North West Regional College

Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review, Northern Ireland: Summative Review by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

February 2013

Executive summary

The

Level 4 HNC Sport (Health, Fitness & Exercise) (28)
Level 5 HND in Advanced Practice in work with Children and Families (Education) (20)

Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations (full-time courses)

Level 4 Certificate in Administration (Business Professional) (5)
Level 4 Diploma in Administration (Business Professional) (8)

The Queen's University of Belfast (part-time course)

FD Early Childhood Studies (3)

University of Ulster (full-time courses)

FD Hospitality and Tourism Management (15)
FD Science, Computing & Software Development (23)
FD Travel and Tourism Management (22)

University of Ulster (part-time courses)

Level 5 Associate Bachelor Degree in Fine/Applied Art (16)
Level 4 Certificate in Counselling Studies (63)

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 and did so in November 2012. The student written submission is comprehensive. It was developed through a total of seven student meetings on the College's three sites at Derry/Londonderry, Limavady and Strabane. It was facilitated by two College staff supported by a graduate intern. The meetings included full-time and part-time higher education students, of various ages, across several different curriculum areas. The contributions from each meeting were collated by the College facilitators. A group of six students on the Derry/Londonderry campus compiled the final student written statement. Students met the coordinator at the preparatory meeting and the team during the review. Their involvement was helpful for the team and provided an insight into a number of topics, including the provision of resources and learning and teaching.

Evaluation of the management of DEL-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 an effective management structure. It works in close partnership with its awarding bodies and organisations, employers and other stakeholders to ensure the College provision meets its strategic priorities. A senior management team of four directors is responsible to the Principal for the strategic development, effectiveness, quality and standards of the College's higher education. They delegate some responsibilities to heads of school and curriculum managers who also ensure that provision is aligned to the College mission and Northern Ireland Higher Education Strategy. The Director of Curriculum has overall responsibility for higher education and the management of academic standards. He is supported by the Head of Higher Education and Training Programmes. The heads of school are supported by curriculum managers for the management of standards at an operational level. The senior management team meets heads of school and curriculum managers annually to discuss statistical outcomes and progress against key performance indicators, including success rates. Exceptionally, where indicators suggest a particular problem, further meetings provide the opportunity to explore issues, make recommendations and monitor progress.

10 The committees with responsibilities for higher education provide an effective oversight of academic standards. They have clear terms of reference and responsibilities which are suitably discharged. The Academic Board oversees curriculum and new course development. Acting as a subcommittee, the Academic Standards Sub-Committee has responsibility for academic standards and disseminating good practice, considering the outcomes of periodic reviews and external examiner reports. Higher education forums at school and college level monitor standards and promote the dissemination of good practice, partly through the sharing of minutes.

11 Student participation in decision-making is developing adequately. Student representatives are suitably involved at course level in staff-student consultative committees and the higher education forums. Student involvement at college-level is less extensive.

The College gives the student body opportunities to see and to comment on these reports as part of its student engagement strategy.

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

18 The College has appropriate procedures for the oversight of staff development. It has a detailed and coordinated staff development policy that reflects its strategic objectives. There are clear procedures for staff development with all activities recorded and evaluated. The Director of Workforce Development and Administration has overall responsibility for staff development. She is a member of the Academic Standards Sub-Committee, which provides an opportunity for the consideration of staff development in the context of other discussions about higher education. The Workforce Development team collate, analyse and review, on a six weekly basis, all management reports, specifically identifying staff training needs.

19 The procedures for identifying staff development needs are appropriate. The College has a comprehensive and effective induction for all new staff. This provides an opportunity to discuss training needs. The College uses an appraisal system, which includes input from teaching observations, to identify staff development needs. Training is provided for both appraisers and staff undergoing the process. The College also identifies staff development requirements through the cycle of quality procedures considered in paragraph 16. There are also strategic priorities which include staff development for the virtual learning environment.

20 Staff development activities provide suitable support for the delivery of the curriculum. Staff are undertaking a variety of development activities, including enrolment on higher degrees, working in industry for short periods and benefitting from the training provided by the awarding bodies and organisations. The College has made extensive and highly effective use of curriculum projects to enhance the provision. Employers and students confirmed that the curriculum projects have been of direct benefit to them. In the current academic year, there are 57 projects spread across the provision with a total budget of over £200,000. These projects are clearly linked to the world of work and provide a significant enhancement of the curriculum. For example, a member of the HNC/D in Sport (Health, Fitness & Exercise) course team undertook a short secondment to a professional football club, resulting in the use of industry standards for personal fitness testing within the curriculum. Another college-wide project is developing the use of social media for improving access to learning and marketing materials. The positive impact of curriculum projects that enhance the student experience across the provision is **good practice**.

21 The College has responded appropriately to the outcomes of the Developmental Engagement. More staff have enrolled on the City & Guilds Training and Assessment Quality Assurance Award for internal moderators, which provides training on assessment and feedback; 68 per cent of staff have now achieved the award. The College has used the Higher Education Conference as an opportunity to share good practice, and to inform staff about policy developments in higher education and the availability of new technologies.

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?

22 The processes and procedures considered in paragraphs 9 to 11 are also relevant to managing the quality of learning opportunities and are equally effective. The College is responsible for all aspects of the quality of learning opportunities, as is clearly stated in the partnership agreements.

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

23 College arrangements for fulfilling its obligations to its awarding bodies are described in paragraphs 15 to 17.

What account is taken of the Quality Code?

24 The College has aligned its policies and procedures with guidance in the Quality Code concerning the management of the quality of learning opportunities. It uses the procedures described in paragraph 12. For example, the College has mapped its teaching and learning against Chapter B3: Learning and teaching of the Quality Code and aligned its provision of careers information, advice and guidance to Chapter B4: Student support, learning resources and careers education, information, advice and guidance. Students have been productively engaged in this process, advising on their specific needs, and in response to this the College has provided enhanced guidance on progression to further higher education study. Based also on the analysis in paragraphs 12 and 13, the extent and depth

The website includes course information such as content, modules of study, and entry requirements. Website information is available in large print and Braille. The College website holds the definitive version of documents and is updated frequently.

36 The College provides a suitable range of course information for students and employers. There is a college-level handbook which includes guidance on student finance, learning support and careers progression. Course handbooks and handbooks on work-based learning for employers and students are available in hard copy. Employers reported that the information they receive is very helpful and is appropriate for their differing needs. They stated that they are able to influence changes to the documentation provided to them through the employer forums and directly with course

The team considers that 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.

C Summary of findings from the Developmental Engagement in assessment

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

46 The Summative Review team has identified a number of features of good practice in North West Regional College 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 and organisations. This was based upon discussion with staff and students and scrutiny of evidence provided by the College and its awarding partners: Accounting Technicians Ireland; City & Guilds; The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development; Edexcel; Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations; The Queen's University of Belfast; and the University of Ulster.

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

- the extent and depth of the College's engagement with the Quality Code (paragraphs 12, 13 and 24)
- the positive impact of curriculum projects enhancing the student experience across the provision (paragraph 20)
- the well-considered procedures to increase the amount and sophistication of the content available to students on the virtual learning environment (paragraph 32)
- the depth and scope of the engagement with employers (paragraph 33).

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

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

- improve the guidance provided to students in course handbooks (paragraph 39).

50 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 and organisations.

51 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**(nfi)-5(de)4(nc)4(e)]TJETBcgJETBT1 03(al)6(y)11(si)5(s)-4(o)18.5D 4>BDC BT1 0 0 1 72.024 6

North West Regional College action plan relating to the Summative Review February 2013						
Good practice	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
In the course of the Summative Review the ream identified the following areas of **good practice** that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
the extent and depth of the College's engagement with the Quality Code (paragraphs 12, 13 and 24)	Cross-reference higher education activity to the quality code as new chapters become available at academic school and support function level to ensure dissemination and ownership	December 2013	Academic Standards Committee	Team members delivering higher education informed about the Quality Code Relevant documents referencing the Quality Code	Academic Board	Evidence base in each academic