QAA

Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

Stockport College

February 2012

SR 038/12

Preface

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

Purpose of IQER

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

The IQER process

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

Developmental engagement

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

The main elements of a Developmental engagement are:

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

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

Summative review

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

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

Evidence

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

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

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

- *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (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 Stockport College carried out in February 2012

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 clear structures and effective processes with which the College manages its higher education empower higher education staff to maintain good academic standards
- there is a rigorous validation process for the self-assessment report by a board which includes external members and a representative from the Board of Governors
- effective management by the College of its staff development strategies supports the achievement of good academic standards and enhances learning opportunities
- the adoption and development of the Feed Forward approach to formative feedback enhances student learning.

Recommendations

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

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

- implement policy guidelines for the use of social media for both students and staff.

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 Stockport 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 Liverpool John Moores University, Manchester Metropolitan University, the University of Central Lancashire, and Edexcel. The review was carried out by Professor Paul Brunt, Dr Elizabeth Briggs, Mr John Skinner (reviewers) and Dr John Hurley (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 its awarding bodies, meetings with staff, students, employers and partner institutions, and reports of reviews by QAA and from inspections by Ofsted. In particular, the team drew on the findings and recommendations of the Developmental engagement in assessment. A summary of findings from this Developmental engagement is provided in Section C of this report. The review also considered the College's use of the Academic Infrastructure, developed by QAA on behalf of higher education providers, with reference to the *Code of practice*, subject and award benchmark statements, the FHEQ, and programme specifications.

3   In order to assist HEFCE to gain information to assist with the assessment of the impact of Foundation Degree awards, Section D of this report summarises details of the Foundation Degree programmes delivered at the College.

4   Stockport College was founded in 1889 as the Stockport Technical and Art School. As the Stockport College of Technology the institution expanded rapidly during the 1950s on its central Wellington Road Campus. After further changes of title it became Stockport College following the merger with North Area College in 2006. Stockport is a mixed economy College with a long tradition of running higher education. The College offers opportunities for students to progress from entry level to honours degree level. This is fundamental to the strategic objective of the College to provide accessible, high quality, flexible and work-related higher education that contributes positively and sustainably to the local economy.

5   Currently, the College enrols approximately 4,500 full-time students and 5,000 part-time students across further and higher education provision. The College is directly funded by HEFCE, and with over 1,200 students studying at level 4 and above, it is within the largest 10 per cent of further education colleges providing higher education in the United Kingdom. There are 1,053 student enrolments on bachelor's degrees, Foundation Degrees and Higher National programmes in 2011-12 (862 full-time equalivalents), of whom approximately 59 per cent are full-time and 41 per cent are part-time.

6   The College provides the following programmes with full-time equivalent numbers of students in brackets and current validating partners.

Edexcel

- HNC Building Services Engineering (16)
- HNC Civil Engineering (15)
- HNC Construction (15)

- HNC Engineering + pathways (33)
- HND Aerospace Engineering (6)
- HND Electrical/Electronic Engineering (9)
- HND Mechanical Engineering (5)
- Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (32)

Liverpool John Moores University

- FdSc Building Services Engineering (7)
- FdSc Construction & Surveying (3)
- FdA Commercial Photography (25)
- FdA Design & Advertising (25)
- FdA Early Years Practice (75)
- FdA Interior Design with Sustainability (10)
- FdA TV Production (26)
- FdA Working with Children and Young People (38)
- BA (Hons) Children & Youth Studies (20)
- BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies (117)
- BA (Hons) Design & Visual Arts (162)
- BA (Hons) Health & Social Care (33)
- BA (Hons) Photography (58)

Manchester Metropolitan University

- FdSc Enterprise Computing (34)
- BA (Hons) Social Work Levels 4 and 5 (98)

University of Central Lancashire

- FdSc Forensic Science (15)

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

7   The College has four active partnership arrangements with Liverpool John Moores University, Manchester Metropolitan University, the University of Central Lancashire, and Edexcel. Liverpool John Moores University maintains overall responsibility for standards, through validation processes and through link tutors. External examiners are appointed and course teams approved by the University. The College is responsible for discharging all functions of teaching, assessment, course management, and student support to the University's required standards. The agreement with Manchester Metropolitan University is for collaboration and specifically states that it is not a partnership. In other key respects it is similar to the agreement with Liverpool John Moores University.

8   The agreement with the University of Central Lancashire specifies that the College will provide programmes in accordance with the academic regulations of the University which retains overall responsibility for standards and the quality of student experience. The agreement with Edexcel requires the College to provide teaching, learning and assessment to defined standards, subject to external examination.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

9   The College completed new buildings for engineering and construction in 2010 which has allowed the conversion of vacated workshop accommodation to a higher

education centre housing classrooms, a common room and computer resources for higher education students. Other higher education-specific resources have also been introduced. Since the Developmental engagement a reorganisation of the management structure has grouped all higher education staff and programmes together managed by a Dean of Higher Education. The College is undertaking a number of changes in its validation arrangements and validating partners, as a consequence of changes of policy by those partners. These plans are well advanced and do not impact on current students.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

10   Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the team. A report was compiled by three students based on the annual survey of higher education students and focus groups which were run with students from each programme. The report concentrates on the quality of learning opportunities, recording student responses to questions on teaching and learning, assessment feedback, tutoring, and employability.

11   During their visit to the College reviewers held a private meeting with 16 students, representing a cross section of programmes. The students were aware of the student submission and most had contributed to it. The meeting covered a wide range of questions, but confirmed the evidence given in the submission on learning opportunities. The student evidence is congruent with other sources and is drawn upon widely in this report.

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?

12   There has been recent significant change to the management of higher education programmes, with differentiated management for higher education and further education provision. A Dean of Higher Education directly manages the higher education portfolio, working with three assistant deans of curriculum areas and a Social Work Manager. The Dean reports to the Vice Principal (Adult, Higher Education and Employer Responsiveness). Since the Developmental engagement, a new higher education strategy (2011-13) focuses on core priorities for development within the current financial context for the sector. The withdrawal of some validated level 6 work by one University partner has presented the College with challenges and also opportunities to revalidate some of its curriculum. Staff are confident that the new management structure and accompanying higher education strategy addresses effectively the current and future challenges to the higher education provision. The team concludes that the changes create a distinctive focus for higher education in the College and has motivated staff during a period of transition in validating arrangements.

13   Effective management processes for ensuring standards have been developed both centrally and across curriculum areas. College policies and procedures are reviewed regularly. Any proposed changes are given a formal impact assessment before approval by the Senior Leadership Team and are monitored effectively. The supporting committee structure has clear and appropriate terms of reference, and robust reporting arrangements to

manage and deliver academic standards. The Higher Education Academic Standards Panel, chaired by the Dean, has overall responsibility for all aspects of quality and standards and reports directly to the Senior Leadership Team. It considers annual monitoring reports and the reports of validation panels. The Higher Education Development Group is the forum for strategic developments by the College's senior managers. At programme level, the Higher Education Forum meets monthly to contribute to the development of policy, and enables staff to share good practice across the provision. Membership of the Forum includes staff from all programme teams and other key staff, for example the Library Manager. The team considers that the strategic implementation of the new structure has empowered higher education staff to enhance academic standards. The clear structures and effective processes with which the College manages its higher education empower higher education staff to maintain good academic standards and constitute good practice.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

14   The Developmental engagement report noted that the College was engaging effectively with many aspects of the Academic Infrastructure. The Academic Standards Panel continues to oversee the mapping of College quality assurance policies and procedures to the appropriate sections of the *Code of practice.* This was identified as good practice at the Developmental engagement. Programme validation and revalidation is conducted through the processes required by the awarding bodies, and in a recent example, the approval of the FdA in Interior Design, College mapping to the *Code of practice* was used. The mapping document contributes significantly to the management of academic standards, and demonstrates a continuing strength.

15   Programme specifications make use of relevant subject benchmark statements, as evidenced by those for BA (Hons) and Foundation Degree awards. Curriculum area staff confirmed that they are involved in the development of programme specifications, and are familiar with the sections of the *Code of practice.*

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?

16   The College provides annual reports for all validated programmes to its awarding bodies. The College works effectively with University link tutors to ensure that there is alignment between its procedures and those of the awarding bodies. Annual programme reviews, annual programme monitoring reports or evaluations, with an accompanying action plan, are completed by programme teams using University templates. The College has well established mechanisms for capturing the 'learner voice' which are detailed in paragraph 21. In all cases, annual reviews provide a detailed overview and address issues raised by students and external examiners. Cohort statistics gathered during the year and on completion are used to assess retention, achievement and progression. The College monitors poor attendance and low success rates rigorously, with monthly reviews of its 'special measures' action plan for underperforming programmes.

17   The Academic Standards Panel oversees action plans from annual reviews to ensure that appropriate standards are maintained, and also provide an enhancement agenda with identified areas of good practice. The higher education self-assessment report captures the annual review outcomes and is used to give information for sharing across curriculum areas. There is a rigorous validation process for the self-assessment report by a board which includes external members and a representative from the Board of Governors which the team considers to be good practice. Resulting action plans then feed into the College Higher Education Business Plan following consideration across curriculum areas.

The awarding bodies receive the higher education self-assessment report and the Validation Board Report.

18   The College has an effective set of procedures for ensuring academic standards. It has a detailed procedure for responding to University-appointed external examiners and Edexcel moderators. External examiner comments and recommendations are included in programme action plans. External examiners' reports confirm that standards are appropriate and that student performance is explicitly linked to intended learning outcomes. Assessment of all student assignments is first marked and then internally verified or moderated. The Developmental engagement report noted that there were inconsistencies in the assessment briefs on some programmes, particularly a lack of clarity between grading criteria and learning outcomes. Considerable progress has been made through the Higher Education Forum, improving the clarity of assignment briefs. Students commented positively about the timely return of work.

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

19   The Higher Education Strategy 2011-13 informs decisions about staff development and places an emphasis on the currency of subject expertise. The staff delivering higher education programmes are encouraged to engage in scholarship or undertake higher level qualifications. This is supported by a scholarly activity budget. Currently approximately 60 per cent of such staff have a level 7 or higher qualification and 11 staff are being supported to undertake master's or research degree qualifications. The College's commitment to continuing staff development and professional updating is underpinned by contractual reductions in contact teaching hours to permit scholarly activity and continuing professional development. There is evidence of good levels of staff participation in scholarship and professional updating and individual contributions of developmental work to the College Higher Education Research Journal. There is good practice in the effective management by the College of its staff development strategies that supports the achievement of good academic standards.

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

Core theme 2: Quality of learning opportunities

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

20   Overall responsibilities for managing the quality of learning opportunities reflect those for managing academic standards. The management arrangements function effectively and are well understood by staff at all levels. All programmes are delivered within designated curriculum areas, and the Dean of Higher Education and assistant deans hold responsibility for the quality of programmes, course modifications and course development. Responsibility for monitoring the quality of learning opportunities operates through the same structures identified in paragraphs 12 and 13. The team concludes that these arrangements manage the quality of learning opportunities efficiently and effectively at operational and strategic levels.

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

21   The arrangements described in paragraphs 16 to 18 provide a secure framework for interaction between the College and the awarding bodies. The College has clear systems for capturing the learner voice. Each cohort elects a student representative who attends the Programme Board of Study and some attend additional course representative meetings. This allows students to comment on programme delivery, College systems and resources. Staff record major student issues in the relevant annual programme monitoring reports and student contributions inform the College's action plans. Students also contribute to two student surveys and module reviews. Thus, there are systematic processes for gathering student feedback about the quality of learning opportunities which the team considers to be working effectively. Students reported satisfaction that the College hears its voice through these formal and informal mechanisms and were responsive to them. Scrutiny of the minutes of Programme Boards of Study identify appropriate actions being taken to address issues associated with student learning opportunities.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

22   The College's engagement with the Academic Infrastructure is described in paragraphs 14 and 15. The College is well informed about the Academic Infrastructure and has mapped the *Code of practice* to its policies and procedures. For example the College's approach to disability is well aligned with the *Code of practice, Section 3*: *Disabled students.*

23   The College assures the distinctive elements of its Foundation Degree provision in line with the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*. All the Foundation Degree programmes contain a large proportion of work-based learning and focus particularly on skill development. The College has revised its work-based learning guides and placement information in response to the Developmental engagement. These set out the main responsibilities of the employer, student and tutor, expectations and assessment of competence during the placement, and the principal stages of work-based learning. Employers who met the team reported satisfaction with these processes, as did students who had undertaken work-based activities and placements.

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

24   The College requires a varied range of teaching and learning approaches to reflect the diverse profile and learning styles of its students. A range of effective mechanisms is in place through which teaching and learning are monitored and enhanced. The College has an annual programme of teaching observation designed specifically for higher education, and a discussion of the outcomes of the observation forms the initial part of the annual appraisal meeting. Staff confirm that the observation process is supportive and value the openness of their peers and the consequent sharing of good practice. Staff confirm that their teaching practice has improved through the processes of constructive scrutiny and reflection.

25   The College has taken a strategic decision to enhance the quality of feedback students receive on their assessed work via the introduction of the Feed Forward model of formative approaches to assessment feedback. The introduction of the approach, encouraged by the Developmental engagement, involved considerable debate in staff teams, use of external advice, and a higher education staff conference. Reviewers found a range of evidence of this enhanced practice. Students reported increased satisfaction

with the approach, which had led them to understand better how to improve their work. Results of the approach are disseminated across teams, and will be presented in a forthcoming Higher Education Academy sponsored conference at the College. The adoption and development of the Feed Forward approach to formative feedback enhances student learning and is good practice.

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

26   In addition to direct progression from further education, the College attracts mature learners from the community. All students have a College induction, including an introduction to the virtual learning environment, skills and subject-specific elements. Students are assessed during induction to identify special needs, such as dyslexia or problems with literacy and numeracy, which are then supported centrally. Students appreciate the induction process which establishes expectations of higher education in a positive manner.

27   There is a well established tutorial system which offers academic support and has a significant role in ensuring that students are supported from their initial acceptance on the programme to completion. One-to-one tutorials are a regular feature of the student experience, are highly valued and apply equally to full and part-time students. Students stated that tutor feedback to them was timely, constructive and helpful for improving their performance and grades. The Developmental engagement identified an effective student tracking and tutorial recording system initiated in engineering and construction. A new system has now been introduced across the College, integrating attendance and progression information and tutorial records. Careers guidance and advice for higher education students is provided both centrally and by programme tutors. Students particularly value the advice received from course staff, which often draws upon the career insights available through the extensive and close industrial links that the College enjoys. The reviewers confirm the students' perception that through these mechanisms the College is successful in widening participation and raising students' aspirations*.*

28   The evaluation of support mechanisms feature in the annual review processes, along with their impact on retention data. Student feedback indicates high levels of satisfaction. Reviewers conclude that the College is supporting students very effectively*.*

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

29   The College Higher Education Strategy 2011-13 places an emphasis on staff development and on appropriate higher level teaching skills. All new staff are required to have or acquire a teaching qualification, receive an induction to the College, and have an appropriate member of existing staff as a mentor in order to help them settle into their role. Continuing professional development is linked to appraisal, enables staff to apply for support, and is guided by the assistant deans to ensure consistency with College priorities. The College provides a programme of relevant staff development and further opportunities are provided by the awarding bodies. Technical staff are also supported in developing relevant skills and updating. These practices are working effectively across higher education and represent good practice.

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

30   The Dean of Higher Education supported by the assistant deans has a dedicated budget to ensure that programmes are supported with appropriate resources. All students

benefit from access to a range of well designed specialised professional facilities. There are some new and refurbished buildings of a high quality, including a higher education centre and common room facilities. Staff and students of many higher education programmes are based here and the classroom accommodation is used by other higher education programmes. The equipment and classroom resources are of a high standard. The team concludes that specialist resources for learning are of a high quality and are managed effectively.

31   The provision benefits from a well qualified and diverse teaching establishment, most of whom work largely or exclusively in higher education. In addition, part-time specialist practitioners bring current vocational experience. Staff operate within committed, cohesive and well managed academic teams.

32   The College has prioritised an expansion of the learning resource centre, and students were generally positive about all aspects of the resource provision to support their learning. The learning resource centre offers some study space specifically for higher education students. Some students raised isolated difficulties in obtaining hard copies of core texts, or problems with the arrangements for loans. The work of the learning resource centre team is efficient and the College has evolved an effective strategy for electronic learning. The range of support materials, schedules and discussion groups on the virtual learning environment indicates a proactive approach to electronic learning. The continued development of electronic learning presents a challenge to both staff and students, but all module leaders are required to conform to a minimum specification of online learning materials. The team concluded that the College had effectively identified and was successfully monitoring the learning resources required to support achievement of the intended learning outcomes of the programmes.

> **The team concludes that it has confidence in the College's management of its responsibilities for the quality of the learning opportunities as required by the awarding bodies to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.**

Core theme 3: Public information

What information is the College responsible for publishing about its HEFCE-funded higher education?

33   The College is responsible for publishing a range of programme-specific and general information relating to its higher education portfolio. For Edexcel programmes of study the College uses documentation templates and formats provided by Edexcel and internally checked and controlled by the College. For programmes validated by the partner universities, the College has delegated authority for producing information relating to those programmes. In conformity with the partnership agreements the College submits all published materials, including website entries, for approval by the awarding university. The internal procedure for meeting this requirement is well understood and operates efficiently.

34   The marketing materials for potential students include a higher education prospectus and programme information leaflets which are made available on request and at open day events. The prospectus is well designed, easy to use and is available in print and online through the College's website, which includes a dedicated area for higher education. The design of the College's website takes account of accessibility issues and a prospectus is also available in different formats including large print Braille and audio formats.

35   Programme handbooks are made available to students at the start of their courses through the College's virtual learning environment and for some programmes in a printed format. Where awarding bodies require the College to use their handbooks these are supplemented with additional College information. All necessary information is provided in the handbooks, including course structure, submission assessment and grading, and also on wider policies such as appeals and misconduct. In meetings with the students most considered the handbooks to be a comprehensive and definitive source of information. Some students also benefit from individual module handbooks which they consider to be good sources of information.

36   In addition to marketing materials employers also receive information from placement handbooks, employer guides, mentor handbooks, and training manuals. Since the Developmental engagement the College has taken action to ensure greater consistency of information provided to employers. The employers who met the review team confirmed that they were kept well informed by the College.

What arrangements does the College have in place to assure the accuracy and completeness of information the College has responsibility for publishing? How does the College know that these arrangements are effective?

37   The well presented higher education prospectus is subject to 'sign-off' by the Dean of Higher Education and Vice-Principal to ensure accuracy at both programme and institutional levels. The accuracy of the information is maintained by the assistant deans and Social Work Manager, who monitor and review the programme details on the College's course details database. Access to this database is limited and strictly controlled. The database is the source for all publications, in both hard copy and through website pages. All requests for new marketing materials and amendments to existing documents including changes required by the awarding bodies, HEFCE or government are updated via this database. The Assistant Principal of Marketing liaises effectively with the authorised providers of information to ensure that they update the database before materials are produced.

38   Much of the information that the College places within its virtual learning environment is subject to the same control. The definitive versions of handbooks, programme specifications and College policies are contained within the course details database. Other course-specific information is uploaded by course leaders with the assistant deans having responsibility for ensuring the quality and content of what is provided. In some areas, particularly Arts Design and Media, students are encouraged to use external social media sites linked to the College's virtual learning environment for the purpose of displaying portfolios of work. College staff monitor the work and the students are subject to the College's IT Acceptable Use Policy. The College is also using social media for publicity purposes. The review team noted that a draft policy for the use of social media was produced in August 2011 but has not yet been implemented. It is desirable that the College implements policy guidelines for the use of social media both for students and staff.

39   The College actively seeks the views of students, parents and employers to ensure the completeness and effectiveness of information. The Assistant Principal of Marketing, assistant deans and Social Work Manager have key roles in collecting feedback to ensure that the information the College provides is meeting the needs of its stakeholders. Feedback is gathered via surveys, focus groups, employer ambassadors, and informal discussions. The College actively listens and provides responsive information via specific marketing to employers, an email newsletter, the Beacon newsletter to employers, and the

Graduate newsletter which employs real case studies of student experiences. Information is effectively managed to ensure it is accurate and complete.

> **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

40   A Developmental engagement in assessment was carried out at the College in March 2011. The lines of enquiry were as follows.

Line of enquiry 1: Does the feedback to students across all curriculum areas provide consistent guidance for the improvement and advancement of academic skills and attainment of learning outcomes?

Line of enquiry 2: Is the assessment of employability skills embedded across all programmes and how is student engagement in this process ensured?

Line of enquiry 3: Is the information published and issued to learners in relation to assessment fit for purpose and is the information appropriate, relevant, accurate and timely?

41   Good practice was identified in the assessment process, including the mapping of relevant sections of the *Code of practice*, use of portfolios and blogs to promote reflective practice in some areas, and an effective tracking system in others. A notable feature was the involvement of employers in supporting work-based assessment and providing feedback. A range of publications supported practice effectively.

42   Development areas included the need for greater clarity between the intended learning outcomes of modules, the assessment tasks set, grading criteria, and feedback. Encouragement was given to the continued development of a process of formative feedback and its integration in tutoring, achieving greater consistency in publications for students and employers, and embedding the development of employability skills across the curriculum by drawing on successful assessment approaches in some areas.

D   Foundation Degrees

43   The College offers 10 Foundation Degrees alongside 11 HNC/D qualifications and six BA Honours programmes. Foundation Degree students make up about 30 per cent of the total full-time equivalents. Curriculum areas offered include science, construction, computing, childhood, media, and design.

44   The Foundation Degrees demonstrate an effective integration of work-based learning across the programmes, and active and effective links with employers. Good practice observed in the Developmental engagement has been disseminated and embedded, for example through revised handbooks for students and employers.

45   All the conclusions stated below apply equally to Foundation Degrees.

E   Conclusions and summary of judgements

46   The 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, Liverpool John Moores University, Manchester Metropolitan University, the University of Central Lancashire, and Edexcel.

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

- the clear structures and effective processes with which the College manages its higher education empower higher education staff to maintain good academic standards (paragraph 13)
- there is a rigorous validation process for the self-assessment report by a board which includes external members and a representative from the Board of Governors (paragraph 17)
- effective management by the College of its staff development strategies supports the achievement of good academic standards and enhances learning opportunities (paragraphs 19 and 29)
- the adoption and development of the Feed Forward approach to formative feedback enhances student learning (paragraph 25).

48   The team also makes a recommendation for consideration by the College and its awarding bodies.

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

- implement policy guidelines for the use of social media for both students and staff (paragraph 38).

50   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.

51   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.

52   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.

Stockport College action plan relating to the Summative review: February 2012						
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 clear structures and effective processes with which the College manages its higher education empower higher education staff to maintain good academic standards (paragraph 13)	Review and agree Terms of Reference for all Higher Education Committee Structures for next academic year Schedule meetings for all higher education committee structures on higher education Calendar for 2012-13 and post on higher education Sharepoint and staff virtual learning environment (Moodle)	July 2012 September 2012	Vice Principal Higher Education, Dean of Higher Education and College Management Team Quality Standards Officer	Continued engagement of both further education and higher education staff in programme and curriculum development and the sharing of good practice	Higher Education Development Group, Higher Education Forum, Academic Standards Panel, College Management Team	Mid-year reviews, Annual programme Reviews, Annual Monitoring Reports; annual self-assessment report
• there is a rigorous validation process for the self-assessment report by a board which includes	Review, schedule and implement higher education self-assessment report 2011-12 and Higher Education Quality Improvement	September 2012	Dean of Higher Education and Assistant Deans of Schools	Timely completion of all Annual Programme Reviews to inform higher education self-assessment report	Vice Principal Quality & Learners, College Governor and external adviser The Principal and	Higher Education Validation Board Curriculum Area

external members and a representative from the Board of Governors (paragraph 17)	Plan 2012-13 in line with the College's Business Plan and Self Assessment Cycle	October 2012			Vice Principal Quality & Learners	Performance Board
• effective management by the College of its staff development strategies supports the achievement of good academic standards and enhances learning opportunities (paragraphs 19 and 29)	Ensure dedicated Scholarly Activity budget to encourage and engage staff in development and professional updating linked to staff appraisals	July 2013	Dean of Higher Education, Research Fellow and Scholarly Activity Lead	Continuation of higher qualifications, participation in scholarship and professional updating Presentations at annual Higher Education Conference	Scholarly Activity Panel, College Management Team, Higher Education Forum, Higher Education Development Group	Staff Research Journal, Annual Higher Education Conference, published papers, continuing professional development/ appraisal system
• the adoption and development of the Feed Forward approach to formative feedback enhances student learning (paragraph 25)	Include Feed Forward model as part of assessment strategies for all newly developed programmes Invite staff from across the College, both further education and higher education, to attend a conference and workshops on the adoption and development of the	May 2012 June 2012	Dean of Higher Education, Higher Education Programme teams	Incorporation of Feed Forward into assessment strategies of all programme specifications and student handbooks Successful delivery of Feed Forward workshops; Teaching &	Scholarly Activity Panel, College Management Team, Higher Education Forum, Higher Education Development Group	Minutes of meetings, programme handbooks, observation database, Higher Education Audit

Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
	Feed Forward approach to formative assessment			Learning Observations		
The team considers that it is **desirable** for the College to:						
• implement policy guidelines for the use of social media for both students and staff (paragraph 38)	Social Media Policy & Guidelines and Information Communication Technology Acceptable Use Policy to be ratified and disseminated to students and staff	May 2012 (ratified) July 2012 (Staff development) September 2012 (students)	Head of Marketing, Social Media Champions Group	Policies to be published on College website; staff and student induction to include the use of social media; dissemination of Social Media Policy and Guidelines All staff and students to sign Information Communication Technology Acceptable Use Policy	Assistant Director Facilities, Dean of Higher Education, Senior Leadership Team	Annual virtual learning environment audit, to include: Review of student and stakeholder complaints, student disciplinaries, and external examiner comments to identify any issues regarding use of social media; any identified issues to be addressed through area business plans Review of website and audit of induction programmes and student handbooks to confirm that policy

						guidelines are visible and shared

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