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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

- 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

A Introduction and context

1 This report presents the findings of the Summative review conducted at the Isle of Wight College (the College). The purpose of the review was 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 for programmes it delivers on behalf of Edexcel and the University of Chichester and the University of Southampton. The review was carried out by Professor Danny Morton and Mr Michael Penton (reviewers) and Dr John Barkham (Coordinator).

2 The team conducted the review in negotiation with the College and in accordance with *T* [illegible], published by QAA. Evidence in support of the Summative review included documentation supplied by the College and awarding bodies, meetings with staff, students, employers and partner institutions, reports of reviews by QAA and from inspections by Ofsted and ALI and other external bodies. In particular, the team drew on the findings and recommendations of the Developmental engagement in assessment. A summary of findings from the 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 the higher education sector, with particular reference to the *C* [illegible] (*C* [illegible]), subject and award benchmarks, *T* [illegible] *E* [illegible] *N* [illegible] *I* [illegible] (FHEQ) and programme specifications.

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

4 The College is a general further education college serving the Isle of Wight community and is situated on a single campus at Newport. In December 2006, there were 6,173 students, of whom 124 were enrolled on higher education courses and 1,467 were full-time further education students. Of the 124 higher education students, nine are full-time and 115 are part-time. There are 29 staff managers, 248 teaching staff (113 full-time equivalents) and 165 support staff (143 full-time equivalents); 28 staff teach higher education students. Of these, seven are fractional and 21 are full-time appointments. The home residence of all the students on higher education programmes is the Isle of Wight.

5 The College has higher education provision in six subject departments. The HEFCE-funded higher education provision at the time of the review, together with the awarding bodies, comprised the following programmes:

Edexcel

- HNC in Graphic Design (part-time)
- HNC in Mechanical Engineering (part-time)

University of Chichester:

- Foundation Degree in Early Childhood Studies (part-time)
- HNC in Business (full and part-time)
- HND in Business (full and part-time)

- HNC in Graphic Communication (part-time)
- HND in Graphic Communication (part-time)
- HND in Information Technology (full-time)
- HNC in Mechanical Engineering (part-time)

University of Southampton

- Certificate of Education (Post Compulsory Education) (part-time).

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

6 Agreement with Edexcel for the delivery of the HNC in Graphic Design and the HNC in Mechanical Engineering is through a standard letter of approval, outlining the conditions, together with the appointment of an external verifier. The contractual agreement with the University of Chichester will last indefinitely but will be reviewed every five years. It provides for the College to teach the programmes offered under its auspices, with student assessment being conducted under the University's regulations. It further details areas of defined responsibility of the partners. The agreement with the University of Southampton is to deliver their Certificate in Education (Post-Compulsory Education and Training). The University has overall responsibility for the academic standards and quality of the programme, exercised through its Faculty of Law, Arts and Social Sciences.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

7 The anticipated £30 million new building on the College site, scheduled for completion September 2009, includes a higher education centre. This will give higher education programmes their own discrete location and identity.

8 From September 2006, the College reintroduced the HNC/D programmes in Graphic Communication and Mechanical Engineering validated directly by Edexcel, operating under its rules and regulations. From September 2007, the HNC/Ds in Computing will also be validated directly by Edexcel. The FD in Early Childhood Studies and the Early Years Professional Status will continue in partnership with the University of Chichester.

9 The HNC/D Graphic Communication currently has a progression route to a full degree in advertising with Southampton Solent University. The University has also identified two possible progression routes for HND Mechanical Engineering students to achieve full degree status. The College is working with the Lifelong Learning Network Credit and Progression Manager (Hampshire and the Isle of Wight), together with the five participating Lifelong Learning Network universities (Chichester, Portsmouth, Southampton, Southampton Solent and Winchester), in developing progression agreements for the College's HNC/D

the high-school needs on the island. The team recommends that it would be desirable that the College continues to develop the strategy, that quality and standards are part of that strategy, and that its development should not be further delayed by the Isle of Wight Council's schools' policy decisions.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

11 Students from the higher education provision at the College were invited to present a written submission to the team but did not to take this opportunity. However, current higher education students made a valuable contribution to the review, as they did for the Developmental engagement through meetings held with the team. The views of current students were also available through the results of College student questionnaires.

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?

12 The higher education programmes have a dedicated budget against which resource and staffing costs are allocated. The College has recognised the problems of budgeting higher education programmes within a further education environment and, where possible, allocates them under separate budget headings. The College has piloted a new financial costing model this academic year. It will be in full use from September 2007 and will enable the College to manage more readily its budgets for higher education.

13 The College manages the quality assurance of all its programmes, using comprehensive procedures covering its higher and further education programmes. It has appointed a Higher Education Manager whose role is to manage, develop, monitor and improve the quality assurance processes and procedures of all the higher education programmes in the College. This responsibility includes overseeing the programme quality and delivery, course compliance with awarding body partners' academic and quality regulations, and the development of existing and new higher education provision. The Higher Education Manager reports directly to the Assistant Principal (Strategic Planning). Any quality issues are reported to the College's quality team, or directly to the Assistant Principal (Strategic Planning), who is a member of the senior management team. The College, with its Higher Education Manager, hold regular quality assurance link meetings with its various partners. Individual higher education programmes validated by different higher education institutions follow that University's quality assurance processes and procedures. An example of good practice is that the College has produced a planning and quality cycle document for the whole College, as well as individual quality cycles for each department within it.

14 Programme managers have the responsibility for curricular management and delivery, maintaining student engagement and ensuring the quality of the student learning experience. They report to their curricular head of department on issues relating to the operational delivery, management and resourcing of courses. The heads of department report to the Assistant Principal (Strategic Planning), who reports to the Senior Management Team and the Corporation.

15 The College actively seeks the views and opinions of many of its employers and the Island Council, as well as the needs of prospective and future students, in the planning and development of programmes. Further development and progress is being made with the Higher Education Strategy, with the involvement of external stakeholders, local employers, current and prospective higher education partners and current and former students. The College has been working enthusiastically with the Island's Children's Services Directorate in developing an FD in Early Childhood Studies, and with local employers and a local university in the proposed development of an FD programme in Water Sports. It is desirable that the College continues to work with these employers, to produce appropriate teaching and learning materials, assessment and work-based learning packages by using the employers' expertise in their respective fields.

16 The College recognises that certain higher education programmes have low student numbers. However, it has put in place measures to combine full and part-time courses, as appropriate, in order to maintain the viability of the programmes, even if at times this creates some timetabling problems. The College has taken further action by combining the first and second years of the programmes until such time as the number of students makes it financially viable to teach the years separately. However, current computing and engineering students found this posed difficulties for them, particularly in their first year, because of the level of units being studied. Units normally studied in their second year proved more challenging than they felt readily able to manage in their first year.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

17 The procedure for monitoring the quality assurance of higher education programmes has been set out in the College's self-evaluation. The Higher Education Manager, who is a member of the Colleges' Quality Team, has overall responsibility for the quality assurance of the higher education provision. The Higher Education Manager also ensures that the partner higher education institutions' quality assurance procedures are being followed, and that the Academic Infrastructure, including the C[illegible], developed by QAA, are being implemented. The University of Chichester and the University of Southampton validation processes for programmes offered by the College on their behalf ensure that higher education standards and QAA guidelines are embedded in the programme specifications. The implementation of these standards is monitored through the programme boards, examination boards and the annual monitoring process. The initiation of standardisation meetings and planned staff development events will provide an opportunity to further embed the Academic Infrastructure and maintain and enhance academic standards.

18 The Developmental engagement team considered that in one programme the grading criteria used on an assignment did not enable students and staff to be clear how the grade award was to be constructed. The College took immediate action to remedy this and now the assessment and grading criteria for the unit comply with the requirements of the awarding body. In order to independently verify the grades given for this unit, first and second-marking has taken place by lecturers who were not involved with the first assessment process. The external examiner from the University of Chichester confirmed that he was highly satisfied with both the new grading criteria produced for the unit and the final grades given to the students.

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?

19 When the partnership with the University of Chichester was formalised, the University wished to standardise the assessment procedures across all higher education programmes within the partnership agreement, as well as preparing the document, Common Procedures and Assessment Regulations for BTEC HND Programmes at the Isle of Wight College and validated by University College Chichester (2003). In order to facilitate this process, the University placed a member of staff, half-time for six months, at the College to support the staff as they assimilated the University academic systems and procedures, and to monitor the writing of unit assessments across the Higher National provision. The College and University are commended for this process as an example of good practice.

20 Published assignment and assessment information is current, accurate and complete for all programmes. The College implements assessment strategies and procedures on its Edexcel HN programmes as set out in the programme specifications. This process is secured by a strong process of internal verification that includes verification of assignments before they are issued to the students, to make certain that the assessment complies with the requirements of the unit and the awarding body. The quality of the assessments, the grading decisions, feedback to the students, and the final result and grading for the

programmes are currently in their first year of study and are to be monitored against the Edexcel and/or national benchmark data in the future.

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

25 The College spends 1 per cent of its annual income on staff development across all further and higher education programmes. In addition, it is proactive in encouraging higher education tutors in updating their vocational/professional practice and knowledge. It is noted that the College holds five staff development days over each academic year. An additional support to staff would be to develop a dedicated site on the College intranet, devoted specifically to higher education, which included links to the awarding bodies' own websites, QAA and the Academic Infrastructure, including the C[illegible]. This is now being addressed.

26 The College supports industrial updating as an important aspect of continuous professional development for all staff members, especially those involved in the delivery of higher education courses. It has received support from local employers, who have provided the opportunity for industrial updating of higher education team members. Continuous professional development is supported by the annual staff appraisal process.

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?

27 As with standards (paragraph 13), responsibilities for managing the day-to-day quality of learning opportunities for higher education programmes are delegated by the partnership institutions to the College. They are monitored through the College's curricular departments, quality systems and higher education programme boards.

28 Each higher education programme appoints, by peer selection, student representatives who attend programme board meetings to ensure that the programme teams respond to student views and issues. Minutes of these meetings are forwarded to the awarding body and actions taken are fed back to students.

29 The Developmental engagement report advised the establishment of a dedicated website specifically devoted to higher education, in order that staff members were kept informed of issues relating to quality and the awarding bodies requirements. The initial development of this is under way.

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

30 Quality assurance of teaching and learning is monitored through the College's observation of teaching and learning programme. A recent review, referred to in paragraph 33, confirmed the accuracy of grading and content of feedback given to staff. The curricular head of department, Higher Education Manager or other designated manager may also carry

Communication and Graphic Design programmes. These use live client projects as

41 Staff development at the College and its collaborative partners has a dual focus of ensuring both the continuing professional development of the individual staff member, and of staff being supported effectively in performing well for the benefit of their learners.

42 The College acknowledges that participation in staff development with its collaborative partners has been patchy. However, College staff have undertaken some staff development directly with partner universities. The team found evidence that these initiatives had enhanced the selection, preparation and development of staff for delivery at the appropriate level of any future higher education programmes. College higher education staff have the opportunity to attend development activities with the University of Chichester, for instance, relating to Portia, the University's intranet and learning resources centre training. However, the team considers that it is desirable for the College to pay particular attention within its higher education strategy to the identification, appointment and development of appropriately qualified staff to deliver its higher education programmes.

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?

43 The curriculum Head of Department has the responsibility for resourcing the higher education programmes. The annual departmental budget incorporates funds for the replacement and updating of higher education curricular resources. Finding resources for new equipment takes place through the annual capital bid process. The Learning Resource Centre has an annual higher education budget based on a per capita allocation per higher

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 arrangements do 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?

45 The information that the College is responsible for publishing includes the College prospectus, student programme handbooks, higher education information broadsheets and

in the public domain on the internet at this point. The Admission and Guidance Team constantly update and respond to changes to these documents. Higher education courses are included in the College's full and part-time prospectuses.

50 In addition to locally produced documents, the Admission and Guidance Team also had access to partner university information and to local and national databases. This information includes, for example, the Island Prospectus and Hot Course.com respectively. Here, they can amend information about the College's higher education programmes.

51 Overall, the College is well placed to inform the wider public effectively about its higher education provision. However, the team gained a strong impression, both from an employer and from current students, that it is less effective than it should be in reaching its prime target of schoolchildren on the Isle of Wight. It would be desirable for the College to raise its profile and local awareness among the school-age and employed population of the Isle of Wight of what it offers, particularly at a time when it has important plans to develop its higher education provision.

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

52 The Developmental engagement took place on 14-15 March 2007. Its focus was on the assessment of students. There were seven lines of enquiry:

- How does the College assure itself that assessment processes and strategies effectively support student learning and that appropriate assessment methods and levels are sued to enable students to demonstrate achievements of intended learning outcomes?
- To what extent are assessment processes rigorous, ensuring quality of treatment for students; are fairly conducted within institutional regulations and guidance and that feedback on students' marked work is fit for purpose?
- How have the College's assessment strategies developed over the last 6-7 years and to what extent does this journey inform the development of new FDs?
- How is the College progressing with attempts to develop with employers innovative and interesting live projects in graphic communication?
- How is staff development funded, is there equitable access to it, and how adequate is the take-up of it?
- To what extent are the principles and procedures of all assessments clearly communicated to all students, staff and examiners involved?
- How does the College ensure that published assessment information is current, accurate and complete?

53 The Developmental engagement team confirmed the College's commitment to maintain the standards set by their awarding bodies and, in particular, noted the well-developed relationship with the universities of Chichester and Southampton. The College has clearly developed its assessment strategies in conjunction with the relevant awarding bodies, assisted by the supportive comments received from external examiners. The team

level. Discussions have taken place to plan the commencement in September 2008 of a scheme to enable students who have achieved the ordinary degree to undertake additional study at the College to top-up to an honours degree.

60 The team was impressed by several examples of good practice in maintaining and enhancing the quality of teaching and learning in the FD Early Childhood Studies. These included the delivery of a study-skills unit, which was identified by the team to be an effective way of developing the study skills of students on higher education programmes. Employer support, particularly from the Early Years' Centre of The Isle of Wight Council, has been strongly significant in the development and delivery of the FD Early Childhood Studies.

61 The College and the University of Portsmouth are working together on the validation

- the College's swift response to higher education student concerns about their quality of learning opportunities and to the recommendations of the Developmental engagement team (paragraph 39).

The team also makes some recommendations for the enhancement of the higher education provision.

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

- continue work in the development of the College's higher education strategy, so that quality and standards are part of that strategy; that particular attention is paid to the identification, appointment and development of appropriately qualified staff to deliver its higher education programmes, and that its development should not be further delayed by the Isle of Wight Council's schools' policy development (paragraph 10)
- continue to work with employers to produce appropriate teaching and learning, assessment and work-based learning materials, and to use the employers' expertise in their respective fields (paragraph 15)
- ensure continuation of its research into the development of secure methods of recording student assessment data in a central repository (paragraph 23).
- raise its profile and local awareness of what it offers among the school-age and employed population of the Isle of Wight (paragraph 51).

64 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.

65 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.

66 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.

The Isle of Wight College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2007						
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 Planning and Quality Cycle document for the whole College, and the individual quality cycles for each department within the College (paragraph 13)	Higher Education Manager to prepare Quality Cycle document for each academic year that feeds into College Quality Cycle and is monitored by the Head of Quality	Preparation date 01 September 2007	Higher Education Manager Head of Quality	Higher education programmes meet Monthly targets as set out in the Higher Education Quality Cycle	Assistant Principal (Strategic Planning)	Head of Quality to monitor through Quality Team Meetings and Quality Standards Committee

The Isle of Wight College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2007						
Good practice	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
• the recognition of local community needs and the involvement of Isle of Wight employers in the development of higher education programmes, including the proposed development of a Foundation Degree programme in Water Sports with local employers and a local university (paragraph 15)	Head of Workforce Development; Programme Managers and the Higher Education Manager to work with existing employer partners to maintain and continue to improve input and a sense of ownership in the College's higher education provision- Develop new employer partnerships / relationships to meet local needs	Approaches made to employers by 21st September 2007	Head of Workforce Development; Heads of Department; Programme Managers; Higher Education Manager	Greater involvement (an increase of 20%) of employers in developing and steering higher education programmes over a one-year period. Working towards the formation of a Higher Education Employer's Forum	Senior Management Team, The Isle Of Wight College; Heads of Department	Monitoring of existing employers forum minutes. Workforce Development Employers Surveys. Involvement of employers on higher education steering committees/ groups

The Isle of Wight College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2007						
Good practice	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
• the identification of the need for specific higher education staff development and the provision of relevant events (paragraph 17)	Embedding of a Higher Education Day on all cross-college Staff Development Days to explore issues relating to the Academic Infrastructure and QAA C	Commenced May 2007	Assistant Principal (Strategic Planning); Heads of Department; Higher Education Manager	Minuted evidence of Staff Development activities, supported by staff development activities	Assistant Principal (Strategic Planning); Head of Quality	External examiners reports confirm compliance to QAA C and the Academic Infrastructure
• the University of Chichester's location of a half-time member of staff at the College for a six-month period to formalise the assessment procedures and programme delivery (paragraph 19)	Action completed 2003	Action completed 2003	Assistant Principal (Strategic Planning) Higher Education Manager			

The Isle of Wight College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2007

Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
• the College's peer observation of higher education teaching, which includes the use of external consultants (paragraph 33)	Planned programme of observation of teaching and learning for higher education lecturers	Schedule to be prepared by the 10th September 2007	Head of Quality; Higher Education Manager	Submission of schedule to Head of Quality. Submission of observations of teaching and learning records for entry onto College database	Assistant Principal (Strategic Planning) Head of Quality	Monitoring by the Quality Team of observation of teaching and learning records to monitor the standard of session and coverage of higher education lecturers
• the range of initiatives that are intended to maintain and enhance the quality of teaching and learning (paragraphs 35, 36)	Staff Development Day sessions incorporate the opportunities for the dissemination of good practice amongst higher education programme teams	November 2007	Assistant Principal (Strategic Planning); Head of Quality; Higher Education Manager	Higher education lecturers participation in staff development day activities	Assistant Principal (Resources); Assistant Principal (Strategic Planning)	Staff Development Day Agenda and Minutes of Activities Continuing development of understanding and implementation of the QAA C

The Isle of Wight College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2007						
Good practice	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
• the College's swift response to higher education student concerns about their quality of learning opportunities and to the recommendations of the Developmental engagement team (paragraph 39)	Monitor student satisfaction surveys. Minute student responses at termly Programme Boards	October 2007	Head of Quality Programme Managers; Higher Education Manager			

The Isle of Wight College action plan relating to the Summative review: May 2007						
Desirable	**Action to be taken**	**target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
• continue to work with employers to produce appropriate teaching and learning, assessment and work-based learning materials, and to use the employers' expertise in their respective fields (paragraph 15)	Programme Managers to liaise and work with employers in their sectors to develop learning materials, assessment and work-based learning packages	Review: December 2007	Heads of Department Programme Managers	Course resources and assessment materials reflect employers' expertise in their respective fields and provide students with realistic work place resources and activities.	Heads of Department; Higher Education Manager	Monitoring the upgrading of programme resources and assessment materials through Programme Boards, student surveys and programme course reviews
• ensure continuation of its research into the development of secure methods of recording student assessment data in a central repository (paragraph 23)	Senior Management Team to investigate possible software programmes. Implementation of selected software programme.	30th September 2007	Head of SMIS and IT Assistant Principal (Strategic Planning) Higher Education Manager	Software programme selected and installed for autumn term	Assistant Principal (Strategic Planning)	Assistant Principal (Strategic Planning) to monitor • Senior Management Team agreement of the computer package to be purchased

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