Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

Cirencester College

February 2011

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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

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 Cirencester College carried out in February 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:

- there is effective internal audit of higher education carried out by the College
- the staff development strategy for higher education is well-considered and effective
- there is a highly organised system of mentoring and guidance within the teacher training programme
- the higher education virtual learning environment provides a shared area with useful information on good academic practice and study skills.

Recommendations

The team has also identified a number ducatit-1.141 Tdx6(ed a)11(r)- g dissemCollegt mids tleginfoer educa

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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 Cirencester 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 that the College delivers on behalf of the Royal Agricultural College, the University of Bath, The University of Bolton and the University of the West of England, Bristol. The review was carried out by Mr Peter Cutting, Mrs Saundra Middleton (reviewers) and Dr John Hurley (coordinator).

2 The Summative review team (the team) conducted the review in agreement with the College and in accordance with *The handbook for Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review*, (the handbook) published by QAA. Evidence in support of the Summative review included documentation supplied by the College and 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 e Tdn1(T)-10(he)1e 0 Tw 5.853(c)-2(I-7(tu

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

10 Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the Summative review team, which was presented with the self-evaluation. The process was facilitated by two non-teaching members of college staff (the Higher Education Officer and the Higher Education Personal Tutor). The evidence was derived from questionnaires and focus group discussions. Reference was also made to material from routine college student feedback monitoring. The evidence was analysed and draft outcomes were prepared by the Higher Education Officer. This was submitted to a group of student representatives, which reviewed the validity of the data and suggested conclusions.

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directly by the course leader to their higher education partner and are monitored by the college Higher Education Officer

23 Higher education staff also regularly take part in development opportunities provided by higher education partners. These have included understanding of higher education levels and progression, setting and measuring standards in assessment, matching learning outcomes to assessment, and marking and moderation. This exemplifies the close and supportive relationship between the College and the higher education partners.

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?

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and the work of the Academic Sub-committee in sharing good practice offer the potential to embed the codes of practice related to learning opportunities as successfully as they have

31 The Personal Tutor is responsible for reporting higher education student support issues to the College through the Assistant Principal, Student Services, working closely with the Higher Education Officer. The Tutor also arranges focus groups for higher education

41 Current students and staff make extensive and regular use of the college virtual learning environments. A general higher education section contains substantial amounts of useful information, including that on good academic practice and study skills. The team considers this to be good practice. Links are provided to partner awarding bodies and handbooks and programme specifications can be accessed electronically. There is, additionally, specific material on programme content, assessment, and course management, plus detailed and useful module-specific content available.

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

42 The consistency of material and the application of the guidelines governing logos and production are laid down in the contracts with partner institutions. Information originated by course teams is approved by the awarding body. The college Marketing Officer is responsible for liaising with the

College and its partners. Good practice was also noted in the attention the College gave to formative assessment, the use of diagnostic tools and the creation of assessment resources on the college virtual learning environment.

47 It was recommended to the College that it should try to achieve a greater parity of student experience by managing assessment practices across its portfolio of courses more consistently. This consideration prompted further recommendations to achieve a more consistent approach to the provision of information on the college website, course information, and material available on the virtual learning environment. The College was encouraged to continue its efforts to develop its commitment to the culture of higher education through support for staff understanding of the Academic Infrastructure and scholarly activity. A final recommendation was made to develop the area of student support and academic guidance.

D Foundation Degrees

48 The College currently offers three Foundation Degrees: FdA Criminology and Criminal Justice, FdSc Environmental Conservation and Heritage Management, and FdSc Computing. The latter is in the final year of operation, following the withdrawal of student numbers by the partner awarding body. Two further Foundation Degrees have been agreed with an awarding body, but the College is currently awaiting the impact of funding changes on the sector before introducing them.

49 Significant improvement is noted in the Foundation Degree programmes since the Developmental engagement, with a closer adherence to the *Foundation Degree benchmark statement* and the *Code of practice* in areas such as skills development, work-based learning and student information and guidance. This has been achieved partly as a response to the Developmental engagement action plan and partly by sharing good practice between courses and from the teacher training programme. The team now concludes that the College offers Foundation Degree students a consistently good programme of learning.

50 All the conclusions of the Summative review below, with the exception of one area of good practice specific to teacher training programmes (paragraph 32) apply to Foundation Degrees.

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

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

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

- there is effective internal audit of higher education carried out by the College (paragraph 19)
- the staff development strategy for higher education is well-considered and effective (paragraphs 22, 35)
- there is a highly organised system of mentoring and guidance within the teacher training programme (paragraph 32)

- the higher education virtual learning environment provides a shared area with useful information on good academic practice and study skills (paragraphs 37, 41).

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

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

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• there is a highly organised system of mentoring and guidance within the teacher training programme (paragraph 32)	Extend tracking of students to other HE programmes	Oct 2011	HE tutor	Central system	Assistant Principal (Student Services)	Appraised through Dept review of tutorials
	Review opportunities to extend practice in other work-based learning modules	Dec 2011	HE sub-committee/ Course Leaders	Guidelines produced and minutes from meeting	Assistant Principal	Evaluation of student voice data

the full potential of
the systems
currently in place

Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is **desirable** for the College to:						
• ensure that the actions from the Developmental engagement to enhance higher education continue to be implemented at programme level (paragraph 20)	Audit progress on Developmental engagement and Summative review action plans	July 2011	Central Team	Carry out audit at Staff Development day		