



Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

The Solihull 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 The Solihull College carried out in May 2011

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 management and delivery of staff development, which involves a highly effective combination of College, partner and individual staff-directed activities, and which is embedded in a supportive and responsive College culture
- the *Code of practice* is well used to evaluate and improve practice, especially in relation to disability, which has resulted in enhancement of the learning opportunities through, for example, ensuring students have access to the physical environment and additional specialist support
- the provision of learning opportunities through the library and the virtual learning environment which make a very positive contribution to ensuring the accessibility of resources and supporting students' learning
- proactive relationships with industry partners have led to curriculum innovation, all of which are mutually beneficial for partners, students and the College.

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 **desirable** for the College to:

- continue to develop its policies and procedures relating to work placement in line with the precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning*
- review the aims of the BA (Hons) Fine Art award in partnership with the validating body and the external examiners, define emerging modes of practice, and ensure clear communication to all stakeholders.

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 The Solihull 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 Birmingham City University, Coventry University, the University of Derby, Edexcel, Oxford Brookes University, and the University of Wolverhampton. The review was carried out by Mr Paul Chamberlain, Mr Peter Cutting, Ms Ruth Stoker (reviewers) and Dr Judith Foreman (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 the College's partnership agreements, management structure, higher education quality cycle, annual monitoring reports, student surveys, higher education forum minutes, student handbooks, staff development records, external examiner reports, employer engagement documents, marketing documents and publishing policy and resource information. 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 mission statement is 'to provide high-quality learning opportunities to meet the needs of individuals, employers and the community'. The College is a large general further education college providing a wide range of qualifications from entry level to honours degrees. It serves a wide area of the West Midlands, with over half of full-time and a third of part-time students coming from the City of Birmingham. The College was awarded the Training Quality Standard in December 2008. Engaging people in lifelong learning and closing the equality gap is a key priority for the College and the borough. The College has two modern, well-equipped campuses and has made significant investment in accommodation in recent years; higher education is delivered at both campuses.

5 Curriculum delivery is structured around five faculties, each of which includes both further and higher education provision. Having delivered higher education programmes for 21 years, the College currently works with five university partners drawn from the region as well as Edexcel. The higher education curriculum is centred predominantly on vocational and employer-focused provision. The higher education student profile reflects the wider local social and economic context and the College's commitment to widening participation. There are 530 higher education students funded by HEFCE, of which around 50 per cent have studied previously at the College. Fifty per cent of students are from areas of social and economic disadvantage. The College has the following higher education provision. Full-time equivalent (FTE) student numbers are in brackets.

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Birmingham City University

- BA (Hons) Fine Art (50)

Coventry University

- HND Business Information Technology (23)
- HND Networking and Mobile Computing (4)
- FD Business Information Technology (10)

University of Derby

- FD in Sports Coaching (7)

Edexcel

- HND Graphic Design (21)
- HND Photography and Digital Imaging (17)
- HNC Photography and Digital Imaging (2)
- HND Business (24)
- HNC Business (Management) (14)
- HND Computing and Systems Development (15)
- HND Sports and Exercise Science (39)
- HND Advanced Practice in Work with Children and Families (Education) (32)
- HND Animal Management (32)
- HNC Animal Management (1)
- HND Aerospace Engineering (18)
- HNC Engineering (Mechanical, Electrical and Electronic, Manufacturing) (22.5)

Oxford Brookes University

- BA (Hons) Business and Management (17)
- FD in Business, Management and Communications (54)
- FD in Early Years (15)
- FD in Classroom Support (15)
- FD in Support for Learning (14)

University of Wolverhampton

- FD in Early Childhood Studies (22)
- Certificate in Education Post Compulsory Education (24)

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

6 The College has partnerships with Oxford Brookes University and the University of Wolverhampton for indirect funding, and direct funding through partnerships with Birmingham City University, Coventry University, the University of Derby and Edexcel. The College is a long-standing member of the Brookes Associate College Partnership. Teacher training for the lifelong learning sector awards are currently delivered in partnership with the University of Wolverhampton. The partnership with the University of Wolverhampton is in its final stages of operation following the decision of the University to review its partnerships arrangements with West Midlands colleges. The partnership with the University of Derby will cease when current students complete their programmes of study in 2011.

Written partnership agreements with all awarding bodies clearly identify the College's responsibilities for the management of its provision.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

7 The College continues to develop its higher education provision based on its strategy to make it accessible to the Solihull community and to respond to labour market needs. A major refurbishment and redevelopment of the Blossomfield campus is nearing completion. A new Arts Centre, Land Based Centre, Management Centre and Conference Centre have been completed. The final stages of the redevelopment of the Blossomfield campus are nearing completion and include refurbishment of the Business Centre and the Higher Education Centre.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

8 Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the Summative review team. Both a written and an innovative graphical submission were presented. The College employed the services of an external facilitator to assist students with the submission. A set of questions was developed, and students from a wide range of the provision met with the facilitator to discuss and feedback on the issues raised by the questions. Following this, a draft submission was compiled by the facilitator, and students were asked to comment. The Student Liaison Officer also spoke to students to confirm the written feedback was accurate. The key matters addressed in the submission include published information about the College, students' experiences as learners and the support they receive, the value of the curriculum and qualifications, and feedback from tutors. The team was able to discuss these and other matters with students at meetings during the visit to the College.

B Evaluation of the management of HEFCE-funded higher education

Core theme 1: Academic standards

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

9 The College has effective partnerships with its awarding bodies. Clear guidelines from the awarding bodies and careful mapping of quality assurance requirements by the College clearly identify the location of responsibilities for the development and enhancement of standards. Representatives of the awarding bodies confirmed that the College has appropriate arrangements to give them confidence in its higher education provision.

10 The Vice Principal (Resources and Planning) has overall responsibility for the strategic management of the College's higher education programmes, and for ensuring that the policies and procedures of the awarding bodies are implemented. The Director of Curriculum reports to the Vice Principal and is responsible for liaison with awarding bodies and also coordinates the higher education quality assurance process across the College to ensure coherence and consistency of application. The five faculty directors are responsible for the quality assurance and enhancement of higher education provision in their areas, working with heads of school and course leaders at programme level.

11 The team confirms the College's claim in its self-evaluation that there is a well-established higher education committee structure which provides effective support for the maintenance and enhancement of academic standards. Each grouping within the structure has clear membership and terms of reference which articulate with the College's overall framework for higher education quality assurance and enhancement. The Higher Education Quality and Standards Board, chaired by the Director of Curriculum, is responsible for all aspects of the quality and standards of the College's higher education. The Board, which reports to the College's Senior Leadership Team, receives and considers reports from faculty higher education programme quality boards, higher education annual monitoring reports and validation panels. The Higher Education Strategy Group provides a forum for senior managers to participate in the maintenance and development of the College's higher education strategy. The Higher Education Forum, which meets twice a term and comprises all the programme teams and key cross-college staff, enables practitioners to discuss and share information about higher education provision and contribute to the development of policy and practice.

12 Overall there is an effective reporting and communication mechanism and clear lines of responsibility for managing the higher education provision. Considerable thought and effort have gone into the development of the system which enables senior management to have clear oversight of higher education.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

13 The Developmental engagement in assessment found good practice in the implementation of the Academic Infrastructure. The review team can confirm that this applies more broadly in the context of the Summative review, and that the Academic Infrastructure is embedded in the quality management process and in the design, approval and delivery of programmes. In their meetings with the team, College staff, including those responsible for supporting teaching and learning, showed good understanding of the Academic Infrastructure and provided examples of the way in which it is used in the development of the College's higher education provision and in the maintenance and enhancement of standards.

14 A series of internal staff development events, together with an annual higher education conference, provides effective opportunities for briefings on the Academic Infrastructure. Staff from different curriculum areas noted the benefit of understanding the FHEQ at levels above those at which they currently teach. This understanding assists staff in the development of curriculum and in enabling them to more effectively advise students on progression. A recent amendment to the format for annual monitoring reports has been made in response to the revision in the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark* and staff in the engineering subject area have responded to amendments to the subject benchmark. All validation events with awarding bodies require evidence to show that the aims, objectives, learning outcomes and assessment strategies are set within the context of the Academic Infrastructure.

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

15 The College assures itself that it is meeting the requirements of its validating partners and awarding bodies through systematic annual reporting, participation in the awarding bodies' own review processes and engagement with external consultants that act as 'critical friends'. At programme level, university awarding body staff identified as link tutors

provide valuable day-to-day quality assurance support and ensure all processes and policies are aligned to partners' requirements. In their meetings with the team, College staff and awarding body representatives demonstrated close partnership working and confirmed that the management of the provision was being undertaken according to awarding body requirements.

16 The College completes rigorous annual monitoring of standards based on very effective integration of activities at programme, faculty and College levels. Each programme completes an annual monitoring report and quality improvement plan using a standard template. Some programmes are required to complete monitoring reports using the awarding body template. All report formats encourage in-depth review of the course and the production of a detailed action plan, and some reports were very comprehensive and evaluative. The implementation of quality improvement plans emanating from the annual reports is overseen by the College Higher Education Quality and Standards Board, with regular review by course teams and their managers, and progress monitored by heads of school and faculty. The annual monitoring report includes a useful section in which progress for the year is evaluated. In their meetings with the team, staff demonstrated strong engagement with the annual monitoring process and provided examples of the impact of annual monitoring on quality improvement. A faculty higher education self-assessment report was introduced in 2010-11 to further strengthen annual monitoring and facilitate the identification of good practice within and across faculties.

17 External examiners appointed by the universities and Edexcel confirm that the standards and quality of the provision are sound and that students are achieving the intended learning outcomes. The team concurs with the Developmental engagement's conclusion that the College responds systematically to external examiner reports and makes full use of these reports to enhance standards. Following recommendations in the Developmental engagement, the College has revised its internal verification policy to ensure that all assignment briefs are checked by a specified internal verifier before being issued to students. The assessment regulations for Edexcel awards have been amended to include a statement of the penalty for the late submission of work.

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

18 The management and delivery of staff development involves a highly effective combination of College, partner and individual staff-directed activities. These are embedded in a supportive and responsive College culture and make a particularly positive contribution to the College's management and enhancement of academic standards.

19 Development needs for individual staff teaching on the higher education provision are identified as part of annual appraisals conducted by heads of school. This process is complemented through reference to annual monitoring reports and quality improvement plans. In addition, the Director of Curriculum may identify specific opportunities arising for teams or individuals. Staff development records, including those for staff registrations for higher awards, are held by the Human Resources Department, which undertakes a formal evaluation of internal and external activities. These are monitored by the Vice Principal (Planning and Resources) and the Director of Curriculum and used to inform future plans.

20 The College has implemented a carefully planned series of staff development activities involving external contributors, and hosts an annual higher education conference to develop and share good practice. Additionally, through its membership of the Oxford Brookes University Associate College Partnership, College staff have opportunities to participate in University staff development events. Staff provided good examples of the way

in which events organised by the College and partner universities, as well as self directed scholarly activities, are being used to update knowledge and increase awareness of academic standards. A standard induction is provided for all new full and part-time staff. This is complemented by additional activities organised on a faculty basis for higher education staff. This includes, for example, familiarising a new staff member with the Academic Infrastructure and College quality assurance processes.

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's management structure is outlined in paragraphs 9 and 10. With reference to the management of the quality of learning opportunities, clear responsibilities and reporting mechanisms are in place and are effective. The Director of Curriculum, working through the Quality and Standards Board, ensures that quality management processes are aligned across programme teams in the College. Issues relating to the quality of learning opportunities are also considered at faculty management team meetings.

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

22 The College's overall approach to ensuring that it is fulfilling its obligations to the awarding bodies is outlined in paragraphs 15 and 16. Clear guidelines from the awarding bodies set out mutual responsibilities for the provision and enhancement of learning opportunities. Learning opportunities are explored as part of the validation process and the College takes part in periodic course reviews with the awarding bodies. Annual course monitoring reports provide effective instruments for reflection on the provision and for identifying potential enhancements to learning opportunities.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

23 The Academic Infrastructure is integrated into the College's management of learning opportunities and is reflected in documentation. Both teaching and support staff have a sound knowledge of its main features. The *Code of practice* is well used to evaluate and improve practice, and the College has undertaken a detailed exercise to analyse the extent to which it reflects sections of the *Code*. Examples of this include work on the section relating to disability which has made a particularly positive contribution to the enhancement of learning opportunities through, for example, ensuring students have access to the physical environment and additional specialist support. This represents good practice.

24 The College operates a range of models to provide opportunities for work-based experience and assessment, including internships, competitive bidding for project briefs and work placements. The College has been developing its procedures with regard to work-based and placement learning and has recently revised its work placement policy.

There are good examples where both students and employers are fully informed and supported through appropriate documentation in preparation for and during the work placement. However, in their meeting with the team, some students and employers indicated that they would appreciate further guidance on their responsibilities and entitlements in relation to placement learning. In order to promote consistency and further strengthen the management of placement learning, the team recommends as desirable that the College continues to develop its policies and procedures relating to work-placement in line with the precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning*.

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

25 There are effective mechanisms for reporting on the quality of teaching and learning, including formal staff appraisal, observation of teaching, annual course monitoring and student feedback. The Higher Education Forum and annual staff conference enable staff from across the College to contribute to the development and enhancement of the Higher Education Teaching and Learning Strategy.

26 The College is currently introducing a revised Higher Education Teaching and Learning Strategy which, in addition to the observation of teaching, will refine the processes for consulting students on the teaching that works best for them, ensure the promotion of equality and diversity in teaching and learning, and formalise processes for the identification of good practice. The revised observation process will involve both graded and developmental observations, and results will be centrally monitored. An informal peer review system will work alongside the formal observations and feed into the appraisal system. In addition, all areas of the College are implementing a weekly staff development programme to share best practice in teaching and learning. Staff have been fully consulted in the revision process, and the team have confidence in the capacity of the observation model to effectively monitor higher education teaching and learning. Student feedback confirms high levels of satisfaction with learning opportunities, and in the meeting with the team, students commented very positively on the quality of teaching on their programmes.

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

27 The College has clearly articulated processes for academic, pastoral and learning support. The guidance and support provided by course tutors and the ease with which they can be contacted are strongly commended by students. Students were also highly positive about the support they received from library staff.

28 The College places importance on the achievement of representative, reliable and informed student feedback. This is gathered through formal module reviews, student representation on programme quality boards, course team meetings, internal surveys on teaching and learning, the HE Student Council and through the National Student Survey. Students confirmed their awareness of the variety of means they have for providing feedback and noted a number of effective outcomes, including the development of specialist resources, the provision of enhanced designated study and social space for higher education students and support with study skills. The Quality Standards Board is alert to the need to encourage more students to provide feedback. During their meetings with the team, students confirmed their understanding of the work of the programme quality boards and their appreciation of opportunities to be involved with them.

29 Annual monitoring processes effectively evaluate admissions procedures, induction arrangements, study skills support and work-based learning. Part-time students confirmed

that learning and teaching arrangements provide appropriate flexibility for them to study effectively.

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

30 The arrangements for the management of staff development are described in paragraphs 18 to 20. Teaching and learning coaches, directed by the Teaching and Learning Manager, support higher education teaching staff, provide timetabled good practice sessions and mentor new staff. Staff identify and share good practice through the Higher Education Forum and the annual higher education conference. Development events have featured the academic challenges of teaching higher education in further education colleges, opportunities for scholarly activity, e-learning and learning technologies, creating activities to eliminate plagiarism and working with university partners to improve the student experience.

31 Teaching and support staff are involved in a wide range of relevant scholarly activity. External examiners and internal monitoring identify the value of teaching staff having current industrial and professional experience. The benefits from this are strongly appreciated by students, particularly those in fine art and engineering. Students also noted their recognition of the benefits to them of staff studying for a higher degree.

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?

33 Resources for higher education programmes are reviewed and determined through the annual business planning process in which academic and service area managers take part. At programme level the suitability and accessibility of learning resources are scrutinised during the validation process and reviewed subsequently through awarding body and College periodic and annual monitoring processes. The College has taken considerable steps to create a learning environment which students and staff appreciate greatly. Planning for the expansion and enhancement of the College estate has included detailed consideration of the needs of higher education provision. The extensive recent investment has supported the provision of high quality new accommodation and resources, particularly in the areas of animal management; art and design; and graphics and photography.

34 The move to the new facilities for BA Fine Art students coincided with a period of unforeseen and significant change in the staffing of the award and a planned rationalisation of the staffing model. Students and staff agreed that the new facilities and revised staffing structure are providing opportunities to find new potential within the curriculum in relation to artistic practice. However, further work is needed to ensure that students can make use of and develop these new modes of practice as they are emerging in the context of the changes. It is recommended as desirable that the College review the aims of the award in partnership with the validating body and the external examiners, define the emerging modes of practice, and ensure clear communication to all stakeholders.

35 The College has a dedicated higher education suite which has recently been refurbished, and a designated higher education area in the open access computer facility. Students acknowledge that this has enhanced their sense of a higher education culture. The provision of learning opportunities through the library and the virtual learning environment make a very positive contribution to ensuring the accessibility of resources and supporting students' learning. The appearance of the virtual learning environment is visually exciting, and includes links to multimedia learning tools, quizzes, displays of student work, notices of forthcoming exhibitions, discussion forums, assessment details and feedback, and

essential programme information. Future plans for the virtual learning environment include interactive assessments, extensive e-library resources and electronic communication tools for use by students and staff in all curriculum areas. Innovation in the use of learning technologies is encouraged, and engagement with it is monitored by the Technology for Learning Steering Group which also ensures that good practice is shared across the College. The Information Learning Technology Manager actively encourages staff engagement with learning technologies and provides support for development.

36 The College has responded to a recommendation from the Developmental engagement by recording and reporting employer engagement across all programmes through the process of annual monitoring. In addition the College has, working in partnership with Oxford Brookes University, undertaken an extensive cross-institution employer engagement project. Students in graphic design, sports and exercise science, computing and early years take a proactive role in engaging employers. The team identified extensive involvement with employers in curriculum and assessment design and consultancy support to teaching, including senior staff at locally-based multinational companies and a wide range of small and medium-sized enterprises. The team found a very good range of examples where the College is achieving curriculum innovation through its proactive relationships with industry partners. These have included the development of an internship scheme for graphic design students, competitive bidding for professional briefs and the sharing of the new animal care centre facilities with a leading farming broadcaster and a professional tropical animal specialist, all of which are mutually beneficial for partners, students and the College. This is good practice.

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?

37 The College produces a range of materials relating to the marketing of the higher education portfolio in general, and information specific to each course. Materials include a prospectus and programme information leaflets which are available in print and electronically through the College website. The prospectus is attractively produced and informative. Information is available in different formats on request for those with visual impairment or who require information in different languages. The College website includes a dedicated area for higher education and provides a good range of accurate general information as well as course specific material.

38 All programmes have a detailed handbook which is made available to students in printed format and through the virtual learning environment. Where awarding bodies require the College to use their own handbooks these are supplemented with additional information about the College.

**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?**

39 There are effective and documented processes in place to assure the accuracy and completeness of information. The College has an agreed marketing calendar with deadlines for the production of key documents. The production of publicity and marketing information is coordinated centrally in the College through its marketing function, and includes oversight and final approval prior to publication from senior management and awarding bodies. The College prospectus is planned well in advance with directors and heads of school responsible for ensuring that course information is accurate. Course information leaflets, which provide a single source for both the hard-copy prospectus and course information hosted on the website, are audited twice a year. Amendments to website information are controlled by the Marketing Department.

40 The College works in collaboration with its awarding bodies on the production of publicity materials and other information related to their courses according to requirements and procedures set out in partnership agreements. During a meeting with the team, awarding body representatives expressed confidence in the College's monitoring of prospectus and course information.

41 The College provides information about tuition fees on the website. In their written submission and meeting with the team some students commented on the lateness of information regarding fee increases in the previous year. Staff confirmed that this was a result of unforeseen changes in the validation arrangements for a particular course and the College now has stronger systems of communication in place to ensure fee information for all students is clear and timely.

42 A system of student bursaries for higher education was introduced in September 2010 and current first year students were provided with information about these at induction. In their written submission and meeting with the team, some second year students expressed confusion about the bursary system and how it applied to them. Staff explained that the confusion had arisen because only students who enrolled from September 2010 onwards are eligible to apply for a bursary. The team's scrutiny of the website and printed leaflets confirms that relevant information and signposting regarding the bursary system is currently available for newly enrolling students.

43 At the Developmental engagement, the team recommended as desirable that the College review its processes for approving course handbooks on programmes, where the College has delegated responsibility for their production, before they are issued to students. This was to ensure consistency of information and clarity of presentation. The College has responded by issuing a revised template for course handbooks which includes standard cross-college information and guidelines for the content to be provided for each programme. Handbooks are now formally approved by the relevant senior director of faculty and the Higher Education Quality and Standards Board before being given to students. This system is now suitably robust. The College has recently invited an external consultant to review its procedures to further strengthen the quality of the handbooks.

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

C Summary of findings from the Developmental engagement in assessment

44 The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in 2010 and addressed three lines of enquiry, agreed in advance with the College. The lines of enquiry were:

Line of enquiry 1: The contribution of processes and procedures for assessment in maintaining academic standards.

Line of enquiry 2: The quality and range of assessment feedback given to students and how feedback promotes learning and supports future improvement.

Line of enquiry 3: The contribution of information provided about assessment in course handbooks and other documentation to the quality of learning opportunities and the systems in place to assure the accuracy and completeness of this information.

45 The Developmental engagement team found a range of good practice across the provision, including the carefully planned staff development opportunities and effective use of the Academic Infrastructure in the implementation of assessment. The team found innovative examples of employer involvement in the design and implementation of assessment and thorough comprehensive module guides on the BA Business and Management programme and the Foundation Degree in Communication in Organisations.

46 The Developmental engagement report also includes four desirable recommendations, namely to consider reviewing the internal verification policy to provide greater clarity regarding the process and its impact on the moderation of student work, and to review guidelines on the late submission of assessment on Edexcel programmes. The report also noted that the College may wish to explore ways of capturing and utilising employer feedback to enhance the curriculum and assessment of students. All the desirable recommendations have been achieved.

D Foundation Degrees

47 The College has been offering Foundation Degrees since 2003. These have been developed to address specific economic sectors and respond to local employer demand. Of the 530 students enrolled on higher education courses at the College, 137 are enrolled on Foundation Degrees. Foundation Degrees are currently offered in:

- Business, Management and Communications
- Business Information Technology
- Sports Coaching
- Early Years
- Classroom Support
- Support for Learning
- Early Childhood Studies.

48 Employers are involved in the design and validation of programmes. The Developmental engagement noted as good practice the innovative examples of employer involvement in the design and implementation of assessment. The team agrees that the successful collaboration between the College and employers supports the needs of students by providing them with skills that are invaluable for further study and subsequent employment.

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

- the management and delivery of staff development, which involves a highly effective combination of College, partner and individual staff-directed activities and which is embedded in a supportive and responsive College culture (paragraphs 18, 19, 20, 30, 31)
- the *Code of practice* is well used to evaluate and improve practice, especially in relation to disability, which has resulted in enhancement of the learning opportunities through, for example, ensuring students have access to the physical environment and additional specialist support (paragraph 23)
- the provision of learning opportunities through the library and the virtual learning environment which make a very positive contribution to ensuring the accessibility of resources and supporting students' learning (paragraph 35)
- proactive relationships with industry partners have led to curriculum innovation, all of which are mutually beneficial for partners, students and the College (paragraph 36).

50 The team also makes a recommendation for consideration by the College and its awarding bodies.

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

- continue to develop its policies and procedures relating to work placement in line with the precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning* (paragraph 24).

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

51 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in The Solihull 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: Birmingham City University, Coventry University, the University of Derby, Oxford Brookes University, the University of Wolverhampton, and Edexcel.

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

- the management and delivery of staff development, which involves a highly effective combination of College, partner and individual staff-directed activities and which is embedded in a supportive and responsive College culture (paragraphs 18, 19, 20, 30, 31)
- the *Code of practice* is well used to evaluate and improve practice, especially in relation to disability, which has resulted in enhancement of the learning opportunities through, for example, ensuring students have access to the physical environment and additional specialist support (paragraph 23)
- the provision of learning opportunities through the library and the virtual learning environment which make a very positive contribution to ensuring the accessibility of resources and supporting students' learning (paragraph 35)
- proactive relationships with industry partners have led to curriculum innovation, all of which are mutually beneficial for partners, students and the College (paragraph 36).

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

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

- continue to develop its policies and procedures relating to work placement in line with the precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning* (paragraph 24)
- review the aims of the BA (Hons) Fine Art award in partnership with the validating body and the external examiners, define emerging modes of practice, and ensure clear communication to all stakeholders (paragraph 34).

55 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.

56 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.

57 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation and other documentary evidence, and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that, in the context of this Summative review, reliance **can** be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

The Solihull College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2011						
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 management and delivery of staff development, which involves a highly effective combination of College, partner and individual staff-directed activities and which is embedded in a supportive and responsive College culture (paragraphs 18, 19, 20, 30, 31) 	Increase attendance of representatives from other colleges/higher education institutions (HEIs) at the annual HE conference	Sept 2011	Assistant Principal Teaching & Learning and heads of school	Programme for 2011-12 produced for each course and then followed	HE Quality and Standards Board	Staff development records
		June 2012	Director of Curriculum	Increased number of external participants for 2012 HE conferences	HE Quality and Standards Board	Survey of external attendees
	Incorporate assessment of staff development into the Higher Education Self Assessment Report (HE SAR)	Oct 2011- June 2012	Assistant Principal HR & Students and heads of school	HE SAR produced which refers to staff development impact	HE Quality and Standards Board	SAR validations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the <i>Code of practice</i> is well used to evaluate and improve practice, especially in 	Establish periodic updating and monitoring through <i>Code of practice</i> mapping	Feb 2012	Director of Curriculum, senior directors, heads of school, College managers and	Updated mapping exercise completed by June 2012 Actions in quality	HE Quality and Standards Board HE Forum	<i>Code of practice</i> continues to be well used Identified through programme quality

<p>relation to disability, which has resulted in enhancement of the learning opportunities through, for example, ensuring students have access to the physical environment and additional specialist support (paragraph 23)</p>	<p>Incorporate cross-college HE functions into HE SAR to include evaluation against relevant sections of <i>Code of practice</i></p>	<p>Sept 2011</p>	<p>course leaders Director of Curriculum</p>	<p>improvement plans for 2012-13 Relevant additions made to 2010-11 HE SAR Evaluation of cross-college functions completed</p>	<p>HE Quality and Standards Board</p>	<p>boards (PQBs), annual monitoring reports (AMRs), HE SAR HE SAR</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the provision of learning opportunities through the library and the virtual learning environment which make a very positive contribution to ensuring the accessibility of resources and supporting students' learning (paragraph 35) 	<p>Increase minimum requirements for HE course virtual learning environment (VLE) sites to further improve learning resources Increase the range of bookable sessions for HE students provided by Library Learning Centre A practice sharing system to be initiated that allows course</p>	<p>Oct 2011 Sept 2011</p>	<p>Assistant Principal Teaching & Learning, Learning Technologies Manager and ILT Group Libraries & Open Access Manager Senior directors, Learning Technologies</p>	<p>All HE VLE sites meet minimum requirements by April 2012 All HE courses access full range of bookable sessions Every course team has a partner to</p>	<p>HE Quality and Standards Board HE Forum</p>	<p>VLE usage statistics, PQBs, HE student surveys and focus groups VLE usage statistics, PQBs, HE student surveys and focus groups AMRs, HE SAR VLE usage statistics</p>

	teams to share effective practice with schools beyond their current faculty		Manager and Lead Teaching & Learning Coach	work with All HE VLE sites meet minimum standard and are well used		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> proactive relationships with industry partners have led to curriculum innovation, all of which are mutually beneficial for partners, students and the College (paragraph 36). 	<p>Establish a Solihull College HE Internship Programme</p> <p>Continue the initiatives started in the Employer Engagement Project to make contacts and establish partnerships with more employers</p>	<p>July 2012</p> <p>Dec 2011- May 2012</p>	<p>Vice Principal Senior Director Employment & Skills</p> <p>Director of Curriculum</p>	<p>Four internships established by Summer 2012</p> <p>All HE course teams make contact with new employers and revisit existing links</p>	<p>HE Quality and Standards Board Corporation</p>	<p>Intern reports</p> <p>Follow-up project report: Outcomes of original recommendations New set of results and proposals</p>
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is desirable for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> continue to develop its policies and procedures relating to work placement in line with the precepts of the <i>Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement</i> 	Develop a new College policy and procedures for HE work placements, based on existing good practice	Jan 2012	Director of Curriculum, Health & Safety Officer	<p>New policy and procedures introduced in Jan 2012</p> <p>Put into operation 2012-13</p>	HE Quality and Standards Board Facilities	Sept 2012 - review of operation shows policy and procedures are being followed by all HE areas

<i>learning</i> (paragraph 24)						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> review the aims of the BA (Hons) Fine Art award in partnership with the validating body and the external examiners, and ensure clear communication to all stakeholders (paragraph 34). 	<p>Establish a review process with Birmingham City University as part of the preparation for revalidation of the course in 2011-12</p> <p>Investigate alternative course structures with different validating HEIs</p> <p>College to make a decision on the viability of continuing to offer the course in the light of indicative recruitment for 2011-12</p>	<p>June 2011</p> <p>June -Nov 2011</p> <p>June 2011</p>	<p>Director of Curriculum, Head of Faculty, Head of School</p> <p>Director of Curriculum</p> <p>Vice Principal Resources & Planning, Director of Curriculum</p>	<p>Review produces recommendations about the aims of the course to support revalidation or development of course</p> <p>Discussion with alternative partners leads to decision on whether to proceed with one of them</p> <p>Decision made on whether to close course or continue in 2011-12</p>	<p>HE Quality and Standards Board</p> <p>HE Strategy Group</p> <p>Executive Management Team, Senior Leadership Team, HE Strategy Corporation</p>	<p>July 2011 - decision made to close course and teach out Years 2 and 3, due to poor student recruitment for 2011-12</p>

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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