

West Herts College - QAA HE Review Action Plan (Updated for academic year 2017/18)

Background:

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for Higher Education is responsible for safeguarding standards and improving the quality of higher education in the UK.

HE Review, which was launched in 2013-14, is led by QAA and is the review method for higher education delivered in further education colleges in England.

The [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) (the Quality Code) sets out the expectations that all providers of UK higher education are required to meet. The Quality Code is applied during HE Review to assure Standards and quality.

West Herts College underwent HE Review in February 2014. The subsequent QAA report published May 2014, was extremely positive and is available at:

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Documents/West%20Herts%20College/West-Herts-College-HER-14.pdf>

Outcomes:

Judgements about standards and quality

Across the four areas where formal judgments were given, the QAA review team formed the following judgements about higher education provision at West Herts College:

-  The maintenance of the threshold academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and/or other awarding organisations meets UK expectations.
-  The quality of student learning opportunities at the provider meets UK expectations.
-  The quality of the information produced by the provider about its provision meets UK expectations.
-  The enhancement of student learning opportunities at the provider is commended.

Good Practice

In addition to the main judgements reached above the QAA review team identified several areas of 'good practice' as follows:

- The transfer of consortium quality assurance practices to other higher-level provision.
- The comprehensive approach at strategic and operational level which effectively facilitates students' transitions to higher levels of education.
- The integrated approach to the provision of support which enables students to achieve their academic, personal and professional potential.
- The extensive and effective ways by which the student voice is used to inform enhancement and create a positive impact on the learning experience.
- The embedded culture of enhancement exemplified through strategic leadership and staff commitment.

Recommendations

The QAA review team also identified two recommendations for West Herts College as follows:

- Ensure that there are effective mechanisms which enable the College to have central oversight of external examiner reports pertaining to all courses.
- Ensure external examiner reports and details of their authors are accessible to students or their representatives.

Affirmations

No affirmations were received.

This positive result is a clear endorsement of the hard work that has been completed across the College to maintain academic standards and to enhance the quality of our programmes. It is also invaluable as it provides independent confirmation of the broader student learning experience at West Herts College.

Follow Up:

The HE Review process requires the College to agree an action plan with the student body to address any recommendations and affirmations and outline plans of how it will capitalise on the identified good practice. The College did not receive any affirmations so the following action plan refers only to the recommendations and areas of good practice received and has



UK Quality Assured

Reviewed 2014



been updated for academic year 2015/16. The action plan is visible to students on studentnet and the college website.



How West Herts College will respond to the recommendations received					
	Recommendation	Timescale	Action	Responsibility	Update
1	“Ensure that there are effective mechanisms which enable the College to have central oversight of external examiner reports pertaining to all courses.”	September 2018	A collective review of all HE external examiner reports will be conducted and a subsequent report, which provides central oversight will be produced. This report will be written by the Head of Higher Level Learning and will be shared with the Quality Manager for the College. The report will be shared at HE Committee, student representative meetings and will be made visible to students via the College VLE.	Director of HE Quality Manager	A report of all External Examiners reports was produced for academic year 2016/17. Two reports were compiled for academic year 2016/17. One report to represent Pearson Higher National qualifications and another to represent University of Hertfordshire Foundation Degree qualifications. Both reports have been shared with key college staff. These reports and all EE reports are available to students and staff via ishare. This practice should continue 2017/18.
2	“Ensure external examiner reports and details of their authors are accessible to	September 2018	Consortium student handbooks will provide details of the role of external examiners and will	Director of HE	A new section regarding the role of external examiners was added to Consortium student handbooks prior to

	students or their representatives.”		<p>detail how students can access external examiner reports. The College will post all external examiner reports, with details of their authors, onto the College VLE for students to access. Student representatives will be guided to these in the first student representative meeting of 2018/19.</p>		<p>start of 2014/15 academic year following HE Review. External examiner reports continue to be available for students to access via ishare.</p>
How West Herts College will capitalise on good practice					
1	“The transfer of consortium quality assurance practices to other higher-level provision.”	Ongoing	<p>Quality assurance processes for consortium programmes are mature, robust and reliable.</p> <p>The portfolio of College-owned higher education is currently expanding. Consortium based quality assurance processes and procedures have been amended and aligned for college-owned programmes and were deemed a strength during HE Review.</p> <p>Ongoing work with Consortium partners and the College’s</p>	<p>Director of HE</p> <p>Higher Education Co-ordinator</p>	<p>Working group has agreed document which is now available and used by Higher National delivery staff.</p>

			<p>Quality department will continue, to ensure high standards across all higher education programmes are evident at the College.</p> <p>A Quality Handbook for College owned programmes will be created based upon the Consortium model. Consortium partners will be consulted and will work collaboratively to produce this document ahead of 2014/15 academic year.</p>		
2	<p>“The comprehensive approach at strategic and operational level which effectively facilitates students' transitions to higher levels of education.”</p>	Ongoing	<p>The successful transition of students onto and within their programmes is prioritised at West Herts College.</p> <p>Strong working relationships exist amongst teaching delivery staff and staff responsible for the provision of wider support to maximise student success and assist with transition from one level to the next.</p>	Director of HE	<p>Induction was further reviewed and revitalised ahead of start of 2017/18 with an increased focus upon assessment activities and maximising student success now embedded into the induction programme. Feedback from student surveys and through student representatives will be gathered to evaluate the effectiveness of this new</p>

			<p>Effective mechanisms remain in place to evaluate students' transition to higher levels of education including: the application of regular surveys, delivery of initial assessments to gauge student academic levels, ongoing monitoring of performance through tutorials and through the application of an online monitoring tool, and an effective referral system, which enables students to gain additional academic support where required.</p> <p>The transition of students onto and through their programmes will continue to be reviewed at a strategic level (HE Committee meetings) operationally (HE Operations Group meetings) and with students during student representative meetings.</p>		<p>approach but initial anecdotal feedback was very positive.</p> <p>Delivery of Masterclasses for HE students is being explored with local Businesses.</p> <p>Student feedback gathered 2016/17 indicated a desire to include more social events into the college year. Student Reps will be consulted in year to help lead on developing these opportunities.</p> <p>An At Risk Indicator Tool was introduced to help staff ensure they provided effective student transitional support at WHC.</p> <p>An evaluation and review of the induction process will be</p>
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			Induction to higher education at the College will be reviewed, with College Directors, Heads of School, Programme Managers, wider support staff and students all invited to contribute and propose new ideas prior to start of 2017/18 academic year.		conducted at strategic and operational levels and feedback from students will be sought via surveys and more directly through meetings with student representatives to continue with enhancing the induction process for students.
3	“The integrated approach to the provision of support which enables students to achieve their academic, personal and professional potential.”	Ongoing	<p>Mature and well developed mechanisms to provide all aspects of support to students exist at the College.</p> <p>The work conducted by providers of wider support to students is highly valued by academic staff. Every higher education subject area has staff from support areas allocated to them. This ensures an integrated approach amongst and between College staff.</p> <p>Shared access to the online tool responsible for monitoring student performance and</p>	<p>Director of HE</p> <p>Teaching and Learning Leader</p>	Wider use of college and university online tools is available for monitoring progress and performance of students. Staff and students have provided positive feedback regarding the effectiveness of these mechanisms.

			<p>progress facilitates the provision of support to students.</p> <p>Wider application of this online tool will be explored, to maximise the benefits to students.</p>		
4	<p>“The extensive and effective ways by which the student voice is used to inform enhancement and create a positive impact on the learning experience.”</p>	Ongoing	<p>The College will continue to engage with students at every opportunity and will respond to all aspects of the student voice to facilitate continued enhancement to the learning experience.</p> <p>The student voice is regularly sought through a variety of mechanisms and will continue to be responded to by strategic leaders and operational staff.</p> <p>Benchmarking across the Consortium takes place and best practice will continue to be shared cross-college at meetings with strategic leaders.</p>	<p>Director of HE Higher Education Co-ordinator</p>	<p>The Teaching and Learning Sub Committee was disbanded 2014/15. However Consortium partners continue to present examples of best practice at university based management meetings. The student voice is sought during all lesson observations, through regular surveys and through the student representative system where teaching and learning is a fixed agenda item.</p> <p>Review of student representation has been conducted and new support materials devised by the</p>

		<p>Clear communication channels exist for students to inform enhancement to programmes and ensure a positive impact on the learning experience. Students will continue to be encouraged to share their experiences with staff at all levels.</p> <p>Inclusion of student representation at Teaching and Learning Sub Committees will be explored to further positively impact on the learning experience.</p> <p>A review of the student representative process will be conducted to maximise the input and output from students towards enhancing the learning experience.</p> <p>Work Based Learning projects that focus upon enhancing higher education at the College,</p>	<p>student engagement partnership are currently being used to develop the rep system further.</p> <p>Work based learning project ideas that focus upon enhancement to learning experience have been presented to some learners at start of 2016/17 academic year. This work will continue through engagement with local employers and students.</p> <p>Staff training and development continues to be driven by student feedback, EE reports and internal quality processes.</p>
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			will continue to be provided to students.		
5	“The embedded culture of enhancement exemplified through strategic leadership and staff commitment.”	Ongoing	<p>Enhancement of the student experience will continue to be a priority at the College and active contributions from staff at all levels (academic and non-academic) will continue to be actively sought.</p> <p>A Teaching and Learning Leader will be assigned, to assist with further enhancing the learning experience and creating a culture of excellence amongst teachers.</p> <p>Staff with Higher Education Academy accreditation will have their achievements celebrated to support the development of a culture of excellence amongst staff.</p> <p>Training and development activities will be personalised to</p>		<p>Teaching and Learning Leaders have been appointed to support HE</p> <p>Two additional members of staff are applying for Fellowship with HEA during 2017/18 and one achieved Senior Fellowship during 2016/17. It is anticipated that staff development for teachers will be supported/delivered by outstanding HE teachers and those with HEA accreditation.</p> <p>Departmental staff development needs were targeted through personalised support 2016/17 and this will continue 2017/18 as required. The introduction of the HHEC Teaching and Learning</p>

			meet departmental needs and ensure best practice is effectively shared across the organisation.		Conference in 2016/17 was a success and this event will be retained and delivered again during 2017/18
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