



# **Integrated quality and enhancement review**

**Summative review**

**Oxford and Cherwell Valley College**

**June 2011**

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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.

## **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 Oxford and Cherwell Valley College carried out in June 2011

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

#### Good practice

The team has identified the following good practice for dissemination:

- the College is fully committed to the development and enhancement of the academic standards of its higher education provision
- many of the internal publications provide exceptionally clear and comprehensive information, imaginatively presented
- processes for monitoring and enhancing the quality of provision and safeguarding academic standards lead to improvement and are clear, timely and systematic
- the College has developed a proactive approach to student support strongly focused on the needs of the individual student.

#### 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:

- review, in consultation with the University of Bedfordshire and De Montfort University, the provision of external examiner reports to ensure they include information that is specific to the College
- ensure the production of information that clearly articulates the responsibilities of the employer, the College and the student in relation to work-based, work-related and placement learning
- address inconsistencies in the information provided to prospective students and keep under review the process used to generate and verify this information.

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

- improve the provision of the books available to support the HNC Construction.

## 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 Oxford and Cherwell Valley College (the College). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the College discharges its responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes which the College delivers on behalf of De Montfort University, Edexcel, Oxford Brookes University, the University of Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire New University. The review was carried out by Mr David Charlton, Ms AnnMarie Colbert, Mr Andy Lancaster (reviewers) and Mr Robert Jones (coordinator).

2 The Summative review team (the team) conducted the initial review in March 2011 and returned to the College for a second visit in June 2011. It conducted the review in agreement with the College and in accordance with *The handbook for Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review* (the handbook), published by QAA. Evidence in support of the Summative review included documentation supplied by the College and awarding bodies, meetings with staff, students and partner institutions, 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.

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

4 Oxford and Cherwell Valley College was established in 2003 as the result of the merger of Oxford College of Further Education, North Oxfordshire College and School of Art and Design in Banbury, and Rycotewood College in Thame. There are four campuses: a construction-based campus in Blackbird Leys, Oxford; a city centre campus in the centre of Oxford; a campus in the market town of Banbury; and a performance engineering centre in Bicester, close to the heart of the British motorsport industry. The Rycotewood furniture provision was relocated to purpose-built accommodation at the Oxford City Campus. Many of the part-time students study in the workplace as well as in the College. In 2010-11, 9,641 students are studying at the College, including 3,902 full-time and 5,739 part-time students. Included in the total are 154 full-time and 180 part-time students studying on higher education programmes, amounting to 244 full-time equivalent students.

5 The higher education awards at the College funded by HEFCE are listed below, followed by the number of full-time equivalent students.

### De Montfort University

- BA (Hons) Fine Art (full and part-time) (22.5)
- BA (Hons) Design Crafts (full and part-time) (19)
- BA (Hons) Graphic Design and Illustration (full and part-time) (31)
- BA (Hons) Film Studies, Photography and Video (full-time) (10)
- BA (Hons) Furniture Design (full and part-time) (11)
- FdA Furniture Design (full and part-time) (14.5)

## **Edexcel**

- HNC Business (part-time) (1.5)
- HNC Construction (part-time) (11)
- HNC Photography (part-time) (8.5)
- HND Business (full-time) (7)
- HND Creative Media Production (full-time) (12)

## **Oxford Brookes University**

- FdSc Motorsports - Performance and Automotive Technology (full-time) (46)

## **University of Bedfordshire**

- Certificate in Education/Postgraduate Certificate in Education (Post Compulsory) (part-time) (34)
- Diploma in Mentoring (part-time) (3.5)

## **Buckinghamshire New University**

- FdA Furniture: Design and Make (full-time) (16)

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

6 The College currently has partnerships with four universities: Oxford Brookes University, Buckinghamshire New University, De Montfort University and the University of Bedfordshire. The relationship with Oxford Brookes, De Montfort and Buckinghamshire New University are formal associate agreements. The programmes offered by the College in these partnerships are all franchised from the relevant universities. The College also has centre approval from Edexcel for the delivery of Higher National Certificates and Diplomas.

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

7 The College is committed to improving the environment for all its higher education students and other users. A £3.5 million project is currently being undertaken to develop the College's Banbury campus, while two additional projects will also see the further development of the Oxford and Bicester campuses. While student numbers have remained relatively stable over recent years, the College has ceased to recruit to some programmes where recruitment was low and, following notification from De Montfort University of the termination of its agreement with the College, the programmes franchised from the university recruited for the last time in September 2009. Instead, the College is focused on developing a range of new 'demand driven' Foundation Degrees with Oxford Brookes University and Buckinghamshire New University that will provide increasingly flexible modes of study as well as progression to an honours year. The College continues to work closely with De Montfort University to ensure that continuing students receive the support they need to complete their qualification.

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

8 Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the Summative review team. With help from the Higher Education Manager, a number of student forums were held. They formed the basis of the student



submission, which was a detailed and informative document. During the review visit, the team had a productive meeting with representative students.

## **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 Overall responsibility for the strategic management of higher education, including collaborative partnerships, rests with the Deputy Principal. The Assistant Principal for Quality, Standards and Higher Education is responsible for the quality and standards of higher education and links the strategic and operational functions. The Higher Education Manager, appointed to a newly created post in January 2010, makes a significant and effective contribution to the management of higher education standards. Key responsibilities include the development of higher education throughout the College and acting as the key contact with higher education partners. The Higher Education Manager and the Quality and Standards Manager, who both report to the Assistant Principal for Quality, Standards and Higher Education, work closely together to coordinate and manage the operationally effective activities that support the delivery of higher education academic standards across the College. Further development of higher education is a key strategic priority for the College and the commitment to this is wholehearted. The College values the way in which its higher education provision raises the aspirations of further education students. There is a clear and coherent policy of building on existing strengths to introduce carefully selected higher education programmes to meet the needs of students and local employers. The College is fully committed to the development and enhancement of the academic standards of its higher education provision.

10 The Higher Education Steering Committee manages effectively the delivery of higher education standards across the provision. The Committee commissions and receives reports on all aspects of higher education provision and is responsible for directly informing new policies and procedures for managing, monitoring and reviewing higher education within the College. Information arising from the Committee is more broadly disseminated by programme managers and curriculum managers who, together with course leaders, work collaboratively with the Higher Education Manager to discharge their responsibilities for the management of higher education standards. Lines of responsibility for the management of higher education standards are coherent and made explicit in the procedural documents hyperlinked in the informative Guide to the Management of Higher Education, a resource valued by staff.

11 Working relationships between the College and its university partners are strong, with regular and frequent contact which enables a shared understanding of partner responsibilities for the management of standards and quality. The College also benefits from good working relationships with Edexcel through its external examiners.

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

12 The Academic Infrastructure is successfully incorporated into college practices and has informed the development of college policies, procedures and practices. For example, Continuous Programme Enhancement Planning, which is a key part of the monitoring

process, requires teams to reference planned actions to the appropriate section of the *Code of practice*.

13 The College's new internal programme approval process ensures that proposed provision articulates with relevant aspects of the Academic Infrastructure, is appropriately resourced and in line with the College's Higher Education strategy. Staff spoke confidently about their use of the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark* in the development of new programmes with Oxford Brookes University and Buckinghamshire New University. Staff confirmed their use of subject benchmark statements in conjunction with the FHEQ to establish the attributes, capabilities and standards expected of students. Programme specifications are in place for all programmes and are used by staff as a key reference point in assessment design and in programme review. A clear and helpful introduction to the Academic Infrastructure is hyperlinked in the Guide to the Management of Higher Education.

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

14 Responsibilities delegated through the partnership agreements are effectively executed by the College. The College is rigorous in evaluating the effectiveness of its own management structures and processes. Self-evaluation at college level is informed by evaluation and planning at programme level. The College sets targets for retention, progression, successful completion and student satisfaction against which to monitor and review its own performance.

15 College processes for monitoring and enhancing the quality of provision and safeguarding academic standards lead to improvement and are clear, timely, and systematic. Online documentation enables real time contributions to be made, comments to be shared and planned improvements to be reviewed. Progress against planned enhancements is also regularly reviewed at impact meetings. The documentation for each programme is monitored annually by a Quality Panel comprising the Higher Education Manager (in the chair), the course leaders and managers and an assistant principal. These panels, which focus on student progress, areas of good practice and areas for improvement, play a key role in promoting improvement. Central to this process are thorough programme self-evaluations, produced by the course leaders, which provide an analytical and critical review of all aspects of the programmes. The clearly structured documentation includes prompts for reflection about key areas, which serve as an effective tool for quality enhancement. The College recognises the need to provide further support to staff to enable more evaluative commentary in some self-evaluation documentation.

16 External examiner reports confirm the achievement of appropriate academic standards. The reports are collated and analysed centrally by the Quality and Standards Manager to provide a college overview. At subject level, consideration of matters raised in reports is formally recorded and progress against planned actions is monitored effectively. In general, reports are used to good effect in the College, although the ability of the College to review teacher education is inhibited by generic external examiner reporting that makes no specific reference to the College. Following a recommendation in the Developmental engagement, the College raised this issue with the University of Bedfordshire, which cooperated by changing the design of the relevant form, but specific comment has still not been forthcoming. The team acknowledges that the University took its responsibility seriously and attempted to address the issue. The generic nature of the most recent external examiner report for the BA (Hons) Graphic Design and Illustration delivered in partnership with De Montfort University similarly inhibits its value to the College and, although the University requested a more specific report, this was not produced. The team acknowledges

that, while the absence of a specific report is a matter for concern, it was only on this one occasion that a report for this programme was not produced. Nevertheless, in view of the central importance of external examiner reports, it is advisable that the College, in consultation with both universities, reviews the provision of external examiner reports to ensure they include information that is specific to the College.

17 The College has taken action to address the other recommendations in the Developmental engagement. In particular, in response to the recommendation that it should develop a college-wide approach to the assurance of assessment, the College has established clear guidelines to ensure consistency in the management, monitoring and development of assessment practices. Impact review and quality panels focus on assessment practice, and formative assessment boards for each programme are being established. Information is disseminated to staff through the clear and comprehensive Guide to Assessment, the Guide to the Management of Higher Education, and the comprehensive Teaching, Learning and Student Support Staff Handbook, the latter two of which give ready access to key information through hyperlinks.

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

18 The continuing professional development policy includes clearly identified roles and responsibilities. Evaluation of the professional development needs and review of planned activities is a feature of the annual staff review process. Input from local and national priorities, lesson observation, external examiner reports and the College's monitoring process inform the annual staff development plan. Staff attend development events, both within the College and with partner universities, and external conferences. They are supported in studying for postgraduate qualifications. Staff value the College's support for continuing professional development activities and gave clear examples of the contribution made to curriculum development by these activities.

19 The induction process for new staff is coherent and informative. An early introduction to college systems includes interaction with the virtual learning environment and the allocation of a subject-specific mentor. The Staff Familiarisation Handbook provides a readily assimilated overview of college provision and services. New staff have an early introduction to assessment standards and the quality assurance processes. This is supported by the Teaching, Learning and Student Support Staff Handbook and the Guide to the Management of Higher Education.

**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 processes described in paragraphs 9 to 11 are also effective in supporting the College's management of the quality of learning opportunities. At programme level, operational management of the quality of learning opportunities is the responsibility of programme teams, led by a course leader who reports to the appropriate programme

manager who, in turn, reports to the appropriate curriculum manager. Staff monitor the effectiveness of programmes through regular team meetings.

### **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 Agreements between the College and its awarding bodies specify responsibilities for teaching and learning, staff development and the provision of student support and guidance. As outlined in paragraphs 14 and 15, the College has effective methods for managing its obligations to multiple awarding bodies and these also apply to its management of the student learning experience.

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

22 The College utilises the Academic Infrastructure effectively in its documentation and procedures to inform the quality of learning opportunities. Both teaching and support staff have a good knowledge of its main features. The *Code of practice* has proved to be a valuable resource for informing and supporting the development of good practice when designing and producing higher education policies, procedures and practices within the College.

23 Subject benchmark statements are used in conjunction with the FHEQ and the Sector Skills Council's qualification frameworks when developing new programmes. These statements have been particularly useful in providing a reference point for the range of attributes, capabilities and skills that students need in order to qualify for their award.

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

24 The College has developed a draft Teaching and Learning Strategy with the aim of enhancing excellence in teaching and learning. In their meeting with the team, students praised the quality of teaching. In student surveys, particularly favourable responses are made to questions about the enthusiasm and accessibility of staff and their ability to explain things and make the subject interesting.

25 A range of effective procedures supports the assurance of the quality of learning opportunities. A key aspect is the college lesson observation procedure, which aims to ensure the effectiveness of the learning and the quality of the students' experience, and to highlight both best practice and development needs. In the creative arts area, peer observation is the accepted norm and there are opportunities for team teaching which enable tutors to share good practice in student critiques, presentations and assessment.

26 There had been a problem with late submission of assignments in the FdSc Motorsports programme. New policies of zero tolerance were introduced and the response from students was very positive. All assessments are now submitted on time, which means that there is no problem in being able to give feedback within the three-week deadline.

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

27 All students are interviewed before being admitted to a programme. Given the current pressures on staff time, this is commendable. Students commented favourably on the advice and guidance given during the application process and the efficiency of the interview system. A significant number of students apply from outside the College,

in addition to those who progress from the College's further education programmes. For students who come from outside the local area, the interview and details of programme information are organised so that the whole process is covered in one day. Students from the College thought that their further education programme had prepared them well for the transition to higher education.

28 All new students follow an induction programme which varies according to the subject area and the requirements of the awarding body. The partner universities also undertake induction of new college students as they see it as a vital opportunity to inform students about the various services on offer to them. There has, however, been some student criticism of induction. For example, all teacher education students agreed that the process could be improved by avoiding duplication of information given in both the university and college inductions. The College intends to develop a college-wide induction programme for all higher education students from September 2011.

29 A range of study support is provided by the College, which is committed to providing an environment that helps successful learning. All students, when they enter the College, receive initial screening to identify any additional support they might need. Students who access additional support consistently achieve very well in their chosen programme. Students commented very favourably on the central student support services available at both the Oxford and Banbury sites. Students on all but one programme reported that they had a structured system of one-to-one tutorials and on the one exception there was easy access to tutors, with help on an individual basis freely given. Students also reported that tutors were prepared to spend time with them individually if they had a problem or were struggling. Students spoke warmly of the helpfulness and accessibility of their tutors, appreciated the value of their industrial experience and acknowledged the importance of tutorials in affording an opportunity for reflecting on their own strengths and areas for development. The College has successfully combined sources of help from the centre and at subject level for both academic and pastoral issues, strongly focused on the needs of the individual student.

30 Programme committees, which address programme-level development, areas of good practice and areas for development, include student representation. Feedback from students is also gathered through student surveys, module evaluations and student forums. Feedback to students is provided through notices showing the actions that have been taken in response to their representations. However, there is evidence that students are unsure about what happens as a result of the surveys they completed. On the other hand, students whom the team met agreed that staff took seriously any issues raised at the personal level.

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

31 Each year the College's Staff Development Manager produces a higher education staff development plan that is informed by higher education programme, curriculum and college self-evaluation documents. This development plan is then discussed and reviewed by the Higher Education Steering Committee. Staff development planning is an iterative process that takes place throughout the year and is constantly evolving in order to meet changing needs.

32 Staff development activities are undertaken proactively both within the College and with its partner universities. For example, one member of staff has recently studied for a master's degree with a university partner. The knowledge and experience gained helped in developing the new FdA in Furniture: Design and Make and fed into the teaching at both higher and further education levels. There was also press coverage which resulted in an

internal college presentation and exhibition. Scholarly activities and professional updating within their own disciplines are undertaken by many higher education staff, which helps to ensure the currency of their teaching and learning.

### **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?**

33 Awarding bodies consider the availability and appropriateness of general learning resources and specialist equipment as part of the validation process. The College has introduced annual operating statements which provide a list of staff for a particular programme of study prior to its commencement. This process gives the awarding body an opportunity to approve the list and to be assured that the programmes are delivered by appropriately qualified and experienced staff. There are also arrangements with higher education partners that include parity of access to library and learning resources for college-based students.

34 Learning Resources staff meet formally with all course leaders on an annual basis. A link representative works with staff within each curriculum area. Lecturers are encouraged to submit requests for resources throughout the year. Learning Resources staff also identify resources in a subject area on request. Students appreciate the support provided by Learning Resources staff. The external examiner's report for the HNC in Construction, however, noted comments from students that unit reading lists were not always available from the library and that some books stocked were old editions. These comments were endorsed by the students in their written submission and again at the student meeting. The Learning Resources team has identified at least one title for this programme which is available as an e-book and further e-books will be available. The Learning Resources team has also proposed making arrangements with the programme team to ensure that students are confident in using e-books.

35 The higher education programmes include a work-related element embedded within them, which may take the form of work-based learning, placements, case-studies, competitions or client-led briefs. The nature of the work-related element varies according to the requirements of the qualification, awarding body and the subject discipline. For example, students on the FdA Furniture: Design and Make are encouraged to seek work placements. Students on the FdSc in Motorsports, however, are required to be employed within the industry in order for them to enter the programme. In both cases, the aim is to enable the students to apply theory directly to practice. Students value this highly.

**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?**

36 The College provides public information for prospective students in the Higher Education Prospectus, in electronic form in the higher education section within the website, and in a section within the hard copy Full Time Prospectus (which covers both further and higher education). At the time of the first visit, the pages on the website provided programme

information, including brief descriptions of the programme, fees, entry requirements and progression opportunities. Those in the Higher Education Prospectus and the Full Time Prospectus contained similar information, with sections on assessment and more general descriptions of the programmes. The Higher Education Prospectus contained specific information about the content of programmes in varying degrees of detail. At the second visit, the College had removed the course-specific web pages, and had instituted the creation of Key Information Sets for programmes, but other publications have been retained.

37 For current students, the College publishes a Higher Education Student Handbook setting out a summary of expectations, policies and procedures. It is published on paper and on the virtual learning environment. This Handbook includes statements and policies regarding coursework and assessment, study support, learning resources and information technology, student services, access to funds, and general rules and regulations. It contains very useful interactive links to partner universities and the relevant parts of their sites/portals. Also, following a recommendation in the Developmental engagement, the Handbook provides information on assessment. Students' responses to this are very positive.

38 The College produces information about individual programmes in programme handbooks, published in print and electronically on the virtual learning environment. Students commented that the handbooks were carefully and thoroughly explained and discussed at induction. Handbooks were singled out by students as being very helpful.

39 All programmes use the virtual learning environment extensively and students value it, although they were critical of the currency and organisation of the information for some programmes. All programme sites include the Handbook, programme specification and a range of supporting information, including module specifications, calendars of work, assessment schedules, teaching materials, assignment briefs and assessment criteria. There are some differences across programmes and modules as appropriate to the demands of the module/programme.

40 The College provides information about the operation of work placements in certain programmes, but has no college-wide higher education work-related learning policy or procedure. The team saw a limited number of examples of information provided for students, but concluded that the College has no system to ensure that all students or employers on relevant programmes receive information about what is expected of them in the context of placements or work-related learning, following the precepts in the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning*.

41 The College produces a comprehensive interactive Guide to the Management of Higher Education written by the Higher Education Manager, which includes hyperlinks to useful sources of reference. It contains detailed information about the management of programmes, covering a wide range of materials and issues, including the Academic Infrastructure, tutorials and student support, and the production of handbooks and assessment briefs. It clearly details the programme monitoring process, administration procedures for students and other relevant materials. Staff agreed that this is a most helpful and informative reference source, especially for members new to higher education, but also for established course leaders.

42 In response to a recommendation in the Developmental engagement, the College now produces the Guide to Assessment, which directly addresses the methods and processes of assessment. This guide, written by the Higher Education Manager and produced in consultation with experienced staff, builds upon experience and existing good practice. Students stated that the Guide was helpful when they were undertaking assessments. Staff confirmed that it assisted in the design of assessments and was used frequently with their students.

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

43 At the time of the first visit, the College had three systems for the generation and maintenance of public information in the various media through which it communicated to prospective students. These systems were not aligned with each other and failed to work in combination. They did not assure consistency and reliability of information across the different media. At the second visit, the College had made substantial improvements in correcting inaccuracies and developing a process which supports the generation, revision and checking of information. There is now a detailed process in place which involves programme staff, management and awarding bodies. This is currently being employed to create information for prospective students for the 2012 intake.

44 The complexity and range of the previous systems resulted in inconsistency of the information about programmes provided across the different media. By the time of the second visit, the College had undertaken considerable work in transforming the course information by establishing Key Information Sets (in anticipation of national developments) which enable the consistent and accurate production of information. These Key Information Sets form the basis for the production of printed materials and web pages. However, there are still minor inaccuracies within the draft versions made available to the team. The College needs to ensure that the process is fully implemented, and that clarity of responsibility within the process is established.

45 At the time of the first visit, the combination of an easily adapted and revised electronic Higher Education Prospectus and the comparative difficulty of altering web pages resulted in the reverse of normal approaches to publication, the Higher Education Prospectus being subject to frequent change while the web pages were relatively fixed. At the second visit, the College demonstrated that this strategy had been revised. The Higher Education Prospectus, while still available on the website, would be date-stamped and fixed, while the new website allowed for individual course pages which could be altered to ensure currency. The College may wish to consider the problems that might arise from having, on the one website, two sources of information which will diverge over time.

46 There are clear processes for the review of programme handbooks. While handbooks demonstrate some variability, there is a consistency of content when they are seen in combination with other materials and documentation on the virtual learning environment.

47 The design, revision and updating of the programme virtual learning environment is the responsibility of the course leader, but there is no established procedure for centrally monitoring this and there is some evidence that annual updating is not always carried out at the appropriate time. The College has employed a pilot procedure to review the content and practices of sites, using student response and evaluation from the Information and Learning Technology Manager. There will be an insistence upon minimum content and standard of presentation.

**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**

48 The Developmental engagement in assessment took place in December 2009. There were three lines of enquiry:

**Line of enquiry 1:** The conduct and robustness of assessment practice and how this contributes to the maintenance of academic standards.

**Line of enquiry 2:** The quality and range of formative, summative and peer feedback and its effectiveness in promoting learning and facilitating improvement in student performance.

**Line of enquiry 3:** The clarity, accuracy and accessibility of information for stakeholders about assessment.

49 The Developmental engagement team identified a number of areas of good practice. The central self-monitoring process is of high quality and the college-wide assessment policy designed specifically for the Higher National programmes is thorough, ambitious and well-documented. There is a wide range of formative and summative feedback; peer feedback supports students in developing skills for their future careers, and the effective engagement with employers in the FdA Furniture Design enables students to benefit from experience of industry-level standards. There is a wide range of information about assessment, especially in the online prospectus, and the college-wide template for Higher National programme handbooks has resulted in a significant improvement in the comprehensiveness and consistency of information on assessment.

50 The team also made a number of recommendations. It considered that the College should approach the University of Bedfordshire with the aim of ensuring the provision of external examiner reports specific to the College; should develop the means for sharing good practice; and should develop a college-wide approach to the assurance of assessment. It might benefit from fostering personal development through the reflective practice journal; ensuring that feedback on assessment is consistently focused on student improvement; reviewing the language used to describe assessment; assuring itself that all relevant information concerning assessment is transmitted to each individual student; and reviewing the documentation about the support of students with disabilities.

## **D Foundation Degrees**

51 The College is committed to the future development of Foundation Degrees which will be developed to meet the local needs of employers and students, while also providing progression routes to the final year of honours degrees in partner universities. Currently, the College offers Foundation Degrees in Furniture: Design and Make (Oxford campus) and Motorsports - Performance and Automotive Technology (Bicester campus). As from September 2011, the College will also be offering Foundation Degrees in Business and Enterprise (Oxford campus) and Creative Art and Design Practice (Banbury campus). The College is also developing an Foundation Degree in the field of construction (Bicester campus) for September 2012 with a specific focus on ecology and sustainability linked to the new Bicester Eco Village development.

52 The conclusions listed in paragraphs 54 to 57 apply to all of the higher education provision, but the following advisable recommendation has special relevance to Foundation Degrees:

- ensure the production of information that clearly articulates the responsibilities of the employer, the College and the student in relation to work-based, work-related and placement learning (paragraph 40).

## E Conclusions and summary of judgements

53 The Summative review team has identified a number of features of good practice in Oxford and Cherwell Valley 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, Oxford Brookes University, Buckinghamshire New University, De Montfort University and the University of Bedfordshire.

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

- the College is fully committed to the development and enhancement of the academic standards of its higher education provision (paragraph 9)
- many of the internal publications provide exceptionally clear and comprehensive information, imaginatively presented (paragraphs 10, 17, 19, 37, 41 and 42)
- processes for monitoring and enhancing the quality of provision and safeguarding academic standards lead to improvement and are clear, timely and systematic (paragraphs 14 and 15)
- the College has developed a proactive approach to student support strongly focused on the needs of the individual student (paragraphs 27 and 29).

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

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

- review, in consultation with the University of Bedfordshire and De Montfort University, the provision of external examiner reports to ensure they include information that is specific to the College (paragraph 16)
- ensure the production of information that clearly articulates the responsibilities of the employer, the College and the student in relation to work-based, work-related and placement learning (paragraph 40)
- address inconsistencies in the information provided to prospective students and keep under review the process used to generate and verify this information (paragraphs 43 to 45).

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

- improve the provision of the books available to support the HNC Construction (paragraph 34).

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 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.

59 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.

60 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/or completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Oxford and Cherwell Valley College action plan relating to the Summative review: March 2011						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
In the course of the Summative review the team identified the following areas of <b>good practice</b> that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the College is fully committed to the development and enhancement of the academic standards of its higher education provision (paragraph 9)</li> </ul>	To include a staff development section in the current Higher Education Management Guide in order to increase awareness of the range of opportunities available to higher education staff to undertake continuing professional development activities	October 2011	Higher Education Manager	<p>Higher Education Management Guide is re-published with new section</p> <p>Higher education staff are aware of opportunities and how to engage</p> <p>Increased focus on continuing professional development within annual monitoring and self-evaluation documents</p>	Higher Education Steering Committee	Course leaders will routinely review activities and evaluate their impact on enhancing academic standards and/or learning opportunities as part of the continuous programme enhancement planning and evaluation process
	Establish a schedule of lunchtime sessions to facilitate the sharing of good practice across all higher	November 2011	Higher education course leaders	Sessions occur as scheduled, are well attended and provide evidence of good practice	Higher Education Steering Committee	The Higher Education Steering Committee will use relevant

	education programmes			which is effectively disseminated		statements from the National Student Survey to evaluate the perceptions of students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>many of the internal publications provide exceptionally clear and comprehensive information, imaginatively presented (paragraphs 10, 17, 19, 37, 41 and 42)</li> </ul>	To ensure that the information published via higher education programme virtual learning sites is accurate, complete and provides examples of active learning opportunities for students	June 2012	Higher education course leaders	All programme sites will have been reviewed using the College's 'virtual learning environment checklist' and examples of active learning materials identified, developed and made available across all Foundation Degree programmes	Higher Education Steering Committee  Programme Committee	Students to provide feedback via virtual learning environment, programme committees and National Student Survey, which is evaluated by the Higher Education Steering Committee
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>processes for monitoring and enhancing the quality of provision and safeguarding academic standards lead to improvement and are clear, timely and systematic (paragraphs 14</li> </ul>	To revise the College's annual self-evaluation documents to ensure closer alignment with the requirements of awarding bodies so as to avoid duplication of reporting	December 2011	Quality and Standards Manager	The College's annual monitoring report template for all higher education programmes meets awarding body requirements and has been agreed by each partner	Higher Education Steering Committee	The Higher Education Steering Committee will evaluate the effectiveness of the new arrangements to ensure that outcomes continue to lead to

and 15)				university as a result of consultation		improvements which are clear, timely and systematic  Feedback from awarding bodies will also be used to evaluate the quality of reports
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the College has developed a proactive approach to student support strongly focused on the needs of the individual student (paragraphs 27 and 29).</li> </ul>	To establish a college-wide induction programme for all higher education students which includes core and programme-specific activities and also avoids duplication of information provided as a result of awarding body inductions	September 2011	Higher Education Manager	<p>A college-wide induction programme is agreed with higher education course leaders and university partners which avoids duplication of information and/or activities</p> <p>Student feedback is positive</p>	Higher Education Steering Committee	Continuous programme enhancement plans will review activities and evaluate their success based upon student feedback via the induction survey

Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is <b>advisable</b> for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>review, in consultation with the University of Bedfordshire and De Montfort University, the provision of external examiner reports to ensure they include information that is specific to the College (paragraph 16)</li> </ul>	Higher Education Manager to discuss request with university partners in order to ensure the future provision of college-specific external examiner reports	June 2011	Higher Education Manager	Future external examiner reports include information that is specific to the College, where appropriate	Higher Education Steering Committee	<p>The Quality and Standards Manager will continue to evaluate all external examiner reports and provide a feedback report to curriculum areas</p> <p>Continuous programme enhancement plans and self-evaluation documents will provide programme-specific evaluation of external examiner comments</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensure the production of information that clearly articulates the responsibilities of the employer, the College and the student in relation to work-based, work-related and placement learning (paragraph 40)</li> </ul>	<p>To establish a work-based and placement learning policy which provides guidance for staff, students and employers that clearly articulates their respective responsibilities in relation to work-related, work-based and placement learning requirements and/or opportunities</p>	<p>October 2011</p>	<p>Higher Education Manager</p>	<p>Staff, students and employers receive guidance and are clear about and fulfil their respective responsibilities</p>	<p>Higher Education Steering Committee</p>	<p>Feedback from employers, staff and students</p> <p>Continuous programme enhancement plans and self-evaluation documents evaluate the effectiveness of these arrangements under 'Quality of Learning Opportunities'</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>address inconsistencies in the information provided to prospective students and keep under review the process used to generate and verify this information (paragraphs 43 to 45).</li> </ul>	<p>Establish a new policy, procedure and workflow which will ensure, through close monitoring, that information published for prospective higher education students is accurate and complete</p>	<p>May 2011</p>	<p>Higher Education Manager</p>	<p>Information published for prospective higher education students provides evidence that the new approval procedures are effective and result in the publication of information which is accurate and complete</p> <p>Individual staff understand and fulfil their</p>	<p>Higher Education Steering Committee</p>	<p>The Higher Education Steering Committee will review the new procedures in consultation with awarding bodies to confirm their effectiveness and amend as appropriate</p>



				responsibility for checking the accuracy and completeness of information		
The team considers that it is <b>desirable</b> for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>improve the provision of the books available to support the HNC Construction (paragraph 34).</li> </ul>	<p>List of titles available as e-books to be drawn up and order placed</p> <p>Communication between teaching staff and Learning Resources on a monthly basis</p> <p>Learning Resources team member responsible for Construction to attend future Programme Committee meetings</p>	<p>May 2011</p> <p>September 2011</p>	<p>Learning Resources Manager Learning Resources Team member (BBL) Course Leader</p> <p>Course leader Learning Resources team member</p>	<p>Purchased stock available in Library/ electronically and being used by students</p> <p>Students making full use of Library services and facilities</p> <p>Learning Resources fully appraised of needs of teaching staff and students</p>	<p>Higher Education Steering Committee</p> <p>HNC Construction - Programme Committee</p>	<p>Library Management System reports</p> <p>External examiner report confirms action has been completed</p> <p>Feedback from students, teaching and Learning Resources staff</p> <p>Continuous programme enhancement plan and self-evaluation document</p>

**RG 811 09/11**

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