



Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

Sandwell College

May 2012

SR 060/12

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ISBN 978 1 84979 637 8

All QAA's publications are available on our website www.qaa.ac.uk

Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

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 Sandwell 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:

- the range of staff development opportunities and the support provided by the College to access them impacts positively on the student learning experience
- student support, and in particular support for students with additional learning needs, is comprehensive and facilitates the achievement of learning outcomes
- the approval and induction processes for staff new to higher education ensure that staff are well prepared and supported in delivering at this level
- mechanisms for sharing good practice, for example the peer observation scheme and the cascading of staff development and scholarly activity at management committees, are effective in supporting quality improvements.

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:

- review student representation on higher education committees to ensure students have direct input into decision making and access to meeting minutes and full external examiners' reports.

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

- formalise the recording of the uptake of generic staff development at awarding body institutions to better inform internal staff development and enable fuller dissemination
- review the use of the virtual learning environment and promote further interactive learning opportunities that enhance the student learning experience
- review the interpretation of minimum content requirements for student handbooks and improve the consistency of information provided in handbooks.

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 Sandwell 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 West London, the University of Wolverhampton and Edexcel. The review was carried out by Dr Philip Davies, Dr Heather Barrett-Mold (reviewers) and Mrs Freda Richardson (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 partnership agreements with awarding body universities, responsibilities checklists, the College's higher education strategy 2010-15, and terms of reference and minutes of higher education management committees. In particular, the team drew on the findings and recommendations of the Developmental engagement. A summary of findings from this Developmental engagement is provided in Section C of this report. As the College has a small higher education provision, the Summative 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 assist HEFCE to gain information to assist with the assessment of the impact of Foundation Degree awards, Section D of this report summarises details of the Foundation Degree programmes delivered at the College.

4 Sandwell College is a general further education college situated in the West Midlands. Nearly two-thirds of all students come from Sandwell, which ranks 16th out of 354 local areas within England for indices of high levels of deprivation. Unlike other local authority areas there are no areas of affluence. In 2011 the percentage of pupils gaining five or more GCSE subjects at A* to C, including Mathematics and English, was 50 per cent compared to a national average of 58 per cent. The rate of unemployment is about 3 per cent above the national average. Nearly three-quarters of Sandwell students come from areas of high deprivation.

5 The College operated across three campuses in substandard accommodation until February 2012 when all provision moved to a single state of the art new building. The College offers provision in all subject sector areas with the exception of agriculture, horticulture and animal care. In 2011-12, 4,645 students were enrolled on further education programmes of whom 1,956 were full-time and 2,689 part-time. There are 152 learners studying at higher level (above level 3), of whom 142 are on HEFCE-funded courses.

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

6 The College has partnership agreements with two universities, the University of Wolverhampton and the University of West London (formerly Thames Valley University). It also offers directly validated Edexcel provision and one HND validated under license by the University of Wolverhampton. Programmes are listed under the awarding body, with full-time equivalent numbers for 2011-12 given in brackets.

Edexcel

- HNC Mechanical Engineering, offered over two years part-time (6.5)
- HNC Photography, also two-years part-time (14.5)

University of Wolverhampton

- HND Photography, two years full-time (24)
- FD Business Management, full-time, level 4 only offered at the College (17)
- FD Business Management, part-time, in first year of operation (2)
- FD Early Years Services, part-time, level 4 only offered at the College (9)
- PCE/PGCE, two years part-time, franchised (12)

University of West of London

- FD Computer Systems Management, two years part-time (6.5)

Recent developments in higher education at the College

7 The College's programme of curriculum development outlined in its strategic plan 2010-15 has been difficult to achieve due to funding constraints. A part-time route to the Foundation Degree Business Management has been successfully launched, and the College has been successful in its core and margin bid, gaining an extra 34 full-time places. It will use these additional numbers to broaden the curriculum base by offering courses in Sport, Engineering and Public Services from September 2013.

8 The College moved into its new building in February 2012. This provides state of the art resources and supports the development of higher education provision across all of curriculum areas (subject to funding). In addition the new building provides a suite of four rooms dedicated to the delivery of higher education.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

9 Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the team. Each higher education programme tutor met with their group and gave an overview of the IQER process. They were then invited to produce a written submission and a number of students provided the views of their group. This was helpful in supporting the findings of the review and validating evidence provided in the self-evaluation and portfolio. The review coordinator and review support officer also met a representative group of students at the preparatory meeting for this desk-based 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?

10 There are clear responsibilities and reporting arrangements for the management and delivery of higher education standards. The College is responsible for course delivery, assessment and internal moderation, and the quality of teaching and learning. It adheres to awarding body requirements for annual evaluation and review. Higher education is managed using college-wide processes and reporting lines as well as a number of specific higher education committees. The Higher Education Management Group has met twice since its establishment in July 2011. It advises on quality, reviews external examiner reports, discusses future provision, and recommends the approval of curriculum-related policies and procedures for higher education. The Higher Education Examination Board reviews grades achieved, learner progression, awards referrals and deferrals. The Higher Education Curriculum Group meets monthly to review provision issues, monitor cross-college action plans and to consider national developments. It is an effective forum for the sharing of good practice. The responsibilities for managing and delivering higher education standards are well embedded in the College's systems and procedures.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

11 Partner universities are responsible for course approval and robust validation processes ensure courses align with the Academic Infrastructure. Programme specifications relate to relevant subject benchmark statements and reflect the level descriptors in the FHEQ. College managers maintain currency in the Academic Infrastructure by their close links and collaborative working with university colleagues. They disseminate updates at the Higher Education Management Group which is attended by all higher education staff. Further dissemination takes place at the Higher Education Curriculum Group and in targeted staff development sessions. The Academic Infrastructure is used effectively to inform course design and delivery, and to secure standards.

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?

12 Management of higher education is monitored internally through the committee structures outlined in paragraph 10. These committees are designed to advise, evaluate and constructively criticise. The cross-college Quality and Curriculum Review Board makes recommendations on course approvals to the Executive Team. The Learner, Quality and Curriculum Committee and Quality and Curriculum Approval Panel receive and agree the recommendations prior to university approval. The Learner, Quality and Curriculum Committee has both student and governor representation.

13 All courses are monitored through the annual course reviews which are detailed and comprehensive and scrutinised by the Quality and Curriculum Review Board. Annual review meetings start with course teams who gather evidence from external examiners, students, data, modules, and resourcing. A completed report with an action plan is written by the team leader and the head of department. Course reviews are

agreed by the Higher Education Management Group and feed in to the wider college self-assessment process, and to partner university quality systems, for provision that is not directly validated by Edexcel. Topics covered include actions from external examiner reports, assessment plans, student achievement, progression, student support, additional support, tutorial plans, work experience, student feedback, resources and staff development. Draft action plans are submitted to the quality and standards department and checked by the Quality Manager and the Director of Curriculum who agree any changes with the head of department. Completed action plans are then reviewed at course team meetings and at the Higher Education Management Group. Implementation of actions is monitored by the quality and standards office.

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

14 The College has recently introduced a higher education staff development policy to promote the attainment of high standards and to further support the sharing of good practice. A staff development day is held at the end of the academic year which includes a higher education element. This is well attended and appreciated by staff. In addition staff are able to take up to 15 days per year (or the equivalent in hours per week) of self-initiated study to engage in scholarly activity and staff development. The content of the 15 days is negotiated with College management who require a report accounting for use of the time and its impact on student learning. This analysis is shared through the Higher Education Curriculum Group and in some areas demonstrates a clear impact on the student learning experience, for example in photography.

15 The College also provides support for professional updating, the attainment of master's level qualifications, professional certification, participation in public exhibitions, attendance at annual trade fairs, and the fostering of external links with professional bodies. Partner universities provide staff development opportunities that staff are encouraged to engage with and that are generally well attended, although not all are recorded (see paragraph 31). The range of staff development opportunities and the support provided by the College to access them impacts positively on the student learning experience and is good practice.

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

Core theme 2: Quality of learning opportunities

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

16 Responsibilities for the management of standards explained in paragraph 10 also relate to the management of quality of learning opportunities. Reporting structures support the monitoring and management of quality well. At course level, quality management is carried out by course leaders and reported through the management structure to the Director of Curriculum. There is a good collaborative handbook that is used by staff and sets out ways of working with the University of Wolverhampton. There is a detailed allocation of responsibilities between the partner universities and the College for each course.

Activities that are delivered jointly, for example student induction, are planned by the partners prior to delivery, and evaluated by both parties on completion.

17 Course reviews explained in paragraph 13 are an effective mechanism for monitoring the quality of learning opportunities as well as the management of standards. These reviews ensure that actions are completed in a timely manner and enable any required changes to action plans to further enhance quality. In addition heads of department attend regular curriculum reviews with the executive team where they are required to account for the quality of the provision and the efficient operating of programmes in their area.

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

18 Courses are reviewed for quality and effectiveness by external examiners who report that all programmes have robust checking and monitoring processes. Partner universities provide collaborative link staff and collaborative conferences that facilitate effective liaison with College staff and assist in quality monitoring. There are good mechanisms for monitoring and enhancing quality across the provision and for ensuring the requirements of awarding bodies are met.

19 All courses have student representatives who are invited to attend the Higher Education Management Group to provide feedback. They are also invited once a term to attend weekly team meetings to present their views. However, there is no student membership on key decision-making committees, for example the Quality and Curriculum Committee and the Higher Education Curriculum Group. Students do not have access to the minutes of these meetings, to annual monitoring action plans or to external examiners' reports. The team considers it advisable that the College reviews student representation on all College committees to ensure students have direct input into decision making and access to meeting minutes and full external examiners' reports, preserving confidentiality where required.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

20 Paragraph 11 on the Academic Infrastructure relating to academic standards also applies to the College's management of the quality of learning opportunities. In addition, at validation the College is required to satisfy the awarding bodies of its ability to manage processes for quality assurance in higher education and its ability to meet the expectations of the Academic Infrastructure. Staff training on the Academic Infrastructure took place in May 2011. This included a mapping of College policies and procedures which is most relevant to staff working in support, advice and guidance. The *Code of practice* has been used to inform ways of working, for example in the admissions and assessment appeals policies and procedures and in careers advice and learning support.

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

21 The teaching and learning policy is a comprehensive document that covers all levels of the College provision. Higher education tutors also teach on the further education courses and use the same policy throughout their work. The policy has underlying principles that include recognition of the individual needs of students, inclusivity, and the need for interesting and stimulating learning environments. It aims to improve the quality of teaching

and the effectiveness of students' learning and achievement through continually enhancing the ways in which students and staff are supported and developed.

22 The College has a process for annual lesson observation, managed centrally by the quality department. The outcomes of observations are linked to annual appraisal and staff development. The main documentation for lesson observations is common across higher and further education but specific higher education grading criteria are used. These are comprehensive and relate to the underlying principles of the teaching and learning policy. In addition there is a good process of voluntary peer observation that is managed locally, with all staff expected to arrange at least one such observation a year. The documentation for this process facilitates the sharing of good practice. There are informal reciprocal arrangements for the peer observation of teaching between College staff and colleagues at partner universities.

23 There is an effective approval process for staff teaching on higher education courses. This includes an internal review by the Director of Curriculum and externally by the partner university. Staff teaching on higher education courses must be appropriately qualified and have experience of teaching at this level.

24 The College has a number of mechanisms for capturing the student voice. There are numerous opportunities for students to comment on teaching and the quality of courses. This includes student representatives, online surveys, module surveys and focus groups. Students value these opportunities and indicate that the College is highly responsive to any issues they raise. The results confirm that the quality of teaching and learning is good.

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

25 Students indicate that the admissions process is helpful. Most students have an interview to check the appropriateness of the course for them and to provide helpful information. Students have an induction at the College and in some cases an additional induction at the partner university. Induction introduces them to College policies, procedures and academic regulations as well as the College infrastructure, including access to a range of support, teachers and timetables, and their course handbooks.

26 Students have regular tutorials as a group or on a one-to-one basis. Full-time courses are timetabled with an allowance of one hour a week and students are able to access their tutors outside of this time. Part-time students also have access to tutorial support. The role of the personal tutor is to offer support, advice and guidance in relation to study, progression, finance, and assessment of prior experiential learning. Personal tutors also provide general support on an individual basis. Students use their course leader or personal tutor in the first instance to discuss queries or issues they have relating to their studies.

27 The College's student services team offers information, advice and guidance to all students. This includes support with careers, UCAS, welfare, safeguarding and finance. Students speak favourably about the support that they receive. They can access study skills support in the form of written information and guides, for example on referencing, classes on specific study skills as part of their course, and by accessing additional support through Study Link. There is a good range of support available for students with specific learning needs; the current uptake is 8 per cent with significant support provided and an expectation of successful achievement for those involved. Student support, and in particular support for students with additional learning needs, is comprehensive, facilitates the achievement of learning outcomes and is good practice.

28 Most students find the formative and summative assessments clear and fair. Feedback is helpful, consistent and enables them to understand what to do to make improvements. Business students are aware that their work is marked twice and commented that this gives them confidence that marking is fair.

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

29 Staff development needs are identified through a range of mechanisms including probation, annual course reviews, staff performance reviews, student feedback, and lesson observations. There is a comprehensive induction process for newly recruited teaching staff. Staff new to higher education are mentored by a member of staff and shadow experienced teachers before they commence teaching at this level. This includes the opportunity to shadow senior staff at the awarding body. The mentee will share some of the delivery of a module, which may be at the partner university, and the mentor will observe and sign off the mentee on successful completion. The College provides time for this process to take place. The approval and induction processes for staff new to higher education ensure that staff are well prepared and supported in delivering at this level.

30 Update briefings and training activities attended by staff are cascaded through the Higher Education Curriculum and Management Groups. There are good mechanisms for the sharing of good practice and the outcomes of scholarly activity and self-initiated study, including through the higher education management committees and the peer observations system. These are effective in supporting quality improvements.

31 Staff attend programme and planning events at partner universities and are able to attend more generic events, although attendance at the latter is not currently captured by the College and as a result is less likely to be cascaded internally. The team considers it desirable that the College formalise the recording of the uptake of generic staff development, at awarding body universities, to better inform internal staff development and enable fuller dissemination.

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?

32 The College moved to its new single campus building in February 2012. This has a separate higher education student zone consisting of three classrooms and an open learning area. Students expressed some concern about the size of the new photography studio, but staff have worked with students to discuss possible mitigating measures should they be required. Students asked for a higher education common room and this has been incorporated into the new building. Students talk positively about their experience and confirm that staff take account of, and try to accommodate, their concerns wherever possible.

33 Teaching staff review their textbook and supporting reading requirements annually for the following year. All books recommended on the programme specifications are purchased. The College purchases additional texts and multiple copies of the texts that are in high demand, in consultation with staff.

34 The College has an information learning technology strategy which includes a section and action plan for the development of the virtual learning environment, although actions mostly do not have timelines. The virtual learning environment is used as a repository for information and provides students with access to teaching and learning

resources. Engineering students confirmed that lesson information is provided on the College virtual learning environment and also on memory sticks. However there is no process for checking minimum requirements on the College virtual learning environment as it is not used as an interactive teaching and learning tool. Students on an award validated by a partner university have access to the university's virtual learning environment and these allow for some interactivity. Students on Edexcel validated provision only have access to the College virtual learning environment. The team considers it desirable that the College reviews the use of the virtual learning environment and promotes further interactive learning opportunities that enhance the student learning experience across all higher education provision.

35 Employers are involved with the courses especially through their contribution to the programme of external speakers on higher education courses and in particular on HND Photography. Part-time students on the Foundation Degrees in Early Years Services and Computer Systems Management are in employment and this enhances their learning experiences on the course. The Foundation Degree in Computer Systems Management is endorsed by a well known hardware manufacturer and offers students employability support through their information portal. Full-time students of the Foundation Degree Business Management find their own two-week work placement. The College undertakes an annual survey of current employer links to canvass their views on the whole College curriculum offer, and when new provision is planned training requirements are researched. However there is no specific research aligned to the higher education curriculum offer.

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?

36 The College is responsible for publishing a variety of information about its funded higher education including in the main prospectus, on the website and in course handbooks. Module guides for collaborative programmes are produced by the awarding university. There is no separate higher education prospectus, although the College provides a wallet folder which contains course information. The marketing department is responsible for maintaining the website and for marketing courses in traditional and digital media. Higher education is marketed through the website, higher education and progression events, advertising for College open events, web advertising and course listings sites. Students find the information that they receive prior to enrolment useful and accurate.

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?

37 The College has robust systems for checking the information which it publishes. The College website is taken to be the central repository of accurate course information in a standardised format suitable for public understanding. It is subject to a set of monitored procedures to check for completeness and accuracy and, once given final approval, the College uses course information from the website as the source for advertisements, leaflets,

brochures and prospectuses. The team found that this is an effective process and the material published on the website is accurate and complete.

38 Student handbooks are provided for each course and contain comprehensive material based upon a template which sets out the minimum content requirements. The handbooks are generally detailed and include reference to programme and module specifications, attendance regulations, useful information on support mechanisms, and advice on referencing and the avoidance of plagiarism. The quality department monitors the handbooks and checks the content against the minimum requirements. There is however variability in the level of detail provided, as the minimum requirements can be interpreted differently and the head of department has the final decision about the level of detail to include. This results in a lack of consistency in content. For example some handbooks have full details of module content while others contain only the module titles. Module details are available in other formats, for example of the virtual learning environment. The team considers it desirable that the College reviews the interpretation of minimum content requirements for student handbooks and improves the consistency of information provided in handbooks.

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.

Summary of findings from the Developmental engagement in assessment

39 The Developmental engagement took place in October 2010. The review considered three lines of enquiry, as follows.

Line of enquiry 1: How effective are assessment strategies in enabling learners to achieve intended learning outcomes and is this adequately supported by the provision of information to students?

Line of enquiry 2: How does the College ensure that all procedures for assessing and the moderation of assessment are fair and transparent and monitored to guarantee that they are in line with awarding body regulation?

Line of enquiry 3: How effective is the content and timing of feedback in enabling students to improve and progress in their learning?

40 The team found the range of assessment strategies employed on the HND and HNC photography courses, timely feedback on assessment which is provided within two weeks, and the variety and type of formative feedback used to support student learning and improvement to be good practice.

41 The College was advised to review the minimum requirements of student handbooks and strengthen the process by which handbooks are monitored and checked for accuracy and completeness, and to ensure all module guides provided to students are complete and accurate. The team considered it desirable that the College consider the development of a higher education staff development policy to provide a more formal approach to the support and monitoring of scholarly activity, develop a more consistent approach to capturing the student voice and review the practice and policy of submitting draft summative assessments for feedback. The College has made good progress with

these recommendations and in particular with staff development and the introduction of self-initiated study to support scholarly activity and continual professional development. The process for monitoring the completeness and accuracy of student handbooks has been strengthened. However the minimum content requirement is currently open to interpretation and it is recommended that the College review this and ensure greater consistency.

D Foundation Degrees

42 The College offers two Foundation Degrees validated by the University of Wolverhampton. These are in Business Management (full-time) and Early Years Services (part-time). In both cases students complete level 4 of the course at the College and then progress to level 5 at the university. The College is hopeful that it will be able to deliver both levels of these Foundation Degrees in future years.

43 In addition the College offers a part-time Foundation Degree in Computer Systems Management which is validated by the University of West London. The College delivers levels 4 and 5 in collaboration with the awarding body partner. Students attend occasional workshops and weekend courses run by the University in addition to attending the course at the College. The College has plans to further develop their Foundation Degree provision using student numbers allocated through the core and margin bidding process.

44 All the findings of the Summative review relate to foundation degree provision; none are specific to the small amount of higher national and PGCE/PCE provision offered by the College.

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

45 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 Wolverhampton, the University of West London, and Edexcel.

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

- the range of staff development opportunities and the support provided by the College to access them impacts positively on the student learning experience (paragraph 15)
- student support, and in particular support for students with additional learning needs, is comprehensive and facilitates the achievement of learning outcomes (paragraph 27)
- the approval and induction processes for staff new to higher education ensure that staff are well prepared and supported in delivering at this level (paragraphs 23 and 29)
- mechanisms for sharing good practice, for example the peer observation scheme and the cascading of staff development and scholarly activity at management committees, are effective in supporting quality improvements (paragraphs 10, 14, 22 and 30).

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

- review student representation on higher education committees to ensure students have direct input into decision making and access to meeting minutes and full external examiners' reports (paragraph 19).

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

- formalise the recording of the uptake of generic staff development at awarding body institutions to better inform internal staff development and enable fuller dissemination (paragraphs 15 and 31)
- review the use of the virtual learning environment and promote further interactive learning opportunities that enhance the student learning experience (paragraph 34)
- review the interpretation of minimum content requirements for student handbooks and improve the consistency of information provided in handbooks (paragraph 38).

49 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.

50 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.

51 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.

Sandwell College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2012						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
In the course of the Summative review the team identified the following areas of good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the range of staff development opportunities and the support provided by the College to access them impacts positively on the student learning experience (paragraph 15) 	<p>Yearly summary of staff development activity to be compiled and circulated to all higher education teaching staff</p> <p>Presentations to be made to Higher Education Curriculum Group to facilitate good practice</p>	<p>October 2012</p> <p>October 2012</p>	<p>Director of Curriculum</p> <p>Course leaders, Deputy Director Higher Education</p>	<p>Summary Report</p> <p>Minutes of Higher Education Curriculum Group meetings</p>	<p>Vice Principal Teaching and Learning</p> <p>Vice Principal Teaching and Learning</p>	<p>Student survey and focus group commentary on the quality of learning experience</p> <p>Good practice is shared and disseminated</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> student support, and in particular support for students with additional learning needs, is comprehensive and facilitates the achievement of learning outcomes (paragraph 27) 	Maintain and monitor the identification and implementation of additional learning support	October 2012	Additional Learning Support manager	Appropriate and timely support in place	Deputy Director Higher Education	Student survey and focus group and additional learning support records

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the approval and induction processes for staff new to higher education ensure that staff are well prepared and supported in delivering at this level (paragraphs 23 and 29) 	Continue to implement existing induction processes for staff new to higher education	September 2012 and January 2013	Heads/team leaders of relevant curriculum areas	Well prepared staff and high quality teaching and learning	Deputy Director Higher Education	Collaborative records Student survey and focus groups
	Refine College induction policy for teachers new to higher education	September 2012	Deputy Director Higher Education		Vice Principal Teaching and Learning	Higher education Induction policy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> mechanisms for sharing good practice, for example the peer observation scheme and the cascading of staff development and scholarly activity at management committees, are effective in supporting quality improvements (paragraphs 10, 14, 22 and 30). 	Peer observation process to be formalised and reports disseminated more widely	September 2012	Head of Quality	Good practice to be identified and shared	Director of Curriculum	Peer observation records Higher Education Curriculum group minutes of meetings
	Maintain current arrangements for cascading staff development via Higher Education Curriculum Group Carry out departmental exchanges in order to share good practice	June 2013	Curriculum heads of department			Records of departmental exchanges
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"> review student representation on higher education 	Student representation from each curriculum area to attend their	October 2012	Curriculum team leaders	Higher education students actively involved in	Vice Principal Teaching and Learning	Higher Education Management Group minutes

<p>committees to ensure students have direct input into decision making and access to meeting minutes and full external examiners' reports (paragraph 19).</p>	<p>Higher Education Management meetings with Vice Principal Teaching and Learning, Director, Head of Quality, Deputy Director Higher Education and relevant head of department and programme leader</p> <p>Students to be invited to team meetings</p> <p>Minutes of Higher Education Management meetings and full external examiners' reports to be disseminated to students through higher education representatives</p>	<p>September 2012</p>	<p>Curriculum team leaders</p>	<p>decision making</p>		<p>Feedback to course representatives</p> <p>Team meeting minutes</p>
<p>Desirable</p>	<p>Action to be taken</p>	<p>Target date</p>	<p>Action by</p>	<p>Success indicators</p>	<p>Reported to</p>	<p>Evaluation</p>
<p>The team considers that it is desirable for the College to:</p>						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> formalise the recording of the uptake of generic staff development at awarding body institutions to better inform 	<p>Online system to be set up on 'teaming' which will enable higher education teaching staff to record and review staff development at</p>	<p>September 2012</p>	<p>Director of Information Learning Technologies</p>	<p>Online system in place for recording attendance at generic staff development events</p>	<p>Vice Principal Teaching and Learning</p>	<p>Summary of activity to be produced for all higher education curriculum areas</p>

<p>internal staff development and enable fuller dissemination (paragraphs 15 and 31)</p>	<p>awarding body institutions</p> <p>Evaluation documentation to be maintained centrally</p> <p>Standing agenda item to be included in Higher Education Curriculum Group meetings for staff to feedback attendance and outcomes of generic staff development</p>	<p>September 2012</p>	<p>Deputy Director Higher Education</p>	<p>Dissemination of staff development information</p>		<p>Higher Education Curriculum group meetings</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> review the use of the virtual learning environment and promote further interactive learning opportunities that enhance the student learning experience (paragraph 34) 	<p>College-wide information learning technologies strategy to be reviewed. This will include a virtual learning environment policy that will promote interactive learning. Staff will receive training</p> <p>A separate area of the virtual learning environment will be created specifically as a higher education forum. This will facilitate group work and peer support</p>	<p>December 2012</p> <p>October 2012</p>	<p>Director of Information Learning Technologies</p> <p>Director of Information Learning Technologies</p>	<p>Virtual learning environment to be used for interactive learning</p> <p>Virtual learning environment to be used for interactive learning</p>	<p>Vice Principal Teaching and Learning</p> <p>Vice Principal Teaching and Learning</p>	<p>Student survey and focus group and review by Higher Education Curriculum Group</p> <p>Student survey, focus group and review by Higher Education Curriculum Group</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> review the interpretation of minimum content requirements for student handbooks and improve the consistency of information provided in handbooks (paragraph 38). 	Review all handbooks	August 2012	Deputy Director Higher Education /Head of Quality	Accurate and consistent student handbooks	Director of Curriculum	Errors and or omissions highlighted and corrected
	Minimum content requirements of student handbooks to be revised to expressly state what must to be included	September 2012	Deputy Director Higher Education /Head of Quality	Accurate and consistent student handbooks	Director of Curriculum	Head of Quality to sign off all handbooks as accurate and complete

RG 981 08/12

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