



Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) of Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd (Study Group)

London International Study Centre

October 2016

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at London International Study Centre. The review took place from 13 to 14 October 2016 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Professor Gaynor Taylor
- Professor Denis Wright.

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by London International Study Centre 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 (Embedded Colleges) 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
- provides a commentary on 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.

In Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) there is also a check on the provider's financial sustainability, management and governance (FSMG). This check has the aim of giving students reasonable confidence that they should not be at risk of being unable to complete their course as a result of financial failure of their education provider.

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 4.

In reviewing London International Study Centre the review team has also considered a theme selected for particular focus across higher education in England and Northern Ireland. The [themes](#) for the academic year 2015-16 are Digital Literacies 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 (Embedded Colleges).⁴ For an explanation of terms see the [glossary](#) at the end of this report.

¹ The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code.

² Higher Education Review themes: www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=106.

³ QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us.

⁴ Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers): www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight.aspx.

Key findings

QAA's judgements about London International Study Centre

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at London International Study Centre.

- The maintenance of the academic standards of the awards offered on behalf of the provider **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendation** to London International Study Centre.

By April 2017:

- ensure additional support is in place and accessible to students identified as at risk by the student progression system (Expectation B4).

Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following action that the London International Study Centre is already taking to make academic standards secure and improve the educational provision offered to its students:

- the steps being taken, based on analysis of data, to develop the curriculum to better support students (Expectation B4).

Enhancement of student learning opportunities

Deliberate steps have been taken by the Centre to enhance the provision in line with Study Group (the provider) requirements. A draft Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy has now been agreed and a student progression monitoring and intervention system is in use. The Centre Action Plan pulls together all agreed actions and allows them to be monitored at both centre and Study Group level.

Theme: Student Employability

CareerAhead is Study Group's employability enhancement project that is being implemented across the network during 2016-17. London International Study Centre has chosen to embed CareerAhead into the curriculum and has identified modules on all programmes where attributes such as interpersonal and other transferable skills can be built into assessments. The Student Handbooks for 2016-17 have an additional section on CareerAhead and from January 2017 students will complete an employability questionnaire as part of the project.

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

About London International Study Centre

Study Group International Study Centre London (SGISCL), also known as the London ISC, was established in 2015. The Centre partners with Coventry University London Campus (CULC) and the University of Law (ULaw). The Centre for both partners is located at the ULaw campus in Bloomsbury.

All courses offered are Study Group approved. Currently the provision includes International Foundation Year programmes for both CULC and ULaw, as well as International Year One and Pre-Masters programmes for CULC only. The Centre has two entry points per year, in October and February. The first intake in October 2015 saw a total of 89 students, with seven of those choosing the Law progression route. The February intake was 45 students, all choosing the Business progression route. Staffing of SGISCL consists of a Head of Centre, a Programme Manager, a Head of English, two administrators and six part-time tutors.

SGISCL has identified the following priorities and challenges:

- the Centre is to work closely with the provider, sales and marketing to agree plans on how the number of students for the International Foundation Law Programme can be increased
- minor modifications to some of the modules may be made following progression of the October intake
- to review student feedback on access and usage of all handbooks available via the VLE
- to ensure there is a progress tracking system in place with both partner HEIs
- to liaise with the Coventry University admissions office to simplify the application process for progressing students
- to implement new initiatives to enhance the quality of learning opportunities, through active staff membership of the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group
- to revise the personal tutor role with a view to increasing the time allocated to each individual student meeting.

As a new Centre, there have been no previous Higher Education Reviews undertaken and therefore no recommendations to address.

Explanation of the findings about London International Study Centre

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 the provider

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1 Study Group is not a degree-awarding body, and does not offer credit, but its programmes are benchmarked, during initial development and at approval and re-approval (or validation and revalidation according to the specific partnership academic arrangement), against *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), for programmes set at Levels 4 to 6, and against the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) for preparatory programmes set at Level 3. It uses the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for Languages for English programmes.

1.2 SGISCL offers two International Foundation Year programmes leading to entry to year one of a number of business and management courses at Coventry University London Campus (IFYCUL) and to the first year of programmes at the University of Law (IFYULaw). In addition, an International Year One programme in Business, Management Accounting and Finance leads to progression to year two of courses at Coventry University London (IY1CUL) and a Pre-Masters Programme in Business, Management, Accounting and Finance (PMPCUL) leads to Masters-level programmes at Coventry University London Campus. All programmes are approved by Study Group whose approval process is clearly documented and includes ensuring that the requirements of the FHEQ or RQF are met. The approval panel includes at least one external member, independent of Study Group and its partner universities. Programme and module specifications, conforming to the prescribed Study Group format, must be circulated to the panel for scrutiny at least five days prior to the event. Post approval, the programmes are 'endorsed' by the partner universities. In the case of SGISCL, the team was informed that this

meant that the partner higher education institutions (HEIs) were content with the academic content taught, and that it is relevant to what students will go on to study after progression. Endorsement does not imply a formal mapping of curriculum in this centre.

1.3 The detailed scrutiny of the programmes at approval, in particular programme and module specifications, by a panel including external representatives would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.4 The team considered the papers relating to the approval process and also programme and module specifications. Meetings were held with the Head of Centre and with representatives of the universities.

1.5 The approval panel included two external members from UK HEIs without links to Study Group, one with a background in law, the second with a background in business. The full report of the approval panel demonstrated that consideration had been given to the appropriate standards for the different programmes. Programme and module specifications for the IY1CUL, IFYULaw and PMPCUL, while not offering explicit reference to the elements of the FHEQ, phrased aims and learning outcomes in terms appropriate to the levels required. In line with Study Group Policy a review of the programmes was carried out after the first year of operation. This resulted in a number of recommendations including two relating to the need for better alignment between programme learning outcomes, module learning outcomes, programme skills and assessments. All the external examiner reports received at the point of the visit also indicated standards were appropriate.

1.6 From the above it is clear that the Expectation is met with close attention paid to ensuring programmes are offered at the appropriate standard and level. The level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.7 The governance of SGISCL's quality assurance processes is overseen by Study Group, who is responsible for the approval of academic programmes (see also section B1). While not a credit-awarding institution, Study Group's overarching quality assurance framework and processes are designed to ensure that SGISCL modules and programmes are in line with the partner HEI's credit structure.

1.8 SGISCL's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group (QAEG) provides a forum for the monitoring and maintenance of academic standards within programmes. QAEG meets quarterly and reports to the Study Group's Academic Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (AQEAC) through the Regional Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group (RQAEG).

1.9 The HEIs have oversight of SGISCL provision through various structures and processes. Centre Handbooks provide a detailed guide to the management of academic standards and quality, and are endorsed by the HEI partners prior to programme approval.

1.10 These processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.11 In considering this Expectation, the review team examined the terms of reference and minutes of quality assurance committees, and looked at Centre Handbooks and other relevant documentation. The team tested its findings through discussions with the Head of Centre and other SGISCL staff, and with representatives of Study Group and the HEIs.

1.12 Individual Centre Handbooks are produced for the both HEI partner articulation programmes and provide a comprehensive guide to the management and operation of SGISCL, including its governance structure and lines of reporting to AQAEC.

1.13 The review team found that there were effective mechanisms in place for the assurance of quality and standards at SGISCL, with AQAEC maintaining oversight of SGISCL's academic framework and regulations through the Centre Review (CR), annual monitoring and the Centre Action Plan (CAP) process (see also section B8).

1.14 A Steering Group for each partner HEI, which is chaired in rotation by senior members of Study Group and the HEI, maintains oversight of academic management and strategic governance of the relevant SGISCL programmes. An Academic Management Board (AMB), chaired by the Head of Centre and attended by teaching staff and the Link Tutor from the HEI, reports to the Steering Group, and, where appropriate, RQAEG or a relevant HEI committee.

1.15 From the documents examined and meetings with staff, the review team found that the quality assurance framework and associated processes ensure SGISCL's modules and programmes remain equivalent in terms of credit with the articulated degree programmes at the partner HEIs.

1.16 Based on the above findings, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.17 SGISCL programmes have a set of required definitive documents, comprising a programme specification and module specifications, which are produced by SGISCL based on Study Group templates, and include information on alignment with subject benchmarks, learning outcomes and their assessment. Study Group maintains a central library of definitive documents, together with other key documents, including module and student handbooks. A third definitive document, the Centre Specification, will record additional information for each ISC, including entry requirements, external examiners and progression awards at partner HEI and their entry requirements. The new Study Group Registry will take on responsibility during 2016-17 for publishing these documents as a record of what is being delivered by ISCs and what has been approved or validated. The Registry will be responsible for maintaining the accuracy of the information and publishing the Centre Specification (see also section C).

1.18 The Study Group Academic Manager is responsible for ensuring stored documents are accurate and current, and works with the Quality Team to maintain a record of any changes to ISC modules and programmes. Membership of the QAEC subcommittee, the Programme Approval and Validation Committee (PAVC), facilitates this role.

1.19 The above structures and procedures would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.20 In considering this Expectation, the review team examined sample module and programme specifications, student handbooks, the CAP and other relevant documentation. The team tested its findings through discussions with SGISCL staff and students and senior representatives from Study Group.

1.21 Programme and module specifications seen by the review team confirmed that they provided definitive records of the Centre's academic provision.

1.22 Centre staff confirmed the role of the SGISCL Curriculum Committee in developing and revising programme and module specifications, with input from tutors, students and external examiners. Discussion with students indicated they had a good knowledge of the assessment procedures on their programme.

1.23 SGISCL's first Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) is due in December 2016, which, together with associated action plans, will be reviewed by RQAEG, QAEC, and Link Tutors/AMB (see also section B8).. The review team were able to examine the SGISCL CAP, which included actions relating to the management of academic standards, annual module reviews and processes to ensure the quality and appropriateness of all student assessments.

1.24 Through a review of relevant documentation and meetings with staff and students, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.1): 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

1.25 All programmes at SGISCL are approved by Study Group using a clearly documented approach. The process involves initial scrutiny at Study Group level followed by an approval event using a panel comprising senior Study Group personnel together with at least one academic subject specialist external to Study Group and its partner HEIs. Final approval, once any conditions emanating from the approval panel have been met, is given by Study Group's quality committee AQAEC.

1.26 The design of the approval process allows the Expectation to be met.

1.27 The team considered the documentation concerning the generic approval process, as well as the reports from both the approval and a meeting of AQAEC and the review carried out after the first year of operation.

1.28 The approval panel included two external members from UK HEIs without links to Study Group, one with a background in law, the second with a background in business. The full report of the approval panel showed that consideration had been given to the appropriate standards for the different programmes. A meeting of AQAEC noted that all conditions had not been met at the point of the meeting and therefore an additional meeting was required prior to approval demonstrating oversight of the process by Study Group. Chair's action in July 2016, confirmed by signature that all conditions had been met.

1.29 The processes are in place and, in the case of this new Centre, used to ensure the Expectation is met with low risk.

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

1.30 SGISCL programmes have overarching learning outcomes, to which module learning outcomes are mapped. Learning outcomes are defined in programme and module specifications and described in student handbooks. Each assessed assignment has marking criteria to inform students what they need to do to achieve particular grades.

1.31 The programme approval and monitoring and review process ensures that the academic standard is at the appropriate level and assessments measure achievement of learning outcomes (see also sections A2.1, B1, B7 and B8).

1.32 Module marks and grades for SGISCL programmes of study are ratified at the final Programme Assessment Board (PAB). SGISCL does not have Module Assessment Boards as modules run concurrently throughout the programme. The PAB verifies achievement of designated learning outcomes at a specified FHEQ level and is chaired by a senior member of one of the partner HEIs.

1.33 The above arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.34 The review team tested this Expectation through examination of programme and module specifications, approval and review documents, and external examiner reports, and through discussions with Centre and Study Group staff, and students.

1.35 The review team found that learning outcomes for module and programme specifications were clearly linked and that they could be demonstrated through assessment.

1.36 To ensure learning outcomes remain appropriate, regional training events involving external experts are being held for staff developing and reviewing programmes and modules.

1.37 Each piece of student work submitted for assessment has a cover sheet that allows markers to provide feedback to students on how they have met the expectations set out in the assessment criteria. Students who met the review team confirmed that it was clear what is required for each assessment and what is required to achieve a particular grade.

1.38 Study Group aims to enhance the consistency of assessment across the ISC network through implementation of a Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework during 2016-17.

1.39 From scrutiny of relevant documentation and discussions with academic staff and students, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.3): 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

1.40 All Study Group-approved provision is subject to annual monitoring, to a review after the first year of operation and to re-approval at least once every five years. In addition there is a periodic Centre Review process by which Study Group seeks, among other things, 'to assure itself that each International Study Centre (ISC) is effectively managing academic standards'. Annual monitoring for the academic year 2015-16 for all approved provision will use a standard Study Group template. Re-approval follows the same process as approval including the use of external panel members.

1.41 These processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.42 The first Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) for SGISCL is not due until December 2016, but the team was able to examine the template to be used and to discuss the process with the Head of Centre.

1.43 As indicated in section A1, a review of the provision after the first year of operation had been carried out. A first Centre Review had also taken place and led to 15 recommendations reported to QAEG.

1.44 The AMR Template includes a section for admission and completion data and also the external examiner(s)' reports (and these comment explicitly on standards). The Head of Centre was clear about their responsibilities for completing the report by December 2016 and explained that it would then be discussed at the regional quality meeting (RQAEG) and the Study Group quality committee (AQAEC). It would be shared with the partner universities via the link tutors and the Academic Management Board. Both the Centre Review and the review following one year of operations made recommendations concerning the completeness and consistency of documentation, demonstrating that standards had been considered.

1.45 The key element in the systematic and regular monitoring of standards is the Annual Monitoring Report and this is not yet due for this new Centre. However, the team noted the understanding and preparedness of the Head of Centre with respect to the first Annual Monitoring Report and noted also the review of the programmes after the first year and the Centre Review. Taking these different elements into account, the Expectation is met with a low level of risk.

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

1.46 SGISCL uses independent, external expertise at various points in its quality assurance and academic cycles, including programme approval panels, Centre Review (CR) panels and external examiners (see also sections B1, B7 and B8).

1.47 The above arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.48 To test this Expectation, the review panel examined programme approval and review documents, and external examiner reports, and held discussions with senior academic staff.

1.49 The quality assurance roles played by external panel members in the development of programmes are outlined in the Study Group Approval Handbook for Study Group-approved programmes and referred to in SGISCL Centre Handbooks. In the 2015 SGISCL Programme Approval Event, the panel included an external academic expert for each of the articulation pathways. The external panel member nomination form sets out the required experience and the responsibilities and commitments of an external panel member.

1.50 The SGISCL CR panel in July 2016 included an external quality assurance expert familiar with the UK HE review process. CR findings inform the CAP.

1.51 External examiners for the SGISCL Business and Law pathways in 2015-16 found that the standard of assessment was appropriate for the level. External examiner reports inform the CAP.

1.52 The review team concludes that the use of external expertise in the Centre's quality procedures and processes is effective, and the Expectation is thereby met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of the provider: Summary of findings

1.53 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.54 All of the seven Expectations in this area are met with low risk. There are no recommendations, affirmations or areas of good practice recorded for this section of the report.

1.55 The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards at SGISCL **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 Programmes are developed and designed in conjunction with both Study Group and the partner universities to prepare students for entry onto a range of university courses as noted in section A1. Initial approval for development must be granted by the Study Group's QAEC Committee (a lead role in such approval is now taken by the new Programme Approval and Validation Subcommittee, reporting to QAEC. Programme design is discussed with the University partners and the proposed programmes subjected to the Study Group's approval process which, in the case of SGISCL, used a panel including two external members from other higher education providers. Once recommendations from the panel have been considered and any conditions met, the programmes are signed off by QAEC.

2.2 The design of these processes allows the Expectation to be met.

2.3 The team was able to consider programme approval documentation, relevant minutes of QAEC and the one-year-on approval. In addition there was discussion with both Centre and University staff involved in programme development.

2.4 In the case of a new Centre the normal Study Group process is to develop and design the programmes using expertise from other centres and from the partner universities prior to the appointment of staff in the new centre. This was the case with SGISCL. Centre and University staff who met with the review team confirmed that while Study Group owns the curriculum, it consulted closely with the partner universities in its development. Documentation from both the approval event and the one-year-on programme review, in using the language of the FHEQ, demonstrated consideration of appropriate standards.

2.5 The review team concludes that the Expectation is thereby met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission

Findings

2.6 Recruitment and selection of students for SGISCL programmes are processed centrally by the Study Group Admission Centre in Singapore and Brighton, and the admissions process conforms to UK Visas and Immigration requirements. The Study Group Admissions Policy and Structure document describes the principles and structure by which admissions function.

2.7 The CULC ISC and ULaw ISC websites provide a direct, online application process. Students applying through a local agent contact the agent for an application form. Changes to programmes are managed through PAVC and any changes affecting the availability of a programme or progression (articulation) to a partner HEI are managed by the admissions team to ensure applicants are kept informed and any necessary actions taken. A Study Group Admissions Complaints and Appeals Policy is now available for applicants (see also section B9).

2.8 The design of the above admissions policies, structures and procedures allow the Expectation to be met.

2.9 To test the Expectation, the review team examined published information on admission requirements and the procedures regarding admissions, and held meetings with Centre and Study Group staff, with new students, and students who had progressed to a degree programme.

2.10 The ISC websites provide potential applicants with advice and guidance, including English language, academic and UK visa requirements, and information on fees. Entry requirements are maintained in centralised databases, and published on public-facing websites. Entry requirements are overseen by Heads of Centres, who work with the Academic Manager at Study Group to ensure that the entry requirements are current. Borderline cases are referred by the Admission Centre to the Head of Centre for a final decision on admission. Borderline decisions are made in consultation with the Head of the relevant programme, and may also involve the HEI Link Tutor. Study Group and the Centre encourage disclosure of a disability at the application stage so that reasonable adjustments can be made.

2.11 The students who met the review team had all applied through an agent. Overall, they found the admission process straightforward, and had received sufficient information about the SGISCL programmes, and life at ISC and in the UK prior to applying, and had been kept updated regularly during the application process. An arrival pack was provided and the students were complimentary about the induction process.

2.12 The review team concluded that the admission process managed by Study Group was transparent and fair, with clear delineation of the role of the Centre Head in ensuring the currency of entry requirements for SGISCL programmes and in considering borderline cases for admission. The review team conclude that the Expectation is met and the associated risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching

Findings

2.13 The Centre recruits its teaching staff in line with Study Group expectations. A full induction is provided and it is a requirement as part of this that all staff complete online training with respect to Safeguarding and Prevent Duty.

2.14 Annual staff appraisal will be carried out, using both management and peer-based observation of teaching, and staff are able to access a range of pedagogical development opportunities.

2.15 A draft Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy has been produced to meet the requirements of Study Group's Learning and Teaching Framework.

2.16 The Centre collects module evaluations to inform possible changes to modules. Verbal feedback from students has also been used to improve assessment feedback from one tutor.

2.17 These processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.18 Documents examined included the Staff Handbook, material concerned with induction, material concerned with appraisal, the Centre Action Plan, the Centre draft Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy, module evaluation and module review forms. In addition the review team met with the Head of Centre and a range of teaching and support staff.

2.19 The review team was informed that advertisements for teaching staff stipulated a requirement for a degree and a teaching qualification. Additionally those teaching on the Pre-Masters course should be qualified to at least Masters level unless they have relevant business or industrial experience.. Exceptionally tutors without a teaching qualification would be expected to have some teaching experience and to be working towards a qualification.

2.20 On appointment staff are given access to the staff handbook and a general induction is given by the Head of Centre. An induction checklist and a separate Health and Safety induction record are provided. The former includes a teaching observation within the first four weeks. During the first week new tutors meet the programme manager and during the first two weeks they must complete online training in Safeguarding to Level 1 and Prevent Duty. This was confirmed by staff who explained that completion of the online training was checked by the senior administrator who printed out the resulting certificates.

2.21 The annual appraisal process uses the Study Group template and is described in the Staff Handbook. Staff informed the review team that some had been appraised while others were expecting their first appraisal. The review team saw this as acceptable given that the Centre has only been operational for a year. All appraisals are carried out by the Head of Centre and involve observation of teaching (both management and peer observation are used with the former carried out by the appropriate line manager - either the programme manager or the Head of English). The documentation used for peer observation feedback is clear and helpful. The review team noted plans to use tutors from other centres to carry out peer observations in 2016-17.

2.22 Development needs may be discussed at appraisal and staff were aware of opportunities offered by Study Group for pedagogic development at both regional and network level, although there has so far been limited engagement with this.. A spreadsheet is used to record training and development, including induction requirements.

2.23 The draft Learning and Teaching Strategy has been written by the Head of Centre using a standard template to ensure alignment with Study Group's Learning and Teaching Framework. Other staff members were able to comment when the draft was submitted to QAEG (this is a small centre so almost all staff attend QAEG). After QAEG a copy of the draft had been emailed to each of the partner HEIs, but no comment had been received at the time of the visit. Approval from Study Group is now awaited.

2.24 Feedback from students on their experience is sought via module evaluation forms and the Module Review form includes reflection from the module leader and comments from students and external examiners.

2.25 While some processes, such as annual appraisal, are not yet complete for all staff due to the Centre just entering its second year of operation, the review team is satisfied that the processes are in place and being used. Thus the Expectation is met with a low level of risk.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement

Findings

2.26 Availability and access to resources are formally agreed in the contracts with the partner universities. Students are welcomed to the Centre with an induction event and arrangements are in place to provide induction for late arrivals. A system of personal tutorials operates within the Centre to give students an opportunity to discuss academic and pastoral matters.

2.27 Progression rates have always been seen as a key performance indicators for ISCs. Until recently these were considered individually by centres. There is now a central Progression Steering Group in place to monitor and report on student retention and achievement across the network of ISCs. A review of the pilot tracking system during summer 2015 culminated in a framework being established across the network where standard definitions of student achievement through a red/amber/green 'RAG' status were determined and a systematic and common process for tracking student achievement and retention was agreed.

2.28 The processes in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.29 Documentation reviewed included the agreements with the two universities, student handbooks, Staff Student Liaison Committee (SSLC) minutes, the agenda for the 2016 student induction programme, completion and progression data for 2015-16 and the staff handbook. Meetings were held with the Head of Centre, students, teaching and support staff and senior staff.

2.30 The Centre is based within the London Campus of the University of Law and all students, irrespective of whether they plan to progress to the University of Law or to Coventry University London Campus, have access to the University of Law Library and ULaw IT systems, including the virtual learning environment which has been adapted for access to students following both ULaw and CULC programmes. In addition the Centre has a dedicated area stocked with a selection of key texts for students studying on business pathways and it is planned to add to this in the current year. Students indicated that resources were generally good although they would have preferred more resource in areas related to business.

2.31 The VLE has material for all modules and there is an increasing use of quizzes and formative assignments in addition to PowerPoint slides and basic module outlines. The Head of Centre noted an aim to improve what is available to meet Study Group's minimum standards.

2.32 All students in the ISC also have access to ULaw Student Services for advice on accommodation, disability support or should they wish to speak to a professional counsellor. All staff are trained in Safeguarding (to level 1) and in Prevent Duty. The senior administrator holds the role of safeguarding officer with the Head of Centre acting as Deputy; both hold level 3 certification with respect to safeguarding.

2.33 On arrival students have a full induction programme including opportunities to register with the police and the health service. Students who met with the review team verified that this covered an adequate range of topics including grades required for progression, IT and the layout of the Centre including fire exits. There was also a thorough and concise induction to the library, possible issues around culture shock and an explanation of the transition process to university at the end of the ISC programme. The content was divided into slots of an hour a day over five days to avoid overload. Original qualifications were inspected as part of the process. Late arrivals were taken through the same material in a one-to-one process.

2.34 Separate student handbooks are available for students progressing to Coventry University London Campus or the University of Law. Students were aware of these and said they contained all the information needed and that they would consult the relevant handbook on a 'need-to-know' basis.

2.35 A personal tutor system is in place and those staff who act as tutors reported that their duties had been explained by the programme manager and were also covered by the staff handbook. Alumni reported that they had a scheduled meeting with their personal tutor once per term with additional meetings as needed. Current students had been informed that tutor sessions would be more frequent; this was confirmed by staff.

2.36 The Centre is situated within the University of Law Campus; however, effort is made to ensure CULC students do not feel alienated from their future university by holding events in the Centre offering students the opportunity to meet with CULC staff and student ambassadors.

2.37 The Centre is tracking progression of its students using Study Group's approach, with assessment and attendance information together with tutor comments used to assign ratings of red, pink, amber or green to each student. The review team noted that attendance was carefully monitored, but that attendance and engagement remained an issue. Where the rating is other than green, interventions are used to offer the student a better chance of success. At SGISCL interventions are case dependent, but could include self-study materials and some additional classes in English which are not, however, mandatory and incur an extra charge. Not all students identified as at risk had availed themselves of the extra support, but staff reported that there had been improved outcomes for around half of those who had. Senior staff recognised a need to strengthen the support offered and to increase the range of extra classes available.

2.38 At the time of the review visit the Centre was unable to provide exact figures for the number of students who had progressed. The vast majority (93 per cent of those on programmes leading to progression to Coventry University London Campus and 100 per cent of the small number planning to progress to the University of Law) had completed their programme, but only just over half of completers were shown as definitely having progressed to their chosen university course. Performance in English was said to be the main cause of failure to meet progression grades and Coventry University London Campus was offering a further IELTS test to allow recovery, hence the outcome for some was still in question. The review team noted that students in danger of failing to meet progression tariffs are being identified in good time, but that interventions are not always being taken up by the students concerned. It is **recommended** that the Centre ensures additional support is in place and accessible to students identified as at risk by the student progression system.

2.39 IFY students who achieve threshold marks, but fail to make the grades needed for progression to their chosen university programme, may be offered alternatives such as an IY1 programme offered elsewhere within Study Group. Support in looking for alternative programmes is also available from Study Group.

2.40 Data produced to track progression is also being used to target areas of the curriculum for further development; for example, Study Group is introducing a new curriculum in English and from October teaching groups will be smaller. The review team **affirms** the steps being taken by the Centre, based on analysis of data, to develop the curriculum to better support students.

2.41 Although there is clearly progress to be made in improving progression rates, the necessary processes are in place and the Expectation is met with a low level of risk.

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

2.42 Students as a body are represented on the Student Staff Liaison Committee which meets once per term and student representatives are invited to attend and engage in QAEG meetings. In addition, various surveys take place or are planned including a survey across all modules..

2.43 The design of these processes allows the Expectation to be met.

2.44 The team reviewed documentation including the minutes of the Staff Student Liaison Committee, minutes of QAEG, module survey documentation, student handbooks and meetings with staff and students.

2.45 The membership and remit of the Staff Student Liaison Committee is clearly stated in the Student Handbooks. It meets once per term and is made up of student representatives from each pathway together with the Head of Centre and the Administration Officer. Representatives are elected by their cohort in the first few weeks of term. The review team met a representative from 2015-16 and was informed by current students that they were expecting nominations and elections to take place during the week following the review visit.

2.46 Representatives are given an explanation of their responsibilities by the Head of Centre and there is also a handbook provided.

2.47 Minutes of the staff-student meetings for 2015-16 showed that representatives present had brought forward a number of issues which had been discussed and responded to. The students who met the review team also gave examples of change resulting from feedback via their representatives.

2.48 Student representatives are also invited to attend QAEG. The Head of Centre noted that those from the October 2015 intake had been invited but had not attended. Those from the February intake had been invited and one had attended. The Head of Centre noted the need to improve engagement with, and by, the student representatives as a priority for the current academic year.

2.49 Module surveys were carried out for all modules and these will be evaluated as part of the Annual Monitoring Report to be submitted in December 2016. Following the Centre Review, the Centre also plans to introduce a survey of pre-arrival and induction experience.

2.50 The Expectation is met with the necessary processes in place and being used and engagement by student representatives improving over the year. Given the continuing intention of the Head of Centre to increase student engagement, the risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.51 Centre and Student handbooks outline the Assessment Regulations; these indicate how SGISCL engages with the Quality Code through processes and procedures that ensure academic standards are set and maintained. Changes to assessment regulations are managed through AQAEC.

2.52 Study Group has a set of minimum expectations for assessment. Subject coursework assignments and examinations are produced by SGISCL Tutors together with marking schemes. The programme approval and monitoring and review process ensures that assessments are mapped to the achievement of learning outcomes (see also section A3.2). ESUS assessments are developed centrally across the ISC network. Examination papers are sent to external examiners for approval (see section B7).

2.53 Study Group is implementing a Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework during 2016-17 with the aim of building upon and enhancing the consistency of assessment across the ISC network. A computer-based system (Progresso) is used to track the progression of each student (see also section B4), and to store student marks securely and accurately for PABs. Study Group does not recognise prior learning in the assessment of students.

2.54 At SGISCL, modules run concurrently throughout programmes. A PAB is held on completion of each of the programmes. PABs include representatives from the partner HEIs, together with external examiners, the Head of Centre and Tutors from both programmes.

2.55 These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.56 To test the arrangements against the Expectation, the review team scrutinised relevant regulations, procedures and processes, assessment information for students and staff in handbooks and other documents, and external examiner reports. The review team also held meetings with students and staff.

2.57 SGISCL teaching staff use a wide variety of assessment methods in supporting the curriculum, enhancing subject-specific knowledge and understanding, and in the development of English language skills. The review team heard that assessments are checked internally for relevance and level before being sent to the external examiner for review. Formative assessment is used to help monitor student progress and engagement and to inform and support improved levels of summative performance. The team heard that there is a formative assessment for almost every class. SGISCL is working to increase consistency of feedback to students. Students were generally very positive about the information provided on assessment, the assessments used and the feedback they received on their work.

2.58 SGISCL uses Progresso to track each student (see section B4). Students at risk of not progressing meet their tutors or Head of Centre to see how this can be addressed. The use of Progresso also ensures marks are stored and reproduced accurately for PABs.

2.59 Penalties for late submission of assignments are set out in student handbooks. At the start of their studies, students are given advice on plagiarism and on conduct in formal

examinations and penalties are described in their handbooks. SGISCL introduced the use of Turnitin software for the ESUS module during 2015-16 and it has been introduced for all written assignments from October 2016. The Centre recognises the benefits of this software as a learning tool for students.

2.60 External examiner comments on assessments for 2015-16 were favourable and included comment that the standard of assessment was appropriate for the level, and the assessments used reflected a suitable range of skills and knowledge.

2.61 The CAP shows active consideration of assessment issues and the implementation of recommended changes, including information provided to students in their handbooks.

2.62 The review team found that the assessment procedures and processes are effective and robust, and concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining

Findings

2.63 The Study Group External Examining Statement is aligned with the Quality Code. External examiners are nominated by SGISCL according to Study Group procedures, and approved by AQAEC. External examiners are sent draft exam papers for their programme for comment and approval. External examiners attend PABs and are invited to visit the Centre prior to the PAB to have the opportunity to scrutinise assessed work. Serious concerns are escalated to Study Group using an Escalation Protocol; all other matters raised by external examiners are considered at SGISCL and reported via AMR through RQAEG to AQAEC.

2.64 These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.65 The review team tested the external examination process by scrutinising relevant documentation, including external examiner reports, and at meetings with Centre staff and students. At the time of the review visit, the SGISCL programmes were too new to conduct a full audit trail on how SGISCL responds to external examiner reports.

2.66 The review team found that the nomination and appointment process for external examiners at SGISCL followed the prescribed procedures, including the use of an induction template for visits by examiners to the Centre, and that details of external examiner roles and responsibilities are given at the start of the induction process. SGISCL has one external examiner for the Business pathway and one for the Law Foundation Year programme; there is a separate external examiner for the ESUS module.

2.67 In their reports, external examiners for the Business and Law pathways commented favourably on the examination process and on the overall standard of student work, and the review team saw consideration of matters concerning external examining recorded in the CAP.

2.68 The review team heard from staff that external examiner reports (from 2015-16) will be made available to students in accordance with Study Group policy, and will be discussed with students at the Staff Student Liaison Committee and made available to all students on the VLE. Students who met the review team were aware of the external examiner system.

2.69 The review team found that the Centre makes good use of external examiners, and concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review

Findings

2.70 All Study Group-approved provision is subject to annual monitoring, to a review after the first year of operation and to re-approval at least once every five years. In addition there is a periodic Centre Review process by which Study Group seeks, among other things, 'to assure itself that each International Study Centre (ISC) is effectively managing academic standards'. Annual monitoring for the academic year 2015-16 for all approved provision will use a standard Study Group template. Re-approval follows the same process as approval including the use of external panel members.

2.71 The processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.72 The first annual monitoring report for SGISCL is not due until December 2016, but the team was able to examine the template to be used and to discuss the process with the Head of Centre. As indicated in section A1, a review of the provision after the first year of operation had been carried out. A first Centre Review had also taken place and led to 15 recommendations reported to QAEG.

2.73 Centre Review and a one-year-on Programme Review have both taken place and resulted in recommendations to approve the provision. The first Annual Monitoring Report is not due until December 2016, but the Head of Centre is clear about the process and timelines for producing this and the way in which it will be used both by Study Group and the partner HEIs, hence the review team believes it will prove an effective process.

2.74 While the annual monitoring process has not yet had a full cycle, other appropriate reviews have taken place and the team believes the Expectation is met with low risk.

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

2.75 The SGISCL academic appeals and complaints procedures are available in Student and Centre Handbooks. SGISCL appeals and complaints procedures are in line with Study Group expectations and have been approved by both partner HEIs.

2.76 The procedures in place for academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of learning opportunities would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.77 The review team tested this Expectation by examining documents relating to appeals and complaints, and in meetings with students and staff.

2.78 SGISCL appeals and complaints procedures have been examined by Study Group at programme approval and re-approval, at HEI validation and revalidation and at Centre Review. Study Group has developed an Academic-Related Complaints and Appeals Policy with a set of overarching principles and minimum expectations for the Centre network. This was approved at AQAEC in April 2016 and was implemented from the start of the 2016-17 academic year.

2.79 The SGISCL ensures students are made aware that academic appeals and complaints procedures are in the Student Handbooks. The students who met the review team were all aware of where to find details of how to make an academic appeal or a complaint.

2.80 Study Group has an Admissions Appeals and Complaints process in place, which is managed centrally (see also section B2).

2.81 The review team found that there are clear policies and procedures for academic appeals and complaints that are articulated by SGISCL to its students, and that the Expectation is thereby met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.82 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

2.83 All nine Expectations in this area are met with low risk. There is one recommendation regarding the accessibility of student support, and one affirmation concerning the use of data for curriculum development.

2.84 The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at SGISCL **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 quality of the information provided by SGISCL online and in hard copy is overseen by Study Group, which requires all ISCs to produce a prescribed set of documents for students and staff. Templates for key documents are provided in the Study Group Academic Quality Handbook. In addition to staff and student handbooks, and programme and module specifications, each Centre has its own marketing brochure, which is produced centrally by Study Group and includes information on programmes of study, progression requirements and opportunities, and term dates.

3.2 The Head of SGISCL is responsible for the accuracy of the academic content of internally and publicly available information and accountable for the formal review process. All documentation is reviewed and updated annually, or more frequently if, for example, changes to the relevant HEI provision necessitate changes in articulation information. Regional Directors report annually to QAEC that all documents are in place for each of their Centres.

3.3 The above procedures are designed to ensure that the information provided about the Centre and its education provision is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy, and would allow the Expectation to be met.

3.4 The review team tested this Expectation by reading a wide range of information produced by and about SGISCL, including Centre, Staff and Student Handbooks, module and programme specifications and marketing information. The team discussed the process for ensuring the quality of information with the Centre staff and representatives from Study Group, and the sufficiency, accuracy and accessibility of published information with students.

3.5 The students who met the review team confirmed the accuracy and usefulness of the information provided to them before application, during the admissions process, and on arrival and subsequent study at SGISCL. The Head of Centre confirmed their responsibilities for ensuring the accuracy of published information on academic matters. The Head of Centre works closely with Study Group's Marketing Manager and the Partner HEIs to review and update public-facing information to ensure it is accessible, current and relevant. An example was provided of how initial confusion by some students in regard to arrival information was effectively addressed.

3.6 Centre Specifications were developed during 2015-16 to make key information available in one place, and these include information or links to information controlled at Study Group by the Academic Manager. QAEC monitors the implementation and effectiveness of Centre Specifications through the PAVC.

3.7 The review team were informed that Study Group works with its legal team to ensure that Centres produce information for students and prospective students that is compliant with current legislation on Consumer Protection published in the Competition and Markets Authority's advice for HEI providers.

3.8 Overall, the information provided by or about SGISCL and its programmes of study is clear, accessible and useful. Information was judged by students and staff accessing it to be helpful and trustworthy. The review team concludes that the Expectation is thereby met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

3.9 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

3.10 The Expectation in this area is met with low risk. SGISCL has systems in place to ensure that the quality of information is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. There are no recommendations, affirmations or areas of good practice in this section.

3.11 The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at SGISCL **meets** UK expectations.

4 Commentary on the enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

4.1 As with all ISCs, a Centre Action Plan is in place at SGISCL and includes actions from Study Group, QAA and the Centre. This action plan is, in the view of the review team, key to a process that ensures deliberate steps are taken with respect to enhancement, that changes introduced are properly evaluated and that good practice is spread between ISCs.

4.2 In the case of SGISCL the team notes in particular the introduction of progression tracking, with interventions to support those in danger of failing to progress, leading to better outcomes for students, the move from using the VLE as a repository for course information to a more interactive learning aid and the agreement of a draft Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy.

5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1 Following a pilot at Sussex ISC, SGISCL and other Centres across the network are introducing 'CareerAhead', Study Group's employability enhancement project, during 2016-17.

5.2 The approach being taken at SGISCL is to embed the 'CareerAhead' programme across the curriculum. The review team heard from Centre staff that each programme has modules where attributes such as interpersonal and other transferable skills can be built into assessments. Course activities such as presentations, group work, visits to employers and talks from its HEI partners will help to develop transferable skills and have a positive impact on employability.

5.3 A section on 'CareerAhead' has been added to the Student Handbooks for 2016-17. Students will complete a Study Group employability questionnaire in January 2017 as part of the 'CareerAhead' project.

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 \(Embedded Colleges\) 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.

Embedded college

Colleges, often operating as part of a network, that are embedded on or near the campuses of two or more UK higher education institutions (HEI) and that primarily provide preparatory programmes for higher education.

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.

Operational definition

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

Programme (of study)

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

Programme specifications

Published statements about the intended **learning outcomes** of programmes of study,

containing information about teaching and learning methods, support and assessment methods, and how individual units relate to levels of achievement.

Public information

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

Quality Code

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

Reference points

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

Subject Benchmark Statement

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

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)

Learning that is delivered or supported through the use of technology.

Threshold academic standard

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

Virtual learning environment (VLE)

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

Widening participation

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

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Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Tel: 01452 557 050

Website: www.qaa.ac.uk