# Higher Education Review of Bexhill College

January 2016

## Contents

# About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Bexhill College. The review took place from 19 to 21 January 2016 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Sylvia Hargreaves
- Ken Harris (student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Bexhill College and to make judgements as to whether or not its academic standards and quality meet UK expectations. These expectations are the statements in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code)[1] setting out what all UK higher education providers expect of themselves and of each other, and what the general public can therefore expect of them.

In Higher Education Review, the QAA review team:

- makes judgements on
  - the setting and maintenance of academic standards
  - the quality of student learning opportunities
  - the information provided about higher education provision
  - the enhancement of student learning opportunities
- provides a commentary on the selected theme
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice
- affirms action that the provider is taking or plans to take.

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. Explanations of the findings are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 5.

In reviewing Bexhill College the review team has also considered a theme selected for particular focus across higher education in England and Northern Ireland.

The themes for the academic year 2015-16 are Student Employability and Digital Literacy,[2] and the provider is required to select, in consultation with student representatives, one of these themes to be explored through the review process.

The QAA website gives more information about QAA and its mission.[3] A dedicated section explains the method for Higher Education Review[4] and has links to the review handbook and other informative documents. For an explanation of terms see the glossary at the end of this report.

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[1] The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at:
www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code.
[2] Higher Education Review themes:
www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2859.
[3] QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us.
[4] Higher Education Review web pages:
www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education/higher-education-review.

# Key findings

## QAA's judgements about Bexhill College

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Bexhill College.

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding body and other awarding organisation **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

## Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following feature of **good practice** at Bexhill College:

- the highly personalised learning, teaching and support to develop students' academic, professional and personal skills (Expectations B3 and B4).

## Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to Bexhill College.

By July 2016:

- formally document College processes for the approval of information about their higher education provision (Expectation C).

By September 2016:

- establish terms of reference, membership and formal reporting lines for the higher education deliberative structures (Expectation A2.1)
- formalise staff-student liaison committees and establish full student membership of formal higher education deliberative structures, to strengthen student engagement as partners in quality assurance and enhancement (Expectation B5)
- establish formal documentation setting out the College monitoring and review process for the higher education programmes (Expectations B8 and C).

By December 2016:

- establish clear links between institutional strategic objectives and enhancement activities, and formally monitor and evaluate the impact on student learning opportunities (Enhancement).

## Theme: Student Employability

Employability is central to the vocationally focused higher education provision of Bexhill College (the College). All the higher education students enrolled at the College are employed in education and training-related roles. The programmes are designed as professional qualifications to develop employability in the education and training sectors.

Further explanation of the key findings can be found in the handbook available on the QAA webpage explaining Higher Education Review.

# About Bexhill College

The College has a main campus located on the outskirts of Bexhill-on-Sea and a small satellite campus located in the town centre. Higher education is delivered at the main campus. The adult education delivered in the the town centre campus includes that for apprenticeships, trainees and adults with learning difficulties. The College's vision is 'Outstanding College, Outstanding Opportunities'.

At the time of its Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review (IQER) by QAA in 2011, the College had 1,470 further education students and 20 higher education students. The College currently has approximately 1,933 further education students and 22 higher education students enrolled.

Since the last QAA review the College has changed its structure for higher education; leadership resides with the Vice Principal, a higher education manager has been appointed, and a Higher Education Board has been introduced. In September 2013, the College introduced the Higher National Diploma in Advanced Practice in Work with Children and their Families (HND) as a progression route for its Level 3 Childcare students. However, interest in the provision declined, recruitment has ceased and two remaining students are completing their programme.

The College considers its key challenges for higher education have been addressed through its use of previously identified good practice. This includes extending the successful Diploma in Education and Training with Professional Graduate Certificate in Education and Training mentor scheme to the HND programme.

The Diploma in Education and Training with Professional Graduate Certificate in Education and Training is delivered by the College in partnership with Canterbury Christ Church University as part of a consortium of centres. The College also works with Pearson, the awarding organisation for the Higher National Diploma in Advanced Practice in Work with Children and their Families.

The College has made progress with the recommendations and further development of good practice identified in the IQER. Progress includes the new management structure for higher education and an increase in the information provided to staff and students to support the delivery of higher education.

# Explanation of the findings about Bexhill College

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

Terms that may be unfamiliar to some readers have been included in a brief glossary at the end of this report. A fuller glossary of terms is available on the QAA website, and formal definitions of certain terms may be found in the operational description and handbook for the review method, also on the QAA website.

# 1 Judgement: The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and other awarding organisations

**Expectation (A1): In order to secure threshold academic standards, degree-awarding bodies:**

**a) ensure that the requirements of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* are met by:**

- **positioning their qualifications at the appropriate level of the relevant framework for higher education qualifications**
- **ensuring that programme learning outcomes align with the relevant qualification descriptor in the relevant framework for higher education qualifications**
- **naming qualifications in accordance with the titling conventions specified in the frameworks for higher education qualifications**
- **awarding qualifications to mark the achievement of positively defined programme learning outcomes**

**b) consider and take account of QAA's guidance on qualification characteristics**

**c) where they award UK credit, assign credit values and design programmes that align with the specifications of the relevant national credit framework**

**d) consider and take account of relevant Subject Benchmark Statements.**

**Quality Code, *Chapter A1: UK and European Reference Points for Academic Standards***

**Findings**

1.1 The College delivers three awards on behalf of two awarding partners, Canterbury Christ Church University (the University) and Pearson. Ultimate responsibility for setting and maintaining the academic standards of the awards resides with these awarding partners. The College's responsibilities for maintaining academic standards are set out in the relevant partnership and approval documents.

1.2 The Diploma in Education and Training with Professional Graduate Certificate in Education and Training programme validated by the University is designed to meet the requirements for achieving the professional standards laid down for teachers in the Further Education and Skills Sector. The programme was developed within the Learning and Skills Improvement Service framework. Learning is quantified through definition of credit values that align with the current national credit framework. Positively defined learning outcomes are incorporated and threshold academic standards are defined in the programme specifications.

1.3 The Pearson Higher National Diploma in Advanced Practice in Work with Children and Families award is a specialist vocational programme with a strong work-related emphasis which is linked to National Occupational Standards Early Years at Level 5.

1.4      Relevant national reference points are used to secure, and ensure consistency in, academic standards. The College's adherence to the approval and regulatory frameworks of the University and Pearson would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.5      The review team examined the effectiveness of the practices and procedures by reviewing contractual, validation and other documentation including schemes of work, assignment briefs, feedback to students and external examiner reports. The team also held meetings with students, teaching staff and senior staff including an awarding body representative.

1.6      The evidence demonstrates the arrangements to be effective in practice. The learning delivered and assessment processes applied by the College are effective in ensuring that students achieve the academic standards established by the University and Pearson. Staff met by the review team articulated a clear understanding of the higher-level academic and generic skills to be developed, acquired and demonstrated for the achievement of the defined learning outcomes. The team saw evidence of this understanding in the design of schemes of work and assessment; the application of assessment processes, including the effective use of the assessment criteria established by the respective awarding partners; and the effective use of external examiner feedback.

1.7      The awarding partners have ultimate responsibility for ensuring adherence to the relevant external reference points through their regulatory frameworks. There is also evidence that the College manages its responsibilities effectively within its partnership agreements. Relevant national reference points are used to secure, and ensure consistency in, academic standards. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation:    Met**
**Level of risk:   Low**

**Expectation (A2.1): In order to secure their academic standards, degree-awarding bodies establish transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how they award academic credit and qualifications.**

**Quality Code, *Chapter A2: Degree-Awarding Bodies' Reference Points for Academic Standards***

**Findings**

1.8 The academic frameworks and regulations of the awarding partners determine academic standards and the award of credit for each programme. The College is required to operate within the academic frameworks and regulations of its awarding partners. The University applies its academic frameworks to secure the academic standards of its awards through its programme design, review and assessment processes. All matters relating to the conferment of the awards are the responsibility of the University. Course handbooks provided by the University detail the programme-specific assessment regulations established at programme approval.

1.9 The Pearson programme specification articulates the academic framework determining the qualifications conferred, programme content, learning outcomes, delivery and assessment strategies and quality assurance of the qualifications. Pearson is responsible for decisions concerning the conferment of the award, including classification. The Pearson regulatory framework sets out the key principles relating to grading individual units, late submissions, referrals and resubmissions. The College is required to operate within this framework and develop and publish its own assessment regulations, including a code of practice on how late submission of students' work is managed. Adherence to the academic frameworks and regulations of the awarding partners together with the College's own arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.10 The review team tested the effectiveness of practices and procedures by reviewing contractual, validation and other documentation including College internal meeting agendas and minutes, course handbooks, assignment briefs and tutor CVs. The team also held meetings with teaching staff, professional support staff and senior staff including an awarding partner representative.

1.11 The evidence reviewed demonstrates the arrangements to be partially effective in practice. The responsibilities of the awarding partners and the College are clear and the review team saw evidence that, within the context of the partnership agreements, the College adheres to the frameworks and regulations for the award of credit and qualifications. College tutors participate in associate tutor training provided by the University. The training is designed to enable College tutors to perform effectively in their role as members of the University Examination Board and includes sessions on the assessment regulations, assessment scheme and the differentiation of assessment at different levels. The College-devised Course Handbook for the Pearson award contains specific assessment regulations including procedures for handling late submission of student work.

1.12 The Senior Leadership Team discharges its responsibility for oversight of academic standards principally through receipt, scrutiny and monitoring of annual programme review reports and associated action plans, in formally documented meetings. These annual reports, and Senior Leadership Team deliberations, are informed by Higher Education Committee discussion of standards and quality assurance matters. Such matters arise through annual monitoring at unit, module and programme levels. Matters considered include external examiner reports, actions taken in response, teaching quality identified in

lesson observations, assessment strategy, student support, skills provision, student destinations, mentor support and student progress. The review team found the precise remit and formal membership of the College's higher education deliberative structures to be unclear. The difference between the Higher Education Committee and the Higher Education Board is indistinct, as neither have documented terms of reference defining their membership and detailing their respective functions. The team heard that in practice the College incorporates examination board functions into the work of its Higher Education Committee. When the Higher Education Committee exercises these functions, it operates as the Higher Education Board but, in these circumstances, the Board also considers standard higher education quality assurance matters. Overall responsibility for institutional oversight of higher education provision lies with the Senior Leadership Team. Its meetings are informed by the deliberations of the College's Higher Education Committee, which discusses higher education standards and quality matters. However, there is no formal reporting line from the Higher Education Committee to Senior Leadership Team meetings. Informal reporting is facilitated through Senior Leadership Team participation in Higher Education Committee meetings.

1.13     The review team found that the College has in place an effective framework to ensure institutional oversight of academic standards and quality. However, the team concludes that formalising the reporting lines for the higher education deliberative structures would strengthen this framework. Therefore, the review team **recommends** that by September 2016 the College should establish terms of reference, membership and formal reporting lines for the higher education deliberative structures.

1.14     The College implements systems, processes and regulations that meet its obligations to its awarding partners. Despite the recommendation in this area, the Expectation is met because the College operates within the context of its partnership agreements and the academic frameworks and regulations for which the awarding partners are responsible. However, the level of risk is moderate because of the College's lack of clarity about functions, membership and reporting lines of the Higher Education Committee and Higher Education Board, which indicates weaknesses in the operation of part of the academic governance structure or lack of clarity about responsibilities. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate.

**Expectation:     Met**
**Level of risk:   Moderate**

**Expectation (A2.2): Degree-awarding bodies maintain a definitive record of each programme and qualification that they approve (and of subsequent changes to it) which constitutes the reference point for delivery and assessment of the programme, its monitoring and review, and for the provision of records of study to students and alumni.**

**Quality Code, *Chapter A2: Degree-Awarding Bodies' Reference Points for Academic Standards***

**Findings**

1.15    Responsibility for maintaining the definitive record for each programme and qualification lies with the two awarding partners. For the University-validated provision the programme specification is set out in the definitive programme documentation with module specifications appended.  For the Higher National Diploma in Advanced Practice in Work with Children and Families the definitive record is provided by Pearson. The College is required to provide definitive programme information, including a tailored programme specification based on the guidance and definitive information provided by the awarding organisation. The approach to maintaining definitive records would enable the College to meet the Expectation.

1.16    The team reviewed the effectiveness of the practices and procedures by scrutinising programme, module and unit specifications, handbooks, and the College virtual learning environment (VLE). The team also discussed their accessibility and use in meetings with professional support and teaching staff, senior staff and students.

1.17    The evidence demonstrates the arrangements to be effective in practice. The College provides a clear tailored record of its Higher National Diploma in Advanced Practice in Work with Children and Families. This information, including course structure, content, level of study and assessment, is in the course handbook. Staff and students also have access to the full unit specifications on the College VLE. The definitive records of the Diploma in Education and Training with Professional Graduate Certificate in Education and Training provided by the University give detailed information for students and staff. Information for students includes programme learning outcomes for both awards and for each individual pathway, assessment strategy and regulations, entry requirements, learning and teaching modes and curriculum details. Additional contextual information provided for staff includes detail about learning, teaching and assessment strategies, student support and assessment processes.

1.18    The definitive programme records form the source of the programme information provided to students. These are also used effectively by staff as the reference point for delivery of the programmes, in assessment, and for programme monitoring and review. Staff and students confirm the information is useful and accessible.

1.19    The College fulfils its responsibilities for maintaining definitive records within its partnership agreements. The definitive records provide a secure reference point and are used effectively by staff. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation:    Met**
**Level of risk:    Low**

**Expectation (A3.1): Degree-awarding bodies establish and consistently implement processes for the approval of taught programmes and research degrees that ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification and are in accordance with their own academic frameworks and regulations.**

**Quality Code, *Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards***

**Findings**

1.20     The awarding partners are ultimately responsible for the approval of taught programmes. The University and Pearson are also responsible for ensuring that academic standards are set at an appropriate level in accordance with their own academic frameworks and regulations. The responsibilities for approval of taught programmes are clearly described in the relevant partnership documentation. Both awarding partners approve the College to deliver programmes and they ensure continued adherence to the standards set at approval through their review processes. For Pearson, continued adherence is primarily assured through external examination. The University undertakes annual and periodic review. The awarding partners appoint, train and receive the annual reports of external examiners. The College is reliant upon the frameworks of its awarding partners for approval of programmes.These responsibilities, the oversight provided by the awarding partners and the College's own arrangements would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.21     The review team considered the effectiveness of these practices by examining partnership documents, the awarding partners' academic frameworks and regulations, programme specifications, minutes of meetings, programme and annual review reports and external examiner reports. The team also held meetings with staff, students, an awarding body representative and employers.

1.22     The review team found that the College adheres to the processes of the University for the Diploma in Education and Training with Professional Graduate Certificate in Education and Training. The division of responsibilities for monitoring alignment with UK threshold and awarding body academic standards is clarified in relevant documentation. University-devised staff development enables College staff to operate effectively in accordance with the academic frameworks and regulations of the University. External examiner reports confirm academic standards are at a level that meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification.

1.23     The review team found that decisions about new provision are made in close dialogue between the awarding partners, higher education teaching staff and the Senior Leadership Team. The Pearson Higher National Diploma in Advanced Practice in Work with Children and Families was introduced in response to student demand to enable students to progress internally from Level 3. External examiner reports for the Pearson programme confirm that the College adheres to the qualification guidelines for maintaining academic standards at an appropriate level.

1.24     Overall, within the context of the partnership agreements with its awarding partners, the evidence shows the College is fulfilling its responsibilities and arrangements are appropriate. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation:     Met**
**Level of risk:   Low**

**Expectation (A3.2): Degree-awarding bodies ensure that credit and qualifications are awarded only where:**

- **the achievement of relevant learning outcomes (module learning outcomes in the case of credit and programme outcomes in the case of qualifications) has been demonstrated through assessment**
- **both UK threshold standards and their own academic standards have been satisfied.**

**Quality Code, *Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards***

**Findings**

1.24     Responsibility for defining the achievement of learning outcomes related to standards resides with the awarding body and organisation. Programme validation and production of definitive programme documentation occur through the procedures of the awarding partners. Programme specifications, intended learning outcomes, information about assessment arrangements and requirements are outlined in programme handbooks and assignment briefs. Assessment arrangements include moderation and the use of external examiners. These arrangements are designed to ensure that credit and qualifications are awarded on the achievement of relevant learning outcomes. The College operates within the assessment regulations and guidance of the awarding partners. These arrangements would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.25     The team reviewed documentation relating to academic standards including programme specifications, programme handbooks and validation documents. The team also examined Partner Periodic Review, annual programme review, self-assessment and external examiner reports. The team also met students and staff including an awarding body representative.

1.26     The evidence demonstrates that the College's arrangements are effective. For the Higher National Diploma in Advanced Practice in Work with Children and Families programme, the review team found that the College uses the awarding organisation's generic guidance. Assignment briefs include pass criteria and contextualised grading criteria for merit and distinction grades developed by the College as required by Pearson. The College works closely with the external examiner to approve assessments. External examiner comments about the effectiveness of assessment procedures indicate arrangements are appropriate. For the Diploma in Education and Training with Professional Graduate Certificate in Education and Training, the process of assessment is guided by the information provided in programme documentation. College and University staff work closely to develop and support consistency between University and College delivery of the programme. Arrangements to promote consistency include module planning, peer observation, double marking and standardisation activities.

1.27     The evidence shows the College is managing its responsibilities for the award of credit and qualifications effectively. The assessment arrangements provide appropriate opportunities for students to achieve the intended learning outcomes and this is confirmed by external examiner reports. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation:     Met**
**Level of risk:     Low**

**Expectation (A3.3): Degree-awarding bodies ensure that processes for the monitoring and review of programmes are implemented which explicitly address whether the UK threshold academic standards are achieved and whether the academic standards required by the individual degree-awarding body are being maintained.**

**Quality Code, *Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards***

**Findings**

1.28    Ultimate responsibility for the overall monitoring and review, including periodic review, of the awards delivered by the College resides with the awarding partners. For awards of the University annual review is organised by the University and responsibility for implementation is shared between the University and College. The College Programme Manager is required to produce an Annual Report to feed into the annual programme review produced at the University. The College is responsible for ensuring appropriate processes are in place for routine monitoring of the Pearson award. The College has its own quality cycle that includes self-assessment. The College's own arrangements and their adherence to the arrangements of their awarding partners would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.29    The team explored the effectiveness of the arrangements by examining monitoring and review documentation including minutes of meetings, the University Partner Periodic Review, and annual, self-assessment and external examiner reports. The team also met students, staff and an awarding body representative.

1.30    The evidence demonstrated procedures for monitoring and review to operate effectively in practice. The College meets the requirements of its University partner in participating in annual and periodic review. Responsibility for managing the programme at the College rests with the College's Higher Education Manager who produces the Annual Report for the University. The College works closely with the University partner, the Vice Principal represents the College at strategic meetings at the University and the College's Higher Education Manager attends operational meetings.

1.31    The College undertakes its own self-assessment process to monitor and review the provision of both awarding partners. Self-assessment reports include narrative about key aspects of each programme. Analysis of course leadership and management, external examiner comment, student feedback, progression, equality and diversity and action planning are included. Feedback from students is incorporated, having been gathered by end-of-module evaluations, student focus groups and student representative meetings. Appropriate consideration is given to recommendations and comments made by the external examiners appointed by the awarding partners and the College responds accordingly. External examiners report that UK threshold academic standards are met and the academic standards required by the awarding partner are being maintained. The team found that matters pertaining to the achievement and maintenance of academic standards are discussed in the College's deliberative structures and that self-assessment reports are presented to the Senior Leadership Team and to Governors.

1.32    The evidence demonstrates that the College manages its responsibilities for programme monitoring and review in accordance with the requirement of its awarding partners. The achievement of UK threshold standards and the maintenance of standards are addressed through programme monitoring and review. The College takes appropriate account of reports from external examiners and its awarding partners. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation:    Met**
**Level of risk:    Low**

**Expectation (A3.4): In order to be transparent and publicly accountable, degree-awarding bodies use external and independent expertise at key stages of setting and maintaining academic standards to advise on whether:**

- **UK threshold academic standards are set, delivered and achieved**
- **the academic standards of the degree-awarding body are appropriately set and maintained.**

**Quality Code, *Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards***

**Findings**

1.33     The University and Pearson have ultimate responsibility for making use of external and independent expertise. These awarding partners engage external members in their approval and validation processes and appoint external examiners to oversee the setting and maintenance of academic standards. External examiner reports detail whether academic standards are successfully achieved and maintained and are received by awarding partners. The College's arrangement for responding to matters raised by external examiners is through its monitoring and review procedures. These processes adhere to the formal arrangements with each awarding partner and would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.34     The review team considered the effectiveness of the arrangements by examining partnership agreements, validation documentation, external examiner reports, self-assessment reports, and partnership meeting minutes. The review team also held meetings with students, staff, an awarding body representative and an employer.

1.35     The team found the arrangements to work effectively in practice. The College makes use of external expertise, primarily through external examiner reports, in the maintenance of academic standards. Recommendations made in external examiner reports are formally considered, incorporated in the College's self-assessment reports and appropriate action taken. The team heard that the College also converses with local employers to determine and meet local needs with relevant teaching and content.

1.36     The evidence shows that the College manages its responsibilities for maintaining academic standards effectively and makes appropriate use of external expertise. Responsibility for making use of external expertise during approval and validation rests with the awarding partners. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation:     Met**
**Level of risk:     Low**

## The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and other awarding organisations: Summary of findings

1.37    In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The review team makes one recommendation in this section: establish terms of reference, membership and formal reporting lines for the higher education deliberative structures (Expectation A2.1).

1.38    All of the Expectations for this judgement area are met. The risk to academic standards for six of the seven met Expectations is low and Expectation A2.1 has a moderate level of risk. The moderate risk indicates weaknesses in the operation of part of the College's academic governance structure or lack of clarity about responsibilities. No features of good practice are identified and there are no affirmations in this area.

1.39    The review team therefore concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards at the College **meets** UK expectations.

# 2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

**Expectation (B1): Higher education providers, in discharging their responsibilities for setting and maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, operate effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes.**

**Quality Code,** *Chapter B1: Programme Design, Development and Approval*

**Findings**

2.1 Ultimate responsibility for the design, development and approval of programmes rests with the awarding partners. The College has responsibility for the maintenance of academic standards and for assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities. The College's adherence to the awarding partners' formal procedures, and its own internal processes, would enable the College to meet the Expectation.

2.2 The team reviewed the effectiveness of the arrangements by examining documentation including partnership agreements, minutes of meetings, validation documents and the College's strategic plan. The team also held meetings with students, staff and an awarding body representative.

2.3 Overall, the review team found that the arrangements are effective in practice. The team explored the College's internal process for approving programmes and found a formally documented process is absent but that close dialogue takes place between the Senior Leadership Team, teaching staff and awarding partners. The review team found that the relationship between the College and the University is long established and that the College was a primary member of the original collective partnership for the teacher training provision. Some contribution to programme development continues to be made by the College through discussions at the strategic and operational meetings held at the University. Discussions confirmed that appropriate partnership processes are in operation for programme design, development and approval, and responsibility resides with the University. Responsibilities for the development of modules and programmes are clearly articulated in partnership agreements.

2.4 The team learned that the Higher National Diploma in Advanced Practice in Work with Children and Families was developed in response to student demand to facilitate progression from the College's Level 3 provision. Discussion about this development took place between senior staff, staff and the external examiner. The team found these discussions are not always well documented. However, external examiner reports confirm the College is effective in discharging its responsibilities for designing effective learning materials, designing a learning and teaching strategy and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities. Students met by the review team confirmed their satisfaction with their programme.

2.5 Overall, the College is effective in discharging its responsibilities for the maintenance of academic standards and for assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities. The College contributes to the procedures of its awarding partners for the design, development and approval of higher education programmes. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B2): Recruitment, selection and admission policies and procedures adhere to the principles of fair admission. They are transparent, reliable, valid, inclusive and underpinned by appropriate organisational structures and processes. They support higher education providers in the selection of students who are able to complete their programme.**

**Quality Code,** *Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education*

**Findings**

2.6      The College undertakes recruitment activity for the Diploma in Education and Training with Professional Graduate Certificate in Education and Training and handles the early stages of the admissions process. Responsibility for admissions decisions rests with the University. Entry requirements are determined by the University and set out in the programme validation document. The College no longer recruits to the Pearson Higher National Diploma in Advanced Practice in Work with Children and Families. The College was responsible for all aspects of the recruitment process; Pearson was responsible for ensuring that the College had appropriate policies and procedures in place. The arrangements identified for recruitment and admissions would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.7      The team reviewed the effectiveness of the procedures in place by examining documentation including admissions, interview and disability support process documents, prospectus information, application forms and the College website. The review team also held meetings with students and staff.

2.8      Overall, the team found the College's recruitment, selection and admission procedures to be effective in practice. For the University provision recruitment and admissions are undertaken within the framework of the University's Admissions and Recruitment policy. Applications are made to Bexhill College in the first instance and all applicants are interviewed by the Higher Education Manager in accordance with a College template. Interview questions explore candidates' capacity to cope with the demands and expectations of the course and interviewers are required to record and deliver feedback on strengths and any areas for improvement. Diploma in Education and Training with Professional Graduate Certificate in Education and Training programme applicants who also apply for teaching assistant posts receive a combined day-long interview. Following checks on ID, qualifications and fee status, the College sends completed forms to the University for a decision on admission. The University applies its own policy and processes in considering and deciding on applications for the accreditation of prior learning. The University is responsible for the registration of successful applicants as students of the University. Entry requirements are clearly described. These include the requirement for 50 hours per year of teaching experience arranged externally and a mentor to provide support in the workplace confirmed in writing prior to starting the course.

2.9      For the Higher National Diploma in Advanced Practice in Work with Children and Families, which is no longer recruiting, entry criteria were set by the College within Pearson's guidance framework.

2.10      Key stages of the admissions process are set out clearly for staff in the College's comprehensive applications checklist. Prospective students have access to full and clear information about entry requirements and the application process from the College's website. Candidates are asked to declare any learning support needs, learning difficulties and disabilities on application and to request and complete a general support questionnaire where appropriate. Where support needs are identified, these are followed up by student

support services and individual strategies are provided to students and tutors.
The processes work well in identifying and providing appropriate support for students.
Unsuccessful applicants' right to appeal admissions decisions to the awarding partners is made clear to prospective students.

2.11    Students whom the review team met spoke positively about the support and guidance they receive throughout the application process. Particularly highly regarded were the accuracy and clarity of the information provided, the very helpful discussions and interview with higher education tutors highlighting the challenges and expectations of higher education study, and exploring their capacity to undertake the programmes successfully.

2.12    The evidence shows that the College effectively implements fair, transparent and inclusive procedures for the recruitment, selection and admission of students. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

**Expectation:    Met**
**Level of risk:   Low**

**Expectation (B3): Higher education providers, working with their staff, students and other stakeholders, articulate and systematically review and enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices, so that every student is enabled to develop as an independent learner, study their chosen subject(s) in depth and enhance their capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking.**

**Quality Code,** *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

**Findings**

2.13     Responsibility for teaching the Diploma in Education and Training with Professional Graduate Certificate in Education and Training programme is shared. College staff must be appropriately qualified, approved by the University and attend the appropriate part of the University's Associate Tutors Programme. The College has responsibility for recruiting and monitoring staff suitability and for supporting staff to undertake the University training.

2.14     For the Pearson Higher National Diploma in Advanced Practice in Work with Children and Families the College is responsible for teaching, including appointing staff and ensuring they have appropriate skills and experience. Pearson reviews resources, including teaching staff qualifications and experience, at Centre Approval and at Academic Management Review.

2.15     The College's commitment to high-quality provision is articulated in the Higher Education Strategy 2014-2019. This aspiration is supported by strategic objectives, including the provision of outstanding teaching, personalised student support, an inspirational learning environment and the development of learners' broader skills. The College's own arrangements, and its use of the arrangements of the awarding partners, would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.16     The review team examined documentation including contractual, strategic and policy documents, programme and tutor handbooks, mentor resource material, teaching observation and appraisal documentation, external examiner reports, staff CVs, schemes of work, assignment briefs, and mentor and student feedback. The team also met students, staff, mentors and employers.

2.17     The evidence demonstrates the arrangements to be effective in practice. The teaching teams comprise two full-time members. One, an existing member of teaching staff new to higher education teaching, confirmed receipt of a helpful induction, support and guidance in assessing student work, and teaching observations.

2.18     The College has formal processes for monitoring higher education teaching quality, comprising peer-teaching observation, management teaching observation, appraisal, and student feedback. Teaching observation and appraisal operate effectively as vehicles for monitoring, development, reflective practice and sharing good practice. Teaching observation is higher education specific, and supported by clear and comprehensive guidance documentation and templates. Appraisal incorporates higher education-specific targets. This is a new initiative and completion of higher education targets, such as research work, is not yet evidenced.

2.19     Higher education-specific staff development within the College includes weekly meetings, sharing work and teaching across the two programmes. College staff also participate in academic partnership meetings and the University's associate tutor training, staff development and shared teaching observations.

2.20    The programmes aim to develop students' reflective learning, independent learning, and analytical and critical skills. Expectations of students, to engage with a shared learning experience and develop as professionals, are set out clearly in course handbooks. Study is part-time and learning takes place at evening teaching sessions and in the workplace. Students value highly the evening teaching mode and the opportunity to undertake the Diploma in Education and Training with Professional Graduate Certificate in Education and Training programme over two years, rather than one, of study.

2.21    Work-based learning is integral to the Diploma in Education and Training with Professional Graduate Certificate in Education and Training. Workplace mentors normally receive training from the University link tutor. For those unable to attend College, tutors deliver individual training sessions in the workplace. The College has introduced workplace mentors for students on the Higher National Diploma in Advanced Practice in Work with Children and Families to support and develop students' knowledge and experience gained at work. The College has appropriate processes to ensure the suitability of mentors, maintains close links to ensure that expectations are clear, and has developed a dual observation system which works effectively to support mentors in their role.

2.22    Students confirm that they feel well supported and value the work-based learning aspect of the courses that allows them to apply skills learned in the classroom. Feedback from mentors confirms that the close links are effective.

2.23    To counteract a decline in student recruitment the College introduced paid trainee teacher posts. This initiative, together with the College's voluntary internship scheme, is praised by the external examiner. Valuable opportunities are offered for applicants not currently in service and the College benefits with respect to the recruitment of well-trained and suitably qualified teaching staff. Students reiterated the benefits of these posts that provide access to voluntary teaching and opportunities to observe experienced teachers.

2.24    The College's Teaching and Learning Policy shows expectations of teaching that reflect the demands of higher education learning. The College implements teaching and learning strategies effectively to promote independent and reflective learning, team-working, and professional and critical analysis skills.

2.25    A highly personalised approach to learning, teaching and support is a key strength of the College's provision. The University-designed Progress Log forms the basis for student-tutor meetings. Students use the log to record areas for development, action and review through reflection on their professional practice and the development of their personal, academic and professional skills. The effective use of the log to create a dialogue around trainees' narrated development has received particular praise from an external examiner. Other aspects of personalised learning support include learning walks, with observation and feedback, peer-to-peer observations, and coaching. The Carousel programme, which focuses on professional skills, is particularly valued by students, who described it as stretching and challenging. Students value these opportunities as greatly supporting and developing their learning. The highly personalised learning, teaching and support to develop students' academic, professional and personal skills is **good practice**.

2.26    Students feed back on their learning experience through College surveys, focus groups, and student representatives. Diploma in Education and Training with Professional Graduate Certificate in Education and Training students also complete the University's online end-of-module evaluation questionnaires. Student feedback is analysed at programme level and annual monitoring reports record action taken. Student feedback on their learning experience is extremely positive overall. Students are informed of developments arising from their feedback through their representatives and through

information accessible on the VLE. Developments have included the introduction of tutor-mentor dual observations; changes to staffing and teaching observation arrangements to accommodate student work commitments; and the introduction of the Carousel programme for higher education students.

2.27      Overall, the College keeps its learning opportunities and teaching practices under systematic review and development. Learning and teaching intentions are strategically articulated, and learning and teaching are supported by peer observation and student feedback. Students confirm their satisfaction with learning and teaching and confirm the VLE enables their learning. The review team identified good practice regarding the highly personalised learning, teaching and support to develop students' academic, professional and personal skills. The team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

**Expectation:      Met**
**Level of risk:    Low**

**Expectation (B4): Higher education providers have in place, monitor and evaluate arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential.**

**Quality Code, *Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement***

**Findings**

2.28     The College is responsible for the provision and maintenance of resources appropriate for the programmes delivered on behalf of its awarding partners. For the Pearson award, responsibility for the strategic oversight of the identification and provision of learning resources rests with the College. The College shares responsibility with the University for ensuring that Diploma in Education and Training with Professional Graduate Certificate in Education and Training students are provided with appropriate tutorial support throughout their studies.

2.29     The College's approach to the development of students' academic, personal and professional potential is articulated in the College's Higher Education Strategy 2014-2019. This includes the provision of high-quality personalised support and enriching opportunities that enhance learning, develop learners' broader skills and promote and celebrate diversity. These arrangements would enable the College to meet the Expectation.

2.30     The review team tested the effectiveness of the arrangements through scrutiny of strategic, policy, contractual and other documentation including student induction materials, student feedback, annual programme review reports, learning materials, teaching schedules, course and tutor handbooks, and minutes of College committees. The team also held meetings with students and staff.

2.31     The evidence demonstrates the arrangements to be effective in practice. The College has developed extensive personalised academic and pastoral support systems. These comprise a structured personal tutorial framework, additional individual functional skills support for students with learning difficulties and disabilities, workplace support by tutors and mentors, and employability support. Students are encouraged to use buddies to share ideas where sessions have been missed and students confirm the value of this arrangement.

2.32     Pre-entry, induction and ongoing support for the development of academic, personal and professional skills are highly personalised. Interviews probe applicants' commitment and ability to cope with the programmes' expectations and demands. A comprehensive induction is provided following admission. Students confirmed the usefulness of pre-entry and induction support, describing it as very informative and delivered in a friendly and professional manner.

2.33     Students receive early individual support for academic writing and referencing skills and thorough feedback on an induction essay completed before the first formal assignment. Where individual needs are identified during diagnostic testing, students receive additional functional skills support. Tutors offer one-to-one academic support for assessment and research planning. The University-devised Progress Log is used effectively to explore students' individual personal, academic and professional skills development. The two remaining students on the Higher National Diploma in Advanced Practice in Work with Children and Families programme value the additional elements introduced to maintain high-quality academic support, including the introduction of workplace-related research topics and workplace mentors.

2.34     Students have ready access to tutors for personal support and regular one-to-one meetings. College student support services include welfare, counselling, disability, study support, health and financial support, and careers advisory and employability services. Students are supported in making decisions about progression and in preparing for the transition, through talks from representatives of relevant organisations. Students enrolled on the Diploma in Education and Training with Professional Graduate Certificate in Education and Training have access to similar support services at the University. Careers and employability skills support is integrated into the programmes and supplemented through the extracurricular Carousel programme. Information about the range of University services available is hyperlinked in the respective handbooks.

2.35     The College's Teaching and Learning Policy articulates an expectation for thoroughly planned teaching, with regard to equal opportunities and differentiation. Students confirm that the tutors aim to ensure all students have equal access to learning opportunities. This approach is exemplified through individualised support for students with particular learning needs. The processes for identifying learning support needs are effective, as is the provision of appropriate support. Students express high levels of satisfaction with the available support and resources. As detailed in Expectation B3 of this report, the highly personalised learning, teaching and support to develop students' academic, professional and personal skills is good practice.

2.36     The budget allocation is determined by the Senior Leadership Team. Effective liaison between the programme teams and Learning Resource Centre Manager ensure the provision of suitable and sufficient books and materials. The Learning Resource Centre provides a place for students to study, as well as the resources to support the courses. Diploma in Education and Training with Professional Graduate Certificate in Education and Training students have full access to the University library and VLE. Students access generic College information, including that about support services, on the College's VLE. Programme information and learning and assessment materials are provided on discrete programme pages within the VLE.

2.37     The College monitors and evaluates the arrangements and resources, enabling students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential effectively through student feedback and annual programme review. The Senior Leadership Team maintains effective institutional oversight through scrutiny of annual programme reports and action plans.

2.38     The College has effective systems and processes for the provision, monitoring and evaluation of arrangements and resources, enabling students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

**Expectation:     Met**
**Level of risk:   Low**

**Expectation (B5): Higher education providers take deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.**

**Quality Code, *Chapter B5: Student Engagement***

**Findings**

2.39      For the Diploma in Education and Training with Professional Graduate Certificate in Education and Training programme, responsibility for ensuring all students engage in educational enhancement and quality assurance is shared between the University and the College. The range of student engagement opportunities, the role of the elected course representatives and the College's specific responsibilities are defined in the University's Tutor Handbook. Responsibility for arranging student-staff liaison meetings, ensuring student representation at these meetings and making all associated documentation available to student representatives resides with the College course coordinator.

2.40      The College has responsibility for developing, implementing and facilitating arrangements and processes that ensure the engagement of students individually and collectively in the enhancement and assurance of the educational experience for the Pearson award. As part of the overall quality assurance and monitoring of the Pearson Higher National Diploma in Advanced Practice in Work with Children and Families, the external examiner meets students during their annual visit.

2.41      The development of the student voice is a key feature of the College's Higher Education Strategy which forms part of the College's strategic drive towards educational excellence. Mechanisms designed to achieve this comprise online surveys, including end-of-module evaluations, focus groups and student representation, with feedback to students on actions taken. These strategies and arrangements would enable the College to meet the Expectation.

2.42      The review team explored the effectiveness of the arrangements in place to engage students by examining documentation including the College's Higher Education Strategy, minutes and notes of formal and informal staff and student meetings, annual review and self-assessment reports, external examiner reports and student survey feedback. The team also held meetings with students and staff.

2.43      The evidence demonstrates the arrangements to be generally effective in practice. The College provides well-structured and helpful training for student representatives, preparing them to carry out their role effectively. Student representatives meet with their peers to elicit their feedback and then communicate student views in meetings with the programme coordinator. For the University awards students complete the University questionnaires in sufficient numbers to allow the collection of meaningful feedback and the outcomes are made available to the College. For Pearson students the College has introduced an online module evaluation questionnaire. Students also feed back directly to the College on specific areas including induction, job application and functional skills support.

2.44      Student representative meetings with the programme coordinator perform the functions of a student-staff liaison committee. However, these meetings are not formally constituted with defined membership, formal agendas and minutes. The lead student representative attends the Higher Education Committee for a limited part of its business to represent student views. Students are not full members of the Higher Education Committee. The review team **recommends** that the College formalise staff-student liaison committees

and establish full student membership of formal higher education deliberative structures, to strengthen student engagement as partners in quality assurance and enhancement.

2.45     Student feedback from end-of-module evaluation, surveys, focus groups and student representatives is reviewed and analysed at programme level, culminating in generally full formal reporting in the College's annual programme Self-Assessment Reports and the annual programme review reports prepared for CCCU. Annual monitoring reports record action taken in response to student feedback. Examples include the introduction of tutor dual observations with mentors; the addition of external trainees as student representatives; the provision of assignment dates at the beginning of the year; and changes to staffing to accommodate students' availability for teaching observation sessions.

2.46     Students are made aware of action taken in response to their feedback by their representatives and through 'you said, we did' information accessible on the VLE. Students describe the student voice as 'a decisive factor in the evolution of the College's HE courses' and confirm that staff listen carefully to what students have to say and are responsive to comments about all aspects of the courses.

2.47     Overall, the College has appropriate student engagement systems and processes in place. However, students are not full members of the College's deliberative structures. Consequently, the review team made a recommendation that the College formalise staff-student liaison committees and establish full student membership of formal higher education deliberative structures, to strengthen student engagement as partners in quality assurance and enhancement. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met because deliberate steps are generally taken to engage students. The associated level of risk is moderate because although procedures are broadly adequate, they have some shortcomings in terms of the rigour with which they are applied because students are not full members of the Higher Education Committee; consequently, there are some weaknesses in the operation of the student representation system.

**Expectation:     Met**
**Level of risk:     Moderate**

**Expectation (B6): Higher education providers operate equitable, valid and reliable processes of assessment, including for the recognition of prior learning, which enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit or qualification being sought.**

**Quality Code, *Chapter B6: Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning***

**Findings**

2.48    The College's processes for assessment operate in accordance with the academic frameworks and regulations of the awarding partners. For the Pearson award, the College is responsible for assessment design, first marking, internal verification and providing feedback to students. Information about assessment requirements and criteria is specified in programme handbooks and assignment briefs. The College has a Complaints and Appeals Policy and a Recognition of Prior Learning Policy in place in accordance with Pearson guidance documentation.

2.49    For the University awards the College shares responsibility for setting assessments, first marking, moderation and giving feedback to students on their work. The University applies its own policy and processes in considering and deciding applications for the accreditation of prior learning. The College's procedures for assessment, and its adherence to the requirements of the frameworks and regulations of its awarding partners, would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.50    The team reviewed the effectiveness of these approaches by examining documentation including partnership agreements, the Pearson specification, handbooks, assessment briefs, the College's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy, self-assessment reports and external examiner reports. A number of meetings were held with College staff and students. The team also held meetings with students and staff including an awarding body representative.

2.51    The evidence demonstrates assessment arrangements to be effective in practice. Criteria for marking and the expected learning outcomes are clearly stated and included in handbooks and in definitive programme documentation. Students are also able to view wider information about assessment including submission dates, the processes for mitigating circumstances, and advice and guidance about plagiarism on the VLE. For the Pearson award, assessments are developed with the external examiner and assessment decisions are verified. For University awards assessment matters are discussed in regular partnership meetings between the University and the College. Examination boards are held at the University and attended by College staff. For the Pearson provision, the College holds a Higher Education Board.

2.52    Students confirm their satisfaction, comment positively about adjustments to assessment made where appropriate and consider assessments to be appropriately challenging. Students are also positive about the timely written feedback, which includes structured guidance on how to improve, and consider the verbal feedback particularly helpful and encouraging.

2.53    The College monitors the effectiveness of its assessment practices through self-assessment reports and external examiners' reports. The recommendations and comments recorded in external examiner reports are detailed in the College's annual self-assessment reports. Appropriate actions are planned and discussion takes place

through the College's deliberative structures. Scrutiny of external examiner reports confirms academic standards are maintained and assessment procedures are followed consistently. For Pearson provision internal verification is appropriate and assessments are approved by the external examiner prior to distribution.

2.54     The team concludes that the College carefully applies its own assessment processes and those of its awarding partner. External examiners confirm the effectiveness of procedures, and students are positive about their assessment and the feedback they receive. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation:   Met**
**Level of risk:   Low**

## Expectation (B7): Higher education providers make scrupulous use of external examiners.

**Quality Code, *Chapter B7: External Examining***

**Findings**

2.55      The awarding partners appoint external examiners and provide training about their roles and responsibilities. For the Pearson Higher National Diploma in Advanced Practice in Work with Children and Families the College receives external examiner reports. Responsibility for effecting actions and recommendations defined by the external examiner resides with the College and the responsibility for approval and sign-off of those actions resides with Pearson. For the Diploma in Education and Training with Professional Graduate Certificate in Education and Training the University receives and responds to external examiner reports. These arrangements and responsibilities would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.56      The review team examined the effectiveness of the procedures by considering documents including external examiner reports, minutes of relevant meetings, annual review reports, and information on the VLE. The review team also held meetings with staff and students.

2.57      Overall, the evidence demonstrates the arrangements to be effective in practice. The College's procedure for reviewing and responding to the recommendations and comments of all external examiners is through its deliberative structures, annual self-assessment reports and action plans and the annual programme review reports produced for the University. The team found that the College's procedures for managing external examiner feedback are appropriate and used consistently.

2.58      For the Pearson award an annual visit occurs in accordance with Pearson's policy, assessment decisions are sampled and the external examiner comments on assessment briefs prior to distribution to students. The College Principal receives external examiner reports and shares these with the Vice Principal, the Higher Education Manager and the other member of staff who teaches the Higher National Diploma in Advanced Practice in Work with Children and Families. For the University awards, external examiner reports related to the provision across the partnership are received by the University and then shared with the College. In discussion the review team learned that these reports are examined in detail by programme teams and University partnership meetings are also used to ensure issues are addressed. Key aspects of external examiner reports for both awarding partners are included in the College annual self-assessment report for each programme. These reports are detailed and include appropriate action plans. The self-assessment reports are presented to the Senior Leadership Team and to Governors. Students and their representatives are aware of the external examining process and have access to external examiners' reports on the VLE.

2.59      Overall, the College considers external examiner reports carefully and, in accordance with the requirements of the awarding partners, makes effective use of external examiners' reports in course monitoring processes. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

**Expectation:     Met**
**Level of risk:   Low**

**Expectation (B8): Higher education providers, in discharging their responsibilities for setting and maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, operate effective, regular and systematic processes for monitoring and for review of programmes.**

**Quality Code, *Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review***

**Findings**

2.60    The College has its own processes for programme monitoring and review and also follows the process of its awarding partners. The University's annual and periodic review processes are applied to the Diploma in Education and Training with Professional Graduate Certificate in Education and Training programme. These processes would allow the College to meet the Expectation.

2.61    The review team explored the effectiveness of the College's arrangements by examining relevant documents including annual programme review, periodic review and self-assessment reports and minutes of meetings. The team also held meetings with staff and students.

2.62    The evidence demonstrates the procedures to be generally effective in practice. The College adheres to the processes and requirements of the University. Annual subject and programme review processes are carried out by the University and the College contributes by completing the University's annual review documentation. The University also undertakes periodic review of the provision the College delivers on its behalf. The College's internal process for programme monitoring and review is implemented appropriately and a self-assessment report is completed annually. These annual reports address aspects key to the assurance and enhancement of learning opportunities including feedback from external examiners, achievement and retention data and student feedback. Actions and matters related to programme review are discussed in the College's deliberative structures.

2.63    Ways of gathering feedback from students are systematic and include surveys, focus groups and student representative meetings with the programme coordinator. Students are apprised of developments arising from their feedback by their representatives and through the VLE. Developments have included the introduction of tutor dual observations with mentors; changes made to staffing and teaching observation arrangements to accommodate student work commitments; and the introduction of the Carousel programme for higher education students.

2.64    The review team found that, although the review documentation prompts appropriate engagement with key performance indicators, there is no formal documentation to describe how the review and monitoring process is undertaken and validated. The review team therefore **recommends** that the College establish formal documentation setting out the College monitoring and review process for the higher education programmes.

2.65    Overall, the College undertakes appropriate programme monitoring and review in accordance with the requirements of its awarding partners. Despite the recommendation in paragraph 2.64, the team is satisfied that the process of programme monitoring and review operates as described by the College. Therefore, the team concludes that the Expectation is met; however, the absence of formal documentation setting out the review and monitoring process constitutes a moderate level of risk. This suggests a lack of clarity about responsibilities.

**Expectation:    Met**
**Level of risk:   Moderate**

**Expectation (B9): Higher education providers have procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of learning opportunities; these procedures are fair, accessible and timely, and enable enhancement.**

**Quality Code, *Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints***

**Findings**

2.66     Responsibility for establishing and implementing complaints procedures for Diploma in Education and Training with Professional Graduate Certificate in Education and Training students is shared between the College and University. The institutional agreement with the University requires the College to adhere to the University's complaints procedures and to have in place a published student complaints procedure which is brought to the attention of all students. College processes must be exhausted before a formal complaint is made to the University. The College and the University are to keep records of formal complaints.

2.67     For the Pearson Higher National Diploma in Advanced Practice in Work with Children and Families, the College is responsible for the implementation of a fair and accessible complaints procedure. Pearson is responsible for dealing with student complaints if the student remains dissatisfied after exhaustion of the College's internal complaints procedure. These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.68     The review team explored the effectiveness of the College's arrangements by scrutinising policy documentation, documented procedures and handbooks, and by viewing the College's VLE. The team also held meetings with students and staff.

2.69     The evidence demonstrates the arrangements to be effective in practice. The College's Complaints Procedure for Higher Education is set out in full in the Teaching and Leaning Policy for Higher Education Students. The three-stage process commences with informal discussions, moves to a written complaint investigated by the Course Manager, and is considered by the Vice Principal if the matter is unresolved, and thence to the final stage entailing the right to appeal to the Principal, Governors and the awarding body. The policy makes clear students' right to refer a complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator if they are unhappy with the outcome. Clear and appropriate timelines and deadlines are set out for each stage of the process, allowing for timely investigation, consideration and decision making.

2.70     Appropriately, the College procedure does not apply to student complaints against their employer. In this case, students are advised to discuss the matter with their College tutor or to refer to the relevant procedure of the employer.

2.71     The College complaints procedure is available to students in the College Student Handbook and the College VLE. The University's handbook for the Diploma in Education and Training with Professional Graduate Certificate in Education and Training programme students provides links to the University complaints procedure. Students are advised of their right to make a complaint to the University should the matter not be resolved locally. For the Pearson programme the student handbook advises of the informal and formal process for raising concerns and information available from student services. Students are aware of the existence of complaints and appeals procedures and where information can be found. The College retains a record of all student complaints and appeals and to date, none have been received from higher education students. Consequently, it was not possible for the team to test the operation of these processes or their use in the enhancement of student learning opportunities. Nonetheless, the review team formed the view that the processes are fair, accessible and timely.

2.72     The review team concludes that the College has appropriate procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints, which are fair, accessible and timely. Informal opportunities are available to enable students to resolve their concerns at an early stage and support is available. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation:     Met**
**Level of risk:    Low**

**Expectation (B10): Degree-awarding bodies take ultimate responsibility for academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities, irrespective of where these are delivered or who provides them. Arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with organisations other than the degree-awarding body are implemented securely and managed effectively.**

**Quality Code, *Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others***

**Findings**

2.73    Students are required to complete substantial work placements. These are part of the programme admissions requirements and are arranged by the students prior to enrolment. The College does not have responsibility for work placements as defined by its awarding partners. The College's arrangements would allow this Expectation to be met.

2.74    The review team examined the College's arrangements by scrutinising documentation including partnership agreements, student handbooks and external examiner reports. The team also held meetings with senior staff, teaching staff, support staff, employers and students.

2.75    The evidence demonstrates the arrangements to be effective in practice. Students on the Diploma in Education and Training with Professional Graduate Certificate in Education and Training programme must have work experience set up on application. Students must complete 50 hours in year one and an additional 50 in year two. For the Higher National Diploma in Advanced Practice in Work with Children and Families Programme students must have 400 hours and a placement. The College has its own teaching and learning policy, which details the support and guidance available for students while on placement including information about how to make complaints.

2.76    The responsibility for securing placements resides with the employer and the student. The College has no responsibility for checking the suitability of placements. The College does not view this as work-based learning as the students remain employed by their respective employers and there is no contractual relationship between the employer and the College. The team learned that a student would need to interrupt or withdraw from their programme if unable to complete their teaching hours. That this is a course requirement is made clear on the College website.

2.77    The review team explored how the College manages its responsibilities for students while on placements and found that the College has a mentor scheme in place. Mentors operate on the programmes of both awarding partners. The mentors are suitably trained, receive observations and are supported by the College and, for the Diploma in Education and Training with Professional Graduate Certificate in Education and Training programme, by the University. The University has created a mentor training handbook and the College also provides training for mentors. This training is conducted in sessions at the College but if mentors are unable to attend, the College visits the workplace. The College reviews its processes by collecting feedback from mentors to evaluate the effectiveness of the service. Students confirmed mentoring is a valuable experience that develops their broader skills. This was also echoed in the meeting with employers.

2.78    The review team found that the College has effective procedures in place to manage the work-based learning in collaboration with employers. The College does not have delegated responsibility from its awarding partners in respect of managing these relationships. Students have a work-based element to their course, which is a contractual

arrangement between the employer and the awarding partner. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation:** **Met**
**Level of risk:** **Low**

**Expectation (B11): Research degrees are awarded in a research environment that provides secure academic standards for doing research and learning about research approaches, methods, procedures and protocols.**
**This environment offers students quality of opportunities and the support they need to achieve successful academic, personal and professional outcomes from their research degrees.**

**Quality Code,** *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

**Findings**

2.79     The College does not offer research degrees; therefore, this Expectation is not applicable.

# The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.80　　In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. All of the 10 applicable Expectations are met. The risk to the quality of learning opportunities for eight of the 10 Expectations is low and Expectations B5 and B8 have a moderate level of risk. The moderate risks in Part B indicate the College's quality assurance procedures are broadly adequate, but have some shortcomings in terms of the rigour with which they are applied and weaknesses in the operation of part of the academic governance structure or lack of clarity about responsibilities.

2.81　　The review team makes two recommendations in this section: formalise staff-student liaison committees and establish full student membership of formal higher education deliberative structures, to strengthen student engagement as partners in quality assurance and enhancement (Expectation B5); and establish formal documentation setting out the College monitoring and review process for the higher education programmes (Expectations B8 and C).

2.82　　There is one feature of good practice regarding the highly personalised learning, teaching and support to develop students' academic, professional and personal skills (Expectations B3 and B4). There are no affirmations in this area.

2.83　　Despite the recommendations and the moderate level of risk in two Expectations, the team concludes that, overall, the quality of student learning opportunities at the College **meets** UK expectations.

# 3     Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

**Expectation (C): UK higher education providers produce information for their intended audiences about the higher education they offer that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.**

**Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision**

**Findings**

3.1      For the University awards all promotional materials devised and used by the College concerning the programme must be designed in keeping with the University's Corporate Identity Guidelines. All information for publication relating to the programme must be approved by the University before dissemination. The College must ensure that its website and publications accurately display any statutory requirements and reflect current programme information in line with University guidelines. For the Pearson award, responsibility for ensuring the accuracy of published information lies with the College. The University undertakes to provide and update the programme handbook annually. For the Pearson award, the College is responsible for producing programme information for students. The respective awarding partners are responsible for issuing student transcripts and award certificates. These arrangements would allow the College to meet the Expectation.

3.2      The review team tested the effectiveness of arrangements through scrutiny of publicly available online and hard copy information, information accessible on the College VLE, documentation including staff and student handbooks, and other course information. The team also held meetings with students and staff.

3.3      Information for the external website and hard copy publications is produced and assembled by the Vice Principal for Higher Education and the Higher Education Manager. Material is agreed as accurate and fit for purpose by the Principal, and submitted to the University for approval. Appropriately, no marketing and recruitment information for the Pearson award is to be found on the publicly accessible website, as the programme is closed. Programme-related information for students on-programme is produced and checked by the programme team.

3.4      The College publishes a wide range information externally online. The website sets out the College's mission, values and strategic objectives, the College Strategic Plan, information about the College Charter, details of the senior staff team and the membership of the College Corporation. The online Diploma in Education and Training with Professional Graduate Certificate in Education and Training programme pages, which are readily publicly accessible, provide clear and helpful information. Information includes a statement of FHEQ levels and validation by the University, intended student profile, course outline, aims and learning objectives, assessment strategies and College contact details, for further information. The College Student Handbook, also publicly accessible online, sets out expectations of students, together with information about student support and guidance, Student Services, additional learning support, careers support, and the complaints procedure. The College website states what students can expect from the College, as articulated in the College Charter. Expectations of students are also made clear in the Diploma in Education and Training with Professional Graduate Certificate in Education and Training Learner Agreement to be signed by students on joining the programme.

3.5     Students confirmed that the information accessible to them pre-entry was accurate and helpful, as is the information provided during the programme. Current students have access to comprehensive module and programme information via handbooks and the VLE. In combination, these set out a wide range of information including curriculum structure and content, module guides and descriptors, intended learning outcomes, assessment information, complaints and appeals, student support, and study guidance.

3.6     All external examiner reports are available in full to students on the VLE. However, some Pearson external examiner reports had not been anonymised. The College readily acknowledged this error and subsequently indicated to the review team before the end of the review visit that this had been rectified.

3.7     The awarding partners provide information for staff about the processes to be implemented for managing academic standards and quality assurance. The Diploma in Education and Training with Professional Graduate Certificate in Education and Training tutor handbook, produced by the University, provides information including the University annual quality review cycle, external examiner and examination board arrangements and processes, assessment standardisation and moderation procedures, module evaluation, and student representation. Pearson provides a similar range of documented quality assurance information for staff. The College's internal annual programme review process, while understood by College staff, is not set out as a formal procedure. The recommendation made about formally setting out the College monitoring and review process for the higher education programmes detailed under Expectation B8 also applies here.

3.8     College processes for the production, monitoring and approval of published information are understood by staff and generally work well. However, these processes are not currently formally documented. To maintain staff understanding, and to ensure continued correct and effective implementation, the review team **recommends** that the College formally document College processes for the approval of information about the higher education provision.

3.9     Overall, the College has in place and implements effective procedures to ensure that information produced for its intended audiences is fit for purpose and trustworthy. The review team makes one recommendation about formally documenting College processes for the approval of information. Despite this recommendation, the team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

**Expectation:   Met**
**Level of risk:   Low**

# The quality of the information about learning opportunities: Summary of findings

3.10     In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The Expectation is met and the risk is low.

3.11     The review team makes one new recommendation in this section: formally document College processes for the approval of information about the higher education provision. The review team repeats the recommendation made in Part B: establish formal documentation setting out the College monitoring and review process for the higher education programmes (Expectation B8). No features of good practice are identified and there are no affirmations.

3.12     Despite the recommendation, the team concludes that, overall, the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the College **meets** UK expectations.

# 4    Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

**Expectation (Enhancement): Deliberate steps are being taken at provider level to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities.**

**Findings**

4.1      The College is formally committed to enhancing its provision and this is expressed in the strategic plan. The College makes use of programme monitoring and self-assessment to drive enhancement. The College's deliberative structures are also designed to provide general oversight and facilitate targeted intervention to improve the quality of learning opportunities. Routine systems for monitoring and review of provision include student feedback and external examiner reports. These arrangements would enable the Expectation to be met.

4.2      The review team examined documents including the College's strategic plan and self-assessment reports, and held meetings with students and staff.

4.3      The review team found systematic and planned enhancement initiatives. These included revision to the management of higher education following QAA review. Self-assessment reports include examples of enhancement activity in response to comments from the external examiner about assessment techniques and the use of Progress Logs. The team heard that self-assessment is used to indicate areas for enhancement. An example included specially tailored classroom delivery about child protection to meet the needs of the students. The College makes appropriate use of external examiner reports to identify and share good practice.

4.4      The review team explored how the College drives its enhancement strategy through its committees by examining minutes from the Senior Leadership Team and found that self-assessment reports are presented to the Board of Governors. College staff benefit from peer review undertaken by University associate tutor trainers who observe teaching and provide developmental feedback. The College also makes use of the Consortium meetings as a tool for enhancement.

4.5      The College strategic plan includes strategic objectives designed to enhance student learning opportunities. This includes personal support, which enhances learning through outstanding teaching. However, a strategic approach to enhancement of student learning opportunities was not clearly articulated to the review team in meetings with staff. Links between the stated strategic objectives and enhancement activity are not always clearly made. It was possible for the review team to identify the relationship between the stated strategic objectives and elements of enhancement. For example, the Carousel programme enhances learning opportunities and is identified as a useful activity by students. The use of lesson observations and Progress Logs is also identified as a tool for enhancement as detailed in the College's self-assessment reports. College priorities incorporate enhancements in response to the 2011 QAA review, including those arising from quality assurance procedures and identified in the strategic plan. These include personalised student support, quality of learning, and teaching quality. Consequently, the review team **recommends** that the College establish clear links between institutional strategic objectives and enhancement activities, and formally monitor and evaluate the impact on student learning opportunities.

4.6      Overall, the review team concludes that the College takes deliberate and effective steps to enhance the quality of student learning opportunities. The strategic plan includes

objectives designed to enhance learning opportunities and there are examples of enhancement activities which align with those strategic objectives. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met. However, alignment between strategy and practice was not clearly articulated in meetings with the review team. Consequently, the team concludes that the associated level of risk is moderate because of insufficient emphasis or priority in some planning processes.

**Expectation:   Met**
**Level of risk:   Moderate**

## The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.7      In reaching its judgement about the enhancement of student learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The Expectation in this area is met and the level of risk is moderate. The moderate risk indicates insufficient emphasis or priority given to assuring standards or quality in some planning processes.

4.8      The review team makes one recommendation in this section which relates to establishing clear links between institutional strategic objectives and enhancement activities, and formally monitoring and evaluating the impact on student learning opportunities. No features of good practice are identified and there are no affirmations.

4.9      The review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the College **meets** UK expectations.

# 5      Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

**Findings**

5.1      One of the College's strategic objectives is to provide opportunities that develop learners' broader skills and increase their enjoyment, achievement, future participation in society and contribution to it. The College describes itself as having a strong ethos and commitment around professional development opportunities that train and maintain a well-qualified and skilled workforce that can sustain outstanding teaching and learning opportunities.

5.2      All the College's higher education students are employed in education and training-related roles and the programmes are designed as professional qualifications to develop employability in the education and training sectors. Accordingly, teaching skills development is a primary focus of learning, teaching and assessment, and work-based learning is a strong feature of both programmes.

5.3      Professional skills development is promoted and supported through a range of learning and assessment strategies, which are fully and formally integrated into the programmes. These include learning walks, coaching, microteaching, and tutor, mentor and peer-to-peer observation, with analysis, feedback and reflection on learning strategies students have used, observed or participated in. The Progress Log, tutor observations and other summative assessments are also valuable vehicles for students to demonstrate the development of professional skills.

5.4      Student employability is further enhanced through broader skills development, also integrated into the curriculum. In accordance with the Teaching and Leaning Policy, the programmes provide students with opportunities to discuss, reflect, debate, analyse and evaluate at higher education level. The skills of collaborative teamwork are developed through group learning activity and the promotion of independent and reflective learning enhances students' capacity to take ownership of their learning and professional development. The practice and development of these skills are effectively tracked and evaluated through the tutorial system, Progress Log and assessment tasks. Ongoing skills development support is offered to College newly qualified teacher graduates. The newly qualified teacher programme of six sessions covers a range of teaching skills and has received very positive participant feedback.

5.5      Reflecting on the recent support provided to higher education students looking for employment, the College determined to offer more opportunities to explore the breadth of employment roles related to teaching, through the use of speakers and visitors from a range of settings. This strategy, which is being implemented within Carousel sessions, is supplemented by information and guidance provided by the College careers service in talks and email communications. Teaching sessions and the Carousel programme include guidance on CV-writing and interview skills.

5.6      Programme teams track the destinations of both new graduates and graduates in service as newly-qualified teachers, and these are reported in annual programme reports. This destination information, together with student feedback, confirms the effectiveness of the College's employability support in developing students' professional and other skills and enhancing career progression.

# Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Definitions of key operational terms are also given on pages 30 to 33 of the Higher Education Review handbook.

If you require formal definitions of other terms please refer to the section on assuring standards and quality: www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality

User-friendly explanations of a wide range of terms can be found in the longer **Glossary** on the QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/Pages/GlossaryEN.aspx

**Academic standards**
The standards set by **degree-awarding bodies** for their courses (programmes and modules) and expected for their awards. See also **threshold academic standard**.

**Award**
A qualification, or academic credit, conferred in formal recognition that a student has achieved the intended **learning outcomes** and passed the assessments required to meet the academic standards set for a **programme** or unit of study.

**Blended learning**
Learning delivered by a number of different methods, usually including face-to-face and e-learning (see **technology enhanced or enabled learning**).

**Credit(s)**
A means of quantifying and recognising learning, used by most institutions that provide higher education **programmes of study**, expressed as numbers of credits at a specific level.

**Degree-awarding body**
A UK higher education provider (typically a university) with the power to award degrees, conferred by Royal Charter, or under Section 76 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, or under Section 48 of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992, or by Papal Bull, or, since 1999, granted by the Privy Council on advice from QAA (in response to applications for taught degree awarding powers, research degree awarding powers or university title).

**Distance learning**
A course of study that does not involve face-to-face contact between students and tutors but instead uses technology such as the internet, intranets, broadcast media, CD-ROM and video, or traditional methods of correspondence - learning 'at a distance'.
See also **blended learning**.

**Dual award or double award**
The granting of separate awards (and certificates) for the same **programme** by two **degree-awarding bodies** who have jointly delivered the programme of study leading to them. See also **multiple award**.

**e-learning**
See technology enhanced or enabled learning

**Enhancement**
The process by which higher education providers systematically improve the quality of provision and the ways in which students' learning is supported. It is used as a technical term in our review processes.

**Expectations**
Statements in the **Quality Code** that set out what all UK higher education providers expect of themselves and each other, and what the general public can therefore expect of them.

**Flexible and distributed learning**
A programme or module that does not require the student to attend classes or events at particular times and locations.
See also **distance learning**.

**Framework**
A published formal structure. See also **framework for higher education qualifications**.

**Framework for higher education qualifications**
A published formal structure that identifies a hierarchy of national qualification levels and describes the general achievement expected of holders of the main qualification types at each level, thus assisting higher education providers in maintaining academic standards. QAA publishes the following frameworks: *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and *The Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland* (FQHEIS).

**Good practice**
A process or way of working that, in the view of a QAA review team, makes a particularly positive contribution to a higher education provider's management of academic standards and the quality of its educational provision. It is used as a technical term in QAA's audit and review processes.

**Learning opportunities**
The provision made for students' learning, including planned study, teaching, assessment, academic and personal support, and resources (such as libraries and information systems, laboratories or studios).

**Learning outcomes**
What a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completing a process of learning.

**Multiple awards**
An arrangement where three or more **degree-awarding bodies** together provide a single jointly delivered **programme** (or programmes) leading to a separate **award** (and separate certification) of each awarding body. The arrangement is the same as for **dual/double awards**, but with three or more awarding bodies being involved.

**Operational definition**
A formal definition of a term, establishing exactly what QAA means when using it in reviews and reports.

**Programme (of study)**
An approved course of study that provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to a qualification.

**Programme specifications**
Published statements about the intended **learning outcomes** of programmes of study, containing information about teaching and learning methods, support and assessment methods, and how individual units relate to levels of achievement.

**Public information**
Information that is freely available to the public (sometimes referred to as being 'in the public domain').

**Quality Code**
Short term for the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, which is the UK-wide set of **reference points** for higher education providers (agreed through consultation with the higher education community, and published by QAA), which states the **Expectations** that all providers are required to meet.

**Reference points**
Statements and other publications that establish criteria against which performance can be measured.

**Subject Benchmark Statement**
A published statement that sets out what knowledge, understanding, abilities and skills are expected of those graduating in each of the main subject areas (mostly applying to bachelor's degrees), and explains what gives that particular discipline its coherence and identity.

**Technology enhanced or enabled learning** (or **e-learning**)
Learning that is delivered or supported through the use of technology.

**Threshold academic standard**
The minimum acceptable level of achievement that a student has to demonstrate to be eligible for an academic **award**. Threshold academic standards are set out in the national **frameworks** and **Subject Benchmark Statements**.

**Virtual learning environment** (VLE)
An intranet or password-only interactive website (also referred to as a platform or user interface) giving access to **learning opportunities** electronically. These might include such resources as course handbooks, information and reading lists; blogs, message boards and forums; recorded lectures; and/or facilities for online seminars (webinars).

**Widening participation**
Increasing the involvement in higher education of people from a wider range of backgrounds.