



Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

Milton Keynes College

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Preface

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

Purpose of IQER

Higher education courses 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 course specifications, which are descriptions of what is on offer to students in individual courses 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 Milton Keynes College carried out in June 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 courses it delivers.

Good practice

The team has identified the following good practice for dissemination:

- the College's management systems, including internal verification procedures, reporting structures, and interaction with external examiners and other external bodies, are effective in promoting a high level of achievement by students
- peer observation of teaching is rigorous and supportive and provides a framework for recorded professional dialogue. Reports indicate that teaching is good or better and students confirm that it is up to date, interesting and uses a range of appropriate styles
- the College has a supportive and productive relationship with local employers and is fully aware of and responsive to the needs of the local community
- there is excellent support for students, including support for progression, from their tutors and from support services throughout the College
- the resource planning and management that led to the creation and funding of the high-quality higher education campus (University Centre Milton Keynes) provides a stimulating environment and a sense of higher education identity for students and staff.

Recommendations

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

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

- produce all course handbooks in a consistent format, with up-to-date content, including reading lists, and presented in a way that supports those who require an accessible font and layout
- specify a minimum amount of content to be routinely uploaded onto the virtual learning environment so that remote access to current learning and teaching materials is available across all courses
- rationalise the College's learning platforms so that students are clear about what information can be found, and where.

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

- negotiate agreements with the awarding bodies so that copies of link tutors' reports for all courses are supplied to the College
- introduce further staff development specific to higher education so that all staff are aware of the Academic Infrastructure, the *Code of practice* and the Higher Education Academy
- provide students with the opportunity to contribute to the continuous improvement of the college website.

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 Milton Keynes College (the College). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the College discharges its responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to courses that the College delivers on behalf of the University of Bedfordshire, Oxford Brookes University and the Open University. The review was carried out by Mr David Charlton, Ms Ann Hill, Ms Sue Miller (reviewers) and Dr Marion Shaw (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 reports 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 course 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 courses delivered at the College.

4 Milton Keynes College is a major provider of post-compulsory education for the city and a significant provider for the surrounding regions of Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire. It is located across four campuses in or near Milton Keynes. One of these campuses (the University Centre Milton Keynes), opened in September 2008, is dedicated to higher education provision. The College offers further education courses to almost 39,000 learners. It has 133 full-time equivalent (151 headcount) higher education students.

5 The College offers the following higher education courses in conjunction with three universities. Courses are listed under the awarding body University, with full-time equivalent numbers for 2010-11.

The University of Bedfordshire

- FdA Digital Imaging & Design for Media (12)
- FdA Graphic Design (9)
- FdA Interior Design (14)
- FdA Psychology & Criminal Behaviour (19)
- FdA Early Years Care (21)
- FdA Sports Therapy (8)
- FdA Journalism (9)
- FdSc Computing Networking & Systems (17)
- FdA Retail Networking (11)

Open University

- FdA Sports, Fitness & Health (0.5)

Oxford Brookes University

- Professional Graduate Certificate in Education/Certificate in Education (Post Compulsory) (12.5)

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

6 The College currently has partnerships with the University of Bedfordshire, its major partner, and with the Open University and Oxford Brookes University. From September 2011 the College will cease to have Oxford Brookes University as a partner and the Professional Graduate Certificate in Education/Certificate in Education (Post Compulsory) will be transferred to the University of Bedfordshire. The College also has the University of Northamptonshire as an awarding body but the College is not currently offering any courses with them. A proposal is on the table for the validation of a Foundation Degree in Sustainable Development with the University of Northamptonshire.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

7 Higher education at the College is offered in a designated building, the University Centre Milton Keynes, which was opened for teaching in October 2008. Work on the building was still underway when the Developmental engagement took place in 2008. At this time the College expected to increase its higher education provision, but financial constraints and a limit on student numbers have restricted the College's ambitions. In 2009, however, the College, through the University of Bedfordshire, was successful in attracting ten additional students (full time equivalent) for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) activities. Since the Developmental engagement, the College has increased its portfolio by the addition of Foundation Degrees in Journalism; in Sports, Fitness & Health; and in Computing Networking & Systems. A Foundation Degree in Accountancy has been discontinued and an HND in Accountancy has been replaced by an HND in Computing. Discussions at a strategic level on the College's aspiration to lead the development of a university for Milton Keynes are continuing.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

8 Students studying on higher education courses at the College were invited to present a submission to the Summative review team. Students did not submit a written document but provided a DVD of their discussion on a number of topics relevant to the review. The discussion group was representative of the range of courses and year cohorts. During the visit the team was presented with a useful written précis of the filmed focus group. The team met two groups of students during the visit and had productive and helpful discussions with them.

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 Following a recent management restructuring and the appointment of a new Principal, an Academic Board has been inaugurated and will be actively involved in the management, monitoring and reporting of the higher education provision. As part of the restructuring, overall responsibility for the strategic management of higher education, including collaborative partnerships, rests with the Vice Principal for Curriculum and Quality. The Director of Quality and the Quality Development Manager are responsible for the quality and standards of higher education and provide a link between the strategic and operational functions. Heads of department have responsibility for operational delivery and management of higher education within their areas.

10 The College operates a system of termly performance reviews based on curriculum areas, led by a panel of senior managers. These inform the monthly key performance indicator meetings held by the senior management team. These meetings both provide ongoing operational management information and inform the annual monitoring reports prepared for the University of Bedfordshire and the Open University. Oxford Brookes University does not require an annual monitoring report; instead, the College prepares a course review for this partner. A Delivery Manager's Quality Planner for the year August 2010 to July 2011, supplied during the visit, clearly shows a regular and effective cycle of committee meetings and reporting arrangements for the delegation of responsibilities for the management and delivery of higher education standards.

11 At the operational level course tutors have direct contact with university link tutors. External examiner reports are commented on by College staff, and this is reported to the universities for incorporation into a formal response to external examiners. Examiners' reports and feedback from student focus groups all feed in to the annual course review, which then contributes to the departmental self-assessment report. The College has links with members of a consortium of the colleges of Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire (CoMBO), a quality improvement group which shares best practice in teaching and learning. At the University of Bedfordshire, course reviews from all partners, together with the link tutors' reports, contribute in to the annual monitoring reviews. The team considers that the College's management systems, including internal verification procedures, reporting structures, and interaction with external examiners and other external agencies, are effective in promoting a high level of achievement by students and constitute good practice.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

12 At senior management level, the College shows a good grasp of the requirements of the Academic Infrastructure. Cross-college staff development and close links with the partner institutions ensure adoption of the Academic Infrastructure and the *Code of practice*, demonstrated in the validation documents of new Foundation Degrees with the University of Bedfordshire and the University of Northampton. In addition, benchmark statements are researched, and their use is reflected in the aims of the courses. These can then be tracked through to the learning outcomes in course specifications.

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

13 The College's responsibilities as denoted in the partnership agreements are effectively executed. Central to this process is the College input to the University of Bedfordshire's annual monitoring reviews. Regular visits by link tutors to the College ensure that course leaders are apprised of concerns and also examples of good practice. The university partners appoint external examiners, whose reports confirm the achievement of appropriate academic standards. Disaggregation of the reports has been instigated since the Developmental engagement for courses with the University of Bedfordshire, enabling examiner comments to be linked to the particular course. In the one case where the examiner felt that the benchmark standards were not being met, the course was revalidated by the partner university after a joint re-submission by this College and one other partner college. Assignment grades confirmed by external examiners are disaggregated so that the College is able to monitor the performance of its students. Progression rates in the College are good, with completion rates in 2011 around 70 per cent and with 38 students topping up their Foundation Degrees at universities, the majority at the University of Bedfordshire.

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

14 The College's arrangements for staff development begin with the annual appraisal process where, after a dialogue with line managers, the development needs of staff are identified. CVs are updated every two years. Staff needs are entered into the College staff development plan. When the College is involved in validations of new courses, a need for the updating of skills and expertise is also noted; this is added to the College staff development plan.

15 The College has a professional development entitlement policy which explains staff support and opportunities, including induction, mentoring, and professional/vocational updating. Staff engagement is actively encouraged and centrally recorded. The College also keeps a record of training relating to higher education. Sessions recorded include a mixture of pedagogical and vocational training, and many involve the partner university. Staff also engage in the university partners' development opportunities as appropriate. There is a long-term arrangement with the University of Bedfordshire that their courses are free for tutors from partner colleges if these are relevant to their teaching.

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 courses delegated within the management structure, and what reporting arrangements are in place?

16 Paragraphs 9 to 11 describe and evaluate the overall management of higher education. Course teams are encouraged and supported to develop and maintain links with university partners and with staff members in the college consortium. Attendance at moderation meetings, assessment boards and link tutor meetings is fully

supported. A checklist ensures that staff are aware of their individual roles and responsibilities in collaboration with the awarding universities and other partners.

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

17 A strong link tutor system is in operation with all the awarding universities. Active links are maintained between unit tutors at the universities and other colleges delivering the same course. Link tutors' visits ensure that the College resources meet the needs of the course, and that the quality of provision meets the needs of students and of the awarding university. Link tutor reports are provided to the universities but are not routinely presented to the College. It is desirable that the College negotiate agreements with the awarding universities so that copies of link tutors' reports for all courses are supplied to the College.

18 A rigorous process is in place to ensure that external examiner reports are appropriately monitored and action-planned. An annual review of higher education internal verification and moderation systems was completed in August 2010 and included a summary of external examination and verification reports. The review confirmed that internal verification systems operate effectively, and that external examiner reports show that good academic standards are achieved and that students receive appropriate learning opportunities. The external examiner for the FdA Computing Networking & Systems commented that 'very clear internal verification is taking place with positive effects on the assessment brief developments and then upon the scripts' individual marking and final grading'. All higher education courses operate a second marker system, and moderation takes place with partner colleges and the universities.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

19 The majority of staff have attended training on the application of the Academic Infrastructure. Those who have been involved directly in the planning, design and validation of courses confirmed that it is embedded in the design and delivery of courses, course specifications, assessment strategy and examination boards. Course specifications are produced for validations and subsequently included in handbooks for students, and clear module specifications are also provided. University partners provide additional support in the use of the Academic Infrastructure during the joint planning of courses. However, responses from some staff, who had not recently been involved with validations, indicated little knowledge of the Academic Infrastructure. They also had little knowledge of the Higher Education Academy. It is desirable for the College to introduce further staff development specific to higher education so that all staff are aware of the Academic Infrastructure, the *Code of practice* and the Higher Education Academy.

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

20 The College quality strategy and the quality manual with its range of policies and procedures are readily available to staff on the intranet. These give details of the range of mechanisms by which the College assures itself of the quality of teaching and learning. All courses provide annual monitoring reports which are closely scrutinised by the senior management team before submission to the awarding universities. Action points are monitored at the performance review, and key performance indicator meetings are held regularly throughout the year.

21 Teaching and learning observations are carried out on all staff delivering higher education courses. Although these are graded in line with the Ofsted criteria, observers are experienced in the delivery of higher education and take into account its different requirements, particularly the need to support and develop independent study skills. Observation reports are well structured and detailed and indicate that teaching is good or better. Mentoring of staff new to higher education delivery is carried out, and peer observation is encouraged, to support development and provide a framework for recorded professional dialogue. Students reported that sessions were interesting and well structured and that staff employ a range of appropriate teaching styles. In accordance with the validation requirements, the universities receive detailed professional files of delivery team members annually, are able to comment on their appropriateness, and identify any development required before they join the delivery teams. The team considers that peer observation of teaching is rigorous and supportive, provides a framework for recorded professional dialogue and is good practice.

22 In accordance with the College Learner Voice Strategy students are offered a range of different methods to provide formal feedback on their experience in College. They confirm that action on issues raised is taken swiftly; for example, cameras have been provided promptly for loan to FdA Graphic Design and FdA Journalism students. Students also reported that the relationships developed with staff allowed them to feedback informally and to agree actions to overcome any issues. Link tutors interview students during their visits, enabling feedback to be channelled directly to the university partners.

23 External examiner reports indicate that the standards and quality of the provision are appropriate and that student achievement is good. For example, the examiner for the FdA Journalism course commented that 'there is a challenging mix of assessments appropriate to the level, with a clear relationship to real world journalistic practice. The student group appears positively engaged with the course and there is ample evidence of effective acquisition of media skills and knowledge'. The College makes full use of these reports to enhance the quality of the courses, ensuring that all reports are circulated and action planned, and that good practice and development opportunities are highlighted to all areas.

24 Students reported that arrangements for the submission of their assignments are rigorous. Some courses require electronic copies on the intranet as well as hard copy. Other courses use artefacts and practical demonstrations as well as essays. All students are aware of the implications of plagiarism, and plagiarism software is used for checking assessments. Students particularly value the extensive feedback provided by staff on their assessments. External examiners have commented on its quality and how well it is linked to the intended learning outcomes. Students also appreciate the prompt return of work they routinely experience, well within the three weeks recommended by the College.

25 The College has developed strong employer links, and employers are involved in any new development proposals. A recent Ofsted inspection graded the College's work with employers as outstanding, and this extends to the higher education provision. The inclusion of work-related learning in each course varies. FdA Early Years and PGCE students are employed in the relevant sector, while placements, work experience and live projects are used in other courses. All students confirmed that this aspect of their study enhances their learning, enables them to reflect on and embed their learning in their work, and increases their employment opportunities. Employers met by the team were complimentary about their relationship with the College, the quality of the students and their training, and the support both they and the students receive from tutors. Courses have developed useful documents to support employers and to explain their role. A good example of this is the FdA Sports Therapy Employer Handbook 2010-2011, which gives detailed information on employers' responsibilities and a code of practice for students on placement. All placements are

carefully vetted to ensure that health and safety requirements are in place and students are visited regularly during their placements. The team considers as good practice the College's supportive and productive relationship with local employers and that it is fully aware of and responsive to the needs of the local community. The College is actively engaged in the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP), which promotes economic growth in the area.

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

26 Students confirmed that they receive effective support from tutors, and that the wider College experience is interesting and stimulating. All students have an allocated personal tutor, who holds regular one-to-one meetings to review academic progress and address any non-academic issues that may inhibit progress. Students are able to access a range of support within the College but can also be directed to facilities within the universities for additional support. Additional learning and assessment is available, and specialist dyslexia support is provided to students if they are assessed as requiring it. All students are able to request support with study, research skills, referencing and document presentation. Formal sessions are provided during induction on Harvard referencing, research skills and the use of library resources, e-books and e-journals. Support for progression is good, progression rates to 'top up' courses are excellent, and students are aware of opportunities for progression beyond the signposted route to the awarding universities. The team considers as good practice the excellent support for students, including support for progression, from their tutors and from support services throughout the College.

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

27 Staff development is closely linked to the appraisal system, and training needs are identified through this and the lesson observations, as well as the specialist requirements of the provision. Staff attend a wide variety of training and are supported to engage in scholarly activity. All staff are members of the Institute for Learning and complete in excess of the requirements annually. Events at the awarding universities are open to staff from the College, and participation rates are good. Several staff have direct relationships with employers and are active practitioners within their own field, ensuring that vocational expertise is relevant and up to date.

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

28 Validation of courses ensures that required resources are in place, and link tutors monitor resource provision during their visits. Resources are excellent. Despite a limited book stock the library has good links and provides extensive access to e-books and e-journals; reading list requirements are met, and staff and students report an active approach to acquisition. Arrangements are in place to enable all students to use the nearby Open University Library as well as those of their own awarding institutions. The Open University provides a very useful study guide for its FdA Sports Therapy course which, among much else, gives advice on the use of resources and where these are to be found.

29 The College website, virtual learning environment and intranet are accessible to all students, and they also have access to the virtual learning environments of their awarding institutions. Course materials, support materials, handbooks and assessment briefs are routinely available, and some courses have developed more innovative use of the facilities

within the virtual learning environment, for example the introduction of discussion forums for group work. Electronic access to information on College support facilities is also readily available. See paragraphs 35 to 37 for further comment on website provision.

30 The accommodation in the University Centre is excellent, and the environment is conducive to academic activity. Staff facilities are good, and the shared office space promotes the dissemination of good practice and integrated approaches to scholarly activity. Students are very appreciative of the well designed building and its dedicated facilities, which add value to their learning experience. The team considers this high-quality higher education campus (University Centre Milton Keynes) provides a stimulating environment and a sense of higher education identity for students and staff. The resource planning and management that led to its creation and funding represents good practice.

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?

31 The College publishes a range of documents to support its higher education provision. This includes employer handbooks, a Foundation Degree prospectus, and a variety of attractive publications which promote the College's profile to the local community. Materials are available in a variety of formats and media. The College's insignia are visible in all published information and are clear and distinctive. Employer handbooks contain useful information regarding staff and student responsibilities on work placements. The College actively publicises and promotes its strong links with local and regional business partners.

32 The awarding bodies provide clear guidelines within the partnership agreements with the College regarding publicity of courses and the standard form of words to be used on publicity materials. There is a comprehensive process for the approval of prospectus materials with partner universities, and all externally published marketing materials are also checked with partners to ensure accuracy of content and consistency of published information. The College is featured on the University of Bedfordshire's website, although students commented that they would like to see more information about the courses at the College on the awarding body website.

33 The College has addressed the recommendation from the Developmental engagement to encourage an awareness in students of what is available of relevance to them at the awarding institutions, as well as at the College. The College may wish to consider including this entitlement information in its prospectus, so that potential students are informed. Students are made aware of the full range of resources and facilities available to them at induction.

**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?**

34 The College has not addressed the recommendation from the Developmental engagement to ensure there is full adoption of standardised information in handbooks, including the format of course specifications. The FdA Retail Management Course Handbook, FdA Sports Therapy Handbook and FdA Psychology & Criminal Behaviour Course Handbook do not contain course specifications. Course handbooks are inconsistent in the information that they provide, and some information provided by curriculum areas is out of date. For example the FdA Psychology handbook, written 2004 and revised 2005, has no College charter or year planner. Some do not contain sufficient relevant up-to-date information relating to equality and diversity issues, and some do not contain reading lists. Some reading lists are out of date, for example the FdA Sports Therapy and FdA Early Years. Some handbooks still do not contain details relating to progression from one level to another, for example FdA Retail Management. Students reported that not all of them received course handbooks at their induction. Some handbooks are printed in a small font and in single-line spacing, difficult to read for dyslexic students and those with impaired vision. The team considers it advisable that all course handbooks be produced in a consistent format, with up-to-date content, including reading lists, and presented in a way to support those who require an accessible font and layout.

35 The College has also not responded effectively to the Developmental engagement recommendation regarding the development of the virtual learning environment across all higher education courses. The College utilises two open-source virtual learning environments, one of which is for higher education students. The team found this confusing, and students stated that they too are not always clear about which learning environment is appropriate for them. Moreover, the higher education virtual learning environment is not populated consistently across all courses and is not used routinely as a major learning and teaching tool. Virtual learning environment content is sampled by the learning resource centre senior staff, but the team found that information on it was sparse and inconsistent. The team considers it advisable for the College to specify a minimum amount of content to be routinely uploaded onto the virtual learning environment so that remote access to current learning and teaching materials is available across all courses.

36 Students have access to the virtual learning environments of the awarding universities. There is inconsistent use of the awarding bodies' virtual learning environments, and some students are unclear about where information can be found. Some students have problems with logging in to the University of Bedfordshire's virtual learning environment, and the College may wish to consider how to improve access for their students. Some students use the platforms effectively, and where courses are well populated with learning materials, such as the FdA Sports Therapy, use is good. Students on other courses use the College or the Centre's site, with variable results. The team considers it advisable to rationalise the College's learning platforms so that students are clear about what information can be found, and where.

37 The College's own website is attractive, easy to navigate, uncluttered and accessible. The College is undertaking a major redesign of the website so that it integrates more easily with management information systems. The College's marketing team has responsibility for updating and assuring the accuracy of the College website, and this takes place on a regular basis. Students confirm that they do not use the website and they are not provided with the opportunity to contribute to its development. They would like to see student handbooks and module guides on the website and believe that this would encourage them

to make more use of it. It is desirable for the College to provide students with the opportunity to contribute to the continuous improvement of the website.

38 Formal arrangements are in place to assure the accuracy of published information. The awarding universities are ultimately responsible for ensuring the accuracy of published information at a strategic level, and the College is responsible at an operational level. The College has clear procedures for checking this and for ensuring the consistency of the information. There are explicit processes for agreeing the format and content of external advertising and publicity materials in all media. The marketing team works closely with the universities to ensure compliance.

39 At course level, heads of department sign off draft copies of published information, and proof materials are sent for checking and approval to link tutors at the awarding universities. The College ensures that all references to courses are accurate and do not misrepresent the relationships between the College and awarding institutions. The universities are satisfied with the quality assurance processes which assure the accuracy and completeness of published information. The Vice Principal for Curriculum and Quality signs off final copies at corporate level. The College's published materials are checked by the marketing department and are reviewed on a cyclical basis. Marketing materials are subject to scrutiny by identified managers to ensure accuracy and consistency of content.

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 courses it delivers.

C Summary of findings from the Developmental engagement in assessment

40 The Developmental engagement took place in November 2008 when the University Campus Milton Keynes was in the final stages of completion. The College was then told that it should have a second Developmental engagement because of an irregularity in the agreement with one of its awarding bodies. This problem was resolved and the second engagement was considered to be unnecessary. A further delay occurred because of the illness of a key member of staff.

41 The College received 14 points of good practice which focused on staff commitment, effective processes and systems for the management of assessment, robust quality assurance procedures and good tutorial support for students. Also commended were student enthusiasm for Foundation Degrees as flexible and vocationally oriented, good links with the awarding bodies, the appointment of the Vice Principal for Higher Education, and the development of a dedicated higher education prospectus and a personal development planner to enable students to manage their assignments and track their progress. A newly introduced external verifier process was also praised. The College's annotated action plan indicates that the good practices have been maintained and in some case enhanced, with the exception of the aspiration to increase the number of Foundation Degrees significantly (because of limited student numbers; see paragraph 43).

42 The Developmental engagement made five 'advisable' recommendations, which included the need to develop a new process for external verification reports for all courses and fully to implement the internal verification process. It also advised the implementation of a new governance structure, consistency in the format of specifications and handbooks, the

development of the virtual learning environment, and a full implementation of student surveys. Desirable recommendations included the encouragement of students to access resources at the awarding institutions, to ensure course specifications have a consistent format, to introduce a mechanism for students to receive a receipt when they submit work and also to be involved in the external verification process by meeting external examiners. The development and encouragement of scholarly activity among staff was also considered desirable. In its 'action plan up-dated' the College states that all the recommendations have been achieved with the exception of the virtual learning environment and consistency in the format of specifications and handbooks. Both of these recommendations have been partially achieved.

D Foundation Degrees

43 The College offers 10 Foundation Degrees. Since the Developmental engagement, the College has increased its portfolio by the addition of Foundation Degrees in Journalism; in Sports, Fitness & Health; and in Computing Networking & Systems. A Foundation Degree in Accountancy has been discontinued. A proposal is on the table for the validation of a Foundation Degree in Sustainable Development with the University of Northamptonshire. The College's ambitions to enlarge its Foundation Degree portfolio significantly have been adversely affected by a limitation placed on student numbers.

44 The evaluations given in Section E of this report apply to the Foundation Degrees the College offers.

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

45 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Milton Keynes 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: the University of Bedfordshire, Oxford Brookes University and the Open University.

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

- the College's management systems, including internal verification procedures, reporting structures, and interaction with external examiners and other external bodies, are effective in promoting a high level of achievement by students (paragraphs 9, 10 and 11)
- peer observation of teaching is rigorous and supportive and provides a framework for recorded professional dialogue. Reports indicate that teaching is good or better, and students confirm that it is up to date, interesting and uses a range of appropriate styles (paragraph 21)
- the College has a supportive and productive relationship with local employers and is fully aware of and responsive to the needs of the local community (paragraph 25)
- there is excellent support for students, including support for progression, from their tutors and from support services throughout the College (paragraph 26)
- the resource planning and management that led to the creation and funding of the high-quality higher education campus (University Centre Milton Keynes) which provides a stimulating environment and a sense of higher education identity for students and staff (paragraph 30).

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

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

- produce all course handbooks in a consistent format, with up-to-date content, including reading lists, and presented in a way that supports those who require an accessible font and layout (paragraph 34)
- specify a minimum amount of content to be routinely uploaded onto the virtual learning environment so that remote access to current learning and teaching materials is available across all courses (paragraph 35)
- rationalise the College's learning platforms so that students are clear about what information can be found, and where (paragraph 36).

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

- negotiate agreements with the awarding bodies so that copies of link tutors' reports for all courses are supplied to the College (paragraph 17)
- introduce further staff development specific to higher education so that all staff are aware of the Academic Infrastructure, the *Code of practice* and the Higher Education Academy (paragraph 19)
- provide students with the opportunity to contribute to the continuous improvement of the college website (paragraph 37).

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 standards of the awards of its awarding bodies.

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 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.

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, 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 courses it delivers.

Milton Keynes College action plan relating to the Summative review June 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 College's management systems, including internal verification procedures, reporting structures, and interaction with external examiners and other external bodies, are effective in promoting a high level of achievement by students (paragraphs 9, 10 and 11) 	<p>College-wide, consistent process in place</p> <p>Robust monitoring of internal verification through termly meetings and senior management team's key performance indicator meetings</p> <p>Centralised monitoring of external examiner reports via the quality team</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>December 2011, April and June 2012</p> <p>September to October 2011</p>	<p>Heads of department</p> <p>Senior Quality Manager</p> <p>Quality Improvement Manager</p>	<p>Continued high levels of student achievement</p>	<p>Vice Principal for Curriculum and Quality</p> <p>Academic Board</p>	<p>External examiners' reports – 100 per cent positive feedback</p> <p>College termly external examiner report through key performance indicator meetings</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> peer observation of teaching is rigorous and supportive and 	Annual graded observation of each member of staff	Annually	Heads of department	Continued high standards of teaching and learning	Directors of curriculum	Records of teaching observations

<p>provides a framework for recorded professional dialogue. Reports indicate that teaching is good or better and students confirm that it is up to date, interesting and uses a range of appropriate styles (paragraph 21)</p>	<p>Gain student feedback on quality of teaching and learning through focus groups</p>	<p>Annually</p>	<p>Heads of department</p>		<p>Academic Board</p>	<p>Monthly key performance indicator reports Student feedback (end-of-module survey; feedback obtained during observations; annual focus groups)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the College has a supportive and productive relationship with local employers and is fully aware of and responsive to the needs of the local community (paragraph 25) 	<p>Restructure of management team to include enterprise managers</p> <p>Director of Curriculum appointed with responsibility for development of employer links</p>	<p>September 2011</p> <p>September 2011</p>	<p>Vice Principal for Curriculum and Quality</p> <p>Vice Principal for Curriculum and Quality</p>	<p>New structure established</p> <p>Additional responsibility confirmed</p>	<p>Principal and Chief Executive</p>	<p>Report to Board of Governors</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> there is excellent support for students, including support for progression, from their tutors and from support services throughout the College (paragraph 26) 	<p>Restructure of student support function with Lead Practitioner responsible for academic support and careers</p> <p>Increase progression rates amongst HE students</p>	September 2011	Vice Principal for Curriculum and Quality	<p>New structure established</p> <p>Progression to top-up degrees increased by 10 per cent</p>	<p>Principal and Chief Executive</p> <p>Vice Principal for Curriculum and Quality</p>	<p>Report to Board of Governors</p> <p>Progression data reported to Academic Board</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the resource planning and management that led to the creation and funding of the high-quality higher education campus (University Centre Milton Keynes) which provides a stimulating environment and a sense of higher education identity for students and staff (paragraph 30). 	Implement computer-aided facilities management (CaFM) software to ensure maintenance of high quality accommodation	June 2012	Facilities Manager	CaFM implemented	Director of Quality	<p>Planned and reactive maintenance records</p> <p>Demonstrate improved response rates against service level agreements</p>

Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is advisable for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> produce all course handbooks in a consistent format, with up-to-date content, including reading lists, and presented in a way that supports those who require an accessible font and layout (paragraph 34) 	<p>All course teams to review handbook content and layout</p> <p>Handbooks to be reviewed and agreed by head of department</p> <p>All handbooks to be made available on Moodle 2 and HEI's VLE</p>	Oct 2011	Heads of department	All course handbooks accurate and up to date	Director of Quality Academic Board	Annual student focus groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> specify a minimum amount of content to be routinely uploaded onto the virtual learning environment so that remote access to current learning and teaching materials is available across all programmes (paragraph 35) 	<p>Content on VLE to be reviewed</p> <p>Minimum expectations of content upload for VLE to be agreed and communicated</p> <p>Targets for content upload to be set and monitored for each course</p>	<p>Oct 2011</p> <p>Oct 2011</p> <p>Oct 2011 and ongoing</p>	<p>Heads of department</p> <p>Senior Quality Manager</p> <p>Heads of department</p>	<p>All courses have minimum level of resources on VLE</p> <p>All courses have minimum level of resources on VLE</p> <p>Range of content on VLE improved and all content up to date</p>	<p>Directors of curriculum</p> <p>Academic Board</p>	Annual student focus groups

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> rationalise the College's learning platforms so that students are clear about what information can be found, and where (paragraph 36). 	College website re-designed. Student intranet accessed via link on the website	Sep 2011	Director of Marketing and Customer Services	Website redesigned	Vice Principal for Marketing and Business Development	Statistics on numbers accessing platforms
	Students signposted to relevant HEI VLE through induction	Oct 2011	Heads of department	Statistics showing students' access to HEI VLE	Directors of curriculum	
	Moodle 2 launched and used as single College learning platform. Effective links to HEI VLEs set up through Moodle	Sep 2011	Head of Learning Resources Centre	Moodle 2 launched and in use	Vice Principal for Marketing and Business Development	
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is desirable for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> negotiate with the awarding bodies so that copies of link tutors' reports for all courses are supplied to the College (paragraph 17) 	Discuss and agree way forward with Head of Quality at University of Bedfordshire	Oct 2011	Senior Quality Manager	Link tutor reports for all courses shared with college in a timely way	Director of Quality Academic Board	Link tutor reports used to inform annual monitoring reports for each course
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> introduce further staff development specific to higher education so that all staff are aware of the Academic 	Programme of staff development opportunities planned for 2011-12 to enhance higher education practice and	July 2012	Senior Quality Manager	All relevant staff will have attended a session	Director of Quality Academic Board	Enhanced academic practice and understanding evident through external examiner reports,

Infrastructure, the <i>Code of practice</i> and the Higher Education Academy (paragraph 19)	develop deeper understanding of the Academic Infrastructure					observations, and annual student focus groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide students with the opportunity to contribute to the continuous improvement of the college website (paragraph 37). 	Student focus groups to be held termly to review and improve the College website	July 2012	Director of Marketing and Customer Services	<p>Three focus groups held</p> <p>Student suggestions and website improvements documented</p>	Vice Principal Marketing and Business Development	Improved student experience when accessing and using the website

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