



Higher Education Review of Guildford College of Further and Higher Education

September 2014

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Guildford College of Further and Higher Education (the College). The review took place from 30 September to 2 October 2014 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Miranda Hobart
- Kanyanut Ndubuokwu
- Paul Taylor.

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by the 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](#) (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 threshold 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 6.

In reviewing the 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 2014-15 are Student Involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement and Student Employability,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](#) and has links to the review handbook and other informative documents.⁴ For an explanation of terms see the [glossary](#) at the end of this report.

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=106.

³ QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus.

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 Guildford College of Further and Higher Education

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Guildford College of Further and Higher Education.

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and awarding organisations **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 features of **good practice** at Guildford College of Further and Higher Education.

- Effective staff engagement in continuous professional development enhances the quality of teaching and learning and is valued by students (Expectation B3).
- The management and support of work-based learning that ensures students' access to good-quality learning experiences (Expectation B10).
- The dedicated management and resourcing of higher education which provides effective oversight and a structure for enhancement (Enhancement).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to Guildford College of Further and Higher Education.

By February 2015:

- develop an effective mechanism to ensure adherence to the assessment policy requirement that assessment briefs make clear to students when they will receive feedback (Expectation B6).

By March 2015:

- make an admissions policy available, and approve and implement an appeals process for admissions (Expectation B2).

Theme: Student Employability

Guildford College of Further and Higher Education makes reference in its mission statement to meeting the skills needs of employers and individuals, and its Higher Education Curriculum Strategy aims to support the development of employability skills and better preparation for the job market, and to engage actively with local employers through the provision of higher-level work-based learning. This 2014-20 strategy includes objectives to establish more employer links for part-time science, technology, engineering and maths provision, ensure work experience is part of all appropriate higher education programmes,

and develop links with the creative skills sector to support purposeful employment upon graduation.

The College involves employers in programme development and review so they maintain their professional relevance and have a clear focus on the development of professional skills. The programme design process and definitive programme documents identify key transferable skills from programmes. These mechanisms to support student employability through programme design are complemented by professional accreditations for some programmes, work experience, placements, and student personal development planning and target setting.

The College's careers advice service has obtained the Matrix Award kite mark. The service delivers subject-specific careers guidance and supports students in the preparation for employment.

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

About Guildford College of Further and Higher Education

Guildford College of Further and Higher Education is a large college based across three campuses in Surrey with a long track record of delivering vocationally orientated higher education linked to the needs of the local area otherwise known as the Guildford College Group. It comprises Guildford College, Merrist Wood College, Farnham Sixth Form College, an international centre and a business centre. Higher education is provided at the Guildford and Merrist Wood campuses. The College's mission is to inspire and enable learners, employers and communities to be successful, achieve their ambitions and rise to new challenges. Its vision is to be recognised as an excellent college, leading change and innovation in the world of education and skills.

The College's priorities are set out in its strategic plan for 2013-18 and in its Higher Education Curriculum Strategy for 2014-20, and include aims to:

- maximise funding opportunities through bids
- deliver a better student experience and improve transparency in the management of programmes
- support the development of employability skills and engage with local employers through higher-level work-based learning
- widen participation
- involve students in quality assurance and enhancement
- manage provision in line with the Quality Code.

The College's governing body oversees the College's finances and policies, and monitors quality and standards. The executive team is responsible for strategic planning and resource allocation, and one of its members, the Vice-Principal for Curriculum and Quality, chairs three higher education-specific committees which monitor, scrutinise and drive enhancement in higher education provision: the Higher Education Strategy and Management Group, the Higher Education Standards, Quality and Enhancement Group, and the Higher Education Information, Marketing and Recruitment Group. The Head of Higher Education⁵ has a key role in the leadership and development of higher education; the promotion of distinctive features of higher education; managing relationships and agreements with awarding bodies; managing budgets; ensuring arrangements for safeguarding the quality of learning

⁵ Director of Higher Education as of 1 November 2014.

opportunities; quality assurance of standards; and developing the higher-level skills agenda with local employers.

The College has over 8,000 students of which over 500 study higher education programmes. The College delivers five Higher National programmes on behalf of one awarding organisation, Pearson. It delivers a range of foundation degrees, bachelor degrees and bachelor top-up degrees through a mixture of validated and franchise provision, on behalf of four awarding bodies: the University of Greenwich (four programmes), Kingston University (seven programmes), London South Bank University (one programme) and the University of Surrey (four programmes). The range of College programmes cover business, commercial management, hospitality, construction, civil engineering, computing, counselling, early years study, animal behaviour and management programmes, equine studies, sport, and golf management. The University of Surrey is closing its partnership agreement with the College with teach-out arrangements in place.

Since the College's Integrated Quality Enhancement Review in 2010, the College has appointed a new Principal and a Head of Higher Education. The scale of the College's higher education has remained consistent though the College works with one fewer awarding body as it no longer has a partnership with the University of Chichester. The range of discipline areas remains the same. At the time of the last review, higher education provision was delivered across five faculties, but structural changes mean this provision is now within three faculties.

The College considers changes to higher education tuition fees and the impact this has had on perceptions of higher education as a challenge to recruitment. The College's strategy is to offer vocationally relevant programmes which reflect the skills needs of local employers. It also meets the challenge through the fee level it sets for programmes.

All of the recommendations from the previous QAA review have been met except one recommendation discussed in detail in relation to Expectation B6 in this report. The College has taken effective actions in relation to all other recommendations: the Head of Higher Education and the Higher Education Groups provide focus and oversight for the management of the quality and standards of higher education provision, and the Self-Assessment Report for Higher Education tracks developments and enhancement. The College now provides programme specifications for Pearson programmes and an e-learning strategy has driven forward staff and student use of the virtual learning environment and the quality of information provided. The College has established clear links between careers services and programme teams. It has introduced a higher education staff development day to promote and share good practices in the delivery of higher education across curriculum areas. It has re-introduced the Higher Education Forum, and ensures the Head of Higher Education attends all management meetings to oversee a consistent approach to higher education.

The College has furthered the good practice identified in the previous QAA report, for example the comprehensive use of the Self-Assessment Report for Higher Education and the extension of its interaction with employers.

Explanation of the findings about Guildford College of Further and Higher Education

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 threshold academic standards of awards

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 (FHEQ)* 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 provides eight bachelor's degrees and seven foundation degrees. Institutional agreements specify that responsibility for accrediting or validating these qualifications lies with the four partner awarding bodies which position qualifications at the appropriate level of the FHEQ. The College provides four Higher National programmes, where Pearson is responsible for allocating qualifications to the appropriate level of the Qualifications and Credit Framework.

1.2 The review team tested this Expectation through meetings with staff and a review of handbooks, programme specifications and external examiner reports. The team confirmed that responsibilities for ensuring that qualifications are set at the appropriate level of the Framework rest with the awarding bodies and organisation. Programmes are set at the correct level and take account of qualification descriptors and Subject Benchmark Statements.

1.3 The review team reviewed the effectiveness of the College's approach to developing programmes and the inclusion of Subject Benchmark Statements through consideration of records of validation meetings, programme specifications and definitive documents. The use of Subject Benchmark Statements is mainly the responsibility of the awarding bodies, though the College makes reference to these and occupational standards in the preparation of programme documentation for validation and revalidation events.

1.4 The awarding bodies, through the validation process and franchise arrangements, ensure that where the College has developed programmes, the content and assessment strategies are at the appropriate level and cover all learning outcomes, and that the programmes are aligned with qualification benchmark statements. The review team confirms that programme specifications and handbooks state the FHEQ level of the programmes. The review team reviewed a number of external examiner reports which confirmed that programme levels, and levels of assessment, are appropriate. The team concludes that the Expectation is met and that the effective arrangements represent a low level of risk.

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

1.5 Academic governance arrangements and requirements are set out in the partnership agreement documents, and the validating and accrediting institutions ensure that learning outcomes and assessment strategies are appropriate. Depending on the awarding body partnership in question, the College is required to adhere to awarding body requirements in designing, developing, assessing, monitoring and reviewing programmes. Academic governance arrangements are clear and the College complies with the requirements of its awarding bodies. As such the Expectation is met in principle.

1.6 The review team considered the Expectation through an evaluation of the partnership agreements, validation arrangements, programme monitoring arrangements and the College's committee terms of reference, and discussed the arrangements in meetings with staff.

1.7 The Head of Higher Education is responsible for ensuring that awarding body and organisation requirements are met, and arrangements and compliance are discussed and monitored by the Higher Education Strategy Group and Higher Education Standards, Quality and Enhancement Group. Links to partner institution regulatory guidance are included in programme handbooks and relevant College regulations for Higher National qualifications are available in handbooks and through the virtual learning environment (VLE). Programme definitive documents are compiled in accordance with awarding body regulations, and monitored and updated as required.

1.8 The College works effectively with its validating partners to ensure that the module specifications are clear and reflect academic frameworks, including those of relevant professional bodies, as in the case of the counselling and animal management and welfare programmes. The College complies with and employs the academic regulations as set by its awarding bodies and set out in the partnership agreements.

1.9 The review team concludes that the College's clear governance and management procedures are effective. The College's role in communicating and adhering to the academic governance arrangements, assessment regulations and frameworks of its awarding bodies ensures that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

1.10 The College is responsible for delivering programmes in accordance with its awarding bodies' regulations and the definitive programme documents approved through validation. For its validated provision with the University of Greenwich, Kingston University and University of Surrey, the College predominantly designs and sets all assessment instruments, and prepares its own resources, schemes of work and lesson plans, in accordance with validated programme specifications. For its franchised provision with the University of Greenwich and London South Bank University, the College delivers programmes using assessments and resources provided by the Universities and as specified in definitive programme documents. Such arrangements indicate that the Expectation is met in principle.

1.11 The review team tested this Expectation through scrutiny of programme specifications, partnership agreements, course handbooks, programme validation and review documents, and discussed the arrangements with staff in meetings.

1.12 The College produces documentation which includes definitive information on the aims, intended learning outcomes and expected learner achievements for each programme of study. This is made available to students through programme specifications and course handbooks available on the VLE and in libraries. Programme managers are responsible for ensuring programmes are delivered in accordance with the definitive programme document.

1.13 The College uses its awarding bodies' revalidation processes to make any substantial revisions to degree programmes. Through its arrangements with Pearson, the College makes changes to Higher National programmes by selecting different module combinations. When the College revises modules it submits revised programme specifications to its awarding bodies for approval, for example making minor changes to the design of assessments. In such instances, the awarding body maintains responsibility for approving and providing the College with revised and definitive programme specifications.

1.14 The review team concludes that definitive programme information is clear, transparent, accessible and appropriately managed, ensuring that the Expectation is met and the associated 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

1.15 The College considers programme approval a collaborative process between it and its awarding bodies, and recognises that responsibility for setting academic standards at an appropriate level rests with the relevant awarding body.

1.16 The College works with link tutors on the development of programme proposals based on the relevant awarding body's validation documents and templates. A proposal document for foundation degrees validated by Kingston University demonstrates that the College provides a business case for the proposed programme for consideration by the awarding body. These arrangements indicate that the Expectation is met in principle.

1.17 The review team tested the Expectation in meetings with senior staff, academic staff, and by evaluating programme specifications and programme approval documents. Meetings with academic staff and link tutors confirmed link tutors work with the College to develop programmes that reference Subject Benchmark Statements, qualification descriptors and awarding body requirements.

1.18 The College's process for the development of programmes is not articulated in a written document; however, support is available within the College and from awarding bodies to ensure that documentation is appropriately prepared before submission. The newly established Higher Education Strategy and Management Group, and the Higher Education Standards Quality and Enhancement Group, have oversight of the management of this element of provision.

1.19 The review team considered programme specifications used for approval by awarding bodies, such as those for the University of Greenwich, Kingston University and the University of Surrey. These specifications include clear programme aims, learning outcomes, learning, teaching and assessment strategies and assess student achievement against UK threshold standards.

1.20 The College participates in programme re-approval processes operated by its awarding bodies. For example, the College revised the credit allocation of modules on programmes validated by Kingston University during re-approval in 2013, bringing these in line with the University's revised academic framework, and attracting commendations from the revalidation panel.

1.21 For Pearson provision, the College offers programmes within the awarding organisation's specified programme framework. The College selects units from the framework to design a programme accredited by the awarding organisation. Proposals based on Pearson provision are subject to College processes whereby the executive team confirm the proposal, and the Higher Education Standards, Quality and Enhancement Group has oversight of the approval processes to ensure consistency and standardisation.

1.22 Where relevant and possible, the College seeks professional body recognition for the programmes. This, for example, has been achieved for the FdSc Counselling which is accredited by the British Association Counselling and Psychotherapy. Programmes with professional body recognition are also subject to an additional level of scrutiny through annual monitoring reports and incorporation of updates and changes to the programme. Even where there is no formal professional body accreditation, the College aligns elements of the curriculum with professional body requirements where possible, such as on the BA Business and HND Equine Management.

1.23 The review team concludes that the College complies with its responsibility to help ensure its partner awarding bodies establish and consistently implement processes for the approval of taught programmes, and accordingly the Expectation is met and the associated 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 ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes rests with the College's awarding bodies. The College has delegated responsibility for the design of assessment on some programmes, and the assessment strategy of each programme is scrutinised as part of validation processes. The College uses the approved assessment strategies and the relevant awarding body grading criteria to ensure the awarding body's requirements are met. The College's Assessment Policy makes it clear that assessment is the main vehicle for ensuring academic standards are met and that it needs to focus on the measurement of learning outcomes.

1.25 The College states that assessment methodology and weighting is made explicit in programme definitive documentation and student handbooks but this is not consistently the case in all documentation. Some programme handbooks include specific details of the range of assessments and their weighting in the form of a summary or assessment map but these do not include information on submission deadlines. Other programme handbooks provide this information module by module rather than giving an overview, while others do not include assessment details.

1.26 Module guides include information on module assessment that is mapped to learning outcomes, ensuring that outcomes are appropriately assessed. Information on assessment at module level is not explicit as it is labelled as 'indicative' and thus possibly liable to change; there is no process to ensure that assessment information released to students is definitive.

1.27 The review team tested this Expectation through reviewing policies and procedures belonging to both the College and its awarding bodies, considering programme specifications, assessment briefs, module guides, and external examiner reports, and in discussions with academic and senior staff.

1.28 The College has an internal verification policy and this is followed to ensure the validity of assessment. Assessment briefs are designed to ensure coverage of learning outcomes and internal verification documents confirm that assignment briefs are approved prior to these being made available to students. In some instances, such as for the FdSc Animal Behaviour and Welfare, the College also seeks feedback from external examiners on the appropriateness of assessment tasks.

1.29 The awarding bodies' external examiners confirm that assessment is robust, valid and reliable. External examiner reports are overwhelmingly positive, confirm that assessment is appropriately set to measure the learning outcomes at the required level, and that assessment meets threshold academic standards for the programmes concerned.

1.30 Programme handbooks follow the template provided by the awarding body and this determines the content and style of information provided. Variation in the level of detail about assessment provided in handbooks is attributed to these styles. In accordance with the regulations of the awarding body and its Students' Honesty Policy, some student handbooks inform students directly about academic misconduct and plagiarism, and some inform students only that they should be familiar with relevant definitions and regulations. The regulations of the awarding body take precedence in all cases of academic misconduct.

1.31 The review team concludes that the College complies with its awarding bodies' processes for managing assessment, and that assessment is robust, valid and reliable, so that the Expectation is met and the associated 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

1.32 Monitoring and review of programmes is the responsibility of the awarding bodies, therefore the College is subject to a range of annual, periodic, institutional and quinquennial reviews by the universities. Review documentation is prepared by the programme team and the Head of Higher Education. Processes for monitoring and review of programmes required by awarding bodies are effectively implemented. The College, in addition, has internal annual processes used to review programmes that are evaluative and action focused.

1.33 For Pearson programmes, the College makes use of external verifier reports and programme data within the College to assure itself of the quality of these programmes. This information is overseen by the Head of Higher Education and Heads of Learning. It is then pulled together into the action-focused Self-Assessment Report for Higher Education. This Report includes clear actions based on external verifier comments. These arrangements indicate that the Expectation is met in principle.

1.34 The review team tested the Expectation by evaluating annual review processes, programme monitoring reports, self-assessment reports, and quality audit reports. The team also discussed programme review with academic and senior staff.

1.35 The College provided a number of examples of monitoring reports that it completes for its awarding bodies. At programme level, programme monitoring reports are produced annually which systematically review programme performance, student achievement statistics and external examiner reports. They identify areas for prompt remedial action and enhancement, and confirm through taking account of external examiner reports that threshold standards are met. The College completes the Self-Assessment Report for Higher Education which summarises external examiner reports and highlights good practice. It also compiles reports that cover all provision delivered on behalf of particular partners, such as for the University of Greenwich and the University of Surrey. The College has reviewed these processes with the intention of streamlining them and to reduce duplication of reports for awarding bodies and the College. In future, reports prepared for awarding bodies will be accepted by the College as also meeting their own monitoring review requirements.

1.36 When the College identifies areas for improvement in Pearson programmes, it undertakes a full quality audit to inform development. The College does not have a periodic review process for Higher National programmes but plans to introduce one by March 2015, taking account of the views of employers and students in a formally documented process.

1.37 The review team concludes that the College complies with its awarding bodies' processes for monitoring and reviewing programmes and has effective internal processes that ensure oversight of its provision, and as such the Expectation is met and the associated risk 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

1.38 The College values and uses external opinion in its quality assurance arrangements. In programme design it develops modules and programmes which are validated by its partner institutions, based on identified skills needs through links with employers, subject specialists and professional bodies. Programme approval is managed collaboratively with partner universities, and link tutors work with the College on the development of the curriculum, assessment strategies and learning outcomes. Based on these arrangements, the College meets the Expectation in principle.

1.39 The review team evaluated the College's use of external expertise in the assurance and scrutiny of academic standards, through an evaluation of programme design and approval documents, external examiner reports and the College's response to external examiner reports. The team also discussed externality with the College.

1.40 The management of threshold academic standards is achieved through internal and external verification and review of programmes. The College identifies areas for improvement and conducts quality audits which review the management, assessment and delivery of programmes. External examiners report on academic standards and the College actively responds to reports and develops action plans to ensure recommendations are acted upon. External examiners' expertise is used both in approving assessment approaches for some programmes and for confirming academic standards for each programme. The College responds to external examiners' comments through programme monitoring reports, the Self-Assessment Report for Higher Education and reports specific to each awarding body.

1.41 The review team concludes that through effective use of a variety of external opinion in the assurance of standards, the College meets the Expectation that 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

1.42 In reaching its judgement on the College's maintenance of academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and Pearson, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.43 The College's responsibilities for maintaining threshold academic standards are defined by its awarding bodies and awarding organisations, which provide transparent frameworks via which the College effectively manages its responsibilities. Higher education provision is maintained at appropriate levels of the FHEQ, and takes account of external benchmarks. The College diligently participates in awarding body and organisation procedures for the award of credit and qualifications, and the College's own procedures are complementary. Responsibilities for meeting awarding body and organisation requirements for the management and oversight of standards within the College are clear.

1.44 The review team found that all Expectations are met and the risk for each area is low. It makes no recommendations or affirmations in relation to the College's maintenance of threshold academic standards.

1.45 The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of the awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and Pearson **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 and Approval*

Findings

2.1 The College works with each awarding body in the design and development of programmes. The College has different responsibilities depending on the nature of the award and the partnership with the awarding body. The College has a clear understanding of how its responsibilities vary depending on whether programmes are franchised or validated, and articulates this concisely.

2.2 The College normally makes a market proposal for new programmes, including market research, which is submitted to the relevant awarding body for approval for development. In liaising with the relevant university, the College comes to an agreement on how the development should proceed.

2.3 The College has a number of mechanisms to lead on aspects of programme development; for example, appointment of a subject lead and project manager for the development of a Foundation Degree in Creativity for the Interactive Industries.

2.4 The College's approach to programme design, development and approval meets the Expectation in principle. The review team tested this Expectation by reviewing approval documentation, templates, validation reports, and programme planning meeting notes, and in discussion with academic staff and students.

2.5 The College produces most of the programme documentation used as part of the approval process. Examples of approval documentation provided show that these are designed to assess the quality of the learning opportunities provided and maintenance of academic standards. The College provided examples of industry involvement in programme design, inviting industry comments on draft module specifications.

2.6 Although there is no formal structured process that the College follows for the internal development of programmes, staff were clear about their role in programme development that support was available both within the College and from awarding bodies via the Head of Higher Education and Heads of Learning. The newly established Higher Education Groups have strategic oversight of programme development and submissions to awarding bodies. Feedback is provided on approval documentation to assist the development team in enhancing the programme proposal.

2.7 Where programmes have been through a process of change and re-approval, students confirmed they had been involved in discussions about the proposed changes, such as the move to standardise the amount of credit available for modules on Kingston University's FdA Golf programme.

2.8 The review team concludes that the College complies with the approval process of its awarding bodies and has effective, complementary internal processes for designing and developing programmes such that the Expectation is met and the associated 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*

Findings

2.9 Admission to the College's higher education provision is through UCAS and direct application to the College. The College has a robust process for admissions, following UCAS and awarding body and organisation procedures. The admissions team follows a policy for advice and guidance to students and prospective students, but this policy is not available to prospective students via the website. General admission principles are set out on the College's website. The College's approach to recruitment, selection and admission meets the Expectation in principle.

2.10 The review team met senior staff, academic staff, ancillary and professional support staff, and students to test the operational effectiveness of the College's admission processes and whether the College meets the Expectation. The team also looked at both the current and the draft admissions policies, applications flow charts, admissions guidance, and correspondence to students regarding their applications.

2.11 The admissions process is administered by a Higher Education Admissions and Enrolment Officer who records applications on the student information management system, and ensures suitable candidates, as identified by programme managers, are interviewed. The admissions process includes extensive use of interviews. A fast-track application process is available for the College's current students progressing to the University of Greenwich top-up degree delivered by the College.

2.12 A comprehensive enrolment pack is sent to applicants who are offered places, and includes a welcome letter, timetables for the course and induction, enrolment details, information on the course, and financial support.

2.13 In line with their equality and diversity policy, the College works closely with the students with any protected characteristics or additional needs from application stage to provide any necessary support. Information for prospective students regarding additional support is available on the College website and specialist support staff carry out needs assessments and support students through the admission process. The College works with Surrey County Council's Physical and Sensory Support Service to advise prospective students about studying at higher education level.

2.14 Students confirmed the efficacy of the admissions process and that information provided about their courses on the College website was adequate. Many had applied to the College after reading about it online, and others followed recommendations from students and alumni; some applied to the College directly but most applied through UCAS. Students confirmed that support from the College during admission was good and particularly helpful for those making 'last-minute' applications.

2.15 The review team received a draft revised Higher Education Admissions Policy 2014 from the College and noted it was due for approval by the executive team in the coming weeks. The team considered the policy against the Expectation that providers should have transparent policies and procedures that adhere to the principles of fair admission, and

recommends that the College make an admissions policy available and approve and implement an appeals process for admissions by March 2015.

2.16 The review team concludes that the College has consistent procedures for liaising with its awarding bodies and awarding organisations in relation to admissions, and has effective admissions processes which are understood by students and staff so that the Expectation is met. The absence of an appeal process for admissions represents a moderate risk to the fairness, reliability and validity of admissions procedures.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Moderate

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

2.17 The College has a clear strategic approach to the management of learning and teaching through a range of policies and practical observations and reviews. Staff are provided with a Higher Education Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy, and lesson observations inform staff appraisal and staff development priorities. Programme teams review their provision at least annually and provide reports to their awarding bodies which include analysis of student feedback, module reports, achievement data and external examiner reports. Oversight of reports produced by programme managers lies with the Head of Higher Education, Directors of Faculty and Heads of Learning and Standards. Programme monitoring and institution reports are considered by the Higher Education Standards, Quality and Enhancement Group before being sent to awarding bodies. The team reviewed a range of programme monitoring reports and institution reports which identify key issues and action plans, report changes from the previous year, analyse data, and review external examiner reports and student feedback. Programmes are also reviewed as part of revalidation cycles to ensure that content remains current and learning and assessment strategies support student achievement. Staff qualifications are also checked as part of validation; CVs seen by the review team confirm that staff are appropriately qualified.

2.18 The annual Self-Assessment Report for Higher Education summarises all key performance indicators and programme monitoring reports for higher education, including a commentary of the quality of the higher education provision and appropriate actions at programme and institutional level. The Higher Education Standards, Quality and Enhancement Group oversees the enhancement of learning opportunities and identifies priorities for College-wide development brought together in the Report. The Report is subject to peer review by staff from other colleges and is approved by the senior management team each October, with development requirements being incorporated into the broader College development plan. Strategic developments and analyses are further supported by periodic programme reviews, revalidations, institutional reviews conducted by partner universities, and resource reviews. The College's strategic approach to learning and teaching and its arrangements for programme review and self-assessment reports indicate that the College meets the Expectation in principle.

2.19 The review team examined the Expectation through meetings with staff and students and reviewed a wide range of programme documentation including learning and teaching strategies and policies, programme monitoring reports, validation and revalidation documents, programme handbooks, induction materials, and minutes of programme meetings and other committees.

2.20 The College provides effective support for student learning and achievement. Individual student support and entitlement is set out clearly in the College Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy, in programme and module handbooks and the Additional Learning Support Policy. Tutorials focus on enabling students as independent learners through personal development and planning, academic writing and referencing and researching skills.

2.21 Student achievement is supported through a wide range of learning strategies which students value. These are particularly noteworthy in relation to the animal management and equine programmes, where students are encouraged to work with sector practitioners in professional settings. Learning opportunities include zoological behaviour observations at wildlife centres, via webcams, camera traps and on-site visits. The College also supports the use of lecturer peer review to encourage the sharing of broader learning experiences and work-based practices.

2.22 The College has a well structured and differentiated Continuing Professional Development Policy. Staff teaching on higher education programmes are enabled to keep up to date with their discipline areas and academic and regulatory requirements through College development days and external events. Funding available through the Teaching Quality and Enhancement Fund allows staff to take part in awarding body events and to undertake five days' industry experience annually. Opportunities are also available for staff to gain remission to write and publish papers and to take part in a range of professional conferences. Staff are supported in gaining and maintaining membership of professional bodies including the Zoological Society, the Professional Golf Association and the British Horse Society. This enables staff to incorporate practice-led materials and case studies into their teaching, and tutors' professional practice is valued by students. The effective staff engagement in continuous professional development enhances the quality of teaching and learning, and is valued by students. This is **good practice**.

2.23 Curriculum development and review includes consultation with employers and other stakeholders. It is robust and helps to ensure learning outcomes meet sector requirements. Staff attendance at external events and feedback from work placements inform learning strategies and resource requirements.

2.24 As part of the validation process, the College plans for additional and appropriate learning resources. Staff confirmed that the College has designated higher education areas at the Stoke Park and Merrist Wood campuses which include teaching rooms, computer areas and social areas. Libraries stock the key higher education texts and the VLE is checked by programme managers to ensure it is up to date. The team met with students who confirmed that there is broad satisfaction with the learning resources.

2.25 The review team concludes that the College has a comprehensive approach to managing the quality of learning and teaching and supports students effectively so that the Expectation is met and the 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

2.26 Effective strategic approaches have been developed by the College to monitor and evaluate its higher education provision resources. The Head of Higher Education is responsible for the overall monitoring and development of higher education requirements within the context of the College's devolved responsibilities. Senior management are responsible for the strategic oversight of higher education and for agreeing new programme developments and resource budgets. Annual monitoring procedures require programme monitoring reports to be produced annually for individual programmes which inform the Self-Assessment Report for Higher Education and for individual awarding bodies. These annual reports are reviewed by the Higher Education Strategy and Management Group and Higher Education Standards, Quality and Enhancement Group.

2.27 The provision of tutorials and libraries and learner support services at each of the College's higher education campuses means the College meets the Expectation in principle. The review team tested the effectiveness of arrangements for student development and achievement through an evaluation of handbooks, documents setting out additional support, advice and guidance, and through discussions in meetings with staff and students. Student support is monitored by programme managers and the Heads of Learning and Standards through programme review activities and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data, including student surveys. Annual curriculum planning presentations to the College executive team set out specific resource requirements including staffing, IT, learning resources and staff development requirements. The College has prioritised higher education requirements, and teaching areas have been refurbished. Students are encouraged to comment on resources, teaching and facilities through faculty forums, focus groups and the Student Parliament.

2.28 Tutors maintain records of student profiles which facilitate provision of student support as required, taking account of learning styles and additional needs. Students receive appropriate information from the outset through induction, module and programme handbooks, schemes of work and tutorials. Where students require additional learning support, sessions are organised to fit in with student timetables and work placements. Tutorials enable student development with a focus on personal development and planning, academic writing and referencing, and researching skills. Personal tutors also support students on pastoral issues and provide broader academic and progression guidance.

2.29 Student representatives play a key role in communicating students' views to the College managers, and student representatives receive training to support them in their roles. Training includes information on threshold academic standards, learning opportunities and public information to support their engagement in quality assurance processes. Students informed the review team that they are able to communicate effectively with their tutors, programme managers and with senior managers as required.

2.30 Students confirmed that they are interviewed and informed about the demands of the programme prior to enrolment to ensure that they are aware of the commitment they are making. Some programme teams, such as for the FdA Early Childhood Studies, provide students with a course information booklet at the interview stage and follow this up with pre-course reading lists over the summer to ensure students are fully prepared for their studies.

2.31 All students are provided with a clear and well structured induction. The College sets out clear strategies for inducting students and supporting their transition to higher education. Students are given College and programme handbooks which provide broad resources information and programme-specific assessment information and timetables. Programme handbooks contain guidance on the academic skills required for higher-level study alongside guidance on how students should manage their studies. During induction, students are introduced to the VLE, library and additional support services.

2.32 Transition into higher education is further supported through initial tutorials in which students set personal, professional and academic goals, and other programme-specific activities. In some programmes, such as HND Equine Studies, a start-of-term assignment supports transition with formative assessment helping students to understand the academic skills requirements; in Animal Behaviour and Welfare programmes, grading an example assignment against the assessment criteria also helps students to understand the higher-level requirements. The College arranges meetings with existing higher education students who can act as mentors and advisers. Students progressing to final-year degree studies are offered advice and guidance on progression routes and choices of programmes. Students can also access the College's advice service for support for progression into employment. Employability is supported through portfolio activities and students are offered sessions on CV building, job applications and mock interviews.

2.33 Documentation considered by the review team and discussed in meetings with staff confirms appropriate Library Resources Centres are available on the Stoke Park and Merrist Wood campuses, and are tailored to meet programme delivery on-site. Library staff provide induction sessions for all students to assist them in their orientation and to highlight support and guidance available. Student feedback indicates these facilities are appreciated and that the level of support is good. Professionally qualified staff help students in locating resources as required. Librarians liaise with tutors to ensure that the book stock is updated to meet course requirements, and the Head of Library services attends Curriculum Management Meetings. Where appropriate, as in the case of animal management programmes, industry-specific resources are provided, familiarising students with professional practices. Students are also consulted on new facilities and the development of resources, as is the case for the new Animal Management Centre.

2.34 Meetings with senior staff, academic staff, support staff and students confirmed that academic, personal and professional activities are provided as part of all higher education programmes. All programmes include tutorial provision and students complete personal and professional development modules. The personal development planning activities support students to reflect on their goals and achievements and areas for development. Where appropriate, students undertake work placements and confirmed that they are well prepared and supported in locating and completing placements and related assessments. Students value their work experience as part of their professional development and future employability.

2.35 The review team concludes that the College has a well defined approach to ensuring students have access to the resources needed to complete their programmes and develop their potential, and as such the College meets the Expectation 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

2.36 The Higher Education Student Engagement Policy sets out the College's approach to student engagement and is available to students on the VLE and website. The policy aims to engage all higher education students in their learning experience through Boards of Study, Student-Staff Consultative Committees, focus groups, faculty forums, Student Parliament, student conferences and student representative meetings. The Policy sets out that each cohort of students is required to appoint student representatives, who are supported in their roles through training. It commits to enabling all students to contribute to module evaluation processes. The Higher Education Strategy and Management Group and the Higher Education Standards, Quality and Enhancement Group oversee the Higher Education Student Engagement Policy. Such arrangements ensure that the College meets the Expectation in principle.

2.37 The review team tested the effectiveness of the College's approach to student engagement by meeting with senior staff, academic staff, ancillary and professional support staff and students, and by considering the student submission and evaluating student representative structures and training.

2.38 The College has in place a system of student representation and training provided by student services and the Head of Higher Education. All higher education students are part of Guildford College Group Student Parliament and are invited to sit on the Parliament Committee. Student representatives attend three meetings of both faculty forums and Student Parliament during the year.

2.39 Other meetings and forums available to students include higher education faculty forums, which bring together higher education students from across programmes, and faculty forums which bring together students from across programme levels with their faculty director. Students confirmed that they relay information from meetings back to colleagues via tutor groups. There are instances of student representatives attending meetings at awarding bodies and engaging in their quality assurance processes.

2.40 In 2013-14, all issues requiring actions from meetings with student representatives were added to an online log and tracking system, which charts issues through to resolution. The system ensures issues are appointed to a relevant member of staff who acknowledges them and then provides feedback on progress.

2.41 Student services organise an annual Student Conference during Learner Voice Week for student representatives and higher education students to meet managers and the College executive team. At the last event, students suggested improvements to various services and the College prepared a resultant action plan.

2.42 The College has effective oversight of its student engagement arrangements but has participated in an NUS Student Engagement Partnership programme to invite recommendations on how to enhance its approaches.

2.43 The College engages with the broader student voice through surveys, such as involving students in the review of their programme through module and programme evaluation forms. It has specific pages on its VLE promoting student engagement and for student representatives, where it posts minutes of meetings and external examiner reports.

2.44 The review team concludes that students understand how the representation system and other mechanisms operate and the College monitors and responds effectively to the student voice. The College actively engages students and provides appropriate platforms for them to communicate with each other and the College, and as such the Expectation is met and the associated risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

2.45 The College's assessment strategies are subject to approval and oversight by its awarding bodies, which maintain responsibility for ensuring that assessment processes are equitable, valid and reliable. To support staff with the quality assurance of assessment, the College uses a Quality Assurance for Higher Education Programmes guide.

2.46 The student submission commented on the timing of assessment feedback, noting that some students would prefer more detailed and quicker feedback. Students on the FD Animal Behaviour and Welfare had to complete subsequent assessments without receiving feedback on the first. The College's self-evaluation document states that the timescale for feedback is set by awarding bodies and students are advised of this in programme handbooks. Such arrangements are broadly adequate and would meet the Expectation in theory. The review team tested this Expectation by reviewing the effectiveness of assessment processes through scrutiny of documentation, programme handbooks, module information, external examiner reports, programme handbooks, assessment briefs and in discussion in meetings with staff and students.

2.47 External examiner reports confirm the rigour of assessment and the responsiveness of the College staff to issues raised. In addition, the College uses internal verification processes to ensure the suitability of assessments and submit assessment briefs to external examiners.

2.48 The College uses processes for the accreditation of prior learning (APL) set by its awarding bodies and complemented by the College's APL Policy. Staff confirmed that they inform students at interview about the possibility of APL and seek guidance from their programme manager if students wish to apply for any APL. A review of course handbooks showed that this information is not consistently within all handbooks. Some, but not all, handbooks included a specific section on APL.

2.49 Documentation seen by the team showed that assessment information is approved with each programme and that detailed assessment information is provided to students in assessment briefs. Students confirmed that assessment briefs and discussions with staff make it very clear how they will be assessed. They were positive about the level of feedback being suitably detailed and helping them to improve their work. They were also very clear that they could meet with their tutor, if needed, for additional feedback.

2.50 Module reviews are used as a mechanism to reflect on and enhance assessment practices. Module reviews take a variety of formats. Some have information pre-populated covering some key module statistics and performance indicators. This format addresses previous actions at the start and includes a clear action plan at the end. Other formats differ and are less focused on identifying and addressing specific actions. Staff confirmed that module reviews enhance assessment practice. Module reviews are scrutinised by programme managers, the Head of Higher Education and Heads of Learning to identify any common issues and good practice.

2.51 The College provides training for staff engaged in assessment, which covers aspects of the Quality Code. Awarding body link tutors support staff to understand assessment regulations relevant to each award. New staff are allocated a mentor, have their own professional development plan and are introduced to the relevant awarding bodies. Regular continuing professional development (CPD) days also focus on sharing good practice, including on assessment.

2.52 The College has processes in place for managing assessment and making assessment practices transparent to students, including arrangements for academic misconduct. Some shortcomings, however, were identified in terms of the rigour with which they are applied, in particular adherence to, and knowledge of, the College's Assessment Policy. The College's Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review in 2010 recommended that the College 'provide a specific feedback return date for each assessment and consider the use of interim feedback to inform future assignments', but the College was unable to specify how it has addressed this recommendation.

2.53 The College Assessment Policy states: 'In the majority of circumstances, it is anticipated that assessed work should be returned to students within ten working days of the submission date'. The awarding bodies' assessment policies also specify feedback return dates. The College's Policy also states that assessment briefs 'must make clear to students when they will receive feedback on the assessed work'. The review team did not see evidence that these two principles of the Assessment Policy, and awarding bodies' policies, are consistently adhered to, demonstrating a weakness in the operation of the policies. The student submission indicates that this lack of consistency is a factor influencing their learning.

2.54 Evidence provided did not support the College's assertion in the self-evaluation document that students are informed of timescales for feedback in handbooks. One programme handbook provided a feedback turnaround time of 'within three weeks', but other programme handbooks did not specify a return time.

2.55 The draft Self-Assessment Report for Higher Education 2013-14 identifies an action in the Quality Improvement Plan for 2014-15 on 'consistency in timeliness, quality and quantity of feedback' but the actions to address this do not explicitly focus on consistency and timeliness. There is an action to develop a higher education marking and feedback policy for formal adoption in 2015-16, but no detail as to whether this will include information on a consistent feedback return time and the process by which students will be informed of feedback dates.

2.56 Some assessment briefs seen by the review team contained feedback return dates but many did not. Those that did belonged only to the BA and FD Early Childhood Studies where feedback return dates vary from five to six weeks. Examples provided showed that some students are informed of feedback return dates in a range of three weeks to four and a half months.

2.57 Academic staff told the review team that they worked to a variety of deadlines for returning feedback, some set by the awarding body. None stated that all students are given a specific deadline by which they will receive feedback for each assessment or showed an awareness of this stipulation in assessment policies. Students confirmed that they experience variation of practice across programmes, and generally do not know when feedback will be available. Only students on the FD Early Childhood Studies confirmed they are given a date for feedback return when they are handed assignment briefs, as previously observed by the team.

2.58 Meetings with staff indicated both that the College was confident that programme teams give students dates for the return of feedback on assessment, and that some tutors may experience difficulty in working to a specific date because of work commitments and hesitancy to give specific dates for feedback. Students confirmed that their concern was more about the lack of an expected return date for feedback and less about unforeseeable slippages against expected dates.

2.59 The review team concludes that the College has broadly adequate quality assurance arrangements for the assessment of students, and they represent a moderate risks to quality. The lack of rigour with which quality assurance arrangements are applied arises from the lack of adherence to assessment policies and the College's unawareness of both the stipulation and this shortcoming. As such, the review team **recommends** that, by February 2015, the College develop an effective mechanism to ensure adherence to the assessment policy requirement that assessment briefs make clear to students when they will receive feedback. The team concludes that the College does not meet the Expectation, as it does not reliably fulfil its assessment arrangements.

Expectation: Not met

Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining

Findings

2.60 External examiners play a central role in the management of standards and quality of all higher education provision and are effectively responded to. External examiners are appointed by the College's partner institutions and awarding organisation in line with partnership agreements and the Pearson BTEC Centre Guide to Assessment Levels 4 to 7. The College liaises with external examiners to arrange visits, for assignment briefs and for further guidance on assessment strategies. The briefing of external examiners is normally carried out by the partner universities, with the College delivering its own induction as appropriate. External examiner reports are considered at programme meetings at which students are represented, and inform the production of programme monitoring reports. Based on these arrangements, the College meets the Expectation in principle.

2.61 The review team tested the Expectation through meetings with staff and students and scrutiny of external examiner reports, responses to these reports, partner agreements, minutes of meetings, and programme monitoring reports.

2.62 External examiner reports considered by the review team confirm that standards are of the level expected, and that assessment processes measure student achievement rigorously. The assessments reflect current professional practices in a number of programmes including equine and animal management provision and students are encouraged to demonstrate their knowledge of current developments and innovations.

2.63 Staff confirmed that external examiners have access to student assessments and visit the programme teams annually in accordance with awarding body and organisation requirements. External examiner reports are submitted to the Head of Higher Education and then distributed to programme teams for discussion in meetings. The College responds to external examiner reports in accordance with awarding body requirements and actions are set out and monitored through programme monitoring reports and action plans. The Self-Assessment Report for Higher Education and action plan capture key points and are reviewed by the Higher Education Standards, Quality and Enhancement Group prior to being reported to the senior management team. Action plans are monitored by programme managers and discussed at Higher Education Forum meetings with students as part of the quality assurance process. Key actions are noted in the Curriculum and Standards Higher Education Report biannually and inform staff development and resource priorities.

2.64 Students confirmed that programme handbooks inform them of the role of external examiners and that reports are available through the new higher education student engagement section of the VLE. Reports are also discussed with students at Boards of Study, and students are informed of actions taken in response to external examiner recommendations.

2.65 Oversight of quality enhancement based on external examiner reports is maintained by the Head of Higher Education and reported to the senior management team. Reports are used to inform improvements both at programme and College level, and as such the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of associated 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

2.66 The College has its own annual cycle of quality assurance reviews, in addition to those requested by awarding bodies and awarding organisations. Higher education programme managers submit annual reports to the Head of Learning and Standards based on a report template. The template is the same as that for further education provision and a higher education-specific template is being introduced for 2014-15. These reports feed into the Self-Assessment Report for Higher Education, produced by the Head of Higher Education.

2.67 Annual reports requested by awarding bodies are scrutinised by Directors of Faculty and Heads of Learning and Standards before final submission. The Head of Higher Education maintains oversight of higher education annual reporting. This provides an element of cross-College scrutiny of these external reports. Under these arrangements the College meets the Expectation in principle.

2.68 The review team tested this Expectation through reviewing programme monitoring reports, periodic review documentation, and access to the Student Engagement VLE, and meeting with staff and students.

2.69 The College takes student feedback and external examiner comments into account in the programme monitoring process. The programme monitoring report template includes a section on student feedback, including National Student Survey results. Student feedback is also gathered throughout the year, at the end of modules and in the lead-up to programme reviews. For 2014-15 the self-evaluation document states that certain programme monitoring documents will be made available to students on the Student Engagement VLE page.

2.70 Programme monitoring reports are clearly action focused: they require a response to previously identified actions and an action plan based on the annual review data. This enables the College to identify enhancements as a result of these processes. Staff confirmed that there is some peer review of the annual reporting processes because programme managers have to present their reports to the executive team.

2.71 The College has arrangements to establish working groups if timelier programme evaluations are required; that is, if there are circumstances that mean it should not wait until the annual review.

2.72 Although the College stated that a new template was being introduced for annual reviews of each higher education programme, meetings with staff confirmed this not to be the case. The Head of Higher Education has revised the process rather than the template so that programme managers no longer need to complete separate annual reports for the awarding body or organisation and the College. In future the College will accept reports for the awarding body or organisation for its own review processes.

2.73 Students confirmed the opportunities to comment on modules and programmes at regular intervals through course and module evaluations, and also appreciated the invitations to provide feedback during the course. Students confirmed that they are able to

provide regular feedback to programme managers individually or via course representatives and gave examples of where this resulted in changes. Students confirmed that they contribute to Course Boards and that the minutes are available to students on the VLE. The College runs a 'You Said, We Did' which was visible to the review team around the College, and confirmed as valuable by students who are informed of feedback from previous cohorts and actions taken in response.

2.74 Programme monitoring reports focus on both assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities. Self-assessment reports are action focused with clear enhancements identified. Progress against these actions is overseen by the Head of Higher Education, and the Higher Education Standards, Quality and Enhancement Group.

2.75 The review team concludes that the College has in place rigorous, regular and systemic processes for monitoring and reviewing programmes, which are overseen by the College's Higher Education Groups and Head of Higher Education, and as such the Expectation is met and the associated risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

2.76 The College has separate complaints and appeal policies. Students making complaints and academic appeals are able to use the College's internal procedure, and those of its awarding bodies and awarding organisation, where relevant. The College procedures for handling students' complaints and academic appeals are fair, effective and timely and allow for the Expectation to be met in principle.

2.77 To test the effectiveness of the College's procedures, the review team discussed the College's arrangements with senior staff and students. The team examined the policy and procedures available to students on the VLE, in student handbooks and through links to awarding body regulations, as well as on the College website.

2.78 Students confirmed that they are aware of the complaints procedure and how to access further information should they need it. The College's processes for managing complaints and appeals are thorough and transparent. The complaints procedure applies to all students at the College and other stakeholders, and has clear timeframes for the completion of various steps. Its steps include an informal stage, and representations to College directors and the executive team. Students can appeal complaint outcomes.

2.79 Information on academic appeals is available in student handbooks with links to awarding body regulations. The review team found inconsistencies in the information on appeals in some handbooks. The handbook for the FdSc Animal Behaviour and Welfare suggests that students can appeal against marks through discussions with tutors but later states that appeals against grades are not legitimate.

2.80 Taking account of the document from the College and discussions with staff and students, the review team concludes that the College has fair and timely procedures for handling students' complaints and academic appeals, and as such 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

2.81 Work experience is a requirement for a wide range of higher education programmes including counselling, early childhood studies, equine studies and animal management and behaviour and welfare. Work placement requirements differ and are set by the awarding bodies and organisations. Where work placements are mandatory, students are informed of the requirements at interview, during induction and through programme handbooks.

2.82 The College has clear procedures for supporting and managing provision with others, including on work placements. Students are responsible for securing their own work placements in the first instance, especially where the identification of placements forms part of the module assessment criteria. Tutors provide a range of advice and guidance based on programme requirements and individual circumstances, and ensure that placements offer suitable learning opportunities. When students experience difficulties in finding a suitable placement, support is available from the College Work Experience Coordinators who liaise with the programme team to ensure placements they identify meet academic requirements. The College keeps records, available to students, of local employers that have previously accepted the College's students, to help students identify placements. The College maintains oversight of placement opportunities through visits and monitoring students' development plans specific to their placements. These arrangements indicate that the Expectation is met in principle.

2.83 The review team tested the College's arrangements supporting and managing provision with others through scrutiny of programme guides, handbooks and procedures, and meetings with staff and students.

2.84 The College provides information for employers on work placements, and visits workplaces in advance of placements as appropriate. All placements are supported by a work experience form, a student-employer agreement and an employers' health and safety and safeguarding form. Placements are informed by discipline-specific requirements, such as for counselling provision, and additional contracts and safeguards are put in place, including confidentiality agreements, to comply with professional body requirements. All work-based learning is formally assessed and subject to internal verification and scrutiny by external examiners to assure academic standards and professional practices.

2.85 The management of placements and employer involvement in supervision varies according to programme requirements, but in all cases is recorded. Students on the FdA in Hospitality Management, for example, set workplace goals agreed with their employer and tutor. Students update their portfolios with support from their tutor and incorporate feedback from their employer. Visit officers and personal development planning unit tutors ensure that opportunities for learning in the workplace are maximised for all students. Where appropriate, as in the case of early childhood studies programmes, employers are provided with information booklets explaining the course and placement requirements, and details of any work-based assessment required of students. Work Experience Coordinators and visit officers are responsible for placement monitoring and the Work Experience Coordinator keeps central files and registers. The management and support of work-based

learning that ensures students' access to good-quality learning experiences is **good practice**.

2.86 The review team concludes that work-based learning constitutes an effective and valued part of many programmes and the College has clear procedures to support students and assure the quality of placement provision with others; as such the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.87 In reaching its judgement on the quality of student learning opportunities offered by the College, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

2.88 The College has appropriate arrangements for designing and developing programmes. The approach to learning and teaching is comprehensive, and promotes reflection of current practice and the identification of good practice. The College articulates a range of resources that support student achievement and the development of students' academic, personal and professional potential. It values the input of and promotes engagement with students and external examiners. Programme monitoring is rigorous and complements the College's approaches to student engagement and enhancement. Information on complaints and appeals is accessible and procedures are suitable. The College has arrangements for the careful management of higher education provision delivered with others, including work placements.

2.89 The review team found that seven of nine Expectations are met with low associated risks. Good practice is identified in relation to Expectation B3, where effective staff engagement in continuous professional development enhances the quality of teaching and learning, and is valued by students. Good practice is also evident in relation to Expectation B10, where the management and support of work-based learning ensures students' access to good-quality learning experiences.

2.90 The review team concludes that the Expectation for B2 was met but the lack of an admissions policy and appeals process available for students applying to study at the College represented a moderate risk because it is relevant to all programmes, despite the risk centring on a small element of the College provision. The team recommends that the College approve and implement an appeals process for admissions by March 2015.

2.91 The review team concludes that Expectation B6 is not met because of the lack of adherence to assessment policies, and the College's unawareness of both the stipulation regarding student feedback return dates and this shortcoming. This represents a moderate risk to quality because the College's procedures are broadly adequate but there are shortcomings in terms of the rigour with which they are applied. The team recommends that the College develop an effective mechanism by February 2015 to ensure adherence to the assessment policy requirement that assessment briefs make clear to students when they will receive feedback.

2.92 Nearly all applicable Expectations have been met and those that are not met do not present a serious risk to the management of this area. The College is aware of its responsibilities for assuring quality, and its responses to previous review activities provide confidence that recommendations will be addressed promptly. The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities **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 The College website provides a comprehensive range of publicly accessible information about the College's higher education provision. Information is also available via the UCAS website, awarding bodies' websites and in the College's higher education prospectus. The College provides students with extensive information about their higher education programmes in handbooks and quality assurance policies. Such arrangements indicate that the Expectation is met in principle.

3.2 The review team tested that information was accessible and fit for purpose by scrutinising the College website and virtual learning environment, prospectuses and programme handbooks. The review team also met with senior staff, academic staff, ancillary and professional support staff, and students.

3.3 The website contains a wide range of detailed information about the overall College strategy and performance. The College's mission, values and overall strategy are articulated additionally in the Annual Report.

3.4 Prospective students can access detailed information about the College's courses from an electronic prospectus, available online and in hardcopy. The website contains appropriate information on admission criteria, application procedures and fees.

3.5 The website contains extensive information on being a higher education student at the College, including details on the University partners, facilities and student support. It provides information on campuses, start dates, the duration and modes of study, awarding bodies and enrolment information. The College has arrangements so that publicly available programme information is annually updated by the marketing department in consultation with programme managers, and includes information on programme modules or units, learning outcomes, assessment strategies, and progression. Awarding bodies comment on the higher education prospectus to ensure their details are reflected accurately. The College has a sign-off procedure for updates to their publicly available information whereby the marketing department and Head of Higher Education are ultimately responsible for checking changes and ensuring consistency across the College websites and publications.

3.6 A policies and procedures page on the College website makes accessible information on the College's cross-College policies, including the College Charter, equality and diversity, complaints process and student disciplinary policy. The College reviews and manages quality assurance policies and procedures, which clearly state the date they are approved and the date they are due for review.

3.7 Programme managers are responsible for information contained in programme handbooks, although the templates for handbooks vary according to the awarding bodies or awarding organisation. Information provided in handbooks is fit for purpose and includes details of programmes, learning outcomes, programme and assessment regulations, and

general College information. However, there is a lack of consistency in the information provided in programme handbooks where some, but not all, have assessment calendars, feedback return dates and information on recognition of prior learning.

3.8 The College uses its VLE to engage students with their programmes, to support learning and teaching, and to manage assessment. It is used to engage students in quality assurance arrangements, and as such external examiner reports are made available on it. It is also used by College support services to make their advice and guidance more accessible. In addition, some programme teams use social media to communicate with students. Students confirmed that this enhanced dialogue with programme staff and improved information available to support their studies.

3.9 Information available through student support services is extensive, and comprises information on admissions, careers, tutorials, personal support, additional learning support and student engagement. The College website has clearly signposted information to each of these services, including contact details to ensure they are accessible to students.

3.10 The review team concludes that the College's management of information about higher education provision is effective, ensuring that information is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy, and as such the Expectation is met and the associated risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

3.11 In reaching its judgement on the quality of the information about learning opportunities offered by the College, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

3.12 The College provides students with detailed, fit for purpose information about its higher education provision and ancillary services. Students confirm that the accuracy and usefulness of the information in their choice of study support their success in their studies. The wide range of information hosted on the College's website ensures it is accessible, and the College provides many key documents such as most handbooks in hardcopy. The College has arrangements to review and regularly update publicly available information, handbooks and quality assurance processes.

3.13 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met because the College provides information about its higher education that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. The associated risk is low owing to the College's sound understanding of its responsibilities for the provision of information and the effective management of information about its higher education provision.

3.14 The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities **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 has dedicated Higher Education Groups which have responsibility for oversight, reviewing and enhancing higher education provision, such as the Higher Education Standards, Quality and Enhancement Group. The Principal encourages a critical perspective on College activities in the appointment of members of the Board of Governors who can identify areas for enhancement. The Principal introduced a five-year Higher Education Curriculum Strategy on arrival at the College that was scrutinised through College processes and approved by the Board of Governors for 2014-20. This provides the strategic lead for the development and enhancement of the College's higher education provision.

4.2 College strategies recognise the role of the student voice, and the College uses it extensively in its enhancement approach. It has a number of mechanisms in place to gather and respond to student feedback. Much of this feedback informs the College's rigorous annual self-assessment reporting processes. The College has arrangements for sharing good practice across programmes, such as through the Higher Education Forum. These arrangements indicate that the College meets the Expectation in principle.

4.3 The review team tested this Expectation by evaluating committee terms of reference, College strategies, the higher education enhancement action plan, the use of student feedback, programme monitoring reviews, minutes of meetings, and the provision of staff training. The team also discussed enhancement in meetings with staff and students.

4.4 Staff confirmed that there is a clear and shared understanding of the strategic approach to higher education, and management mechanisms focus on enhancing higher education. The Head of Higher Education has a significant role in implementing appropriate systems and processes that ensure the distinctive features of higher education provision are maintained and enhanced. Programme self-assessment processes focus on quality assurance and action-focused enhancement. The College has a holistic approach across all higher education programmes taken to improve the quality of students' learning experiences, pulled together in a higher education enhancement action plan. The review team identified **good practice** in the dedicated management and resourcing of higher education which provides effective oversight and a structure for enhancement.

4.5 Students confirmed that staff invite regular informal and formal feedback, and gave examples of programme and module changes made in response to their suggestions. Students appreciated being informed of how actions in response to feedback were progressing. Students valued the higher education student engagement site on the VLE as a useful resource for accessing records of meetings and College action plans based on review processes. Staff noted that the VLE site is a work in progress and they are taking steps to maximise its effectiveness and relevance to students.

4.6 The College's approach to CPD supports the industrial relevance of teaching staff as it requires up to five days' work experience a year. Teachers confirm that they value the opportunities to keep their professional knowledge up to date. Both staff and students confirm that industry-relevant knowledge enhanced the curriculum and the student learning experience. The College also has a strategic approach to sharing good practice across

higher education provision. Regular higher education CPD days are held and the sharing of good practice is always part of the agenda. The Principal also brings in external expertise and key speakers to encourage staff to consider different approaches to their work.

4.7 The College continues to enhance its dedicated higher education spaces and has made financial investments to provide bespoke teaching spaces, for example for the higher education counselling programmes. This development was in response to market demand for counselling programmes and to enhance the College's reputation for these courses.

4.8 The review team concludes the College has in place structures, processes and staff that ensure it takes deliberate steps at provider level to improve the quality of learning opportunities, and as such the Expectation is met and the associated risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.9 In reaching its judgement on the enhancement of student learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

4.10 The College's commitment to enhancement is evident in its strategic priorities, and in its quality assurance procedures which promote feedback and the identification of actions to improve the quality of learning opportunities through deliberative processes at all levels of the organisation. The College's decision-making bodies, the Higher Education Groups, provide senior oversight of enhancement and ensure enhancement is delivered at provider level. The College's arrangements are effective and students and staff cited examples of enhancement. There are processes that identify and disseminate good practice across higher education provision. The review team identified good practice in the dedicated management and resourcing of higher education which provide effective oversight and a structure for enhancement.

4.11 The team concludes that the Expectation is met because the College has in place structures, processes and staff that ensure it takes deliberate steps at provider level to improve the quality of learning opportunities and as such the associated risk is low.

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

5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1 The College has a clear focus on the development of employability skills which are an integral part of a number of programmes, as outlined in *Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others*. Employability is built into programmes during the development and validation stages and students are well prepared for placements. A number of programmes including HND Equine, FdSc Animal Management, FdSc and BSc Animal Behaviour and Welfare, FdA and BA Counselling and FdA and BA Early Childhood Studies have a clear focus on the development of professional skills through work-based learning, and students have support from tutors and workplace supervisors. Work experience and PDP modules form the core of the building of employability skills for all higher education vocational provision.

5.2 Through a review of programme definitive documents, handbooks and work-based learning guides, and through meetings with staff and students, the team found clear evidence of the development of employability skills. Engagement with employers and sector bodies underpins the development of foundation degrees in particular. Liaison with sector employers informs not only curriculum content but also the inclusion of industry technologies and assessments to prepare students for the workplace. The fitness for purpose of the programme design is further tested during the validation period, with panels including sector specialists. Programme specifications outline how employability is addressed through the units and programme as a whole. For example, the College has developed good relationships with animal parks to support the degrees in animal management and behaviour and welfare, and the FdA in Golf reflects the Professional Golf Association Criteria.

5.3 A number of programmes including the BSc in Commercial Management and FdSc in Counselling benefit from professional body accreditation. The BSc Commercial Management is accredited by the Chartered Institute of Building which enables students to progress in their studies to become quality or quantity surveyors. The counselling provision is accredited by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy and supports graduates to register as counsellors with the Health Professions Council. These accreditations provide students with access to additional resources and journals which include job opportunities. Vocational programmes are aligned with sector skills requirements as appropriate, which further support the development of employability skills. In the case of early childhood studies, the common core skills and knowledge for the Children's Workforce Development Council underpin the learning outcomes and are mapped to the programme structure. Additionally, key graduate attributes and transferable skills are addressed in definitive programme documents and through the personal development and planning modules, which also foster the development of reflective practice. Students can access broader support in developing portfolios, preparing for interviews and making applications through tutors and the College careers team.

5.4 The College holds a number of industry events to support engagement with employers including industry evenings and workshops. As yet the College does not have an employer forum, but plans are in place to establish an employer working group to advise the College on aspects of employability. The programme teams also invite guest speakers to talk to students to enrich learning, and arrange visits to organisations where appropriate. External examiners have commented favourably on the quality and range of student employability activities.

5.5 Students have access to the careers, advice and guidance services, which have obtained the Matrix Award kite mark. The careers, advice and guidance team collect and

record destination data which is used by curriculum teams in their self-assessment reports and programme monitoring reports. Job vacancy information is also made available to programme teams.

5.6 The review team notes that the College has no alumni association, though past students are invited back to attend events or talk to students.

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 27 to 29 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* (FHEQIS).

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.

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