



Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

Southport College

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Preface

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

Purpose of IQER

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

The IQER process

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

Developmental engagement

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

The main elements of a Developmental engagement are:

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

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

Summative review

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

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

Evidence

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

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

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

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

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

Outcomes of IQER

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

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

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

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

Executive summary

The Summative review of Southport College carried out in March 2011

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

Good practice

The team has identified the following **good practice** for dissemination:

- the positive contribution of the HE and Access Coordinator post to the development of the higher education provision
- the system the College has developed for ensuring academic standards is well matched to the needs of the small provision and the three awarding body partners
- staff new to higher education teaching are able to gain understanding of the standard required by engaging in team teaching with experienced lecturers, as well as having a mentor
- students benefit from close working relationships with tutors, which facilitates ongoing discussions about their progress
- higher education staff are pursuing higher level qualifications and take advantage of a range of development opportunities offered by the College and its awarding bodies
- the College has sought peer opinion from nearby further education colleges about the quality of its library learning centre resources
- the collaborative development of course information for students serves to reinforce the strong working partnerships with the awarding bodies.

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:

- ensure that the documentation of processes and subsequent actions, as recorded in the relevant minutes, should be sufficiently detailed
- ensure that the FdSc New Media Design & Technology course team reflects on the students' perceptions and expectations of their learning experiences and takes action where necessary
- audit work placements prior to students commencing their placement to ensure that they provide appropriate opportunities for students to meet the module learning outcomes.

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

- consolidate systems for gathering student feedback, addressing actions and responding to them
- continue to increase the dissemination of good practice across curriculum teams, as well as within them.

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 Southport 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 Edge Hill University, Liverpool John Moores University and the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan). The review was carried out by Mrs Patricia Millner and Mr Paul Chamberlain (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 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 Southport College is a well-established, medium-sized further education college providing a diverse programme of training to a variety of learners in the North West. There are two campuses, but only the Southport campus offers higher education. The College's mission statement is 'Working in partnership to provide high quality education and training for individuals and employers'. Total student numbers for 2010-11 are 4,246. The College is the area's largest provider of vocational courses, delivering a range of full and part-time courses across a broad range of provision from pre-entry level through to level 5. Higher education provision is delivered in partnership with local universities and is indirectly funded. The College has increased its portfolio of skills-based provision for adults and offers pre-access and Access courses, which provide progression to higher education. There are 69 part-time and 42 full-time students, amounting to 55.80 full-time equivalents, studying at higher education levels at the College. The higher education programmes are taught by 18 members of staff, who also deliver further education courses.

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

Edge Hill University

- FdSc Integrated Practice for Early Years and Children or Young People Year 1 (9)

Liverpool John Moores University

- BA (Hons) Fine Art Year 1 (15)

University of Central Lancashire

- FdSc New Media Design & Technology (18)
- Certificate in Education (6.6)
- Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (1.6)
- Postgraduate Certificate in Education (5.2)
- Certificate in Preparing for teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (0.4).

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

6 The College has partnership arrangements with three universities. A single programme with each is delivered with Edge Hill University and Liverpool John Moores University. One Foundation Degree and a number of teacher education programmes are validated by UCLan. The responsibilities for managing and delivering higher education standards are clearly identified in the universities' memoranda of collaboration, which define the nature of the partnership. Separate documents, which may be in the form of appendices to the memorandum, define the specific responsibilities of the awarding bodies and the College in relation to academic standards including assessment, student support and services. Overarching university documents, such as academic regulations, provide the framework within which university courses are managed within the College.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

7 Since the Developmental engagement there has been considerable change in the higher education landscape. Some universities have capped student numbers, which has impacted on the recruitment to the FdSc Integrated Practice for Early Years and Children or Young People and initial teacher training programmes. The FdSc in New Media Design & Technology programme, validated by UCLan in 2009 to replace the FdSc in Computing, is now fully operational, but the University was unable to allocate additional student numbers. Therefore eight additional places were secured from the Lancashire Lifelong Learning Network. Liverpool John Moores University has given notice that it intends to suspend recruitment to the BA (Hons) Fine Art for 2011-12, both within the University and at partner institutions. This is to enable a radical overhaul of the course in the light of poor student feedback in the 2010 National Student Survey. As a result, the current intake is likely to be the final one for the College. The College has undertaken a restructure of its management team and reporting systems in response to the continuing impact of the remodelling of the national post-16 qualification frameworks. A new HE and Access Coordinator post has been appointed to take over the cross-college liaison responsibilities of the previous manager and is designated as the main contact person for the College's university partners.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

8 Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the Summative review team. A submission was provided which had been written by one higher education student with support from the HE and Access Coordinator. Student views were gathered through surveys and focus groups which discussed the three core themes of Summative review. The IQER coordinator met several students at the preparatory meeting and the whole team met students representative of the higher education provision on two occasions during the visit. Reviewers found the student contribution 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?

9 The College has recently taken the opportunity presented by a wider review of its management structures to make changes to the internal management of its higher education provision. Overall responsibility for quality and academic standards is held by the College Executive Team. The College operates a matrix structure and recently created an HE and Access Coordinator post, the holder of which reports directly to the Assistant Principal and works across the College. This postholder provides a link to colleagues in the awarding bodies. All courses are now managed within six academic departments rather than faculties. Higher education curriculum leaders report directly to their respective heads of department. Staff and representatives of all the awarding bodies confirm that the changes have been introduced effectively, and have offered opportunities for the further enhancement of the provision.

10 Curriculum leaders report on academic standards through monthly departmental Boards of Studies and to the HE and Access Coordinator through regular HE Practitioner Group meetings. The Quality Improvement Group of senior staff has responsibility for monitoring issues relating to observation systems, overseeing the preparation for external accreditation, and the monitoring and validation of annual quality reports. The group receives reports from external examiners appointed by the validating bodies. A Performance Management Group monitors and generates action relating to higher education performance targets on attendance, retention, achievement, success and progression. Statistical data is supplied by the College management information system.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

11 Staff engage with the Academic Infrastructure through the processes of design, validation, delivery and evaluation of higher education courses. The course documentation for all awards reflects awareness of the precepts of the *Code of practice* and the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*. The team confirms that these requirements, together with relevant moderation meetings and assessment boards, are effective in ensuring appropriate academic standards. The College ensures that all staff teaching on programmes are involved in validation and are aware of the levels of the FHEQ. The team saw evidence of this in the recently validated FdSc New Media Design & Technology. The College works closely with its awarding bodies to ensure the integrity of the moderation process, as demonstrated by the FdSc Integrated Practice for Early Years and Children or Young People with Edge Hill University and the initial teacher training programmes with UCLan.

12 Student handbooks contain information reflecting the requirements of the FHEQ. External examiners' reports confirm that the College is responding to the requirements of the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*. Some external examiner reports for partner colleges are aggregated, which makes it impossible for course teams to identify points specific to their courses. UCLan has reviewed its report template and guidance to external examiners in order to ensure that references to individual colleges are made. The external examiner reports note the quality of feedback given to students, particularly in the initial teacher training programmes. The student written submission and students the

team met confirmed that assessment feedback is helpful, with constructive comments which support progression.

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?

13 The College conscientiously follows academic regulations determined by the awarding bodies' policies and procedures. It is responsible for delivering courses as validated by the partner universities and set out in definitive documents. Responsibilities are clearly defined within formal memoranda of agreement between the parties. The College is responsible for appointing curriculum leaders and operating course committees with student representatives. The committees have responsibility for the day-to-day operation of awards and the quality of the student experience. The College is also responsible for operating student feedback mechanisms and reporting on outcomes to the awarding bodies. The College is currently working with UCLan to increase the level of student participation in surveys. There are some contradictions in the approach taken by the College to obtaining, verifying, recording and responding to student feedback. Some students reported that they are required to respond to too many surveys, while others noted that they were unaware of student representation and feedback systems. The team concludes that it is desirable for the College to consolidate systems for gathering student feedback, addressing actions and responding to them. The College has responsibility for ensuring that students have access to all assessment regulations. Students confirm that these are supplied and interpreted effectively. The awarding bodies ensure that all staff teaching on courses are appropriately qualified. Staff details are included in validation documents and reviewed through link tutors.

14 The HE and Access Coordinator is designated as the main contact for the College's awarding bodies. Staff and awarding bodies agree that the management reorganisation and the appointment of the HE and Access Coordinator has improved communications and enhanced the delivery of the provision. The postholder represents the College at partnership forums and disseminates information to course teams and senior management. College staff and awarding body members recognise the positive contribution of the HE and Access Coordinator post to the development of the higher education provision, which the team considers to be good practice.

15 Annual monitoring reports are the main vehicle by which the College is assured that it is carrying out the requirements of the awarding bodies. These reports are effectively used as part of the College's quality processes. They are monitored by the awarding bodies and the College's Quality Improvement Group. The system the College has developed for ensuring academic standards is well matched to the needs of the small provision and the three awarding body partners. It is working well and is an example of good practice.

16 Staff acknowledge their reliance on informal communication within course teams and in their contact with the HE and Access Coordinator. The minutes and recording of discussions in course team meetings and the HE Practitioner Group do not reflect the staff claims for their constructive value. Although the reporting arrangements are clearly defined, it is advisable that the College ensure that the documentation of processes and subsequent actions, as recorded in the relevant minutes, should be sufficiently detailed. The College is able to identify a range of successful, innovative activities which are enhancing academic standards within courses. However, these have not yet been fully exploited as good practice as suggested in the Developmental engagement action plan. The team considers it desirable that the College should continue to increase the dissemination of good practice across curriculum teams as well as within them.

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

17 All staff are required to maintain a continuing professional development record, and staff appraisals, observations of teaching and learning and annual monitoring reports identify potential staff development requirements. Where appropriate opportunities exist, staff are encouraged to study for higher degrees. The awarding bodies also offer College staff access to learning and development, for example a session explaining the Academic Infrastructure. Staff development activities are noted at the HE Practitioner Group meetings.

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?

18 The detail of the management structure is described in paragraphs 9 and 10.

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

19 The formal partnership agreements include clear statements of the delegated responsibilities of the College regarding the delivery of learning opportunities. There are expectations from all awarding bodies that the College will manage staffing, learning and physical resources, teaching and assessment, marketing, recruitment, admissions, induction, student support and services, complaints, placement and work-based learning, and progression and careers guidance, in line with the arrangements agreed at validation. The College is diligent in carrying out the annual monitoring procedures laid down by the awarding bodies. Effective working relationships exist also between partner link tutors and College staff, so that questions regarding curriculum and procedural guidelines are quickly resolved. The curriculum leader for fine art teaches at Liverpool John Moores University one day a week. This enhances his own development and the transition for College students who have progressed there to level 5.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

20 College staff engage with the Academic Infrastructure by involving themselves with awarding bodies' regulatory frameworks for validation and revalidation. The College implements university regulations, which have been rigorously mapped to the elements of the Academic Infrastructure. With regard to the sections of the *Code of practice* which pertain to learning opportunities, the College has appropriate facilities and processes in place.

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

21 The College Teaching and Learning policy applies to all levels of education but has no specific differentiation for higher education. It sets out the details of its expectations in order to provide high-quality, well-resourced teaching, rigorous assessment and appropriate provision for additional needs. It is good practice that staff new to higher education teaching gain understanding of the standard required by engaging in team teaching with experienced lecturers as well as having a mentor. These are colleagues within the College in the case of the teacher training courses or with staff from Edge Hill University in the case of the FdSc Integrated Practice. One of the innovative learning activities is illustrated by BA (Hons) Fine Art students, who have the opportunity to study overseas in a scheme designed to focus on 'cultural referencing'. Trips to Calcutta, Dubai and New York have been supplemented by a British Council link with a school in Calcutta. All art and design students are included in these activities, so level 3 students benefit from working alongside level 4 fine art students.

22 Annual observations of teaching and learning are the formal procedure used across the College. Staff are graded on their performance. This process identifies good practice. For example, a member of staff presented a teaching session on 'Visual Spatial Resources in the Classroom' at a UCLan scheme meeting as well as at a College staff development event. The HE Practitioner Group is also a forum for sharing good practice in teaching and learning in higher education. In addition, there are developmental observations such as team teaching and 'walk through' observations. In the teacher training area there are shared observations with other partners of the UCLan scheme.

23 It is the remit of the Quality Improvement Group to oversee and generate action relating to the implementation of good practice and continuous quality development in teaching and learning. To inform senior managers about the quality of teaching and learning, the Quality Improvement Group receives reports on the outcomes of lesson observations and sets priorities for staff development.

24 Feedback from students on teaching and learning is gathered in a number of ways through module evaluations, online surveys twice a year and higher education focus groups. Awarding bodies also canvas student opinion. The most recent higher education student survey showed an overall high level of student satisfaction with the intellectual challenge of their courses and teaching. This echoes the opinions voiced in the higher education focus groups. Student representation at course team meetings is an effective way for students to raise issues. At the student meeting and at other points during the visit, the team noted a number of issues regarding the new FdSc New Media Design & Technology. Some students do not fully understand their responsibility for independent learning, and other aspects of the course do not match their expectations. It is advisable that the College ensure that the FdSc New Media Design & Technology course team reflects on the students' perceptions and expectations of their learning experience and takes action where necessary.

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

25 Supportive systems are in place to identify learning requirements at an early stage. Application forms are reviewed by the student services team and applicants are interviewed so that any issues may be brought to the College's attention. Induction activities for higher education students include diagnostic assessments to identify individual learning, literacy or numeracy needs. The assessments do not address information technology skills, which may be just as important, particularly to mature students. Students are given feedback on their performance and support can be put in place immediately or at a later date if needs arise during the course. A named member of student services staff is assigned so that response

to concerns is prompt and appropriate. Higher education students are supported to apply for the Disabled Students' Allowance, and help is given while assessment is carried out or if a student has needs but is not eligible for the allowance. For example, there is a dyslexia support team which assists higher education students.

26 The pattern of tutorial support varies across the higher education courses. One-to-one scheduled tutorials are highly valued, particularly by teacher training and fine art students. Students benefit from the close working relationships with tutors, which facilitate ongoing discussions about their progress and which the team considers to be good practice. Students on the FdSc New Media Design & Technology course have timetabled sessions with a pastoral tutor who helps with matters such as welfare, additional and study support and UCLan applications. Valuable help is provided by the pastoral tutor in structuring support and making arrangements for students with personal difficulties to complete their studies. New media students also have opportunities within module sessions to discuss their assessment feedback and academic progress. Students feel that they have open access to tutors, in person and by email, so that concerns are dealt with promptly. The student meeting confirmed the view expressed in higher education focus group meetings and the student written submission that students are satisfied with the academic support they receive from tutors and with student services.

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

27 The College Staff Development Policy makes a high level of commitment to supporting staff development activities. Continuous professional development is obligatory for all teaching staff at the College. There are eight days of compulsory staff development over the academic year, for which classes are suspended. Individual staff development is identified through the appraisal system and takes into account information from annual monitoring reports and observations of teaching. Several higher education staff are undertaking master's degrees and one is doing a PhD. A number of others are pursuing postgraduate teaching qualifications.

28 Staff who deliver the FdSc New Media Design & Technology have undergone training to familiarise themselves with the new computers and software obtained for the new programme. Other activities undertaken by higher education staff include mentor training, validation days and accreditation panels. In addition, staff avail themselves of opportunities to attend events held by the awarding bodies. Examples include the UCLan conference and a session on interview protocols and procedures held by Liverpool John Moores University. It is good practice that higher education staff are pursuing higher level qualifications and take advantage of a range of development opportunities offered by the College and its awarding bodies.

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?

29 Prior to giving approval to develop a new course, the College's Curriculum and Planning Group reviews the resource implications. Human, physical and electronic learning resources are checked as part of the validation procedures of awarding bodies to ensure appropriateness and adequacy. The College has made a significant investment in new software and computers to meet the requirements for up-to-date industry-standard equipment for the recently approved FdSc New Media Design & Technology course. The Library Centre Report written for UCLan review panels identifies excellent access to a wide range of College facilities and online resources. Library staff encourage students' growing use of e-learning materials. It is good practice that the College has sought peer

opinion from nearby further education colleges about the quality of its library learning centre resources. The ensuing report was positive, with an observation about some out-of-date texts which have subsequently been removed.

30 Student feedback through surveys and higher education focus groups, as well as the annual monitoring process, provides the College with ongoing assurance that the learning resources are sufficient and accessible. Students are generally satisfied with the equipment and availability of learning materials. Where concerns have been raised about unsuitable rooms or lack of access to specialist areas, the curriculum leader and head of department have made timetable changes to address the issues. The College's virtual learning environment is well used and students rate it highly. Each curriculum team populates an area, including with course materials such as course handbooks, module guides and lesson presentations.

31 On the Foundation Degrees, where students are not employed in the vocational area, they are expected to find their own placement. In the case of the FdSc Integrated Practice, there is comprehensive documentation to support the delivery of the placement module developed by the awarding body. For example, there is an informative booklet for placement supervisors and an educational practice audit document. For other courses, it is advisable that the College audit all work placements prior to students commencing their placement to ensure that they provide appropriate opportunities for students to meet the module learning outcomes.

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?

32 The College publishes an annual higher education prospectus and associated course leaflets. The text of the prospectus is also available on the College website, with clear navigation enabling direct access to specific programmes. The College publishes its Strategic Plan and Higher Education Strategy so that it is accessible to stakeholders. Course handbooks and programme specifications are produced in collaboration with the awarding bodies. Curriculum leaders are responsible for adding information specific to the College and the handbooks are signed off by heads of department. Curriculum leaders make module information packs, assignment briefs, learning outcomes and marking criteria available through the virtual learning environment and in hard copy. Leaflets outline student application procedures and financial information. Students the team met and those who contributed to the student written submission appreciate the content and thoroughness of the course handbooks. They receive clear guidance and information regarding intended learning outcomes and assessment criteria through module handbooks published in hard copy and on the virtual learning environment.

**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?**

33 The Marketing Department designs and creates individual publicity pages for each higher education course. These appear on the website and are collated into a Progression and Higher Education Prospectus loose-leaf folder, along with additional information on how to apply to courses, student services and student finance. The College has rigorous and effective procedures for the production and quality monitoring of corporate publications whether in hard copy or on the website. Draft copies of the pages for new and existing courses are prepared each year and sent to curriculum leaders and heads of department for careful checking to ensure the accuracy of the information. The Head of Marketing is responsible for signing off the material before it is sent to the awarding body for its approval.

34 Version control is successfully achieved by strict oversight of the individual leaflets, which can only be obtained by printing hard copies from the webpage which holds the most up-to-date edition. The Head of Marketing attends meetings with awarding bodies to make sure that publicity materials adhere to their branding and content requirements. In addition, the College is required to present publicity materials to the awarding body when submitting the annual monitoring report.

35 The College seeks students' views through higher education focus groups twice a year. The website is the major source of information for students who progress from further education. In response to students' requests for more detailed information, the College is creating links from the course web pages directly to the relevant sections of the awarding bodies' websites. It has also created a larger font version of the website.

36 The College works closely with awarding bodies in the production of course and module handbooks. The partner awarding bodies provide templates which are customised by course leaders, for example to include teaching staff contact details. Curriculum leaders who edit the handbooks are responsible for making all of the course information available on the virtual learning environment in a consistent way. Students report that this information is detailed, clear and easily accessed in hard copy and electronic form.

37 The College has effective arrangements in place to ensure the accuracy and completeness of its publicity materials. Its close working relationships with the awarding bodies ensure that programme and module information is of high quality and comprehensive. The collaborative development of course information for students serves to reinforce the strong working partnerships with the awarding bodies and is an area of good practice.

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

38 The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in December 2009 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 does the College ensure sufficiency and timeliness of feedback?

Line of enquiry 2: How does the College ensure that methods of assessment and marking criteria are clearly outlined to students?

Line of enquiry 3: How does the College ensure that academic standards in relation to assessment are met across programmes and validating bodies?

39 The Developmental engagement team identified a number of areas of good practice. Thorough, constructive and timely formative and summative feedback to students enhances development and effective learning. Effective working relationships with awarding bodies foster partnerships of mutual benefit. The collaborative development of course information for students reinforces the strong working partnerships with the awarding bodies. The College actively engages with employers to enhance the currency of its programmes and assessments through the role of work-based placement supervisors and mentors. Moderation and standardisation activities ensure consistent assessment decisions across the partner colleges and enable the sharing of good practice.

40 The team also made two desirable recommendations. The team recommended that the College should discuss with the awarding bodies whether all assessment schedules can be produced at the start of the academic year, and that it should increase the dissemination of good practice across curriculum teams as well as within them.

D Foundation Degrees

41 The College offers the first year of the FdSc Integrated Practice for Early Years and Children or Young People, with the second year at Edge Hill University. The FdSc New Media Design & Technology, now in its second year, is validated by UCLan and replaces the FdSc Computing. Twenty-seven full-time students are studying for these awards. The College would have liked to expand its Foundation Degree provision, but the capping of student numbers will make this unlikely.

42 The conclusions listed in paragraphs 45 to 48 apply to all higher education courses at the College. Two advisable recommendations apply specifically to FDs:

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

- ensure that the FdSc New Media Design & Technology course team reflects on the students' perceptions and expectations of their learning experiences and takes action where necessary (paragraph 24)
- audit work placements prior to students commencing their placement to ensure that they provide appropriate opportunities for students to meet the module learning outcomes (paragraph 31).

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

44 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Southport College's management of its responsibilities for academic standards and for the quality of learning opportunities of the awards the College offers on behalf of its awarding bodies. This was based upon discussion with staff and students and scrutiny of evidence provided by the College and its awarding bodies, Edge Hill University, Liverpool John Moores University and the University of Central Lancashire.

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

- the positive contribution of the HE and Access Coordinator post to the development of the higher education provision (paragraphs 9 and 14)
- the system the College has developed for ensuring academic standards is well matched to the needs of the small provision and the three awarding body partners (paragraph 15)
- staff new to higher education teaching are able to gain understanding of the standard required by engaging in team teaching with experienced lecturers, as well as having a mentor (paragraph 21)
- students benefit from close working relationships with tutors, which facilitates ongoing discussions about their progress (paragraph 26)
- higher education staff are pursuing higher level qualifications and take advantage of a range of development opportunities offered by the College and its awarding bodies (paragraph 28)
- the College has sought peer opinion from nearby further education colleges about the quality of its library learning centre resources (paragraph 29)
- the collaborative development of course information for students serves to reinforce the strong working partnerships with the awarding bodies (paragraph 37).

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

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

- ensure that the documentation of processes and subsequent actions, as recorded in the relevant minutes, should be sufficiently detailed (paragraph 16)
- ensure that the FdSc New Media Design & Technology course team reflects on the students' perceptions and expectations of their learning experiences and takes action where necessary (paragraph 24)
- audit work placements prior to students commencing their placement to ensure that they provide appropriate opportunities for students to meet the module learning outcomes (paragraph 31).

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

- consolidate systems for gathering student feedback, addressing actions and responding to them (paragraph 13)
- continue to increase the dissemination of good practice across curriculum teams, as well as within them (paragraph 16).

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

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

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

Southport College action plan relating to the Summative review: March 2011						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
In the course of the Summative review the team identified the following areas of good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the positive contribution of the HE and Access Coordinator post to the development of the higher education provision (paragraphs 9 and 14) 	Annually review the HE Access Coordinator role at appraisal	Dec 2011	Assistant Principal	HE Coordinator post maintained	College Executive Team	Staff structure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the system the College has developed for ensuring academic standards is well matched to the needs of the small provision and the three awarding body 	Develop annual higher education staff development programme to include Academic Infrastructure and one other compulsory higher education course-related activity	June 2012	Head of Quality	Staff development schedule	Quality Improvement Group	Attendance and evaluation forms

partners (paragraph 15)						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> staff new to higher education teaching are able to gain understanding of the standard required by engaging in team teaching with experienced lecturers, as well as having a mentor (paragraph 21) 	<p>Revise new staff induction procedures for HE staff to include peer observation</p> <p>Pilot induction procedure</p>	<p>Sept 2011</p> <p>Sept 2011</p>	<p>HE Coordinator</p> <p>Professional Development Manager</p>	<p>Induction documentation completed</p> <p>Staff development records</p> <p>Report on progress. Roll out for Jan recruitment</p>	<p>Personnel</p> <p>Quality Improvement Group</p>	<p>Staff Survey in May 2012 evaluated by Personnel and Vice Principal Services and HE Coordinator meetings</p> <p>Staff feedback, appraisals and probation reports</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students benefit from close working relationships with tutors, which facilitates ongoing discussions about their progress (paragraph 26) 	Maintain the high standard of one-to-one tutorials built into the curriculum delivery	Ongoing	Curriculum Leaders/Heads of department	External examiner reports	Quality Improvement Group	Curriculum Leader through feedback form to students and reported in Annual Monitoring Reports
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> higher education staff are pursuing 	Continue to publicise and fund staff	Annually	Head of Quality	Attendance at Award opportunity	Quality Improvement Group	Annual Staff Development evaluation by Head

higher level qualifications and take advantage of a range of development opportunities offered by the College and its awarding bodies (paragraph 28)	development to support Awards and Development Activity in line with the College Awards fund procedures					of Quality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the College has sought peer opinion from nearby further education colleges about the quality of its library learning centre resources (paragraph 29) 	Continue to review the library provision in consultation with peers	Annually	Head of Information Communication Technology	Reports included in self-assessment	Quality Improvement Group	Report to Quality Improvement Group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the collaborative development of course information for students serves to reinforce the strong working partnerships with the 	Maintain effective working relationships with higher education partners by attending meetings, validation and development opportunities	Annually	HE Coordinator, Curriculum Leaders and Heads of Department	Partnership meetings, Course information booklets, Student feedback, Annual Monitoring Reports	Assistant Principal Quality Improvement Group	Appraisal minutes, Annual Monitoring Reports, Standardisation meetings

awarding bodies (paragraph 37).						
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team agreed a number of areas where the College should be advised to take action:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that the documentation of processes and subsequent actions, as recorded in the relevant minutes, should be sufficiently detailed (paragraph 16) 	Request minute takers to attend higher education meetings to ensure detailed reporting	Sept 2011	HE Coordinator	Detailed minutes	Assistant Principal	Minute review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that the FdSc New Media Design & Technology course team reflects on the students' perceptions and expectations of their learning experiences 	Establish systematic annual focus group calendar and provide minutes and action plans to support department action planning	Annually Immediately	Quality Department Curriculum Leader/Head of Department	Positive feedback from students New induction programme	Assistant Principal and Heads of Department Head of Department	Review the feedback from students and take action as appropriate Board of Studies meetings and through survey of students Oct 2011

and take action where necessary (paragraph 24)	Review induction programme Regular course meetings with students	Sept 2011	Curriculum Leader /Head of Department	Minutes of meetings	Head of Department	and Student Focus Groups Nov 2011 Student Focus Groups Nov 2011 and Jan 2012
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> audit work placements prior to students commencing their placement to ensure that they provide appropriate opportunities for students to meet the module learning outcomes (paragraph 31). 	Establish audit schedule at beginning of course for all placements and conduct risk assessment before learners commence	Sept 2011	Curriculum Leader, Foundation Degree Integrated Practice	Established visit register and risk assessment paperwork, Awarding Organisation liaison, Board of Studies minutes	Director of Skills and Enterprise, HE institute (Edge Hill University), HE Co-ordinator	Annual Monitoring Reports
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:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> consolidate systems for 	Establish a systematic	Sept 2011	Head of Quality	Completion rates in feedback and focus	Quality Improvement	Annual Governors' report, Annual

gathering student feedback, addressing actions and responding to them (paragraph 13)	annual focus group calendar and provide minutes and action plans to support department action planning			groups	Group	Monitoring Reports, Student Focus Group minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> continue to increase the dissemination of good practice across curriculum teams, as well as within them (paragraph 16). 	Agenda item of good practice to be added to the higher education meetings. Use of Teaching and Learning hour specifically for higher education	Sept 2011	HE Coordinator	Effective sharing of good practice	Quality Improvement Group	Student evaluation of experience

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