Southern Regional College

Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review, Northern Ireland: Summative Review by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

April 2013

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, Northern Ireland (IQER NI).

Purpose of IQER NI

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, NI 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 NI focuses on three core themes: academic standards, quality of learning opportunities and public information.

The IQER NI process

IQER NI is a peer review process. It is divided into two complementary stages: Developmental engagement and Summative review. In accordance with the published method, all DEL-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 student submission by the student body
- a preparatory meeting between the college and the IQER NI coordinator several weeks before the Developmental engagement visit
- the Developmental engagement visit, which normally lasts 2.5 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 DEL-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 NI coordinator and QAA reviewers. They do not include nominees.

Evidence

In order to obtain evidence for the review, IQER NI review 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 NI review teams' expectations of colleges are guided by a nationally agreed set of reference points, known as the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. This is published by QAA and consists of three main parts:

- Part A: Setting and maintaining threshold academic standards
- Part B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality
- Part C: Information about higher education provision.

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 NI

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 NI. Progress against these action plans is monitored by QAA in conjunction with DEL 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 Southern Regional College carried out in April 2013

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

Good practice

The team has identified the following **good practice** for dissemination:

- the number and range of opportunities offered by the College to develop students' employability skills and increase awareness of business and industry culture
- the collation, analysis and sharing of student support activities
- the College's engagement with the process of providing information to meet the diversity of student needs, resulting in the award of two chartermarks.

Recommendations

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

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

- ensure that a detailed, standardised policy for the submission of Edexcel assessments is implemented across the College
- ensure the consistent implementation of its internal verification policy
- ensure that the terms of reference for the regulation and operation of assessment boards are clarified to ensure that the Edexcel specialist guidelines and the Quality Code, *Chapter B6: Assessment of students and accreditation of prior learning* are followed
- ensure that the target for completing programme specifications by September 2013 is achieved
- ensure that all higher education staff become fully conversant with the Quality Code
- ensure the consistency of the core content and the quality and depth of supplementary information in student handbooks.

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

- analyse separately and routinely teaching observation sample outcomes for higher education classes
- continue to develop its website in order to give greater emphasis to its higher education provision, thereby enhancing its public profile.

A   Introduction and context

1   This report presents the findings of the Summative Review of higher education funded by the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) conducted at Southern Regional 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 that the College delivers on behalf of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, City and Guilds, Edexcel, Education Development International, the Institute of Accounting Technicians in Ireland, Liverpool John Moores University, Stranmillis University College, and the University of Ulster. The review was carried out by Mr Jonathan Doney, Ms Lorraine Lavery, Mrs Heather Miller, Ms Patricia Millner, Mrs Trudy Stiles (reviewers) and Dr John Barkham (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, Northern Ireland* (the handbook), published by QAA. Evidence in support of the Summative Review included documentation supplied by the College and awarding bodies, meetings with staff, students, employers and partner institutions, and reports of reviews by QAA. 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 UK Quality Code for Higher Education, developed by QAA on behalf of higher education providers.

3   In order to assist DEL in gaining 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   The College is one of six large regional colleges in Northern Ireland. It is located across six main campuses at Portadown, Lurgan, Kilkeel, Banbridge, Armagh and Newry. It also delivers courses at over 30 outreach centres within the region, utilising community and public buildings to ensure education reaches those who need it most. The College focuses on providing further and higher education, including professional, technical and academic studies, from introductory level to advanced and degree level work, as well as a significant number of recreational courses. In the light of this strong vocational focus the provision is largely determined by the needs of the local community and its industry and commerce.

5   The College is committed to the provision of high-quality education and training which consistently meets the requirements of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), QAA and the awarding bodies. The long-term vision of the College is based on its desire to provide relevant and meaningful vocational learning opportunities delivered through high-quality and innovative teaching informed by effective quality improvement planning. The College's mission statement articulates what the vision will mean to individual learners. A series of underpinning core values help define the culture of the College. These values are used as the final arbiter in the College's internal processes and external relationships, as well as the interaction between staff and students.

6   The College has an enrolment of approximately 35,000 students with courses offered across nine schools: Computing and Business; Construction and Built Environment; Creative Studies; Early Years and Healthcare; Engineering and Automotive Studies; General Studies and Applied Science; Hairdressing and Beauty; Hospitality and Tourism; and Sports

Studies and Public Services. There are 1,714 students enrolled on higher education programmes and, of these, approximately 539 are full-time.

7   The following higher education programmes are provided by the College under the headings of their awarding bodies. Numbers of full-time (FT) and part-time (PT) students are given in brackets for each course:

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

- Level 5 Intermediate Diploma in Human Resource Management (PT 14)

City and Guilds

- Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Children's Care, Learning and Development (Management) (PT 33)
- Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Health and Social Care Services (Adult's Management) (PT 16)
- Level 4 Certificate in Advanced Automotive Diagnostic Techniques (PT 20)

Edexcel

- HNC Electrical/Electronic Engineering (PT 33)
- HNC Mechanical Engineering (PT 15)
- HNC/D Applied Biology (PT 27)
- HNC/D Health and Social Care (FT 76, PT 50)
- HNC/D Business (FT 37, PT 29)
- HNC/D Construction/Civil Engineering (PT 36)
- HND Creative Media Production (FT 11, PT 6)
- HND General Engineering (FT 24, PT 2)
- HND Graphic Design (FT 28, PT 5)
- HND Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy (PT 22)
- HND Interactive Media (FT 16)
- HND Management and Leadership (PT 20)
- HND Music (FT 29)
- HND Photography (FT 31, PT 73)
- Level 7 Extended Diploma in Strategic Management and Leadership (PT 11)

Education Development International

- Level 4 Certificate in Principles of Teaching (PT 26)

Institute of Accounting Technicians in Ireland

- Level 5 Diploma Accounting Technicians (PT 96)

Liverpool John Moores University

- BA (Hons) Creative Imaging (PT 28)

Stranmillis University College

- FdA Early Childhood Studies (PT 54)

University of Ulster

- AB English and History (PT 73)
- FdA Counselling (PT 82)
- FdSc Applied Medical Sciences (PT 29)
- FdSc Architectural Technology (PT 2)
- FdSc Computing (FT 36, PT 24)
- FdSc Computing and Network Systems (FT 54, PT 2)
- FdSc Hospitality and Tourism Management (FT 21)
- FdSc Interactive Multimedia (FT 38)
- FdSc International Culinary Arts (PT 21)
- FdSc Sport, Exercise and Fitness (FT 69, PT 1)
- FdSc Sustainable Construction (FT 30, PT 1)
- FdSc Travel and Tourism Management (FT 17)
- Level 4 Certificate in Counselling Studies (PT 82)
- Level 4 DipHE The Irish Language (PT 38)

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

8   The College continues to develop partnerships with a number of universities and other awarding bodies, enabling the provision of an increasingly diverse range of Foundation Degrees, an Associate Bachelor degree and honours degree programmes. The College has formal partnership agreements with the University of Ulster, Liverpool John Moores University, Stranmillis University College, Edexcel and City and Guilds. The College has ongoing license agreements with the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, Accounting Technicians Ireland and Education Development International to deliver their respective courses. Arrangements differ among the other awarding bodies. In the case of the University of Ulster, there is a Memorandum of Recognition to offer approved programmes of study leading to the University's awards. Students are not registered by the University but by the College. The University ensures that the academic standards meet the requirements of *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ). The period of recognition is five years from December 2010. The College has a contractual agreement with Liverpool John Moores University from September 2008 for five years. This makes possible the delivery of one honours degree programme. There is a Memorandum of Agreement with the Queen's University of Belfast through Stranmillis University College for five years from September 2011 for the delivery of the FdA in Early Childhood Studies. Its students are registered with Queen's. Changes to the programme are negotiated initially through Stranmillis, with final approval from Queen's. Edexcel does not have partnership agreements, but the College is subject to its Standard Note for Centres involved with IQER. This explains the roles and responsibilities of the College and Edexcel. The College is an Approved Centre for City and Guilds from 2012.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

9   An expanding portfolio of university-validated programmes seeks to ensure that students have the opportunity to further their education and improve their career prospects within their region. In response to the needs of local students, the College has desisted from introducing top-up fees for full-time higher education and continues to offer competitive rates for part-time higher education. The College plans to develop a more formal partnership with the University of Ulster to pilot a university campus within the Southern region. This will increase the portfolio of part-time higher education programmes and enable the College to work with the University in widening and increasing participation of under-represented student groups, particularly in rural areas. The College has recently launched its new Lord

Ballyedmund Science Suites in the Newry campus. Science provision at the Portadown campus has been further enhanced through the provision of a second science suite to consolidate the engagement with Almac and Norbrook Laboratories and the opportunity to invest in higher apprenticeships in laboratory techniques.

10   The i3 (industry, innovation and incubation) initiative aims to provide a more flexible and responsive service to business and industry and to progress curriculum developments and industry specialisms. This is to ensure that the curriculum is both relevant to industry needs and adequately equips students and lecturers with the knowledge and skills required to match employer requirements. The College is in the early stages of planning the introduction of Centres of Specialism which will be resourced with equipment and facilities that can be used to support applied research and technology transfer. This will lead to a more meaningful delivery of higher education and training and ensure that students are exposed to industry-relevant technology, equipment and training.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

11   Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the Summative Review team. The College's Student Activities Officer worked with students to facilitate the collation of student views for the written statement. This was achieved through a combination of focus groups, feedback through the College website and a social media site. The written submission was received after the Coordinator's meeting with a small student group at the preparatory meeting. It was well-constructed around the three core themes and presented a positive review of the student experience that proved useful to the team in preparing to meet students at the College.

B   Evaluation of the management of DEL-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?

12   The College is effective in delegating responsibilities for standards. The Director of Curriculum and Student Services, who has overall responsibility for the management of academic standards, is a member of, and reports to, the Senior Management Team which shapes higher education strategy and curriculum development. Regular reports on higher education performance are provided to the Chief Executive through the Monthly Report and the Education Committee of the Board of Governors, who have an active interest in higher education provision. The Director of Curriculum and Student Services and the Assistant Director of Teaching and Learning lead the HE Strategy Group, a subcommittee of the College Management Team. This subgroup was created as part of a recent management restructure and provides a dedicated forum for the implementation of the College's higher education strategy, development planning and management of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code). It meets monthly and is chaired by the Assistant Director of Teaching and Learning. Terms of reference define the role of the committee and membership which includes the nine heads of school and the Head of Quality Improvement.

13   The higher education coordinators meet regularly in a forum chaired by the Assistant Director Teaching and Learning and minutes of meetings are kept. The terms of reference of this group are not specified, but all higher education coordinators are invited and curriculum delivery and good practice are discussed. The coordinators value the opportunities given by the forum to ensure good communication and the sharing of best practice, including course management, assessment and resources.

14   Heads of school who appoint course coordinators and the teaching team are responsible at an operational level for the management of academic standards, supported by the Quality Improvement Unit and awarding bodies. The role of course coordinator is clearly defined and lead coordinators are appointed to ensure standardisation of the learning experience where a course is delivered on multiple campuses.

15   For Edexcel programmes, in order to provide information about assessment for students, course teams are required to complete the College's standard course handbook template for higher education and contextualise the assessment and internal verification policy. The guidance supplied for students under headings, including opportunities for reassessment and marking and grading conventions, is inconsistent across the Edexcel course handbooks. The team considers it **advisable** that the College implements a detailed, standardised policy for the submission of Edexcel assessments across the College.

16   The College has taken significant positive steps in managing assessment since the recommendation made as part of the Developmental Engagement in May 2011. The actions taken include staff development and peer mentoring of new teams. During the Summative Review visit, the team rigorously reviewed the assessment processes in three Edexcel programmes, four Foundation Degrees and one Associated Bachelor programme. In one Edexcel programme delivered by a new course team, the team found that there was inconsistency in internal verification, involving the identification of awarding body grading requirements and shortcomings in the standard of academic referencing. While a positive external examiner report was received for 2011-12, grading criteria and referencing issues were not raised through the College internal verification processes. The team considers it **advisable** for the College to ensure the consistent implementation of its internal verification policy.

How does the College assure itself that it is fulfilling its obligations to ensure that the standards of higher education provision meet the requirements of validating partners and awarding bodies?

17   The partnership agreements with the higher education institutions clearly specify roles and responsibilities for the management of higher education. The College has well-established working relationships with its university partners, who have responsibility for the oversight of academic standards. Subject partnership managers and university coordinators meet regularly with College programme coordinators and attend progress and examination boards and staff-student consultative meetings. In FDSc Culinary Arts, the Subject Partnership Manager assisted the programme team in implementing the accredited prior learning policy, including interview and admissions. The revalidation process is well understood by course teams and supported jointly by the University of Ulster and the College to ensure the relevance of the curriculum and the maintenance of academic standards. The College is actively involved in Northern Ireland higher education networks. The Principal, Director and Assistant Director of Teaching and Learning represent the College on collaborative forums and committees with the universities and awarding bodies.

18   The awarding bodies appoint external examiners. There is a clear process for programme teams to respond to external examiners' recommendations and these inform

school and programme self-evaluations. Areas of best practice and areas for improvement from external verification reports are routinely summarised by the Head of Quality and forwarded to the Curriculum Management Team, Senior Management Team and Governing Body. Internal examination boards for Edexcel programmes are held annually. However, guidance provided by the College for course teams about the function and purpose of the examination boards in the context of Edexcel specialist guidelines and the Quality Code is incomplete. The team considers it **advisable** that the terms of reference for the regulation and operation of assessment boards are clarified to ensure that the Edexcel specialist guidelines and the Quality Code, Part B, *Chapter B6*: *Assessment of students and accreditation of prior learning* are followed.

19   There is a systematic and responsive annual self-evaluation process that integrates with awarding body annual monitoring cycles and with college processes. All higher education programmes are required to produce annual reports and quality improvement plans. These are reviewed by the heads of schools and Head of Quality Improvement and then by a panel of senior managers to promote dialogue and encourage development. A comprehensive summary of good practice in information learning technology and pastoral care is produced by the Quality Improvement Unit and this is shared with schools to inform practice and shape development plans. The resulting action plans are monitored at unit, course, school and College management levels. Progress is reported to the Education Committee by the Director of Curriculum and Student Services. The College has introduced a performance management system including balanced scorecards, an organisational strategic management tool, to increase responsiveness and develop target setting and monitoring. The system has been trialled with staff, including senior and College management who are enthusiastic about its benefits to academic standards. The recent estates strategy, including the provision of science and engineering resources, was informed by this comprehensive approach.

What account is taken of the Quality Code?

20   The College is committed to ensure that programme specifications for all programmes are in place. However, not all courses are provided with them yet. There is a challenging schedule to implement these in line with *Chapter A3: The programme level* of the Quality Code by September 2013. University-validated courses have programme specifications provided by the higher education institution, which takes full account of the Quality Code. The University of Ulster programme specification template is adopted for use in all other higher education provision, with a clearly-timetabled plan to have programme specifications for all of the provision available for the new cohort of students in September 2013. The team considers it **advisable** that the College ensures this target is met for all programmes by September 2013.

21   The College has begun to raise staff awareness of the Quality Code. Curriculum managers and course coordinators have been briefed about it by the Head of Quality Improvement. All published sections have been posted on the College's virtual learning environment, together with additional documents explaining the impact on the College's higher education provision and the requirements for all programmes. Guidance from the individual awarding bodies has been disseminated and higher education course coordinators are responsible for ensuring that programmes are managed appropriately. The College is currently planning workshops through which course coordinators will provide guidance to course teams on key parts of the Quality Code. The College acknowledges that further work is needed to disseminate and implement the Quality Code and to achieve staff understanding of it. It is a College priority that will be overseen by the HE Strategy Group and HE Coordinators Forum. The team considers it **advisable** for the College to ensure that all higher education staff become fully conversant with the Quality Code.

22   The FHEQ has usefully informed the development of higher education programmes. For the forthcoming revalidation process, course coordinators from both FdSc Sport, Exercise and Fitness and FdA Counselling are working with the relevant University of Ulster faculties to undergo mapping exercises to ensure there is full alignment with the Quality Code, FHEQ, and subject benchmark statements, including progression requirements. FdA Early Childhood Studies staff have ensured links to the Quality Code and University regulations across their programmes.

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

23   The College has an effective process for managing staff development. The College holds a central training budget which is managed by the Staff Development Committee to prioritise training needs. The College has an active employee development programme that provides significant opportunities for staff to undertake continuous professional development. During the last academic year the College supported staff on a range of continuing professional development activities that included postgraduate teacher training, other postgraduate programmes and job-related training. The self-evaluation reports identify staff development opportunities. The Quality Improvement Unit produces a summary of good practice arising from programme self-evaluation reports, particularly highlighting areas for development of information and learning technology (ILT). This passes to the ILT Steering Group and informs the ILT Staff Development Plan. There are also staff development management training and support opportunities. In addition, the Performance Enhancement Programme, which includes peer observation, brings together a framework for the way in which course performance is reported and provides additional resources to support course teams and individual lecturers.

24   Induction for new staff is thorough. To begin with, they are briefed about the College, their School and their programme. Later, the schemes of work and assessments they devise are initially reviewed prior to distribution. Materials, which are held on the virtual learning environment, include health and safety regulations, College policies and procedures, the Management Information System, human resources, finance and information technology. Pedagogic induction for lecturing staff includes planning, e-registers, teaching strategies, assessment and class administration. Course teams and the course coordinator provide further support through team working. The HE Forum provides a platform for teaching staff to meet, discuss and share innovations and good practice.

25   Lecturing staff have the opportunity to take part in a range of staff development, both in-house and with higher education partners and associated awarding organisations. Several higher education staff are also practitioners whose currency and experience benefits the course teams. Membership of professional bodies provides a means of maintaining currency and taking part in research activities. One head of school provided their staff development day with a presentation on thermal imaging which influenced curriculum development.

26   Liaison with awarding body partners is effective in producing opportunities for staff development. Liverpool John Moores and Ulster universities make available to the College as much of their staff development programme as possible. Staff that attend are required to disseminate information to course teams or schools as relevant. Also, within Northern Ireland, there is a growing cross-college network to share staff development. For example, all HND course coordinators from across colleges in Northern Ireland met to share their experience.

27   The College's promotion of continuing professional development activities on innovative teaching and assessment strategies includes the reintroduction of the Teaching Thinking Certificate. The College has a lecturer appraisal process which includes the lesson observation scheme. The results are analysed by the Head of Quality Improvement to inform staff development plans.

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?

28   Responsibilities for managing the quality of learning opportunities reflect those for managing the delivery of academic standards discussed in paragraphs 12 to 16. The course management structure and the detailed e-course folder and audit contribute towards the management of the quality of learning opportunities. The Director of Curriculum and Student Services has overall responsibility for the management of the quality of learning opportunities and reports to the Senior Management Team. Regular reports on higher education performance are provided to the Chief Executive through the Monthly Report and the Education Committee of the Board of Governors, who have an active interest in higher education provision.

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

29   Responsibilities for fulfilling College obligations to its awarding bodies to ensure that students receive appropriate learning opportunities are discussed in paragraphs 17 to 19.

What account is taken of the Quality Code?

30   The mechanisms in place to ensure that the College takes full account of Quality Code expectations are discussed in paragraphs 20 to 22.

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

31   The College has sound arrangements for assuring the quality of teaching and learning. There are teaching and learning advisers allocated to support teams in all aspects of course management and delivery, teaching and learning, assessment, and implementing retention strategies. The College's Quality Improvement Unit works with individual schools and teams to improve the quality of the self-evaluation reports. Feedback indicates a high level of satisfaction among students with the quality of the teaching, including its variety and the assessment methods. The College offers students a variety of opportunities to influence the quality of teaching and learning, including a dedicated feedback email account, college-wide learner surveys, module evaluations and focus groups. There are guidelines on

course coordination and management and the College audits course management folders annually.

32   Sharing of good practice is undertaken effectively through school-level staff development meetings, the HE Forum and at University of Ulster events. The University of Ulster provides additional training and support for its course directors. There is helpful employer input into the design of programmes and in facilitating the availability of case studies and events for assessment purposes to ensure alignment with industry requirements. Dissemination of useful information and learning technology practice is an integral part of the College's ILT Strategy. Course directors chair examination boards in different schools, affording the opportunity to share good practice.

33   A programme enhancement process has been established to raise the quality of teaching and learning by providing advice and support on programme delivery, course management and quality assurance processes. College and DEL benchmarking data, including four-year data cycle analysis, are used to trigger intervention. For example, in the AB English and History and FdSc International Culinary Arts changed timetables and the delivery order of units to improve recruitment and retention in that course.

34   Classroom observations by trained colleagues are undertaken as part of the appraisal process. The Quality Improvement Unit identifies strengths and areas for improvement to share with schools, the HE Forum and the Governing Body to inform training activities. However, observation outcomes for higher education are not treated separately from those of further education. It is **desirable** for the College to make use of its thorough and well-embedded teaching and learning observation scheme to ensure that the observation sample outcomes for higher education classes are separately and routinely analysed and used to support enhancement.

35   Students report that they find the use of online video tutorials and discussion forums very useful. A draft information technology strategy will provide guiding principles and a framework for the integration of the virtual learning environment into the College's teaching, learning and assessment policies. Its Strategic Vision aims to support improvement and innovation in the delivery of teaching and learning. It also aims to enhance information technology skills and knowledge across teaching teams to embed e-learning and blended learning into the curriculum, including the use of online assessment and collaborative tools. A variety of appropriate methods is used to enhance the relevance of programmes and employability awareness, including industry visits, demonstrations of new equipment and approaches and guest speakers, for example in the FdSc Culinary Arts, HND Hair and Beauty, and the FdSc Architectural Technology. Students are also signposted to relevant external events to enrich their learning, for example in the AB English and History.

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

36   Pastoral support is a significant strength of the College. The comprehensive range of student services is well communicated to students through a high-quality student handbook, at induction, on the virtual learning environment and on notices within the College. The clear Learning Support Policy sets out the College's strong commitment to support for potential and existing students with a learning difficulty or disability. All learners can self refer to the Learning Support Coordinator at each campus for additional support at any point from application onwards. Higher education students are supported appropriately in applying for the Disabled Students' Allowance and, when successful, are provided with all necessary technologies and other support to assist them. The College currently holds two Royal National Institute chartermarks; Sensory Engagement, and Action on Hearing Loss. Students find academic staff very supportive and approachable and these positive working

relationships provide a further level of pastoral care. There is a well-developed and acclaimed Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance service which is involved with pre-enrolment advice and with enabling students to make well-informed future career choices.

37   There are clear student admissions criteria for higher education programmes. As part of the College's retention strategy, the pre-enrolment advice sessions provide an excellent opportunity for all prospective higher education students to determine the appropriateness of the programmes on offer and help them select those most suitable to their abilities and career aspirations. They also provide an opportunity for students to disclose any learning needs, enabling the College to provide suitable support mechanisms at an early stage. On the FdSc International Culinary Arts, the College operates a robust and effective Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning system to admit students with non-traditional qualifications. Students have subsequently reached high levels of achievement.

38   Students receive a useful, comprehensive induction programme during which they are introduced to their personal tutor. This is the main point of contact for every student for general advice or referral to other appropriate services in the College. The personal tutor conducts weekly group tutorials. The generic personal tutorial scheme of work for the year includes opportunities for students to develop valuable personal and employability skills as well as to prepare for job applications. Students also have beneficial individual academic progress reviews each term that update their electronic Individual Learning Plan to promote improvements in learning and achievement.

39   The College provides a number of effective ways to develop students' academic skills. The Learning Resource Centre staff provide specific higher education group sessions at induction for library, research and academic referencing skills. These are followed up on their programme through activities offered to tutorial groups or individuals on a needs basis. Where weaknesses become apparent, students can access Essential Skills classes. Study skills are incorporated into the personal tutorial scheme of work and some programmes have specific modules. Students are very appreciative of the wholehearted help provided by librarians.

40   Where programmes have a requirement for work placement, students are well supported by careful preparation, clear work placement handbooks, good employer liaison and tutor visits. For other programmes, vocational learning is enhanced by industry links such as visits to companies, occupationally appropriate guest speakers, use of 'real life' projects and, often, the tutor's own industrial experience. A number of extracurricular activities enrich the students' learning experience and increase understanding of the world of work. Enterprise and entrepreneurship is nurtured by student involvement in enterprise competitions and activities as part of the Tutorial Programme and Activities Programme organised by the Student Activities Officer. The team considers that the number and range of opportunities offered by the College to develop students' employability skills and increase awareness of business and industry culture is **good practice**.

41   The College uses a wide range of student feedback mechanisms to identify the adequacy and accessibility of its student support activities. The Quality Improvement Unit produces a summary of good practice for pastoral care which is recorded in the programmes' self-evaluation reports. It is forwarded to heads of school and programme teams to disseminate good practice. The course, school and detailed Learning Support Area self-evaluation reports, along with analyses of retention data, are used to inform senior managers of the effectiveness of all the student support provision. Appropriate action plans are drawn up to bring about continuous improvement. Consistency of student support across all campuses is facilitated by monthly meetings of the Learning Support Team and group

training sessions which include support staff engaged on a casual basis. The team considers the collation, analysis and sharing of student support activities to be **good practice**.

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

42   The College's arrangements for higher education staff development are as described in paragraphs 23 to 27.

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?

43   Students confirm that they have ready access to the learning resources and materials they need for their work, including the College's virtual learning environment and electronic systems. The adequacy of human and physical learning resources and the effectiveness of their utilisation is evaluated annually by the Curriculum Management and Senior Management Team levels through the self-evaluation process. Student Services use analysis of enrolment data, hardship fund applications and marketing information to influence the location of courses and resources to meet student needs. The currency of resources is also reviewed during programme validation and revalidation conducted by awarding body partners. External examiners for the majority of programmes confirm that there are appropriate resources to support delivery and assessment. They also confirm the effectiveness of e-resources to support teaching, learning and assessment and recommend where additional equipment is required.

44   There is a dedicated coordinator appointed to meet campus management teams. Local employers are also engaged to ensure that resources are aligned to industry needs. The provision of learning and recreational space for the use by higher education students, together with a calendar of activities, is recognised as a high priority in plans for refurbishment and updating of the College's estate. A new higher education student common room on its Armagh campus has recently been opened. A schedule of needs is produced using school self-evaluation reports and four-year data trends to identify new space and resource requirements.

45   The College is aware of the need to foster a higher education ethos. It has invested in new engineering equipment, construction of new science laboratories and the purchase of new computers to support the delivery of higher education. New specialist lecturing staff have been appointed to help develop the i3 Centre and inform the curriculum. A team of teaching and learning advisers has been appointed to support the review of all aspects of course management and delivery.The College ILT Strategy and development of the information technology infrastructure facilitate the reporting of data to influence the planning of resources. This is achieved on a campus by campus basis. The availability of 24 hour access to e-resources off campus, including an e-library for higher education students, and new ways of flexible delivery of courses, all promote the meeting of learner needs, including the reduction of travel costs and time. The College plans to move to a hosted virtual learning environment site to maintain the reliability of its e-learning platform.

46   The College has engaged fully in the ongoing development of electronic resources to support the needs of learners. Students confirm that they are inducted in the use of e-resources such as the virtual learning environment, e-books and the e-library and use these resources to support their learning. They regularly use the virtual learning environment and access e-resources to achieve the intended learning outcomes for their programmes. Students are aware of their entitlement to access resources at partner universities,

for example on the FdA Early Childhood Studies course. Information technology facilities enable the submission of assignments online in the HND in Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy and the FdSc Computing and Network Systems. Resources are also offered to support the special needs of learners with disabilities, such as laptops, printers and dictaphones.

47   Student feedback that successfully pinpoints the need to achieve improvements in the resourcing of programmes is a strength of the provision. Students from AB English and History, the FdA International Culinary Arts, FdSc Sport Exercise and Fitness and the FdSc Computing and Networking Systems have had the opportunity to influence the sufficiency and accessibility of resources through the annual student survey, staff student consultative committees, campus focus groups, module evaluations and the Students' Union. Outcomes as a result of feedback include the opening of the library on Wednesday evenings, revised coffee shop opening times, solution of room timetabling issues, installation of software on additional machines, installation of wireless access and the availability of a new student common room. The team considers the variety of interrelated mechanisms, both formal and informal, through which students are able to feed back on the sufficiency and accessibility of resources and processes to support their learning is a strength of the provision.

> **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 DEL-funded higher education?

48   The partnership agreements with Liverpool John Moores University and Queen's University clearly state the College's responsibilities for publishing public information and the marketing of its higher education courses. A similar agreement is in place with the University of Ulster. For all other courses, the College assumes overall responsibility for producing materials for both internal and external publication.

49   There is generally satisfactory provision of published higher education information. A general college Prospectus, which includes all courses, is available in print and can also be downloaded from the College website. There is also a web prospectus which provides index-linked content. The Prospectus is advertised on the College's social media network at relevant times throughout the year. Under the direction of the Assistant Director Student Services, a comprehensive and informative Student Handbook is produced annually. This provides general guidance for students, including information on welfare and finance. The College publishes a range of other material, including newsletters and information packs in both printed and electronic form. The College Marketing Team is working with the Collaborative Partnership Forum of the University of Ulster in developing a range of leaflets for their associate students.

50   The College website provides comprehensive information about the College, its courses and policies. However, there is nothing on the home page to indicate that the College delivers any higher education programmes or who their higher education awarding body partners are. The College is aware of this and is currently taking steps to make its higher education provision more prominent and relevant information easily accessible.

The team considers it **desirable** that the College continues to develop its website in order to give greater emphasis to its higher education provision, thereby enhancing its public profile.

51   Where work placement is an integral part of the course, handbooks are available for both students and employers. These are compiled by course teams and are approved by the appropriate awarding body. The University of Ulster provides the College with placement handbooks for Foundation Degree courses validated by them, to which the College adds further subject-specific content as required. In all other cases, the College is responsible for their compilation, which is normally undertaken by course teams. Students and employers confirmed that they had received a handbook and that they found it comprehensive and useful.

52   An Employee Handbook is produced by the Employee Development and Equality Officer for all College staff. Due to the large volume of material it contains and to facilitate the immediate updating of policy documents, this is only available electronically. The content is hyperlinked to enable retrieval from the document store. The team considers this an easy-to-use and valuable resource for staff.

53   Documents such as the Prospectus can be made available in a range of alternative formats on request and disability access guides are available on all sites. The College has taken significant steps in the provision of information for the diversity of student needs. In recognition of this work, it has been awarded chartermarks from both the Royal National Institute of Blind People and the Royal National Institute for Deaf People. These organisations conducted an audit across the six College sites considering all aspects of the College environment. It also included an assessment of the College's printed materials, public information, signage and website. The way in which the College has engaged in this process is considered by the team to be **good practice**.

54   Using feedback from surveys, the College has reviewed its communication strategy and will continue to provide public information of major documents both in printed and electronic forms. The College has no plans to provide a dedicated higher education prospectus because marketing feedback recommended merging the three existing prospectuses. Therefore, the one dedicated to higher education has been merged into the main document for ease of use.

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?

55   The College's Communication Policy provides a regulatory and guiding framework for the publication of all internal and external communications and summarises staff and governors' responsibilities for these processes. Staff showed good awareness of this policy. The Course Information Cycle clearly shows individual responsibilities within the compilation and approval processes for course-related and public information.

56   General publications, such as the Prospectus, are centrally managed and coordinated by the College's Marketing and Communication Team under the direction of the Director for Workforce Development and External Relations. Awarding body approval must be sought for any published material carrying reference to them. Published information for couses validated by Queen's University is first submitted for approval to theTeaching and Learning Committee at Stranmillis University College, before being sent for final approval to the Communications and External Affairs Office at the Queen's University of Belfast.

57   The College has in place appropriate procedures for ensuring that its public information is accurate and complete. These procedures apply equally to both printed and electronic materials. Responsibility for the accuracy of course information lies with the appropriate Head of School working closely with the higher education coordinators who collate material from course teams. Heads of school are also responsible for ensuring the accuracy of information passed to the Marketing Team for inclusion in the Prospectus. To ensure this, information templates are distributed annually and are used to identify inaccuracies prior to publication.

58   Liverpool John Moores University, Stranmillis University College, and the University of Ulster each issue their own programme handbooks to the College. For all other higher education courses at the College, there is a standard template which gives clear guidance on core content. Course teams add to this to suit their specific programmes and awarding body requirements. These are issued on an annual basis by the Assistant Director Teaching and Learning. Handbooks are written by course teams and reviewed by the appropriate school management team with final approval given by the Head of School. For all collaborative provision the approval of the appropriate university Subject Partner Manager must be sought.

59   The Developmental Engagement (May 2011) recommended that the College 'include in its student course handbooks more detailed explanation and guidance about how assignments are assessed and how grades are contextualised.' This was reinforced at the Developmental Engagement Progress Update (May 2012). The team found student handbooks produced solely by the College showed a lack of consistency of core content and that the supplementary information varied in quality and depth. In the majority of cases the more detailed explanation and guidance on assignments, as recommended, is not included. This information can be found in module guides but, again, this varies in depth and detail and is inconsistently applied. The procedures described and presented as evidence to the team for ensuring the accuracy and completeness of information supplied to students in their handbooks are neither robust nor systematically applied. The team considers it **advisable** that the College ensures the consistency of the core content and the quality and depth of supplementary information in student handbooks.

60   The College website is the responsibility of the Marketing Manager under the direction of the Director for Workforce Development and External Relations. A member of the Marketing Team is specifically responsible for updating its content and liaising with staff throughout the College to ensure that all information is accurate and complete. The website is subject to an accessibility audit by external agents on a regular basis and adheres to recognised accessibility guidelines. The website is also subject to analytical audit on a monthly basis by the Marketing Team. This has informed its development, especially regarding its access, for example, by external mobile devices.

61   The College undertakes an annual survey of its printed public communications and has also recently conducted a survey for a review of its website. The feedback from students, employers and other stakeholders provides information on how this material is being used. In turn, this informs the College's strategic approach to publishing supported by stakeholder's views of the effectiveness of its communications. Views and recommendations from these surveys are collated by the Marketing Team who make recommendations to the Senior Management Team.

62   Student views on public information are obtained through focus groups and surveys conducted by the Marketing Team. The College has used images generated by students on its photography courses. Students reported that, overall, they were satisfied with the quantity and quality of the information that they received about the College and their course.

63   Staff showed good awareness of Part C of the Quality Code: 'Information about higher education provision' and the College is confident that its approach to meeting the expectations of this for public information is appropriate. Workshops to examine material already completed have taken place and the College is working toward the production of appropriate 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

64   The Developmental Engagement took place in May 2011. The area selected by the College was Assessment. There were three lines of enquiry. They reflected a broad range of issues relating to the area for review. The first was: How does the College assure itself that its assessment practices are consistent with the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*? The second was: How do the extended and enhanced assessment practices support the diverse learning preferences of the twenty-first century learner while ensuring students have the best possible opportunity to meet the stated outcomes of their programmes? The third was: How does the College ensure the accuracy and completeness of the published information on assessment that it is responsible for, and that this information is communicated effectively to the relevant stakeholders?

65   The team agreed a number of points of good practice. These included good examples of well-designed assessment briefs, clearly aligned to individual learning outcomes, the use of innovative assessment strategies, feedback tailored to students' needs and rigorous second-marking and/or internal verification. Students in creative studies review assessment briefs following the submission of their work in order to reshape them for the benefit of future student cohorts. The blended learning programme of the cyber group within the HND Photography is a good example of personalisation of learning. The level 7 Diploma in Strategic Management and Leadership provides students with the opportunity to submit assessments, and to receive feedback, online. A range of challenging and worthwhile alternative assessment strategies has been introduced across many programmes and, in all cases, students have responded positively.

66   The team made one essential recommendation, that the College take further steps to ensure that all subject staff at all levels manage the areas of the assessment process for which they are responsible in a way that is consistent with maintaining sound academic standards. There were four desirable recommendations. The team considered it desirable for the College to consider how student understanding of assessment regulations could be reinforced to ensure they know about the opportunities for progression and achievement and their implications; establish more effective mechanisms for obtaining student feedback on assessment as there is some inconsistency in some schools; include in its student course handbooks more detailed explanation and guidance about how assignments are assessed and how grades are contextualised; and undertake an exercise to map the College's specified learning outcomes into the assessment template supplied by Liverpool John Moores University for the BA (Hons) Creative Imaging.

D   Foundation Degrees

67   Queen's University is the awarding body for the FdA Early Childhood Studies. The other nine Foundation Degrees offered by the College are awarded by the University of Ulster. Two of these are FdAs and nine are FdScs (see paragraph 7). In response to the needs of local students, the College plans to develop a more formal partnership with the University of Ulster to establish a university base within the Southern region. This will increase the portfolio of part-time higher education programmes and enable the College to work with the University in widening participation of under-represented groups.

68   The College is well placed to further develop its portfolio of Foundation Degrees. The team has confidence that the College discharges its responsibilities effectively in assuring academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities for its students. In addition, 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.

69   In conclusion, the team noted three areas of good practice in university-validated Foundation Degree programmes, including the range of opportunities offered by the College to develop students' employability skills (paragraph 40). The team also made six advisable recommendations, of which two apply to Foundation Degrees (paragraphs 21 and 59), and two desirable recommendations (paragraphs 34 and 50).

E   Conclusions and summary of judgements

70   The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Southern Regional 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, Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, City and Guilds, Edexcel, Education Development International, Institute of Accounting Technicians in Ireland, Liverpool John Moores University, Queen's University of Belfast through Stranmilllis University College, and the University of Ulster.

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

•   the number and range of opportunities offered by the College to develop students' employability skills and increase awareness of business and industry culture (paragraph 40)
•   the collation, analysis and sharing of student support activities (paragraph 41)
•   the College's engagement with the process of providing information to meet the diversity of student needs, resulting in the award of two chartermarks (paragraph 53).

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

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

•   ensure that a detailed, standardised policy for the submission of Edexcel assessments is implemented across the College (paragraph 15)
•   ensure the consistent implementation of its internal verification policy (paragraph 16)

- ensure that the terms of reference for the regulation and operation of assessment boards are clarified to ensure that the Edexcel specialist guidelines and the Quality Code, *Chapter B6*: *Assessment of students and accreditation of prior learning* are followed (paragraph 18)
- ensure that the target for completing programme specifications by September 2013 is achieved (paragraph 20)
- ensure that all higher education staff become fully conversant with the Quality Code (paragraph 21)
- ensure the consistency of the core content and the quality and depth of supplementary information in student handbooks (paragraph 59).

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

- analyse separately and routinely teaching observation sample outcomes for higher education classes (paragraph 34)
- continue to develop its website in order to give greater emphasis to its higher education provision, thereby enhancing its public profile (paragraph 50).

75   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.

76   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.

77   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.

Southern Regional College action plan relating to the Summative review April 2013						
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:						
• the range of opportunities offered by the College to develop students' employability skills (paragaph 40)	1. Disseminate employability and entrepreneurship good practice the College Teaching and Learning Conference	August 2013	Assistant Director of Teaching and Learning in conjunction with Employee Development Unit and Quality Improvement Unit	Attendance of all higher education staff at conference	Director of Curriculum and Student Services	Evaluation of conference to be referenced though annual Higher Education and Student Services self evaluation reports and whole college quality improvement plan
	2. Establish employability and entrepreneurship as an agenda item to be discussed monthly at the the Higher Education Forum and Higher Education Coordinators' meetings	September 2013 - May 2014	Assistant Director Teaching and Learning in conjunction with the Higher Education Forum and higher education coordinators	Training from conference embedded for all higher education coordinators, with shared resources on higher education dedicated virtual learning	Director of Curriculum and Student Services	Annual Higher Education and Student Services self evaluation reports and whole College quality improvement plan Annual Higher Education and Student Services

				environment site		self evaluation reports and whole College quality improvement plan
	3. Further develop the work of student activities and enterprise interns	December 2013	Assistant Director Student Services in conjunction with the Higher Education Forum	Workshop from student interns to higher education coordinators Record of student tutorials Encourage increased participation by higher education students in 'BEST' skills competitions One entrant per STEM[1] focused School to participate	Director of Curriculum and Student Services	Quality improvement Unit audit report to Director of Curriculum and Student Services on survey results in June 2014
	4. Review impact of employability and entrepreneurship on all higher education learners annually as part of online learner survey	June 2014	Quality Improvement Unit	80 per cent positive student response on the effectiveness of employability and entrepreneurship on all programmes of study	Assistant Director Student Services and Higher Education Forum	

---

[1] Science, technology, engineering and mathematics subjects

Advisable	Action to be taken	Target	Action by	Success	Reported to	Evaluation
• the collation, analysis and sharing of student support activities (paragraph 41)	Produce a presentational PowerPoint and promotional materials for college staff to share best practice college wide on: retention, diversity, inclusion, disability awareness, pastoral care, and health and well-being	November 2013	Assistant Director Teaching and Learning and Assistant Director Student Services	Deliver presentation to Senior Management Team, Higher Education forum and higher education coordinators	Director Curriculum and Student Services	Annual Higher Education and Student Services self evaluation reports and whole college quality improvement plan
• the College's engagement with the process of providing information to meet the diversity of student needs, resulting in the award of two chartermarks (paragraph 53)	Produce a presentational PowerPoint and promotional materials for college staff to share the best practice college-wide Ensure that materials are present in: higher education induction checklist, higher education personal tutorial programme, higher education course handbooks	September 2013	Assistant Director Teaching and Learning and Assistant Director Student Services	Deliver presentation to Senior Management Team, Higher Education forum and higher education coordinators Higher education induction checklist, higher education personal tutorial programme and higher education course handbooks contain best practice material of two Charter Marks	Director Curriculum and Student Services	Annual Higher Education and Student Services self evaluation reports and whole college quality improvement plan

		date		indicators		
The team considers that it is **advisable** for the College to:						
• ensure that a detailed, standardised policy for the submission of Edexcel assessments is implemented across the College (paragraph 15)	Provide mandatory staff development for higher education coordinators to ensure all current programme documentation guidance supplied for students under headings, including opportunities for reassessment and marking, and grading conventions is consistent across the Edexcel course handbooks	September 2013	Assistant Director Teaching Learning in conjunction with the Quality Improvement Unit	All course handbooks contain accurate information on assessment Annual checking progress implemented effectively	Higher Education Forum	Feedback and review carried out following higher education coordinators' meeting by Teaching and Learning advisers on all handbooks issued in semester one to ensure full requirements are met Activity completed by end of October 2013 Quality Improvement Unit audit report to Director Curriculum and Student Services on compliance of all handbooks in June 2014
• ensure the consistent implementation of	Provide mandatory staff development for higher education	September 2013	Assistant Director Teaching Learning in	Consistent implementation of internal	Higher Education Forum	Feedback and review carried out following higher

its internal verification policy (paragraph 16)	coordinators to ensure consistency in internal verification involving the identification of awarding body grading requirements in particular Edexcel and the standard of academic referencing		conjunction with the Quality Improvement Unit	verification policy and academic referencing Annual checking progress implemented effectively		education coordinators' meeting by Teaching and Learning advisers on all internal verification undertaken in semester one to ensure full requirements are met. Activity completed by end of October 2013 Quality Improvement Unit audit report to Director Curriculum Student Services on compliance of all internal verification academic referencing in June 2014
• ensure that the terms of reference for the regulation and operation of assessment	Provide a workshop at higher education coordinators' forum to provide a terms of reference for course teams about the	October 2013	Assistant Director Teaching Learning in conjunction with Quality Improvement Unit	All Board of Examinations are compliant with terms of reference Annual checking	Higher Education Forum	Feedback and review carried out following higher education coordinators' meeting by

boards are clarified to ensure that the Edexcel specialist guidelines and the Quality Code, *Chapter B6: Assessment of students and accreditation of prior learning* are followed (paragraph 18)	function and purpose of the examination boards in the context of Edexcel specialist guidelines and the Quality Code, *Chapter B6: Assessment of students and accreditation of prior learning*			progress implemented effectively		Teaching and Learning advisers on all winter board of examinations undertaken in semester one to ensure full requirements are met

Activity completed by end of October 2013

Quality Improvement Unit audit report to Director Curriculum and Student Services on compliance of all examination boards in June 2014 |
| • ensure that the target for completing programme specifications by September 2013 is achieved (paragraph 20) | Curriculum Managers to provide guidance and support through curriculum workshops for higher education teams to ensure that all programme specifications are in place for the new cohort of students in September 2013 | September 2013 | Higher Education Forum in conjunction with Assistant Director Teaching Learning and Quality Improvement Unit | Programme specifications available for all higher education programmes of study in Course Folder and clearly signposted for learners | Director Curriculum and Student Services | Feedback and review carried out by Teaching and Learning advisers following School based curriculum workshop

Reviews scheduled for October 2013 |

						Quality improvement Unit audit report to Director Curriculum and Student Services on compliance of specifications in June 2014
• ensure that all higher education staff become fully conversant with the Quality Code (paragraph 21)	Staff development workshops for all higher education teams each Semester to ensure that all higher education staff become fully conversant with the Quality Code The Quality Code updates in higher education-specific folder in the virtual learning environment	June 2014	Head of Quality Improvement Unit in conjunction with Employee Development Unit	All higher education staff have attended workshops each semester Standard agenda item at course team meetings Positive trend on number of staff accessing the Quality Code on the virtual learning environment	Assistant Director Teaching Learning	Attendance records for semester one and semester two workshops Minutes of team meetings Review hits on virtual learning environment against targets set for next academic year (September 13)
• ensure the consistency of the core content and the quality and depth of supplementary information in student handbooks	Provide staff development for higher education coordinators Ensure that all student handbooks produced solely by the College have a consistent approach in core	September 2013	Assistant Director Teaching Learning in conjunction with Quality Improvement Unit	All course handbooks contain accurate information	Higher Education Forum	Feedback and review carried out following staff development in August by Teaching and Learning advisers on all handbooks issued in semester

(paragraph 59).	content, quality and depth of information					one to ensure full requirements are met from staff
						Activity completed by end of October 2013
	Develop a guide and audit checklist for higher education course handbooks	February 2014		Audit all course handbooks (twice a year) as per audit checklist in October and May to ensure compliance		Quality improvement Unit audit report to Director Curriculum and Student Services on compliance of handbooks in June 2014
Desirable	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
The team considers that it is **desirable** for the College to:						
• analyse separately and routinely teaching observation sample outcomes for higher education classes (paragraph 34)	Analyse separately teaching observation sample outcomes for the Higher Education Performance Enhancement Programme Pilot for three higher education programmes within the next academic year	June 2014	Quality Improvement Unit in conjunction with Higher Education Forum	Course team Performance Enhancement Programme grade, review and action plan	Assistant Director Teaching Learning	Quality improvement Unit audit report to Director Curriculum and Student Services on results of the Higher Education Performance Enhancement Programme in June 2014

	Allocation of two additional Teaching and Learning adviser positions to support curriculum in this process					
• continue to develop its website in order to give greater emphasis to its higher education provision, thereby enhancing its public profile (paragraph 50).	Carry out proposed changes to the College website as detailed on marketing action plan to enhance higher education profile on home page	November 2013	Head of Marketing	Website home page contains information on all higher education delivered by the College and its awarding bodies and is reviewed on a monthly basis to reflect curriculum changes	Higher Education Forum in collaboration with higher education coordinators' forum	Quality improvement Unit audit of website and report issued to Director of Curriculum and Student Services in June 2014