QAA

Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

August 2008

Stroud College in Gloucestershire

SR15/2008

Preface

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

Purpose of IQER

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

The IQER process

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

Developmental engagement

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

The main elements of a Developmental engagement are:

- a self-evaluation by the college

- an optional written submission by the student body

- a preparatory meeting between the college and the IQER coordinator several weeks before the Developmental engagement visit

- the Developmental engagement visit, which normally lasts two days

- the evaluation of the extent to which the college manages effectively its responsibilities for the delivery of academic standards and the quality of its higher education provision, plus the arrangements for assuring the accuracy and completeness of public information it is responsible for publishing about its higher education

- the production of a written report of the team's findings.

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

Summative review

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

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

Evidence

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

- reviewing the college's self-evaluation and its internal procedures and documents

- reviewing the optional written submission from students

- asking questions of relevant staff

- talking to students about their experiences.

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

- *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* which includes descriptions of different higher education qualifications

- the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*

- subject benchmark statements which describe the characteristics of degrees in different subjects

- guidelines for preparing programme specifications which are descriptions of what is on offer to students in individual programmes of study

- award benchmark statements which describe the generic characteristics of an award, for example, Foundation Degrees.

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

Outcomes of IQER

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

- Developmental engagement reports set out good practice and recommendations and implications for the college and its awarding bodies, but do not contain judgements. Recommendations will be at one of three levels - **essential, advisable** and **desirable**. To promote an open and collegial approach to Developmental engagements, the reports are not published.

- Summative review reports identify good practice and contain judgements about whether the college is discharging its responsibilities effectively against core themes one and two above. The judgements are **confidence, limited confidence** or **no confidence**. There is no judgement for the third core theme, instead the report will provide evaluation and a conclusion. Summative review reports are published.

Differentiated judgements can be made where a team judges a college's management of the standards and/or quality of the awards made by one awarding body to be different from those made by another.

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

Executive summary

The Summative review of Stroud College in Gloucestershire carried out in August 2008

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 **cannot** 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

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

- the content of several module reviews, including within the Foundation Degrees in Early Years and for Higher Level Teaching Assistants, which takes account of student feedback and records changes to curricular delivery and other programme amendments that further secure academic standards (paragraph 14)

- a staff development event on the Academic Infrastructure, which covered the relevant sections of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*, subject benchmark statements and *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*. Furthermore, staff were encouraged to follow up the activity by reviewing the QAA website, and key links have been placed on the College intranet (paragraph 20)

- the formal recording of the oral feedback given in tutorials (paragraph 36)

- the provision by the College of up to 60 hours timetable remission for scholarly activities for staff teaching on higher education programmes (paragraph 43).

Recommendations

The team agreed a number of areas where the College is **advised** to take action:

- to establish and maintain a more comprehensive and secure arrangement for the storage and retrieval of quality assurance documentation (paragraph 11)

- to develop a programme specification for the HND Business (paragraph 13)

- to formalise course team meetings, to ensure that meetings are attended by all appropriate staff and student representatives, and that accurate minutes are kept (paragraph 15)

- to produce a practical work handbook for the Foundation Degree in Creative Practices as soon as possible so that this condition of approval by the Awarding Body is fulfilled and students and employers know what is expected of them (paragraph 30)

- to increase the range of information about its higher education which is publicly available, such that it is consistent with the *Guidelines for preparing programme specifications*, published by QAA (paragraph 45)

- to amend the Full-time Course Guide so that it contains accurate information about the Foundation Degrees offered by the College and UWE is named as the Awarding Body (paragraph 48).

The team also agreed the following areas where it would be **desirable** for the College to take action:

- to develop and implement a consistent template for course management files (paragraph 11)

- to develop contextualised 'merit' and 'distinction' guidance for students on the HND Business and to attach this guidance to assignment briefs (paragraph 18)

- to give the HND Business team further opportunities for staff development as they consolidate their understanding of the requirements of the Academic Infrastructure and implement the advice contained within the external examiner's report (paragraph 21)

- to produce a teaching observation template for higher education programmes that is designed to capture those elements of teaching and learning that are unique to higher education (paragraph 35)

- to extend an analysis of learning styles at induction to all curricular areas and consequently offer learning opportunities in a variety of modes so as to make best use of each identified learning style (paragraph 40)

- to develop further its processes for considering accreditation of prior experiential learning and to advise students where and how they might lodge a claim to the awarding bodies (paragraph 41)

- to clarify the distinction in public information between the separate pathways on the Foundation Degree in Creative Practices (paragraph 46).

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 Stroud College in Gloucestershire (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 Edexcel and the University of the West of England, Bristol (UWE). The review was carried out by Mrs Viki Faulkner and Mr Nick Wiseman (Reviewers), and Mr Alan Nisbett (Coordinator).

2   The Summative review team (the team) conducted the review in agreement with the College and in accordance with *The handbook for Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review* (the handbook) published by QAA. Evidence in support of the Summative review included documentation supplied by the College and awarding bodies, meetings with staff and students, 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 for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, subject and award benchmark statements, *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), and programme specifications. In much of its own documentation, the College uses the terms 'course' and 'programme' interchangeably, and this report does likewise.

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

4   Stroud College in Gloucestershire is a small to medium general further education college. It operates from one main site at the northern end of the town centre and has a satellite centre in Dursley. In addition, the College offers learning at approximately 30 outreach centres in the surrounding areas. The current population of the catchment area is 110,000. The area is relatively prosperous but does have some pockets of deprivation. Unemployment is low at 1.9 per cent. Local ethnicity is 0.8 per cent, and the population profile shows an ageing local community. Population growth is projected at 9 per cent to 2010 and the District Council has effectively promoted urban regeneration, with new facilities being built in the town. The post-16 participation rate is 75 per cent. The College operates as a member of the Stroud and District Partnership, which covers Stroud, Cam, Dursley and Wotton-under-Edge areas. The partnership is developing the new 14 to 19 diplomas before a 2009 start. The College has grown its 16 to 18-year old provision by 53 per cent from 2003 to 2007. At October 2007, there were 2,124 learners enrolled, of which 875 were full-time 16 to 18-year olds; 54 per cent of learners were recorded as female and 5 per cent were recorded as from a minority ethnic background.

Current higher education provision (2007-08)

University of the West of England, Bristol

- FD in Early Years (7) (full-time)

- FD in Creative Practices (21) (Fine Art Pathway) (full-time)

- Cert Ed Teaching in the Life Long Learning Sector (5) (part-time)

- PGCE Teaching in the Life Long Learning Sector (12) (part-time)

- FD, Higher Level Teaching Assistants (7) (full-time)

Edexcel

- HND Business Year 1 (21) (part-time)

- HND in Fine Art Year 3 (5) (part-time)

Figures in brackets refer to the number of students on the course.

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

5   UWE is currently the College's validating partner for the indirectly funded provision, while Edexcel is the awarding body for the directly funded provision. There is an agreement with UWE that sets out the understandings and expectations for the provision and delivery of associated higher education programmes, and this is underpinned by Annual Operating Statements for each validated programme. The College complies with UWE's procedures for the approval and validation of new programmes as set out in the Academic Procedures and the guidance to programme planners and validation panels.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

6   In April 2007, the College moved into a new, purpose-built building which cost £18 million. In July 2006, a new Principal took up post and in April 2007 a new Vice-Principal (Education and Performance) was appointed. As a result of overambitious targets set in 2005-06 and below-target recruitment in 2007-08, the senior management team has reviewed the College's higher education strategy and associated targets for 2008-09 and 2009-10. The revised strategy sets recruitment targets, specifies a bespoke higher education and marketing strategy for both internal and external markets, aims to broaden higher education provision to include professional qualifications that meet the needs of the economy, and establishes higher education courses within specific curricular areas. This should facilitate progression routes from Level 3.

7   With the movement of higher education provision into curricular areas, the development and quality assurance of higher education programmes have become the responsibility of the Vice-Principal, Education and Performance and relevant curriculum managers. The Quality Manager has responsibility for keeping abreast of developments in the Academic Infrastructure, for disseminating information to higher education teams through the higher education cross-college committee, and supporting compliance with procedures.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

8   Students studying higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the team but, given the difficulties posed by so many higher education students being part-time, it was not feasible for them to do so. However, meetings were

held in May 2008 with representative groups of students and these proved valuable in gathering student views on their learning experience at the College.

B Evaluation of the management of HEFCE-funded higher education

Core theme 1: Academic standards

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

9   The College has a clear and effective management structure in respect of its responsibilities for higher education provision. This comprises the Vice-Principal (Education and Performance), responsible for strategic management and reporting to the Senior Management Team, with operational coordination provided by the Teaching, Learning and Standards Manager and the Quality Manager. Courses are situated within related curriculum departments and each has a programme leader who is responsible for the annual monitoring and evaluation of the programme.

10   The growing collaborative partnership with UWE has provided a strong basis for new developments and for quality assurance systems that are well grounded in established good practice. FD programmes within the College follow the UWE guidelines for quality assurance, as laid down in the UWE Federation: Collaborative Provision Code of Practice. Edexcel programmes follow a quality assurance reporting cycle that is closely aligned with the College's own self-assessment cycle.

11   Notwithstanding the strength of these systems, the College's procedures for maintaining documentation relating to the monitoring and evaluation of higher education programmes are not robust. On a number of occasions during the review, College staff found it difficult to locate additional documentary evidence relating to quality assurance quickly and easily, including validation documents, programme specifications, and minutes of course team meetings. This has the potential to undermine the effective and efficient management of standards. The team recommends that it is advisable for the College to establish and maintain a more comprehensive and secure arrangement for the storage and retrieval of quality assurance documentation. The team also noted that there is currently no consistent format for course management files and agreed that a more consistent approach had the potential to further secure standards. The team recommends that it is desirable for the College to develop and implement a consistent template for course management files. This is an area where the effective practice evident among the College's further education provision might be emulated by the higher education programmes.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

12   The partnership with UWE has promoted a closer engagement with the Academic Infrastructure among those teams working on the new FDs. Staff whom the team met confirmed that they were more confident in their understanding and their use of the Academic Infrastructure than they had been before the partnership began. Validation procedures, reviews and staff development events have raised lecturers' awareness of the subject benchmark statements and the *Code of practice*. The College recognises that the engagement of the HND Business team with the Academic Infrastructure is not as advanced, but it is being promoted by the cross-college higher education developments and led by the new Programme Leader.

13 All higher education programmes delivered within the College are suitably matched to the FHEQ, and adhere to subject benchmark statements. There is a growing higher education culture within the College and a greater awareness of higher education issues from those staff supporting academic delivery teams, for example the Learning Resource Centre staff, customer services staff and the Senior Management Team. However, the programme specification for the FD in Creative Practices was the only specification that the College was able to provide to the team. The specifications for the other FDs were apparently not retained by the College; and the College acknowledged that it had not developed a programme specification for the HND Business. The team recommends that it is advisable for the College to develop a programme specification for the HND Business in order to reflect the expectations of Edexcel and the Academic Infrastructure. In this connection the College may wish to take account of the guidance on producing programme specifications for Edexcel higher education programmes that Edexcel provides on its website.

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?

14 Module reviews are produced by module tutors on the FD programmes at the end of each module. The team noted good practice in the content of several module reviews, including within the FDs in Early Years and for Higher Level Teaching Assistants, which takes account of student feedback and records changes to curricular delivery and other programme amendments that further secure academic standards. Module reviews are also fed back to the awarding body, UWE, and to the College Programme Leader.

15 Course team meetings have been identified by the College as providing very good opportunities to gather together feedback from a range of sources in order to inform course review. Planned sources include student and employer feedback; teaching and learning observations; external examiner feedback; progression and destination data; and external benchmarks. However, these meetings tend to be informal with variable attendance and inconsistent recording of discussions, decisions and actions. The team recommends that it is advisable for the College to formalise these meetings, to ensure that meetings are attended by all appropriate staff and student representatives, and that accurate minutes are kept.

16 External examiners' reports are received for all programmes and are used to inform annual reviews. The reports are generally positive with respect to standards. The external examiner's report for Creative Practice records 'good and supportive management systems', and the report for HND Business mentions 'good evidence of the internal verification process'. External examiner reports lead to an action plan created by the programme leader. This action plan is sent to, and signed off by, the Principal and the Teaching, Learning and Standards Manager, and provides adequate assurance to the College.

17 There are generally effective links between the quality assurance systems for further and higher education within the College. Annual monitoring reports are created by programme leaders and are informed by the external examiner reports, module evaluations and the outcomes of course team meetings, including student feedback. The annual monitoring reports are submitted to the Teaching, Learning and Standards Manager and then to the Vice-Principal. The Vice-Principal feeds back monitoring and evaluation reports to the Senior Management Team and uses the FD reports to collate the Institutional Monitoring Report to UWE. In addition to the obligations to respective awarding bodies, the College also uses the annual reports to feed into respective curricular area self-assessment reports and, ultimately, the Quality Improvement Plan for the College.

18   The HND Business has assignment briefs that are clear and include guidance and criteria to pass level. The external examiner has confirmed the work on the HND Business to be of a 'reasonable' standard. Students have been given generic Edexcel assessment criteria but, contrary to Edexcel's advice, do not receive guidance on contextualised grades so it is difficult for them to fully understand and work towards the appropriate standards. The team recommends that it is desirable for the College to develop contextualised 'merit' and 'distinction' guidance for students on the HND Business and to attach this guidance to assignment briefs.

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

19   The College, and its awarding body UWE, have undertaken a range of activities to support staff delivering new programmes. Activities have included work shadowing; peer observations; double-marking; meetings with staff across a range of delivery partners, such as the Creative Practices staff visits to one college within the UWE Federation, and the Higher Level Teaching Assistants one-day conference at UWE, as well as more formalised training events such as the two-day UWE Federation Staff Development conference.

20   The College holds regular, cross-disciplinary, higher education meetings and these provide an effective vehicle for dissemination and staff development. The College's higher education meeting of 12 March 2008 included a presentation to staff prepared by the Quality Manager. This presentation updated the group on IQER and raised the awareness of the Academic Infrastructure. The team regarded this event as an example of good practice. Furthermore, staff were encouraged to follow up the activity by reviewing QAA's website, and key links have been placed on the College intranet.

21   The HND Business programme was established in September 2007 and the Programme Leader has been in post since January 2008. The programme team has received support from cross-college higher education developments and the Edexcel external examiner. The Programme Leader confirms that he finds the cross-college higher education meetings useful and relevant. However, the course does not currently have a programme specification and there has also been a lack of a prompt and clear response to some issues raised in the external examiner's report. The team recommends that it is desirable for the College to give the HND Business team further opportunities for staff development as they consolidate their understanding of the requirements of the Academic Infrastructure and implement the advice contained within the external examiner's report.

22   Staff confirmed a greatly enhanced understanding of the 'language' of higher education. It was noted by the team that the College tried, wherever possible, to ensure that staff development opportunities were available to all staff, including those on fractional contracts and staff working for the Learning Resource Centre and Customer Services departments, as well as those on full-time academic contracts.

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?

23 According to the College's self-evaluation, management responsibilities for quality are clearly defined in the reporting structure of the College and in its partnership agreements with UWE. In general, the team concurs with this claim.

24 The team found that, in response to the recommendations in the Developmental engagement report, the College has recently undertaken a review of its higher education strategy and the associated reporting responsibilities, and has made appropriate appointments to make the new arrangements effective. In particular, the Head of Teaching, Learning and Standards, with responsibility for teaching and learning, quality, and learning resources, and a specific remit for higher education, plays a pivotal role in tandem with the Vice-Principal for (Education and Performance). The process whereby the quality of learning opportunities is managed and assured follows the College's quality assurance processes flowchart. The Quality Office has responsibility for auditing action plan outcomes, both in terms of compliance and quality.

25 As confirmed in paragraph 15 above, course team meetings are central to the management of the quality of programmes. Feedback from students, peer observations on teaching, and statistical data on retention and achievement are all considered and fed into course reviews, the self-assessment report and ultimately on to the College's corporation board. There are parallel processes that feed into the UWE protocols for managing its devolved learning opportunities responsibilities. For example, the UWE annual monitoring process applied to the new FD Creative Practices award was not yet complete at the time of the Summative review. However, the Edexcel external verifier's report for the HND Business programme commended the resources in place to support the course. On the other hand, the report noted that there was a need to revise the teaching hours, which the College had responded to, and that the student handbook should contain a programme specification.

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

26 For programmes validated by UWE, the College operates under the UWE Federation: Collaborative Provision arrangements. These comprise a comprehensive framework under which colleges fulfil their obligations. Each year, an Annual Operating Agreement is signed which renews the relationship and specifies operational detail such as the calendar of assignments and other assessment instruments. The relevant faculty at UWE has a responsibility to work with its Federation partners and to receive annual monitoring reports. An example of this stems from the Developmental engagement Action Plan, where it was considered advisable that the College engaged more closely with the Academic Infrastructure. The Action Plan placed responsibility with the UWE faculties to induct College staff into the UWE regulatory framework and to embed this in student handbooks.

27 In the self-evaluation, the College contends that its assurance of a quality provision is buttressed by employing experienced and well-qualified staff. The team was given access to staff curricula vitae that supported this claim. In addition, for those programmes operating under the UWE Federation arrangements, new staff curricula vitae are presented to the relevant UWE faculty for approval. Staff whom the team met were clearly committed to teaching and learning both through taught sessions and via appropriate learning resources.

Professional artists, for example, contribute effectively to the delivery of the FD in Creative Practices, providing direct industrial experience for the students. Students also undertake visits to studios and undertake practice research to broaden their knowledge and understanding of the art world.

28 Much of the higher education provision in the College is of a professional nature with part-time students already in work, for example FDs in Early Years and for Higher Level Teaching Assistants. The employers involved offer mentoring services and other work-based benefits that enhance the learner experience. Senior staff also pointed out, with some justification, that assignments in these professional courses allow use of the workplace as a source for specific materials that enhance the learning and the papers offered for assessment.

29 The team noted that the HND Business and Higher Level Teaching Assistants students had experienced difficulties with their original course management system; College staff agreed to switch the pattern of this support to that already available to the UWE Early Years students. Similarly, the induction period for the Edexcel courses has been extended to the equivalent of one full day and an extra teaching session has been timetabled in response to learner concerns.

30 The FD in Creative Practices has an intermediate stage module in work-based learning; the close links with the practitioner fraternity should help students to develop professional skills fit for the workplace. Development of a differentiated higher education learning, teaching and assessment strategy, which must encompass work-related learning, was a specific condition for the approval of the new FD in Creative Practices. The College agreed to embody this in a special practical work handbook. In discussions with the team, senior staff agreed this had yet to be completed. The team recommends that it is advisable for the College to produce a practical work handbook for the FD in Creative Practices as soon as possible, so that this condition of approval by the awarding body is fulfilled and students and employers know what is expected of them.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

31 The team discussed at some length with College staff the College's engagement with the Academic Infrastructure. During the last 12 months, staff have been exposed much more systematically to the Academic Infrastructure through various activities: UWE Federation meetings; a monthly Federation update that is cascaded to all staff teaching on the UWE higher education programmes; teacher training tutors shadowing UWE staff; Federation art meetings open to all full-time and fractional post-holders at Filton College, for example; Federation conferences and field boards; staff meetings between UWE and College lecturers; and double-marking involving colleagues at UWE.

32 Each module includes a session addressing assessment criteria. Building on this exercise, reviewers saw much evidence attesting to the students' exposure to part of the Academic Infrastructure through the use of detailed grading criteria. Similarly, largely through the UWE programmes' module guides, the learners were engaging with aims and learning outcomes at their particular level of study. Working with programme specifications is another method for students to embrace the Academic Infrastructure. At present, the College is not in a position to furnish all students with these but the Head of Teaching, Learning and Standards has prepared a draft handbook and is planning to put the appropriate programme specification in each as an appendix.

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

33 At a meeting with current students, the team noted that each tutor group nominated a representative to attend curriculum meetings. The students present were not clear how this input moved through the College system but subsequent responses from the College indicate that each curricular area in turn nominates one of these representatives to go forward to college-level meetings chaired by the Vice-Principal (Reputation and Standards). The team considered that these mechanisms provided an effective channel through which the student perspective on the quality of teaching and learning is embraced.

34 There are additional ways in which the student voice can be heard, including through representation at UWE's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee and directly by email to the UWE Wider Workforce Programmes and Projects Committee. The FD Creative Practices course team meeting of July 2007 included student involvement in discussions about resources and the issue of formative assessment, providing another way in which the student voice could be heard and the quality of teaching and learning assured.

35 The team noted that the self-evaluation emphasised the importance of teaching observations, largely in the context of preparation for Ofsted inspections. In discussions with senior staff it was agreed that for the observation of higher education teaching and learning a different approach was needed. The team recommends that it is desirable for the College to produce a teaching observation template for higher education programmes that is designed to capture those elements of teaching and learning which are unique to higher education.

36 The Developmental engagement Action Plan called for the spreading of good practice in oral feedback, already evident in the fine art provision. The College is planning to give all higher education students the same access to tutors enjoyed by their fine art peers. The Action Plan, building on a desirable recommendation, looked for the capture of formative feedback in written form. The team noted that this was now being implemented effectively in, for example, the learning journals and reflective practice components of a modern higher education experience. One aspect of this was to record formally the oral feedback given in tutorials, which the team regarded as good practice.

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

37 As outlined above, the College is now engaging much more proactively with the learner voice and increasing opportunities for learner involvement in the development of strategy through a range of media. Student support was identified as an area of good practice during the QAA Developmental engagement review, March 2007. According to the Ofsted report, the College provides good guidance and support for learners, particularly those on full-time courses. Following interview, students are given initial information and guidance that enables them to make informed decisions in terms of the course content, delivery and assessment, and their ability to commit to the course requirements.

38 Student induction is a well-considered programme, with insights delivered into both the College structures and resources and those of UWE. For example, induction includes an introduction, where relevant, to the generic UWE student handbook and, in addition, students on UWE programmes get immediate access to their Athens accounts. Students at the College have access to the course management system and, for those on UWE-validated programmes, virtual learning environment resources. The contents vary a little between modules but, in general, contain basic module descriptors, access to supporting in-house resources and to the UWE e-learning resources where appropriate. In some cases,

students have regular online tutorials, in addition to the more usual online access. The Edexcel students have an introduction to their own virtual learning environment on their first day in college.

39   A few students expressed some concerns to the team about the lack of diagnostic testing and effective follow-up offered at induction, together with subsequent resources to support those with additional learning needs. College staff explained that UWE held resources that could be released to assist students with specific needs. However, securing access to these could take considerable time, especially if the student did not declare specific learning needs.

40   The team heard from one curriculum area that a learning styles exercise was carried out at induction, the intention being to apprise learners of the best way to study and to adjust teaching approaches accordingly. The team felt that this was a promising development, but there appeared to be little progress in terms of the necessary adjustments to teaching and learning styles. The team recommends that it is desirable for the College to extend the analysis of learning styles at induction to all curriculum areas and consequently offer learning opportunities in a variety of modes, so as to make best use of each identified learning style.

41   Since many students at the College are already in a professional career, there are clear opportunities to consider accreditation of prior experiential learning claims from applicants. The Head of Teaching, Learning and Standards, in drafting the College's higher education handbook, has placed such accreditation high up their agenda. The team recommends that it is desirable for the College to develop further its processes for considering the accreditation of prior experiential learning, and to advise students where and how they might lodge a claim to the awarding body.

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

42   Under Core theme 1, the team found that there were good development opportunities for staff teaching on higher education programmes in the College. In relation to the enhancement of learning opportunities, similar provision is available. Some College staff involved with teacher training delivery have been involved with shadowing their UWE counterparts, and there are plans for dual-session observations on UWE validated courses. Although the teacher training programmes are outside the remit of this Summative review, in such a small college the practice developed in one area is soon spread to others. College staff involved on UWE-validated programme delivery engage with the University directly through attendance at award boards and relevant university committees.

43   The UWE Federation is also looking to offer staff development activities across its partner colleges in order to build a higher education community. The College intends to play a full part in this. The team regards the provision by the College of up to 60 hours timetable remission for scholarly activities for staff teaching on higher education programmes as an example of 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?

44   The team judged that every effort was being made by the College to ensure that higher education programmes had adequate resources. The team met with the Learning Resources Centre Manager who confirmed that, since his appointment at the beginning of 2008, he had developed an effective relationship with UWE's Federation learning resources

manager who is responsible for supporting all partners in the enhancement of their support for learners. The UWE has formally approved the extent and quality of the College resources base. In addition, the Learning Resources Manager has visited another college in the Federation to gain insights and knowledge of how the Federation operated in practice. The team also learnt that the book budget was increasing by 20 per cent for the 2008-09 session and that higher education courses would receive an appropriate share of new purchases. The learning resources that underpin higher education delivery are included in the annual monitoring reporting infrastructure. Higher education resources, both paper and digital, are under continuous review, both internally and through the relationship with the UWE Federation. At the student meeting in May 2008, concerns were raised about access to the higher education quiet study room. The Resources Centre Manager told reviewers that he had alternative rooms available to alleviate the problem.

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?

45 In respect of the FDs validated by UWE, the College publishes course specifications on its website, which set out a range of information to prospective students and other stakeholders, including the name of the awarding body and the entry requirements. However, the team found that these course specifications tended to omit a range of other information that would help prospective students to compare different offerings and make informed choices about their studies, such as the intended learning outcomes of the programmes and the teaching and learning methods used by the College. Although the team noted that this information is available publicly through the UWE website, it found that the College website did not provide links to it. The team therefore concluded that it would be advisable for the College to increase the range of information about its higher education that is publicly available, such that it is consistent with the *Guidelines for preparing programme specifications*, published by QAA. One way to achieve this would be to provide links to the relevant pages on the UWE website.

46 The UWE's FD in Creative Practices is provided at a number of colleges in the UWE Federation and offers students a number of distinct pathways, including Fine Art, Applied Arts and Photography. The names of these pathways are recorded in parentheses on the final award, for example, FD in Creative Practices (Fine Arts) or FD in Creative Practices (Applied Arts). However, the course specification on the College website states that, 'This is a broad-based Fine Art/Applied Arts Course in which students can develop a particular specialism or work across the boundaries of contemporary practice'. Given that the separate pathways lead to awards with different titles, the team concluded that the description on the College's website might give the impression that the pathways were integrated. The team therefore concluded that it would be desirable for the College to clarify the distinction in public information between the separate pathways on the FD in Creative Practices.

47 The College publishes on its website a course specification for the HND Business, validated by Edexcel, which describes arrangements for attendance, assessment and the possibilities for progression. Here too, however, the team found that the course specification omitted a range of other information that would be useful to prospective

students and other stakeholders, such as the intended learning outcomes. This finding contributed to the team's recommendation set out in paragraph 45 above.

48 The College has chosen not to produce a separate higher education prospectus. However, in its Full-time Course Guide 08-09 there is reference to one on page 51. In the same section, the College lists a number of programmes that are not currently provided and there is no mention of the fact that all FDs are validated and awarded by UWE. This contravenes the academic agreement with UWE. The team recommends that it is advisable for the College to amend the Full-time Course Guide so that it contains accurate information about the FDs offered by the College and UWE is named as the awarding body. The team notes that the College is in the process of producing a separate higher education handbook for students and that the draft contained comprehensive and accurate information, based in large part on UWE documents.

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?

49 According to the College's self-evaluation, all publicity materials are subject to the College/UWE protocol. In addition, the College has also produced a comprehensive publication scheme that sets out the legal and policy framework for the College's publications. Currently, curriculum managers are responsible for verifying the accuracy and completeness of public information about the College's higher education provision. The team found that this arrangement had led to a number of inaccuracies outlined above and a failure to develop and publish some important information, such as a programme specification for the HND Business. Within this context, the team welcomed the College's plans for the Vice-Principal (Performance) to assume overall responsibility for the accuracy and completeness of the public information about higher education that the College is responsible for publishing.

The team considers that reliance cannot be placed on the completeness and the accuracy 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

50 The on-site activities for the Developmental engagement in student assessment were completed in March 2007. The lines of enquiry were marking and grading against agreed criteria; moderation and verification; and feedback to students. Based upon discussion with staff and students, and scrutiny of evidence provided by the College, the team concluded that, in the context of the scope of the engagement, the College discharges its responsibilities effectively, as set out in the relevant partnership agreement, for the management and delivery of the standards and the quality of learning opportunities for the awards it offers on behalf of its awarding bodies. The team also concluded that reliance can be placed on the accuracy but not the completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

51 In the course of the Developmental engagement, the team identified much good practice that it judged was worthy of wider dissemination. This included the strong, positive relationship between individual College departments and cognate higher education

institution schools/departments, which informs the development of assessment strategies, methods and standards. The rigour of the external examiner process and that of internal verification and assessment process in the majority of cases were also deemed to be good practice. Other areas of good practice noted included the clear articulation of learning outcomes, well-planned and supportive feedback and the use made of the College intranet by the computing/information technology department to publish comprehensive information on assessment.

52 The most significant recommendations identified in the Developmental engagement related to the need to embed fully an overall higher education strategy within which a discrete higher education learning, teaching and assessment strategy can be developed and fully implemented, and the need for the College, in collaboration with its partner higher education institutions, to take immediate and effective action where standards are found to be at risk. Other recommendations included the need to ensure that the guidelines given in handbooks are consistent with the appropriate University regulations.

D Foundation Degrees

53 At the present time, the College offers three FDs: in Creative Practices, Early Years and for Higher Level Teaching Assistants. The College plans to develop further FDs in the near future. For example, a new FD in Life Style and Wellbeing is being planned with the University of Gloucestershire to start in 2009.

54 Currently, there are some good examples of employer engagement, especially in the FD in Creative Practices. Seven letters of employer support for the programme were viewed. These letters valued employability skills that were built into the programme. Employers have also pledged active support through offering work experience placements, use of specialist facilities for delivery, offers of specialist talks and lectures and career advice and guidance for learners engaged on the programme.

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

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

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

- the content of several module reviews, including within the FDs in Early Years and for Higher Level Teaching Assistants, which takes account of student feedback and records changes to curricular delivery and other programme amendments that further secure academic standards (paragraph 14)

- a staff development event on the Academic Infrastructure, which covered the relevant sections of the *Code of practice*, subject benchmark statements and the FHEQ. Furthermore, staff were encouraged to follow up the activity by reviewing the QAA website, and key links have been placed on the College intranet (paragraph 20)

- the formal recording of the oral feedback given in tutorials (paragraph 36)

- the provision by the College of up to 60 hours timetable remission for scholarly activities for staff teaching on higher education programmes (paragraph 43).

The team agreed a number of areas where the College is **advised** to take action:

- to establish and maintain a more comprehensive and secure arrangement for the storage and retrieval of quality assurance documentation (paragraph 11)

- to develop a programme specification for the HND Business (paragraph 13)

- to formalise course team meetings, to ensure that meetings are attended by all appropriate staff and student representatives, and that accurate minutes are kept (paragraph 15)

- to produce a practical work handbook for the FD in Creative Practices as soon as possible, so that this condition of approval by the awarding body is fulfilled and students and employers know what is expected of them (paragraph 30)

- to increase the range of information about its higher education which is publicly available, such that it is consistent with the *Guidelines for preparing programme specifications*, published by QAA (paragraph 45)

- to amend the Full-time Course Guide so that it contains accurate information about the FDs offered by the College and UWE is named as the awarding body (paragraph 48).

The team also agreed the following areas where it would be **desirable** for the College to take action:

- to develop and implement a consistent template for course management files (paragraph 11)

- to develop contextualised 'merit' and 'distinction' guidance for students on the HND Business and to attach this guidance to assignment briefs (paragraph 18)

- to give the HND Business team further opportunities for staff development as they consolidate their understanding of the requirements of the Academic Infrastructure and implement the advice contained within the external examiner's report (paragraph 21)

- to produce a teaching observation template for higher education programmes which is designed to capture those elements of teaching and learning that are unique to higher education (paragraph 35)

- to extend an analysis of learning styles at induction to all curriculum areas and consequently offer learning opportunities in a variety of modes, so as to make best use of each identified learning style (paragraph 40)

- to develop further its processes for considering the accreditation of prior experiential learning and to advise students where and how they might lodge a claim to the awarding bodies (paragraph 41)

- to clarify the distinction in public information between the separate pathways on the FD in Creative Practices (paragraph 46).

Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation and other documentary evidence, and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that it has **confidence** that, in the context of this Summative review, the College discharges its responsibilities

effectively, as set out in the relevant partnership agreement for the management of the standards of the awards of its awarding bodies.

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.

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 **cannot** be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Stroud College action plan relating to the Summative review: August 2008

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 content of several module reviews, including within the Foundation Degrees in early Years and for Higher Level teaching Assistants, which takes account of student feedback and records changes to curriculum delivery and other programme amendments that further secure academic standards (paragraph 14)	● Module reviews to be shared within teams at programme meetings and across programmes at HE meetings to identify and share best practice. ● Regular agenda item at both meetings.	22.12.08	Programme leaders HE Coordinator	The content of all module reviews are informed by student feedback and show positive outcomes arising from these.	HE Coordinator/ Head of Teaching and Learning and Standards	August 2009 review of annual reports.

Stroud College action plan relating to the Summative review: August 2008

Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
● A staff development event on the Academic Infrastructure, which covered the relevant sections of the Code of practice, subject benchmark statements and the FHEQ. Furthermore, staff were encouraged to follow up the activity by reviewing QAA website, and key links have been placed on the college intranet (paragraph 20)	● All staff new to delivering HE provision are provided with information and support in relation to the Academic Infrastructure.	22.12.08	Programme leaders/ Quality manager	All staff delivering on HE courses understand the Academic Infrastructure	HE Coordinator	July 2009 HE staff checklist/ HE audit Autumn 2009
● to formally record the oral feedback given in tutorials (paragraph 36)	● Best practice identified in tutorials to be disseminated at programme meetings and across programmes at HE meetings to identify and share best practice.	22.12.08	Programme leaders HE Coordinator	Feedback given in tutorials is recorded for students	HE Coordinator	August 2009 review of annual reports/ HE audit Autumn 2009

Stroud College action plan relating to the Summative review: August 2008

Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
• the provision by the College of up to 60 hours timetable remission for scholarly activities for staff teaching on higher education programmes (paragraph 43)	• to continue practice for each HE programme to have 60 hours for staff teaching on programme to undertake scholarly activity	July 2009	Heads of Department (Stroud)	HE courses delivery informed by scholarly activity.	Vice Principal	August 2009

Stroud College action plan relating to the Summative review: August 2008

Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team agreed upon a number of areas where the College should be **advised** to take action:						
● to establish and maintain a more comprehensive and secure arrangement for the storage and retrieval of quality assurance documentation (paragraph 11)	● HE providers to be asked to cc Teaching Learning and Standards/ He Coordinator with all quality assurance documents.	01.12.08	HE Coordinator; UWE faculties; Edexel.	All quality assurance documentation held in Teaching Learning and Standards	Vice Principal	HE audit Autumn 2009
● to develop a programme specification for the HND Business (paragraph 13)	● Programme specification for the HND Business to be developed	01.03.09	Programme Leader Business HND	Programme specification for HND business in place	HE Coordinator/ Head of Department	HE audit Autumn 2009

Stroud College action plan relating to the Summative review: August 2008

Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
● College to formalise these meetings, to ensure that meetings are attended by all appropriate staff and student representatives, and that accurate minutes are kept (paragraph 15)	● Programme meetings formalised with set meeting dates, attendees and minutes kept	01.12.08	Programme Leaders HE courses	Minutes of meetings available; Student representation formalised.	HE Coordinator/ Heads of Department	HE audit Autumn 2009
● to produce a practical work handbook for the Foundation Degree in Creative Practices as soon as possible so that this condition of approval by the Awarding Body is fulfilled and students and employers know what is expected of them (paragraph 30)	● Production of a practical work handbook for the Foundation Degree in Creative Practices. ● Handbook copied to Faculty of Creative Arts (UWE)	01.12.08	Programme leader Creative Practices	Handbook available and with UWE	HE Coordinator/ Head of Department Stroud. Programme Leader UWE	HE audit Autumn 2009. Annual report.

Stroud College action plan relating to the Summative review: August 2008

Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
• to increase the range of information about its higher education which is publicly available, such that it is consistent with the Guidelines for preparing programme specifications published by QAA (paragraph 45)	• Information publicly available for HE programmes is reviewed and increased to include sufficient detail to enable informed choices of student	31.05.09	Marketing Department. Programme Leaders. HE coordinator	Accurate detailed complete information available to the public	Vice Principal	HE audit Autumn 2009
	• Links made with UWE and other HE providers' websites	31.11.08	HE Coordinator/ Marketing Dept			

Stroud College action plan relating to the Summative review: August 2008

Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
● College to amend the Full- time Course Guide so that it contains accurate information about the Foundation Degrees offered by the College and UWE is named as the Awarding Body (paragraph 48)	● Future full time course guide (10-11) to have accurate information about the Foundation Degrees available and the relevant Awarding Bodies	31.05.09	Marketing Department. Programme Leaders. HE coordinator	Accurate information available in Full Time Course Guide. (09-10 guide	Vice Principal	HE Audit Autumn 2009
	● For 09/10 folders of information about HE courses at Stroud College to be produced which contains relevant, accurate HE information leaflets.	23.12.08	Marketing Department/ HE Coordinator / Programme Leaders	Accurate information available for prospective students		

Stroud College action plan relating to the Summative review: August 2008

Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team agreed the following areas where it would be **desired** to take action:						
• to develop and implement a consistent template for course management files (paragraph 11)	• Course management file system agreed and developed with HE leaders • Consistent course management files put in place for all HE courses	May 2009	HE coordinator. Programme Leaders.	Consistent course management files in place for all HE courses	Vice Principal	HE audit Autumn 2009

Stroud College action plan relating to the Summative review: August 2008

Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
• to develop contextualised 'merit' and 'distinction' guidance for students on the HND Business and to attach this guidance to assignment briefs (paragraph 18)	• Development of contextualised 'merit' and 'distinction' guidance for students on the HND Business. Guidance attached to assignment briefs	22.12.08	Business HND Programme Leader	Contextualised 'merit' and 'distinction' guidance in place and available for students on the HND Business	HE Co ordinator. Head of Department	HE audit Autumn 2009
• to give the HND Business Team further opportunities for staff development as they consolidate their understanding of the requirements of the Academic Infrastructure and implement the advice contained within the external examiner's report (paragraph 21)	• Training in Academic infrastructure for HND Business Team, and guidance given on actions from external examiners report.	30.01.09	Quality Manager	HND Business Team have fuller understanding of the Academic Infrastructure and full implementation of the external examiners report.	HE Coordinator	HE audit Autumn 2009

Stroud College action plan relating to the Summative review: August 2008

Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
● to produce a teaching observation template for higher education programmes that is designed to capture those elements of teaching and learning that are unique to higher education (paragraph 35)	● Review University (UWE) observation process.	31.01.09	HE Coordinator/ Partnership director	Review undertaken	Vice Principal	HE audit Autumn 2009
	● Develop observation template/process for SCG HE programmes	1.03.09	HE Coordinator/Teaching and Learning Manager	HE observation template/process in place for SCG HE programmes		

Stroud College action plan relating to the Summative review: August 2008

Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
• to extend an analysis of learning styles at induction to all curriculum areas and consequently offer learning opportunities in a variety of modes so as to make best use of each identified learning style (paragraph 40)	• Best practice identified in analysis and use of learning styles at induction to be disseminated at programme meetings and across programmes.	1.03.09	Programme Leaders/ Teaching and Learning Manager	Learning styles analysis used to inform teaching and learning.	Teaching and Learning Manager	HE audit Autumn 2009
	• Learning style analysis carried out during induction in all HE programmes	Autumn 09	Programme Leaders			
	• Learning style analysis used to inform teaching and learning	Autumn 09	Course Teams			

Stroud College action plan relating to the Summative review: August 2008

Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
• to develop further its processes for considering APEL and to advise students where and how they might lodge an APEL claim to the Awarding Bodies (paragraph 41)	• Handbook for HE students further (09-10) developed to include APEL guidance from awarding bodies as well as HEIs.	June 09	Programme Leaders	APEL process available to students	HE Coordinator	HE audit Autumn 2009
• to clarify the distinction in public information between the separate pathways on the Foundation Degree in Creative Practices (paragraph 46).	• Website and course leaflets to include clear information about the separate pathways on the Foundation Degree in Creative Practices	23.12.09	Programme Leader / Marketing	Course information clearly explains the 2 pathways and students understand the pathway that they are on	HE Coordinator	Report to February HE committee