QAA

Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

June 2007

Blackpool and The Fylde College

SR01/2008

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 Blackpool and The Fylde College carried out in June 2007

As a result of its investigations, the Summative review team considers that there can be **confidence** in the College's discharge 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. The team also considers that there can be **confidence** in the College's discharge of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreements, for the management and assurance of 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:

- there is a clear strategic vision and a framework of policy and procedures for the management, development and quality assurance of higher education

- a well-planned curriculum facilitates progression between further and higher education

- good working relationships between employers and many schools of the College ensure flexible responses to employer needs and close collaboration in specific areas of curriculum development

- the devolved responsibility from the University of Lancaster for aspects of quality assurance enables the development of good quality local systems

- staff development strategies are well resourced and help to ensure that staff are well qualified, developed professionally as teachers and are current in their subject

- the College has a strong framework for student support and academic guidance, which includes the use of personal development plans, extensively in Foundation Degrees, but also in some other programmes

- the development of management information systems ensures that public information is accurate and complete, and facilitates the management of quality.

Recommendations

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

- ensure that in the planned expansion of higher education, key learning resources are matched to programmes and made sufficiently available to students

- continue to monitor its processes for ensuring that teaching and assessment are adequately addressed during instances of extended staff absence.

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

- strengthen student involvement in quality management by supporting the development of skills for the role of student representative

- continue to develop information for students, by extending use of the virtual learning environment for higher education programmes.

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 Blackpool and The Fylde 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 Edexcel, the University of Lancaster, the University of Central Lancashire, Liverpool John Moores University, the University of Huddersfield and Bournemouth University. The review was carried out by Mr Mark Cooper, Mr David Gardiner, Dr Sarah Shobrook and Mr Lawrie Walker (reviewers) and Dr John Hurley (Coordinator).

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

3   In order to provide information to assist HEFCE 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   Blackpool and The Fylde College describes itself as the community college for the Fylde coast, a conurbation of one-third of a million people in north-west Lancashire. The College mission is 'to serve individuals, communities and employers by providing excellent learning opportunities that enhance social development and contribute to economic success. The College aims to transform lives by inspiring learners to achieve their potential in a supportive learning environment'. Within the further education sector, the College enjoys a good reputation, having been identified as one of the first Beacon Colleges and having Centres of Vocational Excellence based in the College in Automotive Manufacturing; Customer Services Quality for Tourism; and Building Services.

5   The College is one of the largest providers of higher education in the further education sector, with 1,230 full-time and 540 part-time higher education students. These constitute about one-sixth of the total college activity. The College has been formed from institutional mergers, and is consequently based on a number of sites, two of which, in Bispham and central Blackpool, are the main locations for higher education programmes. The HEFCE-funded provision at the time of the review, together with the awarding bodies, comprised the following programmes:

Programmes awarded by Edexcel

- HND Advanced Practice in Work with Children and Young Families
- HND Beauty Therapy Management
- HNC Business
- HNC/D Coin Slot Systems and Casino Technologies
- HNC Computing
- HNC/D Computing (General)
- HNC/D Computing (ICT Systems Support)
- HNC/D Computing (Software Development)
- HNC/D Construction
- HNC/D Construction Technology Management
- HND Management
- HND Counselling
- HND Early Childhood Studies
- HNC/D Electrical/Electronic Engineering
- HNC/D Fine Arts
- HND Health and Social Care (Applied Social Studies)
- HNC/D Hospitality Management
- HND Hospitality Management (Licensed Retail)
- HNC/D Manufacturing Engineering
- HNC/D Mechanical Engineering
- HND Nautical Science
- HND Performing Arts
- HNC Plant and Process Engineering
- HND Technical Theatre
- HND Theatre

Programmes awarded by Bournemouth University

- FD Coastal Conservation with Marine Biology
- BSc Coastal Conservation

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Programmes awarded by Liverpool John Moores University

- FD Nautical Science
- BSc (Hons) Nautical Science

Programmes awarded by the University of Central Lancashire

- FD Gaming Technology
- FD New Media Design and Technology
- FD Computing

Programmes awarded by the University of Huddersfield

- BA in Business Administration (FT)

Programmes awarded by the University of Lancaster

- FD Communication at Work
- FD History and Heritage Management Studies
- FD Criminology
- FD Management with Business
- FD Photography and Digital Design
- FD Automotive Technology
- FD Professional Practice (Beauty Therapy)
- FD Professional Practice (Hair Salon Practice)
- FD Professional Practice (Sport and Rehabilitation Therapies)
- FD Professional Practice (Complementary Therapy)
- FD Teaching and Learning Support
- FD Early Years
- FD Working with Young People in the Community
- FD Culinary Profession
- FD Sports Development
- FD Casino Operations Management
- FD Travel and Tourism Management
- FD Hospitality Management (Licensed Retail)
- BA (Hons) English Language and Literary Studies
- BA (Hons) Criminology and Criminal Justice
- BSc Quality Management

- BA (Hons) Education and Training Management

- BA Fine Art and Professional Practice

- BA (Hons) Graphic Design

- BA (Hons) Scientific and Natural History Illustration

- BA (Hons) Technical and Information Illustration

- BA (Hons) Photography

- BA (Hons) Design in Wildlife Photography

- BEng (Hons) Autosport Technology

- BSc in Mechanical and Production Engineering

- BEng Mechatronics

- BSc Computing

- BSc (Hons) Internet Media Technologies

- BSc Information Technologies

- BA (Hons) Hospitality Management

- BA (Hons) Hospitality Management (International Hotel Management)

- BA (Hons) Hospitality Management (Tourism)

- BA(Hons) International Resort Tourism Management

- BA (Hons) Sports Development

- MA in Visual Design

- Executive Diploma in Management Studies.

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

6   The College has long-standing arrangements with the University of Lancaster and Edexcel. Partnership arrangements with the University delegate many responsibilities to the College, subject to general oversight by the University at programme and institutional levels. The arrangement with Edexcel requires simple agreement to run programmes using standard units. Programmes from the University of Huddersfield, Liverpool John Moores University and University of Central Lancashire are franchised and have more specific requirements embedded in the agreements. Programmes validated by Bournemouth University are being transferred to the University of Lancaster by mutual agreement.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

7   Higher education numbers are expanding and the College is making this expansion a strategic priority, placing emphasis on the development of FDs and top-up degrees and working closely with local employers. By 2009, the College is planning to redevelop its central campus principally for higher education and has secured HEFCE and regional development funding to support this development.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

8   Students from the higher education provision at the College were invited to present a written submission to the Summative review team. The submission was written by the College and based on the analysis of questionnaire and focus group data. The submission identified a number of questions that were useful in the review activity and which were supported in meetings 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 infrastructure to support the development of higher education and the management of quality and standards can be found in four interacting elements of the College's organisation. These are staff roles specific to higher education; a higher education strategy and related developmental activities; a structure of committees and other forums; and quality assurance arrangements based upon awarding body processes, with additional College-designed ones. The post of Director of HE Development was created and the current postholder appointed in 2005. The Director for Quality and Standards manages the higher education validation and quality enhancement processes. The College has also recently appointed a higher education Registrar. These posts have enabled strategic reviews to take place and actions accomplished in response to identified targets. The agendas of central committees indicate that the introduction of dedicated higher education management posts has begun to create a shared, cross-school understanding of higher education provision as a whole.

10 The draft Higher Education Strategy 2007-12 offers a clear vision and set of priorities with responsibilities and timescales. This document, together with the Strategy for Curriculum, Teaching, Learning and Assessment, and the HE Quality Improvement Plan, indicates that the College has begun to plan strategically in relation to curriculum, teaching and learning. This is exemplified in the well-developed working relationships between employers and many schools of the College in the development of new programmes. An emphasis on the development of new FDs and top-up degrees has created progression routes from further education, with a high number, 43 per cent, of higher education students following this route in 2006-07.

11 The College has put in place key committees for higher education, including the Higher Education Strategy Group and the Higher Education Academic Development Committee. The Higher Education Strategy Group, consisting of senior managers and Heads of School, is the principal higher education committee. It is chaired by the Principal and is the main forum for discussion and dissemination of strategy. The Higher Education Academic Development Committee includes curriculum leaders and managers; and other staff from the key support areas including marketing, admissions, learning resources and learner support and quality and standards. The chair is the Director of HE Development.

12 With the support of the University of Lancaster, the College has been able to develop a local academic management framework and quality assurance systems based on, but not restricted to, University-designed processes. The College has, for example, introduced

additional levels of scrutiny within the annual review and reporting cycle. While validation arrangements operate within awarding body rules and requirements, applications for introducing new curricula begin with the submission of an internally scrutinised concept document. The primary purpose of the concept stage is to ensure that primary strategic issues are addressed. Until 2006-07, the Higher Education Strategic Development Committee had responsibility for scrutinising the concept document. In the current year, this responsibility has been delegated to the Academic Development Committee.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

13 The review found that the College has extensive engagement with the Academic Infrastructure. This includes exercises specifically aimed at ensuring that programmes take account of the *Code of practice* and relevant subject benchmark statements, and produce adequate programme specifications. The engagement has been supported by training both in-college and by partners. Amongst other external reference points, the School of Engineering and Computing and the School of Maritime Studies have gained ISO 9001:2000 approval. The Developmental engagement in assessment found good evidence of the use of the FHEQ and subject benchmark statements in programme specifications and that account had been taken of relevant sections of the *Code of practice.*

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

14 The awarding bodies set the frameworks for managing the quality and standards of individual programmes, and for overseeing the health of the partnership arrangements, for example through the use of course consultants. Evidence arising from the College's operation of awarding body processes, including monitoring reports from the awarding bodies themselves, indicates that the College acts diligently in relation to its required responsibilities. There are robust procedures for course design, validation and minor amendments, annual and triennial reviews, responses to external examiners, assessment regulations and practice, and assessment and award boards.

15 Responsibility for developing, managing and delivering the operational aspects of higher education is delegated to the schools of the College, although its self-evaluation identifies that they are 'at different stages in the development of a higher education curriculum and culture'. Schools operate internal arrangements to monitor and report on activity in their higher education curriculum through termly quality assurance meetings.

16 On the basis of evidence presented, the team reached the conclusion that, while the quality of local deliberation, monitoring and reporting varies, there is, in general, a sense of responsible local ownership of quality and standards. This has enabled the early stages of the validation process to be devolved to the College by the University of Lancaster. There is a growing understanding of the importance of cross-school analysis and evaluation of the processes and outcomes of higher education as an institutional responsibility.

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

17 The College has a clear commitment to support the development of its staff. Evidence from the review visit supports much of the good practice the College identified in its self-evaluation. For example, the College spends around 2.5 per cent of its budget on staff development. Generally, it requires that staff are qualified to at least a level above

that which they teach and that they have teaching qualifications. Opportunities for staff development are also offered by the awarding bodies. The University of Lancaster, University of Central Lancashire and Liverpool John Moores University all provide opportunities for staff to attend development activities in teaching and learning, curriculum development and in subject updating. Staff can apply for funding for personal development at school level and centrally.

18 Staff development needs are identified through the annual performance review and then addressed. An example of this process is where the College has identified a need to support staff development in relation to e-learning. In interviews with students it was confirmed that the use of e-learning among teaching staff is variable across courses. The College is addressing the issue with specific training for use of e-learning technology. The training includes the opportunity for specific higher education sessions.

The team concludes that it has confidence in the College's management of its responsibilities as set out in its partnership agreements, for the management and delivery of the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of its awarding bodies.

Core theme 2: Quality of learning opportunities

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

19 The responsibility for managing the quality of learning opportunities lies within academic schools and specifically with curriculum leaders and lecturing staff. Currently there are 64 curriculum managers and 51 curriculum leaders employed by the College. The numbers vary between academic areas. However, in most schools, at least one curriculum manager and curriculum leader has specific responsibility for higher education.

20 There is effective management of learning opportunities for students through clear processes at different stages of course development and operation. They are discussed at the 'concept' stages and developed during validation. Following approval, the course consultant or link tutor gives further consideration to learning opportunities and there is specific reference to them as part of the annual course review 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?

21 Learning opportunities in programmes are clearly related to distinctive features of the College's higher education aims, which identify work-based learning, skills development and professional practice, and personal development planning. Much of the curriculum has been designed and delivered in alignment with regional strategic objectives, employers' skills surveys and sector skills perspectives. Learning opportunities are well supported by employer involvement. One example is the involvement of Lancashire and Mersyside automotive manufacturers in designing and building an engine-testing facility in the College, which will also be used by the industry to develop new engine technology. The use of external expertise from industry and commerce including employers, professional bodies, agencies, and Centre of Vocational Excellence contacts is evident in the work-related learning outcomes and assessment tasks in the College's portfolio of FDs. While there is good practice in employer links at the school level, there is as yet no unified College strategy to ensure that processes are consistent.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

22 As stated in paragraph 13, the team found that the College has extensive engagement with the Academic Infrastructure. There is evidence that the guidance contained in the *Code of practic*e is considered in all aspects that impact upon the quality of learning opportunities.

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

23 The quality of teaching and learning is reviewed on a regular basis through annual review and reporting arrangements, as well as the use of external examiners and course consultants. Evidence is considered by school quality groups, the Academic Development Committee and the HE Strategy Group, which oversees the developing 'Strategy for HE Curriculum; Teaching, Learning and Assessment'. The HE Quality Improvement Plan 2005-06 identifies a range of specific actions required to achieve improvement. These include the review, streamlining and dissemination of strategies for teaching and learning, student attendance and student assessment. These considerations are supported by evidence from student perception questionnaires and by a system of student representatives. The representatives met by the team were not entirely confident in their roles or sure of their responsibilities. It is desirable that College training and support is provided to help them discharge their responsibilities more effectively.

24 Teaching observations are conducted on a regular basis, but do not have a specific higher education focus. Senior tutors (teaching and learning) are able to provide peer support through the observation of learning sessions and give feedback on them. The College is actively advancing its capacity for maintaining and enhancing its higher education provision through a Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund project. This aims to support continuing professional development activity, enabling staff to meet agreed national teaching standards and to ensure that teaching is informed and enriched by applied research. An interim report identifies effective progress towards meeting those aims. Successful initiatives include integrating skills development into the higher education curriculum, the development of personal development planning and the appointment of e-learning champions to facilitate the use of online and blended learning. Widening the opportunities for scholarly activity has been more difficult to achieve. The College recognises that 'considerably more work is required' on this objective. Overall, the team concludes that teaching and learning quality is appropriately maintained and enhanced.

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

25 College commitments to its learners, and learner responsibilities are outlined as an 'HE Learner Compact' in the Student Charter. This is reproduced in the higher education handbook, which offers a useful guide to College services and a range of essential information. Central support arrangements comprise a range of well-integrated services for all College students. These include chaplaincy, student union, student liaison worker, nursery, counselling, international welfare and accommodation, careers including personal learning advisers, and student services advice centres on three campuses. Service management is represented on the higher education committees. The effectiveness of learning support is monitored regularly, through end-of-term review meetings between student, tutor and the Learning Support Service; an annual questionnaire completed by all learning support students; and statistics of usage. The College is looking to integrate its databases for student services, to provide a more client-centred focus.

26 Student guidance arrangements, including pre-entry guidance and induction, are suitable. The College anticipates, however, that a continued commitment to widening participation will bring with it an increase in the need to develop specialist additional learning support for higher education students. Currently, the accreditation of prior experiential learning is used primarily to facilitate admission to programmes, rather than to grant credit exemption.

27 All higher education students have personal academic tutors, supported by senior tutors for pastoral matters. Although the higher education handbook states that 'personal development planning is a feature of all HE courses', discussions with staff and students indicate that the formal engagement in such development varies, particularly outside of the FD portfolio. Consideration will be given from 2007-08 to the introduction of specialist learning mentors for higher education students.

28 The College has a clear, documented and accessible policy for careers education, information and guidance that includes statements of the institution's objectives and of students' entitlements and responsibilities. The College provides well-organised careers guidance and advice to its higher education students. In most schools, there is an employers' committee that facilitates collaboration between employers and provides guidance to maximise the benefits to both students and employers. The College careers service achieved the 'Matrix Standard' in 2006.

29 A Quality and Standards Directorate survey of higher education student views reported that 'the majority of students thought that academic support was high and readily available, with tutors being flexible' and that 'personal support is available on a one-to-one basis if struggling'. Despite full workloads, tutors make time for students. They are helpful and approachable, although sometimes tutors can be hard to track down due to other commitments. Students are highly complimentary about the financial advice available from Student Administration and Services. The team concludes that, overall, students benefit from a good standard of academic guidance and study support and that this is evidence of good practice.

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

30 Of the strands identified in the successful Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund bid, staff development has given priority to the adoption of the National Standards for Teaching and Learning and familiarisation with the Academic Infrastructure. Evidence of the effectiveness of staff development is born out in the documentation made available for the team and through discussions with staff. In addition to the substantial support for the development of teaching and other professional skills, staff development policies support subject updating through attendance at courses and conferences. The College staff development fund supports opportunities for extended study, generally for higher degrees, and these also are supported by modest fee concessions from validating partners.

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?

31 Human and physical resources for schools are considered three times per year in the business planning cycle. There are separate bidding arrangements for learning technology resources. Capital money is also devolved to schools. Advanced facilities are available, for example, in simulation resources at the Fleetwood Nautical Campus, in automotive engineering and in health and care. The review team considers that learning resources

are generally appropriate to enable students to meet learning outcomes and in some curriculum areas are of high quality. Nevertheless, there is some evidence that central library and learning resources are under strain in some areas, in particular access to books and electronic journals. It is advisable that in the planned expansion of provision, the College ensures that key learning resources are matched to programmes and made sufficiently available to students. Planning for the new campus will offer an opportunity to address these issues.

32   The self-evaluation acknowledges that the College can have difficulties in recruiting to teaching posts in some curriculum areas. Similarly, some highly specialised curriculum areas face challenges in trying to provide suitable cover for staff sickness. The College is now implementing cross-College strategies to further reduce any negative impact on students. Following the Developmental engagement, the College outlined a process for managing staff absences and ensuring student work is marked. This will include the establishment of a bank of markers from inside and outside the College. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of this strategy. The team deems it advisable that the College continues to monitor its processes for ensuring that teaching and assessment are adequately addressed during instances of extended staff absence.

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 responsiable for publishing about its HEFCE - funded higher education?

33   For most programmes, except those that are franchised, the College is responsible for publishing information about the provision. Definitive College information is contained in the HE Student Handbook, the 'Red Book,' which is given to all higher education students. This provides basic information about College policy and procedures, learner services and resources, assessment and quality assurance in a concise and readable form. There are sections on plagiarism, good academic practice and the appeals procedure. Programme specific information is contained in handbooks and module guides. Assessment information is collated by the College in collaboration with its higher education institution partners.

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?

34   The College has recognised and is addressing some shortcomings in the public information it produces. It is working hard to ensure the information it provides to the public is accurate and complete. Current students noted that information on the College website prior to arriving at the College had been limited and inconsistent. The College has recognised inconsistencies between its own and the UCAS website. It has made a strategic decision to only hold course information on the UCAS website through a web link. In order to ensure consistency and accuracy, the College has developed a template for course information, which is taken from the College prospectus and then loaded onto the UCAS website. When the prospectus is drawn up the partner university reviews it to ensure the accuracy of information.

35 The Developmental engagement found some variation in the quality of programme handbooks, but generally they provide adequate curricula and assessment information. Most student handbooks give information on assessment patterns and processes at programme and module level. This normally includes grading criteria, information on the methods of formative feedback to students and the timescales involved. Some handbooks give guidance on studying and academic writing. This is the case on the BA (Hons) English Language, Literature and Writing, and programmes in tourism, leisure and hospitality. Many other areas produce separate study guides to support assessment, for example the FD Communication at Work and engineering programmes. Supplementary guidance on referencing and plagiarism is produced for many programmes. Some programmes have established good information resources on the College virtual learning environment, although the development is mixed. It is desirable that the College continues to develop information for students, by extending use of the virtual learning environment for higher education programmes. Current students are generally happy with the information available to them internally, both on the College website and that provided by tutors.

36 Accurate information for award boards and panels has always been held at school level and by the relevant awarding body. The College has experienced problems with the central collation and publication of higher education outcome data and the steps to improve this were noted in the Developmental engagement. Since then, a project to interpret individual learner records, using ProAchieve, has been completed. For 2005-06, the College has accurate central information on cohort progression and outcomes. Information is collated centrally only after it has been approved by the relevant partner awarding body. The ability to analyse cohort retention and achievement, however, will substantially support quality management and enable the College to produce accurate public information about its performance. The team agreed that reliance can now be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the public information produced by the College.

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

37 The Developmental engagement in assessment was conducted in March 2007. It was structured around the following lines of enquiry agreed with the College:

- Is there evidence that mechanisms for marking and for the moderation of marks are robust and meet awarding body standards?

- How do programmes ensure that programme intended learning outcomes are assessed?

- Does the written feedback provided to students on assessed work facilitate learning and encourage improvement?

- Is the assessment information produced internally sufficiently clear and fit for purpose?

38 The Developmental engagement team found evidence of much good practice in the frameworks for the quality assurance of assessment. These included robust and well-documented internal scrutiny and moderation processes and generally good information on assessment provided to students. Links with employers resulted in

well-developed intended learning outcomes and work-related assessment tasks. There were excellent examples of written and documented oral feedback to students identified by external examiners. Not all these examples of good practice were evenly developed in the College, but a robust action plan has been put in place to approach the challenge of disseminating them.

39 There were three desirable recommendations, including further work to ensure the matching of intended learning outcomes and assessment in a few areas of the College and ensuring that timescales for assessment feedback were consistently published and met. The need to improve the central collation and dissemination of higher education cohort progression and outcomes had been recognised by the College and was addressed before the Summative review visit.

D Foundation Degrees

40 FD curricula in the College reflect the general strengths and aspirations already identified and take close account of the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*. This produces strengths, including close and collaborative relationships with employers, the well-established use of personal development planning and the incorporation of skills development in qualifications.

41 The good relations with employers include their involvement in curriculum design. An excellent example of employer engagement is the FD in Nautical Science where the College has worked with the Merchant Navy Training Board, which includes representatives of employers and unions. The Board agreed the framework to achieve a demand-led qualification, ensuring that the skills base of the industry is current. Specific FD developments have involved BAE Systems, British Energy and the gaming industry, while Blackpool Borough Council is a major partner in the FD in Sports Development.

42 There is clear evidence of a desire and willingness from employers to be involved as mentors in the workplace and in advising on learning and assessment. The School of Health and Social care has developed an extremely proactive relationship with a consortium of nine local children's centres in Blackpool. This helps to ensure the currency of learning and assessment, the development of skills and implementation of knowledge required in both learning and work placement situations. In some programmes, for example in Early Years, the close employer engagement is critical in order to gain professional status. The FD in Communications at Work has been shaped by local employers as result of concerns regarding professional and personal communication deficiencies in the workplace.

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

43 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. These were based upon discussion with staff and students and scrutiny of evidence provided by the Blackpool and The Fylde College and its awarding bodies Edexcel, the University of Lancaster, University of Central Lancashire, Liverpool John Moores University, University of Huddersfield and Bournemouth University.

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

- a clear strategic vision and a framework of policy and procedures for the management, development and quality assurance of higher education (paragraphs 9; 10; 11; 20; 23)

- a well-planned curriculum that facilitates progression from further education (paragraphs 10; 13; 21)

- well-developed working relationships between employers and many schools of the College, including flexible responses to employer needs and close collaboration in specific curriculum developments (paragraphs 10; 21; 41; 42)

- devolved responsibility from the University of Lancaster for aspects of quality assurance, which enables the development of good-quality local systems (paragraphs 6; 12; 14; 16)

- well-resourced strategies to ensure that staff are well qualified, developed professionally as teachers and are current in their subject (paragraphs 17; 18; 30)

- a strong framework for student support and academic guidance, including the use of personal development plans, extensively in FDs, but also in some other programmes (paragraphs 25; 27; 28; 40)

- the development of management information systems to ensure accurate and complete public information and to facilitate the management of quality (paragraphs 34; 36).

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

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

- ensure that in the planned expansion of higher education, key learning resources are matched to programmes and made sufficiently available to students (paragraph 31)

- continue to monitor its processes for ensuring that teaching and assessment are adequately addressed during instances of extended staff absence (paragraph 32).

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

- to strengthen student involvement in quality management by supporting the development of skills for the role of student representative (paragraph 23)

- continue to develop information for students, by extending use of the virtual learning environment for higher education programmes (paragraphs 35).

45 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.

46 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.

47 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.

Blackpool and The Fylde College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 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:						
• devolved responsibility from the University of Lancaster for aspects of quality assurance which enables the development of good quality local systems (paragraphs 6,12,14,16)	To discuss with awarding bodies how to disseminate the good practice identified. To continue to develop College based quality assurance systems that enhance and complement awarding body systems	end of 08/09	Director of Quality and Standards Awarding Bodies	Joint development activities with awarding bodies and other colleges over next 2 years	HE Strategy Group	Meetings with awarding bodies
• well-developed working relationships between employers and many schools of the college	To continue to develop new employer links that will	end of 07/08	Heads of School	10 % increase in courses that have direct employer or	HE Strategy Group	School self evaluation reports. College Self

Blackpool and The Fylde College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2007

Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
including flexible responses to employer needs and close collaboration in specific curricular developments (paragraphs 10, 21, 41, 42)	enhance the relevance of the curriculum offer			occupational relevance by end of 07/08		evaluation report
● the use of PDPs extensively in Foundation degrees but also in some other programmes (paragraphs 25, 27, 28, 40)	To identify examples of good practice in use of PDPs across college To share approach in these areas with other Courses through HE Academic Development Group To embed the use of PDPs in all newly validated courses	Jan 08 Easter 08 end of 07/08 over next 2 years	Director of HE Development and Heads of Schools	PDPs to be part of all new courses by end of 07/08 PDPs to be incorporated into all courses by 08/09	HE Academic Development Group	Annual Course reviews School self-evaluation reports

Blackpool and The Fylde College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2007						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
	To continue to work with the TQEF action plan					
• well-resourced strategies to ensure that staff are well qualified, developed professionally as teachers and current in their subject. The college is encouraged to find further ways to support and facilitate staff scholarly activity in line with their strategic intentions. (paragraphs 17, 18, 30)	To achieve outcomes set out in TQEF action plan to facilitate scholarly activity within College	end of 08/09	Director of HE Development and the TQEF group	TQEF actions fully achieved Model for scholarly activity implemented across College	HE Strategy Group	Reports on progress twice a year to HE Strategy Group

Blackpool and The Fylde College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2007						
Advisable	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
The team agreed the following areas where it would be **advised** to take action:						
● ensure that in the planned expansion of higher education key learning resources are matched to programmes and made sufficiently available to students (paragraph 31)	Monitor budget allocations 3 times a year Continue to review the methodology for allocating staff and resources to Schools Monitor impact of expansion of programme 3 times a year Review the access to Learning Resources 3 times a year		Vice Principal (Curriculum and Standards) Head of Learning Resources	More efficient delivery of programmes Improved access to resources for students	HE Strategy Group	Annual course reviews Student feedback School quality meetings

Blackpool and The Fylde College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2007					
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
• continue to monitor processes for ensuring that teaching and assessment are adequately addressed in instances of extended staff absence parafgraph 32)	For each School to ensure it has at least 2 members of staff to deliver and assess on all aspects of HE provision by implementing the approach discussed at the Summative Review	Feb 08	Head of School	Student assessments are unduly not delayed due to staff absence	HE strategy Group	Feedback from students

Blackpool and The Fylde College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 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:						
• to strengthen student involvement in Quality Management by supporting the development of skills for the role of student representative (paragraph 23)	Arrange that all HE student representatives undergo training to support them in their role and develop appropriate skills	Dec 07	Heads of Schools and Staff Development Manager	All HE reps complete training	HE Strategy Group	Contribution by reps improved and feedback from reps indicate more confidence in role
• continue to develop information for students by extending use of the Moodle virtual learning environment for higher education programmes (paragraph 35)	To have Handbooks, study guides and programme specifications available on line through Moodle	Dec 07	e-LT Champions	10% increase of Moodle hits for HE courses during 07/08	School Quality Meetings. Academic management team	HE Moodle showcase