

## **Integrated quality and enhancement review**

**Summative review**

April 2009

Wigan and Leigh College

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## **Preface**

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

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

## **Purpose of IQER**

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

## **The IQER process**

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

## **Developmental engagement**

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

The main elements of a Developmental engagement are:

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

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

## Summative review

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

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

## Evidence

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

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

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

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

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

## Outcomes of IQER

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

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

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

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

## Executive summary

### The Summative review of Wigan and Leigh College carried out in April 2009

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

### Good practice

The team has identified the following good practice for dissemination:

- the higher education infrastructure, which includes: a higher education strategy; specific higher education quality assurance and enhancement procedures; a separate structure of committees and groups for higher education and staff roles, which are specific to the development and management of higher education provision
- the use of the 'traffic light system' in both the IQER development plan and Higher Education Audit as a method for identifying the stage reached in the development and implementation of a College policy in accordance with the Academic Infrastructure
- the College's approach to, and promotion of, staff development as it provides sound foundations for the promotion of appropriate standards
- the supportive and sympathetic approach to assisting staff teaching on higher education programmes
- the Higher Education Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy, which builds on good practice by enabling the College to articulate key learning and teaching values in order to enhance the quality of student learning
- the excellent record of addressing widening participation through a variety of measures, including the extensive 'College in the Community' network
- the remission in the form of a 13 per cent weighting of hours given to all staff teaching on higher education programmes
- the new software, which gathers the curricular planning information and enables updated course leaflets to be printed through the portal.

### 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 and where necessary improve its links with employers across all relevant programme areas, to ensure consistent employer engagement in the full promotion of work-based learning opportunities

## Integrated quality and enhancement review

- review arrangements for securing placements for students, to ensure quality and equity across programmes that require work placements, particularly in the light of the expansion of Foundation Degrees and in the current economic climate
- ensure that recruitment of appropriate staff takes place in graphic design.

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

- review and monitor the developing situation in the light of any demands placed on resources by higher education developments in the future.

## 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 Wigan and Leigh 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 that the College delivers on behalf of Edexcel, the University of Bolton, the University of Central Lancashire, the University of Huddersfield, the University of Salford and the University of Sunderland. The review was carried out by Mrs Claire Blanchard, Mr Tom Cantwell, Ms Pat Milner (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 an 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 to gain information to assist with the assessment of the impact of Foundation Degree (FD) awards, Section D of this report summarises details of the FD programmes delivered at the College.

4 The College is based on two sites at Wigan and three at Leigh; higher education programmes are delivered at both sites. Higher education programmes are validated by Edexcel (BTEC) and five different university partners: Central Lancashire, Salford, Sunderland, Huddersfield and Bolton. Recruitment for the last three academic years, for directly and indirectly funded programmes, demonstrates modest growth. In 2008-09, there are approximately 631 full-time equivalent students, with some 50 per cent pursuing Edexcel Higher National Certificates and Diplomas (HNC/Ds) and the remainder pursuing programmes awarded by universities. The latter include substantial numbers on the PGCE/CertEd, validated by the University of Central Lancashire.

5 The following programmes are offered in conjunction with its higher education partners and formed part of the review:

### Edexcel

HNC/D Business

HNC/D Computing

HND Hospitality Management

HND Public Services

HND Graphic Design



HNC/D Mechanical Engineering

HNC/D Electrical Engineering

HNC Civil Engineering

HNC/D Construction

### **University of Bolton**

BA English

### **University of Central Lancashire**

BA Business

Cert Ed/PGCE

Diploma in Management Studies (DMS)

FD Forensic Science

LINCS Combined Honours

FD Sports Coaching

### **University of Huddersfield**

BA Education

### **University of Salford**

FD Community Governance

FD Child & Adolescent Mental Health

FD Complementary Therapies

### **University of Sunderland**

BSc Computer Applications

FD Network Computing.

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

6 A formal Memorandum of Co-operation between each university and the College defines the nature of the partnership. Separate documents, which may be in the form of Appendices to the Memorandum, define the specific responsibilities of the University and College in respect of issues relating to Academic Standards, as well as Assessment, Student Support and Services. Overarching university documents, such as Academic Regulations, provide the framework within which university courses are managed within the College. A matrix summarising the range of responsibilities and the division between University and College was provided to the team and this proved to be very helpful.

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

7 As an active member of the Greater Manchester Strategic Alliance (GMSA) Lifelong Learning Network, the College has developed new Foundation Degrees and is pursuing stronger links with industry through, for example, projects under the Higher Levels Skills Pathfinders. Other initiatives under the Lifelong Learning Network involve the provision of more flexible programmes, including the development of Continuing Professional Development Units in Leadership and Management with the University of Bolton. The College is currently preparing a bid under the HEFCE Strategic Development Fund for capital to establish a 'HE Centre' in partnership with the University of Central Lancashire. The bid will be submitted in 2008-09.

## **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. The College invited an education student to coordinate a number of activities, including focus groups on the three campuses, in order to compile a submission. The resulting written submission was very helpful and together with the meetings held with students provided the team with a representative picture of student opinion on their higher education experience.

## **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 established an appropriate infrastructure designed to ensure the development of its higher education provision, as well as the management of standards on higher education programmes. This infrastructure, which the team noted as good practice, has a number of interrelated features that include: a higher education strategy; specific higher education quality assurance and enhancement procedures; a separate structure of committees and groups for higher education and staff roles which are specific to the development and management of higher education provision. Reporting arrangements with university partners are dependent upon the range and complexity of the relationship. Each university has a partnership office, or its equivalent, with the main curricular links being at programme level between the College and university teams. This has all helped to refocus higher education within the College and assist the College with its bid to become a University Centre. These developments together with the Higher Education Strategy and the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy support the view that the College is planning strategically, in relation to curricula, teaching and learning.

10 Following the Development engagement in May 2008, a restructuring of senior management posts was undertaken to strengthen and further the management and development of higher education across the College. The aim of the restructuring was to improve the cross-college management and delivery of higher education provision. The Higher Education Committee and Higher Education Practitioners Group were identified as good practice in the Developmental engagement and are becoming an established part of the College infrastructure. A separate higher education quality board was established to

enable higher education quality issues to be discussed with greater regularity and depth. The review of committees included reporting structures, and in particular, the role of the Academic Board. From 2008-09, those committees now report directly to the Strategic Management Team, and to the Governing Board, through its subcommittees. It is intended that these changes will lead to more effective implementation of actions arising from the various elements of review monitoring and evaluation of higher education programmes. In respect of the latter, all College management teams meet to an agreed calendar with standard agenda items, minutes and action points. Course teams are required to hold minuted meetings, with issues arising, reported to the relevant Faculty Management Team.

11 The College has used a separate quality assurance system for higher education courses since 1999, with current procedures reflecting the relevant sections of the *Code of practice*. The key quality assurance process is the annual self-evaluation report for each higher education programme with the format based on a partner university's template. The annual report is informed by three course review and evaluation reports compiled in November, April and June. The annual self-evaluation reports are validated by a sub-group of the Quality and Standards Board, with additional reports submitted to partner universities for each programme. The University of Central Lancashire, the College's major partner, also requires a separate college-wide annual monitoring report. Statistical data relating to recruitment, retention and student achievement is a major component of the self-evaluation process and the College uses standard information management software, which has been adapted for higher education use. A similar process is conducted by each Faculty Management Team. External examiners' reports inform both course review and the self-evaluation report. Required actions, arising from such reports, are circulated from the Higher Education Quality Standards Board through members to key management teams in the form of the 'traffic lights' report. All Edexcel examiner reports are received by the Quality and Standards Unit, whereas some university reports are still received by individual curriculum teams, which can lead to delays in the monitoring of action points.

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

12 Recent QAA reviews have confirmed that the College has adopted the Academic Infrastructure in relation to curricula, intended learning outcomes, subject benchmarks and the use of programme specifications. The College has used the Academic Infrastructure as a reference point for many years, when devising policies and procedures relating to its higher education provision. Thus, key policies and procedures are written in accordance with the precepts of the relevant sections of the *Code of practice*, including course planning and validation; quality and standards policy; and assessment policy. Following the Developmental engagement in summer 2008, the IQER Development Group was established with the initial task of reviewing the extent to which the Academic Infrastructure is embedded in all aspects of higher education activities, with its first task being a gap analysis, with follow-up actions. The College has adopted an approach of support and coaching for higher education staff to develop their understanding and of the Academic Infrastructure in this regard. The IQER Development Plan and the Higher Education Audit 2008-09 Stage 2 clearly identify where the course teams have developed their course handbooks using the College template. The use of the 'traffic light' system in both the IQER development plan and higher education audit demonstrates good practice, as a method for identifying the stage reached in the development and implementation of a College policy in accordance with the Academic Infrastructure. The College is fully aware of where compliance is not happening and has supportive activity in place, to ensure staff have a full understanding of the requirements and the benefits to students that the changes will bring.

13 The Academic Infrastructure is well understood and put into operation by all academic staff involved in the delivery of higher education at the College. This has been achieved through a series of bespoke staff development sessions on the Academic Infrastructure, which have been delivered by the validation partners and the College itself. The Academic Infrastructure is embedded throughout all stages of the validation process itself and through programme delivery. The report of the Developmental engagement in assessment confirmed that the communication of assessment requirements takes proper account of the *Code of practice* and other parts of the Academic Infrastructure, such as the FHEQ (paragraph 18). The report also confirms that the use of a standard template for programme specifications, which includes essential information about assessment, makes reference to FHEQ levels. The team found that the College had made progress in this area and that the situation was being monitored in a developmental, non-punitive manner. The higher education audits of 2008-09 will monitor the situation to ensure consistency across the provision.

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

14 The requirements of validating partners and awarding bodies, in respect of the quality and standards for individual programmes, are clearly set out in the various agreements. The College fulfils these requirements by appropriately delegating responsibility for the management, development and delivery of courses to the faculties and divisions, with monitoring and reporting conducted through the College committee structure. Higher education courses are managed within divisions, which themselves are part of an academic faculty, each of which is the responsibility of an assistant principal. Each division has a designated manager and each course, or group of courses, has a designated lecturer as course leader. The course leader completes the three course reviews and annual self-evaluation report for each programme as part of the College's Quality Assurance arrangements.

15 University courses also require a separate annual report. The Higher Education Programme Area Manager completes the college-wide annual monitoring report for the University of Central Lancashire. It is through these processes that the College seeks to assure itself of the quality and standards of its provision. The arrangements that the College has in place to assure itself of standards have been judged to be effective and appropriate by its major higher education partner, the University of Central Lancashire, in its annual monitoring reports on collaborative provision.

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

16 The College is committed to providing staff development for all staff to enable them to undertake their roles effectively and to contribute to meeting the College's objectives. The College values its employees and seeks to provide opportunities for the professional and personal development of individuals. The team considered the College's approach to, and promotion of, staff development to be good practice as it provides sound foundations for the promotion of appropriate standards. The College Staff Development Officer identifies all staff who teach on higher education programmes and ensures that these staff attend specific activities on the identified cross-college staff development days. These activities were undertaken in June and October 2008; and in February 2009, a QAA reviewer delivered a training event relating to IQER.

17 Workforce development is a key strategic objective of the College. Annual staff reviews, informed by classroom observations, result in a training plan for each member of staff, with the team training plan informed by required actions arising from self-evaluation, external examiners reports and College requirements for 30 hours of continuing professional development. There are three full days each College year devoted to staff development and staff can apply for support for attendance at workshops, conferences and the pursuit of higher-level qualifications. All teaching staff are required to be members of the Institute for Learning. Support for teams is also provided by the Higher Education Quality Coordinator, who works with the Advanced Practitioner for Higher Education to provide workshops and other development activities, identified for example, through audits and other reports. In addition to College-based activities, the College staff enjoy opportunities to attend staff development events at the partner universities. Students feel that tutors have a good mix of practitioner and academic experience.

18 The College has adopted a number of means to disseminate best practice within the College including, for example, through the Higher Level Skills Pathfinder for the construction team. Other methods include whole College staff development days, e-leaders, and the integrated support staff, who work together to disseminate best practice among curriculum teams in relation to the virtual learning environment.

**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?**

19 As described under Core theme 1 above, the College has developed a robust and distinct management system for higher education within its overall provision. This system is designed by the College to manage effectively and assure all aspects that affect the quality of learning opportunities. There are designated roles at management level that connect with relevant support staff and systems. Reporting arrangements are in place to ensure that all aspects of the College's responsibility for its higher education provision are transparent and self-evaluative. These arrangements include the annual review system that is common to all partnerships, the College's own yearly Higher Education Audit and the curricular level higher education self-evaluation reports. In addition to these the Higher Education Manager produces a college-wide annual monitoring report for the University of Central Lancashire partnership. This is to be extended to encompass all internal higher education provision as a further quality procedure. The College accepts that not all teams have implemented the policies and procedures that the new system has set out. However, the team found that senior staff were keen to engage these teams in a continuous supportive process, in order to assure quality improvement, and the team regard the supportive and sympathetic approach to assisting staff teaching on higher education programmes to be good practice.

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

20 As referred to in Core theme 1 above, annual monitoring systems are in place in all partnerships. The team met representatives of awarding body partners during the visit and confirm that these mechanisms are in place and are robust and transparent. One area germane to current expectations is the requirement that engagement with employers promotes relevant and effective work-based learning opportunities for students. The team found many links with local employers, yielding numerous opportunities for enhancement of learning opportunities, particularly with regard to FDs. While such links clearly exist they were either at an interpersonal level, often based upon a relationship between a course leader and an employer; or they emerged as a result of, for example, a marketing event conducted at college level. While both of these situations present learning opportunities, the team felt that the current links could be further developed and formalised. The team recommends that the College should be advised to review, and where necessary improve, its links with employers across all relevant programme areas, to ensure consistent employer engagement in the full promotion of work-based learning opportunities.

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

21 Engagement by College staff with the Academic Infrastructure has improved since the Development engagement in assessment. The College higher education team is now confident in its ability to use the Academic Infrastructure and to reflect self-critically on adherence to its various elements. The College accepts that it is still in the process of ensuring that all teams are able to claim full engagement with the Academic Infrastructure. All FD programmes are mapped to the award benchmark and to their individual subject benchmark statements. Handbooks refer to FHEQ and National Qualifications Framework reference points, demonstrating that staff are aware of the correct level of their courses, and that this information is passed to students.

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

22 The Higher Education Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy, which the team regard as good practice in itself, builds on good practice by enabling the College to articulate key learning and teaching values, so as to enhance the quality of student learning. The College offers an excellent student experience through innovation in curricular design and through the implementation of teaching, learning and assessment strategies appropriate for higher education, and access to academic and personal support and guidance. Central to the achievement of the College's ambitions with respect to the student experience is a commitment to ensuring that the principles of quality enhancement, through reflection and evaluation, are embedded in strategies, policies and processes, and a commitment to continuous improvement in all aspects of teaching, learning and assessment practice.

23 The College employs an effective means of monitoring teaching and learning across its higher education provision. This system is based upon classroom observations and the monitoring of support systems for teaching and learning. This includes, for example, scrutiny of schemes of work and feedback systems by the higher education advanced practitioners among others.



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

24 The College collects student feedback by a variety of means including surveys and focus groups. The College has accepted that last year's response rate for the National Student Survey was poor at 49 per cent, although this has since improved to 59 per cent this year. Other, informal, methods of student feedback also clearly fed into the system and are acted upon. While not recognising this directly in the self-evaluation, course leaders described the means by which student opinion was passed to them regularly and they offered examples of where this had been acted upon. This ad hoc feedback was confirmed in meetings with students, who considered this, and other elements of their support from tutors, to be one of the best features of the College. Course leaders recognise, however, the need for regular committee meetings with student representatives. There are means by which students struggling with issues that affect their learning opportunities might find support and guidance. In addition to support from tutors and course leaders, the College has in place a network of advice and support teams offering pastoral, financial and careers advice, and help with accommodation. However, some students mentioned some variability in the opportunities provided for work placements and in the support given by the College in acquiring such placements. The team considers that it would be advisable for the College to review arrangements for securing placements for students, to ensure quality and equity across programmes that require work placements, particularly in the light of the expansion of FD and in the current economic climate.

25 Many students at Wigan and Leigh benefit from inbuilt progression routes. Many have started at level 2 or 3 and progressed into higher education as a result. Often these are students who would not progress into higher education due to previous educational experience or a reluctance to move away from home commitments into a university environment. The College has an excellent record of addressing widening participation through a variety of measures, including the extensive 'College in the Community' network, which is based mainly in wards that are targeted for widening access. As a member of the GMSA, the College is involved in projects designed to raise aspirations and encourage progression into higher education. The team regards this as good practice. For example, current Aimhigher projects involving local feeder schools from targeted wards offer a variety of schemes that seek to increase knowledge and awareness of higher education progression routes and career pathways.

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

26 Staff teaching on higher education programmes are given remission in the form of a 13 per cent weighting of hours, which the team considered to be good practice. Both programme leaders and lecturers confirm that this has allowed them to enhance their engagement with partner institutions and industry. Staff were able to offer various examples where they had gained access to academic and professional qualifications, paid for and supported by time allowances from the College. Several staff described their own progression within the College from teaching at level 3 to developing and eventually course leading higher education programmes. They were unanimous in their praise of the support and professional development offered by the College in preparing and conducting these processes and transitions.

**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?**

27 Physical learning resources are provided by a variety of means. Central resources, such as the library, are maintained through central systems. In addition to this, there is a capital bids system and individual budgets at curricular level. The sufficiency and accessibility of the College's resources is assessed (so far as the University is concerned) at initial validation of a course franchise and also through the interim review and periodic review processes of the University of Central Lancashire. Access to some central resources, that have an impact on the quality of learning opportunities, such as information technology provision in libraries, has been criticised in the past. Students still feel that this access could be improved in several ways, for example, by an extension of opening hours and the provision of a quiet study area. Students commented that computer access was still limited in time and that the system would close down at 1730 hours. The College is aware of both the issue of limited access to equipment and the need for quiet study areas. A plan to address both issues is in place and will be implemented by summer 2009. This involves the creation of two higher education quiet study areas that are equipped with appropriate computing resources. The team considers that this demonstrates engagement with real quality improvement based upon student feedback. However, it is considered to be desirable that the College reviews and monitors the developing situation in the light of any demands placed on resources by higher education developments in the future.

28 In a response to the meeting with students, the team asked specific questions about the HND Graphic Design. This programme receives high praise from students, employers and external examiners for the quality of teaching and the industrial experience of the programme leader. However, it has suffered from the inability to recruit more staff and has thus relied on the efforts of this single individual. The team advises that the College makes every effort to ensure that recruitment of appropriate staff takes place to protect this area of work.

**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?**

29 The College works closely with partner institutions in respect of public information. College staff are clear about the division of responsibility regarding the publication of marketing materials and guides for students. Where a university has a number of college partners delivering the same programme, the University places basic information about which programmes are offered where on its website. More specific detail can be added by the College. Universities provide the precise wording of academic regulations, which the College incorporates into its customised student programme and module guides, except in the case of the University of Central Lancashire PGCE/Cert Ed, where the University produces the course handbook that is used by all its partner institutions.

30 The universities determine and design marketing materials and where information is produced by the College it has to be approved by the awarding body. Within this arrangement the College can tailor materials to suit its own purposes and clientele.



The Marketing Group has responsibility for formatting in the house style and ensuring branding, logos and information are correct and align with university partner requirements as set out in the memorandum of agreement. In the case of the partnership with the University of Central Lancashire, the College is required also to submit all its promotional materials to the University in the Annual College Evaluation Report. University partners were satisfied that the College was carrying out its responsibilities for published material in line with the requirements of the Memoranda of Agreements.

31 In the case of Edexcel programmes, the College is responsible for all published information both in terms of promotional materials (course leaflets, higher education prospectus and website) and academic documents. For higher education programmes, the College produces an annual prospectus, course leaflets, programme specifications, and a College Handbook specifically for higher education students. Separate booklets and information sheets are provided for central College services such as student support. The Marketing Team take responsibility also for updating the UCAS Entry Profiles. With regard to information, the College is obliged to publish under the *Freedom of Information Act 2000*, good progress is being made on this using advice of the Information Commissioner's Office.

**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?**

32 The accuracy of programme specifications, course handbooks, assessment methods and university regulations, is established at the validation stage and promotional materials are submitted to the University prior to publication. The accuracy, completeness and consistency of information for all higher education programmes across all the major forms of publicity, that is, prospectus, course leaflets and website is maintained by the Marketing Team. Course leaflets are updated annually at the curricular planning stage and signed off by Central Marketing for prospectus production. The College has some new software, which gathers the curricular planning information and enables updated course leaflets to be printed out through the portal. Once the curricular plans are agreed with the teams, the information is locked and the website and leaflets are updated from there. Although this is in early stages of implementation, it will ensure that information for prospective students and curricular design is aligned and consistent. This will also ensure consistency of information across the website, leaflets and the higher education prospectus. The team judges this use of new software to be good practice. There was evidence to demonstrate that curriculum teams do check the veracity of programme information. Sign-off labels are used to show materials have been checked.

33 A comprehensive procedure explains validation process for new higher education programmes. The procedure clearly identifies the role of the Marketing Team and Quality Team in ensuring the timeliness and correctness of information to be published about new provision.

34 The College uses Student Perception Of Course surveys effectively to identify if students are satisfied with the written information they received before enrolling and their course information. Students reported that the information provided prior to their course had been correct and helpful. The Marketing Team holds a focus group each year to ascertain from students their views on all aspects of the prospectus and other publicity.

35 Since the Developmental engagement, the College has made a great deal of progress in implementing the recommendation to adopt a standard College format for all programme information and to communicate this comprehensively to students. The use of a standardised College format for programme specifications, course handbooks and module guides ensures that information is provided in a consistent manner and they are checked for accuracy, compliance and quality during the validation of the course self-evaluation.

36 The College operates an annual formal check on the public information. Progress on the updating of processes and procedures is monitored at the monthly higher education marketing meeting. There is a data controller in the College who validates the accuracy of data on the website and in published information generally. When a new College website was launched on 9 March 2009, a thorough testing of the accuracy and accessibility of information, as well as the technical issues, was carried out.

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

## **C Summary of findings from the Developmental engagement in assessment**

37 The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in May 2008. The lines of enquiry for the Developmental engagement agreed with the College in advance of the team's visit are set out below. The lines of enquiry reflect a broad range of assessment issues.

**Line of enquiry 1:** The consistency of approach across the College in the communication of assessment requirements to students.

**Line of enquiry 2:** The approach to staff development activities designed to ensure staff competency in all aspects of assessment.

**Line of enquiry 3:** The arrangements for internal verification and moderation across all courses.

38 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. These included: the effectiveness of the Higher Education Committee and the Practitioners Group, which are responsible for the discussion and dissemination of a broad range of assessment issues that appropriately inform the setting and promotion of standards; some good examples of staff development days, with the partner institutions looking at issues specifically relating to assessment and the setting, and verification of appropriate standards in higher education; good-quality academic and personal support, which ensures that students fully understand assessment requirements and associated criteria, and evidence of accurate and constructive pre-course assessment information offered to students to enable them to make appropriate choices.

39 The Developmental engagement team also identified a number of recommendations. There was one essential recommendation; that was to adopt, across all course teams, and communicate to students, the standard College assessment documentation and practices to ensure consistency and adherence to the *Code of practice*, published by QAA, and the Academic Infrastructure. Included in the advisable recommendations was one to 'ensure that all assessed work is returned promptly against published guidelines and schedules given to students, with timely and effective feedback. A number of desirable

recommendations were made, including one to take a more strategic approach to the management of its staff development activities, for example, by developing a training programme that ensures all higher education staff are fully aware of the requirements of the Academic Infrastructure.

## **D Foundation Degrees**

40 The College's Higher Education Strategy is a subset of the main College Strategic Plan. The plan for 2008-09 has been heavily influenced by the bidding process, which is currently underway for a University Centre under the HEFCE arrangements relating to the Strategic Development Fund. One outcome of the analysis that underpins the bid, is the development of new curricula to address regional strategies and priorities. The main programmes are new FDs in areas such as care services, art and design, and construction.

41 The College has decided not to replace HNC/Ds with FDs, however, nine new FDs have been proposed for delivery in 2009.

42 The following courses are in the process of being validated by the University of Central Lancashire:

FD Sport Coaching Rugby

FD Media Production and Technology

FD Spa Management

FD Computer Technology

FD Health and Social Care

FD Community Governance

FD Building Services and Sustainable Engineering.

43 In addition, the FD Graphic Design has recently been validated by the University of Salford and the FD Fashion and Clothing Technology was recently validated by Manchester Metropolitan University.

44 All of the elements of good practice noted below apply to the FDs currently provided by the College. Two of the recommendations noted as 'advisable' apply particularly to the FDs:

- to review and, where necessary, improve its links with employers across all relevant programme areas to ensure consistent employer engagement in the full promotion of work-based learning opportunities (paragraph 20)
- to review arrangements for securing placements for students to ensure quality and equity across programmes that require work placements particularly in the light of the expansion of FDs and in the current economic climate (paragraph 24).

## E Conclusions and summary of judgements

45 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Wigan and Leigh 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.

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

- the higher education infrastructure, which includes: a higher education strategy; specific higher education quality assurance and enhancement procedures; a separate structure of committees and groups for higher education and staff roles which are specific to the development and management of higher education provision (paragraph 9)
- the use of the 'traffic light' system in both the IQER development plan and higher education audit demonstrates good practice as a method for identifying the stage reached in the development and implementation of a College policy in accordance with the Academic Infrastructure (paragraph 12)
- the College's approach to, and promotion of, staff development to be good practice as it provides sound foundations for the promotion of appropriate standards (paragraph 16)
- the supportive and sympathetic approach to assisting staff teaching on higher education programmes (paragraph 19)
- the Higher Education Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy, which builds on good practice by enabling the College to articulate key learning and teaching values in order to enhance the quality of student learning (paragraph 22)
- the excellent record of addressing widening participation through a variety of measures, including the extensive 'College in the Community' network (paragraph 25)
- the remission in the form of a 13 per cent weighting of hours given to all staff teaching on higher education programmes (paragraph 26)
- the new software, which gathers the curricular planning information and enables updated course leaflets to be printed out through the portal (paragraph 32).

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

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

- to review, and where necessary, improve its links with employers across all relevant programme areas to ensure consistent employer engagement in the full promotion of work-based learning opportunities (paragraph 20)
- to review arrangements for securing placements for students ensure quality and equity across programmes that require work placements particularly in the light of the expansion of FDs and the current economic climate (paragraph 24)
- to make every effort to ensure that recruitment of appropriate staff takes place in graphic design (paragraph 28).

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

- to review and monitor the developing situation in the light of any demands placed on resources by higher education developments in the future (paragraph 27).

49 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, and other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes 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.

50 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, and other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes 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.

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

Wigan and Leigh College action plan relating to the Summative review: April 2009						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
In the course of the Summative review the team identified the following areas of <b>good practice</b> that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the higher education infrastructure, including: a higher education strategy; specific higher education quality assurance and enhancement procedures; a separate structure of committees and groups for higher education and staff roles which are specific to the development and management of higher education provision (paragraph 9)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete 09/12 Strategy by Jan 2010</li> <li>Evaluate and amend quality systems and associated committees for both FE and HE</li> <li>Advanced Practitioners re-designated as Quality Advisors with links to specific</li> </ul>	With Effect From (Wef) Sept 2009	Vice Principal Asst Principal Student Achievement and Asst Principal HE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revised QA systems and Quality Cycle</li> <li>Revised committees and groups for FE and HE</li> <li>Re-defined roles for Advanced Practitioners</li> </ul>	Asst. Principal Strategic Group and Strategic Management Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Termly Business Reviews</li> <li>College SAR</li> <li>HE Audit</li> </ul>

Wigan and Leigh College action plan relating to the Summative review: April 2009						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the use of the 'traffic light system' in both the IQER development plan and Higher Education Audit demonstrates good practice as a method for identifying the stage reached in the development and implementation of a College policy in accordance with the Academic Infrastructure (paragraph 12)</li> </ul>	<p>curriculum areas including HE.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Traffic light system and audit process to be applied to:</li> <li>● College Strategic Plan and HE Strategy</li> <li>● Quality aspects of FE provision</li> <li>● All external examiner reports</li> <li>● College Risk Assessment Strategy</li> </ul>	Wef Sept 09	Vice Principals and relevant Asst Principals	Traffic light and audit reports received by SMT in accordance with the Quality Cycle and Meetings Calendar	SMT, HE Committee APs Group Faculty Management Teams	Business Reviews Activity Reports to SMT and Pro-active Monitoring to SMT

Wigan and Leigh College action plan relating to the Summative review: April 2009						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the College's approach to, and promotion of, staff development to be good practice as it provides sound foundations for the promotion of appropriate standards (paragraph 16)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue cross-college staff development days (3 per annum)</li> <li>All staff to record 30 hours CPD on their Staff Information Record</li> <li>To emulate practice in HE, training plans to include more targeted staff development for FE tutors e.g. teaching at Level 3</li> <li>Asst Principals to lead on a key cross-college</li> </ul>	Completed by July 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff Development Officer</li> <li>Asst Principals</li> <li>Divisional Managers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff CPD Records</li> <li>Improve retention and achievement across all programmes</li> </ul>	SMT Asst Principals Group	Staff Development Annual Report College Self Assessment Report



Wigan and Leigh College action plan relating to the Summative review: April 2009						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the supportive and sympathetic approach to assisting staff teaching on higher education programmes (paragraph 19)</li> </ul>	<p>quality theme including HE observation of Teaching and Learning curriculum design student retention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure all staff undertake their review</li> <li>All training plans are identified and actioned</li> <li>New Quality Advisors offer appropriate support following audits</li> <li>HEFCE Good Practice</li> </ul>	Completed July 2010	All Managers and Staff Development Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outcomes of Teaching and Learning Observation</li> <li>Improved outcomes from audits</li> <li>Positive Course Review and Evaluation</li> <li>Positive Student Feedback</li> </ul>	HE Committee, Faculty Management Teams, SMT	<p>Course SERs</p> <p>Student Survey Results</p> <p>Business Reviews</p>

Wigan and Leigh College action plan relating to the Summative review: April 2009						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the Higher Education Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy, which builds on good practice by enabling the College to articulate key learning and teaching values so as to enhance the quality of student learning (paragraph 22)</li> </ul>	<p>Guide is utilised and implemented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Peer observations to be extended</li> <li>Continue audit of HE provision to ensure implementation of TLA Strategy</li> <li>Review HE TLA Strategy as part of QA procedures</li> <li>Develop and implement a TLA Strategy for FE programmes</li> </ul>	Completion July 2010	Asst. Principals and relevant Quality Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revised and completed TLA Strategies for HE and FE</li> </ul>	HE Committee, APs Group and SMT	College Self Assessment Report Observation of Teaching and Learning Grades

Wigan and Leigh College action plan relating to the Summative review: April 2009						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the excellent record of addressing widening participation through a variety of measures, including the extensive 'College in the Community' network (paragraph 25)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete Strategic Assessment for HEFCE</li> <li>Continue WP activities including Aim Higher; Projects; Flexible Curriculum</li> </ul>	30th June 2009 and thereafter Dec. 2009 for Strategic Assessments	Asst. Principal HE	Milestones identified in Strategic Assessment including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved internal progression</li> <li>Improved student retention</li> <li>Increased recruitment from WP target groups</li> </ul>	SMT	Annual Reports to OFFA and HEFCE

Wigan and Leigh College action plan relating to the Summative review: April 2009						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the remission in the form of a 13 per cent weighting of hours given to all staff teaching on higher education programmes (paragraph 26)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apply a more focused approach to class contact remission for scholarly activity and university links</li> <li>Record utilisation of remitted time as agreed</li> </ul>	Wef Sept. 2009	Asst. Principal HE and Divisional Managers	Tangible record of HE related activities.	HE Committee and SMT	Course SERs Business Reviews
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the new software, which gathers the curricular planning information and enables updated course leaflets to be printed through the portal (paragraph 32)</li> </ul>	Continue improvements in student information, guidance and advice through electronic and paper based systems	Completion by July 2010	College Marketing Manager and Divisional Managers	Improved student satisfaction with all course related information	Asst. Principals Group, SMT, Quality & Standards Board	Student Surveys Self Evaluation Reports Activity Reports

Wigan and Leigh College action plan relating to the Summative review: April 2009						
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<p>The team agreed a number of areas where the College should be <b>advised</b> to take action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● to review, and where necessary, improve its links with employers across all relevant programme areas to ensure consistent employer engagement in the full promotion of work-based learning opportunities (paragraph 20)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Implement Client Relationship Management system</li> <li>● Develop new Foundation Degrees in partnership with employers</li> <li>● Implement projects involving advanced modern apprentices with partners in the Mixed Economy Group</li> </ul>	<p>Completion by July 2010</p>	<p>Director of Enterprise and Partnerships College HE Manager and Divisional Managers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Co-ordinated links with key employers</li> <li>● Improved employer input to curriculum design and delivery</li> </ul>	<p>HE Committee, Faculty Management Teams and SMT</p>	<p>SERs Employer Satisfaction Surveys Business Reviews</p>

Wigan and Leigh College action plan relating to the Summative review: April 2009						
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Re-introduce employers forum</li> </ul>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● to review arrangements for securing placements for students to ensure quality and equity across programmes that require work placements particularly in the light of the expansion of FDs and in the current economic climate (paragraph 24)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Identify programmes requiring work placements</li> <li>● Arrange and implement work placement opportunities in partnership with awarding bodies and employers</li> </ul>	From Sept 2009	Course Leaders and Divisional Managers	Enhanced work placement numbers	HE Committee	SERs External Examiner Reports Student Destinations Business Reviews
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● to make every effort to ensure that recruitment of appropriate staff takes place in graphic design (paragraph 28)</li> </ul>	Application for new post - submitted	Sept. 2009	Head - Wigan School for the Arts	New appointment	SMT	Probationary Review

Wigan and Leigh College action plan relating to the Summative review: April 2009						
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
<p>The team agreed the following areas where it would be desired to take action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● to review and monitor the developing situation in the light of any demands placed on resources by higher education developments in the future (paragraph 27).</li> </ul>	<p>Two new HE rooms to be established at Pagefield and Parsons Walk</p>	<p>Autumn Term 2009</p>	<p>Learning Resources Manager</p>	<p>Completion of rooms</p>	<p>SMT</p>	<p>SERs Student Satisfaction Surveys</p>

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