QAA

Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

June 2007

Doncaster College

SR04/2008

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 the 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 Doncaster College carried out in June 2007

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 across higher education at the College:

- the use of an independent external consultant has helped to provide a valuable, open and transparent student written submission

- there is a very close and productive relationship with the University of Hull that has significant benefits in terms of both quality assurance and enhancement

- the annual monitoring procedures are generally robust and effective

- the scope of staff development opportunities is impressive

- on the MA Digital Performance, students benefit from the wide range of research and scholarly activity, including that of the wider subject community

- there is a strong relationship between staff and students that effectively supports learning

- there are good opportunities for students to progress and gain substantial value from the supportive College environment

- students on the MA Digital Performance value the support they receive from staff and the programme materials given to them

- procedures for checking the accuracy of publicly available information are effective

- the development of an internet strategy for the College is effective, supported by training of administrators at faculty and departmental level.

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:

- embed fully and monitor the effectiveness of the new Higher Education Committee structure.

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

- ensure that the financial arrangements and quality procedures are implemented in a timely manner in new partnership situations

- move as quickly as possible to the full implementation of its staff development policies

- develop further the involvement of students on strategic committees, including appropriate training and support

- to further develop the system for generating and using data relevant to higher education provision

- to ensure that all student handbooks match the standard of the best in supporting learning

- pursue its stated aims of enhancing employer engagement and enterprise activity, which has the potential to benefit students

- ensure that the number of option modules publicly advertised reflects a reasonable expectation of what will actually be available.

In January 2006, the Academic review of Dance, Drama and Performance Arts and Music review 2006, at the College resulted in the judgements of limited confidence for academic standards and of failing for the quality of Teaching and Learning, approved for Student Progression and approved for Learning Resources. The College took the opportunity to demonstrate how it had responded to the reviewers' conclusions in the Academic review report SR34/2005 www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/reports/subjectLevel/sr034_05.pdf in this IQER review instead of through an Academic re-review. The team concludes that the College has responded effectively to the conclusions of the Academic review.

A Introduction and context

1   This report presents the findings of the Summative review conducted at Doncaster College (the College). The purpose of the review was to provide public information on how the College discharges its responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students for programmes funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) it delivers on behalf of Edexcel, the University of Hull and the University of Wales. The review was carried out by Mr David Gardiner, Mr Gary Hargreaves, Dr Mark Mabey (reviewers) and Dr Peter Steer (coordinator).

2   The Summative review team (the team) conducted the review in negotiation with the College and in accordance with *The handbook for a pilot study of an integrated quality and enhancement review*, published by QAA. Evidence in support of the Summative review included analysis in the self-valuation, documentation supplied by the College, meetings with staff, including representatives of the University of Hull and the University of Wales, students, QAA review reports and the Ofsted/ALI inspection reports. In particular, the team drew on the findings and recommendations of the Developmental engagements in assessment and human resources. A summary of findings from the Developmental engagements in assessment and human resources 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 the higher education sector, with particular reference to the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (*Code of practice*), subject and award benchmarks, *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 the new Foundation Degree (FD) awards, Section D of this report summarises details of the FD programmes delivered at the College.

4   In January 2006, the QAA Academic review of Dance, Drama and Performance Arts and Music at the College resulted in the judgements of limited confidence for academic standards and of failing for the quality of teaching and learning, approved for Student Progression and approved for Learning Resources. The College took the opportunity to demonstrate how it had responded to the reviewers' conclusions in the Academic review report which can be accessed at www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/reports/subjectLevel/ sr034_05.pdf in this IQER review instead of through an Academic re-review. A summary of the progress made in response to the Academic review report can be found at section E of this report.

5   Doncaster College is a large general further education college in the Metropolitan Borough of Doncaster. It has two main sites but also offers a wide range of provision in other venues. The College is the major provider of post-school education for the 290,000 inhabitants of Doncaster and is a regional and national centre for a number of specialist courses. The College offers programmes from foundation level 0 to postgraduate level 7. In 2005-06, the College enrolled 800 full-time equivalent learners on higher education programmes, and in 2006-07 this figure has risen to 842 full-time equivalent learners, with approximately 44 per cent of total enrolments being by part-time students (representing 257 full-time equivalent learners). The College is divided into two faculties, five academic departments and a stand-alone business school supported by a number of additional service departments.

6   In 2004, one of the two main sites of the College, the High Melton Campus, six miles to the west of the city centre, was designated as a University centre by the College's main validating partner, the University of Hull. The majority of higher education is delivered at the University Centre but with a substantial amount at the newly opened 'Hub' building in Doncaster.

7   In the QAA Academic review of Dance, Drama and Performance Arts and Music in 2006, there was confidence in academic standards, and the quality of the learning opportunities was approved for most of the provision. However, the MA in Digital Performance received limited confidence in its academic standards and was judged to be failing for teaching and learning. Difficulties with staffing on the programme were partly the cause for these judgements, mainly in terms of the partial failure to implement agreed procedures. The Academic review report indicates that an action plan to deal with this situation was in the early stages of implementation. However, the report also notes that staffing levels in the subject area generally are generous.

8   Edexcel programmes and validated programmes running in the College fall into the following curriculum areas: applied social science, business and management, computing, construction, creative arts, engineering, education, hospitality tourism and leisure, humanities and performing arts. The majority of the higher education is contained within the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Social Science. There are also a number of programmes which are delivered in academic departments which are predominantly concerned with further education provision. The HEFCE-funded higher education provision at the time of the review, together with the awarding bodies, comprised the following programmes.

Edexcel

- HND Music Production

- HNC/D Multimedia

- HNC/D Hospitality Management

- HNC/D Travel and Tourism Management

- HNC/D Computing

- HNC Business and Management

- HNC/D Advanced Practice Working with Children and Families

- HNC/D Building Services Engineering

- HNC/D Electrical and Electronic Engineering

- HNC/D Mechanical and Production Engineering

- HND Electronic Engineering and Computing Technology

- HNC/D Sport and Exercise Science

- HND Public Service

University of Hull

- BA (Hons) Theatre Practice with Digital Performance
- BA (Hons) Performing Arts with Digital Media
- BA (Hons) Applied New Music
- MA Digital Performance
- BA (Hons) Creative Music Technology
- BA (Hons) Top-Up Art and Design
- BA (Hons) Combined Design
- BA (Hons) Visual Communication
- BA (Hons) Fine Arts and Crafts
- FdA Animation and Games Art
- BA (Hons) Top-up Illustration and Animation
- BSc (Hons) Business Computing (one-year top-up)
- BA (Hons) Business Management
- BA (Hons) Business and Management
- BA (Hons) Business and Managerial Accounting
- MSc Strategic Personnel and Development
- MA Marketing Management
- PGCE/CertEd Post Compulsory Education
- FdA Pre-16 Learning and Teaching Support
- BA (Hons) Learning and Development (top-up)
- BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies (top-up)
- MA Education Studies
- BA (Hons) Law and Criminology
- BA (Hons) Applied Social Science
- BA (Hons) English
- BA (Hons) Scriptwriting
- BA (Hons) English with Scriptwriting
- BA (Hons) Combined Studies
- BSc (Hons) Integrated Technology
- BA (Hons) Sports Studies (top up)

- University Advanced Diploma Introduction to Couples Counselling

- MA/PgDip Relationship Therapy.

University of Wales

- MBA Business Administration (+ Postgraduate Certificate (PgCert)/Diploma (PGDip)).

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

9   The College works with a small number of awarding bodies, the two main ones being Edexcel for Higher National programmes and the University of Hull. Additionally, there exist a very small number of students who are completing a programme with Sheffield Hallam University. This relationship is terminated from July 2007 and the provision is not part of this IQER pilot. Also, the College has recently entered into a validating relationship with the University of Wales for an MBA programme involving HEFCE numbers. In addition, for this year, the College has allowed Dearne Valley College to use some of its HEFCE numbers for students on an Edexcel HND programme in Public Services. Dearne Valley College is a fully validated Edexcel centre.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

10 In September 2006, the College opened an extensive new facility in Doncaster city centre called the 'Hub' which houses approximately 20 per cent of the higher education provision, the rest studying at the High Melton Campus. Numbers of higher education students at the College are rising, with an approximately 5 per cent increase between 2005-06 and 2006-07.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

11 Students from the higher education provision at the College were invited to present a written submission to the team. The College provided this for the Summative review at the same time as the self-evaluation. The student written submission was drafted following a focus group session with a sample of higher education students, both full and part-time. The process was led by an independent external consultant in order to gauge student views and experiences. It resulted in a valuable, open and transparent insight into the views of students. The draft was circulated among the same group of students for comments and feedback. However, due to time constraints, the group was unable to circulate the draft amongst the wider student population before submission to QAA. Students met by the team during the Summative review visit provided a range of useful evidence of their learning experience that helpfully supported the team's conclusions.

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?

12 In 2005, the College undertook a management restructure to form two faculties: Social Sciences and Arts. The Doncaster Business School sits outside the structure and reports to the Assistant Principal (Development). The two deans of faculty report to the Director of

Higher Education, who in turn reports to the Vice Principal (Education and Skills). The heads of department report to the Assistant Principal (Curriculum) who also reports to the Vice Principal (Education and Skills). The Director of Higher Education also works with heads of departments and higher education coordinators within the departments and the Business School, although there is no line of managerial responsibility. While the main features of the structure were set in 2005, details have continued to evolve. The management structure has overseen the action plans with respect to the two Developmental engagements. The outcomes have included an effective response to the two essential recommendations in the Developmental engagement on assessment, as well as a comprehensive and fully implemented plan for the MA Digital Performance.

13 The overall responsibility for quality of provision rests with the governors and is monitored through the governors' quality and curriculum meetings. The senior quality committee at College level is the Quality Management Group, which meets on a weekly or two-weekly cycle, dependent on business need. This Group is central to the management of the quality of all the provision and it is a strength of the committee structure that both further and higher education issues are considered at the same meeting, bringing a synergy and an understanding of the issues to staff working in both areas.

14 The College, in 2005-06, undertook a critical review of its structures for the maintenance of standards and the assurance of quality for higher education programmes. This was in order to bring together the management of quality and standards of both the Edexcel and University-validated strands of the College higher education provision. The new higher education committee structure that has resulted from the review has been implemented in the current year and is still in the process of becoming embedded. The senior higher education committee is the Higher Education Quality and Standards Committee. The subcommittees, comprising academic approvals, external examiners, student progress and the HE Administration Group, are chaired by the Director of Higher Education or appropriate senior managers. It is advisable that the new structure be embedded as soon as possible and that its effectiveness be monitored.

15 College moderation processes meet the requirements of the awarding bodies and help maintain academic standards. External examiner reports express confidence in the academic standards of Doncaster programmes, including the MA Digital Performance, for 2006-07 and the FDs. In some cases, the reports provide explicit and detailed comment supporting the rigour of the moderation processes. Hence, the principles of moderation outlined in College documentation are used properly to meet the needs of the awarding body and maintain and improve academic standards.

16 External examiners from across the programme areas commend the quality and usefulness of the feedback on assessed work given to students. Further positive comment relating to the quality of feedback is provided in examination board minutes, focus group minutes and student module evaluations. However, in the past there have been limited opportunities for the sharing of practice between programme areas.

17 For this academic year, the College has allowed Dearne Valley College to use, recruit to and run an HND programme in Public Services, using some of its HEFCE numbers. Dearne Valley College is a fully validated Edexcel centre. A quality review undertaken in March 2007 is being monitored and reviewed with clear progress and completion targets and dates. There is a structured programme specification and associated partnership contract in place. Many of the financial and quality assurance arrangements were not finalised until after the programme had begun.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

18   The College has been engaged with the provisions of the Academic Infrastructure for a number of years and it is now firmly embedded in the policies for higher education provision. This engagement is most apparent during the writing and validation of new programmes, when direct references are made to the FHEQ and subject benchmarks in relation to intended learning outcomes. This process is further continued into the delivery and assessment of programmes. This was examined by both the Developmental engagement in assessment and Summative review teams and deemed robust, within validation documents, annual monitoring reports, assessment instruments and feedback to students. An example of good documentation supporting assessment is the journal on the FD Animation and Games Art.

19   The College-devised policies and procedures relating to higher education provision are written in accordance with the precepts of the relevant sections of the *Code of practice.* This is evident in the Assessment of Higher Education Programmes policy. However, there is a need to ensure that a timely finalisation of the financial arrangements and full introduction of quality procedures occurs when working with new partners, for example, Dearne Valley College and the University of Wales, in line with the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning* (*including e-learning*).

20   The Developmental engagement in assessment confirmed the view of the external examiners that standards are appropriate and are being met. It also verified that the reports of external examiners are monitored and responded to appropriately. The introduction of the External Examiners Subcommittee has meant that all reports and responses will be considered for all awarding bodies, culminating in an annual report sent to the HE Quality and Standards Committee. In addition, annual reports, which are informed by module reviews, are considered at boards of study and the action points monitored.

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?

21   The College works with a limited range of awarding bodies, the two main ones being Edexcel for Higher National programmes and the University of Hull for validated degree awards. Also, the College has just entered into a validating relationship with the University of Wales for a single MBA programme, which commenced in October 2006.

22   The College has a very close and effective link with the University of Hull. There is a strong sense of partnership between the two institutions and this was agreed by both Developmental engagement and Summative review teams as an area of good practice. University provides a wealth of documentation to support the relationship, including a valuable collaborative handbook, while College staff implement the policies effectively. Staff also value the strong relationship with the University which has significant benefits in terms of quality assurance and enhancement. This includes the use, for all higher education programmes, of the robust annual monitoring procedures provided by the University. In terms of future development, the University has agreed a plan that aims to give the College greater autonomy and help its progress towards the stated aim of creating the University of Doncaster. During the present academic year, the academic adviser from the University of Hull for the MA Digital Performance programme has visited several times and provided helpful and supportive comments about the standard of the programme and the support for students.

23 There are now clearly articulated policies and procedures for the relationship with the University of Wales. This year is seen as transitional in terms of the full implementation of the quality procedures, particularly in respect of meeting timescales. The relationship between the two institutions is developing, with staff development sessions implemented on quality assurance and other associated areas.

24 For HNC/D programmes, Edexcel requires that the College operates rigorous internal verification and review procedures. The finer detail is left to the College to decide, with the advice of the external examiners and the Edexcel Specialist Paper on Internal Verification. As with the University of Hull, external examiners are appointed by the awarding body. The College effectively operates the procedures required by Edexcel and this was confirmed in the Developmental engagement in assessment and by the comments of the external examiners themselves.

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

25 The College pursues a policy of developing the level of qualifications held by their teaching staff, as well as providing staff development to support its effective assessment processes. The College requires that all staff should hold academic qualifications at least at the level at which they are teaching and expects that most will have a level at least one above. Seven staff who teach master's level programmes hold doctorates, while most other staff who teach undergraduate programmes hold master's level qualifications. Staff who meet the University of Hull criteria for teaching on its programmes are given recognised teacher status. The College uses a similar recognition process in relation to other awarding bodies. College staff have benefited from links with other further education staff on consortia run by the University of Hull, like the FD Pre-16 Learning and Teaching Support.

26 A cross-college senior-level working group has developed an ambitious strategy document called The Raising Standards Framework for the recruitment, selection, induction, and professional development of its teaching staff. The Developmental engagement team indicated this development to be a very positive one. However, different parts of the framework are in different stages of implementation. Some are already in place, for instance regarding recruitment, while others are scheduled for next year. A key role in staff development is undertaken by the cross-college Research and Scholarly Activity Forum. The College is working to update its register of research interests.

27 The College appointment of Readers within each faculty is a feature of good practice. These posts are intended to heighten the academic aspirations of staff within and outside of the faculty by demonstrating academic leadership. This is manifest in the support given to staff who are considering an application to study at a higher level, or preparing PhD proposals.

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?

28 The College committees and structures relevant to higher education, considered in paragraphs 12 and 13 above, have appropriate responsibility in a number of areas covering the quality of learning opportunities. These include learning and teaching and student support, and operate in partnership with the awarding bodies. Although students are represented in most of the relevant committees of the new structure, getting student engagement has been difficult, although the situation is improving with the College providing training and support for student representatives. However, students are extensively involved in the management of the higher education provision at the programme level.

29 The Higher Education Quality and Standards Committee considers new and existing programme requirements, which may be in direct response to the requests of faculty and departmental management teams, using sources of evidence such as student feedback, outside intelligence and external examiner comments. As part of the revised committee structure, resourcing and academic aspects are being brought together in the programme approval process.

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

30 The College closely follows the requirements of the validating bodies to ensure that students receive appropriate learning opportunities using a variety of mechanisms. These include the use for all higher education programmes of the robust annual monitoring procedures, originally provided by the University of Hull. Students and staff provide routine feedback on a range of matters affecting the student experience. Although some programmes make better use of the review structure than others, the annual assessments provide a generally effective method for monitoring the requirements of the awarding bodies. The University of Hull and the University of Wales have direct oversight of the information in the effective annual reports and the process is just as rigorous for Edexcel programmes. For programmes validated by the University of Hull and the University of Wales, there are joint boards of study that address the range of learning opportunities and the student experience.

31 Annual monitoring procedures are informed by consideration by the College and the awarding bodies of the reports of external examiners, as well as rigorous monitoring of the staff qualification requirements. The University partners have approval procedures that consider a wide range of resource requirements, including the availability of programme texts. The procedures have ensured that the College has met all requirements.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

32 College use of the Academic Infrastructure has been aided by the use of a number of policies and procedures from the University of Hull. Moreover, the College has been developing its committee structure to more fully oversee its higher education provision, including aspects covered by the Academic Infrastructure, irrespective of partner.

33   The team found extensive use of the Academic Infrastructure in managing and enhancing the provision of learning opportunities, including learning and teaching and student support. Examples include the Review of Teaching, Learning and Assessment procedure and the use of University of Hull Guidelines for the production of student handbooks. The College has acted effectively on a recommendation from the Developmental engagement in assessment directly related to areas covered in the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning* (*including e-learning*). However, the team found that learning opportunities may be adversely affected if all aspects of this section of the *Code of practice* are not speedily implemented with new partners like the University of Wales and Dearne Valley College.

34   The use of management information for reviewing and forecasting trends is well developed for further education programmes. This uses a data management system developed for further education, and needs further development in a uniform way for higher education across all faculties and departments, supported by the new committee structure. Nevertheless, presently, the College is able to obtain a useful oversight of student progression and achievement on its higher education programmes.

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

35   The College has well-developed policies and procedures for assuring itself of the quality of the learning and teaching, academic standards. The quality of the learning opportunities is evaluated through the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy for higher education programmes. This examines how aspects of a module relate to the Academic Infrastructure with particular reference to the level of learning outcomes and curricular alignment. The process is divided into a review of module documentation and an observation of teaching. Information about module delivery is effectively used by the College to inform the staff development process and consequently further improve learning. This process is supplemented by the role of the Readers, who have a cross-college role to promote scholarly activity, as well as good academic teaching and learning pedagogy.

36   In the arrangements for reviewing a module, staff reflect on the quality of module delivery, identify areas for improvement and complete an action plan. This is facilitated through the provision of a module review form. The documentation is supplemented by the results of teaching observations. In the past, these have used documentation originally designed for further education courses, but this has been recently updated to align better with higher education delivery. The process is also informed by the results of student evaluation through the module evaluation questionnaires, which are used across the College. Students express confidence that their opinions gathered through the questionnaire and other means are given proper attention and that learning opportunities are well managed.

37   The College staff appraisal system is well structured and effectively implemented. It makes use of student feedback and teaching observations to inform the staff development needs of individual staff. There are College-wide staff development priorities and these are also used as part of the appraisal process. However, the use of the virtual learning environment remains variable across programmes, even though the College is aiming to promote its use through staff appraisal and other means.

38   On the MA Digital Performance, the College action plan has ensured improvements to teaching and learning with, for example, students now having valuable access to outside speakers. The College has made significant progress in ensuring that current staff research

informs the MA curriculum. This was evident in the team's discussions with students and programme staff. Students value the expertise of the staff who are also able to facilitate access to the wider research community in the subject field. This has included attendance at conferences and a visit to Berlin to work with a well-known practitioner. Students of master's degrees also benefit from pre-publication involvement in The International Research Journal of Performance Arts and Digital Media, which is edited by the programme leader.

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

39   Students comment positively on the support that they receive at the College and on the good working relationship with staff. A favourable staff-to-student ratio enables ready access to staff a supportive tutorial system. Extra learning opportunities and tutorials are provided in the event of unexpected absence on either side. Many students have gained substantial value from their time at the College. This is notably so for some who have entered with relatively low entry qualifications and have then progressed through more than one programme at both further and higher education levels.

40   Most students recognise the usefulness of their induction process and the personal support from staff. The induction process at programme level is informed by a College checklist, while handbooks reflect local subject requirements, in addition to those of the awarding bodies. From a limited sample in the Developmental engagement in assessment, student handbooks were found to be comprehensive and helpful. This is generally confirmed from the wider sample provided for the Summative review, although a few are considerably less useful to students in supporting their studies. Generally, students are happy with the quality and timeliness of the feedback they receive, but some indicate that this is not always so. The extensive student feedback mechanisms in the College generally deal with student concerns in a timely way.

41   Programme-specific accreditation of prior experiential learning is in place, in accordance with the requirements of the awarding bodies. The College recognises that an institution-wide accreditation of prior experential learning framework, reflecting QAA *Guidelines on APEL*, and coordinated by the overarching higher education committee structure, would help the support of pre-certificated and vocationally experienced students. Such a framework would also support College moves toward greater autonomy and the expansion of its FD portfolio.

42   The students on the MA Digital Performance programme greatly appreciate the support they get from the staff. They welcome the new induction procedures, the clear programme information available to them, including the programme handbook, the assignment handbooks, and the four substantial documents issued during the summer period. At the time of the visit, there was evidence for the effectiveness of the support in that all of the students enrolled in the current year were still on the programme.

43   The College is working towards greater synthesis of curricular planning, development and implementation. This is in line with student employability concepts that will mean greater engagement with employers on a systematic basis, as well as an increased emphasis on enterprise, particularly with respect to the local economy. The team supports the pursuit of this strategy, which will be beneficial to students in the implementation of learning and preparation for the world of work.

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

44   The Developmental engagement in human resources confirmed that there is clear strategic direction relating to human resources, as well as a number of policies and initiatives that would benefit from implementation and coordination. The College has put a clear action plan in place following the engagement, but there has been insufficient time to assess its effectiveness. The team acknowledges that the action plan is likely to have an impact in 2007-08.

45   The Doncaster College Human Resource Development Policy provides a useful framework for various aspects of staff development across the College. Non-teaching staff, who are important in supporting student learning opportunities, indicate that they have wide ranging and appropriate access to staff development activities. During the Developmental engagement in human resources, they were able to offer the team helpful evidence to show how their skills have been updated.

46   Overall, the staff development activities are valued by staff and are monitored, often through the Human Resource Directorate. Levels of attendance at development activities are high. Upon appointment, all staff commence with a well-considered induction and a probationary period, normally of one year. This provides a formal opportunity for the identification of training and development requirements. Generally, staff recognise these arrangements as supportive.

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?

47   The majority of the higher education provision is delivered at the High Melton Campus with a significant amount at the new Hub building in the centre of Doncaster. Over the last academic year, some programmes have been transferred to High Melton. Both sites provide suitable resources to support the achievement of the learning outcomes including teaching accommodation, availability of IT equipment and library provision. Staff who provide these support services are given full and equal access to the College's staff development opportunities. Students and teaching staff expressed satisfaction with the help provided by Learning Resource Centre staff.

48   The College has a resource planning structure in place, which is aided in its implementation by a proprietary resource planning tool that covers funding, fees and taught hours. This planning tool acts as the guide to devolving budgets for both human and physical resources. However, there have been a number of resourcing difficulties over the last academic year associated with moves of programme location within the College which have affected the student experience. Where required, the College has responded to the specific resource requirements of its University partners, often through the joint boards of study or the programme approval mechanisms.

49   On the MA Digital Performance, a significant amount of money has been spent effectively on new equipment and improved rehearsal space. There are still resource pressures at peak times when some of the facilities are used by students on other programmes. However, on the evidence of meetings with staff and student work, it appears that intended learning outcomes are being met.

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

50 The College is responsible for the accuracy and completeness of the public information it provides about its strategy and mission, the nature and implications of its relationship with its awarding bodies, and the information it supplies about its programmes and the expectations it places on students and employers associated with those programmes.

What arrangements do 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?

51 The team gave careful consideration to the information about staff and their responsibilities, which is made available to students and prospective students, both in hard copy and electronically through the internet and intranet. The College has been developing its website, which is easy to use and navigate, since September 2006. The process has been facilitated by the availability of new specialist staff. Students confirm that the information they receive is generally accurate and informative.

52 As part of its quality assurance procedures, the College has checked the information published on the Dearne Valley College website in the context of its partnership on the HND Public Services. The accuracy of the information was confirmed, although the partnership with Doncaster College is not acknowledged.

53 Considerable amounts of information and help are offered to prospective students and this allows them to make choices on an informed basis. However, the student written submission suggests that, for a small number of students, some details of their programme had changed when they arrived. Students also have electronic access to publicly available information on a variety of central services, including counselling and welfare, careers, financial support, and disabilities. The team found the information easy to locate, with appropriate guidance on how to contact key staff and get advice. Students also mentioned their handbooks and College posters as a major source of information in this area. Comprehensive information about the learning resource centre and its personnel and services is available on the intranet.

54 The College has different lines of responsibility for the development of its external website and the intranet. Both rely heavily on the curricular areas and service teams, for decisions on the nature and scope of the materials provided electronically, and also the materials themselves, including their validity. Published information on the programmes offered and the details about staff in the Faculty of Arts are generally of a very high standard.

55 The College has an effective and quick system, with well-specified roles and processes, for checking the accuracy of published materials as part of its developing internet strategy, involving both the providers of the information, for example, curricular areas, and specialists, including the College webmaster. The process is effectively supported by a trained faculty or department administrator. Staff are aware of the regulatory compliance for both College and awarding bodies in relation to information.

56 The College has proper guidance on publishing matters, such as branding and copyright in an electronic context. It is further supported by the developing internet strategy, official guidance from the University of Hull and a well-ordered webmaster system. However, there has been less guidance on the information that the College wishes to be

made available on the internet and on procedures for the overall quality assurance of the materials available electronically. The team did not find any misleading information with respect to the MA Digital Performance, but there are considerable variations in the character and scope of the information provided by different curricular areas, particularly in relation to staff details. The College is producing an overall internet strategy due to be fully operational by September 2007, and work has progressed since the Developmental engagement in human resources. Some areas of the College already have plans to upgrade the information they provide. Moreover, as part of these developments, information on all higher education programmes is now available electronically. In addition, the College is aware of the need to use student-friendly accessible materials and in the spirit of this has made available two social networking websites.

57   The student handbooks are generally comprehensive and clear. They provide relevant information for students at the programme level and the available central student services. This is done in a helpful way, designed to encourage student involvement and uptake. Copies of the College student handbook are available online and it is planned make it available on DVD. On the MA Digital Performance, there have been substantial improvements to the information made available to students, both in terms of publicity materials and also handbooks to support learning.

58   Programme specifications follow the guidelines of the awarding bodies. Reference to assessment is detailed, providing intended learning outcomes that are effectively linked by the staff to the assessment processes at module level. Programme specifications are given to students as part of their programme materials.

59   Edexcel programmes, particularly, are advertised with a large number of validated option modules, many of which, with relatively small numbers of students, will not run. Students find this situation somewhat misleading, although staff reported that personal guidance is provided before registration, when programme content can be clarified.

60   Overall, the College provides an amount and quality of information that properly supports the student experience in an accessible and student-friendly way. The staff biographies in the Faculty of Arts are particularly informative and helpful. The team did not identify any inaccuracies in the published materials, although student access to information varies considerably according to their area of study. The College is committed to the full development and implementation of its internet strategy, which should lead to the more uniform provision of information. It is clear that the College responds effectively to the requirements of its awarding bodies in relation to information, which include student appeals and complaints and examination regulations.

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

61   The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in January 2007. It addressed the following five lines of enquiry agreed with the College:

● What processes exist to ensure the moderation of standards for assessment instruments and marking and grading of work?

- In what way do the assessment methods and timing of tasks facilitate the students' achievement of intended learning outcomes?

- What evidence is there to suggest that the College complies with the requirements of the awarding bodies in relation to assessment?

- What structures and mechanisms exist for the provision of formative and summative feedback to students including to what extent does the feedback enable the student to achieve an appropriate standard with respect to the learning outcomes?

- Is the information published and issued to students in relation to assessment fit for purpose, appropriate, relevant, accurate and timely?

62 The main theme of the good practice identified during the Developmental engagement was the strength of the College's assessment processes, including moderation, peer consideration of assessment materials and student feedback, underpinned by procedures reflecting the Academic Infrastructure provided by the University of Hull, and by internal college documents. The close working relationship with the University of Hull was also recognised, which has allowed effective annual monitoring procedures, based on those of the University, to be used across the College.

63 The Developmental engagement recommended that essential action should be undertaken with respect to the College relationship with its two new partners to ensure that all financial and quality assurance arrangements are in place by the time students are enrolled. Also, there was an advisable recommendation concerning the development of the College higher education committee structure and a desirable recommendation on the extension of the peer or managerial review of the learning process to all programmes.

Summary of findings from the Developmental engagement in human resources

64 The Developmental engagement in human resources took place in March 2007. The following five lines of enquiry were agreed with the College:

- What staff resource (academic and support) does the College maintain to ensure the standards of the programmes being delivered?

- How do scholarly activity and research support the achievement of standards in the design, delivery and assessment of programmes, and how do they contribute overall to the quality of learning opportunities?

- What processes and systems does the College have in place for the professional development of (new and experienced) staff to enhance the quality of learning opportunities?

- What policies and procedures does the College have in place to maintain and enhance the quality of module delivery?

- What information does the College publish about its human resources and do prospective and existing students access this information?

65 The good practice identified in the Developmental engagement emphasised the wide range of staff development opportunities available, the development across the College of a strong higher education academic community, the effectiveness of the staff appraisal system and various policies concerning staff expertise and development that are being introduced by the College.

66 The Developmental engagement recommended that it would be desirable for the College to take action to ensure full implementation of College policies on staff development and on the allocation of individual lecturer workloads as quickly as possible, that staff development records be updated and that there was a need for further work on developing a comprehensive internet strategy.

D Foundation Degrees

67 The College has two Foundation Degrees (FDs) running in 2006-07. The FD Pre-16 Learning and Teaching Support is run in partnership with the University of Hull associated colleges. Of the other four FDs validated to date, only the FD in Animation and Games has run, due either to low applications or loss of key staff. The total number of learners enrolled on the two FDs in 2006-07 is 62. Four more FDs are presently under development; two are due to start in September 2007 and two in September 2008. The first Developmental engagement found that there is a considerable amount of good practice in assessment on the FD Animation and Games Art and that academic standards are appropriate on the FDs. Programme monitoring is undertaken through the effective relationship with the University of Hull.

E Summary of the College's response to the conclusions of the Academic review of Dance, Drama and Performance Arts and Music, January 2006

68 In January 2006, the Academic review of Dance, Drama and Performance Arts and Music at the College resulted in judgements for the MA Digital Performance of limited confidence for academic standards and of failing for the quality of teaching and learning. Approved judgements were made for student progression and for learning resources. Having already become aware of the difficulties on the programme, the College initiated an action plan during December 2005 and January 2006.

69 The team considers the outcomes of the action plan to be very positive, resulting in robust provision for the students. Extra human and physical resources have been provided to support the programme and programme leadership has reverted to the Reader who designed the programme. The last external examiner report is supportive of the academic standards achieved and the support for student learning.

70 The student experience has been substantially enhanced by access to a wide range of scholarly activity, strongly based in the subject area, and by upgraded programme materials which the students value. Publicity materials have been amended to properly reflect the nature of the programme. The team concludes that the College has responded effectively to the conclusions of the Academic review.

F Conclusions and summary of judgements

71 The Summative review team identified a number of features of good practice in the College's management of its responsibilities for academic standards and for the quality of learning opportunities of the awards the College offers on behalf of its awarding bodies. This was based upon discussion with staff and students and scrutiny of evidence provided by Doncaster College and its awarding bodies, Edexcel, the University of Hull and the University of Wales.

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

- the use of an independent external consultant, which helped to provide a valuable, open and transparent student written submission (paragraph 11)

- a very close and productive relationship with the University of Hull that has significant benefits in terms of both quality assurance and enhancement (paragraph 22)

- the generally robust and effective annual monitoring procedures (paragraphs 22, 31)

- the impressive scope of staff development opportunities (paragraphs 26, 27, 45)

- on the MA Digital Performance, students benefit from the wide range of research and scholarly activity, including that of the wider subject community (paragraph 38)

- the strong relationship between staff and students that effectively supports learning (paragraph 39)

- the opportunities for students to progress and gain substantial value from the supportive College environment (paragraph 39)

- students on the MA Digital Performance value the support they receive from staff and the programme materials given to them (paragraph 42)

- effective procedures for checking the accuracy of publicly available information (paragraphs 55, 56)

- the development of an effective internet strategy for the College, supported by training of administrators at faculty and departmental level (paragraphs 55, 56).

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

The team also agreed upon an area where the College is **advised** to take action:

- to embed fully and monitor the effectiveness of the new Higher Education Committee structure (paragraph 14).

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

- ensure that the financial arrangements and quality procedures are implemented in a timely manner in new partnership situations (paragraph 19)

- move as quickly as possible to the full implementation of its staff development policies (paragraphs 26, 44)

- develop further the involvement of students on strategic committees, including appropriate training and support (paragraph 28)

- to further develop the system for generating and using data relevant to higher education provision (paragraph 34)

- to ensure that all student handbooks match the standard of the best in supporting learning (paragraphs 40, 57)

- pursue its stated aims of enhancing employer engagement and enterprise activity, which has the potential to benefit students (paragraph 43)

- ensure that the number of option modules publicly advertised reflects a reasonable expectation of what will actually be available (paragraph 59).

73 As a result of the extensive College action plan for the MA Digital Performance, which has been fully implemented, the team concludes that the College has responded effectively to the conclusions of the Academic review.

74 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.

75 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.

76 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.

Doncaster College action plan relating to the Summative review: June 2007					
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 use of an independent external consultant, which helped to provide a valuable, open and transparent student sritten submission (paragraph 11)	To be brought up at the next Joint Development Board and at the Universities Collaborative Provision Committee	July 2007	Director of Higher Education	Further reports and reviews facilitated by an independent consultant	Higher Education Quality and Standards Committee/ Quality Management Group	Monitor effectiveness of the arrangement
● a very close and productive relationship with the University of Hull that has significant benefits in terms of both quality assurance and enhancement (paragraph 22)	Continue to take a proactive part in the relationship with all validating bodies		All College staff led by the DHE	Further improvements in quality assurance and enhancement as identified through review processes	HEQSC/QMG	Through internal and validating body processes

Doncaster College action plan relating to the Summative review: June 2007

Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
• the generally robust and effective annual monitoring procedures (paragraphs 22, 31)	Continue to improve the procedures and ensure good practice is embedded across the College	Ongoing	HE Directorate and Programme Staff	Robust set of monitoring documentation leading to the enhancement of quality	HEQSC/QMG	Evaluation of the procedure as part of the Partner Quality Enhancement Report for the University of Hull
• the impressive scope of staff development opportunities (paragraphs 26, 27, 45)	Continue to provide an appropriate and effective range of opportunities for staff engaged in the delivery of HE programmes	Ongoing	HE Directorate validating bodies	An appropriate and effective range of staff development	HEQSC/QMG	Joint Boards of Study to monitor and make recommendations in relation to staff development
• on the MA Digital Performance, students benefiting from the wide range of research and scholarly activity, including that of the wider subject community (paragraph 38)	Continue to provide the MADP students with opportunities including engagement with the wider subject community	Ongoing	Dean Faculty of Arts Programme leader	Continuing engagement with the wider academic community at the forefront of the discipline	HEQSC	Joint Board of Study

Doncaster College action plan relating to the Summative review: June 2007						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
● the strong relationship between staff and students that effectively supports learning (paragraph 39)	Continue to engage with learners in a way that supports them effectively at an individual level through tutorial and other contact	Ongoing	All HE staff	Student feedback Progression and retention statistics	Student Progress Sub-committee	Joint Boards of Study
● the opportunities for students to progress and gain substantial value from the supportive College environment (paragraph 39)	Continue to support learners in a way that supports them effectively at an individual level through academic and non-academic support procedures	Ongoing	All HE staff	Student feedback Progression and retention statistics	Student Progress Sub-committee	Joint Boards of Study

Doncaster College action plan relating to the Summative review: June 2007

Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
• students on the MA Digital Performance value the support they receive from staff and the programme materials given to them (paragraph 42)	Continue to provide the support and develop the materials for future cohorts	Ongoing	MADP Programme Team	Student feedback Achievement and retention statistics for the MADP	Student Progress Sub-committee	Joint Board of Study
• effective procedures for checking the accuracy of publicly available information (paragraphs 55, 56)	Ensure continuing good practices	Ongoing	Marketing Team Programme Teams	Accurate published information as reported by stakeholder groups	HEQSC	HE Administration Group
• the development of an effective internet strategy for the College, supported by training of administrators at faculty and departmental level (paragraphs 55, 56)	Web Strategy to be published and implemented	December 2007	Director of Information and Learning Technology	Effective use of the web as a tool for the publishing of information and means of extending the learning opportunity	HEQSC	HE Administration Group

Doncaster College action plan relating to the Summative review: June 2007						
Advisable	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
The team agreed a number of areas where the College should be **advised** to take action:						
• to fully embed and monitor the effectiveness of the new Higher Education Committee structure (paragraph 14)	Schedule meetings on the College Academic Calendar	July 2007	College Senior Management	An effective Committee structure which meets the need to manage quality and standards and moves the College towards academic autonomy	QMG/SMT	Annual report to be sent to QMG and monitored by DHE
			DHE			
	Review minutes of meetings	July 2008	Deans			

Doncaster College action plan relating to the Summative review: June 2007						
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team agreed the following areas where it would be **desired** to take action:						
• ensure that the financial arrangements and quality procedures are implemented in a timely manner in new partnership situations (paragraph 19)	Ensure financial and other contractual arrangements are agreed and documented prior to programme start	As required	DHE	Contracts in place	HEQSC/QMG	To be monitored by the HE directorate
• move as quickly as possible to the full implementation of its staff development policies (paragraphs 26; 44)	Completion of the work of the Raising Standards group and implementation of the outcomes	September 2008	HR Directorate and senior managers	Coherent and robust policies and procedures in place for the professional development of the teaching staff	SMT	QMG

Doncaster College action plan relating to the Summative review: June 2007

Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
● develop further the involvement of students on strategic committees, including appropriate training and support (paragraph 28)	Ensure students invited as per committee remits Ensure appropriate training is given to each representative	Through 2007/8	HE Directorate	Student representation is helping to inform the work of the committee structure	HEQSC/QMG	HE Directorate
● to further develop the system for generating and using data relevant to HE provision (paragraph 34)	Work with registry to generate monthly reports to be sent to Heads and Deans	September 2007 and onwards	HE Directorate	Accurate and meaningful monthly reports are generated	Student progress sub-committee	HE Directorate
● to ensure that all student handbooks match the standard of the best in supporting learning (paragraph 40, 57)	Ensure all student handbooks confirm to validating bodies' standards	September 2007	Programme leaders	All programmes have accurate and complete handbooks	HEQSC/QMG	HE Directorate

Doncaster College action plan relating to the Summative review: June 2007

Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
• pursue its stated aims of enhancing employer engagement and enterprise activity, which has the potential to benefit students (paragraph 43)	Development and implementation of a College wide employer engagement strategy	November 2007 and ongoing	Programme leaders Deans and Heads of Dept Business Engagement Staff	Strategy in place and increased interaction with employers in the development and delivery of programmes including Foundation Degree	SMT	Asst Principal Development
• ensure that the number of option modules publicly advertised reflects a reasonable expectation of what will actually be available (paragraph 59)	Check information being published in relation to all HE programmes to ensure compliance	September 2007	Programme leaders	Student satisfaction with published information reflecting an accurate position regarding optional modules	HEQSC	Check to be made of published information, particularly web information HE directorate

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