



# **Integrated quality and enhancement review**

**Summative review**

**Leek College**

**May 2011**

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## Preface

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

## Purpose of IQER

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

## The IQER process

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

## Developmental engagement

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

The main elements of a Developmental engagement are:

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

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

## Summative review

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

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

## Evidence

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

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

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

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

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

## Outcomes of IQER

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

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

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

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

## Executive summary

### The Summative review of Leek College carried out in May 2011

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

### Good practice

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

- the provision of a course handbook for FdSc Computing which includes detailed information about delivery at the College for use in conjunction with the handbook provided by Staffordshire University.

### Recommendations

The team has also identified a number of recommendations for the enhancement of the higher education provision.

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

- implement a higher education quality framework to provide an effective oversight of the provision.

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

- undertake more staff development relevant to higher education to provide greater support for the delivery of the provision
- ensure public information is checked before it is made available to students, to eliminate the need to make alterations later.

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

- complete the mapping of the *Code of practice* against relevant College policies to help ensure the suitability of those policies for supporting the provision
- evaluate the results of the recently introduced teaching observation scheme for higher education to provide opportunities for enhancement of learning and teaching
- give all students access to a virtual learning environment providing both comprehensive course information and support for learning and teaching.

## 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 Leek 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 Staffordshire University. The review was carried out by Mr Malcolm McBain and Mrs Sandra Middleton (reviewers) and Dr Peter Steer (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, a meeting with students, the student written submission, QAA review reports and Ofsted reports. 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 was conducted by a desk-based study. 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 Leek College is a small further education college serving the populations of widely-dispersed towns and villages of north-east Staffordshire. For 2010-11 it has approximately 2,400 further education students. While figures for 2009 indicate that some 81.5 per cent of the Staffordshire Moorlands population are economically active, there are pockets of acute deprivation close to areas of high affluence. The College's mission statement is 'Every day, inspiring success through inclusive learning' and its vision is 'everyday brilliance'. Corporate objectives include taking a lead role in working with partners to develop a vibrant learning community across the Staffordshire Moorlands, achieving excellence in educational standards, and widening participation by providing inclusive learning opportunities. The majority of students, including all those on higher education programmes, study at the Leek campus, with outreach centres for further education in Biddulph and Cheadle and a variety of locations for community-based provision.

5 The higher education provision is provided through a partnership with Staffordshire University as the sole validating awarding body. The College is part of the Staffordshire University Regional Federation (SURF), a consortium of nine regional colleges whose aims are: to plan and provide quality-assured higher education in further education colleges; to widen participation and facilitate progression; and to support economic development in Staffordshire and adjacent areas through collaboration and partnership. In 2009-10, there were 175 enrolments. All but eight of these students were part-time, amounting to 91.5 full-time equivalents. For 2010-11 there are 170 students, all part-time, representing 85 full-time equivalents. The higher education provision offered by the College is as follows (full-time equivalent student numbers are in brackets).

## **Staffordshire University**

All programmes are part-time:

- FdA Creative and Cultural Industries: Contemporary Art Practice (13.5)
- FdA Early Childhood Studies (21.5)
- FdA Education (Teaching Assistants) (22)
- FdSc Computing\* (12.5)
- FdSc Mechanical Technology\* (2)
- HNC Business (13.5).

\*These awards incorporate an HNC qualification as an exit point.

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

6 The partnership with Staffordshire University provides clear guidance as to the responsibilities of the partners. Except for FdA Creative and Cultural Industries: Contemporary Art Practice, all programmes are also run at the University and are offered as part of SURF. Assessment briefs are generally provided by the University. Moderation procedures vary between university faculties. On FdA Creative and Cultural Industries: Contemporary Art Practice completed work is first and second marked at the College and is then subject to a standardisation process within the consortium. Some programmes, for example FdSc Computing, do not undertake second marking but send five scripts to the University for moderation. There are other variants. The partnership agreements put the main responsibility on the College to provide the resources to support learning, although it provides for extensive access to University facilities including support from its virtual learning environment.

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

7 Student enrolment has changed little over the past three years. However, this represents a large expansion compared with the numbers enrolled during the scoping exercise for IQER. There is a strong and increasing concentration on part-time provision with no full-time students in 2010-11.

## **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 and did so in December 2010. The submission represents the views expressed at a student higher education meeting. Nine students were involved from four programmes. It was chaired by the Staffordshire University Partnership Manager for the College. The coordinator met students during the preparatory meeting and passed their views onto the reviewers. The team found all the students' contributions useful.



## **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 Staffordshire University provides comprehensive policies and procedures which are clearly articulated in the partnership agreement for the management of standards of its awards. The College adheres closely to the University's requirements as a member of SURF. In the management of the provision, programme leaders report to curriculum managers who are responsible for both further and higher education programmes. Curriculum managers report to the Director of Curriculum and Planning who is a member of the senior management team. Staff work closely with university link tutors maintaining a strong liaison with the University.

10 The Higher Education Development Group is the principal quality monitoring body for the provision. It was chaired by the Director of Quality and Marketing until the Summative review and has always included the Director of Curriculum and Planning, who now has taken over as the chair. The Directors are members of the senior management team and report on quality matters at each of its meetings. Membership of the Higher Education Development Group includes curriculum managers and course leaders. Its first meeting was in October 2010 and it has met monthly since then. The Higher Education Development Group considers internal quality reports and monitors progress against action plans. While there has been some discussion of annual reports, there has been little consideration given to the internal audits undertaken during this academic year. Some issues and observations in the annual reports merit further detailed consideration. Action planning from the meetings is often unclear. The Higher Education Development Group also has the responsibility of ensuring appropriate dissemination of information to course teams. The membership of the committee facilitates this, although it is too early to evaluate the full effects.

11 The Developmental engagement recommended the College to develop and implement a specific higher education quality framework which reflects the local and specific context. It also recommended the development of a quality handbook specifically for higher education reflecting the maturity of the higher education provision. The College has given the Higher Education Development Group primary responsibility for implementing the action plan arising from the Developmental engagement. Slow progress was noted at the October and November meetings. There is no direct reference to progress in the minutes of the December meeting. Overall, the minutes show that the development of an effective oversight of the provision through the Higher Education Development Group is at an early stage. Responses to the Developmental engagement action plan have been delayed well into this academic year leaving little time for implementation.

12 The College has developed a Higher Education Quality Handbook which identifies College quality processes and procedures. It was completed in February 2011, although parts of it have been available since September 2010. As a definitive quality procedures and processes document, the Higher Education Quality Handbook offers only limited guidance on several important areas, including moderation for individual courses, the provision of detailed advice on feedback, and student support and representation. Furthermore, there

is little direct reference to staff development, employer engagement, and use of the virtual learning environment. The handbook includes some material relevant only to further education which is misleading for staff using it.

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

13 The Developmental engagement recommended that the College make more detailed reference to the Academic Infrastructure. The College has fulfilled this recommendation with respect to academic standards. Course documents are generally written and validated by Staffordshire University in accordance with key elements of the Academic Infrastructure.

14 Programme specifications and validation documents make reference to key aspects of the Academic Infrastructure on assessment and achievement. They form the basis of programme handbooks and include details of assessment methodology and intended learning outcomes. Where more documentation is produced locally, for example on FdA Creative and Cultural Industries: Contemporary Art Practice, the College has taken due note of the Academic Infrastructure. Valuable guidance is included in the Higher Education Quality Handbook. In partnership with Staffordshire University, the College provides suitable assessments and work-related learning in line with the guidance for the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*.

### **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 its awarding body?**

15 The SURF Quality Committee has primary responsibility for corporate oversight of all operational quality assurance procedures and systems within the federation. External moderation events are held annually to assure the marking of assessments and standards. Within the College, the Director of Quality and Marketing considers the external examiner reports and passes them to programme team leaders to inform action plans. The Higher Education Development Group has not yet considered external examiner reports in detail. The team considers that some aspects of external examiner reports, for example the comment concerning plagiarism on FdA Early Childhood, merit consideration at college as well as programme level.

16 The College has decided not to include higher education courses in its self-assessment report, although this was its intention in the Developmental engagement action plan and in the self-evaluation. It argues that, as the College self-assessment report is the principal document used to make judgements about further education courses, inclusion of higher education would be inappropriate. The College's view is that the annual monitoring system, oversight by the Higher Education Development Group, and monitoring by key management staff are sufficient. Particularly in the light of the present operation of the Higher Education Development Group, the team concludes that the lack of a formal review of the whole higher education provision reduces the effectiveness of the College oversight of its programmes.

17 Annual monitoring reports and programme team meetings provide some systematic evaluation of the provision. However, annual reports do not always reflect all the concerns raised in the most recent external examiner reports. Issues arising from annual monitoring reports for 2009-10 were discussed at the December meeting of the Higher Education Development Group. However, there is little evidence of how some of these are going to be addressed or whether others have been satisfactorily concluded. The College has supplemented its monitoring procedures by the introduction of a mid-year review which

considers a number of performance indicators at programme level. The first one occurred in March 2011 based on figures from the first semester. It is not yet possible to evaluate the effects of these mid-year reviews.

18 Oversight of the provision by the quality framework being developed for higher education is not effective in five areas: the operation of the Higher Education Development Group including the limited response to the Developmental engagement; the content of the Higher Education Quality Handbook which provides limited support for staff; the lack of detailed consideration of external examiner reports; the absence of an evaluation of the provision as a whole, at one time to be undertaken through the college self-assessment report; and the nature of the consideration of the annual reports and subsequent action planning. The team considers it essential that the College implement a higher education quality framework to provide an effective oversight of the provision.

19 The Developmental engagement recommended the College to establish and operate regular learner forums on all programmes to provide student feedback on the provision. Generally student forums exist and provide valuable student feedback although the format and frequency varies. There is no student forum for FdSc Mechanical Technology. Numbers on this programme are low which produces an emphasis on informal contact between staff and students although a student forum is now to be introduced.

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

20 The College keeps a record of continuous professional development activity. Staff development needs are identified, for example from teaching observations, annual appraisals and programme team meetings. The self-evaluation confirms that staff development activities include few that are specific to higher education. As SURF associate lecturers, there are opportunities to attend staff development sessions. While the self-evaluation refers to the positive feedback received from staff who attended these sessions, there is little detailed consideration, at the College level, of continuous professional development related to higher education. This reduces the effectiveness of any evaluation of relevant staff development needs.

21 The continuous professional development records indicate little subject-specific staff development. While a number of staff are undertaking or have completed postgraduate study, most of it is not subject-specific. There is also a lack of other staff development relevant to subject delivery. The team considers it advisable to undertake more staff development relevant to higher education to provide greater support for the delivery of the provision.

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

## **Core theme 2: Quality of learning opportunities**

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

22 The College operates within a detailed partnership agreement with Staffordshire University. Responsibilities for assuring the quality of learning opportunities are clearly described. The College is responsible for the quality of all the teaching on the provision, recruitment, some of the induction procedures, student support, and the provision of suitable work-related learning opportunities. It is also responsible for ensuring that learning accommodation and resources are appropriate. The University provides substantial access to its facilities.

23 The role of SURF, College processes and procedures and its management structure, and the operation of the Higher Education Development Group in the oversight of the provision are described and evaluated in paragraphs 9 to 18. There is a clear procedure for allocating resources. The Director of Curriculum and Planning has overall responsibility for all College resources. Final decisions are made by the senior management team based on budgets from curriculum managers and College priorities. Staff and student views on resourcing are collected through surveys and through annual reports.

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

24 College procedures for fulfilling its responsibilities to the awarding body for the quality of learning opportunities consist of those described in paragraphs 9 to 18 and 22 and 23. The success of policies is evaluated through student questionnaires, course annual reports and audits of parts of the provision. The Higher Education Development Group provides an opportunity to disseminate effective practice across the College.

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

25 The University has undertaken a mapping of the *Code of practice* which includes information on the relationship with both SURF and College policies. The College indicates that the mapping is at a developmental stage. Some parts of the *Code of practice* clearly articulate with College policies, for example *Section 3: Disabled students*, while others, such as *Section 5: Academic appeals and student complaints on academic matters*, are still in discussion. Many College policies reflect the *Code of practice* as it relates to the quality of learning opportunities. However, completion of the mapping process would provide further clarity on the extent to which policies are guided by all sections of the *Code of practice*. The team considers it desirable for the College to complete the mapping of the *Code of practice* against relevant College policies to help ensure the suitability of those policies for supporting the provision.

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

26 The College has teaching and learning policies developed mainly for further education. The teaching observation scheme is a primary mechanism for monitoring and improving learning and teaching. It requires staff to be observed annually and their performance to be graded. Those who fall below the satisfactory level are provided with

support through the appointment of a mentor and a detailed action plan which is implemented over a six-week period. If required, developmental observations take place. Where the observations identify good practice, this is recorded and shared with colleagues either informally or at larger formal staff development events. The first full cycle of the extension of the scheme to higher education programmes occurred in the 2010-11 academic year. Previously, the higher education provision was not included in the observation scheme and so the impact is yet to be evaluated. The team considers it desirable to evaluate the results of the recently introduced teaching observation scheme for higher education to provide opportunities for enhancement of learning and teaching.

27 Generally, students report that teaching quality is high. Many students have easy access to teaching materials on a virtual learning environment. Because they are part-time and generally study off-site, students find this very helpful. However, FdA Early Childhood Studies and FdSc Mechanical Technology students have little support from a virtual learning environment.

28 The Higher Education Quality Handbook states that feedback will be provided as an integral part of the assessment process on all formative and summative assessment tasks. Student work reviewed by the team shows that written feedback reflects the requirements of the module and is correctly aligned with achievement. There is also guidance for future assessments. However, some students indicate issues with the quality and timeliness of written feedback on assessments. Students value the formative feedback they receive, often orally.

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

29 The College is responsible for student support. The Director of Support for Students has overall responsibility supported by curriculum managers and course leaders. College policies on student support are contained in the Quality Learning Manual. However, several sections are written mainly from a further education perspective with limited contextualisation for higher education.

30 There is a universal personal tutor system for both pastoral and academic support. Students are overwhelmingly positive about the support that they receive from their tutors. The annual monitoring report includes a section on student support where appropriate action points are identified.

31 Generally, final year completion and achievement rates are good. However, on the HNC Business programme, the completion rate for the cohort finishing in 2010 was low. The College has considered this and believes it has taken appropriate action through better resources and support, the results of which will be apparent in future years. Procedures for monitoring student performance now include the Mid-Year Quality Performance Review, reflecting practice already used for the further education provision. There is a strong emphasis on retention and attendance. The first round of these reviews occurred in early March 2011, so it is not yet possible to assess outcomes.

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

32 Arrangements for staff development are described in paragraphs 20 and 21. Professional development opportunities are taken up by staff providing support services within the College and at Staffordshire University. All staff are subject to annual appraisal where staff development needs are discussed.

### **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?**

33 Generally, resource budgets are not specific to higher education. However, curriculum managers take into consideration the needs of the provision in setting their budgets. Students comment on resources through formal and informal College mechanisms. Each course annual report has a section on learning resources. Requirements are included in action plans which are considered by the Higher Education Development Group. The Director of Curriculum and Planning, who has overall responsibility for resources for higher education, is a member of the senior management team and the Higher Education Development Group. Students have access to University resources, including the library and associated electronic learning materials, and the virtual learning environment.

34 For the academic year 2009-10, students indicated that hard copies of learning materials were sometimes difficult to obtain due to shortages at the College, for example on FdA Early Childhood Studies. In this case, as a result of external examiner comment, the College has provided more books and improved access to electronic resources. There has been a long-running issue about the availability of course materials from the University in time for the start of teaching on FdSc Computing, which was not resolved for the beginning of this academic year. Annual reports for 2009-10 indicate a lack of some specialist software packages for FdA Creative and Cultural Industries: Contemporary Art Practice and FdSc Mechanical Technology. Students the team met indicate these issues have now been resolved by the introduction of a range of appropriate graphics and technology software onto machines in the University Centre. Staff teaching HNC Business report accommodation problems when teaching is not in the University Centre as occurred in the academic year 2009-10. Recently, students indicate that the resource position has improved and that staff have been proactive in responding to many of their earlier concerns.

**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 body 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?**

35 The College follows the requirements of its partnership agreement. The College publishes a range of documentation on its higher education provision, including a separate prospectus as well as individual programme information sheets. These publications are available in both printed and digital format and cover a range of topics helpful to prospective students. Course information is usually provided by Staffordshire University; however, on FdA Creative and Cultural Industries: Contemporary Art Practice, the local course team produces the public information and is responsible for ensuring its accuracy. This is done in consultation with the link tutors at Staffordshire University. Programme specifications, which are agreed at validation, are available to students.

36 The University provides course handbooks using a template that varies between programmes. As a result, some of the information regarding facilities, locations and tutors refers only to the University. However, there are some opportunities to contextualise the information to local College requirements. The various course handbooks contain a similar

range of information, although the depth and breadth of content varies from handbook to handbook, as does the amount of contextualisation. Because there is no template, module handbooks are much more diverse in structure. The College and the University share responsibility for induction and the associated information. Students indicate that they are happy with the information they receive before and during induction. The College indicates that policy is for all documents to include the Staffordshire University logo. The college-specific handbook for the HND Business Computing, however, has no logo.

**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 Approval of marketing and publicity material follows SURF procedures that aim to ensure that there is effective control over the accuracy of all public information and promotional activity. While the approval procedure is clearly articulated and detailed, there are inconsistencies between different sources of information. For example, on the information sheet on the College website the FdSc Computing has a reference to Best Practice in the Workplace, a module which draws on the student's understanding, and experience, of evidence gathered at work. There is no such reference in the Higher Education Prospectus. The course information sheet for the FdSc Mechanical Technology states that assignments often incorporate work-based project work. This differs from the information on assessments for this programme in the prospectus. Students are invited to comment on the design and ease of understanding of the prospectus mainly through focus groups. Employers are also invited to comment.

38 The College completed an audit of all its course documentation in December 2010. A number of inconsistencies were discovered. For example, on FdA Creative and Cultural Industries: Contemporary Art Practice there was use of different programme names on assignment briefs. Students met by the team also indicate that there has been confusion over the title of this programme. The errors have now been corrected, or are pending correction, in some cases with the help of the University. A revised prospectus is due in May 2011. The present prospectus indicates that assessment will comprise a mixture of coursework, class testing and presentations. There is no mention of assessment of work-based skills. With the exception of FdA Education (Teaching Assistants), none of the courses explicitly mention the assessment of work-based skills. All new marketing material is now to be approved by the Higher Education Development Group, although there is little evidence of detailed discussions having taken place to date. The team considers it advisable to ensure public information is checked before it is made available to students, to eliminate the need to make alterations later.

39 Course handbooks include sufficient information for students to understand and achieve the intended learning outcomes. They also include details of procedures for appeals and complaints through the University and guidance on plagiarism. Some handbooks, for example HNC Business, do not take all the opportunities available to contextualise the material for College students. On FdSc Computing, staff have produced a course handbook that students use in conjunction with the handbook provided by Staffordshire University. This College handbook provides detailed information about delivery from a college-level perspective and means students are well informed about all aspects of their course. The team considers the College handbook for FdSc Computing to be good practice.

40 Use of the virtual learning environment to provide information to students varies significantly between courses. Some courses provide comprehensive information on the virtual learning environment, while others provide only a very limited amount. Students value information being available on the virtual learning environment, especially when studying

off-campus. The team considers it desirable to give all students access to a virtual learning environment providing both comprehensive course information and support for learning and teaching.

**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**

41 The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in May 2010. It addressed the following lines of enquiry agreed with the College:

- How well is feedback used to promote higher level learning skills and to ensure the maintenance of academic standards?
- How well are assessment criteria understood and interpreted consistently by staff and students?
- How accurate and complete is the published information on how the acquisition of work-based skills contributes to overall assessment?

42 The areas of good practice identified during the Developmental engagement were the effective implementation of the partnership between the College and the other members of SURF; the rigorous use of the detailed SURF guidance on assessment; effective processes for the design, verification and moderation of assessment activities; the ease of access to high-quality pastoral support and guidance; and the opportunities provided at induction which make students aware of Staffordshire University facilities and help to build a higher education ethos.

43 The Developmental engagement indicated that it was advisable to have processes that ensure the timely return of work to students enabling all aspects of feedback to be considered in the annual monitoring cycle; to develop a college-level quality framework that reflects SURF regulations; to make more explicit reference to the Academic Infrastructure in assessment documentation; to develop a comprehensive academic support system that reflects the particular needs of its students, who are mainly part-time and mature; to review all current programme documentation across the provision to ensure accuracy and consistency in content; and to ensure that reference to the work-based skills contribution within assessment is explicit in relevant programme support documentation. It was also considered desirable to increase opportunities for employers to be involved in work-based assessment opportunities; to establish mechanisms for maintaining overviews of the higher education provision, especially in terms of assessment, achievement, and annual programme monitoring reviews; to develop a higher education quality handbook; to formalise the student induction process across the provision; and to establish and operate regular learner forums for all programmes to allow students to feed back on the quality and nature of the provision.

## **D Foundation Degrees**

44 For 2010-11, there are five Foundation Degrees with 143 part-time students representing 71.5 full-time equivalents. In 2009-10 there were 81 full-time equivalents



consisting of eight full-time and 154 part-time students. All programmes are validated by Staffordshire University. Over the last three years the College has been slightly short of its recruitment target. For example, the target for all programmes in 2010-11 was 195 students and recruitment was 170. There are no plans to expand the size of the provision, although the programmes offered may change.

45 The management of the provision is becoming more rigorous, partly as the result of the outcomes of the Developmental engagement. However, the team considers that it is essential to implement a higher education quality framework to provide an effective oversight of the provision. There are also advisable and desirable recommendations.

46 All the team's findings and conclusions are relevant to Foundation Degrees.

## E Conclusions and summary of judgements

47 The Summative review team has identified good practice in Leek 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 body. This was based upon discussion with staff and students and scrutiny of evidence provided by the College and its awarding body, Staffordshire University.

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

- the provision of a course handbook for FdSc Computing which includes detailed information about delivery at the College for use in conjunction with the handbook provided by Staffordshire University (paragraph 39).

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

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

- implement a higher education quality framework to provide an effective oversight of the provision (paragraphs 10 to 12, 15 to 18).

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

- undertake more staff development relevant to higher education to provide greater support for the delivery of the provision (paragraphs 20, 21)
- ensure public information is checked before it is made available to students, to eliminate the need to make alterations later (paragraph 38).

51 The team considers that it is **desirable** for the College to:

- complete the mapping of the *Code of practice* against relevant College policies to help ensure the suitability of those policies for supporting the provision (paragraph 25)
- evaluate the results of the recently introduced teaching observation scheme for higher education to provide opportunities for enhancement of learning and teaching (paragraph 26)
- give all students access to a virtual learning environment providing both comprehensive course information and support for learning and teaching (paragraphs 27, 40).

## Integrated quality and enhancement review

52 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 **limited 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.

53 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.

54 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.

Leek College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 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 area of <b>good practice</b> that is worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the provision of a course handbook for FdSc Computing which includes detailed information about delivery at the College for use in conjunction with the handbook provided by Staffordshire University (paragraph 39).</li> </ul>	Each FD course team will, using the FD computing course handbook as a model, produce a handbook for its course	September 2012	Course leaders and course teams	1 Handbook completed 2 Handbook distributed to FD students in September 2012	Director of Curriculum and Planning	Handbook used from September 2012  Feedback from staff and students
Essential	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is <b>essential</b> for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>implement a higher education quality framework to provide an effective</li> </ul>	1 A plan for Higher Education Development Group meetings showing key topics to be	Sept 2011	Curriculum Manager responsible for higher education quality	Plan completed and issued to Higher Education Development Group members	Director of Curriculum and Planning	The plan is followed; agenda topics discussed and minuted

oversight of the provision (paragraphs 10 to 12, 15 to 18).	discussed at each meeting will be produced				
	2 External Examiners' reports will be summarised and reported to Higher Education Development Group	October 2011		Summary completed. Summary reported at October Higher Education Development Group meeting and minuted	Summary completed, reported to and minuted at Higher Education Development Group
	3 Annual Monitoring Reports will be summarised, reported to Higher Education Development Group and added as an appendix to the Self-Assessment Report	November 2011		Summary completed. Summary reported at November Higher Education Development Group meeting and minuted. Self-Assessment Report uploaded to SFA portal in December 2011	Summary completed, reported to and minuted at Higher Education Development Group
	4 Action plans from Annual Monitoring Reports and External Examiners' reports will be monitored at each Higher Education Development Group meeting	October (Externals' action plans) and November (Annual Report action plans) 2011		Action plans progress reported at each Higher Education Development Group and progress minuted	Action plans reported to and progress minuted at Higher Education Development Group

	5 New quality handbook will be produced. Existing handbook will be used for Sept 2011	September 2012		New handbook issued to all staff teaching on higher education courses		New handbook issued to all staff teaching on higher education courses  Feedback from staff
<b>Advisable</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>Target date</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Success indicators</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
The team considers that it is <b>advisable</b> for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>undertake more staff development relevant to higher education to provide greater support for the delivery of the provision (paragraphs 20, 21)</li> </ul>	<p>Each member of teaching staff will identify subject specific continuing professional development that might be available through SURF. Attendance will require line management approval</p> <p>Curriculum managers will put forward to Director of Curriculum and Planning proposals for subject specific staff development</p>	<p>October 2011</p> <p>November 2011</p>	<p>All higher education teaching staff</p> <p>Curriculum Managers</p>	<p>Each course team will have at least one member of staff who undertakes subject specific continuing professional development in 2011-12</p> <p>Schedule of staff development will be in place</p>	<p>Director of Curriculum and Planning</p>	<p>Continuing professional development opportunities identified and where appropriate attended by staff</p> <p>Feedback from staff. Through appraisal and staff development feedback sheets</p> <p>Director of Curriculum and Planning approves schedule of staff development</p>

	Director of Curriculum and Planning will approve schedule of staff development	December 2011	Director of Curriculum and Planning		Higher Education Development Group	Director of Curriculum and Planning assesses impact of training carried out
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensure public information is checked before it is made available to students, to eliminate the need to make alterations later (paragraph 38)</li> </ul>	<p>The originator (usually the course leader) of new public information confirms (on pro forma) that information is accurate, appropriate and complete</p> <p>All new public information will then be considered by at least two members of Higher Education Development Group. The same pro forma for this will be used, which confirms that the information is accurate, appropriate and complete</p> <p>A report of any new public information considered will be presented to the next Higher Education Development Group meeting, at which</p>	September 2011	Curriculum Manager responsible for HE quality	<p>Public information material considered by Higher Education Development Group members</p> <p>Pro formas completed confirming that the originator and Higher Education Development Group reviewers regard the information as accurate, appropriate and complete</p> <p>Reports made to Higher Education Development Group and Director of Curriculum and planning signs off information as accurate, appropriate and complete</p> <p>Higher Education Development Group</p>	Director of Curriculum and Planning	<p>The procedure for introducing public information is followed.</p> <p>Pro formas are completed and signed</p> <p>Director of Curriculum and Planning signs off information as accurate, appropriate and complete</p>

	meeting the Director of Curriculum and Planning will sign off the information as accurate, appropriate and complete			meetings minute reports received		
<b>Desirable</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>Target date</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Success indicators</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
The team considers that it is <b>desirable</b> for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>complete the mapping of the <i>Code of practice</i> against relevant College policies to help ensure the suitability of those policies for supporting the provision (paragraph 25)</li> </ul>	College policies will be mapped to the <i>Code of practice</i>	September 2012	Director of Curriculum and Planning	Mapping exercise completed	Higher Education Development Group	<p>Mapping exercise completed</p> <p>Amendments made to (if any) unsuitable College policies</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>evaluate the results of the recently introduced teaching observation scheme for higher education to provide opportunities for</li> </ul>	Report produced	August 2011	Director of Curriculum and Quality	<p>Report produced and issued to curriculum managers</p> <p>Examples of good practice or areas for improvement will be commented on in subject sector area self-assessment</p>	Higher Education Development Group	Good practice disseminated and where appropriate adopted by course teams

enhancement of learning and teaching (paragraph 26)				reports		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>give all students access to a virtual learning environment providing both comprehensive course information and support for learning and teaching (paragraphs 27, 40).</li> </ul>	<p>Audits will be conducted of current state of each FD's SharePoint area</p> <p>Each course team will produce targets for improving SharePoint areas</p> <p>SharePoint to be updated with documents referred to in the point above</p>	<p>November 2011</p> <p>February 2012</p> <p>September 2012</p>	<p>Course leaders</p> <p>Course leaders</p> <p>Course leaders</p>	<p>Audit completed</p> <p>Plans completed</p> <p>Documents uploaded</p>	<p>Director of Curriculum and Planning</p> <p>Director of Curriculum and Planning</p> <p>Director of Curriculum and Planning</p>	<p>Audit completed and targets set</p> <p>Documents uploaded</p> <p>All students will have access to course sites</p> <p>There will be evidence of student use of the sites</p> <p>Feedback from students</p>



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