



# **Integrated quality and enhancement review**

**Summative review**

**West Suffolk College**

**March 2012**

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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 (FHEQ)*, which includes descriptions of different higher education qualifications
- the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*
- 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 West Suffolk College carried out in March 2012

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 thorough self-assessment review and evaluation process involving contributions from staff, students, employers and external academic members, which results in evaluative and reflective reports
- the close work with employers, and the integration of employability skills on most programmes, which provide opportunities for students to experience real work environments.

### Recommendations

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

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

- review the terms of reference and membership of all higher education committees and groups to clarify their responsibilities and ensure that there are appropriate opportunities for the discussion of strategic issues
- develop a more extensive and systematic approach to staff development and scholarly activity for higher education staff
- ensure that all staff adhere to the requirements of the assessment policy, and provide timely, detailed and written developmental feedback on student work.

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

- develop its policy further to provide clear guidance for peer observation of teaching which assists in identifying and sharing good practice and supporting the development of a dynamic teaching community
- review thoroughly the existing mechanisms for the identification and dissemination of good practice, to ensure there is a clear and effective process, along with an action plan for cross-college quality enhancement
- implement the existing policy for personal tutorials to ensure that students receive regular reports on their progress across all areas of study, and to encourage them to develop to their full academic potential.

## 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 West Suffolk College (the College). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the College discharges its responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes which the College delivers on behalf of the University of East Anglia and the University of Essex. The review was carried out by Mr David Fallows, Mr Rob Mason, Mrs Patricia Millner (reviewers) and Mr Simon Ives (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, meetings with staff, students and awarding bodies, 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*, subject and award benchmark statements, the FHEQ, and programme specifications.

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

4 West Suffolk College is located in Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, with five Local Learning Centres in nearby Haverhill, Mildenhall, Stowmarket, Sudbury and Ipswich. The College is a significant provider of learning to West Suffolk and South Norfolk and has Beacon Status. The College mission is to provide excellent education and training which develop skills that contribute to the success of the individual and the economy. The College delivers provision in all sector skills areas. It provides a broad range of programmes, from pre-entry to honours degree level, to ensure that its community and stakeholders enjoy good access to appropriate education and training that meets their needs. The College is a large provider of work-based learning with 1,146 apprentices and 1,231 workplace training learners. There is a very successful 14-16 school link programme with 578 students attending the College. There are 2,712 full-time and 3,129 part-time students, and 5,000 on adult education programmes.

5 The higher education programmes are offered as part of the University Campus Suffolk and validated jointly by the University of East Anglia and the University of Essex. University Campus Suffolk is a joint venture between the University of Essex and the University of East Anglia, established on the basis of an equal partnership, and officially launched on the 1 August 2007. The venture is conducted through the medium of a private company limited by guarantee (University Campus Suffolk Ltd), with the universities as the sole members. The College has 712 higher education students, of whom 439 are full-time and 273 part-time, amounting to 593 full-time equivalents.

6 The current higher education awards, with the relevant awarding bodies (full-time equivalent student numbers in brackets), are as follows.

### **University of East Anglia and the University of Essex (joint)**

- Certificate in Education (Lifelong Learning Sector) (9)
- Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (Lifelong Learning Sector) (12)
- BSc (Hons) Applied Computing (13)
- FdSc Building Services Engineering (15)
- BA (Hons) Business Management (85)
- BA (Hons) Business Management and Psychology (6)
- FdA Children's Care, Learning and Development (25)
- BA (Hons) Children's Care, Learning and Development (10)
- FdSc Civil Engineering (4)
- BA (Hons) Computing and Management (2)
- FdSc Computing and Networking (36)
- FdSc Construction (.5)
- BSc (Hons) Construction Management (31)
- FdA Counselling (26)
- FdSc Engineering (Electrical) (12)
- FdSc Engineering (Electronic) (7)
- FdSc Engineering (Mechanical) (19)
- BA (Hons) English and Psychology (3)
- BA (Hons) English and History (64)
- BA (Hons) Graphic Communication (11)
- FdA Graphic Design (27)
- BA (Hons) History and Sociology (2)
- FdA Hospitality and Event Management (21)
- FdA Management (Uniformed Public Services) (26)
- FdA Music Production (33)
- BA (Hons) Music Production (16)
- BA (Hons) Professional Studies (9)
- BSc (Hons) Psychology and Sociology (34)
- FdA Salon Management (5)
- FdSc Sports Coaching and Development (23)

### **Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies**

7 A University Campus Suffolk Framework Collaborative Agreement between the two awarding bodies, the University Campus Suffolk and its five learning network colleges defines the operational responsibilities of the College. The awarding bodies are responsible for programme approval and alignment with the Academic Infrastructure, validation, acceptance of applications, ensuring common standards, moderation, final assessment and award, regular meetings to monitor quality, and the process of annual evaluation and continual improvement of academic outcomes. The College is responsible for programme delivery, assessment and internal moderation, the quality of teaching and learning, application of the awarding bodies' standards, regular internal monitoring of quality, and compliance with awarding body requirements for annual evaluation and review.

### **Recent developments in higher education at the College**

8 Higher education courses have been a significant part of the College's portfolio for a number of years. Recently, there has been steady growth in the range of provision delivered at the College and an increase in student numbers. In 2011-12 the validation of a range of combined honours degrees across business, English, history, psychology, and sociology has provided greater flexibility for students. There have also been recent periodic reviews of



music production, counselling, and computing. The College is the largest provider in the University Campus Suffolk (UCS) learning network partnership and in October 2011 underwent a successful reapproval event with the University of Essex and University of East Anglia.

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

9 Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the team. The development of the student written submission was facilitated and coordinated by the Head of Higher Education in collaboration with elected student representatives. Students were actively involved in collecting and collating much of the evidence through focus groups and questionnaires. This feedback was supplemented by a synopsis of student concerns raised at the student board, and information from the National Student Survey. The resulting submission has been agreed and endorsed, by student representatives and the student governor, as a fair reflection of student views. The team found these views helpful in enabling further issues to be raised in meetings with the students and staff.

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

### **Core theme 1: Academic standards**

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

10 A collaboration agreement between the two awarding bodies, University Campus Suffolk and its learning network of colleges clearly defines the operational responsibilities of the College for managing and delivering higher education standards. These responsibilities outline each partner's role in a range of processes and procedures for quality assurance, programme management, governance, student recruitment, admissions, and support.

11 Specific College responsibilities are prescribed in a range of University Campus Suffolk policies, procedures and other documentation, for example assessment and moderation policies and teaching and learning strategies. These policies and other documents have been developed in conjunction with the two awarding bodies and appropriately reflect the precepts of the *Code of practice*. Monitoring of the policies is carried out by the College through the self-assessment and evaluation process, and at the monthly meetings of its Higher Education Management Committee. Staff from University Campus Suffolk and the awarding bodies regularly attend these meetings. This monitoring process confirms that College staff generally adhere to and implement policies satisfactorily at all levels.

12 The responsibility for the management of academic standards in the College is clearly defined. The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality has overall strategic responsibility for higher education. Operational management support is provided by the Head of Faculty Higher Education and Learner Services, and the Head of Higher Education. Heads of Schools provide further oversight and are responsible for the management of teaching, learning, assessment, programme development, and relevant course teams. Course Leaders review and monitor the quality of the courses and aspects of teaching and learning.

13 The College has effective links with University Campus Suffolk. The Joint Academic Board of University Campus Suffolk oversees the management and quality of academic standards in the College. The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality represents the College on this committee and its outcomes are reported to the senior management team. Course Leaders attend University Campus Suffolk Learning, Teaching and Assessment Group meetings. These groups discuss and make recommendations for the development and delivery of teaching and learning which are disseminated to course teams at staff development events. The University Campus Suffolk Academic Board, a senior academic committee of the Joint Academic Committee, also monitors academic standards through its oversight of the self-assessment review and evaluation process, and through institutional reports. The College is represented at termly meetings of this group by the Head of Faculty Higher Education and Learner Services. Any concerns are fed back to the senior management team for action.

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

14 The College's engagement with the Academic Infrastructure largely arises from its use of University Campus Suffolk's policies and procedures. These have been developed in conjunction with the two awarding bodies and the network colleges, and are mapped to the *Code of practice*. The University Campus Suffolk Policy and Procedures Working Group, a subgroup of its Joint Academic Committee, reviews these policies annually. College staff are aware of the Academic Infrastructure and are able to articulate how they use it when preparing course validations. In addition, staff make reference to the FHEQ, the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark* and subject benchmark statements where relevant.

### **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 Collaboration Agreement and associated University Campus Suffolk documents, policies and procedures make clear what the awarding bodies expect of the College in assuring academic standards. The College's committee structure, in conjunction with University Campus Suffolk committee oversight, ensures that academic standards are satisfactorily monitored at senior, middle and course management levels.

16 The College's Higher Education Management Committee is the main College group responsible for the oversight and monitoring of academic standards and the implementation of University Campus Suffolk's policies and procedures. Its terms of reference state that it receives reports from the various other committees and groups, oversees all the University Campus Suffolk provision, and also has a watching brief over other areas including publicity, marketing and staff development. However, its terms of reference do not include the identification and dissemination of good practice. Minutes of the Committee indicate that most business relates to operational rather than strategic issues and that it has a limited role in the planning of higher education staff development. There is no evidence to show that the Higher Education Management Committee explicitly addresses the outcomes of the self-assessment and review process. A Course Leaders' Forum meets monthly, primarily to consider policies, procedures and initiatives and their implementation. In addition, it also has a remit to identify and share good practice, and identify staff development needs. However, minutes show that there has been limited action in relation to these two aspects.

17 At programme level, course committees meet between two and four times a year. Membership includes the teaching team and student representatives. Agendas for these meetings are informal and there are no terms of reference. Topics addressed are mainly operational, for example discussions on marking deadlines, room allocation, registers, and

resourcing. The team considers that it would be advisable for the College to review the terms of reference and membership of all higher education committees and groups to clarify their responsibilities and ensure that there are appropriate opportunities for the discussion of strategic issues. The Developmental engagement recommended that course leaders should publish an annual schedule of course committee meetings so that student representatives are given the opportunity to attend. This has been addressed, and students confirmed that they are invited to attend.

18 There is effective cooperation between the College and University Campus Suffolk. There are regular formal and informal communication processes which are effective and ensure that the College is informed of essential University Campus Suffolk information, including policy updates and amendments. Programmes that are jointly delivered with University Campus Suffolk and other network colleges are allocated link tutors. In other cases, staff seek advice and guidance from University Campus Suffolk prior to considering offering any new provision.

19 The College has made attempts to compare results of their programmes with those of similar network Colleges by using cross-partnership moderation, sharing the same external examiner, and holding joint assessment boards. This has been particularly successful for teacher education programmes, FdA and BA (Hons) Children's Care, Learning and Development, and FdSc Construction and BSc (Hons) Construction Management. However, this arrangement has yet to prove fully effective in all areas.

20 The College's self-assessment review and evaluation process follows University Campus Suffolk guidelines and formats, and is analytical and thorough. It uses a range of evidence including external examiner reports, assessment outcomes, module evaluation forms, student feedback, employer feedback and performance data. The process considers key aspects of provision, including curriculum, assessment, retention and achievement. Reports are evaluative and reflective. A college-wide self-assessment report, collated from the individual course reports, is produced for approval by University Campus Suffolk. After its approval the College produces an improvement plan that is subject to regular monitoring and review at course and College level. Self-evaluation and review is also well supported by the College's peer review process which staff consider helps them to identify new approaches to their teaching. The team consider as good practice the thorough self-assessment review and evaluation process involving contributions from staff, students, employers, and external academic members, which results in evaluative and reflective reports.

21 There is a clear process for taking action on external examiners' recommendations, whereby course leaders respond and produce action plans. These are monitored by Heads of School. External examiner reports confirm that the standards achieved by students are comparable to those of other institutions. The College is currently considering an appropriate mechanism for sharing the content of external examiners' reports with students.

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

22 The College's Continuing Professional Development Policy outlines the aims, objectives and responsibilities which apply to all staff at the College. However, there is no specific identification of how higher education staff development is prioritised, planned and delivered. Staff have attended a variety of staff development events since the start of the academic year, most of which were focused on further education. There are also opportunities to attend development events at the awarding universities and through University Campus Suffolk. Although College staff take-up of these opportunities is limited,

those who do attend find them helpful. The College has set aside half a day at the end of the academic year to consider themes of good practice identified by the College's learning, teaching and assessment group. The team considers that it would be advisable for the College to develop a more extensive and systematic approach to staff development and scholarly activity for higher education staff.

23 Professional development is identified through the appraisal process, and individual staff are encouraged to seek out appropriate development which may be of interest to them, and reflects the College's aims. Nearly half of the current higher education teaching staff have followed a higher level or further qualification in the last two years, including higher degrees and specialist courses, although this could be managed more strategically. These activities contribute to the enhancement of their skills and knowledge. A small number of staff have been actively involved in the production of research papers and similar projects during the current academic year.

**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?**

24 The responsibilities for managing the quality of learning opportunities, and the associated quality assurance and enhancement processes, reflect those for managing academic standards. These are described in paragraphs 10 to 13. The University Campus Suffolk Framework Collaboration Agreement between the two awarding bodies, University Campus Suffolk and its learning network of colleges clearly defines the operational responsibilities of the College for managing the quality of learning opportunities.

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

25 The processes by which the College assures itself that it is fulfilling its obligations to its awarding bodies are described in paragraphs 15 to 21. The College's responsibilities are identified clearly in the University Campus Suffolk document, Core Responsibilities of the Centre in delivering Higher Education. These obligations include all aspects of the student experience, including enrolment and orientation, student support, placement and work-based learning, academic and professional updating of staff, learning resources, effective communication with students, and equal opportunities. Adherence to these policies and procedures by faculties and programme staff at the College is monitored through the College's Higher Education Management Committee. The College recently underwent a successful reapproval event with the University of Essex and University of East Anglia, which highlighted a number of areas for commendation.

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

26 Engagement with the Academic Infrastructure is outlined in paragraph 14. The close working relationships between the partner awarding bodies and the College

ensure that the Academic Infrastructure is addressed as part of programme approval, validation and delivery. Learning outcomes are appropriately constructed and assessed in accordance with the FHEQ and the *Code of practice*. Awarding bodies are responsible for monitoring the quality of provision in accordance with the expectations of the *Code of practice*, and appoint external examiners to oversee this process. Work is underway to ensure that College policies on disabled students, careers guidance, placement learning, and admissions are explicitly mapped against the precepts of the *Code of practice*, and well attended in-house staff development events have been delivered. Staff new to teaching higher education programmes are introduced to the Academic Infrastructure during induction sessions with the Head of Higher Education, and University Campus Suffolk also provides staff development. The College acknowledges that work to develop awareness, understanding and use of the *Code of practice* needs to continue.

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

27 Teaching and learning strategies include an appropriate blend of academic and work-related elements, and are designed to develop students' employability skills. Evidence from external examiners and the monitoring and review processes confirm there is an appropriate mix of vocational and academic study. Students spoke positively about the quality of teaching, the effectiveness of small class sizes, and the accessibility and helpfulness of teaching and support staff. The 2011 National Student Survey results indicate a high student satisfaction rate of 91 per cent for the quality of teaching. This was reflected at the student meeting, where students were very complimentary about the enthusiasm and subject expertise of teaching staff.

28 Staff teaching on higher education programmes are well qualified and are formally approved by University Campus Suffolk. Many have postgraduate qualifications, and all are expected to have a teaching qualification, or be working towards one. Staff new to higher education receive a thorough induction to teaching and assessing at this level. They have an allocated mentor who may be from outside the specialist area but experienced in higher education. A class observation within the first few weeks of teaching assesses teaching proficiency at an early stage and support can be provided if required. New staff also sit in to observe other higher education classes.

29 The College operates a well planned annual class observation cycle. Academic staff are observed by line managers who have experience of higher education, and observations are graded. The Head of Higher Education has also recently started undertaking observations. Staff who gain an outstanding grade are expected to mentor others. The University Campus Suffolk observation of teaching policy advocates a peer review approach. A variety of different departmental models are being followed in areas such as art and design, business, and the humanities. Staff spoke positively about the value of peer observation as a self-reflective process. However, at present this process is informal and unrecorded, and no overview is taken of the outcomes. The team considers it desirable for the College to develop its policy further to provide clear guidance for peer observation of teaching which assists in identifying and sharing good practice, and supporting the development of a dynamic teaching community.

30 The process for identifying and disseminating good practice is generally carried out informally in course teams. Staff spoke positively of examples, including the value of peer teaching observations and the self-assessment peer review process. The Developmental engagement recommended that the College should introduce a clear process for identifying and disseminating good practice to enable a more effective process of quality enhancement. This has been partially addressed by the formation of a Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Group. However, the impact and effect of the group has been limited, and few examples of good practice have been either identified or disseminated. The team considers that it would be desirable for the College to review thoroughly the existing mechanisms for the identification and dissemination of good practice, to ensure there is a clear and effective process, along with an action plan for cross-college quality enhancement.

31 Work-based learning features in many of the programmes, and reflects the expectations of the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning*. Close working relationships with employers enable them to influence curriculum development and enhancement through the feedback they provide. The College engages well with employers to enhance students' learning, and to provide opportunities for learning in the workplace. Differing patterns of work experience are appropriately tailored to the needs of each programme. A range of work-related learning opportunities is provided, through, for example, work placement, live projects and work-based assessments. Students have taken part in a regional enterprise week and FdA Hospitality and Event Management students have planned and delivered a corporate hospitality event. Students also benefit from expert practitioners who deliver guest lectures or who are employed to teach on a part-time basis. The team identified as good practice the close work with employers, and the integration of employability skills on most programmes, which provide opportunities for students to experience real work environments.

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

32 The College provides a thorough student induction at course and College level. This introduces students to the range of welfare and study support available. Induction also covers academic processes, student representation, and access to learning resources. Students can request additional support in their application, or at enrolment, and support is provided by well trained staff. The College publishes a very informative guide for students, and provides additional support for students when needed. Support requirements for dyslexia are assessed through initial tasks set by course tutors and a wide range of assistive technologies is available.

33 The College makes a clear distinction between academic and pastoral support. The student welfare section of the College is responsible for all aspects of provision of financial information, health and well-being, counselling, and career development. Students can also access the services of University Campus Suffolk, Ipswich and the University Campus Suffolk Finance Department for further specialised help, for example with the Access to Learning Fund.

34 Students can book an interview with a careers adviser from University Campus Suffolk who is available at the College twice monthly. At the meeting with reviewers, students expressed some dissatisfaction with career advice they had received. The College is addressing this by embedding employability skills and careers information in curriculum modules, such as Personal Development Planning, using the new Graduate Headstart programme. Higher education students also have access to the College's own careers, information, advice and guidance service.

35 The Graduate Headstart programme supports and enhances personal development activities. Available through an e-portfolio, it is designed to assist students to prepare for future study and career opportunities. It has been successfully piloted in business management and extended to other Foundation Degrees. From September 2012 it will be offered to all higher education students to enhance their graduate key skills and employability.

36 Study skills support is coordinated by the Higher Education Tutorial Coordinator who works closely with library staff. Students are highly satisfied with the wide range of support activities provided, which include academic study skills support. Bookable and drop-in sessions are available, and include library skills, computer literacy, referencing, and numeracy support. Academic writing skills are delivered by a member of teaching staff.

37 Students reported variable practice in the procedures for the return of assessed work. Some had experienced undue delays in receiving feedback; others were required to return annotated scripts, and were not provided with a copy of the written feedback. Some students stated that they receive detailed, constructive and developmental feedback, while others felt that markers' comments were not always clear or helpful. Some staff felt that students needed to be proactive and request copies of the written feedback. Staff identified a range of practices with regard to providing assessment feedback. The team consider that there is still a lack of clarity among staff about the assessment policy relating to the provision of feedback to students, and wide variability in approach. This had been subject to a recommendation following the Developmental engagement. The team considers that it would be advisable for the College to ensure that all staff adhere to the requirements of the assessment policy, and provide timely, detailed and written developmental feedback on student work.

38 The University Campus Suffolk allocates nine hours of tutorial support per module. One-to-one sessions with module tutors allow time for students to gain oral feedback on assessment and discuss academic progress. Students felt that this was effective. However, student entitlement to regular individual tutorials for whole programme overview is not clear. There is a lack of clarity about how the College is providing the overview of student progress required by University Campus Suffolk policy. The team considers that it would be desirable for the College to implement the existing policy on personal tutorials to ensure that students receive regular reports on their progress across all areas of study, and to encourage them to develop to their full academic potential.

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

39 The College's arrangements for staff development to maintain and enhance the quality of learning opportunities are described in paragraphs 22 and 23. The annual staff appraisal process identifies professional development and scholarship requirements. The College supports staff to undertake higher degrees, short courses for professional development and small research projects, which have a direct and positive impact on students' learning experiences. Staff are required to identify scholarly activity and academic interests as part of an annual approval of staff curricula vitae by University Campus Suffolk.

40 The College timetables three Professional Development days each year which include sessions specifically related to higher education. An annual Higher Education Staff Development day addresses issues arising from the annual programme self-assessment reports, and invites guest speakers to provide master classes, for example in assessment. In the current year, the programme is focusing on the promotion of scholarly activity.

41 Students' learning has benefited directly from staff attendance at external events funded by the College. For example, a global enterprise conference resulted in students' participation in an enterprise week involving local and regional companies. In music production, a successful bid to the University Campus Suffolk Implementing Learning and Teaching Strategies funded two staff to undertake training in cutting edge technologies.

### **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?**

42 There has been a significant investment in the physical resources for students on higher education programmes, including the refurbishment of Suffolk House to provide new teaching rooms and a student common room, which help create a distinctive higher education environment. The College supports the resourcing of new programmes, and validation events confirm the sufficiency and accessibility of resources available. An annual operational planning process prioritises resource allocation. Priorities for funding are determined by the Head of Faculty Higher Education and Learner Services, and the Senior Management Team.

43 Students are provided with reading lists in the module guides. These are supplemented by library catalogue printouts. At the meeting with the team and in the written submission, students expressed some concern about lack of access to books, and this is reflected in a low National Student Survey score. However, student focus groups and surveys have made library staff well aware of this and an action plan is in place. Students are very appreciative of the support provided by library staff in giving a comprehensive induction and continuing assistance, which enhances their learning.

44 The electronic accounts provided to all students enable an increasing use of e-books and e-journals, and allow access to materials remotely and at any time. Library staff produce a wide range of very useful library guides and printed information about journals, databases, e-books and the University Campus Suffolk, Ipswich library catalogue to support students' study. The provision of computers, specialist machines and software is adequate for student needs, although sometimes students have difficulty using wireless connections in some areas of their accommodation.

**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 The College is responsible for publishing a range of higher education information. This includes general publicity information, specific programme-based information and substantial online information. The College higher education prospectus is provided electronically, and this allows for regular updating. The College website provides useful information on all courses, with an active link to the University Campus Suffolk main website and comprehensive programme specifications. There is also helpful guidance on areas such as financial information and study support. The review team found that pre-course materials given to students are generally informative and accurate. As a condition of its recent re-validation, the FdA Counselling is reviewing information for prospective students concerning the additional costs of obtaining professional accreditation.

46 At enrolment, students receive a full induction pack, including course information, timetables and general University Campus Suffolk information. Programme handbooks are produced to a standardised template and provided in paper and online formats. The most



recent student induction survey indicates a high level of satisfaction with the information provided. This was confirmed by students at a meeting with the review team. Handbooks provide an extensive and helpful set of information and reference to a comprehensive student information directory on the University Campus Suffolk website. There has been a significant improvement in the consistency of programme handbooks since the Developmental engagement, and the handbooks for 2011-12 are accurate, relevant and generally appreciated by students.

47 Materials to support learning are originated by module and course leaders. Heads of school and faculty sample materials for accuracy. Assessments are internally verified in course teams and agreed by external examiners before they are issued to students. The College's self-evaluation asserts that systematic procedures are now in place to ensure that assessment information provided to students is consistent, accurate and complete. Scrutiny of this information by the review team confirms that these procedures are now effective.

48 The College is also responsible for publishing a range of information on the virtual learning environment. This contains comprehensive course material including lecture notes, schemes of work, assessment briefs, and links to further reading and other sources of relevant information. Students reported that they found this material generally accessible. Examples of the effective interactive use of the virtual learning environment include the use of online notice boards and links to academic articles and e-journals. There is also an effective online forum in use on the Foundation Degree in Children's Care, Learning and Development.

**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 has effective processes in place to assure the accuracy of public information. All published promotional and advertising material relating to any aspect of the University Campus Suffolk is required to follow its publicity protocol, approved in its collaboration agreement with the two awarding universities. A member of the College marketing team attends the University Campus Suffolk's Communications Group meetings to ensure that the College's Head of Higher Education and staff are kept informed of University Campus Suffolk's requirements. The College uses standard templates for the production of its handbooks and related materials. There is a thorough scrutiny process for materials originating in the College, conducted by the College marketing office, that ensures that all interested staff, including the Principal, verify material before publication. The University Campus Suffolk marketing team regularly sample College marketing material for accuracy. The College marketing department has recently introduced an enhanced marketing plan to promote the College provision internally and externally, and to raise the profile of higher education in the local area.

**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**

50 The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in March 2011. There were three lines of enquiry, which were as follows.

**Line of enquiry 1:** How does the College assure itself that its assessment strategy is consistently and effectively applied across all faculties and programmes?

**Line of enquiry 2:** How effective are the range of assessment formats and timeliness of feedback in supporting the learning of all students and demonstrating achievement of the intended learning outcomes?

**Line of enquiry 3:** How does the College ensure that its information about assessments for students is appropriate, accurate and complete?

51 The Developmental engagement team identified two areas of good practice. These were the student involvement with the annual self-assessment process, and the use of the personal development module to support students' academic study skills.

52 The team also made a number of recommendations. The team considered it advisable for the College staff development programme to focus more on sharing good practice in assessment; to ensure that staff all understand and follow the assessment policy with regard to returning assessed work; to ensure that staff provide timely assessment feedback; to provide clear assessment criteria for all programmes; and to introduce systematic procedures for monitoring assessment information. The team also considered it desirable for the College to introduce a clear process for identifying and disseminating good practice; to introduce a clearer approach to formative assessment and the marking of group work; to publish an annual schedule of course committee meetings; to clarify academic and pastoral tutorial support entitlements; and to improve the accessibility of information on the virtual learning environment.

## **D Foundation Degrees**

53 The College offers 15 Foundation Degrees to 284 students, in a wide range of subject areas. It strongly believes that Foundation Degrees offer a valuable progression route for students, and meet the needs of local employers. Foundation Degree courses are offered in conjunction with University Campus Suffolk, and are jointly validated by the University of East Anglia and the University of Essex.

54 Foundation Degree provision falls within the College's overarching higher education quality assurance and enhancement framework. The College has well established links with employers, who inform curriculum developments and are part of the validation process. This helps to ensure that programmes are aligned with the expectations of the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*. All areas of good practice and recommendations outlined below apply equally to the Foundation Degree provision.

## E Conclusions and summary of judgements

55 The team has identified a number of features of good practice in the College's management of its responsibilities for academic standards and for the quality of learning opportunities of the awards the College offers on behalf of its awarding bodies. This was based upon discussion with staff and students and scrutiny of evidence provided by the College and its awarding bodies, the University of East Anglia and the University of Essex.

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

- the thorough self-assessment review and evaluation process involving contributions from staff, students, employers and external academic members which results in evaluative and reflective reports (paragraph 20)
- the close work with employers, and the integration of employability skills on most programmes, which provide opportunities for students to experience real work environments (paragraph 32).

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

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

- review the terms of reference and membership of all higher education committees and groups to clarify their responsibilities and ensure that there are appropriate opportunities for the discussion of strategic issues (paragraphs 16 and 17)
- develop a more extensive and systematic approach to staff development and scholarly activity for higher education staff (paragraph 22)
- ensure that all staff adhere to the requirements of the assessment policy, and provide timely, detailed and written developmental feedback on student work (paragraph 38).

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

- develop its policy further to provide clear guidance for peer observation of teaching which assists in identifying and sharing good practice and supporting the development of a dynamic teaching community (paragraph 30)
- review thoroughly the existing mechanisms for the identification and dissemination of good practice, to ensure there is a clear and effective process, along with an action plan for cross-college quality enhancement (paragraph 31)
- implement the existing policy for personal tutorials to ensure that students receive regular reports on their progress across all areas of study, and to encourage them to develop to their full academic potential (paragraph 39).

60 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, 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.

61 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, 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

## Integrated quality and enhancement review

management of the quality of learning opportunities to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

62 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, 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.

<b>West Suffolk College action plan relating to the Summative review: March 2012</b>						
<b>Good practice</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>Target date</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Success indicators</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
In the course of the Summative review the team identified the following areas of <b>good practice</b> that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the thorough self-assessment review and evaluation process involving contributions from staff, students, employers and external academic members which results in evaluative and reflective reports (paragraph 20)</li> </ul>	Invite representation from the Governors Quality Committee to the self-assessment review and evaluation event	November 2012	Head of Faculty of Higher Education and Learner Services	Improved understanding of higher education quality processes on the part of the College governing body	Vice Principal (Curriculum and Quality)	<p>Governors' Annual Self-Assessment Report</p> <p>College annual self-assessment and review</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the close work with employers, and the integration of employability skills on most programmes, which provide</li> </ul>	Provide a sharing good practice dissemination event for the whole of University Campus Suffolk	May 2012	Head of Faculty of Higher Education and Learner Services	Improved employability skills across all areas of the curriculum	University Campus Suffolk management	Event evaluation

opportunities for students to experience real work environments (paragraph 32)						
<b>Advisable</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>Target date</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Success indicators</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
The team considers that it is <b>advisable</b> for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>review the terms of reference and membership of all higher education committees and groups to clarify their responsibilities and ensure that there are appropriate opportunities for the discussion of strategic issues (paragraphs 16 and 17)</li> </ul>	Produce a revised Higher Education Committee structure and terms of reference, including a Higher Education Strategy Group and the discussion of strategic issues in the terms of reference of the University Campus Suffolk Course Leaders' Forum	September 2012	Head of Higher Education	<p>Clear reporting process</p> <p>Increased awareness of strategic issues on the part of teaching staff</p>	Head of Faculty of Higher Education and Learner Services	Agendas and minutes of Higher Education Committees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develop a more extensive and systematic approach to staff development and scholarly activity for higher education staff</li> </ul>	<p>Clearly identified annual staff development programme for higher education staff</p> <p>Three 'planning days' annually</p>	September 2012	Head of Faculty of Higher Education and Learner Services	<p>Management and peer observations</p> <p>Module evaluations</p> <p>Course self-assessment</p>	Vice Principal (Curriculum and Quality)	<p>Centre self-assessment review and evaluation</p> <p>Professional development self-assessment report</p>

(paragraph 22)				review and evaluation reports		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensure that all staff adhere to the requirements of the assessment policy, and provide timely, detailed and written developmental feedback on student work (paragraph 38)</li> </ul>	<p>Ensure the University Campus Suffolk Staff and Student Assessment Guide which includes procedures for the return of assessed work and the release of student grades is distributed to all staff</p> <p>Refresh professional development session on assessment procedures</p>	September 2012	Higher Education Administrator; course leaders	<p>At least 67% satisfaction for Assessment and Feedback on National Student Survey 2012-13</p> <p>Increased awareness of Assessment Guide</p>	University Campus Suffolk Management Committee	<p>Internal student surveys; National Student Survey 2012-13</p> <p>Feedback from University Campus Suffolk Student Board</p>
<b>Desirable</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>Target date</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Success indicators</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
The team considers that it is <b>desirable</b> for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develop its policy further to provide clear guidance for peer observation of teaching which assists in identifying and sharing good practice and supporting the development of a dynamic teaching</li> </ul>	<p>Integrate University Campus Suffolk peer observation process into pro-observe ensuring systematic process of identifying good practice for dissemination and/or training needs</p> <p>Staff development to cover University Campus Suffolk</p>	October 2012	Head of Faculty of Higher Education and Learner Services	Increased number of recorded peer observations	Vice Principal (Curriculum and Quality)	<p>Governors' Quality Committee</p> <p>University Campus Suffolk Curriculum and Quality Committee (proposed in revised committee structure above)</p> <p>Centre self-assessment</p>

community (paragraph 30)	guidelines on peer observation					review and evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>review thoroughly the existing mechanisms for the identification and dissemination of good practice, to ensure there is a clear and effective process, along with an action plan for cross-college quality enhancement (paragraph 31)</li> </ul>	<p>Revise terms of reference of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Group to become more focused on identifying areas of good practice and devise solutions for effective dissemination</p> <p>Establish University Campus Suffolk Curriculum and Quality Committee (proposed under advisable recommendation above)</p>	September 2012	Head of HE Higher Education	<p>Course self-assessment review and evaluations</p> <p>Annual Centre self-assessment review and evaluation event</p> <p>Peer observation data</p> <p>'Pro-observe' teaching observation data</p>	Head of Faculty of Higher Education and Learner Services	Centre self-assessment review and evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>implement the existing policy for personal tutorials to ensure that students receive regular reports on their progress across all areas of study, and to encourage them to develop to their full academic potential (paragraph 39)</li> </ul>	<p>Review the use of the electronic Individual Learning Plan across all programmes capturing the good practice already established for FdA/BA (Hons) Children's Care, Learning and Development and FdA/BA (Hons) Music Production</p>	October 2012	Head of Higher Education	<p>Increased number of courses utilising electronic Individual Learning Plans and accompanied recorded increase in students receiving regular progress reports</p>	Head of Faculty of Higher Education and Learner Services	<p>National Student Survey Survey 2012-13</p> <p>Centre self-assessment review and evaluation</p>



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