



QAA

Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

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Tameside College

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Preface

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

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

Purpose of IQER

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

The IQER process

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

Developmental engagement

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

The main elements of a Developmental engagement are:

- a self-evaluation by the college
- an optional written submission by the student body
- a preparatory meeting between the college and the IQER coordinator several weeks before the Developmental engagement visit
- the Developmental engagement visit, which normally lasts two days
- the evaluation of the extent to which the college manages effectively its responsibilities for the delivery of academic standards and the quality of its higher education provision, plus the arrangements for assuring the accuracy and completeness of public information it is responsible for publishing about its higher education
- the production of a written report of the team's findings.

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

Summative review

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

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

Evidence

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

- reviewing the college's self-evaluation and its internal procedures and documents
- reviewing the optional written submission from students
- asking questions of relevant staff
- talking to students about their experiences.

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

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

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

Outcomes of IQER

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

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

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

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

Executive summary

The Summative review of Tameside College carried out in January 2010

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

Good practice

The team has identified the following good practice for dissemination:

- the Higher Education (HE) Staff Handbook, which places emphasis on, and provides explanation of the Academic Infrastructure and relates it to College procedures
- the HE Forum, which encourages a strong higher education ethos and facilitates and encourages the sharing of good practice across the College
- the development of the programme review database, which provides increasing flexibility as a tool for comparing data across programmes and increasing external links in the monitoring and enhancement of standards and quality, and which aids the monitoring of performance and the progress of action plans
- the College's extensive links with industry, which feed into curricular development, enhance teaching and learning and provide valuable opportunities for staff placements
- the development and management of the College's virtual learning environment, which provides a comprehensive learning resource of consistent quality across the curriculum.

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:

- continue to develop the distinction between higher and further education in terms of responsibilities for and reporting on quality and standards, and formalise and articulate more clearly the management, monitoring and reporting structures and procedures for higher education programmes
- ensure that all staff development relating to higher education provision is recorded formally and that records provide a clearer picture of the nature of the activities undertaken
- improve the formal monitoring of quality and standards at module level on Higher National programmes
- develop an explicit process for the systematic checking of published information, supported by an appropriate reporting mechanism.

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

- provide programme specifications to students on Higher National programmes
- make more use of the comments of students, external examiners and other parties in the programme review process and encourage programme teams to be more consistently evaluative in their reporting
- encourage greater involvement of student representatives in the formal monitoring and enhancement of programmes
- further develop the well-used virtual learning environment to incorporate more interactive, collaborative and cooperative material.

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 Tameside 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, the University of Huddersfield, the University of Sunderland, the University of Central Lancashire and Manchester Metropolitan University. The review was carried out by Ms Michelle Callanan, Dr Patsy Campbell and Ms Jane Davis (reviewers) and Mr Peter Clarke (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 representatives of partner institutions and reports of reviews by QAA and from inspections by Ofsted. In particular, the team drew on the findings and recommendations of the Developmental engagement in assessment. A summary of findings from this Developmental engagement is provided in Section C of this report. The review also considered the College's use of the Academic Infrastructure, developed by QAA on behalf of higher education providers, with reference to the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, subject and award benchmark statements, *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and programme specifications.

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

4 The College was formed in February 1998 from the merger of Tameside College of Technology and Hyde Clarendon College. It operates on two main sites and is located eight miles to the east of Manchester. It is the major provider of education and training opportunities in the borough of Tameside, with a comprehensive portfolio of provision from pre-entry through to level 7 on the National Qualifications Framework. The number of higher education students has been declining for several years and currently stands at 2.5 per cent of the College's student body. The College has some 5,800 full-time equivalent students, of whom 146 full-time equivalent are on HEFCE-funded programmes.

5 The higher education offer at the College contains programmes in the areas of teacher education, business and computing, and engineering and construction. In 2009-10 the College introduced two new Foundation Degrees in Business and Accounting Management and Building Services Engineering, and intends to develop more higher education routes. The College provides extensive work-based learning opportunities and holds contracts for the delivery of Train to Gain and Entry to Employment programmes. The College was one of the first providers nationally to achieve the new Training Quality Standard and was the first College in the north-west to achieve both part A and part B.

6 The following is a list of the higher education programmes offered by the College:

Edexcel

- HNC Computing – 10 part-time students (5 full-time equivalents)
- HND Computing – 15 full-time students (12.5 full-time equivalents)
- HNC Electrical/Electronic Engineering – 21 part-time students (10.5 full-time equivalents)
- HND Electrical/Electronic Engineering – 9 part-time students (7.25 full-time equivalents)
- HNC Mechanical Engineering – 25 part-time students (12.5 full-time equivalents)
- HND Mechanical Engineering – 7 part-time and 2 full-time students (7.25 full-time equivalents)

University of Huddersfield

- Cert Ed/PGCE in Post Compulsory Education and Training – 108 part-time students (54 full-time equivalents)

University of Sunderland

- BA (Hons) Education and Training – 12 part-time students (6 full-time equivalents)
- Foundation Degree – Training & Work Based Learning – 17 full-time students

Manchester Metropolitan University

- Foundation Degree – Business and Accounting Management – 3 full-time students

University of Central Lancashire

- Foundation Degree – Building Services Engineering – 6 full-time and 3 part-time students (7.5 full-time equivalents).

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

7 The College is a member of consortia for the University of Huddersfield and the University of Sunderland programmes. Assessment instruments are produced at the relevant university, following consultation, and are common across each of the consortia. In the case of the recently introduced provision validated by Manchester Metropolitan University and the University of Central Lancashire, overall responsibility for quality assurance lies with the university. Students are bound by university regulations, including regulations regarding academic conduct and examination. External examiners are appointed by the universities. Overall, the Memoranda of agreement clearly define the responsibilities of the College and the validating university at institutional level. In some cases, further clarification could be provided at programme level.

8 The College has approval from Edexcel to deliver a range of Higher National programmes. The College determines the nature of these through its choice of standard Edexcel modules according to Edexcel rules. Day-to-day maintenance of quality and standards in delivery of the provision is the responsibility of the College. The College is

responsible for the delivery and assessment of the programmes. Edexcel appoints external examiners.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

9 Foundation Degrees in Business and Accounting Management and Building Services Engineering were introduced for the 2009-10 academic year. The College intends to introduce further programmes and to this end is in the process of developing new premises, which will be dedicated to higher education and enterprise provision.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

10 Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the Summative review team. A submission was produced from the outcomes of student forums in October 2009 using the Nominal Group Technique. This provided the review team with a helpful introduction to student opinion and helped inform reviewers' priorities during the review.

B Evaluation of the management of HEFCE-funded higher education

Core theme 1: Academic standards

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

11 The self-evaluation does not offer an explicit overview of the formal management committee structure or lines of responsibility for managing and delivering higher education standards within the College nor does it present a summary of the reporting arrangements. The College has introduced systems for monitoring higher education separately from further education provision, but these are at an early stage and are still to be fully developed and articulated. The planned review of senior management roles offers the College an opportunity to provide a more focused reporting and management structure for higher education.

12 While higher education represents a small proportion of the College's overall provision, it is seen as central to the institutional mission. Management and governance within higher education are formally defined in the College Higher Education Strategy document. The Higher Education Management Group, consisting of the Vice Principal (Quality, Teaching and Learning) and two assistant principals, meets monthly. It reports on all matters pertaining to higher education to the College Strategy Group. This Group reports to the Senior Management Team, which reports at corporate level to the governors' Curriculum, Quality and Standards Committee.

13 The Higher Education Management group is a key element within the College's management of its higher education provision. However, there are no clear lines of responsibility between this group and those responsible for the delivery of programmes, and the group is not mentioned within the College's Quality Assurance Manual. A more formalised system for managing specific higher education issues at the highest committee level in the College would clarify this, particularly if provision at this level is expanded in line with College plans. The team considers it advisable for the College to continue to

develop the distinction between higher and further education in terms of responsibilities for and reporting on quality and standards and formalise and articulate more clearly the management, monitoring and reporting structures and procedures for higher education programmes.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

14 The College self-evaluation document points to the effectiveness of its safeguarding of quality and academic standards. In particular, it highlights the system of Annual Course Reviews held for higher education programmes, the programme review validation meetings and the HE Forum meetings, which drive improvements in quality through initiating action plans and disseminating good practice. The College's programme review database has recently been developed to provide a distinct section relating to higher education. This maps specific requirements of the *Code of practice*, published by QAA, to the template questions within the Annual Course Review. The College has made a good start in encouraging staff to consider and engage with the *Code of practice*.

15 The HE Forum is used as a vehicle to discuss subject benchmark statements, the FHEQ and the *Code of practice*. All staff teaching on higher education programmes are invited to attend these regular sessions. External examiners have commented favourably on the improvement in the use of aspects of the Academic Infrastructure within assessments and the responsiveness of the team to issues raised previously. Staff are also provided with a Higher Education Staff Handbook, which places emphasis on and provides explanation of key elements within the Academic Infrastructure. The Handbook is very comprehensive and helpful, with many clear pointers to staff on quality assurance issues, procedures and requirements. The team considers that the Handbook represents good practice.

16 Programme specifications for degree programmes are produced by the validating universities. The College has developed programme specifications for the Higher National programmes. However, these are not distributed to students. Students receive module specifications, which provide valuable information, but these fail to give an overview. The team considers it desirable that students on Higher National programmes are provided with programme specifications.

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

17 Each programme has a college link representative. These link staff provide valuable support to the programmes through regular liaison with the validating universities. They contribute to validation and revalidation meetings and attend university committees relating to quality assurance and maintenance of academic standards, including moderation events, examiners' meetings and staff development days. In developing new partnerships with the University of Central Lancashire and Manchester Metropolitan University, college staff benefited from the advice of experienced colleagues in the HE Forum about responsibilities relating to the assurance of quality and standards.

18 The HE Forum plays an effective role in sharing relevant experiences of quality assurance and standards issues and disseminating good practice among staff teaching higher education programmes. Although minutes are taken of each meeting and are available for consultation, the Forum has no formal reporting role within the College's committee structure. Ideas and issues raised are picked up by the Assistant Principals with

responsibility for higher education, but this may be too informal when the higher education provision grows. Nonetheless, the role played by the HE Forum in encouraging a higher education ethos among staff represents good practice.

19 External examiner reports are provided for the consortia programmes, but these tend to be very general. A greater insight is provided by College representatives' attendance at the examination boards and development meetings and subsequent discussions at the HE Forum. The Foundation Degree in Training & Work-Based Learning commenced in September 2008, and the other two Foundation Degrees commenced in September 2009, hence there are not yet any external examiner reports for the Foundation Degrees.

20 The self-evaluation notes that the overall responsibility for quality of provision rests with the corporation and is monitored through the Curriculum, Quality and Standards Committee, which meets once a term. However, higher education provision is not yet monitored separately at this level. This was recognised by the team as an issue which requires formalisation.

21 The programme review database is a valuable management tool. Heads of Programme Areas can drill down the database to examine strengths and weaknesses in individual programmes by comparison with other programmes. They can also check policies, attendance, retention levels or the completion of all elements of the annual programme review. Administrative staff can use the database system to check that annual reports contain all elements required by the universities for monitoring of quality.

22 The system is designed to be as transparent as possible; for example, at the moment the intranet can be accessed remotely by students, but they are debarred from seeing their personal files. Material collated on the College database is used by validating universities and it is planned to develop the higher education area further, to include for example outside professional events. The College's continuing development of the facility was considered by the team to be an example of good practice.

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

23 Staff are encouraged to visit other higher education providers, sitting in on key meetings or work-shadowing a colleague to ensure consistency of approach and standards. Specific events at the validating universities are made available to College staff, including external courses, staff development activities within the College, Greater Manchester Consortium for HE in FE activities, including a staff development register, termly events at the North West Regional Forum for HE in FE and the HE Course Leaders Forum. Staff are encouraged to study for higher degrees, and the Staff Development Unit provides information about financial support for this. Staff development at the College benefits from the College's good relationships with its higher education partners; there are plans to support and increase this cooperation.

24 The need for further engagement with the Academic Infrastructure was highlighted during the Developmental engagement. This has been effectively addressed with staff development activities organised within the College since the developmental engagement. Staff are encouraged to attend regular training sessions within the College on, for example, use of the virtual learning environment, and dissemination of good practice in assessment within engineering. In many cases of cost-free activity such attendance goes unrecorded, hence staff records understate the extent of developmental activity. Furthermore, the records do not provide clear information on the nature of the staff development

undertaken, such as, for example, the length of placements or the location of activities. The team considers it advisable that all staff development relating to higher education is recorded and that records provide a clearer picture of the nature of the activities undertaken. This will help to support the College's ambition to increase its higher education provision.

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?

25 Processes for managing the quality of learning opportunities are generally effective but, as noted earlier, need to be made more formal and be better articulated. The responsibility for the enhancement of the teaching, learning and assessment of higher education programmes lies with the Vice-Principal (Quality, Teaching and Learning) through the Assistant Principal (Quality & Performance), the heads of programme areas, curriculum leaders and course leaders. The Assistant Principal (Quality & Performance) works with programme teams in writing annual programme reviews and action plans, which feed into the programme area reviews and finally into the higher education self-assessment report. This is reported to the Higher Education Strategy Group to inform future higher education strategy documents.

26 Heads of programme areas report termly to senior management through Quality Improvement Reviews on the performance of programmes and the progress on action plans. Processes are effective at addressing issues. For example, the HNC Computing Course Review 2009 identified the low retention rate of its student cohort. A system of regular monitoring of the current student cohort was introduced and changes were made to the programme to reflect the students' needs more closely. The retention rate for the current year to date is 100 per cent.

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

27 Arrangements for assuring that the College is fulfilling its responsibilities are as set out above. Curriculum leaders work with link tutors from the awarding bodies to ensure the provision operates in accordance with collaborative agreements. Curriculum leaders, awarding bodies and students confirm that the process is effective. Cross-moderation events and consortium events involving the College's module tutors, Curriculum leaders and the awarding body link tutors, take place at regular intervals throughout the year. This practice ensures consistency and equity in assessment practices, and supports the enhancement of teaching and learning on different modules. External examiner reports for 2007-08, the latest available, state that the consortia programmes are managed in accordance with the collaborative agreements and the standards set by the Universities of Huddersfield and Sunderland.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

28 As stated above, the College has assisted staff teaching on higher education programmes to engage with the Academic Infrastructure through staff development activities organised within the College since the Developmental engagement. Course review documentation has been redesigned to align questions within the process explicitly to the *Code of practice*.

29 In discussion, staff demonstrated an awareness of key elements of the Academic Infrastructure as it relates to the quality of learning opportunities. However, some areas are not clearly signposted in College documentation.

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

30 The College is committed to providing high quality teaching and learning across all of its higher education programmes. All staff teaching on higher education programmes undergo at least one class observation per year as part of the wider review or to inform the appraisal process. This process, along with its associated action plans, is proving effective in developing the quality of teaching and learning. There are effective links between the outcomes of observation, staff appraisal and staff development.

31 Programme teams are responsible for the completion of the course review, which evaluates the quality of teaching and learning of their programmes. All course reviews for 2009 commented favourably on these matters, citing the effective links with industry and the work-based learning of students, the integration of information and learning technology into modules and the staff development activities that have been used to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. In addition, action plans focus on enhancing the quality of teaching and learning. For example, the 2009 Annual Course Review for HND Engineering identified the need to organise more industry visits for students, and this has been done.

32 External examiners comment favourably on the quality of learning opportunities on Higher National programmes and the responsiveness of programme teams to issues they have raised. External examiner reports for 2007-08 for the university-validated programmes commented favourably on the quality of learning opportunities within the consortia.

33 Links with employers are exemplary, with employers working with programme teams on the development of module content, on project work and in organising industrial visits. In addition, employers also organise presentations to students about industry. Such extensive links provide staff with industrial placement opportunities and many staff have taken up this opportunity. They and the students acknowledged that such experience enhanced the relevance and focus of their teaching. The team considers the College's extensive links to industry, and the benefits these provide to students, to be good practice.

34 All students are encouraged to complete a survey and be represented on student forums. Course review reports demonstrate a varied degree of evaluation of the student comments on these matters. While some reports adopt an appropriately evaluative approach, many are simply descriptive with no attempt to review the contributions of, for example, students and external examiners. The team considers that it is desirable for the College to make more use of the comments of students, external examiners and other parties in the programme review process and to encourage programme teams to be more consistently evaluative in their reporting.

35 Students on university-validated programmes complete module questionnaires. However, there are no reviews carried out at module level on Higher National programmes. This adversely affects the College's ability to monitor the delivery of programmes. The team considers it advisable that the College improve its formal monitoring of quality and standards at module level.

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

36 Students are enthusiastic about their overall learning experience at the College and the contribution made by academic and support staff. They comment favourably on the guidance and support provided by the College in general and by programme teams in particular. Students progressing from further education programmes within the College stated that their progression on to higher education programmes was effective, with good support and guidance from their tutors. The tutorial system is clearly embedded into programmes through formal tutorials, online mechanisms and also through a very supportive informal environment. Students are very appreciative of the open-door policy adopted by staff.

37 While the College provides encouragement for students to provide student representatives, there is a lack of clarity as to their role. Student forums were set up in preparation for this review and these proved helpful in determining student priorities. The College intends to continue to use these. Most higher education students are part-time and therefore find it difficult to attend meetings. As a result there is little involvement of students in the committees which monitor and review programmes. The team considers it to be desirable that the College encourage greater involvement of student representatives in the formal monitoring and enhancement of programmes.

38 Personal development plans are established in higher education programmes. The Course Review for Computing 2008-09 highlighted the need to integrate personal development planning more explicitly within the programmes. Staff confirmed that this has been done and students are supported accordingly.

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

39 The higher education strategy 2009-10 to 2010-11 articulates the College's commitment to staff development activities and the achievement of higher level qualifications. Over the period the College will seek to establish a research strategy to enhance the quality of learning opportunities for students.

40 Staff development activities have been undertaken by all staff teaching on higher education programmes during 2008-09. Many staff participated in a range of cross-college events on higher education, including sessions on the Academic Infrastructure, on the College's virtual learning environment and on widening participation. Many staff have participated in industry placements, which have proved very effective in the enhancement of the teaching, learning and assessment of programmes and in extending links with industry.

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?

41 The College's well-developed and extensively used virtual learning environment offers excellent support to students. It works well as a learning repository, providing comprehensive learning resources and guidance across all programmes. In discussions with the team, students stated that it is a highly valued resource. The team considers that the development and management of the virtual learning environment to provide such a consistent and comprehensive resource is good practice.

42 Some tutors have started to develop the virtual learning environment to provide opportunities for interactivity, through the use of forums and other media, although the forums are sparsely used. Initial teacher training programmes are promoting the use of technology-enhanced learning within module content. The team considers that, following the excellent progress made to date, it is desirable that the College further develop the virtual learning environment to include opportunities for interactive, cooperative and collaborative learning activities.

43 The monitoring and review of learning resources is undertaken through the programme review and subsequent business planning processes. The College works with awarding institutions to access funding for equipment, for example MP3 players and video cameras for the support of initial teacher training programmes. Students and employers feel that resources provide appropriate support for learning.

44 There is effective communication between library and teaching staff to ensure that library resources are appropriate. The Library Manager engages with validating institutions to support the acquisition of up-to-date and relevant materials. The library remains open to students into the early evenings between Monday and Thursday; the College may wish to review access to the library if the planned growth in student numbers and higher education programmes takes place.

The team concludes that it has confidence in the College's management of its responsibilities for the quality of the learning opportunities as required by the awarding bodies to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Core theme 3: Public information

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

45 Clear information about the College's mission, core values, management structure and governance is published on the College website. The website provides programme information, financial guidance and also provides comprehensive information about the resources available to students, including library resources both at the College and at the partner universities. The College publishes a Higher Education Prospectus in accordance with its partnership agreements. Students found this useful but preferred the more detailed information available through the website and through discussions with admissions staff and tutors.

46 Through the virtual learning environment the College provides all higher education students with a handbook containing details of support available through Student Services. It also provides a general student handbook, which contains broader information about the College, including general guidance on 'What to do if things go wrong'. The College is considering developing a higher education student charter. Overall, the College provides students with appropriate guidance on general College services.

47 The College has responsibility for producing programme handbooks for those students on Higher National programmes. These are available on the virtual learning environment and include programme information and associated procedures, for example assignment schedules, assignment submission procedures and notes on academic misconduct. Students find programme handbooks useful and comprehensive, and are also content that tutors will provide further advice and guidance as required.

48 Programme specifications for Higher National programmes, awarded by Edexcel, have been developed by the College. Students on these programmes are provided with helpful module guides including module specifications. However, the overall programme specifications are not made available to them, making it difficult for them to take an overview of their programme. The team considers it desirable that programme specifications are made available to Higher National students.

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

49 The College documents its procedure for marketing and publicity within the Quality Assurance Manual, clearly indicating stages of the process and the member of staff responsible for each activity. The Quality Assurance Manual documents procedures and responsibilities in respect of the development of materials and processes for information, advice and guidance, programme information sheets, documentation relating to induction and the production and uploading of induction material and handbooks to the virtual learning environment.

50 The checking of the quality of programme handbooks for Higher National programmes is the responsibility of the Assistant Principal (Quality and Performance). While the procedure for the reviewing of materials supporting information, advice and guidance is clear, the team noted minor anomalies in some public information. They also saw little evidence of the systematic and reported checking of public information for the support of higher education students. The team considers it advisable that an explicit process is developed for the systematic checking of published information, supported by an appropriate reporting mechanism.

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

51 The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in October 2008. It covered all of the Higher National provision referred to above, along with the Cert Ed/PGCE in Post Compulsory Education and Training validated by the University of Huddersfield and the PGCE in Post Compulsory Education and Training and the BA (Hons) Education and Training validated by the University of Sunderland. As the Foundation Degree in Training & Work-Based Learning had just commenced in September 2008 it was not included in the scope of the engagement. No other Foundation Degrees were running at the time. The lines of enquiry were:

Line of enquiry 1: The extent to which assessment ensures that consistent standards are maintained across curriculum areas and awarding bodies.

Line of enquiry 2: The extent to which the quality of formative and summative feedback enables students to meet academic standards and develop their own learning.

Line of enquiry 3: The extent to which published information on assessment is complete, accurate, meets the needs of students and reflects intended learning outcomes.

52 The Developmental engagement team identified three areas of good practice. The use of the College's virtual learning environment for assessment and related feedback provides good support for student learning. The separate analysis of higher education provision within the programme review database enables the effective monitoring and management of academic standards and quality. The integration of assessment and related feedback with student support and teaching encourages the personal and academic development of students.

53 The team considered it advisable that the College should disseminate the good practice of aligning assignment briefs and intended learning outcomes seen in Engineering to other Higher National provision, and that steps be taken to improve the consistency of the quality and timeliness of feedback provided to students following assessment. The team also reported that it would be desirable if the College took steps to raise awareness of the Academic Infrastructure among staff teaching on higher education programmes, and to monitor the effectiveness of recently introduced assessment submission procedures for Higher National students.

D Foundation Degrees

54 The College offers Foundation Degrees in the areas of Training & Work Based Learning, Business and Accounting Management, and Building Services Engineering. The latter two programmes enrolled their first cohorts in the academic year 2009-10: the Foundation Degree in Training & Work Based Learning commenced in September 2008. None of the programmes has therefore produced graduates.

55 The programmes have been developed by the validating University and the College operates them as franchised provision. It intends to use its links to local industry to take a more active role in the development of further Foundation Degrees. Given the College's limited experience of Foundation Degrees, it is not possible to reach conclusions on its management of its responsibilities relating to academic standards. Some of the general conclusions relating to the quality of learning opportunities are particularly pertinent to the Foundation Degree provision.

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

- the College's extensive links to industry, which feed into curricular development and the enhancement of teaching and learning, and provide valuable opportunities for staff placements (paragraphs 33, 40)
- the development and management of the College's virtual learning environment, which provides a comprehensive learning resource of consistent quality across the curriculum (paragraph 41).

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

- ensure that all staff development relating to higher education provision is formally recorded and that records provide a clearer picture of the nature of the activities undertaken (paragraph 24).

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

- make more use of the comments of students, external examiners and other parties in the programme review process and encourage programme teams to be more consistently evaluative in their reporting (paragraph 34)
- encourage greater involvement of student representatives in the formal monitoring and enhancement of programmes (paragraph 37)
- further develop the well-used virtual learning environment to incorporate more interactive, collaborative and cooperative material (paragraph 42).

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

59 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Tameside 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: Edexcel; the University of Huddersfield; the University of Sunderland; Manchester Metropolitan University; and the University of Central Lancashire.

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

- the Higher Education Staff Handbook, which places emphasis on and provides explanation of the Academic Infrastructure and relates it to College procedures (paragraph 15)
- the HE Forum, which encourages a strong higher education ethos and facilitates and encourages the sharing of good practice across the College (paragraph 18)
- the development of the programme review database, which provides increasing flexibility as a tool for comparing data across programmes and increasing external links in the monitoring and enhancement of standards and quality, and which aids the monitoring of performance and the progress of action plans (paragraphs 21, 22)
- the College's extensive links to industry, which feed into curricular development, enhance teaching and learning and provide valuable opportunities for staff placements (paragraphs 33, 40)
- the development and management of the College's virtual learning environment, which provides a comprehensive learning resource of consistent quality across the curriculum (paragraph 41).

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

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

- continue to develop the distinction between higher and further education in terms of responsibilities for and reporting on quality and standards and formalise and articulate more clearly the management, monitoring and reporting structures and procedures for higher education programmes (paragraphs 13, 20)
- ensure that all staff development relating to higher education provision is recorded formally and that records provide a clearer picture of the nature of the activities undertaken (paragraph 24)
- improve the formal monitoring of quality and standards at module level on Higher National programmes (paragraph 35)
- develop an explicit process for the systematic checking of published information, supported by an appropriate reporting mechanism (paragraph 50).

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

- provide programme specifications to students on Higher National programmes (paragraphs 16, 48)
- make more use of the comments of students, external examiners and other parties in the programme review process and encourage programme teams to be more consistently evaluative in their reporting (paragraph 34)
- encourage greater involvement of student representatives in the formal monitoring and enhancement of programmes (paragraph 37)
- further develop the well-used virtual learning environment to incorporate more interactive, collaborative and cooperative material (paragraph 42).

64 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 agreements, for the management of the standards of the awards of its awarding bodies.

65 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.

66 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/or completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Tameside College action plan relating to the Summative review: January 2010						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
In the course of the Summative review the team identified the following areas of good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Higher Education Staff Handbook, which places emphasis on and provides explanation of the Academic Infrastructure and relates it to College procedures (paragraph 15) 	Update Higher Education Staff Handbook on a yearly basis and further enhance content in relation to the Academic Infrastructure	Sep 2010	Quality	Increase in awareness of new staff in relation to how College procedures relate to HE provision and the Academic Infrastructure	HE Management Group	New staff probationary review inductions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the HE Forum, which encourages a strong higher education ethos and facilitates and encourages the sharing of good practice across the College (paragraph 18) 	New staff delivering Foundation Degrees to pair with more established staff delivering HE from outside of their curriculum area	June 2010 Nov 2010 March 2011	AP Learner Services	Increase in sharing of good practice across departments	HE Forum	Feedback from staff pairings at HE Forum Progress monitored at HE Management Group

Tameside College action plan relating to the Summative review: January 2010						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
	and to report developments to the HE Forum					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the development of the programme review database, which provides increasing flexibility as a tool for comparing data across programmes and increasing external links in the monitoring and enhancement of standards and quality, and which aids the monitoring of performance and the progress of action plans (paragraphs 21, 22) 	<p>Further refinement of the questions within the programme review database to match criteria within the Academic Infrastructure</p> <p>Action plan progress to be included in new HE Quality Improvement Reviews</p>	<p>June 2010</p> <p>June 2010</p>	<p>AP Quality</p> <p>Quality</p>	<p>Programme review database closely mapped to <i>Code of practice</i> and associated updates</p> <p>Close monitoring of action plan targets</p>	<p>HE Management Group</p>	<p>Feedback from Peer Review and Development partners</p> <p>Progress reported in self-assessment report</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the College's extensive links to industry, which feed into curricular development, enhance teaching and learning and provide valuable 	Further increase the range of links with employers within the	Dec 2010	Head of Programme Area (HOPA) Business and Computing	Increase the range of external links with employers – target 3 companies	HE Quality Improvement Review and 14-19	Programme review and self-assessment action plan report

Tameside College action plan relating to the Summative review: January 2010						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
opportunities for staff placements (paragraphs 33, 40)	Computing department All HE staff to undertake a period of placement with employers on a yearly basis					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the development and management of the College's virtual learning environment (VLE), which provides a comprehensive learning resource of consistent quality across the curriculum (paragraph 41). 	Share best practice across curriculum areas; enable each HE course leader to have access to all other HE courses on the virtual learning environment	May 2010	eLearning Manager	All staff delivering HE all HE courses on the VLE	AP Quality/HE Management Group	Feedback from HE Forum on best practice observed

Tameside College action plan relating to the Summative review: January 2010						
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:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> continue to develop the distinction between higher and further education in terms of responsibilities for and reporting on quality and standards and formalise and articulate more clearly the management, monitoring and reporting structures and procedures for higher education programmes (paragraphs 13, 20) 	<p>Schedule specific HE review within Improvement of Teaching and Learning and Learning review group.</p> <p>Develop specific HE Quality Review as distinct from current Quality Improvement Review reporting through Strategy group and Senior management team</p> <p>Review existing business</p>	<p>April 2010</p> <p>October 2010</p> <p>May 2010</p>	<p>VP Quality</p> <p>VP Quality and AP Quality and AP Learner Services</p>	<p>Monthly review of HE systems and processes</p> <p>Quarterly monitoring of QA process through HE focussed Quality Improvement Review</p> <p>Business plan monitoring</p>	<p>Strategy group and HoPAs, HE Management Group</p> <p>Governors, Senior management team and Strategy group, HE Management Group</p> <p>Senior management</p>	<p>Feedback from Improvement of Teaching and Learning review group.</p> <p>Progress monitored as part of self-assessment report</p> <p>Self-assessment report</p>

Tameside College action plan relating to the Summative review: January 2010						
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
	planning process to ensure HE provision is clearly identified with the relevant curriculum-based management and monitoring processes		and AP Quality	through quarterly performance monitoring meetings and regular programme area meetings	team Strategy group and HoPAs	
	Quality Manual update to review all policies and procedures for 2010/11	Sept 2010	VP Quality	All policies and procedures enable the College to take forward our priorities for growth and development of both the quality and quantity of HE provision.	Governors, Senior management team, Strategy group	Self-assessment report
	Review membership of	April 2010	VP Quality	Clear focus for curriculum	Strategy group, HoPAs, Senior	Self-assessment report

Tameside College action plan relating to the Summative review: January 2010							
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation	
	HE Management group to include Assistant Principals with curriculum responsibility			management, meetings with actions picked up on a weekly basis alongside FE matters	management team, Governors		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that all staff development relating to higher education provision is recorded formally and that records provide a clearer picture of the nature of the activities undertaken (paragraph 24) 	<p>Review the suitability of the new HR software for recording activity</p> <p>Ensure that staff development activity is recorded at HE Quality Improvement Reviews and is checked against HR software for accuracy</p>	<p>May 2010</p> <p>June 2010</p>	<p>Staff Development Manager</p> <p>AP Quality</p>	<p>100% accuracy in reporting of Continuing Professional Development and staff development activities</p>	<p>HE Management Group</p> <p>HE Quality Improvement Review</p>	<p>Self-assessment report</p> <p>Programme reviews</p>	
	Design modular feedback using	May 2010	By module	Increase in feedback by	HE Management	Programme Reviews	

Tameside College action plan relating to the Summative review: January 2010						
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> improve the formal monitoring of quality and standards at module level on Higher National programmes (paragraph 35) 	<p>the College VLE with results incorporated into programme review database</p>			<p>module within programme reviews</p>	<p>Group</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop an explicit process for the systematic checking of published information, supported by an appropriate reporting mechanism (paragraph 50). 	<p>Establish an audit scheme and responsibilities for all publicly available information in relation to Higher Education</p>	<p>June 2010</p>	<p>Research & Development</p>	<p>Audit Report</p>	<p>HE Management Group</p>	<p>Self-assessment report</p>

Tameside College action plan relating to the Summative review: January 2010						
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:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide programme specifications to students on Higher National programmes (paragraph 16, 48) 	Include programme specifications in Higher National course handbooks	Sep 2010	AP Quality	All Higher National learners have access to programme specifications	HE Management Group	Programme reviews and self-assessment report
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> make more use of the comments of students, external examiners and other parties in the programme review process and encourage programme teams to be more consistently evaluative in their reporting (paragraph 34) 	Provide further training on the need for evaluative comments within the programme review Ensure that each review includes modular feedback	May 2010 July 2010	AP Quality HoPA	Decrease in the volume of descriptive comments and increase in evaluative statements within programme reviews Exception reporting by modular level data to improve quality	HE Management Group HE Management Group	Self-assessment report Self-assessment report

Tameside College action plan relating to the Summative review: January 2010							
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> encourage greater involvement of student representatives in the formal monitoring and enhancement of programmes (paragraph 37) 	Develop a direct link between student representatives and the College's Quality Unit using the VLE	May 2010	eLearning Manager/AP Quality	Communication link in place between Student Representatives and Quality Unit	HE Management Group	Self-assessment report, feedback from students and representatives	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> further develop the well-used virtual learning environment to incorporate more interactive, collaborative and cooperative material (paragraph 42). 	All programme reviews to include student representative input	July 2010	HoPA	All programme reviews to evidence student input	HE Management Group	Programme reviews and Self assessment report	
	Share best practice within teams by reviewing current examples of interactive, collaborative and cooperative material at HE	May 2010	eLearning Manager	Improved range of interactive, collaborative and cooperative material on all HE courses	HE Forum	Programme reviews, student feedback	

Tameside College action plan relating to the Summative review: January 2010						
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
	Forum Investigate best practice within the sector using eLearning team for additional support					

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
Southgate House
Southgate Street
Gloucester
GL1 1UB

Tel 01452 557000
Fax 01452 557070
Email comms@qaa.ac.uk
Web www.qaa.ac.uk

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