



# **Integrated quality and enhancement review**

**Summative review**

**Weston College**

**October 2011**

**SR 004/11**

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ISBN 978 1 84979 449 7

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Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

## 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 effectively manages 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 Weston College carried out in October 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 highly effective strategic and administrative leadership of higher education through the Directorate of Higher Education ensures a rigorous adherence to appropriate standards
- the use made by the College of the Academic Infrastructure has resulted in the underpinning of higher education programmes with secure and appropriate reference points
- the College's use of national benchmarking data and its active policy of continual improvement provide sound assurance that it maintains appropriate standards
- the strong links with employers enable the College to identify and maintain soundly based work-related standards
- the array of effective quality assurance mechanisms ensure that the College and its partners can have full confidence that the programmes delivered meet all requirements and expectations
- the College's arrangements for staff development and its promotion of scholarly activity enable staff to be fully aware of appropriate academic standards
- there is a highly effective system for peer review which involves staff working in triads
- the wide variety of ways in which the College enables effective support to be given to students
- the effective and dedicated strategy promoted by the College ensures that higher education students enjoy learning resources that enable them to achieve the intended learning outcomes at the highest level
- the coherent initial publicity, pre-programme contact, and support provided through a variety of media provide clear and comprehensive information for students
- the audit of programme handbooks by an external consultant provides the College with a robust independent check on accuracy.

### Recommendations

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

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

- build further on the potential that exists for employers to be engaged with the College; for example the College should consider disseminating programme specifications more widely to employer representatives
- more closely identify in submissions for support for scholarly activity the intended impact in terms of outcomes for student learning
- explain more clearly the range and purpose of additional fees prior to students applying for entry so that successful entrants fully understand the costs involved.

## 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 Weston 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 Bath Spa University, the University of Bath and the University of the West of England. The review was carried out by Dr Heather Barrett-Mold, Dr Glenn Barr, Mr Seth Crofts (reviewers) and Mr Alan Nisbett (coordinator).

2 The Summative review team (the team) conducted the review in agreement with the College and in accordance with *The handbook for Integrated quality and enhancement review* (the *handbook*), published by QAA. Evidence in support of the Summative review included documentation supplied by the College and awarding bodies, meetings with staff, students, employers and partner institutions, reports of reviews by QAA, and from inspections by Ofsted. In particular, the team drew on the findings and recommendations of the Developmental engagement in assessment. A summary of findings from this Developmental engagement is provided in Section C of this report. The review also considered the College's use of the Academic Infrastructure, developed by QAA on behalf of higher education providers, with reference to the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, subject and award benchmark statements, *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), and programme specifications.

3 In order to assist HEFCE in gaining 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 Weston College is a general further education college serving the needs of the people of North Somerset, which is an area covering 145 square miles. For higher education, it also seeks to recruit nationally and internationally. In terms of full-time equivalent students in 2009-10, there were 4,974 in further education and 520 in higher education. In the current year, there are 4,488 full-time equivalent further education students and 596 full-time equivalent higher education students. The College has effectively sustained its student profile against a background of major cuts across the further education sector. Provision at level 4 and above is mostly indirectly funded by HEFCE, working in partnership with Bath Spa University, the University of Bath, and the University of the West of England. There are also a small number of further education funded professional qualifications.

5 Weston College's main accommodation is centred in Weston-super-Mare. Its largest teaching facility and administration centre is at the Knightstone Campus, just off the seafront in the town centre. In September 2007 the College opened its new second site, University Campus, within the town, which replaced the 1960s former Sixth Form College and a Victorian campus which accommodated elements of Creative Arts and Music Technology. In combination, the Knightstone Campus and University Campus represent 90 per cent of the College's estate. In the academic year 2010-11, the College offered the following programmes, grouped by awarding body and with the full-time equivalent number of students in brackets.

### **Bath Spa University**

FdA Applied Art & Design (25)



BA (Hons) Applied Art & Design top-up (work-based) (11)  
 Certificate in Education/Professional Graduate Certificate in Education  
 (lifelong learning) (31)  
 FdA Counselling (23)  
 FdA Early Years (24)  
 BA (Hons) Early Years Education top-up (work-based) (12)  
 FdA Graphic Design (38)  
 BA (Hons) Creative Industries: Graphic Design top-up (work-based) (10)  
 FdA Music Production (28)  
 FdA Musical Theatre (44)  
 BA (Hons) Musical Theatre (14)  
 FdA Performing Arts (56)  
 FdA Popular Music (24)  
 FdSc Tourism Management (21).

### **University of Bath**

FdSc Applied Computing (30)  
 BSc (Hons) Applied Computing top-up (10)  
 FdSc Sport (Coaching) (22).

### **University of the West of England**

FdSc Animal Management (28)  
 FdA Business with Management (30)  
 FdSc Environmental Health (33)  
 FdSc Equine Management (9)  
 FdSc Health & Social Care Practice (26)  
 FdA Inclusive Practice (24)  
 FdA Uniformed Services (19)  
 MA Education (6).

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

6 At Weston College all higher education provision is indirectly funded, working in collaboration with three partners: Bath Spa University, the University of Bath, and the University of the West of England. The partnerships with all three universities are underpinned with a partnership agreement, and although there are variations between the agreements, all three embrace the key characteristics outlined in the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)*. The partnerships are effective and are based on transparency, clarity, stability, and joint authorship and ownership of the agreement. Each agreement is reviewed within a defined timescale and amended if necessary. The formal agreements with all three partner universities address the following: The purpose of the agreement and strategic objectives of the partnership; obligations and responsibilities of university and further education college partners; management and financial basis of the partnership; allocation and security of student numbers over a three year period; and date and term of review for the agreement.

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

7 Both Knightstone Campus and University Campus have University Centres, with bespoke spaces for the delivery of higher-level work. University Centre, Knightstone, accommodates a range of curriculum areas including business, computing, education, humanities, performing arts, and science-based provision. University Centre, University

Campus is home to the art and design and music provision. A third campus has been developed and commenced activity in the 2010-11 academic year. The South West Skills Campus was converted from an industrial site to address the recognised shortage in construction and allied skills, and the need to reskill and retrain, with a focus on adult learners and the construction industries. The College is also considering the potential of this site to build halls of residence and for the development of new provision, possibly in the higher education sector. Since 2007, Weston College has seen a significant growth in the number and breadth of programmes it delivers in higher education, as well as the number of partner universities with which it engages. Following the growth in programmes, there has been a significant increase in the number of higher education students from 370 full-time equivalents in 2007-08 to the current 596, representing an increase of 51 per cent.

## **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. During the regular student forums, students were briefed about involvement in the IQER process and their continued contribution through Summative review. Through the forums, representatives were made aware of the process, and asked to collect information from their student colleagues to be discussed at a meeting to write the student written submission. Support staff encouraged students to use an evidence-based approach, and advised about the structure and layout, but left the content to the students themselves. The team found the resulting submission helpful, as was the meeting with the students which was held during the visit.

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

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

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

9 The College has a clear and comprehensive Higher Education Strategy which sets higher education in the context of the work of the College. Aims and objectives include the establishment of high quality provision that meets the needs of the region and which provides opportunities for a wide range of students to participate in higher education. The partnership agreements, with all three universities, show a clear matrix of responsibilities for each element of activity and who in each organisation takes the lead for each of these elements.

10 The Director of Higher Education leads on discussions with partner universities with, or on behalf of, the Principal and Vice Principal. The Director is responsible for maintaining the registry and for responding to the student voice and enhancing the student experience, as well as key areas of delivery and development of higher education programmes. The management of higher education is aided by the distinctive approach taken by those responsible, including the Higher Education Directorate, key staff, and the Principalship. This has led to discrete and dedicated systems and processes for higher education, which work well alongside those that relate to further education. Programmes are delivered within the College faculty structure. A key committee relating to the management of higher education is the Corporate Management Team which develops policy and strategy. The Higher Education Management Team, chaired by the Director of Higher Education and

responsible for strategy and operation and the Higher Education Board of Study, has student representation and is chaired by the Director of Studies. This team is responsible for quality and standards. The Governing Body is closely engaged with higher education. Governors set policy and strategy and receive an annual report from the Director of Higher Education as well as higher education information as it appears in overall College reports. Governors have a Data, Curriculum and Quality Subcommittee which also receives higher education performance data. Governors attend the performances and exhibitions that feature in some programmes of study. The highly effective strategic and administrative leadership of higher education through the Directorate of Higher Education is good practice, as it has ensured a rigorous adherence to appropriate standards.

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

11 Engagement with the Academic Infrastructure underpins all activity relating to higher education at Weston College and is exemplified in the referencing of the Academic Infrastructure in all activity, from the development of policies and procedures through to the guiding principles of higher education management. On an ongoing basis, when assignments are written or amended, or when programmes are amended, reference is made to the Academic Infrastructure. There are some variations between the partnership agreement with each of the three partner universities but all three embrace the key characteristics outlined in the *Code of practice, Section 2*.

12 A recent example of how the Academic Infrastructure has been appropriately and effectively used has been the review of how student complaints are dealt with, and the subsequent development, supported by partner universities, of a bespoke Higher Education Complaints Policy and Procedure. The development took account of and reflected the precepts identified in the *Code of practice, Section 5: Academic appeals and student complaints on academic matters*. Proposals for new programmes go through a rigorous and clear process internally before their validation with the partner higher education institution in accordance with the *Code of practice, Section 7: Programme approval, monitoring and review*. For example, the recent validation of the top-up to the FdSc Environmental Health took account of this section of the *Code of practice*. The *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark* has been used throughout the development of Foundation Degrees. The team regards the use made by the College of the Academic Infrastructure as good practice, as it has resulted in the underpinning of higher education programmes with secure and appropriate reference points.

### **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 the awarding body?**

13 The team concludes that the College's use of national benchmarking data and its active policy of continual improvement provide sound assurance that it maintains appropriate standards. Achievement and employment rates are high. In 2009-10, 24 per cent of those on top-up degrees obtained a first class honours award against a national average for higher education in further education institutions of 8 per cent and a general national average of 14 per cent. Also in 2009-10, 91 per cent of honours graduates achieved related employment within six months of graduation. Employers consider that qualified students from Weston College are very employable due to their knowledge, their professional approach, and their understanding of the industry into which they are progressing. Staff are well qualified with over half having achieved a master's level qualification or higher and most with relevant industrial, performance or exhibiting experience and many with professional body membership.

14 The strong links with employers enable the College to identify and maintain soundly based work-related standards and are good practice. Examples of partnership development between industry and the College and its partner universities are numerous. They include the introduction of the FdSc Health and Social Care Practice programme which was developed in partnership with the University of the West of England and local Hospital Trusts. As well as offering placements and paid employment, the Environmental Health Officer from Bristol City Council provides lectures on the industry and opportunities to undertake relevant research projects. The partnership with the Brewhouse Theatre and Arts Centre has provided many opportunities for Weston College students to take part in performances. Finally, the Crossroad support for carers give Counselling students an opportunity to gain real work experience and to be mentored through this provision. As well as being involved in the development of programmes and the provision of work placements, employers also give opportunities for project work and deliver guest lectures on specific parts of their industry. In some cases employers are involved in interviewing, mentoring and formative assessment. The team judges, from the response by some employers they met, that there is further potential for the College to inform them more fully (see paragraph 37).

15 The array of effective quality assurance mechanisms represent good practice as they ensure that the College and its partners can have full confidence that the programmes delivered meet all requirements and expectations. These mechanisms include the comprehensive and rigorous Annual Programme Monitoring Reports which are submitted to the Head of Faculty, who produces a cross-faculty Self-Evaluation Report along with a Faculty action plan. The Faculty Self-Evaluation is then presented by the Head of Faculty at the Higher Education Board of Study who responds to questions. The Board of Study makes recommendations, and heads of faculty are then required to implement these as well as the action plan. This process ensures that issues identified by students, external examiners and partner universities are addressed, and provides a platform for the analysis of data relating to retention, achievement and progression. The student voice is an important element of this feedback and is particularly well catered for through student representation on programme boards, induction questionnaires, module evaluations, and through an open-door policy for student views. Feedback to students on action taken is achieved through a newsletter and through Facebook.

16 There is a clear strategy for assessment which links with the requirements of the particular awarding body and which includes the process for internal and external moderation. Programme and module handbooks provide full information on assessment, deadlines, marking, feedback, plagiarism, and the role of external examiners. In 2009-10, a health check was undertaken of programme handbooks and assessment. This resulted in a focus on assessment for staff development, starting with the Summer Higher Education Conference 2010, and the establishment of a working party which developed proposals for guaranteed levels of information for assignment briefs and assessment feedback. These were agreed with each of the partner awarding bodies and have now been implemented and checked through a subsequent health check in 2010-11.

17 During 2008-09, all undergraduate programmes at Bath Spa University, including all franchised programmes, were subject to reapproval. The rationale was to review the curriculum in terms of content and employability. All the College's programmes were reapproved successfully, providing sound evidence of how the College can be assured that the standards set and promoted are appropriate.

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

18 The team considers that the College's arrangements for staff development and its facilitation of scholarly activity enable staff to be fully aware of appropriate academic standards, as well as giving them the capacity to embrace these in their own academic skills and knowledge base. The College has a well articulated policy for staff development and scholarly activity. Higher education staff development needs are identified by individuals and through the emergence of themes from peer observation, external examiner reports, the student voice, and health checks of documentation. As a result, the focus of the summer higher education conference of 2010 was placed on assessment. In a similar way, good practice can be identified. These were shared in two of the five sessions of the HE Staff Development Day in February 2011. All staff teaching on higher education programmes are required to be part of a peer observation activity working with two others to improve practice.

19 Scholarly activity promotes the currency and expertise of teaching staff and all higher education staff undertake it. There is a reduction in a member of staff's annual teaching hours by up to 64 hours if 85 per cent or more is higher education. Much of this activity relates to subject delivery and subject updating. Its positive impact on the curriculum is one benefit, but it is not often the case that staff articulate and measure outcomes for students when they embark on these activities. It is desirable that the impact of scholarly activity in student learning outcomes should be more closely identified in submissions for support.

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

20 The quality of learning opportunities is closely monitored and managed effectively by a key manager in the College who reports through a well developed leadership structure (see paragraphs 9 and 10). These arrangements provide a strong coordinating mechanism which achieves consistency in the student experience across different programme areas, and ensures that there is equity in the quality of learning opportunities throughout this provision. The review team found evidence that there is a well defined understanding and delineation of responsibilities between the HE Directorate and the heads of faculty and programme staff that lead the delivery at programme level. The breakdown of responsibilities is well understood by all staff involved.

21 There is strong support for the higher education provision from the governing body and the College's Corporate Management Team, who have made significant investment in the infrastructure for higher education and have set out ambitious plans for its development. The College has well established and highly effective deliberative structures which ensure that learning opportunities are managed effectively. The Higher Education Board of Study is working effectively and includes a wide variety of staff involved with higher education delivery together with student representatives. The review team found a number of examples

of enhancement to student facilities as a result of feedback from students that were led by this committee.

**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 is engaged in a rigorous process of annual programme monitoring which feeds into the higher education self-evaluation scrutinised by the HE Board of Study. The review team found evidence that these mechanisms are working effectively. The reviews are completed fully and there is strong engagement with link teachers from the validating universities. Clear action plans are developed in relation to student feedback and student performance.

23 Well established mechanisms are in place to gather student opinion and a student voice policy is well integrated into the management of the provision. This involves students taking an active role in student forums. Students are given detailed feedback on the actions taken as a result of issues that have been raised. The Peer Press newsletter delivers a direct response to the student body and provides a briefing by email and in poster form.

24 The team found that mature and effective coordination arrangements operate between the College and awarding bodies. These involve staff at all levels. For example, university link tutors worked closely with programme staff at the College to ensure that the students receive a high-quality learning experience. The Director of Higher Education works very closely and effectively with a diverse range of senior academic and administrative staff at the partner universities.

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

25 The College has ensured that the Academic Infrastructure has been given a high profile by the academic and support staff involved in the delivery of the higher education provision. This forms a major part of staff development and was also a key theme on the briefing day for new academic staff. The team found extensive awareness of the Academic Infrastructure among the staff. This was used as a guide in the development of new policies that supported the quality of learning opportunities. The higher education staff team complete health checks to ensure that College policies are consistent with the provisions.

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

26 The College has robust systems for programme management and monitoring the student learning experience as described in paragraph 14. The review team found evidence of specific examples of teaching and learning that had been enhanced as a result of student feedback.

27 The College has developed a learning and teaching strategy that relates specifically to higher education. This sets out clear objectives for the learning and teaching that takes place and ensures that teaching has a specific higher education focus. In addition, the College collaborates extensively with the validating universities to share good practice. For example, it has adopted a system of peer review from one of the university partners. There is also a process in place which allows staff to be seconded to partner universities to enhance teaching experience. The College has a highly effective system for peer review which involves staff working in triads. This involves an experienced member of staff in the group performing a moderating function and supporting the staff development of the other

colleagues. Themes from peer review are analysed and feed into future staff development plans for the next year. This system has been supported by considerable staff development, some of which has involved external consultancy from the partner university. The team regards this as good practice.

28 The College has an established strategy for the use of technology to enhance student learning. This provision has been benchmarked against minimum standards. A strategic plan has been put in place with a target to develop a high level of online support for 2012. Currently, there are consistent levels of e-learning materials provided across the different programmes. These are well received by students, who see them as a valuable resource.

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

29 The team found that the wide variety of ways in which the College enables effective support to be given to students reflects good practice. There are well designed structures that provide support for all areas of the student life cycle. These include pastoral care and academic support. There is a comprehensive system for allowing students to make informed use of the excellent learning resource provision, which allows students from a variety of backgrounds to make the most of the learning opportunities provided by the College. Students studying on higher education programmes receive exceptional levels of support from the academic teams delivering the programmes. The College has established minimum thresholds for tutorial support. These are monitored by a senior tutor for higher education who ensures the standards are achieved. Key non-academic roles have been established to deliver innovative systems of student support that include an Academic Registrar and HE Student Services Welfare Officer. These roles are highly valued by students who are very satisfied with the support provided by the College.

30 Robust arrangements are in place to provide support for students with disabilities. These arrangements are well understood by key academic and support staff. The College has taken a proactive stance in screening all students at induction to identify those with disabilities and then putting in place additional arrangements for individual support.

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

31 The College provides clear direction to facilitate the development of higher education staff (see paragraphs 18 and 19). Annual reports on staff development and scholarly activity provide an analysis of these activities and inform senior managers within the College of the achievements and future priorities in relation to staff development.

### **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?**

32 The effective and dedicated strategy promoted by the College ensures that higher education students enjoy learning resources that enable them to achieve the intended learning outcomes at the highest level. The College leadership structure ensures that the higher education provision has high visibility within the College's governance and resource allocation deliberations. The team saw effective engagement with students in relation to evaluating the effectiveness of learning resources.

33 The College has made significant investment in specialist learning resources for courses, with industry standard facilities across a range of disciplines. The facilities at

University Campus for creative arts programmes are particularly noteworthy and represent a major investment which has created an exceptional learning environment. The College has planned investment that supports the growth of higher education over recent years and has made a significant commitment to future investment.

**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?**

34 A wide range of material is produced by the College in a variety of formats relating both to marketing the higher education portfolio and to informing and identifying support for prospective students. The prospectus for higher education provision is mirrored, in electronic form, on the College website and provides an appropriate level of detail on the course structure and content, entry requirements, progression opportunities, and methods of assessment. More detailed course information is available to prospective students from the programme specifications on the awarding body websites.

35 Well designed leaflets, created by a company established by recent former students, clearly illustrate the pastoral and academic support services available from the College and each awarding body. Brochures inform students of opportunities for taster days, accommodation, and welcome events which are judged by students to be clear and effective. However, the student written submission identifies that limited information is provided prior to entry on additional costs involved. Students suggest that more information is needed on the amount of money required for studio fees and how they are spent. The College has taken steps to remedy the situation by providing a table of studio fees in the welcome letter, but it is desirable for the College to more clearly explain the range and purpose of additional fees prior to students applying for entry, so that successful entrants fully understand the costs involved.

36 Detailed handbooks, available in paper and electronic formats, provide curriculum and assessment information for students, including calendars, procedures, and links to awarding body virtual learning environments and regulations. Social media links allow students to make contact with peers prior to enrolment and to keep them informed during their time at the College. They are able to pose questions to college support staff, access the Peer Press newsletter, and to interact with other students. Students comment favourably on the extensive contact available, which provides coherent information about programmes and the range of additional support available. The team considers that the coherent initial publicity, pre-programme contact, and support provided through a variety of media are examples of good practice in providing clear and comprehensive information for students.

37 Employers receive a substantial amount of information when providing work placements, allowing them to support students effectively. Employers for Equine Studies and Early Years programmes receive programme specifications but others do not receive these as a matter of course. It is desirable that the College disseminates programme specifications more widely to employer representatives.



**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?**

38 Agreements with the three awarding bodies require the College to seek approval for publicity material, including advertisements, prospectuses, leaflets, press releases, and web information. All publications, in whatever format, are coordinated centrally through the College's marketing function. The prospectus is planned well in advance and the Director of Higher Education, working in conjunction with the Head of Marketing, is responsible for ensuring its accuracy. The process of checking at college and awarding body levels is not formally documented but clear evidence of the process was provided to the team. Checking and updating the College website takes place at least three times each year to maintain its currency and accuracy.

39 An audit of programme handbooks by an external consultant provides the College with an independent check on the accuracy of information and is regarded by the team as an area of good practice. However, some changes to programme titles and regulations have yet to be carried through to all printed copies of course handbooks, the virtual learning environment, and all awarding body websites. For example, the revised title of the FdA Business with Management does not appear in the course handbook and the new title of the BA (Hons) Applied Computing programme is yet to appear on the awarding body website.

40 The Developmental engagement recommended the implementation of the College's draft 'Guaranteed Levels of Information'. These are now in place. They effectively ensure consistency of approach across documentation, while allowing a variety of designs to meet the needs of the different awarding bodies and further education college partners delivering the same programmes.

41 Comprehensive standards of performance are established for programme information on the virtual learning environment. The College website and virtual learning environment are checked for readability and allow for inclusive access. Well managed checking procedures with student representatives assure the College that the content and layout of publicity materials meet student needs. Students confirm that information provided prior to enrolment accurately reflects their experience at the College and that College publications are accurate. College surveys and student comments show improvements in satisfaction with information in the past year.

**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**

42 The lines of enquiry explored during the Developmental engagement in assessment were as follows.

**Line of enquiry 1:** The contribution of internal and external moderation processes to ensure that appropriate academic standards are set and maintained.

**Line of enquiry 2:** The role of staff development in supporting best practice in assessment design and implementation, and the impact this has on student learning and achievement.

**Line of enquiry 3:** To what extent does the College provide clear, accurate and comprehensive information on assessment to promote learning and to facilitate improvement?

43 The Developmental engagement team identified a number of areas of good practice for dissemination in the context of the College's management of student assessment, including the effectiveness of internal and external moderation within the regulations of the College's three awarding bodies; the effective support provided to maintain strong links with professional bodies; the wide range of staff development activities that contribute to best practice in assessment design and implementation; the impact of scholarly activity on assessment practice evident through the currency and range of assessment methods used; and the course and module handbooks which are clear and comprehensive, and provide students with full information regarding expectations for assessment.

44 The team also made a number of recommendations, including it being advisable for the College to initiate further discussions with the awarding bodies to assist the course teams to receive appropriate external examiner comment, and to ensure that timeliness of feedback on student work is consistently observed across all programmes. The team also concluded that it would be desirable for the College to clarify the process of sharing the second marker comments and grades with students; implement the draft 'Guaranteed Levels of Information'; and share the good practice in formative assessment on a more formal basis across all programmes.

## **D Foundation Degrees**

45 Since 2007, Weston College has seen a significant growth in the number and breadth of Foundation Degree programmes it delivers in higher education, as well as the number of partner universities with which it engages. Currently Weston College delivers 19 Foundation Degrees, five of which are validated to continue to honours degree.

46 All the conclusions and recommendations listed below apply to the Foundation Degree programmes offered by the College.

## **E Conclusions and summary of judgements**

47 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in the 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.

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

- the highly effective strategic and administrative leadership of higher education through the Directorate of Higher Education ensures a rigorous adherence to appropriate standards (paragraphs 10 and 15)
- the use made by the College of the Academic Infrastructure has resulted in the underpinning of higher education programmes with secure and appropriate reference points (paragraph 12)

- the College's use of national benchmarking data and its active policy of continual improvement provide sound assurance that it maintains appropriate standards (paragraph 13)
- the strong links with employers enable the College to identify and maintain soundly based work-related standards (paragraph 14)
- the array of effective quality assurance mechanisms ensure that the College and its partners can have full confidence that the programmes delivered meet all requirements and expectations (paragraph 15)
- the College's arrangements for staff development and its promotion of scholarly activity enable staff to be fully aware of appropriate academic standards (paragraph 18)
- there is a highly effective system for peer review which involves staff working in triads (paragraph 27)
- the wide variety of ways in which the College enables effective support to be given to students (paragraph 29)
- the effective and dedicated strategy promoted by the College ensures that higher education students enjoy learning resources that enable them to achieve the intended learning outcomes at the highest level (paragraph 32)
- the coherent initial publicity, pre-programme contact, and support provided through a variety of media provide clear and comprehensive information for students (paragraph 36)
- the audit of programme handbooks by an external consultant provides the College with a robust independent check on accuracy (paragraph 39).

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

- build further on the potential that exists for employers to be engaged with the College; for example the College should consider disseminating programme specifications more widely to employer representatives (paragraphs 14 and 37)
- more closely identify in submissions for support for scholarly activity the intended impact in terms of outcomes for student learning (paragraph 19)
- explain more clearly the range and purpose of additional fees prior to students applying for entry so that successful entrants fully understand the costs involved (paragraph 35).

50 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.

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

52 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>Weston College action plan relating to the Summative review: October 2011</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 highly effective strategic and administrative leadership of higher education through the Directorate of Higher Education ensures a rigorous adherence to appropriate standards (paragraph 10)</li> </ul>	Maintain effectiveness; review strategic and administrative leadership through appraisal of the Director of Higher Education, annual programme monitoring, reports from partner universities, and external examiner reports	With immediate effect (November 2011) and ongoing on an annual basis	Appraisal by the Principal, scrutiny of annual programme monitoring, and external examiner reports by Higher Education Board of Study	Headline pass rates and key performance indicators maintained, positive reports from partner universities and external examiners	Corporation, Principal and Higher Education Board of Study	Appraisal of Director of Higher Education; analysis of key performance indicators, annual programme monitoring, and external reports at Higher Education Board of Study
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the use made by the College of the Academic Infrastructure has resulted in the underpinning of higher</li> </ul>	Maintain awareness of the Academic Infrastructure through staff development, keeping abreast of	Ongoing; implement awareness of new Academic Infrastructure when available	Director of Higher Education and Quality Coordinator Higher Education	Understanding of Academic Infrastructure expressed by staff in feedback	Principal, Director of Higher Education, Director of Studies	Staff Development report considered and approved at Higher Education Board of Study; staff feedback

education programmes with secure and appropriate reference points (paragraph 12)	the proposed changes to the Academic Infrastructure; continue to make effective use of the Academic Infrastructure to underpin higher education delivery					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the College's use of national benchmarking data and its active policy of continual improvement provide sound assurance that it maintains appropriate standards (paragraph 13)</li> </ul>	Maintain and increase the use of relevant comparative data to drive quality and continuous improvement initiatives	With immediate effect (November 2011) and ongoing	Director of Higher Education, Quality Coordinator Higher Education, College data and quality section	Use of comparative data in Annual Programme Monitoring Reports, and Faculty Self Evaluation	Higher Education Board of Study	<p>Annual report to Corporation by Director of Higher Education.</p> <p>Feedback received from Higher Education Board of Study membership</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the strong links with employers enable the College to identify and maintain soundly-based work-related standards and are good practice</li> </ul>	Establish employer review element to Annual Programme Monitoring	March 2012	Quality Coordinator Higher Education	Continued effective engagement with employers, evidence of regular communication, and involvement in programmes by employers	Director of Higher Education, Higher Education Board of Study	Annual Programme Reports will require specific commentary on employer engagement for consideration at Higher Education Board of Study

<p>(paragraph 14)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the array of effective quality assurance mechanisms ensure that the College and its partners can have full confidence that the programmes delivered meet all requirements and expectations (paragraph 15)</li> </ul>	<p>Maintain the array of quality assurance approaches; review and enhance approaches</p>	<p>March 2012</p>	<p>Quality Coordinator Higher Education</p>	<p>High standards maintained, including pass rates; evidence of effective partnership with awarding bodies</p>	<p>Director of Studies and Director of Higher Education</p>	<p>Feedback from students, assessment of key data, and reports from partner universities and external examiners</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the College's arrangements for staff development and its promotion of scholarly activity enable staff to be fully aware of appropriate academic standards (paragraph 18)</li> </ul>	<p>Review of staff development approach; establish links between activity and impact; monitor and review impact of scholarly activity</p>	<p>March 2012 and annually</p>	<p>Director of Studies</p>	<p>Impact noted on the curriculum of staff development and scholarly activity</p>	<p>Director of Higher Education and Higher Education Board of Study</p>	<p>Staff feedback, student feedback; annual scholarly activity report received and considered by Higher Education Board of Study for impact and effectiveness</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>there is a highly effective system for peer review which involves staff working in triads</li> </ul>	<p>Maintain peer observation approach, review and moderate findings, implement improvements</p>	<p>June 2012, and annually.</p>	<p>Quality and Standards Manager</p>	<p>Observation intelligence gathered, basis for staff development identified</p>	<p>Director of Higher Education, Director of Studies, Quality Coordinator Higher Education</p>	<p>Annual report to Higher Education Board of Study</p>

<p>(paragraph 27)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the wide variety of ways in which the College enables effective support to be given to students (paragraph 29)</li> </ul>	<p>Ensure that all new staff have a full understanding of the Higher Education Guaranteed Tutorial Entitlement; ongoing monitoring of this to ensure that students receive effective pastoral and academic support</p>	<p>June 2012 and annually</p>	<p>Senior Tutor, Higher Education</p>	<p>Success of students accessing support, reflected in positive student feedback</p>	<p>Director of Higher Education, Head of Faculty Image and Inclusive Practice</p>	<p>Report received by Higher Education Management Team and Higher Education Board of Study; analysis of student voice reports presented at Higher Education Board of Study</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the effective and dedicated strategy promoted by the College ensures that higher education students enjoy learning resources that enable them to achieve the intended learning outcomes at the highest level (paragraph 32)</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing review of resources. Impact of resources used, assessed at each opportunity and reported through the Higher Education Strategic Plan.</p>	<p>Immediate effect (November 2011) and monthly at Higher Education Management Team</p>	<p>Director of Higher Education, Learning Technology Resource Centre Manager</p>	<p>Positive student feedback in module evaluations; positive partner university reports and external examiner reports</p>	<p>Director of Studies, Principal, Director of Higher Education</p>	<p>Higher Education Strategic Plan considered and approved by Corporate Management Team; analysis of Student Voice reports at Higher Education Board of Study</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the coherent initial publicity</li> </ul>	<p>Maintain current approach, review</p>	<p>March 2012</p>	<p>Head of Marketing and Academic</p>	<p>Positive student feedback on</p>	<p>Director of Higher Education.</p>	

pre-programme contact, and support provided through a variety of media provide clear and comprehensive information for students (paragraph 36)	effectiveness and audit annually		Registrar	information received; audit reflects the accuracy and completeness of published material, as well as areas for improvement/adjustment		Formal report required to be submitted to HE Management Team by Marketing April 2012
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the audit of programme handbooks by an external consultant provides the College with a robust independent check on accuracy (paragraph 39).</li> </ul>	Engage external consultant to audit handbooks on an annual basis; provide advice and guidance for those writing them	Audit April 2012, advice and guidance May-August 2012	External Consultant, Higher Education Curriculum Manager	Accurate, complete and user friendly handbooks produced in compliance with partner university requirements; handbooks available in a timely fashion	Deputy Director of Higher Education.	Reported to Higher Education Board of Study on an annual basis; analysis of Induction Questionnaire Report for Higher Education Board of Study



Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is <b>desirable</b> for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>build further on the potential that exists for employers to be engaged with the College; for example the College should consider disseminating programme specifications more widely to employer representatives (paragraphs 14 and 37)</li> </ul>	Review information received by employers; set information requirements to be disseminated	March 2012	Programme Coordinators	Positive feedback from employers; employer engagement seen to be comprehensive, and evidence of involvement in curriculum updating	Director of Higher Education	Annual Employer Engagement Report to go to Higher Education Management Team in June meeting; analysis of Annual Programme Monitoring Reports
	Review the terms of reference for Employer Liaison Groups	March 2012	Curriculum Manager Higher Education			
	Organise an annual business breakfast for employers	June 2012	Head of Marketing	Good attendance by employers and positive feedback	Director of Higher Education	Assess effectiveness and impact of event
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>more closely identify in submission for support for scholarly activity the intended impact in terms of outcomes for student learning (paragraph 19)</li> </ul>	Intended impact to be specifically identified in discussions and initial request for scholarly activity	With immediate effect (November 2011)	Deputy Director of Higher Education and Curriculum Manager Higher Education	Concrete evidence of positive impact of scholarly activity on the curriculum and student learning reported	Director of Studies	Scholarly Activity Impact Report made to Higher Education Board of Study annually, updates heard at Higher Education Management Team

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>explain more clearly the range and purpose of additional fees prior to students applying for entry so that successful entrants can fully understand the costs involved (paragraph 35)</li> </ul>	<p>Ensure that all additional fees that may be incurred by students are fully communicated in advance of students applying for entry</p>	<p>April 2012</p>	<p>Academic Registrar, Heads of Faculty and Head of Marketing</p>	<p>Positive student feedback regarding the completeness of information provided prior to entry; no issues received from students regarding unexpected fees</p>	<p>Director of Higher Education and HE Management Team</p>	<p>Update provided to Higher Education Management Team June 2012; analysis of Student Voice reports</p>
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