practice of including an independent person and a student representative on the panel of the HNC Construction Assessment Board, which lends objectivity and transparency to its decisions (paragraph 15)
- the electronic student information portal that enhances communication and contains up-to-date information on each student's attendance records, assessment outcomes and progress, with the provision for access by employers, tutors and by individual students (paragraph 25)
- the practice of forwarding the HNC Construction student assignments to employers for their comments and to check their vocational relevance (paragraph 26)

- for those students who have indicated a disability or learning difficulty during the application process, the opportunity for a formal assessment of need by certified College practitioners and assistance with an application for a Disabled Students' Allowance (paragraph 27).

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

The team also agreed the following areas where it would be **desirable** for the College to take action:

- review student needs for access to library texts through the internet and provide guidance on the use of appropriate and less time-consuming search strategies (paragraph 31)
- develop an information technology strategy that provides guiding principles and a framework for the integration of the virtual learning environment with its teaching, learning and assessment policies (paragraph 37).

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

49 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, and other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that it has **confidence** that, in the context of this Summative review, the College discharges its responsibilities effectively, as set out in the relevant partnership agreement for the management of the quality of learning opportunities to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

50 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, and other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that, in the context of this Summative review, reliance **can** be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Salford City College action plan relating to the Summative review: March 2010						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<p>In the course of the Summative review the team identified the following areas of <b>good practice</b> that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the Higher Education Standards Group that oversees the College's higher education courses, which has a broad and expanding remit to ensure that the provision engages with the <i>Code of practice</i>, monitors standards and moderates the courses (paragraph 11)</li> </ul>	<p>Meeting calendar with fixed agenda items attended by representatives of the awarding body, senior managers and appropriate delivery staff. This should ensure that quality assurance is integral to the activities of the Higher Education Standards Group.</p>	<p>Ongoing, with consideration given at the meetings that are scheduled four times each term.</p>	<p>Assistant Principal/ Vice Principal (Skills) and Higher Education Standards Group</p>	<p>Minutes of meetings with actions that are evaluated. All policies are reviewed and approved by the board.</p>	<p>Higher Education Standards Group, Assistant Principal/ Vice Principal (Skills), Group Senior Management Team</p>	<p>All courses are closely monitored and aim to maintain exemplary levels of teaching and learning. External examiner reports are monitored. In addition to course reviews, learner feedback is evaluated and assessed. Matters requiring attention are considered twice each term and the impact of improvements is evaluated and shared across the courses.</p>

Salford City College action plan relating to the Summative review: March 2010						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the practice of including an independent person and a student representative on the panel of the HNC Construction Assessment Board lends objectivity and transparency to its decisions (paragraph 15)</li> </ul>	<p>Continue with good practice in this area. Pilot the good practice within the Foundation Degree Early Years, the Post Graduate Diploma and Certificate in Education (in service) and the Professional Graduate Diploma in Education courses.</p>	<p>Every semester or after the results of students' assessments have been inter-nally verified.</p>	<p>Head of Department for Higher Education, course leaders for higher education programmes</p>	<p>Minutes of meetings, focus groups (meeting twice a term)</p>	<p>Assistant Principal/ Vice Principal (Skills) and Higher Education Standards Group</p>	<p>Feedback from stakeholders shared with all higher education provision representatives at the higher education meetings and on the higher education College's management information system "SharePoint drive". The representative on the panel for the HNC Construction Assessment Board has been confirmed and the role's effectiveness in lending objectivity and transparency will be evaluated continuously.</p>



Salford City College action plan relating to the Summative review: March 2010						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the electronic student information portal that enhances communication and contains up-to-date information on each student's attendance records, assessment outcomes and progress, with the provision for access by employers, tutors and by individual students (paragraph 25)</li> </ul>	Continue with the pilot process with a view to its full implementation in September 2010.	September 2010	Assistant Director, Management Information Systems/ Information Technology	An evaluation of the twice-termly feedback from the stakeholders. Students have access to their individual performance as do their employers.	Higher Education Standards Group	Measurement of employer access and usage. Evaluation of the impact on students' grades and progression into sustainable employment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the practice of forwarding the HNC Construction student assignments to employers for their comments and to check their vocational relevance (paragraph 26)</li> </ul>	Continue with current good practice, evaluate all employer responses	Sample assignments forwarded to employers in a timely manner	Heads of department for Higher Education and course leaders for higher education	Outcomes of assignment sampling for internal verification. External examiner reports	Assistant Principal/ Vice Principal (Skills), Higher Education Standards Group, Group Senior Management Team	The employer-led, vocationally relevant assignments that are recognised through the internal verification process and in external examiner and verifier reports. The potential improvement in learner outcomes and the number of high grades achieved by students.

Salford City College action plan relating to the Summative review: March 2010						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>for those students who have indicated a disability or learning difficulty during the application process, the opportunity for a formal assessment of need by certified College practitioners and assistance with an application for a disabled students' allowance (paragraph 27).</li> </ul>	<p>Continue with the practice of sending an offer of interview letter to those students that disclose a disability or learning difficulty at application stage. Where appropriate, continue to assess students for disabled students' allowances and assist with their applications. Liaise with the awarding body and the local education authority to organise interim and on-course support. Continue to promote transition and higher education events.</p>	<p>Application stage then ongoing until July 2011</p>	<p>Additional Learner Support Manager and dyslexia specialist team holding practicing certificates</p>	<p>Learners supported at higher education level. Learners successfully receiving disabled students' allowances</p>	<p>Higher Education Standards Group</p>	<p>Evaluate feedback from learners to determine how effectively they are supported. Disabled student allowance reports that are written to an appropriate standard. Raised awareness of the support required for higher education and level three learners that wish to progress to higher education courses.</p>

Salford City College action plan relating to the Summative review: March 2010						
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<p>The team agreed the following areas where it would be <b>desired</b> to take action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>review student needs for access to library texts through the internet and provide guidance on the use of appropriate and less time-consuming search strategies (paragraph 31)</li> </ul>	<p>Ensure that the library resource is expanded to provide sufficient and appropriate texts for all higher education learners to access. Timetable specialised sessions for all learners to provide them with technical instruction on access to appropriate search engines.</p>	<p>To be timetabled from September 2010</p>	<p>Assistant Principal/ Vice Principal (Skills), Head of Department for Higher Education, Head of Department Child Care, Head of Department Teacher Education</p>	<p>The effectiveness demonstrated in the learner feedback obtained through the twice termly student focus groups</p>	<p>Heads of Studies, Assistant Principal/ Vice Principal (Skills), Higher Education Standards Group, Group Senior Management Team</p>	<p>Undertaken from the tutors' detailed written feedback on assignments, which evidence the extent of research material available. Focus groups, which provide feedback on the extent to which learners have been using appropriate search engines.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develop an information technology strategy that provides guiding principles and a framework for the integration of the virtual learning environment</li> </ul>	<p>Provide information technology strategy group members, including those from higher education, with a remit to develop, pilot and implement</p>	<p>September 2010</p>	<p>Assistant Principal/ Vice Principal (Skills), Head of Department for Higher Education, Head</p>	<p>The monitored usage of the virtual learning environment. Good practice identified through internal</p>	<p>Scheduled course reviews and learner focus groups. Lesson observation feedback</p>	<p>Access and use of the virtual learning environment by the learners. Evaluate learner feedback on the</p>

Salford City College action plan relating to the Summative review: March 2010						
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
with its teaching, learning and assessment policies (paragraph 37).	the information technology strategy for higher education		of Department Child Care, Head of Department Teacher Education, Assistant Director, Management Information Systems/ Information Technology, Higher Education Standards Group	verification, external examiner and verifier reports. The quality of assignments and subsequent high grades and student perception of the courses.	specific to good practice in the use of information technology.	effectiveness of information technology opportunities provided to students. Performance indicators that are pertinent to the higher education provision.

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