# QAA

**Integrated quality and enhancement review**

**Summative review**

June 2007

Stephenson College

SR13/2008

# 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 the 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 Stephenson College carried out in June 2007

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 **cannot** 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 College uses a small experienced group of lecturers, Lecturer C posts, members of which receive remission and have a quality enhancement remit within the sections. This provides evidence of the College's intent to ensure that supportive quality systems are in place

- the new collegiate review process will be undertaken in conjunction with three other local further education colleges and will draw together the higher education self-assessment review and other quality processes staff development initiatives in the motor vehicles and computing sections, engage effectively with external companies and are worthy of sharing more widely.

### 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 senior College management reviews the way of assuring itself that the Academic Infrastructure is embedded in its higher education work

- review the operation of the process for ensuring the accuracy of the information contained in published material.

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

- consider whether more evaluative commentaries should be produced as part of the annual review process

- consider the value of producing discrete programme specifications for Edexcel programmes which can be made publicly available to prospective students, parents and employers

- review the detail of the procedures regarding students' learning and progression and to bring them into one location, to create a clear regulatory framework for the College's higher education programmes and to facilitate ease of access and therefore consistency in application

- make further effort to seek effective cross-college student representation on appropriate committees, especially those which deal within course review and evaluation.

# 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 Stephenson 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 Edexcel and the University of Derby (the University). The review was carried out by Mr Simon Ives, Ms Trudy Stiles, Mr Clive Turner (reviewers) and Mr Martin Hill (Coordinator),

2    The Summative review team (the team) conducted the review in negotiation with the College and in accordance with The handbook for a pilot study of an integrated quality and enhancement review, 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, reports of reviews by QAA and from inspections by Ofsted and other external bodies. In particular, the team drew on the findings and recommendations of the Development engagement in assessment. A summary of findings from the Development 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 the higher education sector, 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 provide information to assist HEFCE with the assessment of the impact of the new Foundation Degree (FD) awards, Section D of this report summarises details of the FD programmes delivered at the College.

4    The College is a general further education college situated in Coalville, in North West Leicestershire. Since August 2005, the College has offered full and part-time programmes from new, purpose-built premises situated on the edge of the town. The College has higher education provision in five curricular areas: construction, early years and education, information technology and business, motor vehicle and engineering, and the professional development unit. The College has retained its site on the Ravenstone Road Industrial Estate, where the heavy and light motor vehicle national contract training and gas training take place.

5    In the academic year 2006-07, there were 1,005 full-time and 6,460 part-time student enrolments. Of these, there were 17 full-time and 289 part-time students enrolled on higher education programmes. The higher education students are taught by 22 staff, of whom two are fractional and 20 are full-time appointments. The HEFCE-funded higher education provision at the time of the review, together with the awarding bodies, comprised the following programmes:

**Edexcel**

HNC/D Business

HNC Construction

HNC/D Computing (Software Development)

HNC Electrical/Electronic Engineering

HNC Mechanical Engineering

HNC/D Advanced Practice in Work with Children and Families

HNC/D Vehicle Operations Management

HNC Automotive Engineering.

**University of Derby:**

FD Motorsport Technology

Certificate in Further Education Teaching

### Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

6    The College currently uses two awarding bodies for its provision: Edexcel for Higher National provision and the University for the FD in Motorsport Technology, which is in its first year of delivery, and the Certificate in Further Education Teaching (Cert Ed)

### Recent developments in higher education at the College

7    The College has direct funding status with HEFCE, with 157 full-time equivalent students. All this activity is currently in Higher National Certificates and Diplomas. For 2006-07, additional student numbers granted by HEFCE have resulted in a growth of 36 full-time equivalents; a further 10 are planned for 2007-08.

8    The Higher National awards have been offered by the College since the early 1970s and were developed in response to employer and student demand. This provided a route for local students to progress from cognate further education offered by the College.

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

9    Students from the higher education provision at the College were invited, and took advantage of the opportunity, to present a written submission to the team. The College provided administrative support to the student representatives and guidance from two members of staff. After gathering views from across the College, the written submission was written by one student, and approved by the students as a whole, before submission to QAA. The Summative review also drew on the views of students through discussions held during the review visit and by reference to feedback gathered routinely as part of the College's quality assurance procedures.

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

### Core theme 1: Academic standards

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

10  Most of the College's higher education provision is validated by Edexcel. The College is responsible for the academic standards of the Higher National awards offered. No formal partnership agreement exists for these awards, but the College is aware of the requirements published by Edexcel for the maintenance of standards. In particular, the College has in place processes for Edexcel programmes that respond to the expectations outlined in the

Code of practice. Two higher education programmes are validated by the University and are subject to the arrangements clearly outlined in the collaborative agreements. These identify mutual expectations and obligations agreed between the University and the College. There are separate partnership agreements for the FD in Motorsport Technology and the Cert Ed programme. These agreements clearly acknowledge that the ultimate responsibility for the awards rest with the University, as set out in the University Operational Manual.

11   The College's key policy-making committee is the Quality Management Team, chaired by the Principal. It monitors student retention, progression and achievement, provides developmental feedback to individual programme teams and raises any specific concerns about individual courses with section heads. The Quality Management Team receives regular statistical evidence related to student achievement and progression through the Assessment of Learning Plans reports. The College makes good use of management statistics in monitoring academic standards.

12   The Higher Education Board of Studies, a subcommittee of the Quality Management Team, reports on the College's higher education provision twice each year to the management team. The board has a wide membership comprising all higher education tutors, the Directors of Learner Achievement, and Curriculum and Business Development. The Higher Education Board of Studies is establishing itself as an important forum for debate and the development of higher education policies and procedures, and the sharing and dissemination of good practice across the institution. Its role is understood and valued by members of the higher education teaching team and has recently been instrumental, following the recommendations in the Developmental engagement report, in discussions and agreements about College-wide models for programme handbooks and module review. The board also identifies issues emanating from assessment boards and the annual monitoring process, and acts as the final arbitrating body for academic appeals by students. The team regards the emergence of The Higher Education Board of Studies as a positive development in the management of the higher education provision.

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

13   Programme teams and quality staff are familiar with many of the elements of the Academic Infrastructure. The self-evaluation produced for the Summative review provided evidence within each of the section self-evaluations of an understanding by higher education tutors of the *Code of practice* and FHEQ, and how individual programmes have taken account of specific precepts of the *Code of practice*. However, the team found limited evidence to suggest that senior college management has in place a way of assuring itself that the Academic Infrastructure is embedded in its higher education work. The team regards it as advisable that that this is reviewed.

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

14   In discussions with the teaching staff, it was evident that they have a clear understanding of the College's quality assurance procedures. The annual monitoring process for higher education programmes provides an adequate model for quality assurance and review. It allows opportunities, in three stages, for programme teams to reflect critically during the academic year. Review and evaluation summaries, conducted three times each year, collate student feedback and module questionnaires and require

teams to provide a grade against a number of key questions. These feed into the annual self-evaluation for each section of the College. The team found little evaluation in the summaries and judges that it would be desirable for the College to encourage more evaluation in the commentaries produced for the annual review process. This would assist in identifying course-specific issues, areas for enhancement and good practice to be shared. The College uses a small, experienced group of lecturers, Lecturer C posts, members of which receive remission and seniority, to undertake a quality enhancement remit within the sections. This is good practice and provides evidence of the College's intent to ensure that supportive quality systems are in place.

15   For programmes validated by the University, there is a robust process for course review informed by an operations manual. The School of Collaborative and Distributive Learning in the University oversees the partnership arrangements and reports regularly to the University's Academic Quality and Standards Committee. The University receives reports from each of the consortium delivery partners, which feed into an annual monitoring report. Regular moderation meetings ensure the equitability of assessment and comparability of the standard of work. The examination board, which is composed of representatives from delivery partners and University staff, is chaired by a member of the University. The College receives collaborative provision reports from the University as well as conducting its own course and section self-evaluations.

16   The quality audit team in the College plays an important role in the regular monitoring of higher education provision. Each section in the College has an annual risk assessment and an audit of the process is undertaken, including the observation of teaching and consideration of feedback received from students.

17   Currently, there is no discrete overview report on the College's higher education provision. A new process for the development of a College-wide self-assessment review is being undertaken in the 2006-07 academic year. The Director of Learner Achievement, using reports from the section heads, will produce an overview report. This will enable the Higher Education Board of Studies and the Quality Management Team to more effectively review the higher education provision. It is proposed that the higher education self-assessment review, along with other quality processes, will form part of the collegiate review process undertaken in conjunction with three other local further education colleges. This represents an example of good practice.

18   An internal process for course approval and validation allows the Quality Management Team to make informed decisions based on market assessment and the resource requirements of programmes before validation. Revalidation is an explicit part of the quality enhancement process, although the team noted that there is no explicit timeframe for these. There are clear guidelines for this process provided as part of the suite of College policy documents.

19   Assessment boards for Edexcel programmes have recently been introduced. These have been developed in line with national guidelines from the awarding body and the expectation of the *Code of practice*. These are providing a valuable vehicle for ensuring the independence of the process, assuring and confirming assessment decisions on students' progression and achievement, and granting awards. For University awards, clear regulations govern the assessment process. External examiners for all programmes confirm that appropriate academic standards are achieved. External examiners' reports are reviewed by programme teams, the Director of Learner Achievement and the quality team. Action plans are produced by both the course and quality audit teams in direct response to comments made by external examiners, and these feed into the annual review process.

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

20   Staff development is planned against the higher education strategic plan for staff development and is informed by corporate objectives, the outcomes of appraisal, the quality audits and the needs identified at section level. Section heads feed requests to the Director of Learner Achievement who negotiates with the Quality Management Team for the release of resources. These arrangements work well.

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

## Core theme 2: Quality of learning opportunities

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

21   The College has a management structure that enables a responsive exchange of information and effective decision making about the opportunities for learning. Staff clearly understand their roles and responsibilities within the system and students are also aware of the communication channels available to them. The students confirmed that staff are responsive and supportive. Students are aware of the procedures in place to deal with appeals. These are fair and effective and are in line with the *Code of practice*. Course teams have regular meetings to review student progress, resources and other matters. These are minuted and passed to members of the Quality Management Team and/or the Higher Education Board of Studies as appropriate. Action planning is systemic and procedures are in place to monitor and report on progress. This process is replicated in annual review and monitoring.

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

22   The Quality Management Team receives all external examiner reports and initiates action to address them. The College deals effectively with points raised and in a timely way. An example of this is the College's prompt response to the comments of the motor vehicle external examiner who stated that resource provision for the Foundation Degree was not able to fully support the attainment of a specified learning objective. By the start of the next academic year, the issue had been addressed and the equipment provided. Edexcel has indicated that the College should produce a formal response to external examiner reports in line with the precepts in the *Code of practice*.

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

23   Following discussions during the Developmental engagement, work has taken place in relation to developing a College-wide approach to programme specifications. The Higher Education Board of Studies has given consideration to the Guidelines on programme specifications, published by QAA, and a template for the generic contents for programme handbooks has been produced. The College may wish to consider the desirability of having discrete programme specifications for Edexcel programmes, such as can be made publicly available to prospective students, parents and employers.

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

24   There are effective internal verification and standardisation procedures in place which ensure that intended learning outcomes are assessed in a manner consistent with the unit and programme outcomes, and to an appropriate standard. Standardisation meetings ensure that there is a consistent approach to marking and grading assessed work where more than one internal assessor is marking the work. In addition, the College has a thorough system of course and unit evaluation that begins with student evaluation of every unit by questionnaire. The results are collated and presented for consideration by the programme team, the Lecturer C postholders, and the section head, as appropriate. Depending on the nature of any issues, appropriate action is undertaken or passed to the Director of Learner Achievement and or the Quality Auditor. The programme manager produces an annual review document, which feeds into the self-assessment review for each curriculum area. Issues raised by these review processes are sent to the Higher Education Board of Studies or directly to the Quality Management Team for action.

25   The College has 22 staff who teach on higher education programmes, of whom two are fractional and 20 are full-time appointments. Of these, 85 per cent are qualified to first-degree level and 75 per cent have teaching qualifications. The remainder are completing teaching qualifications. There is a formal system of staff appraisal based on regular teaching observation by experienced staff who have received specific training, and also technical teaching observation by subject specialists. Nearly all staff are observed annually. There is clear evidence of peer review involving staff from the University in the observations of teaching in the Cert Ed and the FD. The reports arising from observation are monitored by the Lecturer C postholders, who have clear lines of reporting where development needs are identified. Following the review of the observations, the Quality Management Team identifies College-wide issues and provides corporate staff development activities to address these needs.

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

26   The College has a number of specific policies and procedures for students' learning, support and progression that are designed to operationalise the quality assurance system. However, the team reviewed the policy on mitigation and found that it did not clearly explain the processes and outcomes of the procedure. Taken as a whole, these policies and procedures meet the precepts as set out in the *Code of practice*. However, it would be desirable to review the detail of the procedures and to bring them into one location to create a clear regulatory framework for the College's higher education programmes. This would facilitate ease of access to them, help to ensure consistency in their application and respond to a concern expressed by the students.

27   As a mixed-economy College with a relatively small higher education student population, most of whom are employed and study therefore on a part-time basis, there is a wide range of student support services provided for all the College's students. Services include careers guidance, support with learning disabilities and a commitment to equal opportunities and assistance with financial, accommodation and personal matters through a counselling service. Higher education students use these services when needed.

28   The College monitors student performance regularly and seeks the views of students through formalised procedures of module review and through the use of student questionnaires. However, there is little evidence of student representation in meetings,

although this is mitigated by the proximity and ease of access to staff on a regular basis. It is desirable that further effort is made to seek effective cross-college student representation on appropriate committees, especially those which deal with course review and evaluation.

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

29   There is strong evidence of a commitment to employer engagement in significant areas of the College's higher education work, which allows continuing professional development needs to be identified as courses develop. In the motor vehicles section, updating opportunities, funded by HEFCE projects, allowed three members of staff to visit 18 companies, resulting in a positive impact on assessment design. In the computing section, a three-day placement in a games development company resulted in similar outcomes. The staff development opportunities undertaken in motor vehicles and computing are considered by the team to be good practice and worthy of sharing more widely across other sections. The teacher-training curriculum is directly influenced by the outcomes of appraisal and quality audit. Examples of individually initiated staff development include higher degrees and courses on child protection.

**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 recent significant investment in new buildings and infrastructure is indicative of a strong commitment to providing a first-class learning environment and resource base to support learners. The College has made radical decisions in deciding how the physical spaces are used based around clusters which bring together, within defined curricular areas, the teaching accommodation, the staff, both academic and for student support, and access to the College's substantial IT facilities. These arrangements are well embedded and are praised by staff and students alike. External examiners' reports indicate that learning resources are of good quality, and that students are well supported.

31   There have been issues concerning access to learning resources in the evenings and the availability of certain IT resources to computing and early-years' students. The College is aware of these concerns and has taken steps to address them, although it has recognised that there are some residual issues. The additional cluster being built for the construction curriculum area will address some of the students' requests for a dedicated higher education learner environment.

**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

32   Students on University programmes are provided with handbooks that are considered useful and effective. There is clear guidance to programme leaders about the content of programme and module handbooks, including statements of learning outcomes and the location of the programme specifications. A robust system operates for the University's programmes to ensure that the relevant programme leader at the University checks the content and accuracy of the handbooks and other publications produced at the College for the Foundation Degree and the Cert Ed.

33  There is considerable variation in the style and content of the handbooks used for the Edexcel programmes. Since the Developmental engagement, the College has reviewed the layout and content of the various programme handbooks. The intention of this review was to provide information that consistently contains all the elements required by students and meets the expectations of the Academic Infrastructure. However, the team had concerns regarding the wording of some College policies. For example, late submission of assessment still did not clearly and accurately reflect the policy and the potential consequence to students.

**What arrangements do 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?**

34  The College has clearly defined responsibilities for the checking of the programme material that is published within the website, the prospectus, handbooks and leaflets. The programme teams are responsible for ensuring the accuracy of published information; the marketing and communications manager is responsible for the format and for verifying the information; and the Director of Curriculum and Business for authorising publication. The students considered there to be a lack of depth in some of the course information on the website. The team found discrepancies in course titles listed on the website. There was misleading information indicating that the College offered a two-year honours degree contained in the published course guide. The team judges it advisable that the College urgently reviews the operation of the process for ensuring the accuracy of the information in all published material.

35  For both awarding bodies the College has effective measures in place to ensure the accuracy and completeness of published assessment decisions and data. The internal verifiers in each subject area complete effective double-checking of Edexcel student report forms before submitting these for certification, with final checking by the examinations officer. Following the suggestion contained within an external examiner's report for construction, an independent member of College staff now chairs the assessment meetings to ensure stringent assessment practice in the confirmation of grades.

36  Grade decisions and trends across and between subject areas are appropriately reviewed by the Higher Education Board of Studies as a further systematic check on the reliability of assessment data. This aligns with the precepts of the *Code of practice*. Action plans resulting from any issues are then implemented, and good practice identified by this procedure is disseminated through staff development.

37  The Assessment of Learning Plans system provides a secure and transparent record of all learning and achievement information. The programme leaders are responsible for the accuracy of this information. Section heads monitor it and have to authorise any changes to the data. Edexcel data are checked independently. The team found the operation of the Assessment of Learning Plans to be robust, with clearly defined quality assurance measures.

38  The management information system for student data is checked at programme level against registrations by the programme leader. The statistics are reviewed regularly by the Director of Learning and Achievement. A completion status monitoring facility on the system distinguishes between students of different intakes within the academic year and identifies individual students who are less than 90 per cent on track. Some sections also maintain local spreadsheet systems. The team found the management processes related to the management information system to be secure.

**The team considers that reliance cannot be placed on the accuracy and completeness of all 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

39   The Developmental engagement took place in April 2007 and addressed the following four lines of enquiry on assessment agreed with the College:

- How does the college assure itself that the assessment strategy and design reflect the appropriate academic standards including the use of internal verification, standardisation across partner institutions and external examiners?

- Is appropriate feedback provided to students on assessed work in a way that promotes learning and facilitates improvement?

- Are assessment decisions recorded accurately and systematically and are these communicated to students in a timely manner?

- Can reliance be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the published assessment decisions and data?

40   The Developmental engagement team identified a range of good practice in assessment, which may be summarised as follows. There have been considerable developments in several subject areas of the Edexcel provision to contextualise the assessment criteria to allow students to develop a full understanding of the extended criteria. In the programmes in advanced practice in work with children and families, the assessment planning demonstrates good practice, with dates for feedback being identified on student assignments, together with dates for the submission and the return of student work. The content of the feedback to students on their assessed work is generally appropriate and some demonstrates good practice. An effective range of feedback methods indicates the personalisation of this area of support, ensuring timeliness and immediacy of response that the College could consider ensuring in all areas. The feedback sheets that are used throughout the College are comprehensive and enable students to understand in detail how to progress and improve. The well-managed electronic tracking system through the College intranet provides central recording and access by assessors and promotes transparent monitoring of student progress. The inclusion of an independent chair on each assessment meeting for Edexcel programmes ensures equity of decision-making across the College and stringent assessment practice in the confirmation of grades.

41   The Developmental engagement team made three recommendations. Firstly, it is advisable for the College to carefully consider the timescales for assessment, the spread of assessment types and the levels of achievement in Edexcel programmes to ensure that all students strive for and achieve their full potential. Secondly, it is desirable for the College to review the layout and content of the various programme handbooks used in Edexcel programmes to provide information that consistently contains all the elements required by students and meets the expectations of the Academic Infrastructure. Considerable progress had been made on this recommendation at the time of the Summative review. Thirdly, it is desirable for the College to develop a more formalised procedure for the operation of Edexcel assessment meetings in the College, in line with the University policies. This recommendation is being implemented.

## D  Foundation Degrees

42  The College currently offers one FD in Motorsport Technology, validated in September 2005 by the University for a target of 15 part-time students. The programme commenced in September 2006 with an intake of four students. The College has identified plans for further FD development in three areas, holistic therapy, teaching assistants and early years. Market research in these areas has indicated little demand and none are likely to proceed in the academic year 2007-08.

## E  Conclusions and summary of judgements

43  Based upon discussion with staff and students and scrutiny of evidence provided by Stephenson College and its awarding bodies, Edexcel and the University of Derby, the Summative review team identified a number of features of good practice in the College's management of its responsibilities for academic standards and for the quality of learning opportunities of the awards the College offers on behalf of its awarding bodies.

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

- the College uses a small experienced group of lecturers, Lecturer C posts, the members of which receive remission and seniority and have a quality enhancement remit within the sections. This provides evidence of the College's intent to ensure that supportive quality systems are in place (paragraph 14)

- the new collegiate review process is undertaken in conjunction with three other local further education colleges and draws together the higher education self-assessment review and other quality processes (paragraph 17)

- staff development initiatives in the motor vehicles and computing sections engage effectively with external companies and are worthy of sharing more widely (paragraph 29).

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

46  The team also agreed upon a number of areas where the College is **advised** to take action:

- to ensure that senior College management reviews the way of assuring itself that the Academic Infrastructure is embedded in its higher education work (paragraph 13)

- to review the operation of the process for ensuring the accuracy of the information in all published material (paragraphs 33, 34).

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

- consider the need for more evaluative commentaries as part of the annual review process (paragraph 14)

- consider producing discrete programme specifications for Edexcel programmes, which might be made publicly available to prospective students, parents and employers (paragraph 23)

- review the detail of the procedures regarding students' learning and progression and to bring them into one location, to create a clear regulatory framework for the College's higher education programmes and to facilitate ease of access and therefore consistency in application (paragraph 26)

- make further effort to seek effective cross-college student representation on appropriate committees, especially those which deal within course review and evaluation (paragraph 28).

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

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

50   Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, and other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that, in the context of this Summative review, reliance **cannot** be placed on the accuracy and completeness of all of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

| Stephenson College action plan relating to the Summative review: June 2007 | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **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 College uses a small experienced group of lecturers (Lecturer C posts), who receive remission and seniority, and have a quality enhancement remit within the sections. This provides evidence of the College's intent to ensure that supportive quality systems are in place (paragraph 14) | Disseminate best practice in monitoring progress and timely completion of review and evaluation | November 2007, March 2008, June 2008 | Section Heads/lecturer Cs | Improved evaluative commentary of strengths and areas for improvement<br><br>Timely completion of module reviews<br><br>Timely Assessment meetings | Director of Learner Achievement/Q uality Management Team/ HE Board of Study | Quality Audit Report<br><br>EE reports |

## Stephenson College action plan relating to the Summative review: June 2007

| Good practice | Action to be taken | Target date | Action by | Success indicators | Reported to | Evaluation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| • the collegiate review process is undertaken in conjunction with three other local further education colleges in which the higher education self-assessment review, along with other quality processes, will be reviewed (paragraph 17) | Consolidate existing links with peer colleges to support<br><br>Seek additional links with peer colleges to ensure all programmes have external review link. | | Section Heads/lecturer C/ tutors | Improved teaching and learning to good or better | Director of Learner Achievement/Quality Management Team/ HE Board of Study | Teaching and learning grade profile<br><br>Student satisfaction surveys |
| • the staff development opportunities that are undertaken in motor vehicles and computing are worthy of wider sharing across other sections (paragraph 27) | Continuing professional development for each tutor to be undertaken to improve industry link to the curriculum | July 2008 - 2009 | Section Head<br><br>Teaching /Learning Improvement Manager | 100% of tutors to complete a placement in industry on a 2 year cycle | Director of Learner Achievement/Quality Management Team/ HE Board of Study | CPD Records<br><br>To show impact<br><br>Student satisfaction surveys |

**Stephenson College action plan relating to the Summative review: June 2007**

| 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 ensure that senior College management reviews the way of assuring itself that the Academic infrastructure is embedded in its HE work (paragraph 13) | Consolidate the Quality Improvement Group terms of reference<br><br>Complete dedicated quality audit for all cross college HE programmes | November 2007<br><br>June 2008 | Director of Learner Achievement | A set of HE quality systems which embed the Academic infrastructure<br><br>A highly evaluative Self Evaluation of college HE provision | Deputy Principal /HE Board of Study | Quality Audit Report<br><br>Annual SE |
| ● to review the operation of the process for ensuring the accuracy of the information in all published material. (paragraphs 33, 34) | Produce a calendar for checking accuracy<br><br>Named personnel to be responsible for accuracy | October 2007 | Director of Business and Recruitment | All information to be accurate and complete in published material and held on website | Deputy Principal/ Management Team/ HE Board of Study | Student satisfaction survey<br><br>Quality Audit Report |

**Stephenson College action plan relating to the Summative review: June 2007**

| 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: | | | | | | |
| ● consider whether more evaluative commentaries should be produced as part of the annual review process (paragraph 14) | Review tri-annual review and evaluation process | November 2007 | Quality Improvement Group | A harmonised review and evaluation process which analyses strengths and areas for improvement in line with the Academic infrastructure | Director of Learner Achievement/Quality Management Team/ HE Board of Study | EE Reports Quality Audit |
| | To embed the module review and electronic tracking | December 2007 | | | | |
| ● consider whether an opportunity exists to have discrete programme specifications for Edexcel programmes which can be made publicly available to prospective students, parents and employers (paragraph 23) | Monitor consistency of specifications in each programme hand book | October 2007 | Programme Leader | 100% of course handbooks consistent to template for programme specification and published on the HE website | Director of Learner Achievement/Quality Management Team/ HE Board of Study | HE Quality Audit Report |
| | Monitor each programme specification available on the college HE website | December 2007 | Section Head | | | |

**Stephenson College action plan relating to the Summative review: June 2007**

| Desirable | Action to be taken | Target date | Action by | Success indicators | Reported to | Evaluation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ● review the detail of the procedures regarding students' learning and progression and to bring them into one location, to create a clear regulatory framework for the College's higher education programmes and to facilitate ease of access and therefore consistency in application (paragraph 26) | Agree all relevant policies and procedures<br><br>Review all existing policies and procedures<br><br>Identify any omissions<br><br>Ensure all agreed policies and procedures are held on the HE website | May 2008 | Quality Improvement Group | A full, accurate and up to date set of relevant policies and procedures are accessible to students and tutors | Director of Learner Achievement/Quality Management Team/ HE Board of Study | Quality Audit<br><br>EE Reports<br><br>Student satisfaction survey |

**Stephenson College action plan relating to the Summative review: June 2007**

| Desirable | Action to be taken | Target date | Action by | Success indicators | Reported to | Evaluation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ● make further effort to seek effective cross-college student representation on appropriate committees, especially those which deal within course review and evaluation (paragraph 31) | Include value of 'Student representation' in published material and on website<br><br>Tutors to positively encourage course representatives to course meetings<br><br>Agenda course representatives as first item on Quality Improvement Group | December 2007 | Quality Improvement Group | Student Council for HE to be established | Director of Learner Achievement/Quality Management Team/ HE Board of Study | Student satisfaction survey and focus groups |