QAA

Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

June 2009

Sparsholt College

SR33/2009

Preface

The mission of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications and to inform and encourage continual improvement in the management of the quality of higher education.

As part of this mission, QAA undertakes reviews of higher education provision delivered in further education colleges. This process is known as Integrated quality and enhancement review (IQER).

Purpose of IQER

Higher education programmes delivered by further education colleges (colleges) lead to awards made by higher education institutions or Edexcel. The awarding bodies retain ultimate responsibility for maintaining the academic standards of their awards and assuring the quality of the students' learning opportunities. The purpose of IQER is, therefore, to safeguard the public interest in the academic standards and quality of higher education delivered in colleges. It achieves this by providing objective and independent information about the way in which colleges discharge their responsibilities within the context of their partnership agreements with awarding bodies. IQER focuses on three core themes: academic standards, quality of learning opportunities and public information.

The IQER process

IQER is a peer review process. It is divided into two complementary stages: Developmental engagement and Summative review. In accordance with the published method, colleges with less than 100 full-time equivalent students funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) may elect not to take part in Developmental engagements, but all HEFCE-funded colleges will take part in Summative review.

Developmental engagement

Developmental engagements explore in an open and collegial way the challenges colleges face in specific areas of higher education provision. Each college's first, and often their only, Developmental engagement focuses on student assessment.

The main elements of a Developmental engagement are:

- a self-evaluation by the college

- an optional written submission by the student body

- a preparatory meeting between the college and the IQER coordinator several weeks before the Developmental engagement visit

- the Developmental engagement visit, which normally lasts two days

- the evaluation of the extent to which the college manages effectively its responsibilities for the delivery of academic standards and the quality of its higher education provision, plus the arrangements for assuring the accuracy and completeness of public information it is responsible for publishing about its higher education

- the production of a written report of the team's findings.

To promote a collegial approach, Developmental engagement teams include up to two members of staff from the further education college under review. They are known as nominees for this process.

Summative review

Summative review addresses all aspects of a college's HEFCE-funded higher education provision and provides judgements on the management and delivery of this provision against core themes one and two, and a conclusion against core theme three.

Summative review shares the main elements of Developmental engagement described above. Summative review teams, however, are composed of the IQER coordinator and QAA reviewers. They do not include nominees.

Evidence

In order to obtain evidence for the review, IQER teams carry out a number of activities, including:

- reviewing the college's self-evaluation and its internal procedures and documents

- reviewing the optional written submission from students

- asking questions of relevant staff

- talking to students about their experiences.

IQER teams' expectations of colleges are guided by a nationally agreed set of reference points, known as the Academic Infrastructure. These are published by QAA and consist of:

- *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*, which includes descriptions of different higher education qualifications

- the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*

- subject benchmark statements, which describe the characteristics of degrees in different subjects

- *Guidelines for preparing programme specifications*, which are descriptions of what is on offer to students in individual programmes of study

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

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

Outcomes of IQER

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

- Developmental engagement reports set out good practice and recommendations and implications for the college and its awarding bodies, but do not contain judgements. Recommendations will be at one of three levels - **essential, advisable** and **desirable**. To promote an open and collegial approach to Developmental engagements, the reports are not published.

- Summative review reports identify good practice and contain judgements about whether the college is discharging its responsibilities effectively against core themes one and two above. The judgements are **confidence, limited confidence** or **no confidence.** There is no judgement for the third core theme, instead the report will provide evaluation and a conclusion. Summative review reports are published.

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

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

Executive summary

The Summative review of Sparsholt College carried out in June 2009

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 existing arrangements for the management of higher education, which delineate clear responsibilities and discrete processes for the management and assurance of standards in higher education at different levels within the College organisational matrix

- the variety of ways in which the College ensures that staff and students have an understanding of the Academic Infrastructure

- the appointment of the higher education teaching coach, as it is proving to be an effective means of promoting good-quality teaching in higher education

- the comprehensive approach to providing for the development needs of staff teaching in higher education

- the committed and dedicated approach of learning resource managers to identify and meet the needs of higher education students

- the quality assurance and reporting procedures in place to review the accuracy of information, and to identify when to take appropriate action.

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 the template for recording grade review decisions and improve the monitoring of its use across programmes.

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

- review links to employers and the world of work, with a view to making them more formal and resilient where appropriate

- adopt a more proactive and focused approach to careers, and vocational advice and guidance, for higher education students

- consider the need to include information about the awarding body in programme publicity leaflets and the part-time prospectus

- consider creating a separate section on fees and financial support for both full and part-time higher education students, to ensure greater prominence and clarity.

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 Sparsholt 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 Universities of Portsmouth and Southampton. The review was carried out by Mr Harry Davison, Mrs Catherine Fairhurst and Mrs Elisabeth Downes (reviewers) and Mr Alan Nisbett (coordinator).

2   The Summative review team (the team) conducted the review in agreement with the College and in accordance with *The handbook for Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review* (the handbook), published by QAA. Evidence in support of the Summative review included documentation supplied by the College and awarding bodies, meetings with staff, students, 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 Academic Infrastructure, developed by QAA on behalf of higher education providers, with reference to the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, subject and award benchmark statements, *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and programme specifications.

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

4   Sparsholt College is a specialist land-based institution, located about three miles to the north-west of the city of Winchester, which can trace its origins to its foundation in 1899 by Hampshire County Council. There are currently more than 2,000 full-time and 6,000 part-time students enrolled at the College. Of these, some 280 full-time and 144 part-time students are enrolled on higher education programmes. The higher education provision at the College has developed over the last 15 years from higher national programmes to a suite of 19 full and part-time Foundation and honours degrees tailored to meet the high-level skills needs of land-based industry.

Higher education provision at the College

5   The College offers the following higher education programmes:

Programmes validated by the University of Portsmouth:

Full-time FdSc and BSc Hons

- Animal Management

- Equine Studies

- Wildlife Management

- Aquaculture & Fishery Management

Part-time FdSc route

- Animal Management (with animal behaviour options)

- Wildlife Management

Part/full-time FdSc qualifications

- Lowland Woodland Management

- Garden Design

- Horticulture

- Arboriculture and Tree Care

- Veterinary Nursing Science

- Zoo Resource Management

Part/full-time honours degree (BSc) top-up qualifications

- Applied Animal Behaviour

- Veterinary Nursing Science

- Garden Design

Programmes provided on behalf of the University of Southampton

- Level 4&5 Certificate in Education (CertED) (Post Compulsory Education and Training (PCET))

- Level 7 Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

6   The College is a partner of two higher education institutions. All Foundation and honours degree programmes are validated by the University of Portsmouth. The College is directly funded by HEFCE for this provision. A partnership agreement is held with this University and the collaborative partnership and curricula were reviewed in 2007-08. The Level 4/5 CertEd and Level 7 PGCE are offered in an indirect funding partnership with the University of Southampton. The curricula were revalidated in 2007 to meet the new PCET Initial Teacher Training Guidelines. The College is part of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Lifelong Learning Network and is the lead college for the Business and Management Curriculum Group.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

7   The College has recently undergone re-organisation, including some changes in structure and roles and responsibilities for higher education. From June 2009, overall responsibility for the strategic direction of higher education rests with the new post of Dean of Higher Education, with the HE Development Manager being responsible for the day-to-day management of quality assurance and delivery.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

8   Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the team. A number of meetings were held, facilitated by an independent consultant. From these discussions, a draft written submission was compiled and then circulated for comment and ratification to higher education student representatives. The final document proved to be very helpful in informing the team about the student viewpoint, as did the meeting held with students during the visit.

B Evaluation of the management of HEFCE-funded higher education

Core theme 1: Academic standards

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

9   Effective committee and management structures are in place to enable the College to manage and assure the standards of its higher education programmes on behalf of the awarding bodies. Quality policy and strategy are the responsibility of the Quality & Standards Committee of the Board of Governors and this is devolved to the Senior Management Team at an operational level. Responsibility for the management of higher education is delegated to the Associate Vice Principal, and the HE Development Manager. The HE Development Manager works closely with the Quality Manager; and Assistant Principals are responsible for the management of the curriculum and standards and gather student feedback on assessment and higher education development. An effective self-evaluation exercise is undertaken annually, with appropriate actions planned and reported upon. In relation to delivery, the learner managers, course managers, year tutors and unit tutors make good use of the Programme Management Quality Assurance and Control Framework. This provides a timeline for all staff in respect of the quality assurance management of a programme, and templates for the relevant documentation are used at the programme level. There are regular curriculum team meetings to discuss issues that arise and feed into annual quality review. The College has a Higher Education Unit Review Subcommittee, which is tasked with the review of units within programmes and is linked to the internal verification strategy.

10 The University of Portsmouth has recently bestowed Associate College status upon the College. This is a reflection of the confidence that the University has in the capacity of the College to manage and assure standards on its behalf. The associate status provides for a six-year cycle for review rather than the normal three-year cycle for Collaborative Partnership. It also provides for annual sponsorship on the University's PgCert (Learning and Teaching in Higher Education) programme for two full-time College lecturers, who have teaching responsibilities on the validated programmes. College lecturers teaching on the validated degrees are designated as honorary lecturers of the University of Portsmouth. Lecturers teaching on the validated degrees have access to the research facilities of the School of Biological Sciences.

11 The Level 4/5 CertEd and the Level 7 PGCE are offered in partnership with the University of Southampton. The programme is managed directly by Southampton. The team found that there was a very good level of cooperation within a very effective partnership.

12   The College is developing its management structure to reflect the importance of higher education provision. A new structure was being put in place at the time of the review visit. The intention is to strengthen even further the lines of management and accountability for higher education within a clear framework. The existing arrangements are reflective of good practice, in that they delineate clear responsibilities and discrete processes for the management and assurance of standards in higher education at different levels within the College organisational matrix.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

13   The College is engaging comprehensively and effectively with the Academic Infrastructure, including the FHEQ, the *Code of practice* and relevant professional and occupational benchmarks. These are used to inform the development, delivery and monitoring of standards. Programme specifications demonstrate that teams have planned intended learning outcomes with close attention to subject benchmark statements and appropriate reference to sections of the Academic Infrastructure.

14   Comprehensive and clear information on the Academic Infrastructure is made available to both staff and students through the college virtual learning environment. This provides material for staff in relation, for example, to student assessment in higher education, student support and placement learning, all of which informs the development of new units, and programmes. There is a complementary site for higher education students, the Higher Education Community and Information Space. This site areas includes sections on the 'higher education ethos', assessment, personal development planning, study skills and the programme specifications. The variety of ways in which the College ensures that staff and students have an understanding of the Academic Infrastructure represents good practice.

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?

15   External examiners are appointed by the University of Southampton and the University of Portsmouth. In respect of the University of Portsmouth provision, the College has the opportunity to nominate individuals who have relevant academic and industrial expertise. Where possible, the College tries to support a new external examiner by allowing them to shadow the current external examiner. Within this provision, reports are sent by the external examiner to a designated member of the University and then forwarded to the HE Development Manager. The issues raised by the external examiners are fed into the Quality & Standards Committee. The external examiner is present, or provides a written review at the grade review meeting, and also gives a verbal report to the examination board.

16   In general terms, the College carries out its functions in regard to examination procedures laid down by the University of Portsmouth with appropriate rigour. However, the team found some inconsistencies in the use of the standard template used to record grades prior to the formal examination board. Some practices did not result in a clear and proper recording of such meetings for audit purposes. The team believes that it is advisable to review the template for recording grade review decisions and implement better monitoring of its use across programmes.

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

17   There are College-wide higher education staff development days and an annual conference covering training in information learning technology, assessment techniques and teaching and learning. College staff also access staff development activities within the University of Portsmouth. Staff teaching on higher education programmes have extensive experience in the related industries and the College has a 'new lecturer' mentoring scheme to ensure that staff new to teaching in a higher education context are supported in their teaching role.

18   The College also has an ongoing staff development programme, which includes an annual HE staff development day in September and other events that support staff in delivering the higher education programme, and keep staff aware of new developments related to teaching in higher education. These include external organisations, such as the Higher Education Academy and the University of Portsmouth.

19   A number of staff are fellows of the Higher Education Academy and the College is working actively with the University of Portsmouth to increase the level of staff membership to the academy. College staff also attended staff development events external to the College, run by QAA, the Higher Education Academy and the University of Portsmouth. During the meeting with the team, staff were very positive about opportunities to develop their subject expertise.

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?

20   As reported under Core Theme 1 above, the management of the higher education provision at the College is effective in respect of standards. The same is true of the management of learning opportunities. In addition to the systems and structures described above, the management and quality assurance of learning opportunities in higher education are linked at programme level through staff development. Student feedback and the observation of teaching provide good evidence for the management and assurance of teaching quality and the promotion of learning. Student achievement of the stated learning outcomes and performance levels is reported at the Higher Education Examination Board, and three-year trends are summarised and reviewed in the annual report to the University of Portsmouth.

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

21   As described above under Core Theme 1, the obligations to the awarding bodies are set out in the agreements the College has for the delivery of their awards. The College submits an annual report to the University of Portsmouth, which considers external examiners' reports, student achievement and progression, the effectiveness of the curricula, and also reports on the quality and enhancement of learning opportunities. The report includes:

teaching observations and resulting actions; professional development for staff; resources including the virtual learning environment; software purchase; issues raised by students; student qualifications on entry; enhancements to the curriculum; learning and teaching; assessment and student support strategy; attendance; and final graduate destinations.

22   The quality of the learning opportunities is commented upon by the students both formally and informally. They confirmed that the tutorial system is the main way of raising issues which are then communicated to the programme team meeting. Programmes also have student representatives and the students agreed that any issues are discussed with these representatives, who then participate in the Student Voice meeting. The virtual learning environment and the HE Student Community Newsletter, as well as posters, are used to give feedback to the students on any action taken.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

23   As noted under Core Theme 1, the Academic Infrastructure is well integrated into the College's current management and quality assurance arrangements, and the appropriate elements of the *Code of practice,* have been taken into account when the higher education programmes were designed. The staff teaching on higher education programmes are well acquainted with the requirements of the Academic Infrastructure, in so far as they are relevant to the quality of learning opportunities.

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

24   The College has a number of mechanisms in place that enable staff to report on the quality of learning opportunities, including formal staff appraisal and peer observation of teaching, student feedback and the quality assurance processes, including annual programme review. Self-assessment with an action plan is a key component of the quality assurance framework. Programme teams evaluate the performance of their provision at programme level, including an action plan that feeds into the report of the HE Development Manager to the University of Portsmouth and the College's Board of Governors.

25   The academic staff have close relationships with their industries and professions and employers are involved in higher education development, to ensure that the programmes are fit-for-purpose and fulfil the needs of industry. However, the team noted that many of the links to employers and the world of work are personal and informal and it is desirable that consideration be given to reviewing these, with a view to making them more formal and resilient where appropriate.

26   The annual College lesson observation profile shows a high quality of teaching in higher education, with 94 per cent of sessions judged 'Good' or better in 2006-07 with a dip to 76 per cent in 2007-08. The College was able to identify this because of the learning and teaching observation scheme, and then to address the issue by the appointment of a specific higher education teaching coach who mentors new staff and supports all staff in their higher education teaching role. Staff new to higher education are supported by a scheme for mentoring new lecturers. The 2008-09 profile shows 88 per cent of sessions to be 'Good' or better with no unsatisfactory results. The team judges the appointment of the teaching coach to be an example of good practice, as it is proving to be an effective means of promoting good-quality teaching in higher education.

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

27   The main focus of student support is the programme team, and staff are able to respond to students' needs because of the small-group teaching. This was confirmed by the students, with the part-time students especially appreciating the support that was available. During the induction programme, the College provides students with a specific HE college and programme handbook on a memory stick. At this stage, they are introduced to the available facilities of the awarding bodies. Pre-entry tests in literacy and numeracy are used as required for the education students and as a diagnostic tool, to identify any learning support needs of the other students.

28   Students are directed by group tutors to student services for learning, financial and pastoral support, and information is available from the one-stop enquiry desk. The students are aware of, and appreciate, the support that is available to enhance their learning opportunities. and they confirmed a high level of academic guidance and pastoral support. Students are invited to offer their opinions on their learning experience and so contribute to the management of quality through a variety of mechanisms, including unit review surveys, programme representatives and student focus groups that are held by Student Services. Generally, students receive good levels of support from a variety of sources, but it would be desirable for there to be a more proactive and focused approach to careers and vocational advice and guidance for higher education students.

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

29   In the higher education strategy document, the College recognises the importance of staff development within the higher education experience. This is stated as 'Provide staff with the opportunity to maintain their pedagogic and subject expertise together with recognising their competence as teachers in HE'. Staff development needs are identified from various sources, such as individual appraisal and teaching observations, and these feed into a staff development programme which includes an annual higher education staff development day, as well as staff events which support staff to deliver the higher education programmes. There is a comprehensive higher education tutor's support section on the virtual learning environment. The staff were very positive about their staff development opportunities. All the academic staff are encouraged to develop their subject knowledge, and this is shown by their external activities and participation at events at the University of Portsmouth. The comprehensive approach to providing for the development needs of staff teaching in higher education is an example of good practice.

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

30   The College claims to have the best practical land-based training resources in the country, a claim that was supported by employers, students and HEFCE's survey in 2008 of land-based provision. The College has benefited from HEFCE direct funding of £111,386 during 2008-9. Funding requests from each programme team are scrutinised by the curriculum managers. Cases for new resources over £1,000 are considered through capital bids and each curriculum area has a devolved budget for items less than this. In addition, there is a budget for each final-year student to bid for up to £400 of laboratory equipment to assist their studies for the dissertation.

31 The higher and further education students share many of the same resources and facilities. Some concern was expressed to the team by students that the equine studies students are not able to access the specialist facilities when they are needed because of the pressure on these resources from further education students, but the staff are aware of their concerns and are developing the time management skills of these students. The library is very responsive to students' requests. In response to a learner survey conducted in May/June 2007, a dedicated silent study area was provided in August 2008, together with a second help-desk. Some of the higher education students said they needed more dedicated learning areas and in response to this a higher education lounge was developed, together with a silent area in the library. The committed and dedicated approach of learning resource managers to identify and meet the needs of higher education students is a feature of good practice in the management of higher education in the College.

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 is the College responsible for publishing about its HEFCE-funded higher education?

32 The College Mission and Vision statements appear on all published literature. The Vision statement makes specific reference to higher education, emphasising the strategic importance the College places on the development of its higher education programmes. The College is required to produce an annual strategic plan: the current 2008/09-2012 document addresses both further and higher education. In addition, the College publishes a higher education statement and key strategic objectives, this along with the Widening Participation Strategic Assessment will form the basis of the full Higher Education Strategy.

33 The College publishes an annual prospectus of its higher education provision, which outlines the programmes of study and requirements for entry. A College Careers and Training Guide gives a useful overview of the structure of qualifications, career options and student life on campus. The website provides comprehensive information on student support, land-based careers, links with employers, admissions processes and financial support. Programme specifications are published on the College's virtual learning environment, where they are available to both staff and students. They are clear and conform to the templates provided by the validating Universities. However, the team judges that, in two instances, the College should consider the need to include information about the awarding body. Course publicity leaflets and the part-time prospectus do not currently contain this information. It is desirable that these documents contain full information.

34 Course handbooks are comprehensive, follow a standard template and are consistent across the various curriculum areas. In line with the College's Sustainability Policy, handbooks are now issued to students on a memory stick. Prior to induction, students receive a College Student Handbook containing information about College facilities such as accommodation, learning resources, transport arrangements and various policies including health and safety and equality.

35 The College Quality Development Manager produces a Quality Assurance and Control Framework, containing checklists and templates for meetings designed to encourage good practice and consistency for curriculum staff delivering both further and higher education. The College also publishes an Internal Verification Policy that sets out the student

entitlement to a fair assessment process. The section on higher education includes guidance on reviewing assessment briefs, double-marking and the use of agreed internal verification documentation.

What arrangements does the College have in place to assess the accuracy and completeness of information the College has responsibility for publishing? How does the College know that these arrangements are effective?

36 All course handbooks are submitted to the HE Development Manager for checking. This ensures a consistently high standard across the College and is an example of good practice. Students confirm that they find the handbooks useful and appreciate the fact that tutors go through the information with them at the start of the programme. Programme teams undertake planning in June each year, which provides an opportunity for tutors to meet and review curriculum and assessment, make minor or major modifications to programmes and consider feedback from student unit reviews.

37 Although the handbooks do not contain the programme specifications they do contain the overall aims and very comprehensive information about the programme of study and assessment. The team confirmed that current students received an assessment schedule and over the last year, tutors have made greater efforts to ensure that assessment deadlines are effectively managed. This was in response to one of the recommendations in the Development engagement report. The students confirmed that, in most cases, this had reduced assessment bunching at the end of the year. The College has a rigorous planning system in place to collect programme information and check for accuracy prior to the publication of the higher education prospectus. There is also a system in place for the University of Portsmouth to comment on the accuracy and completeness of programme details. The final prospectus is signed off by the College senior management team. Students confirm that they find the prospectus and website, particularly the student profiles, useful at the initial stages of enquiry. Opportunities to view College facilities and talk to tutors on one of the visitor or taster days help students to make an informed choice about a programme of study. The College Registrar takes responsibility for updating information on fees and financial support for all students. The website has a section on fees and financial support, which includes information relevant to higher education students. However, the team thought it desirable for the College to consider creating a separate section on fees and financial support for both full and part-time higher education students, to ensure greater prominence and clarity.

38 The College adopts an agreed set of Collaborative Academic Regulations for Assessment and Examination with the University of Portsmouth. The College HE Development Manager takes responsibility for communicating the regulations to staff through briefings. These regulations, along with more general guidance on higher education and assessment, are published on the virtual learning environment. This has links with the University of Portsmouth website, which enables tutors to access conferences and events to support their continuous professional development. There are also opportunities for staff at the College and University to engage on joint research projects.

39 The University of Portsmouth provides a clear and well-written handbook for personal development planning. The handbook has been customised by the College and each curriculum team uses the materials in a way that meets the needs of their students. Tutors delivering teacher training programmes comply with the University of Southampton regulations. Students confirm that tutors provide very clear information and the teacher training programmes fully meet their expectations.

40   The College has systems in place to check the accuracy of publicity materials and course handbooks, and identified managers within the College take responsibility for keeping information up to date. University partners have full confidence in the accuracy of information produced and compliance with University procedures. University partners are supportive in providing appropriate guidance. Both students and employers confirm that the College delivers a student experience in line with what is communicated through the promotional materials, and at events. The quality assurance and reporting procedures in place, to review the accuracy of information and to identify when to take action as a result of that information, is an example of good practice.

The team considers that reliance can be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

C   Summary of findings from the Developmental engagement in assessment

41   A Developmental engagement in assessment took place in June 2008. The lines of enquiry were as follows:

Line of enquiry 1: How effective is the induction and mentoring of new and part-time staff into the understanding and practice of assessment?

Line of enquiry 2: How does applied and work-related assessment promote student learning and achievement?

Line of enquiry 3: How effective is the use of assessment feedback as a developmental and improvement tool for enhancing student performance?

42   The Developmental engagement team found a number of features of good practice. These included the Higher Education Tutor zone within the virtual learning environment, which provides valuable information and guidance to teams and individuals delivering higher education programmes, and enables staff to understand and implement appropriate standards in the assessment of student work. Also good practice is the continuing professional development portfolio for College staff that incorporates areas of mentoring of newly appointed staff. The accuracy of the published information in the 'Higher education Prospectus 2009 Full-time entry' relating to the excellent links with employers in all areas of study in higher education, was considered good practice.

43   The team made a number of recommendations. It was judged to be advisable for the College to strengthen the processes relating to the timely return of work and its monitoring, to ensure that the delay in returning work was kept within the stated requirements. This was to ensure that students' learning was not undermined by late feedback and the consequent inability of students to learn from feedback and improve performance before submitting other assignments. Included in the 'desirable' recommendations were the suggestions to develop the use of cross-programme integrated assessment across all land-based programmes and to ensure that students receive the more comprehensive guidelines from the University of Portsmouth's Code of Practice in their programme handbooks, in order that they have full information regarding the criteria that apply to all grades of achievement.

D Foundation Degrees

44 The College currently offers Foundation Degrees validated by the University of Portsmouth in the following subjects:

- Animal Management

- Equine Studies

- Wildlife Management

- Aquaculture & Fishery Management

- Lowland Woodland Management

- Garden Design

- Horticulture

- Arboriculture and Tree Care

- Veterinary Nursing Science

- Zoo Resource Management.

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

- the existing arrangements for the management of higher education, which delineate clear responsibilities and discrete processes for the management and assurance of standards in higher education at different levels within the College organisational matrix (paragraph 12)

- the variety of ways in which the College ensures that staff and students have an understanding of the Academic Infrastructure (paragraph 14)

- the appointment of the higher education teaching coach as it is proving to be an effective means of promoting good-quality teaching in higher education (paragraph 26)

- the comprehensive approach to providing for the development needs of staff teaching in higher education (paragraph 29)

- the committed and dedicated approach of learning resource mangers to identify and meet the needs of higher education students (paragraph 31)

- the quality assurance and reporting procedures in place to review the accuracy of information and to identify when to take action as a result of that information (paragraph 40).

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

The team agreed an area where the College is **advised** to take action:

- to review the use of the template for recording grade review decisions and to implement better monitoring of its use across programmes (paragraph 16).

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

- consideration should be given to reviewing links to employers and the world of work, with a view to making them more formal and resilient where appropriate (paragraph 25)

- there needs to be a more proactive and focused approach to careers and vocational advice and guidance for higher education students (paragraph 28)

- the College should consider the need to include information about the awarding body in course publicity leaflets and the part-time prospectus (paragraph 33)

- to consider creating a separate section on fees, and financial support for both full and part-time higher education students, to ensure greater prominence and clarity (paragraph 37).

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

48 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Sparsholt 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 Universities of Portsmouth and Southampton.

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

- the existing arrangements for the management of higher education, which delineate clear responsibilities and discrete processes for the management and assurance of standards in higher education at different levels within the College organisational matrix (paragraph 12)

- the variety of ways in which the College ensures that staff and students have an understanding of the Academic Infrastructure (paragraph 14)

- the appointment of the higher education teaching coach as it is proving to be an effective means of promoting good-quality teaching in higher education (paragraph 26)

- the comprehensive approach to providing for the development needs of staff teaching in higher education (paragraph 29)

- the committed and dedicated approach of learning resource mangers to identify and meet the needs of higher education students (paragraph 31)

- the quality assurance and reporting procedures in place to review the accuracy of information and to identify when to take action as a result of that information (paragraph 40).

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

The team agreed an area where the College is **advised** to take action:

- to review the use of the template for recording grade review decisions and to implement better monitoring of its use across programmes (paragraph 16).

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

- consideration should be given to reviewing links to employers and the world of work, with a view to making them more formal and resilient where appropriate (paragraph 25)

- there needs to be a more proactive and focused approach to careers and vocational advice and guidance for higher education students (paragraph 28)

- the College should consider the need to include information about the awarding body in course publicity leaflets and the part-time prospectus (paragraph 33)

- to consider creating a separate section on fees, and financial support for both full and part-time higher education students, to ensure greater prominence and clarity (paragraph 37).

52 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 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.

53 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 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.

54 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.

Sparsholt College action plan relating to the Summative review: June 2009

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 existing arrangements for the management of higher education, which delineate clear responsibilities and discrete processes for the management and assurance of standards in higher education at different levels within the College organisational matrix (paragraph 12)	Publicise the accountabilities within the new structure to all staff involved in higher education and evaluate its effectiveness	March 2010	Dean of Higher Education Assistant Principal (Sparsholt)	Staff are aware of accountabilities and clear working relationships and responsibilities are identifiable	Senior Leadership Team	Vice Principal
• the variety of ways in which the College ensures that staff and students have an understanding of the Academic Infrastructure (paragraph 14)	Identify additional opportunities for raising awareness and understanding of the	December 2009	Dean of Higher Education Higher Education Development Manager	Additional opportunities of have been identified for raising awareness and understanding	Higher Education Tutors Meeting	Quality Development Manager

Sparsholt College action plan relating to the Summative review: June 2009

Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
	Academic Infrastructure amongst staff and students			of the Academic Infrastructure amongst staff and students.		
● the appointment of the HE Teaching Coach as it is proving to be an effective means of promoting teaching in higher education of a good quality (paragraph 26)	Ensure Higher Education Teaching Coach continues to work with staff across all higher education programmes	March 2010	Higher Education Development Manager Teaching Learning and Curriculum Development Manager Higher Education Teaching Coach	All staff teaching on higher education programmes are aware of the support available from the Higher Education Learning Coach and identified opportunities to improve their practice	Dean of Higher Education	Quality Development Manager
● the comprehensive approach to providing for the staff development needs of staff teaching in higher education (paragraph 29)	Document and promote opportunities for staff teaching on higher education	April 2010	Higher Education Development Manager Teaching and Learning and	Staff teaching on higher education programmes are aware of and take up the opportunities	Dean of Higher Education	Quality Development Manager

Sparsholt College action plan relating to the Summative review: June 2009

Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
	programmes to develop their pedagogic and subject expertise		Curriculum Development Manager	to develop their pedagogic and subject expertise		
● the committed and dedicated approach of learning resource managers to identify and meet the needs of higher education students (paragraph 31)	Identify additional opportunities for learning resource centres staff to meet the needs of students on higher education programmes	April 2010	Higher Education Development Manager Learning Resources Manager	Additional opportunities to support higher education students via the learning resource centre staff are identified and publicised	Dean of Higher Education	Quality Development Manager
● the quality assurance and reporting procedures in place to review the accuracy of information and to identify when to take action as a result of that information (paragraph 40).	Ensure the practices and procedures underpinning the accuracy of published information are built upon	April 2010	Higher Education Development Manager Marketing and Student Information Manager	Systems for checking accuracy of publicly available information adhered to and deadlines met	Dean of Higher Education	Quality Development Manager

Sparsholt College action plan relating to the Summative review: June 2009

Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team agreed a number of areas where the College should be **advised** to take action:						
• to review the use of the template for recording grade review decisions and to implement better monitoring of its use across programmes (paragraph 16)	Review the procedures for documenting outcomes of Grade Review Meetings and implement the outcomes to improve the reporting process	Improved processes in place – July 2009 Review of improved processes – October 2009	Dean of Higher Education Higher Education Development Manager Learning Managers	Procedures to documenting Grade Review Meetings and new process is implemented and reported upon	Higher Education Tutors Meeting	Quality Development Manager

Sparsholt College action plan relating to the Summative review: June 2009

Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team agreed the following areas where it would be **desired** to take action:						
● consideration should be given to reviewing links to employers and the world of work with a view to making them more formal and resilient where appropriate (paragraph 25)	Review and identify improvements in the linkages to employers and world of work across higher education programmes	April 2010	Higher Education Development Manager Learning Managers	Learning managers are able to assure leak College of the resilience of the linkages with employers and world of work within higher education programmes	Higher Education Tutors Meeting	Dean of Higher Education
● there needs to be a more proactive and focused approach to careers and vocational advice and guidance for higher education students (paragraph 28)	Examining the current careers and vocational advice and guidance on higher education students and identify ways to improve pro-activity and focus	May 2010	Higher Education Development Manager Marketing and Student Information Manager	Student feedback indicates the appropriateness of career and vocational advice and guidance as being proactive and focused on the needs	Higher Education Tutors Meeting	Dean of Higher Education

Sparsholt College action plan relating to the Summative review: June 2009

Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
• the College should consider the need to include information about the awarding body in course publicity leaflets and the part-time prospectus (paragraph 33)	Review procedures and processes to ensure awarding body information is included on course publicity leaflets and part-time prospectus	December 2009	Higher Education Development Manager Marketing and Student Information Manager Learning Managers	All course leaflets and part-and time prospectus relating to higher education makes reference to the awarding body	Dean of Higher Education	Quality Development Manager
• to consider creating a separate section on fees, and financial support for both full and part-time higher education students, to ensure greater prominence and clarity (paragraph 37)	Review processes and procedures for disseminating information on fees and financial support for both full and part-time students and to identify ways to make information more accessible	January 2010	Dean of Higher Education Registry Manager	Information and guidance material on higher education fees and financial support of both full and part-time students produced which is accessible and understood by staff and students	Higher Education Tutors Meeting	Quality Development Manager