Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

Wiltshire College

March 2011

SR 034

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 Wiltshire College carried out in March 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 matrix setting out awarding bodies' requirements, which promotes a clear and rigorous adherence to the requirements of the College's awarding body partners in respect of standards
- examples of induction and mentoring practices, which illustrate the College's determination to set and maintain clear and understandable common standards
- the role of the advanced practitioner in support of higher education staff
- the Annual Monitoring Report for Art and Design, which provides a self-critical evaluation leading to clear actions and improvement in the quality of learning
- examples of work-based learning in many programmes, together with the active involvement of employers, which promote the quality of learning and support the overall purposes of Foundation Degrees
- the comprehensive processes and facilities which lead to the effective promotion of high quality student support
- the College's processes for ensuring high quality resources
- the use of focus groups of existing higher education and level 3 students to provide comment on drafts of the next prospectus, resulting in appropriate and beneficial changes to its format and style.

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:

- monitor the programme management files more thoroughly to ensure better compliance with college quality assurance policies
- revise the template for handbooks, in consultation with learning support tutors and students, to ensure the most accessible fonts and formats are used to aid readability, and that proofreading is improved to cover document presentation and content.

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

- reflect on the terms of reference and reporting processes of the Quality Improvement Board and on the frequency and consistency of operation of its meetings
- ensure that the full potential of the Higher Education Management Group to promote a consistent and robust approach to the management of higher education is further explored
- reflect further on health and safety procedures and ensure that the needs and situations of higher education students are appropriately covered
- ensure that the particular challenges and methods of higher education teaching are better reflected in class observations and peer appraisal.

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 Wiltshire College (the College). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the College discharges its responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes which the College delivers on behalf of Bath Spa University, the University of Bath, Bournemouth University, Edexcel, Greenwich University, the Royal Agricultural College and the University of the West of England. The review was carried out by Mrs Sue Miller, Mrs Trudy Stiles, Mr Brian Whitehead (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 engagements in assessment and student support**.** A summary of findings from these Developmental engagements 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   Wiltshire College was formed, in 2000, from the merger of Trowbridge, Chippenham and Lackham Colleges. In January 2008, Salisbury College joined the group. The College is a mixed economy college serving the whole of the county community, providing education and training through every main funding stream. Turnover is approximately £43 million. In 2010-11, in addition to higher education students, there are around 4,200 16-18 year-old students, 5,000 19+ students, 900 apprentices and over 500 14-16 year-old students on vocational courses. The College has four main campuses at Trowbridge, Salisbury, Chippenham and Lackham (a land-based campus). Higher education is delivered at all campuses. Courses offered at each campus reflect the nature and location of that campus; for example, Chippenham has Centre of Vocational Excellence status for digital and broadcast media so the Digital Media Arts FdA and BA courses are based there. Salisbury has a longstanding reputation for photography, film and fashion; Lackham has land-based provision; Trowbridge is the county town, so this is where the BSc in Social Work, FDA in Early Childhood Studies and BA in Early Years are delivered. The College has a specialist education centre at Castle Combe motor racing circuit and the FDSc and BSc Motorsport Engineering courses are run there.

5   In 2010-11, there are 800 HEFCE-funded students studying a broad portfolio of courses. There are 465 (58 per cent) full-time students and 335 (42 per cent) part-time. This portfolio has changed significantly over the last three years in response to changing local demand. The College was able to grow its higher education student numbers from 2007-08 to 2010-11 from 750 to 825 enrolments through negotiation with its awarding body partners. This trend of growth has stabilised in 2010-11 as a result of changing external

circumstances. At the time of the review the following programmes were offered by the College on behalf of its awarding bodies:

Royal Agricultural College

BSc (Hons) Animal Science and Management (10 full-time equivalents (FTEs))
FD Animal Science and Management (35 FTEs)

University of Bath

FD Rural Environmental Management (7 FTEs)
FD Motorsport Engineering (41 FTEs)
BSc Motorsport Engineering top-up (11 FTEs)
FD Computing (36 FTEs)
BSc Computing top-up (not recruited in 2010-11)
FD Early Childhood Studies (44 FTEs)
BA Hons Early Years top-up (13 FTEs)
FD Digital Media Arts (13 FTEs)
BA Digital Media Arts top-up (8 FTEs)
BSc (Hons) Social Work (62 FTEs)

Bournemouth University

BA (Hons) Fashion and Textiles (years 2 and 3) (24 FTEs)
BA Photomedia (Film and TV/Photography pathways) top-up (23 FTEs)
BA Film and Cinematography (54 FTEs)
BA Photography (24 FTEs)

Greenwich University

Certificate in Education/Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (25 FTEs)

Bath Spa University

BA (Hons) Fashion and Textiles (year 1) (17 FTEs)
FD Education Studies for Teaching Assistants (16 FTEs)
FD Applied Art and Design (38 FTEs)
Certificate in Education (years 1 and 2) (30 FTEs)
FD Counselling (8 FTEs)

University of the West of England

FD Games Technology (8 FTEs)

Edexcel

HND Design for Print and Screen (7 FTEs)
HNC Business (43 FTEs)
HNC/D Electronic Engineering (19 FTEs)
HNC/D Mechanical Engineering (20 FTEs)

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

6   The College has partnerships with the Universities of Bath, Bath Spa, Bournemouth Greenwich, the West of England, the Royal Agricultural College and Edexcel. Partnership agreements are for franchised delivery of courses, where the students are funded by the awarding institution, and for validated provision, where the students are directly funded through the College's contract with HEFCE, with the award being made by the university partner.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

7   In order to recognise the importance of higher education to the College's mission, the Strategic Director for Higher Education was promoted to Assistant Principal for Higher Education and Development in 2009-10. The Assistant Principal works throughout the College structure with those who have a responsibility for higher education, ensuring that activities are coordinated and conducted in the best interests of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. The Higher Education Committee has been replaced in 2010-11 with the Higher Education Management Group. The Higher Education Management Group is composed of senior managers who have a responsibility for higher education. It has the same composition as the Quality and Curriculum Management Group chaired by the Vice-Principal which meets weekly. The Group will meet twice per term as a minimum, but as it is the same composition as the Quality and Curriculum Group it can meet and discuss issues on a weekly basis if required.

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. Each course has an elected course representative and these representatives were invited to collect the views of their peers. Course representatives at each campus then met and developed a statement about their experiences at that campus. Representatives from each campus then met to compose a single college document. This process was supported by the Head of Student Liaison and Enrichment. The resulting statement was comprehensive, clear and generally very positive and formed the basis of fruitful discussion at the subsequent meeting with students 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 management of the delivery of the higher education programmes is distributed across the College. The College has four directorates of curriculum, which are subdivided into 11 programme areas through which higher education is delivered. The Vice-Principal, Curriculum and Quality, and the Assistant Principal for Higher Education and Development oversee the delivery of higher education. The latter works closely with the directors of Curriculum, Customer Services, Quality, Information Services, Staff Development and each higher education programme manager.

10   Each programme has a Programme Management File containing all the information relating to the programme and to the cohort of students on the programme. These should contain the programme handbook; schemes of work; programme data; minutes of quality meetings; assessment records, including internal verification sampling and external examiner reports; students' and employers' feedback. The majority of the programme management files are maintained to a high standard with good quality information. However, there are occasional omissions and it is recommended as advisable that the College monitor the files more thoroughly to ensure better compliance with College quality assurance policies.

11   The College has clearly defined lines of reporting and areas of responsibility. A Quality Improvement Board has ongoing oversight of the management of each programme and is the first level of reporting. It meets five times per year and comprises the teaching team, chaired by the Programme Area Manager. In addition, the teaching team is required to maintain an updated programme action plan known as the Quality Improvement Plan. The team found inconsistencies in the minutes of the Quality Improvement Board meetings, both in the frequency of meetings and discussions of the external examiners' reports in the meetings. It is recommended as desirable that the College reflect on the terms of reference and reporting processes and whether value for money and optimum efficacy might be achieved by having fewer, but more consistently operated, meetings.

12   The Quality Improvement Board reports each term to the Quality Review Meeting, which is chaired by the Vice-Principal, Curriculum and Quality. The reports of the Quality Review Meeting then feed into the Higher Education Management Group, which comprises the College Principal, Vice-Principal and several directors, and is chaired by the Assistant Principal for Higher Education and Development. The Higher Education Management Group has ultimate responsibility for ensuring academic standards are maintained. The Higher Education Management Group reports to the College Leadership Group and the Senior Management Team, who in turn report to the Quality and Standards Committee of the Board of Governors. The team viewed the operation of the Higher Education Management Group as work in progress and recommend as desirable that the College ensure the full potential of this group to promote a consistent and robust approach to the management of higher education is enhanced.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

13   The college academic infrastructure and each higher education programme have been clearly and well developed with reference to the QAA Academic Infrastructure, including the FHEQ, subject benchmark statements and the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*.

14   In discussions with the team, staff were knowledgeable about the Academic Infrastructure and confirmed that they find it useful, especially the FHEQ. For example, the BA (Hons) Early Years team makes continual reference to the Academic Infrastructure in relation to reviewing the programme units, assessment, reading lists and employer requirements for work-based learning. The *Code of practice* is identified and key aspects are described in the programme handbooks.

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

15   The College has partnerships with seven awarding bodies, each with their own agreement. Although there is overlap between the terms of the agreements, the complexity of the arrangements makes it difficult for the relationships to be centrally managed.

The College has developed a matrix of responsibilities that clearly identifies the differing obligations with each awarding body and how the College meets these obligations. The team considers the matrix to be an example of good practice, as it promotes a clear and rigorous adherence to the requirements of the College's awarding body partners in respect of standards.

16   The immediate responsibility for managing each relationship lies with the programme leaders, who have very good relationships with the awarding bodies' link tutors, and the Assistant Principal for Higher Education and Development maintains an overview of the arrangements. The newly formed Higher Education Management Group will have responsibility for the overview, but as it is in its first year of operation there is no evidence of this to date. It also identified as good practice the central induction programme, during which students are made aware of the awarding bodies' requirements. Oversight of the standards of the provision is maintained through a series of quality assurance groups and reporting systems as described above. The team considers that these are on the whole working effectively, but there are some inconsistencies, identified above, which need to be addressed.

17   At the end of each academic year, each programme team completes an annual monitoring report, which serves two purposes. Within the College the reports feed into the programme area Self-Assessment Report, which then feeds into the College Self-Assessment Report. The annual monitoring reports are also used to report to the partner awarding bodies and, although these have different requirements, the College has designed their annual monitoring reports to mesh with awarding body requirements where possible. A double burden on programme leaders is avoided as the relevant awarding body's systems take priority.

18   Each awarding body's link tutors work closely with the programme leaders to provide good day-to-day management of the programmes. The Assistant Principal for Higher Education and Development checks each annual monitoring report before it is sent to the awarding body. At the beginning of the new academic year, the annual monitoring reports are returned to the College, and any issues or actions from these, external examiners or link tutors' reports are discussed at the Quality Improvement Board and included in the Programme Management Files and the Quality Improvement Plans.

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

19   All staff new to Wiltshire College have a formal induction programme. Staff new to higher education, or teaching on a new higher education programme, are supported by other team members. The team found that this worked effectively, with staff receiving support from other team members. The FD Early Childhood Studies team verifies and double marks all assessments for new staff, and their schemes of work are developed jointly during the first term; established staff on the BSc (Hons) Social Work spend time observing and being observed by the new member of staff; on the FdA Digital Media Arts new staff are provided with a teaching mentor and a subject mentor. The team regards these examples of induction and mentoring to be good practice as they illustrate the College's determination to set and maintain clear and understandable common standards.

20   In addition to this support from team members, the College has appointed an advanced practitioner with 40 per cent remission from teaching to support higher education staff. The role of this person is to observe higher education teachers and to promote high standards, and the team judged this to be good practice. Good practice is disseminated through the higher education team, which is made up of the Assistant Principal for Higher Education and Development, programme leaders, advanced practitioners for higher

education, the Advanced Tutor for Higher Education, Director of ILT, Library Manager, Higher Education Admissions Manager, and Director of Student Services. This team organises a staff development day at the end of each academic year, and over the past two years good practice has been identified from the QAA Developmental engagements, external examiners' and awarding body link tutors' reports, and requests from the staff. The Higher Education Management Group will also identify areas of good practice and concern from the minutes of the Quality Review meetings.

21   The College encourages staff to participate in staff development sessions organised and run by the awarding bodies. It also supports a number of staff to undertake research degrees and has recently introduced an informal group to consider how this experience is improving practice.

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?

22   The arrangements described in paragraphs 9-12 are also effective in supporting the College's management of the quality of learning opportunities. For example, the Higher Education Management Group meeting has identified that they review Bath and Bournemouth annual monitoring reports prior to receiving external examiner or link tutor reports and have agreed appropriate action to ensure that all external comments are monitored. They also identified the Art and Design Annual Monitoring Report as a model of good reflective practice that could be disseminated across the provision. The team concurs with this judgement, viewing the Art and Design Annual Monitoring Report as a particularly good example of how self-critical evaluation can lead to clear actions and improvement in the quality of learning.

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

23   Responsibility for the recruitment of students rests with the College, which has an applications and interview procedure managed centrally by the Higher Education Admissions team. Students spoke positively about their initial interview and the admissions process. The BA Photography students' induction included a photo shoot and a quiz to support their reading and use of the programme handbook.

24   All staff are approved by the awarding body. New staff are mentored by an experienced team member. All programmes have a programme leader, who undertakes the responsibilities required by the awarding body and College to effectively manage and monitor all aspects of the programme activities. All programmes are monitored annually and each awarding body reviews programmes periodically. All awarding bodies have expressed confidence in the quality of learning opportunities provided.

25   The Quality Improvement Board for the FdA Applied Art and Design identified a concern over the health and safety monitoring of work placements due to a conflict between Bath Spa University's recommended procedures and college guidelines, which are geared more to further education than higher education, and where a strict implementation of the latter could result in higher education students losing good placements. The team judges it to be desirable for the College to reflect further on these procedures and to ensure that the needs and situations of higher education students are appropriately covered.

26   The involvement of employers supports and enriches the work-based learning requirement of Foundation Degrees. Work-based/related learning is seen as important and integral to all programmes, with 'live briefs', placements, work-based assessment and observations being used. The team found excellent examples of work-based learning in many programmes and viewed these, together with the active involvement of employers, to be good practice as they promote the quality of learning and reflect the overall purposes of Foundation Degrees well. FD Applied Art and Design students undertake block placements, often in London studios, and exhibit their work at the London student fashion week. FD Computing and Games Technology students are developing smart computer games for the military for training purposes in a move from expensive industry simulations. These students will be demonstrating their project to the military, alongside big professional companies, in a Capability Demonstration. This is expected to be a continuing partnership.

27   Employers providing work-based learning and placements are enthusiastic regarding the quality and commitment of the FdSc Computing students placed with them. The students have produced systems to industrial standards. One employer values the partnership with the College to such an extent that he is moving his business to be close enough to involve more students with a view to ultimately employing more of them. An example of constructive employer input into the design and content of a programme is in Digital Media Arts, where the College implemented a suggestion to start the programme with a boot camp, with students using cameras to gain experience of a shoot.

28   Students have a variety of ways in which they feed back their opinions. They confirm that the good relationships they have with their personal tutors due to relatively small class sizes and regular tutorial time means that they can present issues informally as and when they occur. In addition, class representatives are able to approach the tutor on behalf of the class. Students participate in the National Student Survey. The College has just begun using a central survey of all higher education students. The awarding bodies all have a formal process for meeting with students or student representatives. These meetings are designed to support students to express their opinions constructively.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

29   The influence of the Academic Infrastructure has been detailed in paragraphs 13 and 14. In the delivery of the higher education programmes the team is satisfied that the programme teams take account of the Academic Infrastructure and are endeavouring to follow the guidance provided. The staff reported that training on the *Code of practice* has increased their awareness of diversity, learning disabilities and the inclusion of programme specifications in handbooks. Staff are effectively kept up to date through team meetings and higher education staff development days. Staff new to higher education are mentored, usually by the programme leader.

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

30   College policy on class observation ensures that all staff have a graded observation annually for quality improvement and evaluation purposes. However, although observers of

higher education sessions receive additional support from the Higher Education Advanced Practitioner, the observation criteria are not differentiated from those for further education. Additionally, staff may not be observed in a higher education situation. The team recommend as desirable that the College ensure that the particular challenges and methods of higher education teaching should be better reflected in class observations.

31   Peer observation of teaching is a collaborative and reciprocal process whereby one peer observes another's teaching and provides supportive and constructive feedback for development purposes. Staff are clearly committed to the process and confirm that it facilitates sharing of good teaching practice and that they gain fresh perspectives on teaching. There is normally a pre-observation meeting and a post-observation meeting for discussion and reflection.

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

32   Students value the strong personal support received from programme teams, beginning with their first contact with the College, as defined in the higher education admissions process. During induction, all students are introduced to the various forms of support available to them. Effective systems support academic progress, pastoral requirements and personal development. These include regular tutorials with their designated tutor, full induction, and a strong Student Support and Engagement directorate. The College is Matrix accredited. There are also effective links with university partners relating to student support.

33   Each team has a programme leader and tutor with responsibilities for overseeing and supporting the learning experience respectively. The Advanced Tutor for Higher Education is developing and testing some tutorial resources to further support the students and to provide shared and consistent materials. All full-time programmes have regular group tutorials that are planned around the students' current requirements. The college-developed collection of career information called My Career Online is an excellent resource for all students.

34   The college meeting structure for course management includes formal discussion on student progress. If there are concerns, the tutor or programme leader intervenes to support the student through the use of a Learner Review Action Plan. College additional learning support services are available for higher education students. All students are assessed for Additional Learning Support at the start of the year, but may also be referred during the year if needs become apparent. Taken together, the team considers all of these processes and facilities to be good practice in their comprehensive and effective promotion of excellent student support.

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

35   The arrangements described in paragraphs 19-21 are also effective in maintaining and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities. Staff attend awarding body staff development sessions and the College supports a number of staff to undertake research degrees, including an MSc in Anthrozoology, a PhD in the History of Art and an MSc in Early Childhood Studies. The College has recently introduced an informal group of those undertaking research degrees to consider how the experience is improving practice. The group is chaired by the Principal, who is currently undertaking a professional education doctorate, as is the Vice-Principal, Curriculum and Quality.

36   The universities' link tutors, whose reports are incorporated into the annual monitoring process, advise the teams where improvements can be made, for example

developing evaluative writing. An annual higher education development day is used to brief all staff who deliver or support higher education programmes on such issues as the external and internal higher education environment and scholarly activity. The advanced practitioner has described how she will support the development of teaching and learning and encourage the sharing of good practice. The latter has included the use of the College's virtual learning environment, eStudy, to enhance student learning within Early Years programmes and the support of student work placements in the BSc (Hons) Social Work. All academic staff are members of the Institute for Learning, for which they carry out and record 30 hours of continuing professional development. A checklist is available to support them, but they are not given additional remission for the scholarly activity required for higher education delivery. The recording of scholarly activity is under development and is as yet incomplete.

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?

37   Resourcing requests are made by course teams within an effective central bidding system. The students generally agree that the library resources and IT facilities are good. Collaboration with the awarding bodies provides for effective off-campus electronic support. Each campus has a learning resources centre with appropriate resources, and electronic resources are being built up. The Trowbridge Learning Resources Centre includes a discreet higher education area with computers and a quiet study or conference room. Good links with partner universities and good collaboration between campus facilities ensure that resources are available and accessible to all higher education students.

38   The students are enthusiastic about how the College virtual learning environment supports their learning. In particular, the part-time FD Early Childhood Studies and BA (Hons) Early Years use eStudy very effectively for discussion forums. A range of resources are deployed through eStudy in addition to programme team teaching and assessment material.

39   The College has processes in place which ensure that excellent specialist accommodation supports the quality of learning opportunities The resources of the Centre of Vocational Excellence in digital and broadcast media are industry-standard. Students on digital media arts programmes participate in developing products that are commercially viable, so they are able to pitch for commercial contracts and hence develop client communication skills. Motorsport engineering students benefit from industry-standard facilities at Castle Coombe. Motorsport students unanimously confirmed the excellence of resources and the race track is an exceptional bonus, giving them regular opportunities for working with professional teams. Land-based resources at Lackham are also of excellent quality. The College's processes for ensuring high quality resources represent good practice.

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

Core theme 3: Public information

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

40   The College lists a range of published material in the self-evaluation, including a prospectus, specific course information, general information on college facilities and support for higher education students, and a range of handbooks. Extensive use is made of the website, with all the documents listed readily available and a facility to download 'printer friendly' copies. The dedicated higher education section of the website is easy to navigate and provides generic information on support services, including childcare, accommodation and finance. Good use is made on the website of hyperlinks to provide users with easy access to further information and to the awarding body websites. Information is also published on the UCAS site, with good links back to the Wiltshire website for further details.

41   Students receive a general handbook from the College detailing facilities, support services, policies and procedures. In addition to this, students receive similar general handbooks from the university partners. Detailed course handbooks and module guides are provided for all courses, and discussed and explained during induction.

42   Effective, extensive use is made of the virtual learning environment, eStudy, to provide additional information, copies of handbooks, course-specific information and news, in addition to the learning materials specific to student awards. Subject staff are supported and trained to use the virtual learning environment and manage the content and quality of materials. Students confirmed that the remote access to materials and information is useful and that they make extensive use of this. In particular, part-time students support their learning, and share information, through the use of online discussion and forum facilities.

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?

43   The college communications strategy, along with marketing plans and a marketing calendar, supports the processes of publication. Pre-publication collation and checking of information is extensive, including by programme teams and curriculum managers, university partners, the marketing team and web manager. Focus groups of existing higher education and level 3 students have been used to provide comment on drafts of the next prospectus, and this has resulted in appropriate and beneficial changes to its format and style. The team regards this use of consumer evaluation to be good practice

44   The College works closely with the different partners and their marketing teams to ensure that all information pertaining to that partner and their awards is agreed and signed off before publication. Course information sheets conform to a standard template and are produced using an in-house system called 'web-edit'. Course teams provide the basic information, which is proofread and edited by the marketing team to ensure consistency and completeness. Students confirmed that the information sheets provide an accurate overview of their programmes.

45   Where university partners are in agreement, course handbooks are produced to an agreed college template, which ensures full information is provided to students. Application of this template is variable, so that inconsistencies remain in the use of accessible fonts and formatting, and in one case some phrases designed to support the production of the handbook have been left in the text and may be misleading to students. The team recommends as advisable that, in consultation with learning support tutors and students,

the template be revised to ensure the most accessible fonts and formats are used to aid readability, and that proofreading be improved to cover document presentation and content.

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

46   The Developmental engagement in assessment was conducted in December 2008. The lines of enquiry were as follows:

Line of enquiry 1: To what extent does published assessment guidance support the maintenance of academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience?

Line of enquiry 2: How does the College manage the assessment of work-based learning in the support of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities?

Line of enquiry 3: How does the College manage internal and external moderation in support of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities?

47   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 central induction programme, during which students are made aware of assessment requirements and the awarding bodies' requirements; the robust internal and external moderation procedures; the use of the virtual learning environment on the Early Years programme to foster discussion and provide feedback on assessment; and the programme handbooks that are based on a standard template using common text from the College Code of Practice on Assessment.

48   The Developmental engagement team also reported a number of recommendations. These included two areas where it was advisable for the College to take action: to ensure that the published information on the timing for the return of feedback is made clearer to students and that feedback is given in accordance with this published information in order to enhance learning opportunities, and to publish a College policy on extenuating circumstances which reflects the needs of the awarding bodies but ensures consistency of student experience. The Developmental engagement team also reported that it would be desirable for the College to take action on a number of areas, including: reviewing all work-based activities that the students undertake in the Motorsport Engineering programme and, where appropriate, relating them more closely to the assessment regime; considering the provision of further staff development activities for assessment and moderation training; and reviewing external examiner reports with a view to identifying and disseminating good practice in the use of these reports and to ensure that college-wide issues are identified.

Summary of findings from the Developmental engagement in student support

49   A second Developmental engagement, in student support, took place in March 2010, with the following lines of enquiry:

Line of enquiry 1: How does the College support student learning, including work-based learning, through the tutorial process in the support of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities?

Line of enquiry 2: How does the College support students, through the provision of appropriate resources, to enable them to take advantage of the learning opportunities offered?

Line of enquiry 3: How does the College make the support mechanisms it offers clear and accessible to students and applicants through published information, including pre-enrolment and induction materials?

50   The Developmental engagement team identified a number of areas of good practice for dissemination in the context of the College's management of student support. These included the high levels and quality of personal support given by staff that facilitate the achievement of high standards and good retention levels; the extensive and detailed practice handbooks provided to students on the BSc (Hons) Social Work and the well-designed Student Portfolios for the work-based learning module on the FD Animal Science and Management, which set out clear support mechanisms for students on placement; and the arrangements for monitoring student support and the use of the Learner at Risk Tracker, which provide a rigorous framework for ensuring that students at risk are identified and supported and for informing the College of emerging issues in the management of its student support services.

51   The Developmental engagement team also reported a number of recommendations. These included three areas where it was advisable for the College to take action: agree a set of expectations for both personal and group tutorials, which should apply equally to full and part-time students; update and improve the clarity of the information about potential extra costs that students may incur, and monitor the development of the new policy on central admissions and evaluate its success and impact on student knowledge of courses. The Developmental engagement team also reported that it would be desirable for the College to take action in a number of areas, including further embedding the work-based learning expectations guidelines across all programmes that include work-based learning elements; ensuring that all staff use eStudy to provide resources to students; and promoting more actively the 'My Career Online' resource throughout the College.

D   Foundation Degrees

52   The College has made a major investment in the development of Foundation Degrees, with a wide range of subject and professional offerings in animal science and management, motorsport engineering, computing, early childhood studies, digital media arts applied art and design, and games technology.

53   All the good practice and recommendations cited below apply equally to the Foundation Degree programmes.

E   Conclusions and summary of judgements

54   The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Wiltshire 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.

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

- the matrix setting out awarding bodies' requirements, which promotes a clear and rigorous adherence to the requirements of the College's awarding body partners in respect of standards (paragraph 15)
- examples of induction and mentoring practices, which illustrate the College's determination to set and maintain clear and understandable common standards (paragraph 19)
- the role of the advanced practitioner in support of higher education staff (paragraph 20)
- the Annual Monitoring Report for Art and Design, which provides a self-critical evaluation leading to clear actions and improvement in the quality of learning (paragraph 22)
- examples of work-based learning in many programmes, together with the active involvement of employers, which promote the quality of learning and support the overall purposes of Foundation Degrees (paragraph 26)
- the comprehensive processes and facilities which lead to the effective promotion of high quality student support (paragraph 34)
- the College's processes for ensuring high quality resources (paragraph 39)
- the use of focus groups of existing higher education and level 3 students to provide comment on drafts of the next prospectus, resulting in appropriate and beneficial changes to its format and style (paragraph 43).

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

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

- monitor the programme management files more thoroughly to ensure better compliance with college quality assurance policies (paragraph 10)
- revise the template for handbooks, in consultation with learning support tutors and students, to ensure the most accessible fonts and formats are used to aid readability, and that proofreading is improved to cover document presentation and content (paragraph 45).

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

- reflect on the terms of reference and reporting processes of the Quality Improvement Board and on the frequency and consistency of operation of its meetings (paragraph 11)
- ensure that the full potential of the Higher Education Management Group to promote a consistent and robust approach to the management of higher education is further explored (paragraph 12)
- reflect further on health and safety procedures and ensure that the needs and situations of higher education students are appropriately covered (paragraph 25)
- ensure that the particular challenges and methods of higher education teaching are better reflected in class observations and peer appraisal (paragraph 30).

59	Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, and other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that it has **confidence** that, in the context of this Summative review, the College discharges its responsibilities effectively, as set out in the relevant partnership agreement for the management of the standards of the awards of its awarding bodies.

60   Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, and other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that it has **confidence** that, in the context of this Summative review, the College discharges its responsibilities effectively, as set out in the relevant partnership agreement for the management of the quality of learning opportunities to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

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

Wiltshire College action plan relating to the Summative review: March 2011						
Good practice	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
In the course of the Summative review the team identified the following areas of **good practice** that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
• the matrix setting out awarding bodies' requirements, which promotes a clear and rigorous adherence to the requirements of the College's awarding body partners in respect of standards (paragraph 15)	Ensure that the matrix is kept up to date as awarding body (AB) expectations of the College change over time	Annually revised	Assistant Principal, Higher Education	Understanding of College's AB requirements continues to result in minimum issues between College and ABs	Higher Education Management Group	Annual monitoring reports, Report to Higher Education Management Group
• examples of induction and mentoring, which illustrate the College's determination to set and maintain clear and understandable common standards (paragraph 19)	Continue to ensure that new staff benefit from the induction and (particularly) the mentoring given by existing experienced higher education team members.	Immediately on appointment of any staff new to higher education	Assistant Principal, Higher Education, Staff Development Manager	Improved quality of student learning experience; good rates of high quality lesson observations	Higher Education Management Group	Student focus groups by individual programme; Report to Higher Education Management Group and Quality and Curriculum Management Group

• the role of the advanced practitioner in support of higher education staff (paragraph 20)	Higher Education Advanced Practitioner to work with teachers new to higher education, to work with curriculum managers less experienced in higher education and to report on good practice found in higher education Observations at Higher Education Team Conference	July 2011	Director of Quality (to whom advanced practitioners report), Higher Education Advanced Practitioner	Improved quality of student learning experience; good rates of high-quality lesson observations	Higher Education Management Group	Student focus groups by individual programme; Report to Higher Education Management Group and Quality and Curriculum Management Group
• the Annual Monitoring Report for Art and Design, which provides a self-critical evaluation leading to clear actions and improvement in the quality of learning (paragraph 22)	FD Applied Art and Design Programme Leader to offer support to other Bath Spa programme leaders	September 2011	Applied Art and Design Programme Leader, Bath Spa programme leaders, Director of Quality	Improved evaluation of programmes leading to continuous improvement	Higher Education Management Group	Bath Spa annual monitoring reports
• examples of work-based learning in many programmes, together with the active involvement of employers, which promote the quality of learning	Higher Education Team conference to have a Work-Based Learning Good Practice Sharing session	July 2011	Programme leaders, Staff Development Manager, Assistant Principal, Higher Education	Further develop excellent work-based learning practice throughout the College	Higher Education Management Group	Annual monitoring reports for individual programmes where evaluation on work-based learning is expected; student focus groups

and support the overall purposes of Foundation Degrees (paragraph 26)						
• the comprehensive processes and facilities which lead to the effective promotion of high quality student support (paragraph 34)	Ensure that this aspect of the College's work is continued and publicised widely	Annually	Assistant Principal, Higher Education, Director Customer Services	Good responses from students on quality of support and the accuracy of public information to describe the support	Higher Education Management Group	Student focus groups by individual programme; Report to Higher Education Management Group and Quality and Curriculum Management Group
• the College's processes for ensuring high quality resources (paragraph 39)	Ensure that the quality of the resources available to higher education students continues to improve and the College publicises the quality of the resources more widely	Annually	Assistant Principal, Higher Education, Director Customer Services	Good responses from students on quality of support and the accuracy of public information to describe the resources	Higher Education Management Group	Student focus groups by individual programme; Report to Higher Education Management Group and Quality and Curriculum Management Group
• the use of focus groups of existing higher education and level 3 students to provide comment on drafts of the next prospectus,	To continue with using students in helping to develop/approve marketing literature (including web-based material)	Annually	Director of Customer Services	Good responses from students about how the quality of public information helped them make informed decisions	Higher Education Management Group	Student focus groups by individual programme; Report to Higher Education Management Group and Quality

resulting in appropriate and beneficial changes to its format and style (paragraph 43).						and Curriculum Management Group
Advisable	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
The team considers that it is **advisable** for the College to:						
• monitor the programme management files more thoroughly to ensure better compliance with college quality assurance policies (paragraph 10)	Programme management files to be audited twice per year as part of routine Quality Audit	December and May annually	Director of Quality	Compliance with College systems improved to the benefit of the student experience	Higher Education Management Group and Quality and Curriculum Group	Report to Higher Education Management Group and Quality and Curriculum Management Group
• revise the template for handbooks, in consultation with learning support tutors and students, to ensure the most accessible fonts and formats are used to aid readability, and that proofreading is improved to cover document presentation and	Handbook template to be reviewed for accessibility and readability All handbooks to be reviewed by Curriculum Manager prior to release	July 2011	Director of ILT	Improved quality of presentation of information	Higher Education Management Group	Student focus groups by individual programme; Report to Higher Education Management Group and Quality and Curriculum Management Group

content (paragraph 45).						
Desirable	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
The team considers that it is **desirable** for the College to:						
• reflect on the terms of reference and reporting processes of the Quality Improvement Board and on the frequency and consistency of operation of its meetings (paragraph 11)	Review to be carried out at year end	July 2011	Director of Quality	College procedures clearly articulate with AB procedures with no unnecessary duplication of effort	Higher Education Management Group	Report to Higher Education Management Group and Quality and Curriculum Management Group
• ensure that the full potential of the Higher Education Management Group to promote a consistent and robust approach to the management of higher education is further explored (paragraph 12)	Review to be carried out at year end	July 2011	Assistant Principal, Higher Education and Director of Quality	Higher Education Management Group becomes more effective in its role	Higher Education Management Group and Quality and Curriculum Management Group	Report to Higher Education Management Group and Quality and Curriculum Management Group
• reflect further on health and safety procedures and ensure that the	New system has already been established Higher education	May 2011	Health and Safety Manager and programme leaders	Higher education students are able to access placements	Higher Education Management Group	Report from Health and Safety Manager to Higher Education

needs and situations of higher education students are appropriately covered (paragraph 25)	students are trained to conduct their own risk assessments on placements if necessary			without unnecessary procedural delay		Management Group
• ensure that the particular challenges and methods of higher education teaching are better reflected in class observations and peer appraisal (paragraph 30).	Class observation process and protocols to be reviewed at the year end	July 2011	Director of Quality, Assistant Principal, Higher Education, Human Resources Manager	Observation of teaching practice process is flexible enough to recognise the different strengths and weaknesses of a higher education teaching performance	Higher Education Management Group Quality and Curriculum Group	Lesson observation database, report to Higher Education Management Group