QAA

Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

Furness College

September 2011

SR 001/11

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 effectively manages 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* (FHEQ), which includes descriptions of different higher education qualifications
- the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*
- 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 Furness College carried out in September 2011

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

Good practice

The team has identified the following good practice for dissemination:

- the close and effective relationship between the College and employers ensures that students benefit from valuable work-based learning and career progression opportunities
- the detailed and rigorous annual monitoring procedures make an effective contribution to the maintenance of academic standards and the enhancement of the provision
- staff use a comprehensive quality tracking database which makes a significant contribution to the effective implementation of course action plans and to the quality assurance and enhancement of the provision generally
- the bridging qualifications offer students the opportunity to enhance their skills significantly in preparation for study on their target awards.

Recommendations

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

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

- complete as soon as possible the mapping of its policies relevant to the quality of learning opportunities with the guidance provided by the *Code of practice* to ensure that the quality of the student experience is maximised
- ensure that the programme and module handbooks on FdA Business Management and FdSc Construction Management are comprehensive in order to provide better information to support students in their learning.

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 Furness College (the College). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the College discharges its responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes which the College delivers on behalf of the University of Lancaster, the University of Central Lancashire and the University of Cumbria. The review was carried out by Mr Mark Cooper, Mr David Fallows, Mrs Heather Miller (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, separate meetings with staff including awarding body representatives, employers and 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 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   Furness College is a small further education college situated in Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria. The College's mission is 'Delivering Education and Skills to Inspire and Change Lives'. The College attracts students from within a 50-mile radius, with an emphasis on the Furness area. The College has programmes in all areas of further education except land-based provision, with particular strengths in engineering and construction. In 2010-11 the College recruited approximately 4,100 learners. Total recruitment for 2011-12 will be similar. Furness Training is a separate unit which offers apprenticeships, employability training and legislation-based learning such as programmes on first aid and health and safety. All higher education is delivered alongside similar further education programmes on one campus, which is currently undergoing a £40-million building programme. Current annual income is approximately £10.5 million.

5   The College consists of 12 curriculum areas, each managed by a curriculum manager. Higher education programmes are offered in six of these areas: Technical Engineering; IT; Business; Sport and Young People's Project; Early Years and Education; and Health and Social Care. In 2010-11, enrolment was 316.9 full-time equivalents consisting of 52 full-time and 489 part-time students. For 2011-12, enrolment comprises 39 full-time and 479 part-time students, representing 331.5 full-time equivalent students. All the provision is indirectly funded. The higher education provision offered by the College is as follows (full-time equivalent student numbers, where available, are in brackets):

University of Lancaster

- BEng (Ord) Electrical/Electronic Engineering (26)

- BEng (Hons) Electrical/Electronic Engineering (9.6)
- BEng (Ord) Mechanical Engineering (20)
- BEng (Hons) Mechanical Engineering (10.6).

University of Central Lancashire

- BA (Hons) Education and Professional Studies (9.3)
- Certificate in Education (4.5)
- Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (January start)
- FdA Early Years, Education and Care (18.7)
- FdA Children, Young People and their Services (13)
- FdSc New Media Design and Technology (20)
- HNC Electrical and Electronic Engineering (38)
- HNC Mechanical and Computer Aided Engineering (64)
- Postgraduate Certificate in Education (5.5)
- Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (0.8).

University of Cumbria

- BSc (Hons) Computer Systems Development (5)
- FdA Business Management (32.7)
- FdSc Construction Management (20.7)
- FdSc Computing (16.3)
- FdA Health and Social Care (15.5)
- FdA Sports Coaching and Sport Development (1.3)
- University Certificate in A Head Start (runs in third semester).

Partnership agreements with awarding bodies

6   All the awarding bodies require the College to provide resources to support learning. Student recruitment is a College responsibility. For all the awarding bodies, responsibility for setting assessments and for moderation, sometimes in the context of a consortium, is shared with the College. College staff provide the feedback on student work. The production of course and module materials is a shared responsibility between the College and its awarding body on all programmes, except for those awarded by the University of Lancaster where the College produces them.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

7   While full-time equivalent enrolment has not significantly changed recently, growth is planned with the University of Cumbria as a result of the redevelopment of the College campus with an expected final completion date of March 2013. This will include a University Centre for higher education courses. Increases in enrolment are planned to start in September 2012.

Students' contribution to the review, including the student 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 July 2011. The Director of Higher Education organised three feedback sessions which were attended by about 20 students. The Quality and Standards Unit also used information from module evaluation

questionnaires to compile the submission which was shown to a sample of the students involved in the process. Students met the team during the review. The team found the students' contributions helpful.

B Evaluation of the management of HEFCE-funded higher education

Core theme 1: Academic standards

How are responsibilities for managing and delivering higher education standards delegated within the management structure and what reporting arrangements are in place?

9   The College's responsibilities to each of its awarding bodies are clearly set out in institutional and programme-level agreements. The College adheres closely to these requirements. The awarding bodies oversee academic standards primarily through their rigorous programme approval and assessment procedures.

10   The College's self-evaluation states that there is a clear, comprehensive and coherent structure for managing and delivering higher education standards. The team found compelling evidence to substantiate this claim. Curriculum managers are responsible for the control and development of their subject areas. Programme leaders are responsible for the day-to-day operation of individual awards. The Director of Higher Education has overall responsibility for all matters related to higher education within the College and reports directly to the Quality Improvement Group. She is supported by the Higher Education Coordinator. The Quality Improvement Group provides an effective oversight of the provision and a forum for the exchange of good practice. The Quality Improvement Group reports to the Principalship Strategic Team and onwards to the Learner Experience Committee of the Board of the Corporation, both of which provide an effective strategic input into the monitoring of the provision. As a manager, the Director of Higher Education reports to the Deputy Principal of Curriculum and Quality.

11   The College has a number of administrative staff with responsibilities for the provision who help to ensure effective communication and maintain productive relationships with university staff in related roles. Link tutors act as a valuable conduit between the College and the relevant university concerning student progression opportunities.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

12   Most of the elements of the Academic Infrastructure concerned with academic standards are covered by comprehensive and well considered processes and procedures of the awarding bodies. The team found that College staff make appropriate use of the subject benchmarks, the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*, *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and the sections of the *Code of practice* relevant to academic standards.

13   There are strong and continuing links with major local employers in line with the guidance in the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*. For example, the engineering programmes and the FdA Children, Young People and their Services provide authentic work-based learning as an integral part of the curriculum and its assessment. Employers report that staffing and resources are up to date and consistent with current practice, thereby enabling effective assessment linked to the needs of the jobs market. Students reach a high standard of competence, which helps with their career development.

Employers met by the team were generally happy with the curriculum. However, they would welcome further discussion and development in line with the needs of their particular businesses, especially as the students are generally part-time and sponsored by the company.

14   The 2010-11 external examiner report for FdSc Construction Management found that the level 5 assessments lacked sufficient critical engagement. This was the first time that these final-level modules had been delivered on the programme. Analysis by staff indicated that it was the wording of the assessments that needed adjustment. As a consequence, the programme team have worked effectively to modify the assessments with the support of the University of Cumbria and the Director of Higher Education.

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

15   The primary line of reporting for programme leaders in relation to academic standards is to the committees and boards of the awarding universities. Programme leaders are fully aware of their responsibilities under the partnership agreements for assuring academic standards and report strong support from the awarding bodies. Awarding body representatives confirm their confidence in College procedures and staff. Awarding body annual reviews show continuing confidence in the academic standards of the provision. In conjunction with its awarding bodies, the College has appropriate mechanisms for the consideration of external examiner reports and the production of suitable responses. The College has responded appropriately to the recommendation of the Developmental engagement concerning the quality of feedback given to students.

16   The College has an effective annual monitoring procedure that makes full use of all the available data. Each programme leader is responsible for producing an annual course review. These are based on a thorough and detailed analysis of data from, for example, assessment boards, external examiner reports, university link tutor reports, and the analysis of student feedback by programme teams, curriculum managers and the Director of Higher Education. The reviews culminate in an agreed action plan. The team found these reviews and their action plans to be comprehensive and analytical. The reviews are attached to curriculum area self-assessment reviews, so avoiding duplication of effort. The Director of Higher Education presents course reviews to the Quality Improvement Group, outlining any action to be taken. The annual reports are then sent to the awarding bodies and the Director of Higher Education produces a summary higher education report for awarding bodies, approved by the Quality Improvement Group. Any issues of concern or good practice are highlighted to the Principalship Strategic Team. The College's consideration of all reports relevant to the provision is undertaken rigorously and with a high level of attention to detail. The detailed and rigorous annual monitoring procedures make an effective contribution to the maintenance of academic standards and the enhancement of the provision and this is good practice.

17   The procedure for monitoring the implementation of action plans is equally rigorous. The College has a comprehensive quality tracking database that is used by the Director of Higher Education to keep track of the progress of all action plans. It is also available to other managers. Course audits in which programme leaders and curriculum managers account for progress against the action plans occur three times a year. Live data is included in the College quality tracking database and informs the course audit meetings. For example, the student feedback system is thorough and is updated regularly during the year by information from module evaluation questionnaires, conducted electronically, and by data from staff and student liaison meetings. With the help of the quality tracking database, the Director of

Higher Education effectively manages any issues and queries arising from the monitoring of the action plans or to do with quality assurance and enhancement generally. Staff use a comprehensive quality tracking database which makes a significant contribution to the effective implementation of course action plans, and to the quality assurance and enhancement of the provision generally, and this is good practice.

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

18   The College has a continuing professional development policy that maps to its strategic objectives. All staff receive a minimum of 30 hours of personal professional development a year, after which they discuss the outcomes with the relevant curriculum manager and complete an evaluation form. In addition, because the teaching year is shorter on higher education programmes, staff have additional time for staff development compared with further education colleagues.

19   The College schedules a variety of staff development events each academic year. Partner universities also provide staff development events which give a valuable opportunity to share good practice; examples include workshops on assessment and developing the virtual learning environment. In addition, the close relationships with local major employers enable staff to take up many opportunities for industry and professional updating. The College monitors attendance at staff development events ensuring take-up is sufficient to support the provision.

20   The awarding bodies approve staff teaching on their programmes at validation or through a university faculty quality committee. Staff are normally expected to hold a qualification at least one level above that which they are teaching. The College provides a mentor for staff new to teaching on higher education programmes and supports their development of assessments through the internal verification processes.

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

Core theme 2: Quality of learning opportunities

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

21   As indicated in the partnership agreements, the College is responsible for the quality of all the teaching on the provision, admissions, 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 awarding bodies provide substantial access to their facilities for students.

22   The College's management structure, processes and procedures are described and evaluated in paragraphs 9 to 17. There is a clear and detailed procedure for allocating resources. Budgets are finalised by senior management after a detailed planning process. Curriculum managers have a budget for day-to-day expenses that covers both the further and higher education under their control. The College approval process is where programme resource needs are first identified, with the awarding body annual reports providing an

ongoing formal review. Each year the College identifies priorities for capital expenditure based partly on bids from curriculum managers. Capital funding has enabled major equipment to be purchased primarily for engineering programmes and for computer and e-learning equipment.

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

23   College procedures for fulfilling its responsibilities to its awarding bodies for the quality of learning opportunities are described in paragraphs 9 to 17 and 21 to 22. The success of the policies is evaluated through the rigorous and detailed procedures described in paragraphs 10, 15 to 17 and 22.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

24   The College has begun mapping the *Code of practice* to its policies and procedures relevant to the quality of learning opportunities. Admissions policies have already been mapped appropriately and the College is currently mapping its initial advice and guidance policies to the *Code of practice, Section 8: Career education, information, advice and guidance* and its work-based learning policies to *Section 9: Work-based and placement learning*. The team consider it is desirable that, as soon as possible, the College completes the mapping of its policies relevant to the quality of learning opportunities with the guidance provided by the *Code of practice* to ensure that the quality of the student experience is maximised.

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

25   The College has a detailed teaching and learning strategy that identifies six key priority areas allied to the College's values and strategic aims. It considers the complete learning experience of students from initial contact to course completion. The use and review of the strategy is overseen effectively by the Quality Improvement Group.

26   There is an effective teaching and learning observation scheme with grades based on further education criteria. The College recognises that higher education has special features and has made appropriate responses. For example, only staff who teach on higher education programmes are involved in formal observations across the provision. Students indicate that the quality of teaching and learning is high. This is supported by external examiner reports.

27   On a regular basis, the College chooses a specific challenge and focus for its teaching and learning observations. Partly as a response to the recommendation of the Developmental engagement for the academic year 2011-12, the focus is on the use of the virtual learning environment. There is a two-year target of extending its use by staff and students to enhance the learning process. The College has set minimum standards and expectations for use of the virtual learning environment. Many programmes exceed these expectations, for example by using it for the electronic submission of students' work, and by providing revision exercises to support student learning. Most students met by the team indicated their satisfaction with the virtual learning environment. However, the College recognises that some modules are making limited use of the virtual learning environment for supporting learning and teaching.

28   The Developmental engagement recommended that feedback is given to all students in a timely manner allowing it to be used for other assessments. This has been achieved in most instances. However, students met by the team indicate that this is not always so on FdA Business Management, although the situation is improving.

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

29   The College has an effective system of student support starting before enrolment. Where appropriate, at interview, staff offer students a bridging qualification, for example the University of Cumbria-validated 'Head Start' programme. Students take these programmes before the commencement of their target award, providing an effective preparation for higher education and an opportunity to enhance their study and other skills. For example, engineering students met by the team indicated their bridging programme significantly helped them to develop their skills in mathematics. The bridging qualifications allow students returning to study, or moving from further education programmes, to make a smooth transition into higher education. The quality of submitted work by students who studied on these bridging qualifications is of higher quality than would normally have been expected. The bridging qualifications offer students the opportunity to significantly enhance their skills in preparation for study on their target awards and represent good practice.

30   The College provides a formal induction for all students, which they value. Any need for additional learning support is initially identified during the admissions process. The Inclusion Officer is responsible for assessing students' needs and organising a suitable response within the College. Students confirm that this additional support is available and effective. Timetabled tutorials and work placement monitoring provide effective academic and pastoral guidance during the whole of the students' time at the College.

31   The College gathers students' opinion in a variety of ways, including formal module evaluation questionnaires, student liaison meetings and tutorials. Staff understand and value the mechanisms for listening and responding to feedback from students. Issues raised by students are effectively and quickly acted upon. They are recorded in the quality tracking database which is reviewed and updated at each course audit and used to monitor progress on the agreed actions.

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 18 to 20. The College has clear procedures to identify and provide for the development needs of central support and technical staff.

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

33   The College provides appropriate resources to support learning. Staff and students confirm that resources and the access to them is good. For example, specialist equipment for the engineering programmes is of industry standard and will be further enhanced when the new building opens. Students have access to other learning resources, both at the College and through the partner universities, that fulfil their needs. Students value the access to extensive electronic learning materials. They indicate that access to printed materials is appropriate. The College provides the computer hardware and software that students require for their studies. Plagiarism software is being trialled across the provision. The timetabling of programmes reflects the needs of part-time students and their employers.

34   Major local employers liaise effectively with College managers and curriculum teams. As reported in the Developmental engagement, the College and employers working closely together provide well managed work placements and work-based learning opportunities which are valued by students. The close relationship of the College with local employers helps to give students the skills required by the job market.

> **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?

35   The College responsibilities for publishing public information are stated in the partnership agreements. All marketing materials are carefully scrutinised by awarding bodies prior to issue and there are guidelines for the use of logos, layout and the information to be included. The awarding bodies work closely with the College at regular marketing meetings and approve published materials prior to publication. The University of Central Lancashire has formalised the process through an effective detailed annual review process.

36   Publicity materials are available in printed form and electronically on the College website. The website is attractive, user-friendly and easy to navigate. Students confirm that the information they received prior to enrolment was helpful and accurate. It was consistent with their subsequent experiences as a student on the course.

37   The College produces a range of pre-enrolment information for prospective students. The higher education programme guide is attractive and includes student profiles, the courses on offer, funding details and how to obtain further information. A College template is used consistently across the provision to produce standardised course-specific information leaflets which are informative and accessible. The College does not publish a separate higher education prospectus and relies on course leaflets which can be updated quickly and efficiently.

38   The College takes sole responsibility for programme and module materials for University of Lancaster awards and shares it with the partner university for the rest of the provision. The validation process ensures there are detailed programme specifications for all awards.

39   Employers receive programme information on a regular basis and contribute to case studies and quotes on their relationship with the College. A College liaison officer provides a link with one large local employer concerning promotional literature. Materials on work-based learning provide comprehensive information for employers on their roles and responsibilities.

40   Paragraphs 13, 34 and 39 examine how the College works effectively with employers. The close and effective relationship between the College and employers ensures that students benefit from valuable work-based learning and career progression opportunities, and is good practice.

41   As indicated in the Developmental engagement, the College provides extensive and valuable information, sometimes with the help of its awarding bodies, to support students with their work-based learning. This detailed guidance covers areas such as the specific nature of the work-based learning and the support available to undertake assessments. It is valued by students met by the team.

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?

42   There is a clear policy framework for the consideration of public information issued by the College, which includes comprehensive guidance for staff on the preparation, updating and issuing of printed and electronic published material. Programme teams produce information about the awards which is checked for accuracy and completeness by the Marketing Manager and the Higher Education Coordinator. Course audits led by the Director of Higher Education review published information to check that the material meets current templates and changes in programmes. Remedial actions are taken although actions are not formally recorded. These procedures work well for publicity materials.

43   The Developmental engagement made a recommendation about the availability of assessment information on the College virtual learning environment. The College has introduced a strategy for staff use of its virtual learning environment to ensure that definitive programme information is available to all students. The College is monitoring progress through its quality assurance processes. All programmes have a copy of the current handbook on the virtual learning environment. Student satisfaction with the virtual learning environment has increased substantially between 2009-10 and 2010-11, although it still lags somewhat behind other areas of the student experience. The College has responded properly to the recommendation of the Developmental engagement.

44   Programme handbooks are generally accurate, informative and comprehensive; for example, those for FdA Children, Young People and their Services and FdSc Computing. They include academic regulations, appeals, programme requirements, and College-based processes and points of contact. Information concerning referencing and plagiarism is detailed and wide-ranging. A minority of handbooks, including those for FdA Business Management and FdSc Construction Management, are less student-friendly. Although they have information about the programmes provided by the awarding body, there is a lack of college-specific detail required by the University of Cumbria template.

45   The Developmental engagement recommended that the College improve the quality of module handbooks on programmes like FdSc Construction Management. The best module handbooks for 2011-12, including those for FdSc Computing and FdSc New Media Design and Technology, fully meet the College and university-prescribed guidelines. These handbooks put the syllabus into a context and language suitable for the student and provide a brief scheme of work, the assessment requirements and guidance on resources. For a few programmes, including FdA Business Management and FdSc Construction Management, the information provided is less helpful to students and varies considerably between modules. The team consider it desirable for the College to ensure that the programme and module handbooks on FdA Business Management and FdSc Construction Management are comprehensive in order to provide better information to support students in their learning. The majority of programmes publish module handbooks on the virtual learning environment. Some programmes, including all the Bachelor of Engineering programmes and FdA Early Years, Education and Care, also provide printed copies to meet student preference and need.

> **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

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

Line of enquiry 1: The quality and effectiveness of feedback, including tutorials, to students on formative and summative assessment in indicating improvement opportunities and in meeting the required academic standards.

Line of enquiry 2: The effectiveness and relevance of work-based learning assessment in supporting the student's development of theoretical and vocational learning.

Line of enquiry 3: The extent to which students and staff received comprehensive and timely information about the processes and outcomes of assessment.

47 The areas of good practice identified during the Developmental engagement were the high standard of the written feedback on FdA Health and Social Care and FdA Sports Coaching and Sports Development; that work-based learning is a distinctive and effective part of every programme; that work-based learning effectively links academic study with its application in the workplace and is valued by employers; and the comprehensive student and employer guidance on work-based learning.

48 The Developmental engagement indicated that it was advisable to ensure that staff provide detailed comments on the designated feedback form; to have formal minuted student liaison meetings for the FdSc Computing and the HNC Engineering programmes; and to improve the module handbooks on some programmes. It also considered it desirable to give feedback to students before external moderation processes, allowing its use for subsequent assessments; and to increase the amount of assessment information available for some programmes on the College virtual learning environment.

D Foundation Degrees

49 In 2011-12 the College is running 10 Foundation Degrees with the University of Central Lancashire and the University of Cumbria as the awarding bodies with five programmes each. Enrolment in 2010-11 was 46 full-time and 125 part-time students, representing 129.3 full-time equivalent students. For 2011-12, enrolment is 39 full-time and 149 part-time students, giving a total of 138.3 full-time equivalent students. There are no immediate plans for expansion.

50 The College manages its Foundation Degrees in an effective manner as part of a rigorous and detailed oversight of all of its provision. Both university partners provide access to some resources for students and extensive support for staff.

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

E   Conclusions and summary of judgements

52   The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in the 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 Lancaster, the University of Central Lancashire and the University of Cumbria.

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

- the close and effective relationship between the College and employers ensures that students benefit from valuable work-based learning and career progression opportunities (paragraphs 13, 34 and 39)
- the detailed and rigorous annual monitoring procedures make an effective contribution to the maintenance of academic standards and the enhancement of the provision (paragraph 16)
- staff use a comprehensive quality tracking database which makes a significant contribution to the effective implementation of course action plans, and to the quality assurance and enhancement of the provision generally (paragraph 17)
- the bridging qualifications offer students the opportunity to enhance significantly their skills in preparation for study on their target awards (paragraph 29).

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

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

- complete as soon as possible the mapping of its policies relevant to the quality of learning opportunities with the guidance provided by the *Code of practice* to ensure that the quality of the student experience is maximised (paragraph 24)
- ensure that the programme and module handbooks on FdA Business Management and FdSc Construction Management are comprehensive in order to provide better information to support students in their learning (paragraphs 43 and 44).

56   Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, 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.

57   Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, 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.

58   Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, 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.

Furness College action plan relating to the Summative review: September 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:						
• the close and effective relationship between the College and employers ensures that students benefit from valuable work-based learning and career progression opportunities (paragraphs 13, 34 and 39)	Annually review and enhance work-based learning through work-based handbooks, employer forums for each curriculum area, and enhanced professional development of students	July 2012	Director of Higher Education with programme leaders	Improved engagement and feedback with employers; positive evaluations from students' work-based learning via module evaluation questionnaires and student liaison meetings	Director of Higher Education	Minutes of employer forums, module evaluation questionnaires, student liaison meetings, annual reports, course audits, external examiner reports
• the detailed and rigorous annual monitoring procedures make an effective contribution to the maintenance of	Continue to develop and review the annual monitoring process to ensure good practice is applied	July 2012	Director of Higher Education	Quality standards are embedded and known by all staff and students to enhance the provision of higher education	Quality Improvement Group by the Director of Higher Education	Course audits, annual reports, student liaison meetings, module evaluation questionnaires, National Student

academic standards and the enhancement of the provision (paragraph 16)						Survey data; external examiner reports, annual reviews by partner higher education institutions
• staff use a comprehensive quality tracking database which makes a significant contribution to the effective implementation of course action plans and to the quality assurance and enhancement of the provision generally (paragraph 17)	Update, maintain and develop quality tracking database and quality assurance and enhancement systems	July 2012	Director of Higher Education	Quality assurance and standards is reported regularly at the Quality Improvement Group meeting Provision is enhanced and all programmes comply rigorously with the processes	Quality Improvement Group by the Director of Higher Education	Course audits, annual reports, student liaison meetings, module evaluation questionnaires, National Student Survey data, external examiner reports, annual reviews by partner higher education institutions
• the bridging qualifications offer students the opportunity to enhance significantly their skills in preparation for study on their target awards (paragraph 29).	To further develop the bridging programmes and their use to prepare students for progression, by raising staff and student awareness of their success	Sept 2012	Director of Higher Education	Students fully prepared for higher education study Increased numbers on bridging programmes	Director of Higher Education and programme leaders	Analysis of enrolment data for bridging programmes, retention data, student liaison meetings, surveys

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:						
• complete as soon as possible the mapping of its policies relevant to the quality of learning opportunities with the guidance provided by the *Code of practice* to ensure that the quality of the student experience is maximised (paragraph 24)	Mapping of *Code of practice* to College policies and procedures	July 2012	Director of Higher Education	Mappings concluded and approved by the Quality Improvement Group	Director of Higher Education	
• ensure that the programme and module handbooks on FdA Business Management and FdSc Construction Management are comprehensive in order to provide better information to support students in their	Review and update FDA Business Management and FdSc Construction Management handbooks to ensure student information is locally focused	July 2011	Director of Higher Education and programme leaders	Handbooks approved by Director of Higher Education, students are confident and satisfied with the content

Approved by University of Cumbria Quality unit | Director of Higher Education | Induction process review, student liaison meetings, module evaluation questionnaire |

learning (paragraphs 43 and 44).					