



# **Integrated quality and enhancement review**

**Summative review**

**Moulton College**

**January 2011**

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## Preface

The mission of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications and to inform and encourage continual improvement in the management of the quality of higher education. As part of this mission, QAA undertakes reviews of higher education provision delivered in further education colleges. This process is known as Integrated quality and enhancement review (IQER).

## Purpose of IQER

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

## The IQER process

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

## Developmental engagement

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

The main elements of a Developmental engagement are:

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

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

## Summative review

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

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

## Evidence

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

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

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

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

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

## Outcomes of IQER

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

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

management of the standards and/or quality of the awards made by one awarding body to be different from those made by another.

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

## Executive summary

### The Summative review of Moulton College carried out in January 2011

As a result of its investigations, the Summative review team (the team) considers that there can be **confidence** in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreement, for the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of its awarding body. The team also considers that there can be **confidence** in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreement, for the quality of learning opportunities it offers. The team considers that reliance **can** be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

### Good practice

The team has identified the following good practice for dissemination:

- the active support of the team of senior lecturers and the recently appointed Director of Higher Education creates a coherent and effective higher education management structure
- the well-integrated relationship with the University of Northampton is strongly collaborative and has enhanced the learning opportunities for students
- the College's commercial enterprises provide students with enriching and realistic vocational experiences
- the opportunities for staff to undertake research and the rigorous approval and funding process of the Research Committee encourage professional updating and scholarly activity
- the clarity of publishing procedures and their monitoring ensures the consistency and accuracy of public information.

### 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:

- establish a structured mechanism for students to have sight of external examiner reports.

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

- consider producing guidelines to formalise relationships between employers, students and the College
- consider developing its own higher education staff handbook.

## 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 Moulton College (the College). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the College discharges its responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes which the College delivers on behalf of the University of Northampton. The review was carried out by Professor Paul Brunt, Professor Christopher Gale, Mrs Daphne Rowlands (reviewers) and Ms Penny Blackie (coordinator).

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

3 In order to assist HEFCE to gain information to assist with the assessment of the impact of Foundation Degree (FD) awards, section D of this report summarises details of the FD programmes delivered at the College.

4 Moulton College, formerly the Northamptonshire Institute of Agriculture, was established in 1921 to provide agricultural education and training for the farming community. The College has developed significantly since incorporation and now offers a curriculum that includes construction and sports studies. The College attracts further education students from surrounding counties, and higher education students from across the United Kingdom. The College's areas of specialism all support industries that are dependent upon a high degree of practical skill. Courses reflect the demands of these industries, and have a high practical content. An Ofsted teaching inspection in 2008 and a care standards inspection in 2009 both graded the College as 'outstanding' in all categories of inspection criteria. In the academic year 2010-11 it has more than 2,500 full-time and 5,500 part-time students. Of these, 480 full-time and 276 part-time students are on higher education programmes, which equates to 648 full-time equivalent students. They are taught by 62 full-time and five part-time staff.

5 Higher education is delivered alongside the further education provision in seven of the nine subject areas. This supports the College's mission to enable progression for non-traditional learners into higher education. Students can also progress to postgraduate study within the College. There is a close relationship with the University of Northampton, which validates all of the higher education provision. A number of programmes are taught jointly by College and University staff.

6 The higher education awards funded directly and indirectly by HEFCE are listed below, beneath their awarding body and with full-time equivalent numbers of students for 2010-11:

### **University of Northampton**

- Higher National Certificate (HNC) Applied Animal Studies (running out) (1)
- HNC Building Services Engineering (3)
- HNC Civil Engineering (15)
- HNC Construction Management (23)
- Higher National Diploma (HND) Applied Animal Studies (running out) (6)
- HND Interior Design (jointly taught) (18)
- HND Outdoor Education (running out) (0)
- HND Sports Management (running out) (0)
- HND Animal Welfare and Management, top-up (running out) (1)
- FdSc Agriculture (24)
- FdSc Applied Animal Studies (62)
- FdSc Arboriculture (13)
- FdSc Civil Engineering (17)
- FdSc Civil Engineering, top-up (3)
- FdSc Construction Management (26)
- FdSc Construction Management, top-up (13)
- FdSc Countryside and Wildlife Management (27)
- FdSc Conservation and Land Management (running out) (3)
- FdSc Equine Management (18)
- FdSc Horticulture and Garden Design (22)
- FdSc Sports Performance and Coaching (61)
- FdSc Sports Therapy (49)
- BA Interior Design (jointly taught) (29)
- BA Sports Management, top-up (jointly taught) (4)
- BSc Applied Animal Studies (60)
- BSc Applied Animal Studies, top-up (18)
- BSc Applied Conservation Biology (jointly taught) (11)
- BSc Civil Engineering, top-up (9)
- BSc Construction Management, top-up (7)
- BSc Equine Management (14)
- BSc Equine Management, top-up (9)
- BSc Land Management, top-up (11)
- BSc Sports Performance and Coaching, top-up (8)
- BSc Sports Therapy, top-up (11)
- Certificate in Education/Postgraduate Certificate in Education, lifelong learning (35)
- MSc Animal Welfare (16).

### **Partnership agreements with the awarding body**

7 The College has a single higher education partner, the University of Northampton. The responsibilities for managing and delivering higher education standards are clearly identified in the University's Collaborative Handbook and in the Operational Service Level Agreement that form part of the Memoranda of Cooperation between the University and the College. The close relationship both geographically and historically facilitates the management of standards. All College provision is overseen by the relevant University school and forms part of a 'field' that has responsibility for quality and standards for a group



of courses. The fields generally have a field chair, who is a member of University staff, but land and environmental management and animal welfare and management have College staff as field chairs as these subjects are not offered by the University. All schools appoint a link tutor, whose liaison responsibilities are defined in the Collaborative Handbook. The University procedures have all been produced with reference to the Academic Infrastructure and are reviewed on a rolling basis to ensure their continuing alignment. Foundation Degree proposals are required to include a mapping guide against the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*.

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

8 As a result of the expansion of higher education provision, a Director of Higher Education post was introduced from 1 January 2010. The Director of Higher Education has overall responsibility for the development of the higher education curriculum and its delivery. The postholder manages the relationship with the University of Northampton, and is a full member of the University's Academic Quality and Standards Committee. In 2010, the College was awarded 50 additional places and associated funds from the HEFCE Modernisation Scheme. The additional places are reflected in the recruitment numbers in paragraph 6. Funding has been used to extend the provision of wireless networks across the campuses in Moulton, provide additional workstations in the higher education area of the Learning Resources Centre and to support work on the updating of the land-based curriculum. There are currently plans to extend the range of postgraduate provision.

## **Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission**

9 Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the Summative review team. A student submission was presented following a College briefing to two meetings of a cross-section of students from a selection of courses and years. One student drafted the document and checked its validity with the original group and other student representatives. Students from a range of courses met the Coordinator at the preparatory meeting and reviewers during the visit, which the team found very helpful.

## **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?**

10 The Deputy Principal (Curriculum and Quality) has oversight of the higher education provision and line manages the Director of Higher Education and the Assistant Principal (Academic). Heads of faculty report to the Assistant Principal (Academic). Together with the Director of Quality Improvement and the Head of Registry Services these three senior managers form the College's Academic Division management group, with oversight of all the College's academic provision. This group meets weekly to discuss strategic and operational issues concerning all academic provision, including higher education. Each subject area with higher education provision has a designated senior lecturer, who supports the Director of Higher Education in the day-to-day management of higher education and reports formally to

the relevant subject manager. The senior lecturers effectively disseminate relevant content of these meetings and good practice to lecturing staff.

11 The key bodies with oversight of academic standards are the College's Academic Board and the Quality Improvement Committee. The membership of this committee includes the senior lecturers, the Director of Higher Education and the Director of Quality Improvement, who is the chair. University link tutors for each subject area are also members, as is the University's Senior Assistant Registrar, Quality and Curriculum Services, who has responsibility for collaborative quality matters, and the University's UK Partnerships and Offsite Learning Advisor. The Academic Board receives minutes from the Quality Improvement Committee and makes all decisions about new course proposals. Each group of courses has a course board that meets three times a year with University and student representation. The subject's senior lecturer and the University link tutor use the minutes of these meetings to produce an annual review that includes all issues relating to standards including external examiner comments and student feedback. The experience of the Developmental engagement and its outcome has informed a change to procedures within the College. Since the 2009-10 reporting cycle the Director of Higher Education uses them to produce an overall summary report for consideration by the Quality Improvement Committee and the Academic Board. The team concludes that the proactive support of the team of senior lecturers and the recently appointed Director of Higher Education creates a coherent and effective higher education management structure, which is good practice.

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

12 The team confirms the College's claim in its self-evaluation that the Academic Infrastructure is embedded in its practices. Examples include the alignment in the design of programmes, in programme specifications, in its assessment strategy and in the conduct of examination boards. The Director of Higher Education has specific responsibility for ensuring alignment with the Academic Infrastructure, updating relevant documentation and arranging staff development sessions to inform staff about significant changes. The Director's membership of the University of Northampton's Academic Standards and Quality committee is a focus for communication between the College and the University.

13 Staff reported that they found the Academic Infrastructure useful in the development of the College's higher education. In their meetings with the team, staff demonstrated familiarity with the Academic Infrastructure and commended the role of the Director of Higher Education. Documentation relating to the Academic Infrastructure is found in several key University sources, such as the Overview of Quality and Standards, the University Modular Framework Staff Handbook and the Collaborative Handbook. Detailed and informative programme specifications are presented in definitive documentation, and summaries included in student handbooks. The intended learning outcomes are carefully matched to subject benchmark statements and to the level of study. Subject knowledge and skills, assessments, and learning and teaching strategies are clearly explained.

### **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 subject area annual reviews feed into the University school's Annual Collaborative Report. Following the recommendations in the Developmental engagement, the College recognised that there were some inconsistencies in assessment practices. A Code of Practice for Higher Education Assessment has been developed to address these inconsistencies. It is written to conform with the University policy on assessment, and is accompanied by a guide for staff. The team saw evidence that this Code of Practice is widely used in the College.

15 Most of the College's provision has been subject to a formal periodic subject review over the last two academic years. This was a discrete review in the case of provision in the fields of land and environmental management and animal welfare and management. In sports studies the review has been undertaken as a part of the University school's provision. The different reviews are chaired by University staff and have afforded the College the opportunity to examine the higher education provision internally while preparing documents for the review panels to consider. The panel included external members suggested by College staff and approved by the University. The reports from these reviews all confirm that the College is fulfilling its obligations with regard to standards. Recommendations have formed part of the action plans for improvement in these areas. The remaining two subject areas, interior design and teacher training, are due to have periodic subject reviews during the academic year 2010-11. An institutional review of the overall partnership took place in December 2010. This was a strategic review, with an external panel member, of the strategic and operational aspects of the partnership and highlighted many positive elements. The panel recommended reapproval for a period of six years.

16 External examiners are in place for all courses validated by the University. They are nominated by College staff and appointed and trained by the University. Their reports are circulated to all relevant College staff to form part of the annual review and, from the reporting period for 2009-10, their comments and actions form part of the overall report on higher education. External examiners are complimentary about the provision and the quality of feedback to students. The Developmental engagement report confirmed as good practice 'a robust system for checking that assignments meet the requirements of each award and this is formally recorded in documentation which can be audited'. This process is included in the College Code of Practice. The assignment pro formas have been revised, as suggested in the Development engagement action plan, so as to make the links between learning outcomes, assessment criteria and student feedback clearer. Students do not receive formal feedback from external examiner reports. The team considers it advisable that the College should establish a structured mechanism for students to have sight of external examiner reports.

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

17 The Workforce Development Strategy informs decisions about staff development with a plan that includes all staff and supports the achievement of academic standards. All teaching staff who do not hold a teaching qualification are supported to achieve one. Currently 80 per cent of full-time teaching staff hold a level 5 or 6 teaching qualification and the other 20 per cent are working towards one. All new staff receive inductions to the College and the University, and have an appropriate member of existing staff as a mentor in order to help them settle into their role. The 'carousel days' are undertaken during study weeks, when there is little formal class contact, and provide short, focused events that staff can attend or be advised to attend. As an example, they have been used as opportunities to share good practice in response to examples identified by external examiners. During September 2010 a series of sessions for higher education staff were arranged to fully establish the Assessment Code of Practice. Where appropriate, staff are assisted in gaining higher-level academic qualifications to support current or future higher education provision. Members of staff can apply through the Staff Development Committee for support to acquire such qualifications and to attend conferences in the UK and internationally. These opportunities are valuable in supporting their continuing professional development. The College has paid conference fees for staff and students to attend a science conference relevant to both.

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

## **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?**

18 The arrangements for the delegation of responsibilities for managing the quality of learning opportunities are described in paragraphs 10 and 11. Each course has a manager, responsible for its day-to-day quality. The senior lecturers have overall responsibility for the quality of the courses and they meet frequently to share good practice and to discuss areas of commonality such as learning and teaching strategies. They attend weekly meetings with the Director of Higher Education and the Higher Education Quality Improvement Committee. The quality structure is well defined and effective; issues are discussed in course boards through to boards of study and the Academic Board.

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

19 The links with the University of Northampton are strong and proactive. Working practices are highlighted in the Memoranda of Cooperation. The validation process involves College staff, which ensures that learning opportunities are appropriate and linked to the relevant subject benchmark statement. At an operational level the course manager has responsibility for ensuring that learning opportunities are appropriate. This responsibility is facilitated by a highly productive partnership with the University link tutor. The well-integrated relationship with the University of Northampton, which is strongly collaborative and has enhanced the learning opportunities for students, is an area of good practice.

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

20 The College is clearly meeting the expectations of the precepts of the *Code of practice*, subject benchmark statements and the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*. Meetings with staff confirmed that lecturers teaching on higher education programmes are familiar with the Academic Infrastructure and new staff are introduced to its elements through induction and their mentor. Staff were able to show how relevant sections of the *Code of practice* had assisted the development of a framework to inform their approach to managing the admission of disabled students and the selection of appropriate work experience venues.

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

21 The College recruits well-qualified staff who maintain their professional development. A high proportion of those teaching on higher education courses have postgraduate qualifications. A robust and effective teaching observation system includes higher education observations. This process complements the internal developmental learning and teaching processes used to highlight areas of good practice and identify general development needs. The University undertakes annual checks to ensure that staff

are suitably qualified. From these checks, development needs are identified and fed into future staff development programmes.

22 Student views of teaching are collected through internal surveys throughout the year, module evaluations and the National Student Survey. Where practical the student voice is used to inform the structure of courses. The student meeting and the student written submission confirmed that there had been a few problems with the quality of some teaching, but that these had been addressed. They believe that teaching is now of a consistently high quality.

23 The College's commercial enterprises provide students with enriching and realistic vocational experience, which the team acknowledges as good practice. This enhances student learning, as all students have the opportunity to gain experience in one of the College's commercial activities. For example, in applied animal studies students undertake four days of work experience in the small animal veterinary practice, hydrotherapy centre or with the animals on the College's farm. Sports students assist in the running of a sports therapy centre and practise on external customers. Foundation Degree students have three weeks' work experience outside the College and the report about their industrial experience forms part of the module assessment requirements.

### **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?**

24 Resources are assessed regularly by the Academic Board, as well as during the validation and review processes to ensure their sufficiency for students. There is an effective process that allows staff to bid centrally for small items of equipment and minor building alterations. For example, laboratory resources have been provided for the veterinary nursing course. Students make good use of University resources that are available to them, helped by the proximity of the University to the College. Since 2008 the College has invested £5.1million in upgrading resources. The College library budget is adequate and partially devolved to subject teams, who work with specialist librarians to determine priorities. The Learning Resource Centre has been effectively refurbished and some dedicated higher education funding used to enhance access to computers and wireless networks. Most students consider the level of resources to be good.

25 The College's commercial activities, described in paragraph 23, provide an additional resource of a high standard. The College has established employer liaison groups as a formal forum through which to engage with the College. Employers take students on placements and this can lead to employment, for example in the gardens of local country houses and estates. Employers are not formally involved in assessments, although they frequently attend student presentations. Most of their contact with the College is at an individual level. The team met employers who spoke highly of their links with the College, its courses and the students. The team considers these relationships to be mutually beneficial, although the information for employers about their responsibilities is not centrally organised. The team concludes that it would be desirable for the College to produce guidelines to formalise relationships between employers, students and the College.

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

26 The College recognises that there is a need for separate support mechanisms for further and higher education students and has appointed a learning support tutor specifically for higher education. This post augments the support available from the University and assists potential applicants to apply for specialised allowances such as the Disabled Students' Allowance. An effective tutorial system operates for all students. A well-organised

tutorial programme claims to allocate each student two termly personal tutorials to focus on their personal development. In a meeting with the team, students said that they all have at least one 30-minute tutorial per term, which they value. A scheme of work for tutorials includes group sessions on developmental topics such as critical thinking. Students commented favourably on the tutorial system and clearly find personal tutorials helpful. Students also appreciate the open door policy which gives them regular access to approachable staff, who provide an excellent level of support. Study skills sessions in the Learning Resource Centre at lunchtimes support students in becoming independent learners

27 The virtual learning environment contains a detailed and consistent range of student learning materials, which include presentations, lecture notes and tasks, as well as course and module handbooks. These resources are easily available on and off-campus and are regularly improved year to year. The materials are monitored by course managers to ensure that the latest versions only are available. Students can navigate to individual modules to access information. A generic induction assignment is used to identify students' individual needs. This practice has resulted from the action plan that followed the Developmental engagement.

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

28 Arrangements for staff development are largely described in paragraphs 17 and 18. The staff development programme is formally linked to the College strategic plan. The University offers development sessions for higher education staff, occasionally along with other college partners. Some of these sessions take place in the College. The College Research Committee assesses staff proposals for research and decides whether they are appropriate and can be funded. The College's specialist facilities offer opportunities for staff to undertake applied research activities, such as those within the equine hydrotherapy centre. Research outcomes are reported back to the Committee and the whole process provides effective opportunities for professional updating and scholarly activity, which the team considers to be good practice. Each member of staff completes 30 hours continuing professional development, which is linked to their appraisal, as well as the strategic plan. Teaching and other duties are allocated on a caseload basis, which takes into account lecturers' needs to update themselves professionally.

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

## **Core theme 3: Public information**

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

29 The College is responsible for producing a range of information for applicants including a prospectus, course leaflets, industry-related newsletters and website information. Such information is available in a range of formats on request. The Higher Education Prospectus is a detailed publication containing information about the College's entire higher education provision. There is also a well-designed and comprehensive section relating to higher education on the College's website. This comprises information about the courses, student support and learning resources, but there is little guidance about fees and access to financial support, or information about the development of students' employability skills. In their meeting with the team students reported that when applying to the College it would

have been helpful to have links to more detailed course information. Information for staff relating to quality assurance matters is found in a range of documentation, much of which is produced by the University. While such information was accurate and complete, it included additional material that had less relevance to the College's own staff. The team came to a view that it would be desirable for the College to consider developing its own higher education staff handbook as a single point of reference for staff to assist their understanding of the management of quality in the College.

30 For current students the main source of information produced by the College is their course handbook, which is issued during induction. Copies of the comprehensive and consistent course handbooks are also available on the virtual learning environment. They contain a wide range of useful information, including details of the teaching team, guidance on regulations and College policies. Students also receive a module guide for each module undertaken. The guide and further information relating to the module is made available on the virtual learning environment. Students find the module guides helpful in providing more detailed information, such as a weekly schedule of timetabled sessions and assessment deadlines. An analysis of a sample of module guides found they conform to a standard minimum specification of content and layout. Some guides, such as the module in equine behaviour, have a comprehensive reading list and assessment guidance. Students value the information contained on the College website and in course handbooks and module guides. They acknowledged the steps the College has taken to improve the amount of information and details of assessment regulations in response to recommendations from the Developmental engagement.

**What arrangements does the College have in place to assure the accuracy and completeness of information the College has responsibility for publishing?  
How does the College know that these arrangements are effective?**

31 Clear and effective procedures ensure the accuracy and completeness of the information the College publishes, with ultimate responsibility for the approval of public documents resting with the Principal. The content of the Higher Education Prospectus is compiled by course managers, checked by their line managers and collated by the Director of Higher Education before a technical editor proofreads and the Principal approves the final draft. A similar procedure exists for course information on the College website. The technical editor regularly monitors all new material on the virtual learning environment. The Learning Technologies Manager provides weekly reports to the Assistant Principal, who quality assures the general level of information. Course handbooks and module guides follow an equivalent rigorous design and approval mechanism, with key staff within the College and University holding specific responsibilities for the consistency and completeness of the information provided. The team considers that the clarity of publishing procedures and their monitoring ensures the consistency and accuracy of public information and represents good practice.

32 Students provide feedback on the usefulness of College information through module and course reviews and reports from course representatives at board of studies meetings. The feedback is analysed and used to inform subsequent amendments to the published material. Such feedback has resulted in changes to the templates for course handbooks, for example to include explanations of how overall award classifications are calculated. Module guides provide more detailed assessment information. These improvements have been made in response to the recommendations of the Developmental engagement.

33 The University reviews and checks the accuracy of course information in effective liaison with the College. There are clear guidelines relating to publicity and marketing, including the use of the University logo, and there is explicit reference to the requirements

within the partnership agreement. The University is satisfied with the quality assurance procedures and reporting processes that assure the accuracy and completeness of published information.

**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**

34 The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in March 2010 and covered all the higher education provision. Three lines of enquiry were agreed with the College and ensured that all IQER core themes could be addressed:

**Line of enquiry 1:** How are assignments designed to meet the award standards specified by the intended learning outcomes and communicated to students through the programme specifications?

**Line of enquiry 2:** How is assessment feedback matched to grading criteria? How clearly is it communicated to students and does it provide developmental guidance?

**Line of enquiry 3:** How effectively does the timing of assessment feedback comply with the University's written policy?

35 The Developmental engagement team identified a number of areas of good practice: the robust system for checking that assignments meet the requirements of each award, and the standard templates for assessment, supports quality and standards and promote good communications with students; the range of feedback mechanisms provides developmental guidance to enhance achievement, and the diagnostic formative assessment tool enhances learning opportunities; the individual and group tutorials provide valuable support for student development.

36 The team also made a number of recommendations. It considered that it would be advisable for the College to monitor completion of the front sheet on assessment documentation to prevent errors and omissions. The College could take measures to improve the clarity and consistency of assessment information communicated through programme and module handbooks. A review of assessment documentation was also advised, to ensure effective understanding and timely communication with students. The team considered it desirable to take action to simplify the terms used to describe the roles of staff involved in the management of assessment. The College could provide additional guidance on converting assignment grades into overall module grades and calculating final award classifications. Additional measures to embed procedures that enhance student reflection could assist personal development, and the College could strengthen the procedures for collecting and using student feedback on assessment.

## **D Foundation Degrees**

37 The College has developed a suite of Foundation Degrees in line with its overall higher education strategy. These capitalise on the College's strengths in vocational provision and its commitment to operating under business principles. They also make appropriate use of the practical and commercial experience of lecturing staff. Strong industrial links have developed over a substantial period of time. All three faculties - Building and Construction, Land-based Studies and Equestrian, and Sport and General Education - offer some of the 13 Foundation Degrees, partly as progression opportunities to students studying on HNC or level 3 courses at the College and elsewhere who might not traditionally seek entry into



higher education. In 2010-11, 338 full-time equivalent students, just over half of all higher education students in the College, are studying for Foundation Degrees. Several of the courses also offer progression to level 6 of an honours degree. Foundation Degrees attract mature returners to education and those who are working in the sector and wish to study part-time. This is in accordance with the College's widening participation strategy.

38 The FdSc Land Management and FdSc Conservation and Land Management have been replaced by the FdSc Agriculture and FdSc Countryside and Wildlife Management, which began in the current academic year. Arrangements are in place to enable existing students to complete their course of study. The conclusions for Foundation Degrees are those listed in paragraphs 40-43 for the provision as a whole.

## E Conclusions and summary of judgements

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

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

- the active support of the team of senior lecturers and the recently appointed Director of Higher Education creates a coherent and effective higher education management structure (paragraphs 10, 11, 13, 18)
- the well-integrated relationship with the University of Northampton is strongly collaborative and has enhanced the learning opportunities for students (paragraphs 7, 19)
- the College's commercial enterprises provide students with enriching and realistic vocational experiences (paragraph 23)
- the opportunities for staff to undertake research and the rigorous approval and funding process of the Research Committee encourage professional updating and scholarly activity (paragraph 28)
- the clarity of publishing procedures and their monitoring ensures the consistency and accuracy of public information (paragraph 31).

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

42 The team agreed one area where the College is **advised** to take action:

- establish a structured mechanism for students to have sight of external examiner reports (paragraph 16).

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

- consider producing guidelines to formalise relationships between employers, students and the College (paragraph 25)
- consider developing its own higher education staff handbook (paragraph 29).

44 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

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responsibilities effectively, as set out in the relevant partnership agreement for the management of the standards of the awards of its awarding bodies.

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

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, in the context of this Summative review, reliance **can** be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

| <b>Moulton College action plan relating to the Summative review: January 2011</b>                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                     |                    |                                                                        |                                                                            |                                  |                                                                               |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Good practice</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>Action to be taken</b>                                                                                                           | <b>Target date</b> | <b>Action by</b>                                                       | <b>Success indicators</b>                                                  | <b>Reported to</b>               | <b>Evaluation</b>                                                             |
| In the course of the Summative review the team identified the following areas of <b>good practice</b> that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                     |                    |                                                                        |                                                                            |                                  |                                                                               |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the active support of the team of senior lecturers and the recently appointed Director of Higher Education creates a coherent and effective higher education management structure (paragraphs 10, 11, 13, 18)</li> </ul> | Continue the development of senior lecturers in their role with targeted staff development                                          | 30 September 2011  | Director of HE                                                         | Improved student experience                                                | HE Quality Improvement Committee | Continuing professional development (CPD) records of staff                    |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Expand the College HE Annual Review to incorporate subject managers' HE action points to ensure full integration with subject areas | 30 November 2011   | Subject managers, Director of HE, Director of Quality Improvement (QI) | Improved inclusion of subject areas in the development of higher education | Academic Board                   | Appraisal and performance review summaries<br><br>HE Annual Review and Report |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the well-integrated relationship with the University of Northampton is strongly collaborative and</li> </ul>                                                                                                             | Ensure full representation on, and attendance of staff at, relevant University committees, meetings and events                      | 31 December 2011   | Heads of faculty, Subject managers                                     | Improved coordination and engagement with University formal processes      | HE Quality Improvement Committee | Minutes of meetings<br>CPD records for events                                 |

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| has enhanced the learning opportunities for students (paragraphs 7, 19)                                                                                                                                                                           | Engage in the processes in order to create a true strategic partnership including the development of shared resources                                                                                                                                                  | 30 June 2012                                                | Senior Management Team                                                                                       | The development of shared resources and co-funding of research staff                                                                          | Senior managers and governors                                                                                 | Minutes of meetings                                                 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the College's commercial enterprises provide students with enriching and realistic vocational experiences (paragraph 23)</li> </ul>                                                                        | Review and extend the developments made in 2010-11 to enhance the student experience and the quality of learning in commercial enterprises                                                                                                                             | 30 September 2011                                           | Assistant Principal, Director of QI                                                                          | Compliance statistics relating to consistent application of process                                                                           | Academic Board Commercial managers' meeting with senior management team (SMT)                                 | Student feedback in module evaluations and overall HE annual survey |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the opportunities for staff to undertake research and the rigorous approval and funding process of the Research Committee encourage professional updating and scholarly activity (paragraph 28)</li> </ul> | <p>Monitor research and scholarly activity of staff engaged in higher education by the production of an annual report on research activity and outcomes</p> <p>Extend the number of staff undertaking postgraduate study into all fields of the College's HE offer</p> | <p>31 October 2011</p> <p>30 September 2011 and ongoing</p> | <p>Senior Lecturer - Research</p> <p>Deputy Principal Curriculum &amp; Quality (Chair of Research Group)</p> | <p>Increased number of successful bids for external research funding</p> <p>Staff engaged in research in all substantial HE subject areas</p> | <p>Research Committee Academic Board</p> <p>Staff engaged in research in all substantial HE subject areas</p> | <p>Staff CPD records</p> <p>Annual HE review</p>                    |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the clarity of publishing procedures and</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                        | Fully establish the protocols for the checking of published                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 31 December 2011                                            | Senior Management Team                                                                                       | Improved consistency report through audit of all                                                                                              | Academic Division meetings                                                                                    | Audit reports                                                       |

|                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                               |                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                           |                                         |                                                                                    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| their monitoring ensure the consistency and accuracy of public information (paragraph 31).                                                                 | information<br><br>Ensure consistency and accuracy of information in the website redesign project                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                               |                                                                   | channels of communication<br><br>Feedback from website users during trials of new site                                                                    | Marketing Committee                     | Statistics and feedback about website users                                        |
| <b>Advisable</b>                                                                                                                                           | <b>Action to be taken</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <b>Target date</b>                            | <b>Action by</b>                                                  | <b>Success indicators</b>                                                                                                                                 | <b>Reported to</b>                      | <b>Evaluation</b>                                                                  |
| The team agreed one area where the College should be <b>advised</b> to take action:                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                               |                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                           |                                         |                                                                                    |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>establish a structured mechanism for students to have sight of external examiner reports (paragraph 16).</li> </ul> | <p>External examiner reports to be available on virtual learning environment (VLE) course sites</p> <p>Key points from reports to be discussed at the Course Board in October each year where membership includes students</p> <p>Further develop the HE student forum to consider the common overarching issues arising from external examiners' reports</p> | <p>31 October 2011</p> <p>31 October 2011</p> | <p>Senior lecturers</p> <p>Director of HE,<br/>Director of QI</p> | <p>All students aware of external examiners' comments<br/>Minutes of Course Boards</p> <p>Establishment of HE student forum and impact on development</p> | <p>HE Quality Improvement Committee</p> | <p>Student feedback at Course Boards</p> <p>Reports discussed at student forum</p> |

| Desirable                                                                                                                                                             | Action to be taken                                                                                                                                                                                  | Target date                                    | Action by                                                              | Success indicators                                                                                                   | Reported to                                             | Evaluation                                                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| The team agreed the following areas where it would be <b>desired</b> to take action:                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                |                                                                        |                                                                                                                      |                                                         |                                                                |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>consider producing guidelines to formalise relationships between employers, students and the College (paragraph 25)</li> </ul> | Review industrial experience protocols in order to formalise the relationships                                                                                                                      | 31 August 2011                                 | Assistant Principal, Director HE                                       | Implementation of the guidelines with feedback from employers                                                        | Academic Board                                          | Minutes of Industrial Liaison Groups Annual HE Review          |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>consider developing its own higher education staff handbook (paragraph 29).</li> </ul>                                         | <p>A Staff Handbook to be produced so that any member of staff teaching a higher education module and business support staff can refer to it.</p> <p>Development sessions to introduce handbook</p> | <p>31 August 2011</p> <p>30 September 2011</p> | <p>Director of HE, Head of Registry Services</p> <p>Director of HE</p> | <p>Consistent application of processes that are designed in collaboration with the awarding body</p> <p>As above</p> | <p>HE Quality Improvement Committee</p> <p>As above</p> | <p>Course Board minutes</p> <p>Course team meeting minutes</p> |

**RG 709 04/11**

**The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education**

Southgate House  
Southgate Street  
Gloucester  
GL1 1UB

Tel 01452 557000  
Fax 01452 557070  
Email [comms@qaa.ac.uk](mailto:comms@qaa.ac.uk)  
Web [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)