Higher Education Review of Hadlow College

September 2014

Contents

About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Hadlow College. The review took place from 23 to 25 September 2014 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Mr Craig Best (student reviewer)
- Ms Erika Beumer
- Dr Helen Corkill.

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

In Higher Education Review the QAA review team:

- makes judgements on
  - the setting and maintenance of 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 5.

In reviewing Hadlow 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[4] and has links to the review handbook and other informative documents. For an explanation of terms see the glossary at the end of this report.

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[1] The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: www.qaa.ac.uk/qualitycode.
[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 Hadlow College

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

- The maintenance of the threshold academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding bodies and other 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 Hadlow College.

- The range and variety of vocational and commercial resources available to students and the ways these are used both within and alongside the curriculum to enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential (Expectation B4).
- The tailored academic support provided for students transitioning into, and between, higher education levels (Expectation B4).
- The development of a comprehensive and accessible web microsite to enhance higher education information and identity (Expectation C).
- The engagement by staff at all levels of the organisation with a wide range of enhancement activities (Enhancement).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendation** to Hadlow College.

By March 2015:

- amend College processes and procedures to ensure the effective governance, management and monitoring of all credit-bearing placement and work-based learning activities wherever they are provided (Expectation B10).

Theme: Student Employability

The College approach to student employability is driven from a strategic level and the College has established structures and processes to ensure that employer engagement is facilitated at both strategic and operational levels. The College has developed a number of key commercial partnerships which enables it to be well informed of commercial requirements and current industry practices. These commercial activities are used across all programme areas to inform the curriculum and develop students' industry-related skills and experiences. Student employability is systematically embedded across all programmes through the inclusion of core graduate attributes and work placements in each programme in addition to other work-based learning and employer engagement activities.

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

About Hadlow College

Hadlow College (the College) is a specialist college delivering further and higher education programmes across a range of land-based disciplines. The main campus is located near Tonbridge in Kent although the College has specialist educational and commercial facilities across the region to support the delivery of its programmes. The College has around 2,800 full-time and part-time students of which 537 are enrolled on higher education programmes. The majority of the College's higher education provision is delivered through an agreement with the University of Greenwich (the University) which validates foundation degrees, bachelor's degrees and higher national certificates and diplomas. These programmes are across the discipline areas of equine, agriculture, fisheries, countryside, landscape, horticulture, garden design and animal management, conservation and behaviour. The College has recently developed a higher national diploma in sport through a direct agreement with Pearson although this programme has yet to commence. The College also has a franchise agreement with Canterbury Christ Church University for the delivery of teacher training qualifications which are outside the scope of the Higher Education Review.

The College's mission statement for 2010-15 is 'Hadlow - the outstanding land based College'. This vision is underpinned by five strategic objectives and 25 operational objectives. The operational objectives form the basis of key performance indicators that are routinely monitored and systematically used to drive improvements across the College. The strategic direction of the College is determined and overseen by the Board of Governors, and the Executive team comprises the Principal supported by a Vice Principal and Director of Finances and Resources. The Vice Principal is assisted by three Associate Principals with cross-College responsibilities for Quality and Staff Development; Curriculum; and Student Support Services. The College senior management team is reviewed annually and is due to be restructured in light of the College's recent acquisition of K College. The senior management team meets twice a month and receives reports from all key committees and groups including the monthly Higher Education Managers Group and fortnightly Heads of Faculty meetings.

Since the last Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review (IQER) in April 2010, the College has expanded its facilities for further and higher education students, including the opening in January 2013 of a new site in the Royal Borough of Greenwich for equine provision. A site has also been acquired for a new commercial country park in East Kent to support the delivery of countryside, conservation, landscape and biodiversity programmes as well as expanding research and employer engagement opportunities. The College has also significantly developed the use of technology in teaching, learning and assessment through investment in the infrastructure, new specialist equipment, online resources and the development of the virtual learning environment. The Learning Resources Centre underwent a significant redevelopment in 2012 and a new Careers Hub has been established on the main campus to meet the changing needs of higher education students.

The College has continued to develop in areas that were recognised as good practice in the last IQER report, including the systematic processes for gathering student feedback; the strong and effective links with employers, professional bodies and commercial partners; the development of high-quality teaching through staff development activities; the specialist resources for learning; and the approach to providing information to external stakeholders. Some of these areas continue to represent ways of working which make a positive contribution to the management of higher education at the College and are recognised as good practice in this report. The College has also made good progress on all of the seven desirable recommendations made at the last review and the positive impact of changes, such as those made to assessment feedback, the development of the Learning Resource Centre and the introduction of peer observation for staff, is evident.

Explanation of the findings about Hadlow College

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

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

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

a) ensure that the requirements of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (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's roles and responsibilities as delegated by the University are clearly set out in its partnership agreement. These are clearly understood by the College and reflected in the College's Higher Education Strategy. The qualifications provided by the College in partnership with the University adhere to the principles laid out in the University's Quality Assurance Handbook. This specifies the external reference points which inform programme approval decisions, including the FHEQ and appropriate subject and qualification benchmarks. For the programme approved with Pearson, consideration of relevant frameworks and benchmarks is undertaken by the awarding organisation. Adherence to these regulatory frameworks for academic standards enables the College to meet Expectation A1 of the Quality Code*.*

1.2   The review team tested the College's approach to the operationalisation of these regulatory frameworks by examining documents setting out the quality assurance processes that drive programme approval, monitoring and review and by reviewing programme specifications and reports of programme approval and review events. The team considered how information about qualifications is presented to students by looking at student handbooks and information held on the virtual learning environment. The review team also talked to staff and students.

1.3   The College has delegated authority from the University to design and develop new awards. Detailed procedures, forms and guidance to staff developing programmes are provided to the College through the University's Quality Assurance Handbook. There is internal scrutiny of the viability and appropriateness of each new qualification proposed, including the appropriateness of the level, the nature and title of the award and the content, before submission for formal University approval. The University ensures the programmes align with the relevant qualification descriptor and approves all qualifications. The College approaches qualification development in consultation with professional bodies, where relevant, and in active consultation with employers.

1.4   A detailed Programme Proposal and Programme Approval Document are completed for each new programme. These ensure that qualifications align with the FHEQ. The Critical Appraisal and Programme Review Document ensures that qualifications are reviewed against the FHEQ and appropriate benchmark statements. Staff are aware of the FHEQ, although there were instances of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) being named as a reference point rather than the FHEQ. Staff are conversant with subject and qualification benchmarking. During the process of designing and approving new programmes, University staff provide support in ensuring adherence to appropriate levels and benchmarking. All higher education staff attend the College's Annual Higher Education Conference which also assists staff in their understanding of the FHEQ and relevant benchmarks.

1.5   The review team confirms that all qualifications have programme specifications, which provide the programme learning outcomes for each award and indicate how these are met across the range of component modules (referred to by the College, and hereafter, as courses). All programme handbooks, course guides and programme information on the virtual learning environment use level descriptors drawn from the FHEQ and outline how qualifications are awarded based on the achievement of learning outcomes. This information is communicated to students in accessible student handbooks and through clear sections on the virtual learning environment. External examiners confirm the appropriateness of methods of assessment in the context of intended learning outcomes. All qualifications are titled in accordance with the conventions specified in the FHEQ.

1.6   In summary, the College effectively fulfils the requirements of its degree-awarding body and organisation. Ultimate responsibility for allocating each qualification to the appropriate level in the FHEQ rests with the University, although the specification of learning outcomes ensures that programmes align with the FHEQ and internal and external examination processes confirm that learning outcomes have been achieved. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation A1 is met and the risk in this area is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.7   The University is responsible for securing academic standards and establishing the academic frameworks that govern the award of credit and qualifications. The University framework for awarding degrees is detailed in the University Academic Regulations for Taught Awards and information to College staff is provided in the University's Quality Assurance Handbook. The requirements of Pearson awards are set out in the BTEC UK Quality Assurance Handbook and BTEC Programme Specification. The frameworks and regulations provided by the University enable the College to meet Expectation A2.1 of the Quality Code.

1.8   The review team scrutinised a range of documents outlining the academic frameworks and regulations applied by the University and College. The review team also spoke to staff during the review visit to ascertain their understanding of responsibilities within the context of the partnership agreement.

1.9   The academic frameworks and regulations pertaining to the higher education provision at the College are clearly outlined and are understood by staff. The College has a specific higher education page on its intranet which provides links to relevant University documents and to any alternative College policies where these apply, such as the College Assessment Policy for Higher Education. The review team considers that the University and College provide transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern the award of academic credit and qualifications. The engagement of the College with the requirements set by the awarding body, combined with the documentary evidence provided, demonstrates that Expectation A2.1 is met and the risk in this area 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 responsibility for maintaining the definitive record for each programme and qualification lies with the University. As noted in A1.1, all qualifications are outlined in programme specifications which detail the aims, intended learning outcomes, awards, programme structure and assessment. Programme specifications form part of the definitive programme document and are held on the shared University system. The definitive records are used by the College as the key point of reference for programme information. The approach to maintaining definitive records enables the College to meet Expectation A2.2 of the Quality Code.

1.11   The review team examined programme specifications, schemes of work, programme handbooks and assessment briefs as well as reviewing information provided on programmes through the virtual learning environment and marketing materials. The review team also spoke to staff during the visit about the programme approval processes in place at the College.

1.12   College staff are aware of the requirements set out in the programme specifications and ensure information provided regarding programmes is aligned with the approved documentation. The College ensures the accuracy of information by maintaining a master file of programme information which is used to inform programme handbooks and publicity materials. This information is also used to assist with annual resourcing and planning activities. The review team considers that appropriate mechanisms are in place for maintaining definitive programme information and that these are used appropriately by College staff. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation A2.2 is met and the risk in this area 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

1.13   As outlined in A1.1, the University approves all academic programmes and provides detailed procedures, forms and guidance to the College on programme development. The College is responsible for the design of new programmes and has established its own internal approval mechanisms prior to submission for University approval. All new programmes are formally proposed to the College's Curriculum Planning and Review Group (CPRG) to ensure that there is appropriate fit with the College strategic plan and that there are suitable progression opportunities for students. The College also uses established employer liaison groups to inform the direction and content of new provision, with the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) providing strategic input and operational advice being provided by Faculty Industry Liaison Meetings (FiLM) in each subject area. The University and College processes for programme approval enable the College to meet Expectation A3.1 of the Quality Code.

1.14   The review team evaluated the effectiveness of the College's programme design and approval processes by reviewing the relevant policies, procedures and guidance made available to staff by the University and College, by analysing the documentation used for recent programme approval and by considering the minutes of internal meetings. The team also met staff involved in the internal design and approval of programmes, a University Link Tutor and industry representatives to explore their role in these processes.

1.15   The forms used in the design and approval process are detailed and ensure that the University receives sufficient evidence to confirm and monitor both the appropriateness of academic standards setting and the College's adherence to University policies and strategies. The review team considers that the approach to the FHEQ, subject benchmarking, credit and learning outcomes in programme development was robust and promoted sufficient attention to standards setting.

1.16   Overall, the process from the decision to start a new programme to submission to the University in line with College and University procedures was regarded as effective and thorough. The College has established internal approval processes which complement those of the University and there was evidence that these are effectively implemented. The approach ensures that academic standards are set at a level that meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification and are in accordance with University academic frameworks and regulations. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation A3.1 is met and the risk in this area 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

1.1   All programmes are subject to the University's Academic Regulations for Taught Awards. The College has developed its own higher education assessment policies and procedures which are in accordance with the University assessment requirements. All components of assessment are agreed at validation, which includes verification that assessment is appropriate to the subject area and the learning outcomes. Assessment components and learning outcomes for programmes and courses are articulated in programme information provided to students, and student work is assessed against these criteria. The College Assessment Policy sets out the procedures for marking and feedback by staff. Procedures for the consideration of marks and awards through assessment boards and by external examiners are outlined by the University and include a two-tiered approach of Subject Assessment Panels (SAP) and Progression and Award Boards (PAB). The approach to the intended learning outcomes and assessment enables the College to meet Expectation A3.2 of the Quality Code.

1.2   The review team tested the College's approach by examining the relevant policies, procedures and guidance made available to staff by the University and College, analysing the external examiner reports and considering the minutes of internal meetings. The review team also met staff involved in the assessment of programmes and a University Link Tutor.

1.3   The College employs appropriate systems of double marking, internal verification and moderation. Students understand learning outcomes and their relationship with assessment. External examiners are used to comment on assessment briefs in advance of the student being assessed and to review student work. External examiner reports reviewed by the team confirmed that assessments enable students to achieve the learning outcomes as appropriate to their awards, and that standards of assessment are comparable.

1.4   Assessment results are considered and confirmed through the SAP meetings which are chaired by the University and attended by College staff and external examiners. These meetings also review the spread of marks across all assessment components and any issues are referred to the College Higher Education Managers Group and inform Programme Monitoring Reports. The PAB is held at the end of the academic year and ensures that assessment decisions on progression and conferment of awards are in line with the required regulations and standards. Students are aware of the purpose of these assessment meetings through the programme handbook, and staff make students aware of this process through group tutorial sessions. External examiners are required to report on the maintenance and comparability of standards at the meetings and in their annual reports.

1.5   The overall process for designing assessments, from the point of programme approval to confirming the achievement of learning outcomes through SAP and PAB,

ensures that due attention is given to the maintenance of academic standards. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation A3.2 is met and the risk in this area 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

1.6   University requirements for the monitoring and review of programmes are articulated within the University Quality Assurance Handbook. Course Monitoring Reports produced at the end of each course report on issues pertaining to standards and quality and include student achievement statistics and external examiner feedback. These inform Programme Monitoring Reports completed at the end of the academic year which consider a range of internal and external feedback and include action planning for the forthcoming year. The College uses the Programme Monitoring Reports alongside other College and University data to inform an annual Higher Education Self-Assessment Report (SAR) which is closely monitored at senior management level to ensure appropriate actions and continuous improvement. The College also undertakes annual health check activities for all higher and further education provision which consider a broad range of data and generate action plans which are also monitored by senior management. The College produces an Annual Institutional Report for the University which reflects upon the operation and development of the partnership. In line with University requirements, programmes are subject to periodic review every five years in a process managed by the University. The approach to intended monitoring and review enables the College to meet Expectation A3.3 of the Quality Code.

1.7   The review team tested the College approach to monitoring and review by considering Course and Programme Monitoring Reports, external examiner reports and responses, and documentation produced through the College self-assessment processes. The review team also talked to staff to explore the operation of the annual monitoring and review activities.

1.8   The Programme Monitoring Reports provide a critical evaluation of student achievement and operational matters at the programme level. There is evidence that external examiner comments are given careful consideration and that actions drawn from the analysis contribute to a cycle of enhancement. Remedial action is taken as soon as possible and communicated back to the external examiner and the University. The annual SAR for higher education is used to monitor actions outlined in Programme Monitoring Reports, and the associated Quality Improvement Action Plan is reviewed regularly by senior management.

1.9   The overall processes for the monitoring and review of programmes are thorough, and provide information on whether academic standards are appropriately maintained and achieved. The College fully engages with the policies and procedures of its degree-awarding bodies for monitoring and review and has added to these through internal checks and self-assessment activities. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation A3.3 is met and the risk in this area is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.10   The University requires the input of external and independent expertise in programme approval through membership of University Programme Review and Approval Panels. Once approved, every programme has an assigned external examiner who reports to the University and College on quality and standards. Where appropriate, professional, regulatory and statutory body requirements are considered and the College currently has one professional body linked to programmes in landscape and garden design. As noted in A3.1, the College has established employer liaison meetings across all provision to help inform programme design and development at strategic and operational levels. The use of external expertise enables the College to meet Expectation A3.4 of the Quality Code.

1.11   The review team evaluated the College's effectiveness in seeking and responding to external expertise by considering minutes of employer liaison meetings and internal qualification approval events, reading external examiner reports, and tracking responses to external examiners through reporting and monitoring structures. The review team also met staff and employers to explore the College approach.

1.12   The College has developed a distinctive approach to working with a range of employers and values the input of industry professionals. BAC advises the College at a strategic level and specific employers are invited to advise on new qualifications which are linked to strategic developments. FiLMs are used regularly to consider programme development, as well as internal and periodic review. Employers advise on content and currency to inform design and development of programmes. While it is usual for a practitioner to be a member of a review panel, industry externals do not routinely participate in the panel or the proposal team for an approval event.

1.13   External examiners are drawn from both academic and industry backgrounds. This approach helps current industry practice in specialist areas to be observed and embedded into programmes as well as ensuring that threshold academic standards are maintained and achieved. However, there was evidence from reports that some industry externals, while making valuable contributions on currency and content, were not able to comment fully on the comparability of standards, and on occasion were not fully conversant with FHEQ levels and relevant benchmarking.

1.14   The College effectively engages with the University procedures for engaging external and independent expertise in setting, approving and maintaining academic standards. In addition, the College has established effective employer engagement mechanisms and makes good use of its external industry links and advisers. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation A3.4 is met and the risk in this area 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

1.15 In determining its judgement on the maintenance of threshold academic standards of awards at Hadlow College, the review team considered the findings against the criteria as outlined in Annex 2 of the relevant handbook. All Expectations in this area are met and the level of risk is considered low in all cases.

1.16 The approach to the maintenance of academic standards is defined by the awarding body which provides clear frameworks and regulations for the approval and assessment of academic programmes. The University procedures are consistently applied by the College and generally operate effectively in the setting, approving and monitoring of academic standards. Where the College has developed its own processes and procedures, these complement University requirements and reflect areas of strategic importance for the College. Both University and College policies and procedures are understood by staff and provide secure frameworks for the maintenance of academic standards.

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

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

Findings

2.1   The College design and develop programmes in line with the University's Quality Assurance Handbook and submit these to the University for approval. The internal College processes for the design, development and approval of programmes prior to submission to the University are outlined under Expectation A3.1. These internal processes are also applied to consider any subsequent changes to programmes prior to University approval. The approach taken to the design, development and approval of programmes enables the College to meet Expectation B1 of the Quality Code.

2.2   The review team tested the College approach to programme design by reviewing programme approval documents, programme approval guidelines and forms used during the programme approval process, and talked with staff and employers during the review visit.

2.3   The College's Curriculum Planning and Review Group (CPRG) works effectively in scrutinising proposals and advising senior management of curriculum planning and development. Employer links are evident through the biannual FiLMs in all curriculum areas which provide employers with the opportunity to contribute to further and higher education curriculum planning. These meetings inform the decision-making process for new programmes and are used regularly to consider programme development. Where FiLMs are not directly involved in programme development, individual employers are contacted by teams. BAC advises the College at a strategic level and plays an integral role in programme development. Specific employers advise on new qualifications linked to strategic developments.

2.4   The processes for making changes to programmes, including consultation with students, are well structured and have specific deadlines that the academic team needs to meet. This ensures that all documentation is ready for review by both the internal reviewers and the University and review team confirmed that changes are well documented.

2.5   Overall, the review team concludes that there are effective processes for the design and approval of programmes. The College processes facilitate detailed consideration of programme proposals in terms of the strategic positioning, development of the curriculum and operational and resource considerations. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation B1 is met and the risk in this area 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

2.6   The College's Admissions Policy applies to all applicants for higher education programmes validated by the University. All full-time students are admitted through UCAS and part-time students through the College online application system. Information on admissions is available via the website and higher education prospectus including a designated Rural University microsite. A series of pre-induction activities are offered to prospective students to provide additional information regarding study at the College. The College provides training to admissions staff and monitor the application of the admissions process, the recruitment position and feedback from new entrants. The approach to recruitment and admissions enables the College to meet Expectation B2 of the Quality Code.

2.7   The review team scrutinised the admissions policy in conjunction with the linked procedural documentation. The review team also looked at the operation of the process by talking to staff and current full-time and part-time students.

2.8   The review team confirms that training is given to staff involved in admissions for both part-time and full-time applications. There was evidence that the College reviews and monitors the admissions process and uses this data to implement improvements. An example of development is demonstrated by the strategic decision to split pre-induction activities between enquiries and applicants.

2.9   Information on admissions provided to prospective students is clear and designed to ensure all prospective students are informed of programme details and requirements prior to application. Prospectuses are to a high standard and the content is informative, well ordered and accessible. The production of the higher education prospectus since the last review, combined with the detailed Rural University microsite, provides good information for prospective students. The College holds a number of scheduled taster events and open evenings throughout the academic year. Once an applicant has confirmed their place at the College, they are invited to attend the transition summer school and higher education pre-induction days prior to enrolment. Students confirm that the admissions process was straightforward and information provided by the College was clear.

2.10   The College makes effective use of its admissions processes to identify prospective students with particular learning and support needs. These processes are carried out as part of the induction process and referrals are made to the Learning Support Unit for individual student follow-up.

2.11   Overall, the review team considers that the College has a clear and comprehensive admissions policy which is appropriately applied and monitored. The College's approach to admissions is inclusive and accessible to students through guidance made available on the College's external website. The review team concludes that Expectation B2 is met and the risk in this area is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.12   The College articulates and systematically reviews and enhances the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices through a variety of strategic and operational mechanisms. This is outlined principally through the Teaching Learning and Assessment Policy, but also through strategies on lesson observation, peer observation, e-learning, staff development and scholarly activity, and the Expert Learner Strategy. Collectively these approaches to enhancing the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices enable the College to meet Expectation B3 of the Quality Code.

2.13   The review team considered the operation of well established lesson observation practices through analysis of the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy and supporting documents. It looked at the role of students as observers in this process. The operation of peer observation through the teaching squares scheme was examined. The team talked to staff involved with management, teaching and support, and to students, about the opportunities provided by the College and their experiences of teaching and learning at the College.

2.14   The review team confirms that the College places high importance on its systematic and rigorous approach to monitoring the quality of teaching. A variety of mechanisms to observe teaching are employed, including graded lesson observations, 15-minute 'snapshot' observations and learning walks. New staff start with supportive observations. Students are trained to participate in lesson observations, and do so in tandem with an experienced member of staff, although the participation of higher education students is currently low. The thorough approach to lesson observations underpins the College's self-assessment processes in that quality improvement of observations is set against targets, linked to key performance indicators and monitored through the Quality Improvement Action Plan.

2.15   Peer observation, introduced since the IQER, is well understood and undertaken by staff through the systematic introduction of teaching squares. Staff appreciate the opportunity to observe teaching and learning across different faculties. Peer observation is introduced during teacher training and new teaching staff are given the opportunity to observe colleagues as a standard feature of induction. All curriculum staff are required to carry out a minimum of two peer observations each year and to feedback on good practice to colleagues. Observations are completed prior to annual appraisal and are reflected in continuing professional development (CPD) records and inform planning for further staff development.

2.16   The College takes a systematic approach to the identification and provision of staff development. All teaching staff are required to undertake 30 hours' CPD per annum and a variety of in-house CPD activity is offered two afternoons per week, and on three staff development days per year. The College also organises a dedicated higher education conference every year. CPD is recorded, reflected on at appraisal, and its impact is evaluated. Funding is allocated through annual budget allocation processes. The College supports staff to undertake subject updating, higher academic and professional qualifications, scholarly activity and understanding pedagogy related to the delivery of higher

education in the further education context. The College also has an Advanced Practitioner who supports new staff but is also available to support and develop ideas on teaching and learning. Assessment mechanisms have been a particular recent focus.

2.17   The College is a member of the Higher Education Academy (HEA). One member of staff has achieved professional recognition for higher education teaching through the HEA and another is in progress. Working with the University, the College intends that in late autumn 2014 Higher Education Programme Leaders should start to work towards recognition through the Professional Standards Framework.

2.18   Overall, the review team considers that the approach to developing learning opportunities and teaching practices is thorough and effective. Staff at all levels conveyed a strong sense of commitment to the College's approach to learning and teaching. A rigorous lesson observation strategy, thorough and consistently applied quality improvement processes, and the College's commitment to staff development and scholarly activity demonstrate that Expectation B3 is met and that the risk in this area 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

2.19   The College has a range of strategies and policies to ensure the provision and monitoring of learning opportunities and resources. The Higher Education Strategy 2013-16 provides the framework for the development and delivery of higher education within the College. Approved new programmes are included within the annual Business Planning Cycle to ensure appropriate resources are in place and resources are also considered within CPRG meetings. The Higher Education Quality Strategy outlines the quality mechanisms which monitor and evaluate this, including the use of the Higher Education SAR and key performance indicators to identify and act on issues pertaining to resources. The Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy provides guidance for delivery and optimising student learning opportunities. The approach to the provision of resources and support enables the College to meet Expectation B4 of the Quality Code.

2.20   The review team considered the effectiveness of these strategies and mechanisms in practice by analysing strategy and policy documents, reports of annual monitoring and review activity, and supporting documentation. The review team also met staff, including professional, academic and learning support staff, and employers, and talked to students about the ways in which the College enables them to develop and achieve through their studies.

2.21   The College takes a strategic approach to the allocation of learning resources, which includes consideration of the specialist needs of each programme and the vocational and academic skills required to deliver each subject area. A contingency fund is maintained to facilitate in-year purchases, which are unforeseen at the time of the annual internal bidding process. The provision of resources is monitored and evaluated through the use of key performance indicators and through programme monitoring.

2.22   Progress on the virtual learning environment has been rapid and although still evolving, use is now well established. The Learning Resource Centre has recently been completely remodelled, and students and staff confirmed that this is now a well used resource. A Careers Hub was established in 2012-13, and links with higher education curricula are developing. The College has invested in a wide variety of vocationally related resources, including specialist learning and commercial technologies. The purchase of resources reflects close commercial relationships with industry, and use of commercial facilities is embedded into the curriculum. Excellent opportunities are provided for students to work with industry and good use is made of external speakers, industry and study visits and networking events.

2.23   Students are very appreciative of the wide range of industry-standard resources available to support their programmes. Particular reference was made to the extensive large-scale land-based operations, such as the College farms and equine facilities at both Hadlow and Greenwich; the specialist commercial facilities, such as the fisheries, nurseries and the garden centre; and the specialist technologies, such as a mechanical horse and cow monitors. The range and variety of vocational and commercial resources available to students and the ways these are used both within and alongside the curriculum to enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential is **good practice**.

2.24   The review team notes a range of strategies and initiatives designed to enhance student learning and foster independent learning. The College has a well established summer school for applicants which provides an introduction to studying at higher education level. Through its Expert Learner Strategy, the College has extended the summer school concept to run a formal scheme of work delivering study skills support through the first half term of level 4 programmes. The College has also introduced transition summer schools to support those moving from level 4 to 5 and 5 to 6, which students confirmed was particularly useful for those returning to learning or progressing from another institution. The tailored academic support provided for students transitioning into, and between, higher education levels is **good practice**.

2.25   The expectations of students in relation to learning and teaching are articulated in the student entitlement which is displayed in all classrooms and on the virtual learning environment. The College has a well embedded tutorial system for all higher education students, including regular group tutorials and termly personal tutorials. Students complete personal development plans within their tutorials, which are a University requirement, and tutorial arrangements are monitored through the curriculum health checks.

2.26   Overall, the review team considers that the College has an effective approach to planning, resourcing, managing and monitoring the effective delivery of programmes, within a whole-College culture of continuous improvement. The College has established a wide variety of arrangements and high-quality resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. There are effective strategies and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating its arrangements and resources. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation B4 is met and the risk in this area 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

2.27   The College considers student engagement through two themes; the curriculum and cross-College engagement. The College has a Learner Involvement Strategy and a Student Charter which set out the roles and responsibilities of all students. This includes a matrix of Learner Voice activities and outlines opportunities to feed into enhancement via Learner Voice events and the annual Higher Education Learner Conference. The approach to student engagement enables the College to meet Expectation B5 of the Quality Code.

2.28   The review team scrutinised a range of documentation supporting the College's approach to engaging all students, individually and collectively, as partners in quality assurance and enhancement. The review team also met both students and staff to test the documentation supplied and gain views on the effectiveness of the mechanisms applied.

2.29   All programmes have trained elected student representatives at each academic level and a programme representative for part-time courses. Representatives are allocated time in group tutorials to collect feedback from peers before attending programme meetings. Actions raised are followed up by the Programme Team and fed back to the student representatives. Students met by the review team confirmed that the approach works well and commented positively on the approach the College has taken to address issues raised, notably the development of a higher education study space. The effective informal channels between committed academic staff and their students makes for an effective partnership.

2.30   All students at the College have the opportunity to be elected as members of the student union and, through the governance of the student association, are represented at a number of College meetings including Health and Safety, Safeguarding, E-learning, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. There is no allocated position for higher education representation beyond programme level but higher education students do have the opportunity to run for student association roles and participate in Learner Voice meetings attended by the Principal and Chair of Governors. The review team saw some examples of where the College is working in partnership with students, such as the student contribution to the development of the Expert Learner Strategy in 2013 and the involvement of students in the teacher observation process, although participation is currently low.

2.31   The monthly Learner Voice meetings combined with the student feedback surveys and Annual Higher Education Conference facilitate effective opportunities for students to raise and discuss both commercial and academic issues. Both students and staff commented positively on these methods and on the approach to closing the feedback loop.

2.32   The review team considers that the College has a cohesive working relationship with students which closely follows the established further education model. The approach is effective in ensuring student feedback is provided to staff, and in providing opportunities for students to be consulted on quality assurance and enhancement, although there is scope for greater engagement of students in the operation and development of College quality assurance procedures. Overall, the review team concludes that Expectation B5 is met and the risk in this area 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

2.33 The College complies with the University's assessment policies and procedures, including arrangements set out in the University's Quality Assurance Handbook, to ensure there are appropriate arrangements and policies for monitoring adherence to assessment regulations and for the accreditation of prior learning. The College has implemented a Higher Education Assessment Policy that is aligned to the University framework and provides additional information and guidance to staff. The volume and type of assessments within each programme are scrutinised during programme validation. The external examiner ensures that the assessment processes and standards at the College comply with the requirements of the University. Accreditation of prior learning is managed and approved by the University. The approach to assessment enables the College to meet Expectation B6 of the Quality Code.

2.34 The review team met students and staff to discuss their experience of assessment and feedback, and looked at relevant documentation, including programme handbooks, programme specifications, Programme Monitoring Reports and external examiner reports.

2.35 The College ensures that students are assessed in a range of ways, both formative and summative, which are aligned with the learning outcomes of the course. Students are made aware of the assessment processes during induction and the procedures to follow are discussed in staff meetings. Students are provided with appropriate feedback on the standard and quality of their work by the use of a standardised assessment template. Assessment briefs are prepared using a standard template and the briefs are reviewed by the internal verifiers. The external examiners have commented positively on the quality of assessments used. Students who met the team commented that the assessment feedback is both timely and helpful and that learning outcomes and assessment requirements are clearly outlined. The College has conducted a successful trial with e-portfolio software and this has now extended to other courses as an assessment tool for interactive feedback.

2.36 Overall, the review team considers that students are provided with appropriate opportunities to show that they have achieved the intended learning outcomes and that the College has an effective approach to the management of assessment. The team therefore concludes that Expectation B6 is met and the risk in this area is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B7: External Examining*

Findings

2.37   All programmes have external examiners who are recommended by the College and approved and appointed by the University in line with the procedure outlined in the University Academic Regulations for Taught Awards. External examiners are required to follow the regulations determined by the University and arrangements for training and monitoring of examiners remain the responsibility of the University. External examiner involvement is required prior and post-assessment to ensure that intended learning outcomes are assessed appropriately and that standards align with other equivalent qualifications in the sector. External examiner reports are integrated into the programme review process and annual monitoring activities at the College and inform action plans. The use made of external examiners enables the College to meet Expectation B7 of the Quality Code.

2.38   The review team considered the use made of external examiners by reading a range of external examiner reports and responses; looking at records of annual monitoring processes; examining key documents on external examining produced by the University; and talking to staff and students, including student representatives, about the sharing of external examiner reports.

2.39   The University provides a thorough handbook and offers an induction for external examiners. Due to the specialist vocational nature of the provision, the external examiners appointed are a mixture of established academics and industry representatives. A small minority of external examiners reported that they had not been offered an induction before starting their role and would have welcomed such an opportunity. Mentoring arrangements are not provided by the University for external examiners new to the role or appointed from industry. As noted under Expectation A3.4, although industry externals make valuable contributions in terms of currency and content, some externals from industry were unable to comment fully on the comparability of standards and some were not fully conversant with FHEQ levels and relevant benchmarking. The College was able to evidence that it has recently challenged the clarity of external examiner reporting, where appropriate.

2.40   The review team considers that the College has robust processes in place for receiving and responding to external examiner reports. The Associate Principal Quality and Staff Development reads all external examiner reports. Heads of Faculty include issues raised by external examiners in faculty Self-Assessment Reports, which inform the College and Higher Education Self-Assessment Reports. Programme Leaders report on issues raised by external examiners in the Programme Monitoring Reports which are sent to the University. The University also responds formally to all external examiners.

2.41   Revised versions of programme handbooks include the name and affiliation of external examiners. Students confirmed that they understood the role of the external examiner and knew who they were. Students reported that they have access to recent external examiner reports on the virtual learning environment. Some students noted that they had met with the external examiner and had read reports.

2.42   Overall, the review team considers that the use of external examiners is appropriate. While there are isolated examples of external examiner reports not best serving the College and its students, the review team considers that the College has robust systems for monitoring and reviewing external examiner comment, including offering challenge to the

clarity of reporting, where appropriate. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation B7 is met and the risk in this area 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

2.43   As outlined under Expectation A3.3, the key components of the College's monitoring of programmes are the Course Monitoring Reports, Programme Monitoring Reports and higher education SAR which provide a hierarchical reporting and action planning structure from course level to senior management. The annual higher education SAR, which additionally draws on other College and University data, includes an action plan which is monitored at intervals during the year by senior management. In addition to this process, the College undertakes health checks, Curriculum Quality Improvement and Quality Improvement meetings which all generate actions for development. The University monitors provision through the Annual Institutional Report produced by the College, through Link Tutor involvement at programme level and through periodic reviews which it conducts every five years. The approach to the monitoring and review of programmes enables the College to meet Expectation B8 of the Quality Code.

2.44   To test the procedures for monitoring and review, the review team met staff and students and looked at the relevant documentation provided, including Course and Programme Monitoring Reports, action plans arising from annual monitoring, self-assessment reports and evidence of quality improvement activities.

2.45   Course monitoring reports are produced at the end of each course and these provide an overview of the quality of the course in terms of student experience, student achievement and standards. These in turn inform the Programme Monitoring Report produced at the end of the academic year which consider feedback from tutors, students and external examiners, and include action plans. The annual higher education SAR also contains a Quality Improvement Action Plan which indicates if the action points have been implemented. This is validated by the senior management team and governors and the action plan is used to drive up quality.

2.46   The annual curriculum health check report combines information regarding the curriculum, students and resources to identify areas for development, strengths and improvements made since the previous health check report. The Annual Institutional Report produced annually for the University reflects upon the operation and development of the partnership and highlights developments, areas of good practice and enhancement at the College. Periodic review follows a similar format to programme approval and as such allows appropriate opportunities for assuring and enhancing academic quality.

2.47   Overall, the approach to monitoring and periodic review processes offer regular and systematic opportunities to review the quality of student learning opportunities. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation B8 is met and the risk in this area 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

2.48　　The College is responsible for managing student complaints and the approach is detailed in its Complaints Policy. The academic appeals process is managed by the University and students are referred to the Student Regulations, Policies and Procedures section of the University website; a link is available on the College virtual learning environment page for higher education. Information on the channels for complaints and appeals is made available to students through their programme handbook. The approach to handling complaints and appeals enables the College to meet Expectation B9 of the Quality Code.

2.49　　The review team tested the College's approach to dealing with complaints and appeals by reviewing the relevant procedures and evidence of where the outcomes from these procedures are considered within the College. The review team also spoke to students and staff to ascertain their understanding of the processes and view of the effectiveness of arrangements.

2.50　　The review team confirms that information on complaints and appeals is accessible and students are aware of the location of information regarding the processes for raising concerns. Student awareness of the procedures is proactively checked by the College through the extensive induction questionnaire completed by students. The Student Complaint procedure encourages early and informal resolution through the Programme Leader or Course Coordinator, although students can also raise academic concerns through the programme representative at Programme Team meetings and raise cross-College concerns through regular Learner Voice meetings. A formal submission under the College Complaints Policy is only made if these mechanisms do not produce a satisfactory resolution and, as a result, the number of formal student complaints received in recent years is low. Formal student complaints are dealt with by a Complaints Administrator and overseen by an Associate Principal who produces an annual report to the senior management team. Each action plan from a complaint becomes part of the quality improvement plan for the faculty or support area SAR. Students confirmed that processes are effective and that issues raised have been resolved in a timely manner.

2.51　　Overall, the review team considers that the College has suitable procedures for handling student complaints on the quality of learning opportunities and that these are enacted in a fair and timely manner. The approach to providing information on academic appeals and referring such cases to the University is also sound. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation B9 is met and the risk in this area 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

2.52   The University has ultimate responsibility for the quality of student learning opportunities. All higher education programmes at the College include courses involving learning in a work environment. In this regard the College has responsibility for the management and communication of its arrangements with employers and placement providers where learning opportunities within the workplace constitute an integral part of a student's programme. The College Higher Education Work Based Learning Guide provides the key internal frame of reference for students, staff and employers on the management and support of placements. Placement and work-based learning is captured and monitored formally through programme, faculty and higher education monitoring and self-assessment review processes and through some programme health checks.

2.53   The review team tested the College's approach to assuring the quality of placement and work-based learning by scrutinising the Work Based Learning Guide, information for employers, health and safety documentation, completed placement forms, annual monitoring and review documents, external examiner comments and schemes of work. The team also spoke to programme, support and managerial staff, as well as to students and employers about their experiences.

2.54   The College has been commended by the University for providing embedded workplace opportunities for all students. All higher education programmes include a common course, entitled Work Based Learning, at level 4 and most at level 5 with the exception of BSc International Agriculture at level 5 which uses an Industrial Experience course instead. The review team found that terminology used for placement and work-based learning activities was inconsistent throughout the College's documentation referred to variously as work experience, work experience placement, work shadowing, work-based learning, work placement and industrial experience. This contributes to some confusion in the documentation in articulating the exact nature and processes for managing learning in a workplace environment.

2.55   The College has well established processes for checking health and safety in the workplace. Health and safety checks are carried out by a central placement team before a student is placed and regular placement hosts are visited annually. The team visits local employers and contacts more distant employers by email and telephone calls. A central list of approved placement providers and work-based learning employers is maintained. The College has clear written procedures although due diligence checks are not routinely part of this process.

2.56   The Work Based Learning Guide is considered to be a generally useful document. It provides a definition of work-based learning, although it does not differentiate between placement and work-based learning. The guide outlines the broad expectations of each party within a three-party agreement between students, the College and an employer/placement provider which require contextualising to individual workplace learning activities. The College does not provide specific handbooks for employers/placement providers and although there is a generic leaflet for equine management courses, this is not explicit to higher education requirements.

2.57   The Work Placement/Work Based Learning Agreement Forms, which are part of the Work Based Learning Guide, permit a limited form of three-party agreement between the student, the employer/placement provider and the College. However, the form principally addresses the employer/placement provider and therefore does not allow for articulation of the three sets of contextualised roles and responsibilities. Nor does it identify the student's programme, level of study, course learning outcomes or, explicitly, the intended outcomes of the placement/work-based learning activity. Staff confirmed that no separate contractual agreement or letter of agreement is used with employers/placement providers. Learning agreements are not used systematically across all programmes, and in a minority of cases placements did not prove appropriate in allowing for the achievement of the course learning outcomes.

2.58   As noted, the HND and BSc International Agriculture programmes contain a credit-bearing Industrial Experience course at level 5 which is undertaken in a workplace abroad or in the UK. This course is not treated by the College as a work-based or placement learning course and therefore no due diligence, health and safety check or risk assessment is undertaken and no formal learning agreement is put in place. Students undertaking workplace learning outside the EU are not covered under the College's insurance policy. As the College does not categorise this activity as placement or work-based learning, these international arrangements are not centrally recorded. The necessity for improving the supervision of the industrial placement had been recorded in the Programme Monitoring Report, but actions were not reflected in other parts of the College's monitoring systems. As this workplace activity forms an integral part of a credit-bearing programme, the review team takes the view that the College should revise its approach to ensure that all workplace activity is included in the formal checking processes and articulated in a learning agreement.

2.59   As a credited course, placement and work-based learning is captured and monitored formally through the self-assessment monitoring processes at programme, faculty and College level. However, there is little evidence of oversight of workplace activities being maintained separately from the annual monitoring processes. The Work Based Learning Guide does not appear to have been updated in recent years and would benefit from updating to reflect changes in legal requirements and sector good practice. The review team considers that current processes and documentation have not been considered fully against Chapter B10 of the Quality Code, particularly with regards to proportionate due diligence, written agreements and encompassing all relevant activity in the UK and abroad. The review team therefore **recommends** that the College amend processes and procedures to ensure the effective governance, management and monitoring of all credit-bearing placement and work-based learning activities wherever provided.

2.60   Overall, the review team identifies that there are some shortcomings in the approach to managing and monitoring learning opportunities provided by other parties. College quality assurance processes do not encompass fully all arrangements for learning within the work environment, including overseas, to ensure the quality of student learning opportunities regardless of context or location. Furthermore, processes and procedures for oversight of arrangements at programme and College level are not fully effective. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation B10 is not met and that there is a moderate risk to assuring the quality of student learning opportunities.

Expectation: Not met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

2.61   The College has no research degree provision, therefore this Expectation is not applicable.

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.62 In determining its judgement on the quality of student learning opportunities at Hadlow College, the review team considered the findings against the criteria as outlined in Annex 2 of the relevant handbook. All Expectations in this area are met, with the exception of Expectation B10. The level of risk is considered low in all cases apart from Expectation B10 where the arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with external employers are considered to represent a moderate risk to the quality of learning opportunities.

2.63 The review team identifies two features of good practice in the way the College establishes, monitors and evaluates its arrangements for resources. The provision of vocational and commercial resources to support student learning and develop student employability are strategically led and evident across all curriculum areas. The range and variety of resources enhance the student experience and there was evidence that this had a positive impact on the development of students' academic, personal and professional potential. Similarly, the tailored academic support provided prior to, and during, studies made a positive contribution to academic progression, and the way that this support had been monitored, amended and extended demonstrated careful evaluation by the College. Although oversight and monitoring activities are generally sound, the review team identified some shortcomings in the College approach to the management of work-based learning and placement arrangements. Current arrangements are not fully inclusive of all learning that contributes to credit-bearing provision and arrangements for approving and monitoring the appropriateness of work-based learning and placements, at programme and College level, are not fully effective. The review team therefore considers there is a moderate risk that arrangements with others may not always be implemented securely or effectively managed, and recommends that the College amend processes and procedures to ensure the effective governance, management and monitoring of all credit-bearing placement and work-based learning activities wherever provided.

2.64 The review team therefore concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the College **meets** UK expectations.

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

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

Findings

3.1 The College provides information to students and other stakeholders through two external-facing websites, the main College website and the Rural University microsite, which is dedicated to higher education. The College's virtual learning environment is used for communication of information to enrolled students and staff. The University Quality Assurance Handbook is made available to staff through the intranet, with references to University and College policies and procedures as appropriate. The approach to the production of information enables the College to meet Expectation C of the Quality Code.

3.2 The review team tested the approach to the production of information and the management of information by exploring the accuracy of information with staff and students, and reviewing both external websites and the internal virtual learning environment. The team also looked at available promotional publications during the review visit.

3.3 The review team confirms that the Rural University microsite provides specific information on programmes, fees and finance, campus life, accommodation, news and events, and how to apply. The microsite also includes key policies, including the Student Charter, Teaching, Learning and Assessment policy and the Higher Education Strategy. In addition, the College has developed individual staff profiles and made all programme handbooks externally facing to ensure prospective students are able to make an informed decision prior to application. Students met by the review team commented positively on the information provided online and in College publications prior to application. The development of a comprehensive and accessible microsite to enhance higher education information and identity is **good practice**.

3.4 The College virtual learning environment is predominantly used as a repository of information relating to all aspects of College life and programme information, although the College is developing this as a more interactive learning resource. The information provided is detailed and comprehensive and both students and staff met by the team confirmed that the virtual learning environment was the 'go-to place'. The College has a systematic process in place to ensure handbooks are standardised and reviewed annually by both the College and University marketing departments before publication. Oversight of programme information is maintained through the College's CPRG and the Business Planning Cycle.

3.5 The use of management data in the quality cycle is rigorous and clear as evidenced through the systematic use of key performance indicators and self-assessment processes at programme, faculty and senior management level. An example is the in-depth survey undertaken post induction which is used to inform future improvements but which also offers the College an opportunity to address any initial student concerns or provide clarification through additional communication or group tutorials. A further example is the enhanced provision of career information to higher education students through the new Careers Hub. Students, staff and employers comment positively on this development and the continued development in the career advice and support given to both students and employers.

3.6   Staff confirmed that information provided by the College to assist them in the delivery of the programmes and the understanding of their responsibilities was clear and readily available. Staff are aware of the documentation required in relation to quality processes. The College also facilitates wider communication by the production of the Quality Newsletter which offers consolidated oversight of areas of the quality processes.

3.7   The review team considers that the College has a clear understanding of the expectations placed on it with respect to publishing information, and has clearly engaged with ensuring that prospective students are able to make an informed decision prior to applying. Processes for approval and assurance are developed and iterated by the CPRG and Business Planning Cycle, which ensures an appropriate level of approval. The review team concludes that Expectation C is met and the risk in this area is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

3.8   In determining its judgement on the quality of information about learning opportunities, the review team considered the findings against the criteria as outlined in Annex 2 of the relevant handbook. The Expectation in this area is met and the level of risk is considered low.

3.9   The review team concluds that information made available by the College to the public, prospective and current students, and staff is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. The review team notes that the development of the Rural University microsite was particularly effective in providing comprehensive information on higher education programmes and presenting a distinctive identity to higher education provision at the College. This approach is considered by the review team to make a positive contribution to the quality of information provided and is recognised as good practice.

3.10   The review team therefore concludes that the quality of information about learning opportunities at the College **meets** UK expectations.

4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

Findings

4.1 The College approach to enhancement is embedded within the operational objectives and monitoring of key performance indicators linked to the strategic plan. These are set and regularly monitored by the Board of Governors and drive the enhancement of learning opportunities provided at the College. The College operates a structured self-assessment process and the resulting quality improvement action plans are used systematically and monitored through the Quality Team and managed by senior managers. This approach enables the College to meet the Expectation on Enhancement.

4.2 The review team evaluated the College approach to enhancement through discussions with staff, students and employers, and by examining the policies and procedures that underpin enhancement, including the annual monitoring processes, the role of the BAC, FiLMs, annual monitoring reports and action plans, external examiners' reports, staff development opportunities, student feedback, and feedback from employers.

4.3 The review team received various examples of enhancement outcomes cited by staff, students and employers which had arisen from discussions in the forums mentioned, including efforts to continuously align programmes with industry and develop the range of learning opportunities available. Examples of this included the development of commercial resources mentioned elsewhere in this report, the establishment of the Thanet Earth Fellowship and the research opportunities available to staff.

4.4 The review team saw evidence that enhancement activity is considered and acted upon at all levels of the organisation. Key performance indicators are informed by specific and detailed management data and are used systematically at strategic and operational levels to monitor progress and drive improvements. Similarly, engagement with Learner Voice activities occurs at the level of governors, the principalship, senior management and programme delivery and is used to identify areas for enhancement. The annual monitoring, self-assessment and auditing mechanisms through health checks and improvement meetings highlight any potential enhancements or issues that need to be reviewed to enhance the learner experience.

4.5 Improvements to teaching and learning are strategically driven and monitored. Good practice features as an item for discussion on all Programme Team meeting agendas and these are shared at faculty meetings and across faculties through cross-College staff development days. Outcomes from Quality Improvement meetings, health checks, staff development and observation processes are also reported to senior management and good practice is identified and shared through the Higher Education Managers Group and staff development activities. Staff met during the review confirmed that enhancement is embedded into all activities and cited numerous examples of strategic developments and good practice initiatives in operation at the College. The engagement by staff at all levels of the organisation with a wide range of enhancement activities to be **good practice**.

4.6 The review team notes a number of developments which had been strategically led to improve the quality of learning opportunities. A notable example is the deliberate step to incorporate placements and work-based learning into all programmes and establish the BAC and FiLMs to develop employability skills and opportunities for students. The strategic decision to provide commercial experience through College-managed sites and to provide

specialist facilities and technologies also supports this approach. The development of the Careers Hub, investment in the virtual learning environment, redesign of the Learning Resource Centre and appointment of an Advanced Practitioner for Higher Education and e-learning consultant are all examples of where analysis of management data and student feedback have led to the enhancement of opportunities for all higher education students.

4.7   A further example is the approach taken by the College to providing information and study support to students which has been progressively developed over the last four years. Through the Expert Learner Strategy and key performance indicators, the original summer school developed to prepare applicants for progression to higher education has been extended to provide separate preparatory activities for current higher education students transitioning between academic levels. Following evaluation of these activities and other management data at the Higher Education Managers Group, the College has now widened the potential impact by the development of individual expert learner groups for 2013-14 to provide extended induction and study skills support during the first part of the academic year.

4.8   Overall, the review team considers that the College takes deliberate steps to enhance its higher education provision. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation concerning enhancement of student learning opportunities is met and the risk in this area is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.9   In determining its judgement on the enhancement of student learning opportunities at Hadlow College, the review team considered the findings against the criteria as outlined in Annex 2 of the relevant handbook. The Expectation in this area is met and the level of risk is considered low.

4.10   The review team identifies that the approach to enhancement of student learning opportunities was strategically driven and embedded within quality assurance processes within the College. Consideration of enhancement activity was evident at all levels of the organisation and there were numerous examples of where potential improvements had been identified and where initiatives were planned and implemented at College level for the benefit of all students. While student feedback is used systematically to inform enhancement activities, students are not directly or routinely involved in meetings where enhancement initiatives are planned and discussed. Continuous improvement and sharing of good practice is evident across the College and the review team consideres the engagement by staff at all levels of the organisation with a wide range of enhancement activities to be good practice.

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

5   Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1   The College's Higher Education Strategy is aligned to the College strategic objective to support economic development in Kent and meet the wider needs of local businesses by providing a well qualified workforce within the land-based sector. Employability skills and the development of students as independent learners are themes that run through the College's approach to its whole provision. The higher education provision at the College is underpinned by the Greenwich Graduate Attribute Statements. While these do not explicitly mention employability, they define the behaviours, values and skills which prepare students for future careers. At strategic level, the focus on employability is driven by the Board of Governors, the senior leadership and the BAC.

5.2   All programmes are vocational, focus on career progression, and aim to work with employers to ensure that strong links with employability skills are embedded into degree programmes and documented in schemes of work. The College ensures that intellectual, subject-specific, transferable and professional development skills are considered at the design stage of all programmes, in addition to the Greenwich Graduate Attributes which are also applied. All higher education programmes include a placement or work-based learning course at both levels 4 and 5.

5.3   The College has a distinctive approach to working with employers. The Principal sits on a large number of local, regional and national employer networks. BAC operates at a strategic level while the biannual FiLMs focus on specific subject areas and operational matters, including advising on curriculum and contributing to programme development and review. Employers visit the College to give talks on specialist areas and provide research project opportunities. Students visit employer premises and a bank of employers provide regular placement learning opportunities. Employers confirmed that they valued the College as a strategic and core commercial partner and looked favourably on its graduates in terms of current and future employees. Annual programme monitoring systematically reports on engagement with employers and curriculum links with the workplace.

5.4   The College has a clear strategic commitment to developing commercial operations within the College estates. These include fishing lakes, garden centres, farm shops, a commercial glasshouse and restaurants. Commercial enterprise is linked to the higher education curriculum at all levels, and provides a range of learning opportunities from introductory workplace learning for level 4 students to research sites for level 6 students. The commercial resources provide a high-quality learning experience for students and enable them to undertake relevant training and work-related and placement learning. In partnership with a large commercial organisation, the College has developed an innovative level 6 fellowship in horticulture. This provides a paid work-based research opportunity for one student, as well as workplace activities for the whole cohort, which is commercially sponsored and overseen by the partner organisation.

5.5   The College has developed a dedicated Careers Hub to enhance the provision of career management skills for all students. A member of staff with particular experience of higher education has recently been appointed to provide more tailored advice and support for higher education students. Every student has access to a variety of tutorials, workshops, activities and events designed to develop employability, entrepreneurial and career-related skills necessary for prospective employees and entrepreneurs. Students confirmed the helpfulness of the careers staff, particularly in developing curricula vitae, advice on placement suitability and sourcing paid employment opportunities.

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.