

Colchester Institute

QAA Review of College Higher Education (RCHE) May 2013

The College notes the positive report of the 2013 Review of the College by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). Covering our undergraduate and postgraduate taught provision, the outcome provides independent confirmation of the quality and standards of our programmes and the broader student learning experience.

Reviews are conducted by an independent panel of peers (senior academics from other institutions and a student reviewer) and include scrutiny of a detailed Self Evaluation Document, a supporting evidence base and a Student Written Submission. The Review culminated in a week-long visit in May 2013 when the panel held meetings with a significant number of staff and students.

Outcome

The full Institutional Review report can be viewed [here](#) on the QAA website.

In the four areas where formal judgments are given, the report confirms that:

- Academic standards of the awards the College offers on behalf of its awarding bodies **meet UK expectations** for threshold standards.
- The quality of the information produced by the College about its learning opportunities **meets UK expectations**.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities at the College **meets UK expectations**.
- The quality of student learning opportunities at the College **is commended**.

This good result is a clear endorsement of the hard work that is been done across the College to maintain academic standards and to enhance the quality of our programmes.

The QAA team identified the following four areas of good practice:

- The College's development and constructive use of detailed assessment and grading criteria to facilitate students' understanding of expectations about achievement at each level of study
- The College takes a strategic and innovative approach to embedding employability, in its broadest sense, in all aspects of the curriculum, thereby facilitating improved student understanding of the relationship between theory and practice
- The College takes a systematic and responsive approach to students' module evaluations
- The College offers high-quality learning support and pastoral care for students with a disability.

The review produced just a single recommendation:

- By the start of the calendar year 2014, strengthen monitoring procedures to ensure that all assessed work is returned to students, with appropriate feedback, within the specified timeframe.

Three areas of work were endorsed, where improvements are already in hand (affirmations):

- The College is completing and evaluating a revised scheme of peer teaching observation
- The College is working with the Students' Union to strengthen the effectiveness of student representation on committees
- The College is integrating a range of technological supports into learning and teaching

Action Plan

The review process requires the College to agree an action plan to address the recommendations and affirmations. The action plan will be updated until all actions have been completed, the plan and all updates will be published on the College's website www.colchester.ac.uk. The action plan has been developed in partnership with representatives of the student body.

The QAA Institutional Review action plan (below) was approved by the College Leadership Team on October 8th 2013.

For further information on the Review, please contact Ian Davis, Higher Education Manager on 01206 712230

QAA Review 2013 Action Plan

Recommendation	Report Ref	Actions/Update	Timescale	Lead	Monitoring
<p>By the start of the calendar year 2014, strengthen monitoring procedures to ensure that all assessed work is returned to students, with appropriate feedback, within the specified timeframe.</p>	<p>Para 1.3</p>	Amend all HE course assessment schedules published at start of semester to show hand-in and hand-back/feedback dates.	Mid Oct 2013	Area Heads	HE Ops Team HE Committee
		Update all module guides and assessment briefs to clearly state the return dates for assessed work and feedback.	Mid Nov 2013	Area Heads	HE Ops Team HE Committee
		Modify the HE assessment tracking sheets (HEATS) that list hand-in dates to also record scheduled and actual hand-back dates for all HE programs.	Mid Nov 2013	Business Admins	Area Heads HE Manager
		Analyse and report on the timeliness of feedback using the HEATS data.	End Feb 2014	HE Manager	Area Heads HE Boards HE Committee
		Devise and implement institutional management procedures to ensure compliance with published deadlines.	End Dec 2013	HE Manager	College Executive
<p><i>In parallel with the administrative actions described above to record and monitor timeliness, the Technology Enhanced Learning team will roll-out across College additional components of the Moodle VLE for on-line coursework submission and the provision of results and feedback.</i></p>		Produce support materials and train students in the use of the Moodle VLE for on-line coursework submission.	End Oct 2013	Head of TEL	Area Heads
		Train staff in the use of Moodle for on-line marking and the publication of results and feedback via the secure access-controlled Mark Book	End Oct 2013	Head of TEL	Area Heads
		Implement on-line submission of coursework across all HE provision together with publication of results and feedback. (Where assessed work is not suitable for digital upload, the on-line feedback component only will be used to inform and support students.)	Mid Nov 2013	Head of TEL	HE Committee

Affirmation	Report Ref	Commentary	Timescale	Lead	Monitoring
<p>The College is completing and evaluating a revised scheme of peer teaching observation.</p>	<p>Para 2.2</p>	<p>The updated peer observation scheme was introduced part way through the academic year with tutors given up to eighteen months in which to complete a peer observation. Early indications are that linking pre-observation reflection to the HEA Professional Standards Framework (PSF) has been of benefit.</p> <p>Observers report the process as providing a clearer focus and the recorded discussions and outcomes demonstrate links to appropriate professional ‘competencies’ with conversations about levelness of questioning and language.</p> <p>All observation forms submitted so far have had appropriate areas for development identified, and all have received feedback on those areas. When more forms have been received, the process overall will be evaluated in terms of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The degree to which observees are identifying HE-appropriate areas for development 2. The extent to which observees are using the process to receive subject-specific support, generic HE feedback (levelness) or ‘technical’ development 3. Whether there are links between areas identified for improvement, and learner feedback 4. The perception of staff of the process as genuinely developmental 5. The ways in which peer observation should link to, or inform other quality and development strategies across the College. <p>Further revisions following consultation with HE staff may address:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Whether to label the scheme observation or review 2. The possible use an on-line tool such as Infopath 3. The wider remit of HE teaching eg tutorials, dissertation supervision 4. The expectation of pre-session preparation and how it should inform in-session learning 	<p>End 2014</p>	<p>Quality Manager</p>	<p>HE Committee</p>

Affirmation	Report Ref	Commentary	Timescale	Lead	Monitoring
<p>The College is working with the Students' Union to strengthen the effectiveness of student representation on committees.</p>	<p>Para 2.5</p>	<p>A new post of Student Engagement Assistant (SEA) has been created in the HE Operations team, from September 2013, to work with the Student Union to improve the effectiveness of participation by student reps in all aspects of quality enhancement.</p> <p>A student engagement strategy will be developed in the first term of 13/14 taking advantage of research carried out in the last two years by a variety of agencies and the initiatives around student partnerships currently being developed by QAA and the HE Academy.</p> <p>The SEA has already made contacts and is taking full advantage of QAA and HEA resources attending the student-centred Quality Matters event in Birmingham in early October and seeking participation in a number of working groups associated with current student engagement projects.</p> <p>Immediate plans include a program of induction and training for new student reps comprising a variety of on-line resources and face-to-face activities organized by the SEA in collaboration with the Student Union.</p> <p>Social Media will be further developed (Facebook, Twitter and Google+ among others) to allow individual students to participate and communicate with HE student reps and the College's VLE will provide the hub for resources to support the process.</p> <p>An evaluation of the student rep system as it operated in 2012/13 is planned by the SEA to further inform how best to modify the process to allow students to work effectively in partnership with course teams, departments and HE committees.</p>	<p>Summer 2014</p>	<p>HE Student Engagement Assistant</p>	<p>HE Manager HE Committee</p>

Affirmation	Report Ref	Commentary	Timescale	Lead	Monitoring
<p>The College is integrating a range of technological supports into learning and teaching.</p>	<p>Para 2.15</p>	<p>The Technology Enhanced Learning team is responsible for supporting and developing the Moodle VLE introduced in 2009 and utilised by all curriculum areas in the College to support learning. As previously noted it will be extended in 2013-14 to enable online submission and marking of coursework to be implemented across College.</p> <p>The team also supports a cross college group of TEL Advisors - academic staff drawn the Faculties who act as champions of new technologies, sharing good practice and participating in pilots and evaluations of the latest developments.</p> <p>Good use is made of JISC National and RSC Eastern resources with regular attendance at special interest group forums building links with other colleges and universities.</p> <p>The team have provided practical help as well as inspiration in the provision of Apple iPads to all new HE students, an initiative driven by the HE Strategy which in combination with the installation of wireless connectivity across most of the campus has enabled the College to support flexible and mobile learning in the HE curriculum.</p> <p>2013-14 will see close to 1000 ipads in use by students and staff and the team will be working to further develop the library of resources, apps and training that are enabling students to take advantage of the technology in their learning.</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>TEL Manager</p>	<p>HE Manager Teaching and Learning Committee</p>