



Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

Newcastle-under-Lyme College

March 2011

SR 38/2010

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2011

ISBN 978 1 84979 292 9

All QAA's publications are available on our website www.qaa.ac.uk

Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

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 Newcastle-under-Lyme 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 use of the Higher Education Practitioners' Forum to inform and disseminate higher education policy contributes significantly to assuring academic standards and the quality of learning resources provided
- the use of standardisation and moderation meetings for Foundation Degrees and teacher training awards brings rigour and consistency to the internal verification process
- the College's Higher Education Assessment Feedback Policy provides clear guidance on providing timely and effective feedback
- academic and pastoral support and guidance for students is highly accessible and makes effective use of electronic media
- the higher education portal offers significant additional teaching and learning opportunities, including access to staff-monitored online discussion groups and seminars
- the College's developing use of interactive social networking as a publishing medium is proving effective in enhancing communications with, and between, higher education students
- the higher education portal provides an effective communications channel for students and staff, allowing them direct access to a wide range of online materials and information links, and enhances substantially the identity of higher education within the College.

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 **desirable** for the College to:

- increase the availability and take-up of staff development activities specific to higher education and encourage further staff engagement in wider scholarly activities
- continue to develop means of providing feedback effectively to all students in response to issues raised
- consider the further development of College higher education publications in order to project a more visible and distinct identity for the provision.

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 Newcastle-under-Lyme College. The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the College discharges its responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes which the College delivers on behalf of Edexcel and Staffordshire University. The review was carried out by Professor David Eastwood, Professor Chris Gale and Mr Bob Millington (reviewers) and Mr Jeffery Butel (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 Newcastle-under-Lyme College was formed as a tertiary college in 1986. Its mission is 'To shape successful lives through excellent education and training'. It is located within the North Staffordshire Regeneration Zone and recruitment is largely from Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent. The most sizeable provision is a broad range of vocational and GCE A-level programmes for 16 to 18 year-olds. This is complemented by activity in higher education, work-based learning and apprenticeships, employer-related training, link work with schools, and community outreach programmes. The College is now established in its new campus which opened in January 2010. This includes a dedicated University Centre, which provides a focal point for the range of higher education activity within the College.

5 The College has around 3,200 full-time and 5,000 part-time students, of whom 87 full-time and 266 part-time students, representing 220 full-time equivalents, are HEFCE-funded. The College is a member of the Staffordshire University Regional Federation (SURF). The provision offers progression routes to higher level qualifications in a broad range of subjects, many with a work-related focus. There are 38 college staff, representing 8.4 full-time equivalents, who contribute to teaching on higher education awards; they are Associate Lecturers of Staffordshire University. The College's HEFCE-funded higher education provision in 2010-11 is shown below with validating body and student enrolments including, for part-time awards, full-time equivalents (FTEs).

Edexcel

- HNC Mechanical Engineering (part-time) (7; 3.5 FTEs)
- HNC Electrical and Electronic Engineering (part-time) (37; 18.5 FTEs)

Staffordshire University

- FdA Contemporary Art Practice (full-time) (38)
- FdA Graphics and Digital Design (full-time) (28)
- FdA Graphics and Digital Design (part-time) (1; 0.5 FTEs)
- FdA Digital Media Production (full-time) (5)
- FdSc Complementary Therapies (part-time) (8; 4 FTEs)
- FdA Early Childhood Studies (part-time) (108; 54 FTEs)
- FdA Education (Teaching Assistants) (part-time) (3; 1.5 FTEs)
- FdSc Information and Communication Technology (part-time) (9; 4.5 FTEs)
- FdA Leadership and Management (part-time) (8; 4 FTEs)
- FdSc Electrical and Electronic Technology (part-time) (21; 10.5 FTEs)
- FdSc Mechanical Technology (part-time) (11; 5.5 FTEs)
- Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (part-time) (53; 26.5 FTEs)
- Level 0 Foundation Year Psychology (full-time) (16)

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

6 The College has had a partnership agreement with Staffordshire University Regional Federation (SURF) since April 2000. In accordance with the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)* the University is responsible for the academic standards of awards. Awards are delivered and managed in accordance with University regulations, policies and procedures. The College is responsible for the quality of the learning opportunities of its higher education programmes and for the achievement of academic standards, including the monitoring and evaluation of modules to inform annual monitoring, award committees and annual review of awards.

7 The College also operates Edexcel HNC programmes under the Standard Note; there is no formal partnership agreement. Records of programme approvals for the relevant Edexcel programme specifications are maintained by the Curriculum Leader. These awards are delivered and managed in accordance with the College's policies and procedures and are subject to external verification of assessment and quality processes that support and assure effective assessment.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

8 Since the 2010 Developmental engagement, as a consequence of national funding changes, the College has reduced its full-time higher education student numbers, consolidating the numbers available within the College's largest established programmes. For reasons of financial viability, the College terminated its contract with a leading telecommunications company in summer 2010, including cessation of delivery of FdSc Telecommunications Management and FdA Customer Care/Contact Centre Management, with a consequent reduction in part-time student numbers.

9 New part-time awards have been introduced in FdSc Information and Communication Technology and FdA Leadership and Management with first cohorts enrolled in September 2010. In September 2010, the College replaced the two Edexcel HNC awards in Mechanical Engineering and Electrical and Electronic Engineering with Foundation Degrees in Mechanical Technology and Electrical and Electronic Technology validated by Staffordshire University. Further growth in part-time higher level provision is planned, with awards in Music Technology, Public Services and Health and Social Care going through the University approval process for delivery from September 2011. Higher

level provision in Construction and in relation to Environmental Technologies is at an early planning stage.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

10 Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the Summative review team. The submission was prepared by a student who had also prepared the submission for the Developmental engagement and then proceeded from a Foundation Degree to a bachelor's degree with honours at the University. A total of 208 students contributed to the submission, representing 81 per cent of full-time and 61 per cent of part-time higher education students. Although the College facilitated opportunities for student discussions it played no part in the compilation of views or the writing of the submission. The submission is well structured and representative of the various programmes. It proved most helpful to the team. The team also had useful meetings with current and former students.

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?

11 The Director of Curriculum Innovation has overall responsibility for the College's higher education programmes. Reporting to him is the Higher Education Coordinator whose post, established in July 2010, is a direct outcome of the Developmental engagement. These two staff are members of the College Higher Education Strategy Group which also includes the Assistant Principal, the heads of Learning and Quality Systems, Inclusive Learning, Corporate Communications, Resources and Guidance, heads of faculties and the University's Contract Partnership Manager for the College. The remit of the Higher Education Strategy Group is to focus on the College's Higher Education in Further Education Strategy, curriculum development, recruitment and marketing. The Higher Education Coordinator facilitates the Higher Education Practitioners' Forum which drives the Developmental engagement action plan forward and shares good practice across programmes. The College's five faculties have responsibility at the operational level for the management and delivery of appropriate academic standards for their higher education programmes. Reporting structures are effective although implicit rather than explicit. The College's Higher Education in Further Education Strategy informs the wider College Development Plan.

12 Monthly meetings of the Higher Education Practitioners' Forum seek to implement the Developmental engagement action plan, sharing good practice in assessment feedback and in internal verification practices, and to ensure that academic standards are applied consistently across the College. The Forum, in which the Coordinator drives the agenda and acts as a catalyst for action, also provides a conduit for practitioners across programmes to share experiences. The team considers that the establishment and use of the Higher Education Practitioners' Forum to inform and disseminate higher education policy is good practice and contributes significantly to assuring academic standards.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

13 The team concurs with the College's assertion that the Academic Infrastructure is embedded in its practices through validation procedures. The use of the Academic Infrastructure is reflected in the design of programmes, in programme specifications, in the assessment strategy and in the conduct of examination boards. There is an awareness of the FHEQ, the *Code of practice*, the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark* and relevant subject benchmark statements. Intended learning outcomes are carefully matched to subject benchmark statements and to the level of study. Subject knowledge and skills, assessment and learning and teaching strategies are explained clearly.

14 The Director of Curriculum Innovation and the Higher Education Coordinator have responsibility for ensuring alignment with the Academic Infrastructure. The latter has particular responsibility for updating relevant documentation and arranging staff development sessions to inform staff about significant changes. Updating is facilitated by use of the higher education portal on the virtual learning environment. Staff valued highly the work of the Coordinator in ensuring currency. College representation at all levels on SURF committees and the close working relationships of programme staff with colleagues at the University and other SURF partners provide further opportunities for staff to keep abreast of any changes.

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

15 For University awards, the College follows policies and procedures set out by Staffordshire University. In accordance with the *Code of practice, Section 2*. Staffordshire University is responsible for the academic standards of awards, and programmes are delivered and managed in accordance with university regulations, policies and procedures. In the case of Edexcel programmes, College policies and procedures, incorporating Edexcel requirements, as set out in the Standard Note, apply. The College has a clear understanding of its obligations under these arrangements and appropriate means of assuring itself that they are being met. College membership of SURF groupings provides further opportunities for the College to assure itself that it is meeting its obligations. The Principal is a member of the SURF Management Board, the Director of Curriculum Innovation is a member of its Management Committee and the Higher Education Coordinator sits on its Quality Committee.

16 There are effective internal verification and standardisation processes for assuring academic standards, both for the design of assessment tasks and for the assessment of completed work. The Developmental engagement identified standardisation meetings for Foundation Degrees as a strength. Processes are rigorous and in line with SURF Quality Committee recommendations and the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*. College departmental standardisation meetings followed by SURF standardisation meetings bring rigour and consistency to internal verification processes. The standardisation and moderation meetings for Foundation Degrees and teacher training awards bring rigour and consistency to the internal verification process. The team found that this continues to be an area of good practice.

17 Monitoring and evaluation of higher education programmes are rigorous and effective. Programmes are subject to an annual cycle of self-assessment, either through University Annual Monitoring Reports for SURF programmes or external examiner reports for Edexcel. This provides the framework for regular appraisal and continuing development of good practice on all college programmes. Annual monitoring reports reflect a high degree of interaction between college and university staff. The Edexcel external examiner reported

an excellent rapport with college staff and confirmed that the College meets Edexcel requirements and academic standards as set out in the Standard Note. However, the College has recognised an over-reliance on the external examiner reports to identify good practice and areas for development, and is taking steps to ensure that future Edexcel provision will follow the monitoring and evaluation processes used on other programmes.

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

18 University-based staff development opportunities are available through SURF for all associate lecturers of Staffordshire University. These encompass both subject-specific and more generic activities. For example, all higher education staff attend standardisation meetings, assessment panels and award boards at the University and are invited to other developmental events, including meetings with link tutors, to ensure academic standards are maintained and good practice shared. Within the College, opportunities for staff development are generally college-wide and not specifically directed at higher education. Personal development needs are identified through annual development reviews and the teaching and learning observation system, and are fed through to the Staff Development Coordinator. All college staff are entitled to 10 staff development days per year. The formation of the Higher Education Practitioners' Forum has provided further opportunities for staff working on higher education programmes to discuss and share professional development opportunities. However, the team considers it desirable that staff are encouraged to engage in scholarly activity that is specifically aimed at maintaining and enhancing academic standards on higher education programmes.

19 College staff can apply for funding to attend conferences and professional updating events relevant to their disciplines. Staff informed the team that most requests are met. Staff are expected to disseminate information and outcomes from such events. New staff are inducted into the College by the Staff Development Officer and undertake a series of tasks, including meeting the Higher Education Coordinator who appraises them of higher education specific opportunities. The team considers that staff development at the College supports the achievement of appropriate academic standards by a combination of formal and informal means.

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?

20 The general arrangements for managing and reporting on the quality of learning opportunities are those described for academic standards in paragraphs 11 and 12. The coordination of student learning arrangements is facilitated by college senior staff membership of the Higher Education Strategy Group and relevant university committees. At an operational level the managing of learning opportunities is delegated to faculties where there are important responsibilities for curriculum leaders and curriculum managers. Regular programme meetings chaired by the curriculum leader, to which student representatives are

invited, contribute to the production of annual programme monitoring reports. These reports are forwarded to the University and evaluated within the college quality cycle in a way that is equivalent to the self-assessment reports produced for the further education provision. Meeting minutes and reports confirm that appropriate structures and reporting systems ensure that learning opportunities are managed effectively.

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

21 The College has substantial delegated responsibility for the provision of learning opportunities on its higher education provision. This includes admissions, induction, teaching and learning, student support, and resources. There are clear procedures and reporting mechanisms between the College and the University at programme level to ensure that the obligations set out in the SURF agreement are met. College staff liaise regularly with the relevant University academic department through link tutors, and participate fully in staff development days and cross-college standardisation events. The University representative confirms that at an operational level staff are displaying a high level of commitment in meeting their obligations and that they are taking ownership of the programmes they deliver. Procedures on the College's HNC programme are in keeping with the Edexcel Standard Note and the external examiner confirms that the College is fulfilling its obligations to provide students with the necessary learning opportunities to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

22 The general arrangements described in paragraphs 13 and 14 ensure that staff make reference to the Academic Infrastructure in relation to the quality of learning opportunities. Programme specifications indicate that the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark* has been an important reference point at the time of validation in determining the teaching, learning and assessment strategies on the FD programmes. The College has kept abreast of the recent revisions that have been made to *Section 3* and *Section 8* of the *Code of practice* through management discussions within the Higher Education Strategy Group and staff attending additional training events provided by the University. Careers and support staff reported that they had checked the College's provision against the updates to ensure alignment, but had not found it necessary to make any changes. The team concludes that due account is taken of the relevant parts of the Academic Infrastructure to ensure the sufficiency and quality of learning opportunities provided.

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

23 The quality of teaching and learning is monitored closely following the procedures set out in the College's Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy. There is a college-wide annual teaching observation scheme. Sessions are graded, and then evaluated within the College's teaching observation report. The observations are used to inform individual action plans. Special provision has been made to ensure staff teaching higher education are observed at this level at least every other year. The results of the observations are evaluated within a report that the College produces annually for the University and which identifies general points for improvement. The observation scheme is effective in assuring and enhancing the teaching and learning on the programmes.

24 Student feedback is gathered systematically and used to monitor and enhance the learning opportunities provided. Methods include the use of end-of-module questionnaires

and regular contact with student representatives on all programmes. The results are discussed and evaluated in the annual monitoring reports. The College has recognised the particular value of the higher education student forums that were set up to support the production of the IQER student written submissions as a means of gaining an holistic picture of student opinion across its higher education provision, and it intends to continue and develop their use. This will also help the College in its efforts to develop a more distinct higher education identity.

25 Students are highly satisfied with the teaching they receive and the learning opportunities provided. They agree that any concerns they have are addressed effectively by the College. However, the College is over-reliant on the role of student representatives to relay College responses to issues raised. The team considers it desirable that the College considers means of providing clear feedback to all students on actions being taken to address their concerns, including greater use of electronic notice boards and the higher education portal, in order to facilitate further student comment where necessary. This will serve to further demonstrate the importance the College places on the student voice and allow for the better management of learner expectations on the programmes.

26 The College has made good progress in implementing its Developmental engagement action plan and has effective systems to enhance the quality of learning opportunities. The Higher Education Practitioners' Forum has proved most effective in disseminating good practice on teaching and learning across the programmes, especially in relation to the development of reflective portfolios and the provision of assessment feedback to ensure that it is timely, comprehensive, constructive and consistent across the provision. The team considers that the new Higher Education Assessment Feedback Policy represents good practice in providing clear guidance on providing timely and effective feedback.

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

27 The College provides comprehensive support for its higher education students reflecting its strategic objective to provide learner support to meet individual needs. Academic support focuses on regular discussions with personal tutors on a one-to-one basis following the arrangements set out in programme handbooks. Students also benefit from the support of student advisers in Learner Services who assist with personal and study issues and which has been awarded the Matrix standard in recognition of its high standards in delivering, information, advice and guidance. Additional support is provided to overcome specific difficulties, such as dyslexia. In addition, students on SURF programmes have access to all university services, including careers guidance. The College reviews and evaluates the effectiveness of its student support arrangements thoroughly. This takes place through annual programme monitoring reports, through surveys, reviews and reports by the College's Learner Services, and through student feedback.

28 Students are appreciative of the high level of support they receive and provided numerous examples of ways in which they had been supported outside the classroom environment, including through the College's and University's intranet, telephone calls, emails and tutor-supported discussion groups on the virtual learning environment. The team considers the highly accessible academic and pastoral support, which makes good use of electronic media to meet individual student's needs and lifestyles, to be good practice. The overall effectiveness of support for higher education students in the College is further affirmed by the high level of retention and achievement on the programmes and the high proportion of students progressing from Foundation Degrees to bachelor's degrees with honours.

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

29 The general arrangements for staff development have been explained in relation to academic standards in paragraphs 18 and 19. The College provides a wide range of professional training opportunities to support teaching and learning on its further education provision, and these are very well attended. A number of the sessions are relevant to higher education, such as sessions devoted to e-learning. Staff indicated that they attended individual training sessions at the University to update their knowledge of specific areas of learning and teaching in higher education.

30 Curriculum vitae confirm that staff are well qualified. Over half the staff have postgraduate qualifications, of whom two-fifths have a master's qualification or above. The majority of staff records provide a clear indication of how they undertake scholarly and vocational opportunities at the University, or elsewhere, to maintain currency. However, records of a significant minority of staff are less well-developed in this respect. External examiners in their reports chose to encourage further scholarly activities in two programme areas. As previously noted, the team considers it to be desirable that the College increases the availability and take-up of staff development activities that are specific to teaching in higher education and encourages wider staff engagement in scholarly activities.

How does the College ensure the sufficiency and accessibility of the learning resources the students need to achieve the intended learning outcomes for their programmes?

31 The budgeting strategy for higher education programmes is integrated fully with that of the rest of the College provision, based on annual allocations to faculties in a well-organised process. Students and staff have benefited considerably from the high quality accommodation and facilities in the new campus which are well suited to the vocational character of the programmes. A key feature on the campus is the University Centre on the third floor of the main building, which promotes a greater sense of coherence and identity for higher education students. Only higher education students can access the facilities which include a range of computing systems and facilities, and study and meeting space. Further provision is available in the College Learning Resources Centre and students on university programmes can also make use of the online and print materials available on the nearby university campus.

32 To support students' development as independent learners, the College has sought to maximise off-site accessibility to resources. To this end it has expanded its provision of online journals and e-books and accelerated the development of its virtual learning environment with a dedicated higher education portal. The team considers that the development of the College's higher education portal constitutes good practice in the way it provides students and staff with direct access to a wide range of online teaching and learning materials, services, tutor-supported discussion groups and websites from a single well-designed intranet location. The provision is well-suited to the needs of part-time adult learners.

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?

33 The College is responsible for publishing a range of publicity and general information for prospective higher education students using electronic and print media. These include a higher education prospectus referred to as a University Centre Brochure. The newly designed brochure includes individual course digests and is attractive and informative. The College is also developing the use of social networking sites for the distribution of contemporary, interactive digital information. The team considers that the College's developing use of interactive social networking as a publishing medium is proving effective in enhancing communications with, and between, higher education students and represents good practice.

34 Higher education awards delivered at the College are also publicised in the University's prospectus and website, together with various promotional guides and mini prospectuses detailing the University's partner college programmes. SURF publishes a range of useful on-course student information, for example on induction, careers information and disability provisions. The College has an updating role in these publications, but does not produce its own College-specific higher education equivalents. Published programme specifications, programme and module handbooks used within the College are developed for programme validation and remain the responsibility of the University. The College does not produce its own programme specifications or handbooks. Similarly, published handbooks for programme mentors, critical friends and employers, designed to ensure that all participants concerned with the delivery and support of a programme are fully informed, remain the responsibility of the University.

35 The partnership agreement with Staffordshire University includes explicit procedures for agreeing the form and content of external advertising and publicity. The agreement confirms that material using 'standard wording' will receive 'automatic' agreement, but that all other news releases, advertising and web pages should be copied to, and signed off by, the University's Marketing and Public Relations Department. The College is currently in the process of developing a 'University Centre at Newcastle' brand as part of its marketing strategy. The review team considers it to be desirable that this branding process is extended to all College higher education publications, and to the higher education portal, thereby developing a stronger and more distinct College higher education identity.

36 The portal lies within the existing college-wide virtual learning environment, to serve both as a teaching resource and as a central repository for all published higher education information, including links to other college-wide and Staffordshire University electronic resources. The College recognises the growing importance of providing students and staff with information electronically and the new portal seeks to maximise congruence between the existing College and Staffordshire University virtual learning environments and information systems. Under the overall control of the Head of Resources and Guidance, and already at an advanced and impressive stage of development, the higher education portal substantially enhances the identity of higher education within the College and constitutes an area of good practice.

**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?**

37 The College manages its responsibilities for public information with a clear awareness of the expectation, expressed in the *Code of practice, Section 2*, that the awarding body should exercise effective control over the accuracy of all public information about its awards. It also recognises the importance of ensuring that potential students have the best possible information about the content of courses and the value of specific qualifications.

38 The core information for use in the course handbooks is drawn directly from validation documentation to ensure accuracy, and is routinely checked through annual course monitoring. Curriculum leaders are responsible for the annual updating of programme information, which is then channelled through link tutors to the University. The production of the College's own University Centre prospectus and course digests is overseen by the College's Head of Corporate Communications and there is a clear cycle for their production, including the approval of content. Key roles are well defined within the cycle. There is a parallel process for the updating of information provided on the College website and for the transmission of more day-to-day information on the College social networking sites. These measures are effective in ensuring the accuracy and completeness of information produced.

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

39 The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in May 2010. The three lines of enquiry, agreed with the College in advance, are set out below. The lines of enquiry reflect a broad range of assessment issues.

Line of enquiry 1: The role and effectiveness of feedback on assessed work in supporting student learning.

Line of enquiry 2: The contribution and effectiveness of internal verification in assuring academic standards.

Line of enquiry 3: The role and usefulness of College information in identifying, clarifying and supporting student assessment opportunities in the workplace, work placements and other industry-related activities.

40 The Developmental engagement team identified a range of good practice. This included the role of standardisation meetings for Foundation Degrees and teacher training awards in bringing rigour and consistency to the internal verification process; employer feedback on student performance; the provision of prompt detailed oral feedback to students on their submitted work; the wide range of publicity material supporting work-based assessment; and helpful handbooks in some subjects which set out clearly the respective roles of students, employers and work-based mentors.

41 The Developmental engagement report also made a number of recommendations. It advised the establishment of a cross-college forum for higher education practitioners to facilitate the sharing of experiences and good practice in approaches to internal verification and provision of prompt formative feedback on student work, and extend the documentation for employers and workplace mentors to all programmes. The report considered it desirable that the College produce a feedback template setting out the minimum required content across all awards, that it should consider extending the use of reflective journals to all awards and raising student awareness of the published information available to support their learning.

D Foundation Degrees

42 The College currently offers three full-time and eight part-time Foundation Degrees. These encompass Art, Graphic Design, Digital Media, Complementary Therapies, Early Childhood Studies and Education (Teaching Assistants), Information and Communication Technology, Leadership and Management, Electrical and Electronic Technology, Mechanical Technology. All awards are validated by Staffordshire University. There are 309 students on Foundation Degree programmes, 71 of whom are studying full-time. For reasons of financial viability, the College terminated its contract with a leading telecommunications company in summer 2010, including cessation of delivery of FdSc Telecommunications Management and FdA Customer Care/Contact Centre Management, with a consequent reduction in part-time student numbers.

43 New part-time awards have been introduced in FdSc Information and Communication Technology and FdA Leadership and Management with the first cohorts enrolled in September 2010. In September 2010, the College replaced the two Edexcel HNC awards in Mechanical Engineering and Electrical and Electronic Engineering with Foundation Degrees in Mechanical Technology and Electrical and Electronic Technology validated by Staffordshire University. Further growth in part-time higher level provision is planned, with awards in Music Technology, Public Services and Health and Social Care going through the University approval process for delivery from September 2011. Higher level provision in Construction and in Environmental Technologies is at an early planning stage.

44 The conclusions in Section E apply to all programmes including Foundation Degrees.

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

45 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Newcastle-under-Lyme 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, Edexcel and Staffordshire University.

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

- the use of the Higher Education Practitioners' Forum to inform and disseminate higher education policy contributes significantly to assuring academic standards and the quality of learning resources provided (paragraphs 12, 26)

Integrated quality and enhancement review

- the use of standardisation and moderation meetings for Foundation Degrees and teacher training awards brings rigour and consistency to the internal verification process (paragraph 16)
- the College's Higher Education Assessment Feedback Policy provides clear guidance on providing timely and effective feedback (paragraph 26)
- academic and pastoral support and guidance for students is highly accessible and makes effective use of electronic media (paragraph 28)
- the higher education portal offers significant additional teaching and learning opportunities, including access to staff-monitored online discussion groups and seminars (paragraph 32)
- the College's developing use of interactive social networking as a publishing medium is proving effective in enhancing communications with, and between, higher education students (paragraph 33)
- the higher education portal provides an effective communications channel for students and staff, allowing them direct access to a wide range of online materials and information links, and enhances substantially the identity of higher education within the College (paragraph 36).

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

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

- to increase the availability and take-up of staff development activities specific to higher education and encourage further staff engagement in wider scholarly activities (paragraphs 18, 30)
- to continue to develop means of providing feedback effectively to all students in response to issues raised (paragraph 25)
- to consider the further development of College higher education publications in order to project a more visible and distinct identity for the provision (paragraph 35).

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.

Newcastle-under-Lyme 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 use of the Higher Education Practitioners' Forum to inform and disseminate higher education policy contributes significantly to assuring academic standards and the quality of learning resources provided (paragraphs 12, 26) 	HE Practitioners' Forum to discuss any changes in education policy which contribute to academic standards and quality of learning experience	Forum meetings to be held monthly throughout 2010/11 and 2011/12	HE Coordinator HE practitioners Quality Manager	HE Practitioner Forum Meeting records evidence dissemination of educational policies and identifies appropriate actions	HE Strategy Group Curriculum and Learner Engagement Directorate Senior Management Team SURF Quality Committee	Development of internal systems and procedures in relation to changes to Academic Infrastructure noted in annual HE in FE Self Assessment Report

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the use of standardisation and moderation meetings for Foundation Degrees and teacher training awards brings rigour and consistency to the internal verification process (paragraph 16) 	<p>HE teachers to share good practice of internal verification processes with colleagues at the monthly HE Practitioners' Forum</p>	<p>Forum meetings to be held monthly throughout 2010/11 and 2011/12</p>	<p>HE Coordinator HE practitioners Quality Manager</p>	<p>Rigorous and consistent approaches to internal verification processes are implemented across all programmes</p>	<p>HE Strategy Group Curriculum and Learner Engagement Directorate Senior Management Team SURF Quality Committee</p>	<p>Evaluate impact of consistent approaches to IV processes on success rates and report in annual HE in FE Self-Assessment Report</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the College's Higher Education Assessment Feedback Policy provides clear guidance on providing timely and effective feedback (paragraph 26) 	<p>Timeliness and quality of feedback to be monitored in accordance with HE Assessment Feedback policy</p>	<p>Issue to be raised at HE Practitioners' Forum in July 2011 in readiness for annual monitoring reports and external verifier visits</p>	<p>Curriculum leaders HE Coordinator Quality Manager</p>	<p>Annual monitoring reports and external verifier reports identify areas of good practice</p>	<p>HE Strategy Group Curriculum and Learner Engagement Directorate Senior Management Team SURF Quality Committee</p>	<p>Annual monitoring reports and external verifier reports evaluated by HE Strategy Group and areas of good practice noted in annual HE in FE Self-Assessment Report</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> academic and pastoral support and guidance for students is highly accessible and makes effective use of electronic media (paragraph 28) 	<p>Develop HE at NULC e-questionnaire for students to assist in the evaluation of the effectiveness of electronic media</p>	<p>October 2011</p>	<p>HE Coordinator Head of Learning and Quality Systems HE practitioners HE students</p>	<p>Annual monitoring reports and external verifier reports identify areas of good practice</p>	<p>HE Strategy Group Curriculum and Learner Engagement Directorate Senior Management Team SURF Quality Committee</p>	<p>Data obtained from e-questionnaires evaluated by HE Practitioners' Forum and HE Strategy Group and actions identified in annual HE in FE Self-Assessment Report</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the higher education portal offers significant additional teaching and learning opportunities, including access to staff-monitored online discussion groups and seminars (paragraph 32) 	<p>Further develop HE portal in response to input from HE practitioners and HE learners via the e-questionnaire</p>	<p>December 2011</p>	<p>HE Coordinator HE practitioners HE students Head of Learning Resources and Guidance</p>	<p>Annual monitoring reports and external verifier reports identify areas of good practice</p>	<p>HE Strategy Group Curriculum and Learner Engagement Directorate Senior Management Team SURF Quality Committee</p>	<p>Information gained from learners and staff used to evaluate impact of HE portal improvements on teaching and learning</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the College's developing use of interactive social networking as a publishing medium is proving effective in enhancing communications with, and between, higher education students (paragraph 33) 	<p>Evaluate the use of website, Facebook and Twitter as part of the HE in FE Marketing Strategy</p>	<p>December 2011</p>	<p>HE Coordinator Head of Marketing</p>	<p>Review and update of the HE in FE Marketing Strategy</p>	<p>HE Strategy Group Curriculum and Learner Engagement Directorate Senior Management Team SURF Marketing Committee</p>	<p>Information and opinions gained from learners and staff used to evaluate impact of social networking as a publishing medium. Findings reported in annual HE in FE Self-Assessment Report</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the higher education portal provides an effective communications channel for students and staff, allowing them direct access to a wide range of online materials and information links, and enhances substantially the identity of higher education within the College (paragraph 36). 	<p>Further develop HE portal in response to input from HE practitioners and HE learners via the e-questionnaire</p>	<p>December 2011</p>	<p>HE Coordinator HE practitioners HE students Head of Learning Resources and Guidance</p>	<p>Annual monitoring reports and external verifier reports identify areas of good practice</p>	<p>HE Strategy Group Curriculum and Learner Engagement Directorate Senior Management Team SURF Quality Committee</p>	<p>Information gained from learners and staff used to evaluate impact of HE portal improvements on teaching and learning. Annual HE in FE Self-Assessment Report</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 desired to take action:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to increase the availability and take up of staff development activities specific to higher education and encourage further staff engagement in wider scholarly activities (paragraphs 18, 30) 	<p>HE teachers to be encouraged to take up CPD activities provided by Edexcel and SURF partners and cascade information through the HE Practitioners' Forum</p> <p>HE teachers to identify CPD requirements through the HE Practitioners' Forum</p> <p>Staff induction process to be developed to include CPD session on delivering HE in FE</p> <p>Introduction of HE in FE Staff Handbook</p>	<p>Ongoing throughout 2011/12</p> <p>September 2011</p>	<p>HE Coordinator</p> <p>HE practitioners</p> <p>Staff Development Officer</p> <p>Curriculum managers</p>	<p>Annual monitoring reports and external verifier reports identify areas of good practice</p>	<p>HE Strategy Group</p> <p>Curriculum and Learner Engagement Directorate</p> <p>Senior Management Team</p> <p>SURF Quality Committee</p>	<p>Evaluation on usefulness of new actions through annual appraisals and teaching observations and annual report to Governors of CPD activities by Staff Development Officer</p> <p>Evaluate HE in FE Handbook via HE Practitioners' Forum</p> <p>Annual HE in FE Self-Assessment Report</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to continue to develop means of providing feedback effectively to all students in response to issues raised (paragraph 25) 	<p>Results and comments from HE surveys and focus groups to be reported on HE portal as 'you said - we did'</p>	<p>From January 2012</p>	<p>HE Coordinator Head of Learning Resources and Guidance Head of Marketing</p>	<p>Annual monitoring reports and external verifier reports identify areas of good practice Development of HE portal</p>	<p>HE Strategy Group Curriculum and Learner Engagement Directorate Senior Management Team SURF Quality Committee</p>	<p>Evaluate data from HE surveys to measure the impact on learners of the addition of 'you said - we did' to the HE portal Annual HE in FE Self-Assessment Report</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> consider the further development of College higher education publications in order to project a more visible and distinct identity for the provision (paragraph 35). 	<p>To further develop the HE in FE at NULC brand by: Unique design of HE course digests to be inserted in HE Brochure. Hold a cross-college HE induction event Arrange an HE Celebration Event</p>	<p>August 2011 September 2011 July 2012</p>	<p>Head of Marketing HE Coordinator HE practitioners Curriculum managers</p>	<p>HE in FE at NULC brand further established Annual monitoring reports and external verifier reports identify areas of good practice</p>	<p>HE Strategy Group Curriculum and Learner Engagement Directorate Senior Management Team SURF Quality Committee SURF Marketing Committee</p>	<p>Evaluate data from HE surveys to measure the impact on learners of new HE brochures and HE induction event Collect comments from learners leaving the HE Celebration Event to evaluate its effectiveness Annual HE in FE Self-Assessment Report</p>

RG 728 06/11

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