



# Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of Matrix College of Counselling and Psychotherapy

June 2017

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## About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Matrix College of Counselling and Psychotherapy. The review took place from 31 May to 2 June 2017 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Mr Christopher Mabika
- Dr Anya Perera.

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provision and to make judgements as to whether or not academic standards and quality meet UK expectations. These expectations are the statements in the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) (the Quality Code)<sup>1</sup> 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 (Alternative Providers) the QAA review team:

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

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#)<sup>2</sup> and explains the method for [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).<sup>3</sup> For an explanation of terms see the glossary at the end of this report.

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<sup>1</sup> The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code).

<sup>2</sup> QAA website: [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk).

<sup>3</sup> Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers): [www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education).

## Key findings

### Judgements

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

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies **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**.

- The strong and systematic approach to supporting students' professional development as integrative counsellors (Expectations B4, B3).
- The proactive and personalised learning and pastoral support provided to students from initial application through to completion of their studies, which enables them to develop their personal potential (Expectations B4, B2, B3).
- The comprehensive and detailed support for student placements, which strengthens the ability of students to put learning into practice in diverse professional environments (Expectation B10).

### Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations**.

By September 2017:

- further develop the strategic approach to the enhancement of learning opportunities (Enhancement).

By January 2018:

- ensure that teaching staff develop a continuing awareness of current developments in student learning and assessment in higher education (Expectation B3).

### Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following action already being taken to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to students:

- The steps being taken to strengthen management decision making through the establishment of an internal committee structure (Expectation A2.1, B8).

## About the provider

Matrix College of Counselling and Psychotherapy (the College) is a specialist counselling college delivering a single programme leading to the award of a BSc with Honours in Integrative Counselling from its awarding body, Middlesex University (the University). Established in 2001, it aims to provide an excellent training in integrative counselling by developing effective, ethical and skilful practitioners with robust theoretical frameworks, who are equipped to work with vulnerable clients.

The College's management team comprises the Director and the Deputy Head of Training. Based in Bury St Edmunds, it makes use of rented premises in Norwich and Ipswich to carry out teaching, which is conducted by a team of 13 tutors and takes place at weekends. At present there are 27 students enrolled in Ipswich and 31 in Norwich.

Since the College's Review for Specific Course Designation in 2014, its ownership and management have changed. Other changes since include the use of new premises in Ipswich with additional facilities to support programme delivery, the introduction of a virtual learning environment (VLE), and the appointment of a Learning Support Tutor.

The College's programme is accredited by the UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) and aligns its curriculum with the UKCP's Psychotherapeutic Counselling and Intersubjective Psychotherapy Standards for Education and Training (PCIPC SETS). The most recent review by the UKCP of the College's provision took place in 2015 and resulted in positive outcomes.

The key challenges currently faced by the College include the costs, financial and organisational, of regulatory compliance, of renting premises, and of the development of online resources. The College regards it as a priority to maintain HEFCE funding to allow its students to have access to student loans.

The College's provision has been validated by Middlesex University since 2005 under the terms of a Memorandum of Cooperation which sets out the College's responsibilities to the University and which remains in effect until August 2018.

## Explanation of findings

This section explains the review findings in greater detail.

### **1 Judgement: The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and/or 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 programme is validated by Middlesex University. The validation agreement was signed in September 2011 and has been extended to the end of August 2018. The programme is subject to the University's processes for assurance of standards, including due diligence, the management of the validation process, and conferring awards. The College develops and modifies the curriculum and maps the programme to external reference points deriving from professional bodies, as described in Expectation A3.4. The University approves any modifications made to the programme, in line with its approval and quality monitoring review and the Approval for Programme Validation and Review Events procedure.

1.2 The Subject Benchmark Statement for Counselling and Psychotherapy informs the College's curriculum, whose learning outcomes and assessment criteria are aligned with it, and is used to inform any changes being considered. The PCIPC SETS provide a regulatory framework stipulating expectations on the curriculum, programme characteristics, entry

qualifications, and recruitment through to assessment and continued professional development.

1.3 The College maintains close links with the University through the Link Tutor, its Centre for Collaborative Partnerships and the Department of Psychology. These arrangements, together with the College's application of the University's monitoring and approval processes, would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.4 The review team held meetings with the College's management, Programme Leads, and teaching staff, and representatives from the University. The team also scrutinised programme design and approval and related documentation.

1.5 Programme Leads oversee the design, review and development of the curriculum and produce drafts of recommendations for further consideration by the Management Committee. Programme Leads gave as an example their role in the establishment of the chronology of teaching modules. The College also stated that some significant programme changes were discussed at the Curriculum Committee in February 2016 in line with the College's quality review process and Quality and Standards Policy, agreed at the Programme Leads curriculum meeting and then approved by Middlesex University, with support from students, staff and placements. The Curriculum Committee meets four times each year to update and review the current year's curriculum and to make recommended changes to the management team and Middlesex University: for example, in 2016 the College introduced a module in trauma to the curriculum of Year Two. Representatives from the University confirmed that the College is following programme approval processes, which is also evident in College documentation.

1.6 The College maps its internal processes to external reference points, including the level descriptors of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), the Subject Benchmark Statement for Counselling and Psychotherapy, and the UKCP's PCIPC SETS, as well as the requirements of Middlesex University for approval of programmes. Academic staff confirmed the use of FHEQ level descriptors to deliver and assess learning outcomes at the appropriate level. The College requires that staff maintain active membership of relevant professional bodies, and for students to undertake supervision hours with a supervisor who is UKCP registered or accredited by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). The College also maintains institutional membership of the UKCP, and its managers sit on the Board and on the Training and Education Committee of the UKCP, with the Director involved with quinquennial reviews of other providers.

1.7 The College has secure arrangements for maintaining the academic standards of its award. The Expectation is met and 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**

1.8 The Memorandum of Cooperation articulates the designated responsibilities within the collaborative partnership between the College and Middlesex University. Responsibility for the administration, management and delivery of the provision rests with the College. The University and the College appoint respective link tutors responsible for ensuring the maintenance of the standards and delivery of the programme, effective liaison and the annual exchange of documents. The Head of Training, who is also the Director, is the Institutional Link Tutor. The College is responsible for the appointment of a Board of Studies for the programme, which meets twice per year and comprises Programme Leads, link tutors, representatives of the teaching team, and at least two student representatives for each year of the programme.

1.9 The College's approach to safeguarding standards and quality is articulated through its Quality and Standards Policy. Its teaching and assessment framework is contained within the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, the Assessment and Internal Verification Policy and the Policy for Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL). Governance arrangements are contained in the Governance and Internal Structures document, which presents a recently introduced structure defining the arrangement of committees, communication and reporting channels.

1.10 The College, acknowledging the risk of an apparent conflict of interest arising from its owner also being its Director, has undertaken a review of its management structure. The management team is working with an external moderator to plan and develop a changed structure, which will include the input of external expertise to support more robust governance. A new committee structure has recently been established to oversee the management of academic standards at the operational level. Within the new structure, the Management Committee monitors the delivery of the programme. Other committees, including the Programme Leads Committee with responsibility for the day-to-day management of the programme, the Curriculum Committee, responsible for the curriculum, and the Research Committee, have operational responsibilities and report to the Management Committee. The College convenes joint Boards of Studies with the University as stipulated in the Memorandum of Cooperation, and conducts regular Assessment Boards.

1.11 These arrangements, if securely implemented, are sufficient to allow the Expectation to be met.

1.12 The review team convened meetings with management, Programme Leads and Academic Staff, as well as representatives from Middlesex University. The team also scrutinised documents on the academic governance arrangements and management of academic standards, as well as minutes of the various committees.

1.13 Committee chairs confirmed that they have the mandate to make decisions, which are passed on to the management team for approval, and that the new structure is working effectively. However, the recently introduced committee structure is yet to be fully embedded in the College's working practices. The review team **affirms** the steps being taken to

strengthen management decision making through the establishment of an internal committee structure.

1.14 The College has secure arrangements to govern the award of credit, but the lack of embeddedness of its committees indicates a weakness in the governance structure. The Expectation is met and the level of risk is moderate.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Moderate**

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

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

**Findings**

1.15 The College is responsible for producing the definitive record of its programme, in the form of a Programme Specification prepared using the University's template, to serve as its point of reference for delivery and assessment of the programme. Programme specifications are published in the Programme Handbook, which the University states that it retains the right to approve and monitor. The Programme Handbook communicates to students the learning and assessment opportunities needed to demonstrate achievement of the programme learning outcomes.

1.16 The University generates certificates and records of study on the basis of assessment information, which the College supplies. Monitoring and review follows the University's requirements and in addition are governed by UKCP review procedures.

1.17 These arrangements, if securely implemented, are sufficient to allow the Expectation to be met.

1.18 The team met College staff and students, and representatives from the University. It also scrutinised programme documents including the Programme Handbook and Programme Specification.

1.19 The College produces a Programme Handbook containing detailed course information including the structure of the programme, module information as well as information on how the programme is taught and assessed, assessment schedules and information on placements and registration with the UKCP. The handbook also contains information on available awards and their levels as well as details on the award of credit. The Programme Specification and curriculum maps are also available in the handbook as appendices as well as module narratives, reading lists and the syllabus. Teaching staff confirmed that they use the FHEQ Level descriptors in teaching and assessing student work and that they cover each learning outcome at the appropriate level.

1.20 The College has secure arrangements for the production and maintenance of the record of the programme. The Expectation is met and the 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**

1.21 Under the terms of the Memorandum of Cooperation, the University, as the awarding body, has responsibility for setting and maintaining standards and for final approval of programme development and modification. To synchronise with an extension to the six-year partnership agreement with the University until August 2018, revalidation of the course will occur in 2018. Under the agreement, the University undertakes annual review of this validated collaborative programme, and is responsible for appointing the external examiner and receiving the external examiner annual reports. The College complies with the University's frameworks and procedures for the approval of programmes and is subject to the monitoring procedures as stipulated in the University's Learning and Quality Enhancement Handbook. This is designed to ensure that the administration, staffing, academic validity and standards are equivalent to those of the University.

1.22 The College complies with the University's procedures for programme approval and changes. To support the University's annual monitoring processes, liaison occurs throughout the year between the two appointed link tutors at each institution. The designated Link Tutor at the College is the Head of Training and the Link Tutor at the University is a subject specialist. The arrangements for assessments are designed to ensure that credit and awards are outcome-based, and this is communicated through the detailed programme handbook, which uses the University's template and is checked by them. Assessment Boards are chaired by the Link Tutor at the University and the external examiner, appointed by the University, must have the necessary expertise to consider the appropriateness of standards, which is endorsed in the 2016 report.

1.23 These arrangements, if securely implemented, are sufficient to allow the Expectation to be met.

1.24 The team met with senior staff, tutors, students and senior representatives from the University with responsibility for quality, standards and collaborative provision. In meetings with senior staff, the review team was able to test understanding of the role of the Curriculum Committee and the interaction with Programme Leads in overseeing the review and development of the curriculum ahead of the revalidation event. The team reviewed documentation including the Programme Handbook, external examiner reports, annual monitoring and evaluatory reports, and the accompanying institutional action plans.

1.25 In the context of the Memorandum of Cooperation, the College is secure in fulfilling its responsibilities, maintaining academic standards with oversight by the University as the awarding body. The partnership is well established and the respective responsibilities are well understood and clarified in documentation. The College, through the Director of Training, has established a constructive relationship with the University, and evidence indicates that the College is fully engaged with the appropriate frameworks and regulations.

1.26 The College is managing its responsibilities for the award of credit and for its qualification effectively, and in so doing complies with its obligation to satisfy the University's requirements as the awarding body. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

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

**Findings**

1.27 The University validates the modules for the programme, and Programme Specifications are approved through the validation procedures, updated annually and published in the Programme Handbook. As such, ultimate responsibility for securing standards rests with the University as the awarding partner, and assessment and moderation arrangements reside with the College.

1.28 Programme specifications are published in the Programme Handbook and provide a reference point for delivery and assessment. This communicates to students the learning and assessment opportunities needed to demonstrate achievement of the programme learning outcomes. In addition, as a training organisation, the College must align with the UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) Psychotherapeutic Counselling and Intersubjective Psychotherapy College's standards for education and training.

1.29 Programme learning outcomes are mapped against modules for each year of study and the assessment strategy is designed to ensure that students can demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes.

1.30 The College is responsible for setting, marking and providing feedback on assessment tasks, following its own Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. The programme is linked to the University's Faculty of Science and Technology, and is governed by the University's regulations for taught programmes of study and the College's own Codes and Procedures. Grading criteria are published in the Programme Handbook; the College, in seeking to review its assessment, has recently established a separate Assessment Committee to support the operation of its Curriculum Committee.

1.31 The College works closely with the external examiner and the Link Tutor to help ensure that assessment is outcome-based; the Link Tutor or Head of Training chairs the Assessment Boards. The chair of the Assessment Board is responsible for signing the conferment list and decisions from programme Assessment Boards are passed by the University's Link Tutor to the Centre for Academic Partnerships. The Programme Handbook articulates the assessment methods and provides a clear assessment map for students through each year of study. This handbook also provides a curriculum map for each year of study and details the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy linked to programme and module learning outcomes.

1.32 These arrangements, if securely implemented, are sufficient to allow the Expectation to be met.

1.33 The review team examined the effectiveness of practices through meetings with senior representatives from the University, students, senior staff and other members of teaching staff at the College, and through examination of the Programme Handbook,

external examiner reports and staff CVs. The team was able to test the shared understanding and the operation of delegated responsibilities by both parties through meetings.

1.34 The College is managing its responsibilities in accordance with the University's expectations. The validation procedures ensure that the requirements of the FHEQ and the Subject Benchmark Statements are considered and ongoing externality is assured through the University's appointment of an external examiner, through scrutiny by professional bodies and through discussions with the University's Link Tutor.

1.35 The College works closely with the external examiner and Link Tutor to approve assessments and uses the University's template for grading criteria alongside descriptors of expectations at each level of study. Students' progress towards learning outcomes is discussed at Programme Leads meetings and with individual students at tutorials. The College has effective interaction with bodies responsible for codes of practice and standards in Counselling and Psychotherapy, and it has mapped its teaching to the standards set out in the PCIPC SETS and Subject Benchmark Statements. Most students are members of the UKCP and are supervised by practitioners with similar membership. The College is also an institutional member of the UKCP.

1.36 External examiners' reports reflect positively on the assessment practices being used and on the fairness of the grading by the markers. The review team received confirmation that there is ongoing and close dialogue between the College's Link Tutor and a wider pool of University staff based in the Department of Psychology with respect to new programme design and approval. Use of the University's template for the Programme Handbook ensures that learning outcomes and threshold standards are made explicit.

1.37 The College is adhering to the University's processes for the operation of the Assessment Board and for the award of credit and qualifications. 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**

1.38 The University has overall responsibility for the programme, inclusive of overall monitoring and review, and the College is responsible for administering the course in accordance with procedures detailed in the University's Learning, Quality and Enhancement handbook. Through the terms of the agreement and appointment of Link Tutors, the University is responsible for the maintenance of standards, and adherence to the quality and annual review procedures.

1.39 Alongside the University's required annual monitoring procedures, the College has developed its own annual monitoring review process. The College's review process is informed from a variety of sources including student feedback, feedback from staff and students from the Weekend Register, and a tutor review of delivery and student performance, which is shared with the Programme Leads and is completed after each training weekend or seminar day.

1.40 Oversight of assessment is the responsibility of the University's Assessment Board. The Board is chaired by the University Link Tutor or an approved nominee from the Faculty of Science and Technology. Formal decisions of Programme Assessment Boards are passed to the Centre for Academic Partnerships by the University's Link Tutor. Arrangements for assessments and the Boards must conform to the University's regulations for taught programmes of study.

1.41 The College enjoys a supportive partnership with University. Processes for monitoring and review to fulfil the requirements of the University are well established and understood, and draw on an established partnership between the two institutions. The process is strengthened through annual external examiner reports and by the College's recently established internal Annual Evaluatory Report, which seeks to draw together several existing annual monitoring and feedback mechanisms.

1.42 These arrangements, if securely implemented, are sufficient to allow the Expectation to be met.

1.43 The review team examined the processes being used for internal monitoring and established annual review processes leading to an annual monitoring report submitted annually to the University. The team considered a range of documents relating to the current offering including external examiner reports, the UKCP review report, minutes of meetings, action plans and mapping documents. The team also met with staff operating at all levels of the organisation, students and University representatives.

1.44 The team found that the procedures and processes used for monitoring and review are well understood and operate effectively. Full consideration is taken of the external examiner appointed by the University, who specifically reports on whether threshold standards are met. The College uses this annual report to take remedial action as required, for instance through its recent efforts to raise the quality of student essays. The College has not yet been subjected to a periodic review of the programme by the University, but it has

been reviewed by the UKCP, its professional accreditation body. The introduction of an Annual Evaluatory Report, the underpinning feedback mechanisms and qualitative and quantitative data provide the scaffold to this review and offer an opportunity to identify good practice. The mechanisms of annual monitoring ensure maintenance of academic standards.

1.45 Overall, the team concludes that the College has appropriate internal mechanisms in place, and with sufficient oversight by the University, for the monitoring and review of its programme. The Expectation is therefore met and the associated risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

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

**Findings**

1.46 The University has responsibility for assuring externality during validation and for ensuring that standards are maintained through the use of approved external examiners. The programme design must also align with the accreditation requirements of the PCIPC SETS.

1.47 The College actively engages with external stakeholders including placement providers and alumni, through the Members Committee and the UKCP. As a designated training member organisation, the College is subject to review by the UKCP, whose first quinquennial review of the College took place in 2016 with favourable outcomes.

1.48 Under the Memorandum of Cooperation with the University, the College has delegated responsibilities for assessment including marking, and for submission of a response to the external examiner report. The external examiner views students' work and reports annually to the University. The College complies with the University's requirements for annual monitoring and the report details responses to any recommendations made by the external examiner. The College also responds separately to requirements and recommendations arising from the UKCP quinquennial review.

1.49 The College actively engages with external stakeholders and values the input of the external examiner, receiving additional feedback as required. The external examiner also comments on student performance in relation to clinical and professional practice. The College also maintains a directory of supervisors who work with a student to enhance professional development during their clinical training as counsellors. In the College's commitment to producing effective integrative counsellors, placement providers are also canvassed for their views on any areas of training that need to be addressed by the College, leading, for instance, to the training on trauma that now takes place in Year Two of the programme, and which is intended to enable students to work with traumatised clients during their placements.

1.50 During counselling placements, placement providers supply feedback, as does the appointed supervisor, who is required to endorse supervision of clinical hours and indicate whether there are any learning needs. Following successful completion of the viva and a further 200 hours of client hours above that required of the degree programme, the student is entitled to apply to be a Psychotherapeutic Counsellor and to be registered with the UKCP.

1.51 These arrangements, if securely implemented, are sufficient to allow the Expectation to be met.

1.52 The review team tested the Expectation through review of external examiner reports, the College's responses to these, its self-assessment reports and the actions taken as a result of external scrutiny. The team examined minutes of meetings, including Boards of

Study, the Curriculum Committee and the Assessment Committee to see how the external examiner report is disseminated and used and how it is informing review of current provision. Feedback from external assessors was reviewed along with relevant policy documents and the placement pack. The review team also discussed procedures and details with representatives from the University, placement providers, senior staff, tutors and students.

1.53 External engagement is valued and is effective. The College responds to the external examiner reports and that of UKCP and there is evidence of consideration, discussion and training arising from the external examiner recommendations. Students confirmed that the report is circulated to them. The new committee structure has been constituted to further inform and direct changes arising from external scrutiny and internal self-review and monitoring. The Head of Training also maintains her role as a UKCP reviewer.

1.54 The College is proactive in taking steps to engage with external stakeholders, making full use of external expertise to assure that its training meets the needs of its accrediting body and that threshold standards of the University are maintained. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated risk is low.

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

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

1.55 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. All Expectations in this judgement area are met. The level of risk is moderate for Expectation A2.1 and is low for all other Expectations.

1.56 There are no features of good practice or recommendations in this judgement area. There is a single affirmation relating to the steps being taken to strengthen management decision making through the establishment of an internal committee structure.

1.57 There are secure frameworks to ensure that standards are maintained at appropriate levels and that the definitive record of each programme is used to govern the award of academic credit and qualifications.

1.58 The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and/or other awarding organisations at the provider **meets** UK expectations.

## 2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

#### **Findings**

2.1 Responsibility for the design, development and approval of the BSc (Hons) Integrative Counselling programme rests with the University as part of its collaborative provision. The partnership agreement, expressed through a Memorandum of Cooperation, has been extended for a year to accommodate this review, with revalidation of the programme deferred to coordinate with this extension. Changes to governance and internal structures has resulted in a newly defined role for the College's Curriculum Committee, which is charged with development of the curriculum in preparation for the revalidation. This committee operates alongside the Assessment and Research Committees.

2.2 The College has not developed any new programmes, but it is preparing for the University review of its current provision and is considering development of a master's programme. In accordance with its own Quality and Standards Policy, any future developments would adhere to the University's requirements and procedures for the design and approval of the programme and those of the UKCP. Prior to invoking formal processes of programme development approval, internal discussions using input from the University's Link Tutor and advice from the Psychology Department's Director of Programmes for Collaborative Provision and Placement Learning at the University are secured. The Head of Training is the Link Tutor at the College and liaises directly with the University in these preliminary discussions. Close reference is paid to the procedures for programme validation and review. Advice on the development of new programmes is assisted by its own internal review processes, which capture feedback from a range of stakeholders.

2.3 The College operates an internal annual review cycle that captures feedback from stakeholders to inform changes. The proposal to train students on trauma to assist them with their clinical work resulted from feedback from a placement provider and was instigated by the College through a module change following the University's procedures. Module changes are signed off by the Link Tutor or Director of Programmes and Chair of the Faculty Quality Committee at the University.

2.4 The Curriculum Committee, alongside the Programme Leads, oversees the review and development of the curriculum. The University approves programme change, which draws on the annual monitoring review process.

2.5 These arrangements, if securely implemented, are sufficient to allow the Expectation to be met.

2.6 The review team examined the Memorandum of Cooperation, terms of reference and minutes of the Curriculum, Assessment and Research Committee, and further details were explored through meetings with senior staff and Programme Leads, including the Chair of the Curriculum Committee. Meetings were held with senior representatives from the University responsible for collaborative provision and quality, tutors and students. The

effectiveness of processes was scrutinised through review of documentation relating to review and monitoring.

2.7 There is clear understanding regarding the division of responsibilities in the approval of programmes, with members of management responsible for liaison with the University. Staff are aware of the College's own processes and procedures and are familiar with the need to follow the University's processes, expectations of the UKCP and the role of externality. Understanding of the new committee structure and their respective roles in curriculum development and review was evident through these meetings.

2.8 The College adheres closely to the programme design requirements of its validating partner, and the College's Director of Training provides the conduit between the University and College staff through the additional designated role as Link Tutor. Staff are gaining experience of programme design through the imminent review of the programme and through this, the processes operated by the University. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.9 The Memorandum of Cooperation assigns to the College the responsibility for the recruitment and admission of students onto the programme and states that all programmes have published selection criteria and selection procedures, with admission requirements that include relevant English language qualifications, guidelines on the accreditation of prior certificated or experiential learning, and professional and academic qualifications.

2.10 The College's strategy, aiming to develop excellent clinicians by ensuring that only applicants personally ready are accepted onto the course, underpins the College's admissions processes. This is supported by the guidelines for applicants, which provides details of the admissions processes. The Admissions Policy affirms the College's values, in the form of general rules which it observes during the admissions process, and the attributes expected in applicants. A recently developed application form allows applicants to confirm their intent to study by including a reflection on their reasons for wishing to undertake counselling training, and also permits applicants to declare any disabilities: the College provides written guidance on completing the application form and on the use of the recently strengthened APL criteria that require a portfolio of evidence to prove prior learning. The College also has a Fitness to Study Policy, which is applied to ensure that applicants can study effectively and can meet the placement requirements.

2.11 These arrangements, if securely implemented, are sufficient to allow the Expectation to be met. To test the practical application of these arrangements, the team held meetings with senior staff, teaching staff, professional support staff and students.

2.12 Students confirmed being interviewed by two members of staff and that the details of the application process, entry requirements, course details and costs are provided on the College's website. In its admissions process, the College does not insist on applicants having academic qualifications, considering it necessary for counselling training to be open for all. Instead, the College requires applicants to demonstrate a range of personal qualities and to show a suitable level of motivation and commitment to study. English language competency equivalent to at least 6.0 on the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) scale, with at least 5.5 for each component, is required of candidates whose first language is not English.

2.13 Prior to submitting an application, prospective applicants can attend 'Taster Sessions', at which they may obtain detailed information about the programme, and may have an opportunity to learn about and discuss its demands and rigours. The College states that in 2016, out of the 29 prospective students who attended Taster Sessions, 12 applied and are current students. The College attributes a recent drop in non-completions to the strengthened selection process, the Taster Sessions, and the revised APL system.

2.14 The College's clear and careful processes for the selection and admission of students, carried out with a strongly personalised approach, support the feature of good practice identified in Expectation B4 relating to the proactive and personalised learning and

pastoral support provided to students from initial application through to completion of their studies. The Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

#### **Findings**

2.15 The Memorandum of Cooperation assigns the responsibility for the provision of tuition to the College and requires the College to ensure that library, IT and other learning resources are available for its students. College students are not entitled to access or use the University's Learning and Resource Services. The standards in the PCIPC SETS outline the important elements for the establishment of effective learning and teaching, enhancing the learning environment and student engagement in learning.

2.16 The College's Quality and Standards Policy provides the basis for learning and teaching, making reference to the standards and quality of the University and UKCP. It outlines the critical elements for maintaining an effective learning and teaching environment and safeguarding quality, making a commitment to collecting student feedback and regularly monitoring achievement and progression trends. The Quality and Standards Policy also makes reference to the College's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, the document and the Programme Handbook as the key documents outlining how the College maintains effective learning and teaching. It places emphasis on the value of relationships in learning and teaching as in counselling and psychotherapy, thus providing students with a basis for reflection on their future practice. The Quality and Standards Policy also highlights the importance of maintaining an active learning environment that engages students. The Codes and Procedures document lays out the expectations of both staff and students in maintaining a supportive learning environment.

2.17 The Tutor Recruitment Policy outlines the process that ensures that training staff are adequately qualified on appointment and once on board, are appropriately inducted, participate in continuous professional development activities and have the necessary registration with the UKCP. Both tutors and students receive induction when they first join the College. The Induction Policy specifies that all new staff have a mentor for the full year. The College also has a Tutor Observation Protocol that stipulates that the classroom work of each teacher will be observed annually by the Head of Training, the Deputy Head of Training or a Programme Lead.

2.18 The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy assigns the role of the main point of contact and support for students to the Programme Lead. There is also a Learning Support Tutor providing a range of personal support to students including playing a pastoral role.

2.19 The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy emphasises inclusivity and the importance of relationships. Annual staff observations are regarded as an important part of ensuring standards in teaching and enhancing students' learning. Students, in end-of-year evaluations, provide feedback on the quality of teaching and of the facilitation of their learning by tutors; students also comment on their own learning during training weekends. Good practice by staff is disseminated at the staff training day in June of each year: for example, good practice points identified in teaching observations in 2015-16 included the use of discussions during teaching with reference to the tutors' own practice, and allowing students time to process learning received.

2.20 These arrangements, if securely implemented, are sufficient to allow the Expectation to be met.

2.21 The review team scrutinised policy documents including the Quality and Standards Policy, the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, the Tutor Recruitment Policy, the Codes and Procedures Handbook and the Staff Induction Policy. The team was given a tour of the VLE and met students, Programme Leads, teaching staff and the Learning Support Tutor.

2.22 Staff and students confirmed the use of a wide a range of teaching approaches, with a mix of didactic and experiential learning. 'Process groups' are carried out on Sundays for students to consider issues about their own experience and triads, involving counsellor, client, and observer, are used to give students confidence in their practice. Students also make presentations and undertake skills-based work to develop listening, observation, and reflective skills. Staff and students confirmed that on the students' first weekend at the College, tutors spend time giving them information and undertaking group-forming exercises. In the third year, Programme Leads offer advice to students about career progression.

2.23 Student feedback on arrangements for the first week of their programme is generally positive. The College uses student feedback to review approaches to learning including weekend training evaluations, student end-of-year evaluations, informal feedback from alumni, formal feedback from work placements, retention statistics, feedback from the external examiner and the external assessors, past completion statistics and feedback from the UKCP and from Middlesex University. The student submission to this review comments positively on the learning environment. Student feedback, especially in end-of-year evaluations and in the meeting with students, is generally positive. The UKCP report of December 2015 also reported positively regarding learning and teaching.

2.24 A variety of teaching methods, suited to the material being delivered and personalised to student needs, are used in carefully structured teaching weekends. These support the feature of good practice identified in Expectation B4 in relation to the proactive and personalised learning and pastoral support provided to students from initial application through to completion of their studies, which enables them to develop their personal potential.

2.25 The College uses a range of effective approaches to strengthen the academic skills of students, some of whom may have re-entered education after a break of some years. These approaches include the Essay Writing Training Days delivered in October each year, individual tutorial support and online video training on referencing. Students commented positively on opportunities to discuss individual essays with tutors. External examiners have also commented positively on the effectiveness of the feedback given to students to support their development, with one report stating that tutor feedback was thorough and helpful, with clear guidance about how to gain a pass for deferred students. These features support the feature of good practice identified in Expectation B4 relating to the College's strong and systematic approach to supporting students' professional development as integrative counsellors.

2.26 Students confirmed that the College's VLE works effectively as a source of information, while drawing attention to the lack of consistency in the provision of handouts from tutors. Students also expressed satisfaction with available library resources and other learning resources.

2.27 The College conducts staff observations as outlined in its protocol for developmental purposes. Tutors evaluate the weekend's teaching content on their registers and issues are fed back through the management team to the curriculum meeting. Staff appraisals and student feedback are used to identify staff training needs.

However, although the University provides a number of staff development opportunities, neither Programme Leads nor tutors had attended any of these and current staff development activities do not necessarily target continuing awareness of current developments in student learning and assessment in higher education. The team found that members of academic staff are not taking full advantage of opportunities to strengthen awareness of developments in teaching, learning and assessment within the sector, and **recommends** that the College should ensure that teaching staff develop a continuing awareness of current developments in student learning and assessment in higher education.

2.28 The College has secure arrangements to govern the quality of teaching and learning and to support the development of students' capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking. The Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.29 The College's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy is the key document that articulates the College's approach to enabling students to become effective integrative counsellors. It is supported by other policies, including the Quality and Standards Policy, the Admissions Policy, the Induction Policy and the Matrix College Supervision Statement and Policy. The Programme Handbook provides information to students on how they can find help to enable their development on the course. The College's approach to a vocational career pathway is made evident through Taster Days. The importance of personal awareness and reflective practice is seen as being important as the academic training.

2.30 These arrangements, if securely implemented, are sufficient to allow the Expectation to be met.

2.31 The team considered this Expectation by meetings with senior staff, teaching staff, professional support staff and students and through documentary evidence, including the above policy statements.

2.32 Student progression data show increasing rates of progression and achievement. A recent drop in non-completion rates is reflected in the retention figures, which since 2013 have ranged from 75 percent to 87 percent but are 100 percent for the most recent cohort: the College attributes this increase to the strengthened selection process, the Taster Sessions, and the revised APL Policy.

2.33 Students undertake work placements as part of their development to acquire clinical experience and for accreditation, some of which are subsequently converted into employment after graduation. The College has also provided a session for students on setting up a private practice.

2.34 Students stated that they were required to attend an hour of supervision for every six hours of client work and that they attend triad sessions and undergo observations in Year Two, enabling them to assess their readiness to practise. Students confirmed that teaching weekends are experiential and encourage relational interaction, and that each weekend is carefully structured with timetabled lectures, triads and group sessions. Although students accepted that achieving a balance between study, placement and work is a challenge, they expressed the view that the support they receive to progress on the course furthers their personal development and enables them to progress with their studies. Students commented that tutors showed depth of knowledge and experience in practice and are readily available, enthusiastic and supportive, encouraging self-reflection and improvement of practice. The College has also provided a session for students on setting up a private practice. The review team considers the strong and systematic approach to supporting students' professional development as integrative counsellors to be a feature of **good practice**.

2.35 The College offers a strong commitment to personalised relational interactions with students. Staff awareness of the personal circumstances of individual students, the open nature of communication between students and staff, and the support offered by the Learning Support Tutor, contribute to the personal development of each student. These approaches, the College's clear, careful and personalised processes for the

selection and admission of students described in Expectation B2, and the range of effective approaches to strengthening the academic skills of students described in Expectation B3, combine to form the proactive and personalised learning and pastoral support provided to students from initial application through to completion of their studies, which the review team finds to be a feature of **good practice**.

2.36 The College has secure arrangements to ensure the development of students' academic, personal and professional potential. The Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.37 In line with its validating body requirements, the Boards of Study, held twice a year, are the formal mechanism for staff-student dialogue to secure student engagement. Student representatives attending these meetings receive training from the College's Head of Training, and are invited to evaluate the training they receive. Central to the College's mission is developing an open relational connection with students that mirrors integrative professional practice. Staff with positions supporting the Management Committee, such as the chairs of committees, are required to demonstrate good relational leadership skills.

2.38 There are a number of avenues in which the College proactively gains student feedback, including weekend evaluations, placement evaluations, training evaluation and end-of-year evaluations. Student evaluations of new tutors are captured by management through the standard weekend evaluation mechanisms. Evaluations enjoy high completion rates from students at each site. Students are also able to access members of the management team directly, including the Head of Training. There are a range of feedback mechanisms from staff to students including business updates and the Matrix College newsletter; Chairs of the Curriculum and Assessment Committee are tasked with feeding back to students. The recent introduction of a VLE allows tutors to interact with students in between the weekend contact sessions, and enables student-to-student dialogue through use of the forum facility.

2.39 The College's aim of providing and encouraging open communication between the Head of Training, tutors and students is aligned with its strategic aims, and is reiterated through its Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. Student views are canvassed through formal and informal means and students reported that they feel their voice is heard. The College fosters a culture of inclusivity, which is endorsed through meetings with students and is noted in the student submission to this review. Student representation at the Curriculum and Assessment Committees is considered by management as an important contribution to strengthening the effectiveness of changes relating to governance. The specific contributions of a Year Three representative to the work of the Curriculum Committee assisting in the review of content and delivery for the future, and of a Year One student on the Assessment Committee, ensure that students are involved in the decision-making processes.

2.40 The College actively engages with its alumni, offering opportunities for professional development after graduation, arising from its mission to be a centre for integrative counselling education. Students, staff, alumni and local practitioners offering placements can all attend these events and this offers a valuable networking opportunity for students to engage in shared training events in a community of practice.

2.41 Use of data from the National Student Survey and from the survey on Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education will this year, for the first time, allow benchmarking to national data and will serve as an additional tool to the established student review mechanisms contributing to annual review processes. Increasingly, students are using the VLE to access information, and participation and activity is noted, although not formally monitored, pre and post-weekend delivery.

2.42 These arrangements, if securely implemented, are sufficient to allow the Expectation to be met.

2.43 To test this Expectation, the review team met the Head of Training, senior staff, tutors and students, and examined documentary evidence including terms of reference and minutes of meetings, questionnaires and results of surveys, and communications to students from the management team. The team received a demonstration of the VLE and how it is used at the College.

2.44 The review team found that the College actively engages with its students both individually and collectively, and this reflects its core values and the emphasis it places on relationships. Students confirmed that their views are systematically collected and responded to by the management team and that active participation in committees is encouraged. Students informed the team that, if required, they can access and discuss matters with senior members of staff directly, and confirmed that actions are taken as a result of their feedback. The review team met students studying at each site who substantiated the opportunities offered to engage with the College and to meet with tutors and senior staff who all teach at both venues; this is reflected in the high participation rates achieved in the end-of-year surveys. Joint training with staff and alumni is appreciated, and students feel well informed about developments at the College.

2.45 The engagement of students is integrated into the College's calendar through Boards of Study, and committee meetings accompanied by well-established and regular feedback mechanisms, and students confirmed that they have meaningful discussion through both these formal and informal channels. Students are given information about becoming a student representative at the beginning of the year, are elected by their peers, and receive training. Reciprocal feedback on evaluations occurs from management to student representatives, and students expressed the view that they feel part of the College and that their voice is heard and acted upon. Student participation is encouraged through Boards of Study meetings, the College newsletter and student participation in the Assessment and Curriculum Committee. Business updates are read out to students at the start of the weekend.

2.46 The College actively engages with its students in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience. Students have a good working relationship with staff at all levels of the organisation that resonates with the form of integrative counselling training delivered, working in partnership with the management team. Therefore, the team concludes that the College meets the Expectation and the associated level of 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**

2.47 The College's responsibilities for the management of assessment are articulated in the Assessment and Internal Verification Policy, the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy and the students' Programme Handbook. The College is responsible for setting, marking and giving feedback on assessment, and it is marked and moderated in line with the University's Code of Assessment Practice, given in its regulations.

2.48 The Programme Handbook follows a University template and gives students guidance on the schedule and nature of assessments in each year, together with detail on assessment and grading criteria. The College adheres to PCIPC SETS, which allows students to apply for UKCP registration as psychotherapeutic counsellors following graduation. This requires successful completion of 450 clinical hours, of which 250 hours are integrated as part of the course with supervision for every six hours of client work and 35 hours of personal counselling each year. At a time of their choosing, students are assessed on their readiness to practise by the Programme Leads, supported by the Head of Training. In support of this, students receive feedback from tutors on their triad work, and tutor feedback on student performance and delivery outcomes is captured on weekend registers which are sent to the Deputy Head of Training and shared with Programme Leads.

2.49 The College is responsible for setting, marking and giving feedback on assessments, and the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy underpins assessment processes. Procedures for assessment are laid out in the Assessment and Internal Verification Policy, available to students for reference on the VLE. The College applies a variety of assessment methods, both formative and summative, to enable the students to demonstrate all their learning outcomes.

2.50 Assessment includes the completion of a case study at levels 5 and 6, with submission dependent on the completion of 100 hours of clinical practice in Year Two of the programme and 150 hours in Year Three; readiness to practise is assessed internally by tutors. Following submission of the case study, a viva voce examination is held with an external professional acting as the examiner. This builds on systematic observation by tutors and feedback on counselling skills that takes place at each training weekend, and explores the integrative philosophy and framework underpinning the student's practice. Through the case study and clinical work, students demonstrate their capacity to develop integrative, therapeutic and effective counselling skills and the ethics, professionalism and responsibilities required of this role.

2.51 Continuous assessment of personal development and counselling skills through practical sessions and tutor observation each weekend is used to embed the professional skills and the standards expected of a psychotherapeutic counsellor. Students are obliged to attend 80 per cent of taught sessions and complete 35 hours of personal counselling each year, and this is made clear at the start of the course. Students also complete an iterative learning journal, using their own space on the VLE, in which they reflect on their development and acquisition of skills. Both self and peer-assessment feature in the assessment strategy, with tutor feedback on a student's learning collated each year in

their journal. The development of academic, personal and counselling skills, and progress towards learning outcomes, is discussed at tutorials; the timing of the assessment for readiness to practise in Year Two is determined by the student. The personal learning journal and essays are marked by the programme leads and the students' integrative counselling philosophy, based on case study work, is assessed in a viva conducted by an external independent expert; assessment is overseen by the external examiner appointed by the University. In recognition of the importance of the viva, and with written agreement with students, a secure digital recording of the viva is held for six months.

2.52 The College's approach to the Accreditation of Prior Learning is documented in its policy document and is offered in collaboration with the University and the UKCP. Recent changes to the APL Policy have been made to ensure that potential applicants have the relevant counselling skills on entry to succeed on the course. The College's management decided, based on experience and analysis of progression data, that graduates from other disciplines would be advised to start in Year One of the programme. The APL Policy is published on the College's website and advice is offered on an individual and case-by-case basis by senior staff, including the Head and Deputy Head of Training, prior to application.

2.53 The College operates formative and summative assessment that adheres to the requirements of its validating body, the skills required by its professional body, and the College's own expectations of integrative relational counsellors. This operates within the context of its own policies, including its Quality and Standards Policy. The College follows the University's criteria for the selection of external examiners and the appointment is approved by the University. The Link Tutor from the University is a subject specialist, and attends at least one Board of Studies and chairs the Assessment Boards attended by the external examiner.

2.54 All essays are marked by two markers, one of whom is the Programme Lead; a third marker, if required, is a member of the management team. Anonymous marking is not employed due to the nature of the subject; although the use of two markers reduces potential bias, the review team was unable to see details of how this marking operates. Students expressed very positive views on the quality of assessment processes and of the feedback they receive. A range of marked work is reviewed by the external examiner ahead of the Assessment Board. Tutors give feedback on students' progress to the Programme Lead after each weekend. The student handbook gives detailed guidance on assessments, with criteria and grading criteria accompanying an assessment map for each year of study in relation to learning and programme outcomes. Students are made aware of the University's regulations through links on the VLE and in the handbook.

2.55 The remit of the newly formed Assessment Committee is to review and advise the management team on assessment, including criteria and the contextualisation of learning outcomes, and to inform future improvements in preparation for revalidation, which will contribute to the College's overall action plan.

2.56 These arrangements, if securely implemented, are sufficient to allow the Expectation to be met.

2.57 The team examined the effectiveness of the procedures in meetings with senior staff and tutors, representatives from the University holding responsibility for quality and standards, placement providers and students. The team looked at completed external assessments, details of the viva, feedback from tutors on the learning journal and student evaluations of new tutor training. The team also examined the criteria for marking and the definitive programme documentation published in the handbook, and examined College documentation and policies relating to assessment. Feedback from tutors on the learning journal and from tutorials and minutes of the Assessment Committee, the Assessment

Boards and external examiners' reports were all made available for scrutiny. Details of continual assessment, and weekend registers on student progress leading to the readiness to practise, were explained in meetings with staff and students.

2.58 The College complies with the University's Assessment Board procedures, and the University's Link Tutor and Director of Collaborative Provision liaise with the Head of Training. In response to external examiners' comments and internal review, the VLE and designated taught sessions are used to strengthen support for students' essay writing skills and case studies. Although it is too early to evaluate the success of this approach, the current tutorial system does track students' perceptions of their own written work through each level of study. Programme Leads meet regularly and are responsible for marking essays, tutorials, internal verification and reviewing the curriculum and assessments annually; changes to assessments arising from marking are passed to the Curriculum Committee/Assessment Committee and Head of Training prior to being forwarded to the external examiner. The College aims to improve students' essay writing skills and the accompanying marking of essays. The Learning Support Tutor offers additional help and advice for students through additional tutorials, including assistance with essay writing.

2.59 The College does not currently have the facility of Turnitin, and alternative plagiarism-detection software is used if needed. Students are given guidance on how to avoid plagiarism, but the personalised nature of the essay, based on each student's own experiences coupled with the tutor's knowledge of each student and their personal integrative counselling practice, helps the detection of academic misconduct.

2.60 The UKCP (PCICP) report and the 2016 external examiner's report commented positively on the College's adherence to assessment standards and parity between markers. A review of the marking guidelines and criteria was recommended by the external examiner and this forms part of the remit for the newly constituted Assessment Committee, which will also consider student views. The UKCP review recommended more reading between weekend delivery, and more guidance and fuller use of the VLE is being used to help address this.

2.61 Overall, the team concludes that the College operates secure assessment practices enabling students to achieve the intended outcomes, and this is informed by reflection, subject-specific knowledge and the demands of professional practice. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the 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**

2.62 The appointment of the external examiner follows the University's published guidelines and criteria, with nominations approved by the University. Approval is based on the candidate's academic and professional standing and the necessary experience and expertise to maintain comparability of standards; the appointment is made for a four-year period.

2.63 Induction is organised by the Head of Training at the College, with training available at the University. The external examiner approves the titles of summative essays and reviews a sample of students' work, including failed and deferred submissions. The College is responsible for formulating a response to the external examiner's annual report and identifying accompanying actions. This is monitored by the University through its annual monitoring procedures, with feedback from the Link Tutor and through the Assessment Board. The external examiner's report is expected to follow the University's template and, as such, provides commentary on the appropriateness and effectiveness of internal assessment processes, regulations and procedures in respect of the qualification and standards, student achievement, assessment recommendations and good practice. These reports, submitted after the Assessment Boards held in November, are the property of the University and, on receipt, are distributed to the relevant parties. The College's formal response to the report must be made to the University within six weeks. The external examiner's report is received at the Boards of Study attended by students and is published on the VLE.

2.64 A range of essays across the marks range are reviewed by the external examiner, who reports annually on whether standards are appropriate and whether the assessment process is rigorous and fair; this report is received by the University. The Head of Training responds to external examiners' reports and the report also forms part of the evidence for the Annual Monitoring Report. Feedback from the external examiner contributes to programme review. The role of the external examiner is made explicit to students in the Programme Handbook, with reports made available to the students through the VLE and discussed with staff at Assessment Boards. The response and action arising from the external examiner's report are collated by the Director of Training to ensure institutional oversight and dissemination through workshops, Boards of Study and Assessment Boards.

2.65 These arrangements, if securely implemented, are sufficient to allow the Expectation to be met.

2.66 The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of a range of documentation including external examiners' reports, the AMR, action plans, and minutes of meetings, including the Management and Curriculum Committees, and tested awareness and monitoring of actions through meetings with tutors and students.

2.67 The team concluded that the College makes full use of the external examiner's reports and that it reflects on issues in the reports at all levels of the organisation to improve the learning experience. Actions are taken at provider level and discussed at all levels of the organisation. The monitoring of the effectiveness of actions is being developed through action plans and annual reports, although targets are not as yet clearly articulated in the documents examined by the team.

2.68 External examiners' reports also inform actions taken to improve provision; for instance, in response to comments from an external examiner about student essays the College has established essay workshops, video training, and an introduction to essay writing skills in weekend delivery. This demonstrates consideration of the external examiner reports and associated actions from the Management Committee and Assessment Boards, downwards to Boards of Study.

2.69 The review team concludes that the work of external examiners is valued by the College and is used to assure comparability of standards and the quality of the student learning experience. External examiners' reports are considered carefully and procedures align with the University requirements and the College's own processes. Therefore, the Expectation is met and the associated risk is low.

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

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

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

#### **Findings**

2.70 The College complies with the University's quality requirements and produces an annual monitoring report (AMR) using the University's report template. This is authored by the Head of Training, who is the institution's Link Tutor. In accordance with the University's procedures for collaborative provision, the report is considered by the University Link Tutor and Deputy Deans and at the annual monitoring and evaluation meetings, at which any risks or issues are identified. Feedback on the annual monitoring report is provided by the University's Link Tutor. The University requires discussion of the action plan at Boards of Study meetings, with responses to the external examiner's report also discussed at Assessment Board.

2.71 The first quinquennial review of the College was undertaken by the UKCP in 2015, with its report published in 2016. The College is subjected to a formal review of the programme by the University, which occurs six years after the start of the Memorandum of Cooperation; the agreement has been extended for one year until the 31 August 2018.

2.72 The College complies with the University's annual monitoring requirements and uses the University's template for the report. This report provides supporting evidence including admission, progression and achievement data, minutes of Assessment Boards and Boards of Study, accreditation body and external examiners' reports.

2.73 Additionally, the College operates its own monitoring and review processes drawing on student evaluation of feedback, weekend registers, end-of-year of evaluations, external examiners' reports, placement evaluations, staff self-appraisal, including discussions at staff training days, and the newly introduced Annual Evaluatory Report (AER), which is designed to present an overview drawing on feedback from all stakeholders. This is reviewed at the Management Committee and is presented at the November Board of Studies.

2.74 These arrangements, if securely implemented, are sufficient to allow the Expectation to be met.

2.75 The review team considered this Expectation in meetings with members of the Management Committee, and with teaching staff, students and representatives of the University. The team also considered minutes of the Board of Studies, Annual Monitoring Reports, the Annual Evaluatory Report and student evaluations.

2.76 The review team found that the process of annual monitoring, and responsibilities associated with it, are well understood by all parties and are effective. Students verified that their views were canvassed during the year, including evaluations each weekend, and completed evaluations were reviewed by the team. The College's AER is considered by the Board of Studies; although the action plan from the AMR is not explicitly discussed, issues and actions arising from the AMR are shared with students at these meetings.

2.77 The process of annual monitoring and review is well established. The annual monitoring report complies with the University's requirements and provides quantitative data that allows systematic monitoring. Provider oversight is also achieved through the Annual Evaluatory Report, and this is considered by the Management Committee. This report draws

on and collates a range of feedback received from external examiners' reports, student and staff evaluations, and weekend registers. In addition, the accrediting body also conducts an independent review and recommendations arising from this have been responded to. Devolved responsibilities to the newly formed Curriculum and Assessment Committees allow evaluation of actions and reports to the management. The Management Committee oversees and monitors the performance of the College and authors the College action plan and AER, and response to external examiner reports and professional body reviews. The Curriculum and Assessment Committee produces an annual report to feed into the annual review process.

2.78 The College's AER is a recent innovation and is not yet fully embedded. In support of the affirmation identified in Expectation A2.1, the recently established committee structure is likely to assist in embedding the preparation and consideration of the AER.

2.79 The College fulfils its monitoring and review responsibilities for its validating partner and supports this by its own annual monitoring processes. The newly introduced AER forms an internal overview informed by the College's own student and tutor feedback mechanisms. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated risk is low.

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

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

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

#### **Findings**

2.80 The College adheres to the University's complaints procedure and this is published in the Programme Handbook and on the VLE with hyperlinks to the relevant documents on the University website. The Complaints Procedure can be invoked to express concerns or complain about delivery, the quality of the service received or any other matter. In the context of the College's mission and specialism, early informal resolution to complaints is sought through open dialogue with students. Open communication between students, Head of Training, the College management, Programme Leads, tutors and supervisors is proactively encouraged through its provision. This ethos is seen as being pivotal to supporting the College's aims of producing effective counsellors, able to work with vulnerable clients.

2.81 A complaint is first raised informally with the person concerned, then directed to the Programme Lead, with formal complaints received by Head of Training. Details about what constitutes a formal complaint are published in the Codes and Procedure Handbook, and the procedure is seen as a means of investigating a breach in the College's published Codes of Ethics and/or Code of Professional Conduct and Codes of Professional Practice. In a case where there is a complaint against the Head of Training, there is recourse to direct the matter to the Chair of the Ethics Committee. The Complaints Procedure was reviewed and updated in response to recommendations from the UKCP review. As a training member of UKCP, the College is subject to its Complaints Procedures. If the complaint is unresolved internally it can be referred to the University by following the University's Complaints and Grievance Procedure, and this is made clear in the Codes and Procedures document and the Programme Handbook.

2.82 The College has an Academic Appeals Policy which it makes available to students on the VLE; appeals are considered by the Head of Training. If College procedures have been exhausted, the appeal may be referred to the University and must follow the University's Appeals and Regulations Procedure (Section G).

2.83 There are internal procedures that are signposted to students in the Programme Handbook and VLE. Where published internal procedures for complaints and appeals fail to resolve an issue, the student has recourse to the University or to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator by following the University's Complaints and Grievance Procedure or the University's Appeals and Regulations Procedure.

2.84 These arrangements, if securely implemented, are sufficient to allow the Expectation to be met.

2.85 The team met students and staff, and considered documentation including the Student Handbook, the Academic Appeals Policy, and the University's Codes and Procedures.

2.86 The team found the College's approach to be well understood and effective. Students have opportunities to have regular and ongoing dialogue with Programme Leads and any complaints can be raised directly with the management team. Complaints are resolved by informal discussions; the University has not received any formal complaints and

the College confirmed that there have been no formal complaints or appeals in the last two years.

2.87 Students are aware of where information about the complaints and appeal procedure is held and this is published in the Programme Handbook and on the College VLE. In the view of the review team, informal procedures are effective in resolving students' concerns in a timely and open manner, resonating with the culture of the organisation. The accessibility of the management team and the direct communication with the Director of Training supported this.

2.88 The College operates an effective means of handling student complaints and appeals. The Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.89 As part of their training, and according to the requirements of the UKCP, students are required to undertake a minimum number of hours in a clinical placement to fulfil the requirements of the degree programme and of their professional accreditation. Students are required to become student members of the relevant professional bodies before engaging with the placement. The College has the responsibility for managing relationships with the placement providers, and for quality assurance processes and assessments. The Memorandum of Cooperation with the University requires the College to provide appropriate liability cover for students during their clinical placement.

2.90 Placements take place during Years Two and Three of the programme, and the College considers them to be a key part of the development of students' practical clinical skills. As part of the quality assurance processes, the College maps its placement practices to the relevant Subject Benchmark Statement. The College also requires that the students undertake a minimum number of supervision hours in which the students work under an appropriately knowledgeable and trained supervisor with UKCP membership.

2.91 The College has established a four-way placement agreement between the placement provider, the student, the clinical supervisor and the Programme Leads. Students are not allowed to start their clinical placement until such an agreement has been concluded.

2.92 The College has a number of policies that govern the planning and conduct of placements. The Fitness to Study Policy applies particularly to placements in order to ensure that students can participate fully and satisfactorily in relation to client needs. The Governance and Internal Structures Document determines the communication between the College and placement providers. The College Strategy commits the College to fostering new placements as part of student development, while the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy commits the College to working with placement providers to establish standards.

2.93 The Management Committee maintains oversight of the relationship between the College and placement providers. The Deputy Head of Training is responsible for placements. Programme Leads have day-to-day responsibility for the oversight of placements. Tutors are also involved with placement through the provision of feedback on individual students.

2.94 These arrangements, if securely implemented, are sufficient to allow the Expectation to be met.

2.95 The review team met members of staff including the Placement Manager and support staff, placement providers, representatives from the University, and students, and scrutinised documents covering arrangements for placements.

2.96 Students are informed about the requirement for placements at the interview stage, at induction and during their first weekend training. They also receive regular updates, which include information on placements. Students confirmed that they learn about the process in

Year One and then start to look for placements seriously in Year Two. While the onus is on the student to find a placement, students confirmed that they are given sufficient details about suitable organisations with whom the College has arrangements, and that the College is proactive in making sure that all students have a placement. Placement information is also available in the Programme Handbook, at the annual placement day, and at meetings of the Boards of Studies. Students confirmed the effectiveness of the College's arrangements for placements and expressed the view that placements support and enhance their professional development.

2.97 The College takes steps, through its Fitness to Study Policy, to ensure that students entering a clinical placement are ready to do so from the point of view of their personal and professional development. A student deemed not to be ready may instead complete the required placement hours during an additional consolidation year.

2.98 Placement providers confirmed that they have an agreement with the College that is updated annually and that they do not carry out any assessment of student work for the College. They also stated that while having students on placement, the College maintains regular fortnightly contact and that they can contact the Deputy Director concerning any issues which may arise.

2.99 Evaluative feedback from students and from placement providers shows positive views about the College's arrangements. The review of the effectiveness of placement processes is a key part of the College's Programme Annual Evaluation Review. The review team considers the comprehensive and detailed support for student placements, which strengthens the ability of students to put learning into practice in diverse professional environments, to be a feature of **good practice**.

2.100 The College has secure and supportive arrangements for managing learning opportunities at providers of clinical placements. The Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.101 The College does not offer research degrees.

**Expectation: Not applicable**

**Level of risk: Not applicable**

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

2.102 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. All Expectations in this judgement area are met, with a low level of risk.

2.103 There are three features of good practice, relating to the support for students' professional development, the proactive and personalised learning and pastoral support provided to students, and the comprehensive and detailed support for student placements.

2.104 The single recommendation in this judgement area relates to the need to ensure that teaching staff develop continuing awareness of current developments in student learning and assessment in higher education.

2.105 There are secure arrangements to manage the quality of student learning opportunities. The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the provider **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 Memorandum of Cooperation requires the University and the College to agree on published information relating to the programme. The University also approves and monitors the Programme Handbooks, all advertising and publicity material relating to the programme. The University Marketing Department and the Director of Programmes for Collaborative Provision approve and sign off any promotional information before use. Information published by the College that mentions the University is monitored by it. The College is required to use the University's templates for the Programme Specification and the Programme Handbook; these are updated annually and provided through the University Link Tutor for approval prior to the start of the academic year.

3.2 To ensure that it meets the terms of the Memorandum, the College has in place a Process of Publishing Policy which stipulates the procedure for the development, approval and publishing of information intended for management, for staff, for students or for the wider public. The Deputy Head of Training is responsible for updating information in handbooks and other student information. The management team is responsible for information approval in line with the Process of Publishing Policy, and the Management Committee formally determines the date of publication and review.

3.3 The review team tested the effectiveness of the College processes through meetings with staff, with students and with University representatives, and scrutinised published information and the policy documents mentioned above.

3.4 The College has secure arrangements for the consideration and approval of policy documents and public information, overseen by the Management Committee, whose minutes show that information including policies and website information is discussed and is subject to its approval. Most policy documents, with the exception of the Supervision Policy, show the author, approval details and review dates.

3.5 Students confirmed that the information provided to prospective students is available on the website. Information about additional costs that students may expect to incur, including costs while on placement and the cost of liability cover, is available in written form and also on the College website. The College newsletter is sent to the College mailing list as well as to students, alumni, supervisors and placement providers, and is posted on the VLE. Students also confirmed that most of the information they require is also available in the handbook. Information made available to staff includes the Tutor Recruitment Policy, the Induction Policy, and the Induction Checklist.

3.6 The College has secure arrangements for managing the quality of information that it provides. The Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

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

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

3.7 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The single Expectation in this judgement area is met, with a low level of risk.

3.8 There are no features of good practice, recommendations or affirmations in this judgement area.

3.9 The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the provider **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 distinctiveness of the learning experience and the College's aim to secure continual improvement are communicated through the Learning and Teaching Strategy and the Quality and Standards Policy that supports its mission. The central tenet of enhancement is enshrined through its focus on working, integrative counselling practice and this directs staff development. The College's approach to enhancement of the students' learning experience and quality complies with review processes published in the University's Learning and Quality Enhancement handbook. In addition, the College operates its own internal annual reviews drawing on scrutiny from professional bodies, external examiners and feedback from students. Staff are practising counsellors or psychotherapists, and student-centred activities facilitate progress towards the College's assessment of achievement and through 'readiness to practise'. The College's focus on producing effective counsellors and excellent clinicians is a shared aim at all levels of the College from the Director of Training downwards, allowing the development of a community of practice. This aim reflects its stated mission, underpins its strategy, and allows the development of a community of practice with a common goal and commitment to enhancement.

4.2 These arrangements, if securely implemented, are sufficient to allow the Expectation to be met.

4.3 The team examined the College's strategy documents and tested collective understanding of the term 'enhancement' through meetings with managers, staff and students. The team reviewed monitoring systems to test identification of priorities and integration into strategic oversight, which included the review of action plans and enhancement activities.

4.4 The College's approach to supporting students to become developing excellent clinicians is seen through its retained training membership of UKCP, strengthened approaches to placement and effective mechanisms to support student development. Other improvements such as those made to the admissions procedures have led to improved progression. The College operates effective student feedback mechanisms, including a robust means of monitoring weekend delivery.

4.5 The College's mission emphasises the development of a personal integrative model of practice which informs its strategy and is summarised and communicated visually to staff and students through a document known as the 'jigsaw'. Staff at all levels of the organisation demonstrated a commitment to continual improvement. Examples of enhancement were identified, including individualised student support, a culture of reflection that embeds relational working to establish tutor-student dialogue at all levels of the organisation, and a robust means of evaluating weekend delivery.

4.6 The Management Committee reviews the College's performance against its stated mission and reviews progress against agreed actions. The formation of the Curriculum, Assessment and Research Committees, chaired by appointed Programme Leads, is intended to strengthen the annual review process, which is currently completed by members of Management Committee, so informing management decisions and enhancement activities. These committees have been introduced, as part of a considered response to the 2016 monitoring visit, to help consolidate governance. The Head of Training,

or her representative, serves as a member on the Curriculum Committee and the Assessment Committee to allow a cohesive overview.

4.7 The College demonstrated its resolute commitment to continual improvement and to the development of confident and effective practitioners. The review team recognised that there are a number of examples of activities that collectively serve to enhance the student experience, but it was not clear how strategic objectives such as excellence in teaching practice are being driven. It was not made clear to the review team how strategic objectives were directing future enhancement activities, how good practice in teaching and learning was identified, nor how full use of the many review activities or robust use of information and data is driving enhancement priorities and informing activities.

4.8 The College has clear evaluative systems for monitoring its provision: its approaches to quality assurance and to students' professional and academic development is being consolidated into a single internal annual report. Reflection is integral to the College's approach, and self-assessment reports resonate with its ethos of reflective practice. Strategic oversight at provider level is being formalised and will allow more evidence-based evaluation to inform and identify enhancement priorities. Nevertheless, initiatives such as the teaching and learning strategy are not being used fully to identify best practice, and systematic monitoring of initiatives and processes can be used to ensure that there is shared understanding of enhancement. The review team **recommends** that the College further develops the strategic approach to the enhancement of learning opportunities.

4.9 Overall, the review team concludes that the College has enhancement activities that align with the College's mission, supported by objectives that facilitate the deliberate steps being taken to enhance student learning opportunities. The planning and monitoring of the effectiveness of these steps using data-driven evidence to evaluate progress and achievement is not fully embedded, and planned strategic priorities could not be articulated at all meetings. However, there are a number of enhancement activities that have taken place arising from external and self-review, and these form the basis for further development and identification of performance indicators. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

4.10 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The single Expectation in this judgement area is met, with a low level of risk.

4.11 The single recommendation in this judgement area relates to further development of the strategic approach to the enhancement of learning opportunities.

4.12 There are no features of good practice or affirmations in this judgement area.

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

## 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 21-24 of the [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\) 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](http://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](http://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.

### Awarding organisation

An organisation authorised to award a particular qualification; an organisation recognised by Ofqual to award Ofqual-regulated qualifications.

### Blended learning

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

### Credit(s)

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

### Degree-awarding body

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

### Distance learning

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

### Dual award or double award

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

### e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning.

**Enhancement**

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

**Expectations**

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

**Flexible and distributed learning**

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

**Framework**

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

**Framework for higher education qualifications**

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

**Good practice**

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

**Learning opportunities**

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

**Learning outcomes**

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

**Multiple awards**

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

**Operational definition**

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

**Programme (of study)**

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

**Programme specifications**

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

**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.

**Self-evaluation document**

A report submitted by a higher education provider, assessing its own performance, to be used as evidence in a QAA review.

**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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