



# **Integrated quality and enhancement review**

**Summative review**

**St Patrick's International College**

**September 2012**

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## **Preface**

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

## **Purpose of IQER**

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

## **The IQER process**

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

## **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. Other private providers may elect to take part in a Summative engagement voluntarily.

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

## Evidence

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

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

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

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

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

## Outcomes of IQER

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

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

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

Colleges are required to develop an action plan to address any recommendations arising from IQER. Progress against these action plans is monitored by QAA in conjunction with HEFCE and/or the college's awarding body(ies)/organisation(s) 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 St Patrick's International College carried out in September 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 appointment of elected student officers provides an independent and highly trusted communication and support link between students and the College
- library and technical staff have collaborated to produce a purpose-designed library catalogue interface that is interactive, easy to use and highly responsive.

#### Recommendations

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

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

- manage formal meetings more rigorously, particularly those of its senior academic committees, ensuring the use of standard agenda and more precise and detailed minutes
- establish a robust mechanism for internal reporting on the whole of the higher education provision at the senior College level
- ensure that the internal verification procedures are implemented fully and consistently, and that staff better understand the process
- address inconsistencies and weaknesses in the quality of the written feedback given to students on their assessed work
- ensure the prompt completion of the improvements to its website to bring the content up to date, with all the awarding bodies represented and all programmes entered accurately.

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

- consider the introduction of a formal induction for new academic staff
- build on the existing peer review arrangements by making use of external reference points and the moderation of observer judgements
- continue its efforts to introduce an e-library facility and take careful account of honours degree demands in its future planning of the provision

- consider ways to ensure that students are better informed about the function and content of the general College handbook
- use the arrangements already in place for BA (Hons) Fashion Design to promote the review of public information within annual monitoring across all programmes.

## A Introduction and context

1 This report presents the findings of the Summative review of higher education conducted at St Patrick's International College. The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the College discharges its responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes which the College delivers on behalf of Edexcel, Middlesex University, the University of Sunderland and the University of Wales, as well as that for which the College provides tutorial support for students taking external degrees with the University of London. The review was carried out by Mr Jonathan Doney, Mr John Hawthorn, Ms Jenny Steer (reviewers), and Mr David Lewis (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 and representatives of partner institutions, past reports of reviews by QAA and by the British Accreditation Council for Independent Further and Higher Education. 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* (the *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 St Patrick's International College (the College) was formed in 1998 in the premises of the former St Patrick's International School, a Catholic Church institution off Oxford Street in central London. The College is a private higher education institution, which concentrates its curriculum on vocational and professional courses. Its mission includes a commitment to empower its students through education, and thereby to change their lives. It also seeks to transcend cultural and other boundaries across the world to arm students with the competence and confidence to excel. The College has expanded its provision from its original Higher National awards focused on computing and business. It now delivers a wide portfolio of Higher National programmes, professional diplomas, and honours and master's degrees, across six academic schools. These schools are: Art and Design, Business Management, Health and Social Care Management, Hospitality Management, Law, and Technology.

4 The College does not receive HEFCE funding. It recruits up to three times annually to its programmes and had over 640 students, all full-time, at the time of the visit, which occurred at a low point in the recruitment cycle. In 2011-12, the College had around 990 full-time students over the academic year. Nearly 80 per cent of these are international students recruited from over 80 countries outside of the EU. A total of 43 academic staff teach the higher education programmes, which are delivered by the College in association with four awarding bodies. The higher education awards delivered by the College are listed below by awarding body, with the number of full-time equivalent students in brackets.

### Edexcel

- HND Business Management (203)
- HND Health and Social Care Management/Care Practice (38)
- HND Hospitality Management (45)
- HND Information Systems Engineering (27)



- HND Network Engineering and Telecommunication Systems (370)
- HND Creative Media Production (5)
- HND Creative Media Production (Game Design) (0)
- HND Creative Media Production (Game Animation) (0)
- HND Creative Media Production (Journalism) (0)
- HND Creative Media Production (Moving Image) (0)
- HND Fashion and Textiles (8)
- HND Graphic Design (2)
- HND Interactive Media (4)
- HND Photography (6)
- HND 3D Design (7)
- HNC Law (11)
- Extended Diploma in Strategic Management and Leadership (70)
- Advanced Professional Diploma in International Health Management (19)
- Advanced Professional Diploma in Strategic Hospitality Management (2)

### **Middlesex University**

- BA (Hons) Fashion Design and Styling (5)
- BA (Hons) Fashion Design and Technology (3)

### **University of London**

- Bachelor of Laws (5)

### **University of Sunderland**

- BA (Hons) Business Management - One-year top-up (20)
- BSc (Hons) International Tourism and Hospitality Management - One-year top-up (10)
- BSc Health and Social Care - One-year top-up (12)
- Master of Business Administration - Top-up (55)
- MSc Health and Social Care - Top-up (7)
- MSc Tourism and Hospitality - Top-up (4)

### **University of Wales**

- BSc (Hons) International Business Management - One-year top-up (2)
- Master of Business Administration (39)

## **Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies**

5 The College has well established working partnerships with Edexcel and the University of Sunderland. Students on the Bachelor of Laws are external students of the University of London, so there is no formal agreement with the University. The agreement with Middlesex University is more recent, with the honours degree awards in fashion starting in February 2011. There is a formal agreement with the University of Wales to complete the delivery of programmes for which students were already enrolled at another private college that has now ceased to trade. All teaching on these programmes will be completed by December 2012. Most students on the Master of Business Administration award are completing dissertations, with all scheduled to be submitted by February 2013. The University of Wales provision was thus not given detailed attention within the review.

6 The College's responsibilities for the management of academic standards, quality and public information vary in detail between the different awarding bodies. In the case of customised Edexcel awards, the College has devolved responsibility for all aspects of the provision; while under standard arrangements, Edexcel provides the programme and unit

specifications. The agreement with Middlesex University gives the College extensive control over all aspects of academic standards, subject to relevant University regulations. It also devolves complete responsibility for the quality of learning opportunities and much of public information. For University of Sunderland awards, College responsibilities are limited to managing the quality of learning opportunities and some areas of public information. The College provides tuition and support for students taking the University of London external degree, but has no other formal responsibilities.

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

7 A range of significant developments has taken place at the College, some of them since the Development engagement. There has been an expansion in the range of provision and student numbers, largely the result of the College taking over responsibility for programmes at other private colleges that have ceased to trade. The College entered into eight such agreements during 2011-12. These developments have resulted in some academic restructuring, including the formation of a new School of Art and Design, which includes the previous School of Fashion and Design. They have also resulted in an increase in home and EU students from under five per cent to just over 20 per cent. Admission arrangements have been revised to facilitate three intakes annually for some of the provision. A long-standing partnership agreement with the University of Portsmouth has been terminated by mutual consent. A new agreement with Nottingham Trent University for a top-up degree has ended after the first graduating cohort. The College is now subscribing to the Higher Education Academy and has decided to end its relationship with the British Accreditation Council.

## **Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission**

8 Students on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the Summative review team. The process for developing the submission was coordinated by student officers, who consulted student representatives. Senior College staff provided support through meetings with the officers. The final submission comprised two parts. A written report summarised the findings from a survey of students, undertaken by student officers. The second part was a short video recording of interviews with a small sample of students from different nationalities and academic programmes. Overall, the submission proved useful in informing the topics that were explored during the review, some of which were followed up in an informative meeting with students during the visit.

## **B Evaluation of the management of 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 responsibilities for managing the academic standards delegated to the College are clearly documented. They include an appropriate involvement of staff at different levels and a well defined committee structure. The Director of Education is a member of the small senior management team and oversees all aspects of standards and quality. The Director chairs the two senior academic committees, the Principal Management and Governance Committee and the Academic Policy Making Committee, and reports directly to the Chief Executive of the company. Heads of school have a key role in managing standards on a

day-to-day basis and report to the Director of Education, as do heads of the academic support departments. Some heads of school have additional college-wide responsibilities. The newly established post of Director of Academic Standards and Quality Planning and the Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement both report to the Director of Education.

10 At College level, the Principal Management and Governance Committee is the senior strategic body, with oversight of all functions of the business, including quality management and enhancement. It receives reports and recommendations for action from the Academic Policy Making Committee, which is responsible for internal quality assurance matters. It considers the reports from awarding bodies and external examiners. It is advisable that these committees are managed more rigorously, ensuring the use of standard agenda items for recurring important business and more precise and detailed minutes. Currently, the meeting records are too sketchy to properly record business or track agreed actions. The minutes made it impossible to confirm the assertion that the committees give due consideration to student progression data. A third senior committee has recently been established with the intention of strengthening the reporting of academic standards and quality. This is the Academic Quality Audit Committee, which will be convened annually to review reports arising from the annual quality cycle.

11 The arrangements for managing academic standards are clear and effective within the academic schools. They operate as part of the College Course Management Quality Life Cycle, which provides an explicit and well understood framework for reviewing and reporting on the provision over a complete academic year. Discussions with staff and the scrutiny of minutes confirm that school boards of study, which include student representation, are effective in safeguarding academic standards. While the reporting arrangements are functioning well at school level, the College has no formal means by which its senior committees can reflect on standards and quality across the whole of the higher education provision. The College is advised to establish a robust mechanism for the internal annual reporting of the whole academic provision at a senior level.

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

12 College staff have a sound understanding of the importance and use of the Academic Infrastructure, as claimed in the self-evaluation. This is evident, for example, in the programmes validated by Middlesex University, where staff have developed the curricula and produced the programme specifications with direct reference to the FHEQ and subject benchmark statements. For University of Sunderland awards and most of the Edexcel provision, the predetermined units and regulations ensure that suitable attention has already been given to the FHEQ, subject benchmark statements and the relevant sections of the *Code of practice*. The Developmental engagement confirmed that, overall, College assessment procedures take appropriate account of the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*. The self-evaluation recognises that an in-depth mapping exercise is now needed to ensure that College procedures fully reflect the relevant 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?**

13 The College assures itself that its obligations are being met through the implementation of its extensive quality assurance arrangements, operating within the College Course Management Quality Life Cycle. This cycle incorporates Semester and Term Management Process Models, which are a set of standardised academic management procedures. These procedures are focused on the progression of students and assist the College in managing its multiple admission points over the academic year. The clear

overarching frameworks incorporate a range of specific activities and procedures that contribute to the maintenance of academic standards. These include the system of College boards, assessment and verification, external examining, annual monitoring, student academic records and periodic review by awarding bodies.

14 The College has appropriate arrangements for managing assessment and the Developmental engagement confirmed that the requirements of the awarding bodies are being met. Assessment operates within the context of a well managed system of boards, including unit assessment boards, mid-semester examination boards and external examination boards. There are clearly defined procedures for addressing the reports of external examiners, these having been strengthened and standardised following the Developmental engagement. The Director of Education usually receives the reports and forwards them to heads of school, who, in consultation with programme managers, decide what actions are required. It is not possible to confirm that the clear procedures for responding to external examiner reports are fully embedded, as the College was unable to provide evidence that the 2012 action plans for two Higher National awards had been completed by the required date. However, the external examiner reports made available for the review offer evidence that assessments and academic standards are at an appropriate level across the various programmes.

15 The College is aware of its obligation within the partnership agreements to submit annual monitoring reports to its two university partners. The most recent periodic review report from the University of Sunderland in 2010 confirms that the College continues to meet all University expectations. Middlesex University has yet to undertake a periodic review, but a representative gave assurances to the reviewers about the College's management of standards on its awards.

16 The self-evaluation asserts that comprehensive records of student achievement and progression are used in support of academic standards. There is clear documentary evidence that individual student records are detailed and used effectively, for example in identifying academic support needs. However, there is limited evidence in minutes of the data being used by senior committees to analyse and respond to patterns and trends.

17 The emphasis on students in the quality assurance arrangements is reflected in the attention given to student opinion. Students are represented on boards of study, elect a paid Student Officer and contribute to student surveys. The surveys are evaluated at programme and school levels, with students informed about any resultant actions.

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

18 A number of recent initiatives have significantly enhanced the potential of staff development to support academic standards. The College has revised its staff development policy to promote the importance of regular professional development and increase the take-up among staff. Staff development activities are being planned to align more explicitly with the strategic aims of the College. A newly developed staff appraisal policy is expected to take effect in 2012-13. It is designed to articulate with the revised staff development policy and peer observation system to better identify and deliver individual staff development needs. It is desirable that the College should consider adding to these developments by introducing a specific induction programme for new staff. At present, induction is based on the provision of a comprehensive handbook.

19 As claimed in the self-evaluation, a variety of college-wide development opportunities have been provided to facilitate staff awareness of relevant academic standards. Activities have included staff workshops to introduce or reinforce policies and

procedures, including one focusing on online marking. Away-day conferences and events have been held, while other specific training sessions have focused on the use of plagiarism detection software and the virtual learning environment.

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

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

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

20 The College has extensive or complete responsibility, depending on the partnership agreement, for the quality of learning opportunities on each of the academic programmes. Learning opportunities are managed through a well defined process of delegated responsibilities and committees, as described in paragraphs 9 to 11. There are clear reporting lines between module leaders, programme managers and heads of school, each of whom has delegated responsibility for the quality of learning opportunities at their level of oversight.

### **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 As described in paragraphs 13 to 17, the College has a range of clearly documented quality assurance arrangements that it uses to assure itself about its provision of learning opportunities. Where there is a need to update staff on changes to awarding body requirements, this is normally undertaken through special staff meetings and by posting revised procedures on the staff intranet.

22 The internal verification system is one way in which the College is able to ensure that students receive appropriate learning opportunities. Although the procedures are extensively documented, there are a number of issues that limit their effectiveness. College records confirm that all assessments are verified internally before being issued to students. This stage of the process, however, is not fully meeting its intended purpose. The verifier is only required to answer a very limited number of questions about the suitability of assignment briefs. Furthermore, some feedback given to assessors by verifiers is bland and unhelpful. The verifier samples the assessment decisions, but is not required to comment on how well assessment was conducted or on the quality of the written assessment feedback given to the student. It is also evident from discussions with staff that some are unclear about the difference between second marking and internal verification. It is, therefore, advisable that the internal verification procedures are implemented more fully and consistently, and that action is taken to ensure that staff better understand the process.

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

23 The College takes account of the Academic Infrastructure in managing the quality of learning opportunities, as described in paragraph 12. The mapping of provision against its elements, particularly the *Code of practice*, has been largely informal. Staff have a good

awareness of elements such as the agreed programme specifications and benchmark statements, and use them to inform their teaching.

24 The College provides ongoing support for staff to ensure they are kept aware of the Academic Infrastructure and the implications of the new UK Quality Code for Higher Education. Briefing sessions in June 2012 looked at College provision in relation to the Academic Infrastructure. They covered benchmarking, policies and the procedures published in staff and student handbooks, including plagiarism and appeals.

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

25 At the time of the review, a formal learning and teaching strategy was being developed for implementation during 2012-13. The main mechanisms by which the College assures itself about the quality of teaching and learning are the two complementary systems of teaching observation, undertaken by peers and programme managers. The developmental peer observations are carried out within subject teaching groups, some of which are very small, and the College acknowledges that the outcomes have not been consistently reported. Some of the reports provided for the review include ratings that appear generous in relation to the accompanying observer comments. It is desirable that the College introduces some formal external reference points for the observation process, as well as a procedure for moderating the observer judgements. The formal engagement with the Higher Education Academy is a helpful move in promoting these improvements.

26 Students are able to express their views about teaching and learning through module survey questionnaires. These surveys, referred to as 'planners', are collected at the start, middle and end of each semester. The results are fed into the College quality assurance processes. Students confirm that they are kept informed about the outcomes of the surveys and that their concerns are addressed.

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

27 The College has a range of mechanisms and procedures for providing academic and pastoral support, and student feedback suggests that these are operating satisfactorily.

28 Student officers make a crucial and highly effective contribution to the delivery of support. Students elect officers from a shortlist agreed by the College, which pays them for what is normally a sabbatical year in post. This robust process ensures that candidates have appropriate maturity and personal skills, as well as the trust of fellow students. The students are able to cite many examples of the officers' work. These include resolving sensitive issues, such as student concerns about the teaching of individual members of staff. Student officers have a range of other responsibilities, including a central role in the induction of new student intakes. This innovative role represents good practice, making a major contribution to student support. Student officers provide an independent and highly trusted communication and support link between students and the College.

29 The scrutiny of a sample of assessed student work revealed variability in the quality of the written feedback given to students. While there is evidence of good feedback, some of it lacks focus, does not address assessment criteria or is brief and lacks constructive advice for improvement. These issues were the subject of a recommendation from the Developmental engagement and have been raised in some recent external examiner reports. The College is advised to address the continued inconsistencies and weaknesses in the quality of the written feedback given to students on their assessed work.

30 Students who are facing difficulties with their academic performance may be recommended by the Examinations Board to attend clinical sessions or diagnostic panels to agree remedial actions. Clinical sessions are effective in allowing staff to offer focused revision on topics that are causing difficulty. Diagnostic panels are officially constituted meetings in which serious problems are discussed and formal improvement plans agreed.

31 General pastoral guidance and support is readily available from the Head of Student Affairs and through prompt informal access to members of staff. The Head of Student Affairs has counselling experience and is also able to provide advice on personal matters such as finance, health and accommodation. Students can be referred externally for more specialist support where the need is identified.

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

32 The College has an explicit staff development policy aimed at encouraging staff members to update their skills and knowledge in their areas of expertise and in accordance with strategic aims. It supports a good range of activities, including attendance at conferences, study for higher subject and professional qualifications, the development of new programmes and scholarly activities. A valuable feature of the staff profile is the high level of involvement in outside professional practice, including membership of relevant professional bodies.

33 The College's commitment to effective teaching and learning is evident in the priority being given to increasing the number of staff with formal teaching qualifications. To this end, staff are being encouraged to engage with the Higher Education Academy and are supported financially to study for a recognised teaching qualification.

**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?**

34 There is a well understood process for allocating resources, in which the Director of Education makes the final decisions. The priority is to ensure that in advance of each semester, programmes have the threshold level of resources needed to meet their published learning outcomes. Students are able to comment on resources through semester surveys and mid-term meetings with staff.

35 The small College library is equipped mainly on the basis of reading lists provided by heads of school, programme teams and awarding bodies. The process has ensured a threshold level of library provision that meets the requirements of the awarding bodies. Students on some programmes also have access to their awarding university's virtual learning environment. However, students commented on the lack of breadth for meeting the demands of honours degree programmes, for example in respect of research for essays and dissertations. The College is working towards the introduction of an e-library, which should help to address the limited access to journals. It is desirable that the College continues its efforts to introduce an e-library facility and also takes careful account of honours degree demands in its future planning of the provision.

36 The self-evaluation states that the Librarian and the Head of Computing Services review resources annually in consultation with the Director of Education and the Principal Management and Governance Committee. However, it is not possible to determine the effectiveness of the meetings, which are held informally without the taking of minutes.

37 Library and technical staff have collaborated to produce a purpose-designed library catalogue interface that is interactive, easy to use and highly responsive. The interface allows students to see the cover and contents page of current stock, and a visual indication of the book's location within the library. They can also access details of their own library account and post comments and requests to the librarian, who is required to respond. The catalogue interface, which is an area of good practice, is a highly effective innovation that is being further developed to increase its functions.

**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 higher education?**

38 The College responsibilities for public information are clearly stated in the various partnership agreements and well understood by staff. A strategic decision has been taken to concentrate on distributing materials electronically through the website, virtual learning environment, intranets and a social media site. The recently redesigned website, which the College sees as the primary vehicle for promoting itself and its programmes, is attractive and easy to navigate. Some of the external signing on the College building has yet to be updated to reflect the recent changes in awarding body partners.

39 There are clearly defined procedures for generating the different types of information. For example, the content of the range of explicit College policies and procedures is developed by the Quality Department, overseen by the Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement before final review by the Director of Education.

40 Students confirm the value of the virtual learning environment, which enables them to access a range of information for their programme off campus. The College requires staff to produce a minimum prescribed set of materials for each programme. The College has responded to a recommendation from the Developmental engagement by ensuring that programme and assessment information provided for students on the virtual learning environment is complete and that entries consistently meet prescribed requirements. Students now appreciate being able to use the virtual learning environment to submit assignments and receive assessment results and feedback.

41 The staff intranet is used effectively to disseminate and store documentation, including policies and procedures. The College has offered professional development sessions to encourage more staff to use the intranet, particularly to access updated information from the awarding bodies.

42 Students on all awards receive a detailed programme handbook, as well as a general College handbook. Programme handbooks for the awards of the two universities are well compiled and informative, with core content provided by the university partner. Handbooks for the Edexcel programmes are generated internally to a consistent style and content. The content of all programme handbooks is agreed by the relevant head of school before release. Students confirmed that they had received the College handbook, but were unclear about its content and value. It is desirable that the College considers how it might ensure that students are better informed about the function and content of the handbook.



**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?**

43 The College has in place a series of explicit procedures for checking and ensuring that public information is accurate and complete. The procedures are generally well understood by those staff who need to engage with them. The standard procedure for externally published information requires that the Director of Education formally approves all material. This approval takes place after materials have been checked and signed off by the Marketing Manager and Director of Communications. Where required by partnership arrangements, content and presentation are also submitted for approval by the awarding body.

44 The Marketing Manager is responsible for the website. Academic staff are able to check programme-related materials after they have been drafted by the marketing team. The self-evaluation states that the Marketing Manager reviews the College's web-based content at least termly, but this is not formalised within the web publishing policy document. Development work on the website is ongoing, but it is advisable that the College ensures its prompt completion. This is needed to bring all content up to date, with all the awarding bodies represented and all programmes entered accurately. At the time of the visit, there was a gap in the listing of the awarding bodies and some programme details were difficult to locate.

45 The annual monitoring report for the BA (Hons) Fashion Design programmes includes comment on public information. In addition to checking consistency between different sources of programme information, consideration is also given to any matters raised by students and external examiners. It is desirable that the College extends this useful review of public information to all annual monitoring reports across the provision.

46 There are explicit procedures for ensuring that overseas recruitment agents are able to provide programme information to prospective applicants.

**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**

47 The Developmental engagement in assessment was undertaken in June 2011. It focused on three lines of enquiry, which were agreed with the College in advance. The lines of enquiry reflect a broad range of assessment issues and allowed the team to explore the three IQER Core themes. They were as follows:

**Line of enquiry 1:** How are appropriate academic standards ensured with regard to the assessment cycle from the design and verification of assignments through to marking and moderating?

**Line of enquiry 2:** What are the processes for providing feedback to the students on assessment and how do they ensure timely and constructive guidance that accurately reflects students' achievement and allows appropriate opportunities for improvement?

**Line of enquiry 3:** What information and guidance is published for students and staff regarding assessment and how does the College ensure its accuracy, completeness and accessibility?

48 The Developmental engagement report identifies a number of features of good practice, including a carefully planned scheme of diagnostic assessment and the comprehensive assignment briefing form being used on some of the provision. The report also highlights a rigorous approach to plagiarism that is sensitive to diverse backgrounds of students and the use of standardised documentation on the staff intranet, which is used to promote consistency in assessment practice.

49 The report contains a range of recommendations for improving the standards and quality of the higher education. It refers to the advisability of introducing formal action planning for responding to external examiner reports and to addressing inconsistencies in the operation of assessment within fashion, including student perceptions of unfairness. Other advisable recommendations focused on inconsistencies in the assessment feedback given to students, ensuring that all schools meet the requirements of the Semester Management Process Model and Lecturer Activity Diaries, and the need to meet the College's own requirements in respect of the information provided for students on the virtual learning environment. The report outlines two desirable recommendations for enhancing the provision. The College should maintain a record of internal verification activities on the Edexcel programmes and provide all students with an overview of assessment as part of the induction process.

## **D Foundation Degrees**

50 The College does not offer Foundation Degrees.

## **E Conclusions and summary of judgements**

51 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in St Patrick's International College's management of its responsibilities for academic standards and for the quality of learning opportunities of the awards the College offers on behalf of its awarding bodies. This was based upon discussion with staff and students and scrutiny of evidence provided by the College and its awarding bodies, Edexcel, Middlesex University, the University of Sunderland and the University of Wales.

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

- the appointment of elected student officers provides an independent and highly trusted communication and support link between students and the College (paragraph 28)
- library and technical staff have collaborated to produce a purpose-designed library catalogue interface that is interactive, easy to use and highly responsive (paragraph 37).

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

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

- manage formal meetings more rigorously, particularly those of its senior academic committees, ensuring the use of standard agenda and more precise and detailed minutes (paragraphs 10, 16 and 36)
- establish a robust mechanism for internal reporting on the whole of the higher education provision at the senior College level (paragraph 11)
- ensure that the internal verification procedures are implemented fully and consistently, and that staff better understand the process (paragraph 22)
- address inconsistencies and weaknesses in the quality of the written feedback given to students on their assessed work (paragraph 29)
- ensure the prompt completion of the improvements to its website to bring the content up to date, with all the awarding bodies represented and all programmes entered accurately (paragraph 44).

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

- consider the introduction of a formal induction for new academic staff (paragraph 18)
- build on the existing peer review arrangements by making use of external reference points and the moderation of observer judgements (paragraph 25)
- continue its efforts to introduce an e-library facility and take careful account of honours degree demands in its future planning of the provision (paragraph 35)
- consider ways to ensure that students are better informed about the function and content of the general College handbook (paragraph 42)
- use the arrangements already in place for BA (Hons) Fashion Design to promote the review of public information within annual monitoring across all programmes (paragraph 45).

56 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, and other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that it has **confidence** that, in the context of this Summative review, the College discharges its responsibilities effectively, as set out in the relevant partnership agreements for the management of the standards of the awards of its awarding bodies.

57 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, and other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that it has **confidence** that, in the context of this Summative review, the College discharges its responsibilities effectively, as set out in the relevant partnership agreement for the management of the quality of learning opportunities to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

58 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, and other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that, in the context of this Summative review, reliance **can** be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

St Patrick's International College action plan relating to the Summative review September 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 <b>good practice</b> that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the appointment of elected student officers provides an independent and highly trusted communication and support link between students and the College (paragraph 28)</li> </ul>	Provide opportunities that will enable student officers to strengthen and further develop their support link roles at programme, school and College levels	September 2013	Head of Student Support Services  In consultation with programme managers and heads/associate heads of school	<p>Student officers have designated office space that is clearly signposted and access to resources required to perform their roles effectively and efficiently</p> <p>Communication links between student officers, senior management and senior College committees are visible, effective and take place frequently on a regular basis</p> <p>A robust system of student officers supported by student representatives provide focus for the</p>	<p>Director of Education</p> <p>The Academic Policy Making Committee</p> <p>The Principal Management and Governance Committee</p>	<p>Student representative-senior staff meetings: agendas and minutes</p> <p>Quality Handbook</p> <p>Student Handbook</p> <p>Student survey reports</p> <p>Student officers' meetings with students: documented evidence</p> <p>Mid-term boards and boards of study: agendas and minutes</p>

				student voice		<p>Annual monitoring reports</p> <p>Formal College responses to issues raised by students</p> <p>Mapping exercise: <i>Chapter B5: Student engagement</i> of the Quality Code - particularly Indicators 1, 2, 3, 5 and 7</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>library and technical staff have collaborated to produce a purpose-designed library catalogue interface that is interactive, easy to use and highly responsive (paragraph 37).</li> </ul>	<p>Develop present catalogue capabilities further</p> <p>Organise relevant briefing/training sessions open to all staff members and students</p>	May 2013	<p>College Librarian, in consultation with the software engineer</p> <p>The Principal Management and Governance Committee</p>	<p>Plans for library catalogue development have sufficient financial backing and are linked securely to the College's Learning Resource Strategy</p> <p>Staff and students demonstrate knowledge of the library catalogue capabilities and various search methods</p> <p>Monitoring arrangements are in</p>	<p>Director of Education, in consultation with the Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement, and the Academic Policy Making Committee</p>	<p>Unit progression boards, mid-term boards, and boards of study: agendas and minutes</p> <p>Feedback from staff</p> <p>Student surveys</p> <p>The Academic Policy Making Committee and the Principal Management and Governance Committee:</p>

				place to ensure that the catalogue continues to function effectively as a research tool		agendas (learning resources provision as a standard item) and minutes  Library reports and/or library development updates  Student Handbook
<b>Advisable</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>Target date</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Success indicators</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
The team considers that it is <b>advisable</b> for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>manage formal meetings more rigorously, particularly those of its senior academic committees, ensuring the use of standard agenda and more precise and detailed minutes (paragraphs 10, 16 and 36)</li> </ul>	<p>Improve the quality standards of senior level College committees</p> <p>Formalise procedures, including standardised items on agendas and precise, detailed minutes</p> <p>Review current membership criteria and terms of reference to ensure that representation and remit are fit for purpose</p>	October 2013	Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement	<p>Academic standards and quality management/planning are standard items on the Principal Management and Governance Committee and the Academic Policy Making Committee agendas</p> <p>Results of discussions are detailed in formal minutes/reports</p> <p>Meetings focused upon learning</p>	<p>Director of Education</p> <p>The Academic Policy Making Committee</p> <p>The Principal Management and Governance Committee</p>	<p>Quality Handbook</p> <p>The Academic Policy Making Committee and the Principal Management and Governance Committee: agendas and minutes</p> <p>Learning resource provision meetings: agendas and minutes</p>

				<p>resource provision, involving the College Librarian, the Head of Computing Services and senior management, take place each term and are well documented</p> <p>Minutes or summaries (as appropriate) of senior committee meetings are available for review by staff and students</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>establish a robust mechanism for internal reporting on the whole of the higher education provision at the senior College level (paragraph 11)</li> </ul>	<p>Develop the Course Management Quality Process Life Cycle model in ways that will enable it to function as a robust set of indicators for internal reporting at College level</p> <p>Develop a report format for distribution that can easily be understood by staff members, students and appropriate external parties</p>	November 2013	Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement, in consultation with the Director of Academic Standards and Quality Planning	<p>The Course Management Quality Process Life Cycle model works effectively as a tool for charting progress made in respect of academic standards and enhancing quality management within the College</p> <p>Regular, systematic reviews are undertaken on the model's effectiveness, ensuring that it remains fit for purpose</p>	<p>Director of Education</p> <p>The Academic Policy Making Committee</p> <p>The Principal Management and Governance Committee</p>	<p>Quality Handbook</p> <p>Reports of annual reviews undertaken by the Academic Quality Audit Committee</p> <p>Boards of study: agendas and minutes</p> <p>The Academic Policy Making Committee and the Principal Management and Governance Committee: agendas and</p>

						minutes Annual monitoring reports School and programme team agendas and minutes College policies and procedures, 2012-13
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensure that the internal verification procedures are implemented fully and consistently, and that staff better understand the process (paragraph 22)</li> </ul>	<p>Review and revise internal verification policies and procedures, including the present internal verification pro forma, to improve the quality of feedback and ensure consistency in approach across the College</p> <p>Organise briefings/ workshop sessions aimed at deepening staff awareness and understanding of the internal verification process</p>	August 2013	Heads/associate heads of school, in consultation with programme managers	<p>Internal verification procedures are implemented effectively and consistently across all schools at College level</p> <p>Staff members demonstrate full awareness of College expectations in respect of the internal verification process</p> <p>Verifiers provide a wide range of constructive feedback to assessors, based upon their review</p>	Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement	<p>Staff Handbook</p> <p>Quality Handbook</p> <p>College policies and procedures, 2012-13</p> <p>Unit progression boards: agendas and minutes</p> <p>Examination boards and boards of study: agendas and minutes</p> <p>The Academic Policy Making Committee: agendas (assessment a</p>



						<p>standard item) and minutes</p> <p>External examiner reports</p> <p>Annual monitoring reports</p> <p>Mapping exercise: <i>Chapter B3: Learning and teaching</i> of the Quality Code - particularly Indicators 1 and 2</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>address inconsistencies and weaknesses in the quality of the written feedback given to students on their assessed work (paragraph 29)</li> </ul>	<p>Review and improve existing mechanisms for monitoring the quality and consistency of assessor feedback to students</p> <p>Provide college-wide opportunities for lecturers to develop skills in workshop/ seminar sessions that can be applied effectively online, in addition to hard copy marking</p>	August 2013	Programme managers	<p>Written feedback on marked assessments is sufficient and useful, and enhances student opportunities for learning</p> <p>Evidence that markers and moderators are adopting a more consistent and helpful approach to providing feedback to students about their work</p>	<p>Heads/associate heads of school, in consultation with the Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement and the Academic Policy Making Committee</p>	<p>Internal verification reports relating to the moderation of assessed work</p> <p>Samples of assessed work, drawn from online and hard copy sources</p> <p>External examiner reports</p> <p>Unit progression boards: agendas and minutes</p>

						<p>Student survey reports</p> <p>Student representative-senior staff meetings: agendas and minutes</p> <p>Mapping exercise: <i>Chapter B3: Learning and teaching</i> of the Quality Code - particularly Indicator 9</p> <p>Comparisons against the UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education, particularly A3</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensure the prompt completion of the improvements to its website to bring the content up to date, with all the awarding bodies represented and all programmes entered accurately (paragraph 44).</li> </ul>	<p>Produce a schedule (timeline) for completing improvements, based upon reviews of progress made in current developments</p> <p>Ensure that information about the awarding bodies and programme content is accurate and up to date</p>	February 2013	Marketing and Recruitment Manager (responsible for information oversight), in consultation with the Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement (responsible for production and review of all quality-related documentation and the Student Handbook)	<p>Construction of the new website is complete</p> <p>Further developments are focused upon enhancement</p> <p>Policies, procedures and mechanisms for ensuring that information is accurate and up to date are working effectively</p> <p>Monitoring routines have been operationalised and are working effectively over the spectrum of information</p>	<p>Director of Education</p> <p>The Academic Policy Making Committee</p> <p>The Principal Management and Governance Committee</p>	<p>Quality Handbook</p> <p>College policies and procedures</p> <p>College website</p> <p>Staff intranet</p> <p>StP On-Line (College virtual learning environment)</p> <p>The Academic Policy Making Committee and the Principal Management and Governance Committee: agendas and minutes</p> <p>Student survey reports</p> <p>Induction surveys</p> <p>Staff feedback</p> <p>External representatives and awarding</p>
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						<p>bodies: documented feedback</p> <p>Reviews on College provision of information undertaken by the Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement</p> <p>Mapping Exercise: <i>Chapter B10: Management of collaborative arrangements</i> of the Quality Code - particularly Indicators 26, 27 and 28</p>
<b>Desirable</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>Target date</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Success indicators</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
The team considers that it is <b>desirable</b> for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>consider the introduction of a formal induction for new academic staff (paragraph 18)</li> </ul>	Develop and formalise induction procedures and practices for new academic staff members on a college-wide basis,	May 2013	Heads/associate heads of school, in consultation with programme managers and academic administration	New academic staff members are fully informed of College, school, programme and module procedures, expectations and	Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement and the Academic Policy Making Committee	<p>Staff Handbook</p> <p>Staff induction packages</p> <p>Documented staff feedback on the</p>

	<p>capitalising on the good practices previously applied informally within the various schools</p> <p>Enhance the induction process by establishing a mentoring or buddy system</p>	September 2013		<p>requirements prior to the start of term</p> <p>They also benefit from the additional support provided by mentors, who are experienced and familiar with the demands of the programme and College procedures</p>		<p>value of induction sessions and access to mentors</p> <p>Annual monitoring reports</p> <p>Academic staff meetings (College and school): agendas and minutes</p> <p>The Academic Policy Making Committee: agendas and minutes</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• build on the existing peer review arrangements by making use of external reference points and the moderation of observer judgements (paragraph 25)</li> </ul>	<p>Review current procedures and practices undertaken in respect of teaching observation at School level to identify good practice</p> <p>Map against external reference points, including approaches to moderation</p> <p>Reshape current policy and implement consistent procedures across</p>	<p>April 2013</p> <p>September 2013</p>	<p>Heads/associate heads of school, in collaboration with programme managers</p>	<p>Two complementary, but separate, mechanisms for teaching observations are used consistently and to good effect throughout the College: peer review and programme manager review</p> <p>Quality in teaching observation is assured through the use of external reference points and the internal</p>	<p>Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement</p> <p>The Academic Policy Making Committee</p>	<p>Staff Handbook</p> <p>Semester and Term Management Process Models folders - peer observation evidence</p> <p>Boards of study: agendas and minutes</p> <p>Appraisals</p> <p>Staff development</p>

	the College			moderation of observer judgements		records  Quality Academic Audit Committee: reports  The Academic Policy Making Committee: agendas and Minutes  Comparisons against the UK Professional Standards Framework - particularly K5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>continue its efforts to introduce an e-library facility and take careful account of honours degree demands in its future planning of the provision (paragraph 35)</li> </ul>	Develop and initiate operational plans to establish an e-library that will add depth and breadth to the current hard copy collection	September 2013	<p>Heads of school, College Librarian</p> <p>The Academic Policy Making Committee, in particular, formation of a working party on e-library resourcing, with the Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement representing quality interests</p>	<p>Plans and funding for developing, expanding and managing an e-library in the medium term have been agreed and approved by the Principal Management and Governance Committee, and the stocking process has commenced</p> <p>Visible improvement in the quality of</p>	<p>Director of Education</p> <p>The Academic Policy Making Committee</p> <p>The Principal Management and Governance Committee (progress reports)</p>	<p>The Principal Management and Governance Committee and the Academic Policy Making Committee: agendas and minutes</p> <p>Annual monitoring reports</p> <p>External examiner reports</p> <p>Student survey</p>

			The Principal Management and Governance Committee (financial support)	research demonstrated in student written work		reports Samples of student work Library reports and/or library development updates
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>consider ways to ensure that students are better informed about the function and content of the general College handbook (paragraph 42)</li> </ul>	Improve the College's current induction and distribution procedures in ways that facilitate student awareness of and appreciation for the College Handbook	July 2013	Head of Student Support Services Student officers	<p>The utility of the College Handbook as an information tool is recognised by students and staff members</p> <p>Students demonstrate knowledge and understanding of College policies, procedures and regulations</p> <p>Briefing/workshop sessions on the Handbook have a designated space in induction sessions held for all new staff members and students</p> <p>Students and staff members have easy access to the latest</p>	Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement	<p>Student induction: agendas and information packs</p> <p>Student survey reports</p> <p>Student representative and senior staff meetings: agendas and minutes</p> <p>Student officers' meetings with students: documented evidence</p> <p>Induction survey feedback</p> <p>Mid-term boards and boards of study: agendas</p>

				electronic version		and minutes  Mapping exercise: Part C: Information about higher education provision of the Quality Code - particularly Indicators 1, 2, 3, 5 and 7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>use the arrangements already in place for BA (Hons) Fashion Design to promote the review of public information within annual monitoring across all programmes (paragraph 45).</li> </ul>	Introduce reviews of public information into the annual monitoring process across all programmes and at College level, using the Fashion Design Report as a guideline	September 2013	Programme managers  Heads/associate heads of school	<p>A section on the management of information is included in annual reports produced for all programmes</p> <p>Contents take into account handbooks, promotional materials, considerations of awarding bodies and issues raised by external examiners and students</p>	<p>Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement</p> <p>The Academic Policy Making Committee</p>	<p>The Academic Policy Making Committee and the Principal Management and Governance Committee: agendas and minutes</p> <p>Boards of study: agendas and minutes</p> <p>Annual monitoring reports</p> <p>Academic Quality Audit Committee: reports</p> <p>Unit progression boards: agendas and minutes</p>



						Mapping exercise: Part C: Information about higher education provision - particularly Indicators 3, 4, 5 and 7, and <i>Chapter B10: Management of collaborative arrangements</i> of the Quality Code - particularly, Indicators 26, 27 and 28
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**RG 1072 12/12**

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