



Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of Nelson College London Ltd

September 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 Nelson College London Ltd. The review took place from 26 to 28 September 2017 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Mrs Pauline Bateman
- Professor Clare Milsom
- Ms Elizabeth Shackels.

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)¹ setting out what all UK higher education providers expect of themselves and of each other, and what the general public can therefore expect of them.

In Higher Education Review (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.

A check is also made on the provider's financial sustainability, management and governance (FSMG) with the aim of giving students reasonable confidence that they should not be at risk of being unable to complete their course as a result of financial failure.

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

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

² QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk.

³ Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers): 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 the degree-awarding body and other awarding organisation **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectation UK expectations.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following feature of **good practice**.

- The highly effective management of the virtual learning environment, which makes a positive contribution to learning and teaching and supports students' independent learning (Expectation B3).

Recommendations

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

By February 2018:

- undertake a more rigorous analysis of students' entry qualifications and subsequent achievement to inform future admissions (Expectation B2)
- ensure that monitoring and review processes include a rigorous analysis of student retention and achievement data, and provide effective interventions to support students at risk of withdrawal or failure (Expectation B8)
- devise cross-College mechanisms for staff and students to come together to identify and share good practice to support the enhancement of learning opportunities (Enhancement).

Financial sustainability, management and governance

The financial sustainability, management and governance check has been satisfactorily completed.

About the provider

Nelson College London Ltd (the College) was founded in 2009 as an independent higher education college and is based in East London, with campuses at Ilford and Gants Hill (the latter building being owned by the College). The mission statement of the College states that it 'offers access to higher education to people from the widest possible range of backgrounds, enabling them to transform their lives and prosper through the acquisition of the knowledge and skills that they need to succeed in their chosen careers'.

The College delivers two Pearson programmes: HND Hospitality Management and HND Business. In addition, from September 2016 the College commenced delivery of FdA Hospitality Management, BA (Hons) Hospitality Management top-up, and BA (Hons) Business top-up programmes on behalf of London Metropolitan University (the University), with which a partnership was agreed in 2015. At the time of the review visit there were 1,008 full-time students, 143 of whom were on programmes validated by the University. The College has developed a strategic plan to meet its aims, which includes offering a varied selection of academic programmes, to enable its students to become resourceful, independent and self-directed learners, and to maintain long-term financial viability.

The College's last engagement with QAA was a partial review in October 2016 of two judgement areas: the quality of student learning opportunities, and the enhancement of student learning opportunities. The findings of that review were that both areas under consideration met UK expectations. Additionally, the review team identified two areas of good practice in the extensive and professionally produced course manuals for the FdA and top-up programmes, and in the extensive support given to all students through the personal tutoring system and the work of the support lecturers. The team also identified two recommendations to strengthen the terms of reference for the committee responsible for academic planning, to make explicit reference to the role of students and external stakeholders in the design and approval of new programmes, and to implement a more structured process for programme design and approval. There were two affirmations of action being taken by the College: the steps being taken to analyse the relationship between student entry qualifications and their subsequent achievement to inform future admissions criteria; and the implementation of the new annual programme monitoring process, to include the thorough analysis and evaluation of student metrics, particularly in relation to student attainment. The College devised an action plan to address, monitor and evaluate the matters identified. The review team considered the effectiveness of the actions taken by the College following the partial review.

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 Threshold standards for awards delivered at the College are secured through the primary responsibility of its awarding organisation, Pearson, and its validating body, London Metropolitan University (the University). The College's Academic Board provides institutional oversight and assures that standards at the College are maintained, and that the awards are delivered within the framework and regulations of the awarding body and organisation.

1.2 Pearson has primary responsibility for ensuring that the HND programmes are positioned, aligned and named appropriately according to *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)* and that learning outcomes are appropriate to level 5. The University validates two level 6 BA (Hons) top-up programmes, designed, developed and delivered by the College. The respective responsibilities of the awarding bodies are set out in the College Level Agreement.

1.3 The College has developed policies and procedures to support the governance of academic standards. These include an Assessment Policy and Student Attendance,

Re-registration and Progression Policy. The programme specification of the relevant awarding body is used to ensure alignment with the FHEQ, and to take account of relevant subject benchmark statements. These arrangements would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.4 The review team considered a range of documentation relating to the setting and maintenance of threshold standards from the awarding body, awarding organisation and the College. The team also met staff and students to discuss how academic standards are managed in practice.

1.5 As the guardian of academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience, the College's Academic Board plays a crucial role in the maintenance and assurance of academic standards. The Academic Board is also responsible for the oversight and monitoring of the College's Master Action Plan, which is devised from outcomes of individual programme review. All programmes are delivered in line with nationally recognised external reference points, including Subject Benchmark Statements and the FHEQ. Programme specifications make direct reference to these reference points. Student and Course Handbooks provide comprehensive information for students on the quality assurance and standards of the awards for which they are registered. Handbooks include information on how module learning outcomes deliver the aims of the course. External examiners' reports confirm (at a programme level for Pearson and a module level for the University) that standards are maintained appropriately and are met. College staff understand and are aware of the requirements of each partner. Mandatory training is provided for all staff and is also included in the staff induction process.

1.6 Awards offered are mapped against relevant national benchmarks through the joint responsibilities of the College and its awarding body and organisation. The College implements and monitors its procedures effectively to ensure that it meets its stated responsibilities. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.7 Pearson and the University, as the awarding organisation and body, are responsible for establishing and setting the academic framework for the awards, including the level and credit value of the units or modules that form the programmes, delivered at the College. Oversight at the College is provided by the Academic Board, which ensures that academic standards are maintained through the operation of well-documented policies and procedures. These documents are reviewed annually. The frameworks of the awarding bodies, supported by the academic structure and governance arrangement of the College, would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.8 The review team considered a range of materials relating to the governance of threshold academic standards and their supporting regulations. The team also met staff, including a representative from the University.

1.9 The awarding body and organisation are responsible for providing the academic framework and regulations for the awards delivered at the College. For Pearson, these are set out in the Pearson BTEC Guide to Quality and Assessment. For the University, there is a comprehensive regulatory framework for undergraduate awards. Within the College, there is a well-defined academic management structure. The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC) reports to the Academic Board and is responsible for ensuring that the College's policies and procedures meet the regulatory requirements. Assurance is provided at programme level through the Programme Committee, which reports to the QAEC. The Student Representatives Committee addresses more operational issues in respect of the student experience. The Academic Planning Committee (APC) is responsible for determining the College's programme portfolio and is positioned alongside the QAEC, and reports to Academic Board.

1.10 Pearson sets out the framework of assessment for students enrolled on HND awards. Programmes are structured to ensure that students meet the required learning outcomes. For the level 6 validated awards of the University, the academic framework sets out the regulations for assessment. Assessment for both awards is subject to internal and external marking and moderation procedures, which ensure that learning outcomes are achieved and academic credit is appropriately awarded. The College supports these frameworks and ensures the requirements are met through locally managed and approved policies and procedures. In addition, in programme delivery, staff responsibilities are focused on one awarding body or organisation. This ensures adherence to the relevant framework and reduces the potential for confusion related to different regulatory requirements.

1.11 The academic frameworks for awarding credit are met; qualifications are appropriate and supported by effective governance arrangements, which are aligned with the requirements of the awarding partners. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.12 Responsibility for maintaining definitive records of each approved programme and qualification rests with Pearson or the University. The respective awarding partner ensures that each programme is positioned appropriately on the FHEQ. Pearson makes the programme specifications and relevant unit specifications available on its website. The University maintains a list of all programmes delivered at the College in the collaborative partner section of its website. The College produces bespoke handbooks for each programme based on the specifications, which are authorised by its partners. In the QAA partial review report of 2016, the extensive and professionally produced course manuals for the FdA and top-up programmes handbooks were identified as good practice. The College has built on this, and published and distributed handbooks to students in each subject area, which are also published on the virtual learning environment (VLE). Learning outcomes are set at programme and unit level, and the handbook for each unit contains the aims, learning outcomes and/or assessment criteria, indicative content, assessment scheme and a reading list. These systems would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.13 The review team scrutinised documentation, including programme specifications and handbooks, approval documentation, external verification and examination reports for Pearson and University programmes. The team met senior staff, teaching and delivery staff, and students.

1.14 A programme specification is in place for each approved course and is subject to an annual cycle of monitoring and review by the respective awarding body and organisation. Reports confirm that the College is delivering and assessing each programme in accordance with the partners' regulations and that it is meeting their requirements for monitoring and review. Students confirm they have a good understanding of the content of the programme specifications and the requirements of the awarding partners. Clear records are kept by the College and are available to students on the VLE.

1.15 The College is meeting the requirements of its awarding body and organisation in its delivery of approved programmes. Partners have primary responsibility and ensure that definitive records of programmes and qualifications are maintained; they also monitor the College's processes to ensure it meets its responsibilities. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.16 Primary responsibility for the formal approval of programmes rests with the respective awarding partners. Processes for the design and approval of modules, programmes and qualifications are approved by the University. Processes are in place to ensure that programmes are aligned to the FHEQ, Subject Benchmark Statements and qualification descriptors. Programmes approved by the University are subject to re-validation at the end of each specified period.

1.17 Pearson monitors the quality of assessment decisions and ensures that UK threshold academic standards and its own academic regulations are met. This is achieved through activities such as the annual Academic Management Review and external examiners' reports. These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.18 The review team scrutinised documentation, including awarding body and organisation approval and centre monitoring reports, programme specifications, external examiners' reports, regulations, and the College's quality assurance documentation. Meetings were held with the Principal, senior management, teaching staff and students, and the University's Head of Academic Partnerships.

1.19 The College has appropriate internal scrutiny processes. The APC is responsible for academic portfolio planning and development, and making recommendations to the Academic Board regarding approval and re-approval of partners. The APC reviews programmes offered at the College to ensure they meet the current standards of the awarding body and organisation. Programmes are further monitored through focus groups, student feedback, module reports and committee meetings, such as the Student Representatives Committee. These review activities inform the College Review and Enhancement Report.

1.20 Effective processes are in place to enable the College to meet its limited responsibilities in designing and developing provision in conjunction with the awarding partners. The awarding body and organisation ensure that academic standards accord with UK thresholds. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.2): 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

1.21 The awarding body and organisation are responsible for ensuring that credit is only awarded where students have met the required learning outcomes and UK threshold standards, as articulated in the FHEQ, and that their own standards have been met. Unit specifications provided by Pearson clearly state the learning outcomes to be assessed. The College has an appropriate committee structure in place and a comprehensive range of quality assurance policies and procedures. These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.22 The review team reviewed a range of documentary evidence, including the terms of reference and minutes of the Academic Board, Academic Assessment Panel, the internal verification and moderation policy, and external examiners' reports, and met academic and professional staff and students.

1.23 The University's Course Level Agreement specifies the responsibilities for the degree programmes delivered by the College, including those for assessment of students. The module specification approved at validation outlines the assessment requirements to meet the learning outcomes. The University's Subject Standards Board and Performance Enhancement Meeting are responsible for approving all assessment processes and ensuring that these are fit for purpose.

1.24 Pearson also specifies the responsibilities for its programmes in the BTEC Guide to Quality and Assessment (levels 4-7). However, the College's programme managers and their teams are responsible for the design and delivery of all assessments, which are approved by the relevant external examiner.

1.25 The College has devised eight committees, which report ultimately to the Academic Board. The Academic Assessment Panel is responsible for approving all assessment practices for Pearson programmes, and for overseeing assessment decisions and awards, including resits and compensation. The College's Assessment Policy has been aligned to meet the assessment requirements of both Pearson and the University.

1.26 The College has two quality manuals that accurately reflect the quality assurance requirements of both awarding partners. For example, they refer to the internal verification processes required for Pearson programmes, and the moderation processes required for University programmes. Appropriate sampling procedures are used to verify that students are meeting the required standards of their awards, and these include first and second marking, and sampling of a range of students' marked work, and work that has been deemed a fail. External examiners' reports confirm that the College has set assessments at the appropriate standard to test the learning outcomes.

1.27 The College convenes an Academic Assessment Panel for its Pearson programmes that appropriately reflects the guidance outlined in the BTEC Guide to Quality and Assessment Handbook. The annual Academic Management Review undertaken by Pearson has consistently indicated that assessment processes are effective. The University's course committees and Subject Standards Boards are attended by the Academic Liaison Tutor. External examiners appointed by both the University and Pearson confirm that standards are comparable to those of other providers and meet UK threshold standards. The College's Academic Board retains oversight of all higher education processes.

1.28 College procedures that ensure assessment processes are robust and rigorous; for example, the College works effectively in partnership with its awarding body and organisation and has devised appropriate policies that ensure that credit and qualifications are awarded only where learning outcomes and the academic standards of the awards are met. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.29 Responsibility for monitoring and review of programmes varies according to the awarding body and organisation's requirements and is clearly outlined in the responsibilities checklist. The University is responsible for monitoring and reviewing its own programmes and does so through the Annual Quality and Monitoring Report process. This requires the College to produce an annual monitoring report in October of each year, which is then forwarded to the Head of Academic Partnerships. In addition, programmes validated by the University are reviewed through the preparation of a Module Log for each module and a Course Log for each programme. The Academic Liaison Tutor provides additional support in monitoring and reviewing programmes.

1.30 Responsibility for monitoring and reviewing Pearson programmes rests with the College. The Academic Management Review visit undertaken by Pearson ensures that appropriate quality management processes are in place to deliver their programmes.

1.31 The review team scrutinised the terms of reference and minutes of the Academic Board, Programme Committee, College Assurance and Enhancement Committee, and the College Monitoring and Evaluation Diagram. At the time of the review visit no monitoring and review reports had been finalised for 2016-17 academic year, and were therefore not available for consideration.

1.32 The College has devised a quality cycle that illustrates the processes it adopts to monitor how programme teams are meeting the academic standards required by its awarding partners. Each programme team is responsible for producing an individual Annual Review and Enhancement Process Report or Course Log. This report takes into account a range of information, including student feedback, external examiners' reports, and assessment outcomes. Reports are completed by module leaders and programme teams and are forwarded to programme or course leaders, who review them and then forward them to the programme or course committees, and finally to Academic Board, which has oversight of all provision. The College produces an annual Review and Enhancement Report from the collation of all programme reports, with oversight for this resting with the Principal.

1.33 The College operates monitoring and review processes to effectively meet its responsibilities to its awarding partners. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.34 The College follows the requirements of the University and Pearson in the involvement of external and independent expertise in the setting and maintenance of academic standards. The responsibility for engaging this expertise rests largely with the awarding partners, which appoint and approve members of validation panels, and through the appointment of external examiners. The awarding organisation also uses an external reviewer to conduct the Academic Management Review visit for HNC/D programmes; external academics act as external examiners.

1.35 Pearson appoints external examiners to confirm that internal assessment meets national standards and allow certification of awards. For the University, the external examiner verifies the standards of modules contributing to a validated programme leading to an award. Pearson examiners regularly visit the College; examiners for both awarding partners moderate assessment in line with the academic frameworks and the College Assessment Regulations. For validated programmes, College staff prepare mark schemes. External expertise was used extensively in the design of the programmes validated by the University. These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.36 The review team considered a range of documentation relating to the involvement of externality in the maintaining of academic standards, including centre approval documentation, annual management reviews, and external examiners' reports and programme approval materials. The team also met staff and students to explore how external and independent expertise is used in programme design and delivery.

1.37 The College effectively responds to external benchmarks, including the Quality Code, Pearson regulations and centre guidance, the University's regulatory requirements, and appropriate qualifications frameworks to ensure it can play its part in meeting threshold standards.

1.38 External examiners are provided with appropriate information in relation to their roles and responsibilities. The College's Assessment Policy references external moderation and ensures that awarding partner requirements in relation to external scrutiny are met. For all awards at the College external examiners moderate a sample of the student assessed work. External examiners from Pearson visit regularly and review assessment procedures and decisions. For the validated awards, engagement with external examiners is managed through the University, and examiners do not visit the College or meet students. However, staff from the College are invited to annual programme enhancement meeting at the University, at which they may meet examiners appointed to their programme.

1.39 External examiners appointed by Pearson confirm assessment at a programme level. For University-validated provision, external examiners operate and report at module level. Reports from both awarding partners are scrutinised and made available to students on the VLE. An action plan is produced by the College for each report, which feeds into the

annual review process, including the Module Monitoring and Evaluation Report and the module and course logs.

1.40 The use of independent and external expertise to set and maintain standards is achieved largely through the awarding body and organisation's arrangements. The College engages positively with these processes and externality is integrated into the quality assurance activities. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

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

1.42 All seven of the Expectations for this judgement area are met and the associated level of risk is low in all areas. There are no features of good practice, recommendations or affirmations in this area.

1.43 The review team notes that the primary responsibility for much of this judgement area lies not with the College but with its awarding body and organisation. The College has good relationships with its awarding partners and responds appropriately to their requirements. The College has internal policies and processes to ensure that it can meet its responsibilities.

1.44 The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of the degree-awarding body and other awarding organisation at the College **meets** UK expectations.

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

Findings

2.1 Primary responsibility for the design and approval of higher education programmes delivered by the College rests with Pearson and the University. The College uses well-established procedures from its partners to confirm the approval of new programmes. The awarding partners ensure that academic standards are set in accordance with their academic frameworks and regulations, and at a level that meets UK threshold standards. The University uses validation processes and panel meetings to approve programmes, which include programme information, partnership arrangements, capacity to deliver and quality assurance arrangements.

2.2 Oversight of programme design and development, and recommendations on the approval of partners, lies with the APC, a subcommittee of the College's Academic Board. New programmes are designed by College academic staff in consultation with students and local employers, and validated and approved through the University's processes. These internal and external processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.3 The review team examined a wide range of evidence, including institution and programme partnership agreements, responsibility checklists, programme specifications and the minutes of meetings of the APC. The team also met a wide range of staff and students.

2.4 The APC terms of reference were recently revised to meet the recommendation in the 2016 QAA partial review. The report recommended that the College strengthen the terms of reference for the committee responsible for academic planning, to make explicit reference to the role of students and external stakeholders in the design and approval of new programmes. Revised terms of reference for the APC were approved by the Academic Board in February 2017, and include arrangements for amendments to programmes and involve relevant stakeholders.

2.5 The 2016 QAA partial review found that the processes for programme development were broadly adequate but had some shortcomings in terms of the rigour with which they were applied. The report recommended that the College implement a more structured and rigorous process for programme design and approval, and formulate guidance on this for relevant staff and students. In response, a new Programme Design and Approval Policy and Procedures have been approved by the Academic Board. The guidance on the Policy is clearly outlined in the form of procedures and a flow chart of key stages. The Policy requires the College to follow systematic procedures in collaboration with its awarding partners, and is intended to embrace the views of various internal and external experts and stakeholders. While processes are now in place, the College is not currently introducing new programmes, so these have not yet been tested.

2.6 Systematic processes are in place to ensure effective design, development and approval of programmes, and the responsibilities around these are clearly articulated and are effectively implemented. The awarding body and organisation have well-established

processes to ensure that the design, development and approval process is rigorous. 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

2.7 The College has devolved responsibility from its awarding partners for all recruitment activities. The College's Recruitment, Selection and Admissions Policy outlines the relevant procedures. All students are required to undertake a functional skills test of maths and English, where this is not their first language. These policies and procedures would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.8 The review team reviewed the College's Recruitment, Selection and Admissions Policy and other relevant documentation, and met senior staff responsible for the management of the admissions and induction process, teaching staff and a range of students.

2.9 Programme leaders work alongside admission staff throughout the process to support applicants, and staff are well trained to undertake this role. In addition, students are interviewed and are required to produce a personal statement as part of the application process. All admission decisions are made by academic staff in conjunction with admission and recruitment teams, following the assessment of functional skills and an interview. Unsuccessful students can obtain feedback on their performance and if dissatisfied with the process can appeal against the decision.

2.10 Clear information about how to apply, including the admissions criteria for each programme, is presented on the College website and in the prospectus. To support recruitment processes, marketing and recruitment staff are trained on individual course entry requirements, which facilitates effective advice and support from first contact. Students describe the process as straightforward and supportive, and additional help is available if required for completing application forms.

2.11 All students are enrolled by the College and receive a general induction that includes access to the College VLE and the range of support services available. Students registered through the University also receive access study skills and online library resources.

2.12 The 2016 QAA partial review recommended that the College review the effectiveness of its admission processes to ensure there was a better fit between its marketing activities and students enrolled. In line with its action plan, the College has taken steps to review its admission processes, and further action has been taken to gather student data. However, these processes are significantly underdeveloped and require more rigorous data analysis to ensure that appropriate students are recruited, and subsequently achieve. Student non-achievement rates, although improving, remain high. The review team **recommends** that, by February 2018, the College undertake a more rigorous analysis of students' entry qualifications and subsequent achievement to inform future admissions.

2.13 The College operates fair, reliable and inclusive admissions procedures that enable the recruitment of students. However, further work is needed to ensure that all students admitted have the potential to complete their programme of study. Students confirm the

accuracy of information they receive and that entry requirements are clearly communicated to them. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.14 The Teaching and Learning Policy describes the College's strategic approach. Themes identified are: a student-centred approach, valuing faculty and staff, and a supportive learning environment. Supporting policies describe how this approach is implemented in practice, including a Personal Tutoring and Student Support Policy, an Equality and Diversity Policy, and the Student Handbook. All policies are reviewed annually and approved by the College's Academic Board, which maintains oversight for teaching and learning. The policies, procedures and approach to the development and enhancement of learning and teaching opportunities would allow this Expectation to be met.

2.15 The review team scrutinised relevant policies and procedures and held meetings with a wide range of staff. The team met students across the range of provision to discuss their experiences. The team also reviewed the role of the VLE and its use in the support of learning and teaching.

2.16 Policies and procedures at the College allow for the review and enhancement of student learning opportunities and teaching practice. Learning and teaching is discussed at module and programme-level committees, as part of Review and Enhancement Processes and through Module Evaluation and Monitoring reports. Programme Committees report through the QAEC to the Academic Board, which has institutional responsibility for the quality of the student learning experience.

2.17 Staff are appropriately qualified and supported. The College provides a comprehensive framework of teaching observation, including peer review, and assessed teaching observations. Peer review provides a developmental opportunity for staff to share good practice. Management teaching observations are formal evaluations of teacher performance and include a grade and an action plan. Outcomes from observations are analysed and included in the annual College Review and Enhancement Report. Staff spoke positively about the processes of teaching observation and peer review, and the impact on their professional development. Training is also provided through the College, and staff are encouraged, and supported, to gain professional recognition with the Higher Education Academy.

2.18 Learning and teaching is supported through VLE, and the library and learning resource centre. Extensive use is made of the VLE, which is available to all staff and students. Vigorous oversight and monitoring is provided through a diligent and committed central support team to ensure that materials are complete and current. The student assessment process is conducted fully through the VLE, including the provision of developmental assessment feedback. Students spoke positively about the value of the VLE and its role as an integral aspect of the learning environment, which supports their development as autonomous learners. The VLE has been developed to be accessible on mobile devices and students reported being able to read course materials and assessment outcomes from any location. The highly effective management of the virtual learning environment, which makes a positive contribution to learning and teaching and supports students' independent learning, is **good practice**.

2.19 The library and learning resources centre is equipped with an online system and full-time librarian and resources officer. Core and recommended textbooks required by Pearson and the University are available, and unit handbooks include references for links to websites, journal articles and books. The College also subscribes to relevant newspaper and industry magazines. Online resources are monitored regularly and teaching staff receive training.

2.20 The College provides all students with a comprehensive Course Handbook, which includes all relevant policies and codes of practice. Handbooks are reviewed at Programme Committees and approved by the Academic Board. Students spoke positively about the extensive and professionally produced handbooks, which were deemed to be an example of good practice in the 2016 QAA partial review.

2.21 Feedback from students on the learning environment is provided through module evaluations, questionnaires and the exit survey. Outcomes are used to review the quality of learning and teaching, and the information is used to inform the College Review and Enhancement Reports, which are considered by the Academic Board.

2.22 The College has a committed and enthusiastic teaching team, supported by a dedicated central administration, and student learning is effective. The VLE provides a positive mechanism for supporting independent learning. There are robust procedures for the review and provision of learning opportunities and teaching practice to enable and support students to develop as independent learners. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated 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

2.23 The Teaching and Learning Policy sets out the approach to enabling student development and achievement. The Policy provides a commitment to inclusive learning and the development of individual students' potential. Other supporting policies include the Equality and Diversity Policy; Personal Tutoring and Student Support Policy and Procedures; and Student Attendance, Re-registration and Progression Policy. The College also evidences a strong commitment to the development of academic skills and delivers a comprehensive schedule of workshops designed to support student development. The College's focused support approach to enabling student development achievement would enable this Expectation to be met.

2.24 The review team scrutinised policies and procedures relating to students' academic, personal and professional support. The team also met staff, including professional support staff, and students across the range of programmes delivered at the College.

2.25 Pastoral and academic support systems are in place for all programmes, and arrangements are detailed in the Student Handbook. The Personal Tutoring and Student Support Policy and Procedures clearly state the responsibilities of the personal tutor, student support office, and students. Students develop individual learning plans and, with the support of their tutor, set appropriate development and achievement targets. The Policy also states the College's academic targets in relation to student achievement. Each student is allocated a Personal Academic Tutor. Students confirmed that they are in regular contact with their personal tutors and with staff in the support office. Considerable work has been carried out at the College to ensure that information provided to students is clear, in particular information relating to assessment. As a result, there has been an improvement in student submission and pass rates in line with the targets stated in the policy documentation.

2.26 The Student Attendance, Re-registration and Progression Policy ensures oversight of engagement and that students are aware of their responsibilities and processes for monitoring attendance. The Policy sets an attendance threshold of 50 per cent and provides support materials through the VLE and a YouTube channel.

2.27 The College provides extensive support for academic skills development. Study skills workshops are provided weekly, and students are encouraged to reflect on their strengths and identify areas for development. A comprehensive range of workshops provides weekly guidance on mathematics, essay writing, critical analysis, and making use of feedback on assessment. Within modules, students are prompted to develop their skills through provision of detailed reading lists within the module specifications. Additionally, a College-specific social media channel has been developed to support and encourage flexible learning. Videos uploaded to the channel include academic materials as well as recordings focusing on the development of student professional and personal skills. It also includes tutorials on how to access and engage with the VLE.

2.28 The 2016 QAA partial review identified as good practice the extensive support given to all students through the personal tutoring system and the work of the support lecturers, which enables them to develop their personal, academic and professional potential. This work has been built on over the last year, providing a strong foundation of support from which students can develop their academic, personal and professional potential.

2.29 The College has a comprehensive framework for enabling student development and achievement. The study support mechanisms, the use of social media and the VLE ensure that students have access to the resources they need to achieve the learning outcomes. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associate 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

2.30 The College has a well-structured and established representation structure that evidences a commitment and willingness to engage with students and work with them as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their learning opportunities. Formal mechanisms include representation on key quality assurance committees and through module and programme evaluations. In addition to this formal approach, the College also supports informal opportunities for student engagement. These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.31 The review team tested the operation of these arrangements by examining a range of documents including committee minutes and terms of reference, feedback surveys and support for representatives. The team also discussed student engagement with student representatives and academic staff to evaluate the effectiveness of the approach in practice.

2.32 There is a network of formal and informal working relationships at the College that allow students to enhance their educational experience. The Academic Board has oversight of all student engagement activities. Students are included in the membership of formal strategic-level committees, including the Board of Governance, the Academic Board and the APC. There is also a student member on each of the Programme Committees, and a dedicated Student Representatives Committee.

2.33 Programme areas elect their own student representatives through a democratic process and meet regularly with programme leaders through the Student Representatives Committee. The College provides effective training and support to ensure that student representatives are able to fulfil their roles. Training sessions are provided to staff and students to ensure that representatives are prepared in advance of relevant committee meetings.

2.34 Students' feedback is also collected through internal and external surveys. Internally, these include module evaluations and an exit survey. Eligible students have, for the first time in 2016-17, also taken part in the National Student Survey and the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education survey. Outcomes from student surveys feed into the annual programme review and enhancement process, and inform the action plan. More recent informal processes have included a student engagement campaign launched by the College. Students are also encouraged to meet with senior management both formally and informally.

2.35 The College takes a range of deliberate steps to engage students in the quality assurance and enhancement of their educational experience, and supports students to participate effectively in these processes. The review concludes that the Expectation is met 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

2.36 The assessment of College programmes is overseen by its awarding body and organisation, which have ultimate responsibility for ensuring that assessment maps to learning outcomes. Assessments are designed and approved in line with the requirements of its partners. However, the College is responsible for the delivery of all assessment processes, including conducting assessments, marking and moderation, and convening assessment panels.

2.37 The Course Level Agreements for the level 6 BA (Hons) top-up programmes validated by the University indicate the responsibilities around assessment. The module specifications and guides outline the learning outcomes that the assessment must achieve. The College undertakes first marking and submits it to the University for moderation. Annual Subject Standards Boards are held to confirm marks and awards, although College staff do not attend these meetings.

2.38 The Pearson BTEC Guide to Quality and Assessment (levels 4-7) explains the need to deliver valid, reliable, fair, and manageable assessment, designed to develop skills and knowledge in line with the assessment criteria. It recommends using a range of assessment methods. The Guide has a section on reducing plagiarism and includes a table identifying responsibilities at different stages of assessment. This includes the role of assessor, internal verifier and standards verifier. These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.39 The review team reviewed a wide range of documentation, including the quality manuals, policy, procedures relevant to assessment, minutes of assessment panels and boards, and external examiners' reports, and spoke to staff and students.

2.40 The College has devised two separate quality manuals, each of which contains an internal verification and moderation policy that reflects the requirements of its awarding partners. Additionally, there is a range of policies and processes that aims to promote transparency around assessment, including those on extenuating circumstances, student complaints, equality and diversity, and recognition of prior learning. Staff are responsible for identifying and investigating unacceptable academic practice and students are required to submit all work through plagiarism-detection software.

2.41 The College ensures that students receive appropriate information about their assessments in programme handbooks, and extensive information is available on the VLE. The College has also devised an assessment schedule that has been developed to spread the burden on students. Students have indicated that they are effectively supported by their tutors and study support staff through regular checks of students' in-semester progress at team meetings. Students with learning support needs are signposted to the Student Disability Officer for further assistance. The modified tutorial system now provides more directed support on each module rather than generic support. Students are able to access their marks and feedback on the VLE.

2.42 Termly Academic Assessment Boards for Pearson provision take place within the College. The University holds its own Subject Standards Boards, which have oversight of assessment. The College's Academic Managers have oversight of all Academic Assessment Boards and the grading process that follows. External examiners confirm that assessment is thorough and rigorous. HND courses are moderated under a College-devised policy. A flow chart for recording grades lists each stage of the process, together with attendant risk, and clear responsibilities are identified for each stage. The Academic Assessment Panel reports to the Academic Board.

2.43 The College has a Recognition of Prior Learning Policy. The Policy aligns with the University accreditation of prior learning system, and the Pearson system for accreditation and recognition of prior and experiential learning. Students are made aware of the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy in the Student Handbook, which is issued during induction.

2.44 The College operates equitable, valid and reliable processes of assessment in a systematic manner in line with the requirements of its awarding body and organisation. Assessments are varied, with a robust marking and moderating system. Formative and summative assessment feedback is provided effectively. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining

Findings

2.45 The responsibility for defining the role of the external examiner, and for their selection, appointment and training, lies with the awarding body and organisation. The engagement of the external examiners with the programmes delivered is overseen by the Academic Board and detailed in the quality assurance manuals. External examiners moderate samples of students' work and report on matters relating to assessment and academic standards. At programme level, external examiners' reports are reviewed at Programme Committees, with actions reported to the QAEC. These arrangements would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.46 The review team considered arrangements for external examiners through discussions with staff and students. The team also reviewed external examiners' reports, responses and action plans, and committee minutes.

2.47 For Pearson awards, external examiners are appointed to each programme. They moderate modular assessments and produce a programme-level report. External examiners appointed by the University operate only at a module level. While these reports confirm threshold standards, one external examiner has commented that it would be useful to moderate the work within the wider academic context of the programme. The College provides comprehensive responses, including an action plan, to external examiners' reports. Actions inform the annual College Review and Enhancement Report. External examiners' reports and responses are also made available to students through the VLE.

2.48 External examiners appointed by Pearson visit the College and meet staff and students on HND programmes. Staff report strong engagement with the Pearson external examiners and value their academic insights. External examiners appointed by the University meet College staff at the programme enhancement meeting hosted annually by the University. There is no requirement within the University's approved process to meet staff and students at the College.

2.49 Systems for external examining as defined by the awarding body and organisation are working well; the College makes extensive use of the examiners' reports in assuring and developing the quality of its students learning opportunities. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review

Findings

2.50 Primary responsibility for monitoring and review varies with the awarding body and organisation and is clearly articulated in the responsibility checklists. The University is ultimately responsible for monitoring and reviewing its own programmes and does so through the Annual Quality and Monitoring Report process. Programmes validated by the University annually produce Course Logs and termly produce Module Logs for each module delivered in that term. For Pearson programmes, teams annually produce Review and Enhancement Processes reports and termly Module Evaluation and Monitoring reports. The Pearson Guide to Quality and Assessment informs this process effectively. The College's monitoring and evaluation diagram illustrates the process of review used for all its programmes.

2.51 Each programme team is responsible for producing its own Annual Review and Enhancement Reports or Course Logs. These are forwarded through the QAEC to the Academic Board. From these reports the College produces an overview College Review and Enhancement Report. However, at the time of the visit only one of these reports was available, in draft form, for the 2016-17 academic year. These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.52 The review team reviewed the terms of reference and minutes pertaining to the Academic Board, the QAEC, the Academic Assessment Panel, the internal verification policy, external examiners' reports and minutes of the Subject Standards Board.

2.53 The Academic Board has oversight of all monitoring and review processes that take place in the College. This Board is chaired by the Principal and meets termly. Each programme team is responsible for producing its own Annual Review and Enhancement Report. This Report takes account of a range of information, including student feedback, external examiners' reports, and assessment outcomes.

2.54 The College has produced a Quality Cycle that further supports College staff by indicating what activities they should be undertaking to ensure reports are completed. During the visit, this Quality Cycle was further revised by including a clearer timeline for each activity to be undertaken.

2.55 The 2016 QAA partial review highlighted concerns around the College's monitoring and review processes and the use of data to evaluate performance. The report recommended the implementation of the new annual programme monitoring process to include the thorough analysis and evaluation of student metrics, particularly in relation to student attainment. From the documentation available at the time of the review, and discussions with professional and academic staff, it is evident that some progress has been made, including the revised module evaluation and monitoring reports for Pearson programmes. These have begun to take account of student withdrawal and achievement data. However, insufficient progress has been made to address the concerns of the partial review. The review team **recommends** that the College ensure that monitoring and review processes include a rigorous analysis of student retention and achievement data, and provide effective interventions to support students at risk of withdrawal or failure.

2.56 The College has emerging procedures that, if operated effectively, will ensure regular and systematic processes for monitoring and for review of programmes. However, there is a need to implement a more robust and explicit quality assurance and enhancement cycle, and further analyse data to ensure students at risk of failure or withdrawal are more effectively supported. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code, Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints

Findings

2.57 The College has appropriate policies and procedures in place for the management of student complaints and academic appeals. There is a clear complaints and appeals policy, an admission appeals procedure, and an assessment decision review policy, with guidance for students on the role of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator. Relevant information is published on the website, addressed at student induction, and available on the VLE. The College makes clear that informal resolution of complaints is its preferred option. The policies and procedures in place to govern complaints and appeals would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.58 The review team scrutinised documents including the student complaints policy, the assessment decision review request, and admission appeal procedures, and met staff and students. The team also examined the complaints register, which identified three complaints between September and December 2016, which had been successfully resolved.

2.59 Students confirmed their understanding of the process and expressed their satisfaction that the College responded effectively to informal complaints. They were able to give examples of when the academic appeal process had been used effectively. Students are initially encouraged to raise any concerns informally with the relevant member of staff or programme leader. If a student remains dissatisfied, a formal complaint can be submitted. If the student remains dissatisfied they can use the awarding body or organisation's respective complaints procedure. Complaints and academic appeals policies and procedures work effectively in practice. The College clearly explains its processes to students through programme handbooks and signposts the arrangements available. The admissions appeals procedure does not clarify procedures for making a complaint. Staff confirmed that prospective students can appeal within 10 days, and then, if unsatisfied, can take a complaint to the second stage.

2.60 The College operates fair, accessible and timely processes for handling complaints and academic appeals. Policies and processes are clearly communicated to students. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (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

2.61 The College does not work with any organisation other than its awarding body and awarding organisation; therefore, this Expectation does not apply.

Expectation: Not applicable

Level of risk: Not applicable

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

2.62 The College does not offer research degrees, therefore this Expectation does not apply.

Expectation: Not applicable

Level of risk: Not applicable

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

2.64 All Expectations in this area are met and the associated level of risk is low in most areas. Two areas, Expectations B2 and B8, are deemed to have a moderate level of associated risk. The review team identified one area of good practice and two recommendations. The recommendations refer to Expectation B2 (a more rigorous analysis of students' entry qualifications and subsequent achievement to inform future admissions) and Expectation B8 (ensuring that monitoring and review processes include a rigorous analysis of student retention and achievement data, and provide effective interventions to support students at risk of withdrawal or failure).

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

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1 Information about higher education provision is clear, easily accessible, and available online and in published resources. The website contains information on the aims and ethos of the College, the prospectus, information regarding programmes offered, the range of students, and photographs and job titles of staff. There is clear information regarding fees and entry requirements, credit values for each unit, course duration, and mode of study. The College management structure is explained, and information is included on the profiles of the Board of Governance. The College also shares information and good practice through the website, newsletters, posters, minutes of meetings and materials published on the VLE. The policies and procedures in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

3.2 The review team scrutinised the website, the VLE and a range of documentation and published information, and talked with students and staff.

3.3 Students find the website user-friendly and up to date, and confirm that all information is provided in the Student Handbook, which is given to all students at the start of every academic year. Induction for new students includes comprehensive information in student and programme handbooks, assignment briefs and marking criteria.

3.4 All public information is reviewed by the Principal, and audits and reviews of public information are overseen by the Academic Board. The College is contractually bound to submit material to Pearson and the University prior to publication by the College.

3.5 The Student Management System records information about students' attendance, academic progress and achievement. Information for those with responsibility for maintaining standards and assuring quality is accessible within the College and is also published by Pearson and the University.

3.6 Students confirmed that the information they had been given prior to enrolment was accurate and the provision was as they expected. Comprehensive Course Handbooks for each programme are greatly valued by students, as is the course information and support on the VLE. Students confirmed that the VLE is user-friendly and is readily accessible on their mobile phones.

3.7 The College has in place effective measures to monitor the quality of sources of information. The information about higher education provision is accurate, trustworthy, fit for purpose and supports students in making informed choices. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

3.9 The Expectation for this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk is low.

3.10 Information published by the College is fit for purpose and trustworthy. Processes for the development and verification of information are understood by staff. Students confirm that information is comprehensive, accessible and helpful to them, and that they are provided with sound information to support their learning.

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

4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

Findings

4.1 The College has no formal strategy relating to enhancement. However, its approach to enhancement is outlined in its Strategic and Operational Plan. The College's approach to enhancement at an operational level is to ensure that all practices relating to the delivery and management of higher education are underpinned by effective quality assurance processes. The College has devised eight committees that oversee and have responsibility for the management of higher education. The Academic Board is the primary committee to which all other committees report, and which in turn reports to the governing body. The QAEC has oversight of monitoring and how enhancement is being developed within the College. Students are also represented in the different committees, demonstrating an effective student voice. These approaches would allow the Expectation to be met.

4.2 The review team considered a range of evidence, including annual and periodic monitoring and programme review reports, external examiners' documentation, and published documents cataloguing improvement initiatives. The team met academic and support staff, senior staff and students.

4.3 The College has appointed a Head of Programme Delivery, whose role is to promote educational enhancement through work with external stakeholders, including the University. The recent appointment of a Placement and Employability Officer is intended to support students in their attempts to find suitable work placements. Programme leaders and teaching staff actively plan guest speakers, whose engagement enhances students' learning experience of their specific study area; regular field trips are also organised. Students consider themselves to be effectively supported by their tutors.

4.4 The student representative process is well structured and well established. Students are effectively engaged at all levels within the College, including at the governing body. This engagement has led to positive benefits for students, including an extension in library opening hours, and the development of a better tutorial process.

4.5 Staff development is made readily available, and new staff are adequately supported. A skills audit was recently carried out to highlight developmental needs of staff. The College has membership of the Higher Education Academy, and staff are encouraged to apply for fellowship. Programme teams meet each semester to discuss and share experience and identify actions that need to be addressed. There is evidence from documentation and the meetings held with staff that they find these opportunities valuable. However, there are very limited opportunities for teaching and professional support staff to come together across the College to identify or share good practice at a wider college level. The review team **recommends** that the College devise cross-College mechanisms for staff and students to come together to identify and share good practice to support the enhancement of learning opportunities.

4.6 Overall, the College has a range of improvement initiatives, underpinned by annual review processes and an established committee structure, which help drive quality enhancement. There is a lack of a formalised enhancement strategy and staff have few opportunities to meet to identify and share good practice. 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

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

4.8 A range of mechanisms are in place that enable enhancement to take place, although there is a lack of a formalised enhancement strategy with overt measures of impact. There is one recommendation related to enabling staff to have regular opportunities to meet to identify and share good practice

4.9 The Expectation in this area is met and the associated level of risk is low.

4.10 The review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the College **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.

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

Academic standards

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

Award

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

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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