



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

Partial Review

September 2016

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education (Alternative Providers) Partial Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Nelson College London Ltd. The review took place from 26 to 27 September 2016 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Ms Brenda Eade
- Dr Douglas Halliday.

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

This was a Partial Review following a monitoring visit undertaken in December 2015, which resulted in the following published report. The QAA review team made judgements on the two areas requiring improvement - the quality of student learning opportunities and the enhancement of student learning opportunities.

In this Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) Partial Review the QAA review team:

- makes judgements on
 - the quality of student learning opportunities
 - 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 summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. Explanations of the findings are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 4.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.² A dedicated section 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 (the Quality Code), available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code.

² QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us.

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

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Nelson College London Ltd

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Nelson College London Ltd.

- The quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at Nelson College London Ltd.

- The extensive and professionally produced course manuals for the FdA and top-up programmes, which provide detailed, accessible and structured information in support of teaching and learning (Expectation B3).
- 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 (Expectation B4).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to Nelson College London Ltd.

By January 2017:

- 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 (Expectation B1)
- implement a more structured process for programme design and approval (Expectation B1).

Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following actions that Nelson College London Ltd is already taking to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to its students:

- the steps being taken to analyse the relationship between student entry qualifications and their subsequent achievement to inform future admissions criteria (Expectation B2)
- the implementation of the new annual programme monitoring process, which includes the thorough analysis and evaluation of student metrics, particularly in relation to student attainment (Expectation B8).

About Nelson College London Ltd

Nelson College London Ltd (the College) was founded in 2009 as an independent college of higher education and is based in Essex, with campuses at Ilford and Gants Hill; the latter building is 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 courses: 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 whom a partnership was agreed in 2015. At the time of the review visit there were 1,057 full-time students, 191 of whom were on the University courses. The College has developed a strategic plan to meet its strategic 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 an annual monitoring visit in December 2015. Since then, developments at the College have included the introduction of the University courses, which were the result of student requests to include appropriate level 6 progression routes, the establishment of the Academic Planning Committee, and changes to the way the College monitors students to improve assignment submission rates.

Explanation of the findings about Nelson College London Ltd

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

1 Judgement: The 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

1.1 The College established the Academic Planning Committee in November 2015. The terms of reference for the Academic Planning Committee include approving new partnerships and programmes, and confirming the continuation of existing partnerships and programmes. Oversight of programme development lies with the College's Academic Board, of which the Academic Planning Committee is a subcommittee. The Academic Planning Committee is responsible for establishing subcommittees for undertaking programme design and approval. The Committee also scrutinises amendments to existing programmes, although this is not stated in the terms of reference. Employers are involved in the design and development of programmes through the completion of a questionnaire and meetings focusing on specific areas of programme development. However, their role is not set out in the terms of reference of the Committee. The College uses the approval and validation processes of its awarding organisation and awarding body for the final approval of programmes.

1.2 The College has established its own internal procedures for planning and developing its portfolio, for the approval and re-approval of partners, and for programme design and approval through the Academic Planning Committee. Strategic oversight of the processes for and outcomes of programme design, development and approval lies with the Academic Board. The College uses the well-established procedures of its awarding organisation and awarding body to confirm the approval of new programmes. These defined internal and external processes would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.3 The review team tested the Expectation by scrutinising the minutes of the Academic Planning Committee and Academic Board, and examining the approval documentation for the University programmes and the newly validated Higher National Diploma in Business. It reviewed the programme specifications for each of the programmes and met with the Chair of the Academic Planning Committee, academic staff and students.

1.4 The processes for programme design and approval and for partnerships are relatively new and have yet to be fully implemented. The Academic Planning Committee was constituted by Academic Board in November 2015, is chaired by the Principal and includes the Head of Quality, Head of Student Services, Head of Academic Services and programme leaders in its membership. However, its role in programme approval is not fully defined, and the Policies and Procedures Manual does not include a detailed description of the process for designing, developing and approving a new programme.

1.5 Four new programmes - the FdA Business, FdA Hospitality Management, BA Business top-up and BA Hospitality Management top-up - were successfully validated by the University in September 2015. Members of the academic staff at the College were responsible for designing the curriculum, writing the programme specifications and handbooks, and presenting the programme proposals to the University for validation. They were supported in this process by external experts in the various subject areas. All four

programmes were due to commence in September 2016. As the validation event took place in September 2015 before the Academic Planning Committee was convened, the Committee did not play a role in the validation process. However, the decision not to recruit to the FdA Business programme in September 2016 was considered and approved by the Committee.

1.6 The College has recently been approved to run a newly designed Higher National Diploma in Business. A report on the selection of the optional modules and the approval of the programme was received by the Academic Planning Committee in April 2016. However, it is not clear how effectively the Committee scrutinised the proposal, nor what input it had into the design of the curriculum and the approval process. The review team **recommends** that the College implement a more structured process for programme design and approval.

1.7 Employers and students were consulted as part of the validation process for the University and Pearson programmes, and an extensive employers' event took place for the FdA in Hospitality Management. Meetings with staff and students confirmed that the University top-up programmes were developed as a direct response to students' requests that progression routes from the Higher National Diploma to degree programmes be made available in the College.

1.8 The terms of reference of the Academic Planning Committee do not include students or external stakeholders as formal members of the Committee. The College is therefore not making full use of external expertise in the design and development of its programmes and not engaging students effectively in the process. The review team **recommends** that the College strengthen the terms of reference of the committee responsible for academic planning to make explicit reference to the role of students and external stakeholders in the design and approval of programmes.

1.9 The College has a formal internal process for the consideration of new partnerships and provision, and follows its awarding organisation and awarding body's processes for the final approval of programmes. However, the review team found that the College's processes and procedures for programme design and approval, and for establishing new partnerships, require further development to ensure they provide a clear structure for developing and introducing new programmes, and for formally involving students and external stakeholders in the process. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate, as the procedures are broadly adequate but have some shortcomings in terms of the rigour with which they are applied.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

1.10 The Policies and Procedures Manual sets out the admissions policy for the College and covers the various stages of the admissions process. The policy includes the criteria for admission to the programmes offered by the College, which are directly aligned to the requirements of the awarding organisation and the awarding body. The College has an admissions team, which manages the admissions process. Overall responsibility for admissions lies with the Head of Marketing. The University makes the final decisions on admission to the programmes it has validated. The College is responsible for ensuring that students admitted onto the Higher National programmes meet the entry requirements set by the awarding organisation. A flowchart sets out the stages in the admissions process. Potential students are assessed to ensure they have a suitable level of English language, complete a functional skills test and attend a mandatory interview to assess their motivation to study. Students are required to attend an induction programme that includes input from staff and a video presentation.

1.11 The processes and procedures for admissions at the College are set out in the Policies and Procedures Manual and the admissions flowchart. They are aligned to the Quality Code, reflect the requirements of the awarding organisation and awarding body, and would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.12 The review team considered documentation relating to admissions, including the entry requirements of the awarding organisation and awarding body, the College's admissions policy and flowchart, and the induction video. The scope of the functional skills test and the results achieved by prospective candidates were scrutinised. The review team met members of the College's admissions team, and academic staff and students.

1.13 The Head of Marketing, who is a member of the Principal's Executive Group, takes overall responsibility for admissions, which includes ensuring that the information relating to the admissions process is accurate and up to date. Information about the programmes offered by the College is set out on the website. Students confirmed that the information they had received was accurate and up to date, and enabled them to effectively complete the application process.

1.14 The detailed admissions policy in the Policies and Procedures Manual, and the flowchart, effectively sets out the stages in the admissions process. Entry requirements to Higher National programmes are included in the admissions policy. The College is responsible for ensuring that students admitted to Pearson programmes have the necessary qualifications. The Pearson Academic Management Review for 2015-16 confirms that the admissions process is fit for purpose and that students are registered with the awarding organisation within 30 days.

1.15 Entry requirements to University programmes are specified in each of the Course Level Agreements and the University has ultimate responsibility for admission. Staff at the College have received some preliminary induction by the Head of Programme Delivery at the University on the University's admission's requirements and processes.

1.16 The College has recognised the need to address the low progression and achievement rates that raised concerns at the last QAA monitoring visit. It reviewed its admissions policy in January 2016 and now employs professional admissions staff rather than relying on agents to recruit students. The admissions staff have received training on the admissions process and are familiar with Expectations B2 of the Quality Code. The suitability of applicants to complete a higher education course is assessed through their personal statements, qualifications and a functional skills test. Students who have not studied in English for the final two years of their courses are given an English language test.

1.17 All students are required to undertake a mandatory interview, conducted by the admissions staff, to assess their motivation to study. The interview follows a standard format. A member of academic staff reviews the admissions forms and may also participate in the interviews depending on their availability. Admissions decisions are regularly audited for compliance to the College's admissions policy by the Head of Quality.

1.18 The Senior Management Team indicated that the revised admissions procedures have resulted in a lower acceptance rate for applicants; the data on submission of assessments and student progression and achievement demonstrates improvement. The College plans to 'undertake a multi-layered analysis' of applications data to identify the relationship between entry qualifications and student achievement. The first stages of this process have been put in place at the start of the academic year 2016-17 with the production of a draft report template and the gathering of admissions and progression data. The review team **affirms** the steps being taken to analyse the relationship between student entry qualifications and their subsequent achievement to inform future admissions criteria.

1.19 The College has not received any appeals against admissions decisions, but information on the appeals procedure is available in Student Handbooks and on the website.

1.20 The College intends to introduce a student survey of the admission and induction process to collect feedback from students in September 2016. A questionnaire and report template has been produced but no data was available at the time of the review. However, students indicated that they had been asked to provide feedback on their induction programme.

1.21 The College has revised admissions procedures that clearly set out the stages of the admissions process and provide effective criteria to assess a potential student's intention to study. Oversight of the admissions process for University programmes is maintained by the awarding body, and admission onto the Higher National programmes is effectively monitored through the awarding organisation's use of external verifiers and the Academic Management Review report. College staff are appropriately trained and aware of their responsibilities of the admissions process. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated 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

1.22 The College has a Learning and Teaching Policy that is overseen by the Academic Board. The Policy includes procedures for peer observation and teaching observation, which are linked to staff appraisal and development. Learning opportunities are evaluated through student feedback, including surveys and via meetings with student representatives and from the comments made by internal and external verifiers. This evaluation is summarised in the Review and Enhancement Process reports submitted to the Academic Board. These reports also comment on student progression and achievement. The Individual Learning and Personal Tutorial Policy makes provision for students to receive feedback on their progress. Teaching staff are required to hold qualifications that are equivalent to, or above, the level at which they are teaching.

1.23 The Learning and Teaching Policy contained in the Policies and Procedures Manual sets out the aims of the policy and the procedures by which they should be attained. This policy and associated procedures would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.24 The review team tested the Expectation through meetings with academic staff and students, by scrutinising the CVs of academic staff; reviewing the teaching and learning material, including study guides, videos and the College's virtual learning environment (VLE); and reading the Review and Enhancement Process reports.

1.25 The review team found that the College effectively uses a range of teaching and learning methods, which includes formal lectures, and workshops. It provides a programme of Knowledge Exchange workshops, which include basic IT courses as well as supporting the development of employability skills through field trips to potential employers. Guest speakers contribute to the learning and teaching process and provide a focus for specific areas of the curriculum such as conference, banqueting and events management.

1.26 The Staff Recruitment Policy is aligned to the Quality Code, *Chapter B3* and sets out procedures for the recruitment of staff. All staff are required to attend an induction programme. Staff CVs indicate that they are appropriately qualified in their subject area and many are members of the relevant professional bodies for their area of expertise. The majority of staff also hold teaching qualifications.

1.27 The College supports continuing professional development and provides a number of internal training workshops for staff. These sessions are well attended and include training on how to chair meetings, standardisation of assessment, marking and internal verification, improving feedback to students, and reviewing the action plan resulting from the 2015 QAA report. Feedback from staff on the training programmes is positive. In October 2016 the University intends to provide further staff development on the four recently validated programmes. Several staff have obtained fellowship of the Higher Education Academy and the College intends to support staff to apply for fellowship. Clear records are maintained of staff development activities.

1.28 Teaching observations are conducted termly and the process is overseen by the Head of Academic Services. Peer review is also undertaken termly. Staff produce individual

development plans, which are considered as part of the appraisal process. Outcomes of peer review are summarised in the Review and Enhancement Process reports.

1.29 Student feedback on teaching and learning is collected termly via informal dialogue between staff and students, through programme committee meetings and meetings with student representatives; students also complete surveys at the end of each term. The outcomes of these surveys are analysed in the Review and Enhancement Process reports. Students confirmed that they experienced a range of different learning activities, which included lectures, seminars, group activities and one-to-one tutorials. They commented that they were taught by enthusiastic and well-motivated staff.

1.30 Detailed study guides have been developed by teaching staff for the diploma and degree programmes delivered by the College. These provide the learning outcomes and indicative content of each module and introduce students to the theories, concepts and models associated with the subject area. The guides also include case studies and self-evaluative activities for students to undertake as part of the formative assessment process. In addition, teaching staff provide a range of additional study materials to support learning. A template has been developed for teaching slides to ensure that they are designed around the learning outcomes. Lecture materials, including study manuals, are reviewed by peers and uploaded to the College's VLE. The extensive and professionally produced course manuals for the FdA and top-up programmes, which provide detailed, accessible and structured information in support of teaching and learning, is **good practice**. The effectiveness of the learning resources for the Business programmes is confirmed in the Pearson external verifier report and its annual monitoring report.

1.31 The College has recently opened a new library with a full-time librarian and library management software. It has purchased all the core texts for University programmes, and subscribes to a number of online databases. E-learning is managed by the Head of Academic Services and all courses have material on the VLE. Students confirmed that they use the resources provided by the College and have access to the University online resources.

1.32 The Higher National Student Handbook provides clear information relating to the content, structure and assessment of programmes, and includes a code of conduct. Handbooks are also provided for University programmes, which set out the structure of the programme and the assessment regulations.

1.33 The Academic Board maintains oversight of learning and teaching through the Review and Enhancement Process reports, which evaluate and review learning and teaching. They contain summaries of the outcomes of teaching observations and peer observation, present the key issues from student feedback, provide commentary on external examiner reports and matters arising from programme committees, and analyse student progression and achievement data.

1.34 The College works effectively with its staff, students and other stakeholders to systematically review and enhance the learning opportunities available to students and enable them to develop as independent learners. There are clearly defined and rigorous processes for monitoring learning and teaching, which are overseen by the awarding organisation and awarding body, and students confirmed satisfaction with the variety of teaching methods provided. Good practice is identified in this area in the College's supporting course materials. 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

1.35 The Individual Learning and Personal Tutorial Policy, which is part of the Learning and Teaching Policy, specifies the basis on which personal tutors support students in setting and achieving personal targets. The Equality and Diversity Policy describes how the College will provide support, advice and resources to allow access for students with special learning needs, and the Disability Strategy sets out the procedures to make adjustments for students who have learning support needs. These policies are included in the policies manual and in the Student Handbooks for all programmes. The College monitors the impact of its policies and procedures, which are designed to enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential, through the programme committees, the Internal Verification Committee and the Academic Board. The Review and Enhancement Process reports include a summary of the outcomes of the monitoring processes.

1.36 The College's policies, which provide for a systematic approach to supporting students to obtain the skills they need for their personal and professional development and academic achievement, together with the procedures for monitoring these processes, would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.37 The review team examined the procedures relating to student support, which are set out in the Policies and Procedures Manual, reviewed samples of individual learning plans, scrutinised the Review and Enhancement Process reports, considered minutes of the programme and student representative meetings, and met support and academic staff and students. The College's policy for the acquisition of learning resources was also reviewed.

1.38 The Individual Learning and Personal Tutorial Policy identifies the role of the personal tutor and provides a template for student individual learning plans. Students complete a self-assessment questionnaire to identify their learning goals.

1.39 Individual learning plans identify the units they need to take and record their progress. These are tracked on a spreadsheet to identify students who have not completed the required units and provide a basis for personal tutors to monitor the progress and achievement of their students and make interventions where necessary.

1.40 Students indicated that they are able to obtain support and guidance from a range of staff at the College. This includes their assigned personal tutors, who introduce themselves during the student's induction and continue to make contact with their students via email, the VLE and in classes. They provide support for students who require additional help with their studies. Students confirmed that they had met with their personal tutor and that they could easily contact them when they required further support. In addition to support from teaching staff and personal tutors, students are also able to seek further guidance on their learning and assessment from support lecturers, who are members of the academic team and have a specific role to help students with the assessment process.

1.41 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, is **good practice**.

1.42 The College supports the development of employability skills through the Knowledge Exchange Centre, guest lecturers from industry and by organising field trips. Students confirmed that they had attended workshops run through the Knowledge Exchange Centre, which included communication skills, CV writing and IT.

1.43 A recent Pearson external verifier report for the Higher National programme in Business identified the need for further support for report writing. The College is addressing this issue by closely monitoring students' progress and raising awareness, during induction and in class, of the study skills programme and workshops.

1.44 The College has opened a new library and resources centre at the Gants Hill site, which houses the key and recommended texts for courses offered by the College (see paragraph 1.31). Students commented on the variability of resources between the two campuses, but indicated that they were able to visit the library at Gants Hill and could also access College resources and the University learning resources through the VLE.

1.45 Students confirmed that the College supports equality and diversity and encourages everyone equally. They are invited to declare any disability as part of the enrolment process, and are aware of adjustments being made to learning and teaching materials for students with impaired vision. Students who felt discriminated against were encouraged to make a complaint.

1.46 Students complete an exit survey to assess the development of their employability and professional skills during their studies with the College. This enables the College to identify areas where it should invest in resources to enhance students' learning and developmental experiences.

1.47 Students are given the opportunity to undertake voluntary work placements as part of their professional development. The College intends to introduce a mandatory work placement as an assessed component of a planned foundation degree validated by the University, although the start date for this had not been confirmed at the time of the review.

1.48 The Academic Board approved an Employability and Work Placement Policy in June 2016. There is a mandatory work placement in the work-based learning module of the FdA Business programme validated by the University. The rationale for the placement is set out in the programme specification. The placement will be assessed via a 2,000 word reflective portfolio. The College has recently appointed a work placement coordinator, who is currently developing a network of business contacts to host student placements. The intention is that students will be responsible for finding their own placements, with the coordinator providing support for students. At the time of the review, arrangements were in the early stage of development, although the review team acknowledges that these developments are in the context of a wider commitment to employability and employer engagement demonstrated by the College.

1.49 The College reviews the impact of its support processes and the effectiveness of the resources provided through programme committees, the Internal Verification Committee and the Academic Board. The Pearson Academic Management Review report confirms that staffing and physical resources are appropriate for the Higher National programmes. The University approval process confirms that the College has the necessary resources for the FdA and top-up programmes.

1.50 The College provides a wide range of resources and extensive support, which effectively enables students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. Students were positive about the support provided to them by academic and support staff and the resources available to them. Good practice is identified through the extensive support system available. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated 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

1.51 The College has student representatives on its Academic Board and programme committees in addition to a Student Representative Committee. Student feedback is collected from all students on a termly basis via a survey, and subsequently analysed by programme managers. The Student Representative Committee also provides a formal mechanism for raising issues with programme leaders, programme committees and the Academic Board, holding termly meetings. Each student cohort elects two student representatives, with the College providing training and support for representatives. The College has an open door policy allowing students to meet any member of the College Senior Management Team. Any actions emerging from student input are tracked via action logs appended to each set of committee minutes.

1.52 This framework is consistent with the requirements of the Quality Code, providing a range of formal and informal opportunities for all students to feedback to the College on all aspects of their educational experience. Therefore, this framework would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.53 The review team explored the College's engagement with students by meeting the College Principal, senior staff, teaching staff, and professional support staff. The team discussed the operation of these procedures with students. The team also reviewed policy documents and minutes of College committees.

1.54 Students reported to the team that they considered the College to be both welcoming and receptive to student feedback; students provided examples of how the College had responded to student feedback, for example by improving the teaching facilities. Students also reported that individual staff were responsive to student feedback and cited examples of individual staff changing their lecturing style in response to feedback.

1.55 Staff and students confirmed that the open-door policy was in place and used by students to raise issues. Students welcomed the opportunity to use informal mechanisms for providing feedback to the College. The open-door policy had been noted as a positive feature by one of the College's external examiners in their report.

1.56 The review team found effective collection of student feedback on a termly basis via regular surveys. Students were very receptive to receiving regular termly surveys and very willing to provide formal feedback via this route. Reports on the feedback, produced by programme managers, were found to be informative and welcomed by the students. These reports provide student evaluations of individual staff. The review team found that some staff received very high evaluation scores from students. Termly Review and Enhancement Process reports summarise student feedback.

1.57 The review team found supportive and effective training in place for student representatives, who reported that training was informative and helpful. The review team found that the training was mapped against the Quality Code and made explicit reference to the requirements of *Chapter B5*. Minutes of Student Representative Committee meetings demonstrated a student representation system working effectively, with minutes and action logs demonstrating responses with corresponding actions being reported to students.

1.58 The effectiveness of student engagement is reviewed annually by the Academic Board to ensure that the terms of reference of the relevant committees are appropriate and that the College continues to benefit from student engagement. However, the review team noted that currently there is no student representation on the Board of Governors.

1.59 There is effective student engagement at the College, which is welcoming, receptive and responsive to student feedback. Students are confident that the College is making effective use of their feedback and also articulated a strong sense of belonging to the College community, which is strengthened in part by the opportunities to provide feedback to the College. The review team 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

1.60 The College follows the requirements of the awarding body and awarding organisation in respect of assessment. These are set out in the quality assurance manuals for each awarding organisation. The Assessment Policy for the Higher National programmes includes internal verification, submission and extenuating circumstances. The outcomes of assessment are reviewed by assessment panels. The College has a policy for recognition of prior learning, which is included in the Student Handbook. There is a policy for the review of assessment decisions in the case of an appeal. Review and Enhancement Process reports, summarising assessment outcomes, are considered by the Internal Verifier Committee and programme committees, which report to the Academic Board. The Head of Quality Assurance has overall responsibility for assessment.

1.61 The College's assessment policies and procedures, including the recognition of prior learning, which are all aligned to the requirements of the awarding organisation and awarding body, would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.62 The review team examined the assessment policies contained in the Quality Assurance Manuals, and the Policies and Procedures Manual, scrutinised minutes of assessment panels and samples of marked and moderated assessment, and read the external verifier reports. The review team met the Head of Quality Assurance, the Head of Programme Delivery, programme leaders, internal verifiers and students.

1.63 The College follows the procedures and processes prescribed by the awarding organisation for assessment and the recognition of prior learning. These are clearly set out in the Quality Assurance and the Policies and Procedures Manuals and are communicated to students via their Student Handbook. At the time of the review there had not been any applications for recognition of prior learning.

1.64 The Quality Assurance Manual for the University specifies the assessment process for the foundation degree and top-up programmes. The University intends to provide further training, in respect of the assessment regulations, for staff at the College, in October 2016. Details of the University's assessment processes are included in the Student Handbooks.

1.65 For the Higher National programmes, assessment briefs and assessment decisions are verified by internal verifiers using standard forms. The Internal Verification Committee meets once every term. Termly audits are carried out to check that the internal verification process has been completed effectively.

1.66 The College plans to rename the Internal Verification Committee to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee, as this more effectively describes the role and remit of the committee. Standardisation meetings are held each term and include staff development workshops on specific areas of the assessment process such as marking and internal verification.

1.67 Students confirmed that a range of different assessment methods are used and that the feedback they receive helps them to improve their grades for future assessments. They are aware of the penalties for late submission and academic malpractice and had received training on effective referencing. They confirmed that formative feedback on assessment is provided during their classes and they can discuss any queries relating to assessment with their tutors in class or on a one-to-one basis.

1.68 Grading criteria that describe what is required for pass, merit or distinction are set out in the Quality Assurance Manual and are specified on assessment briefs. A summary of grading criteria is included in the Student Handbook and students confirmed that they were familiar with the requirements for pass, merit and distinction.

1.69 Academic assessment panels are held each term to consider the outcomes of the assessment process. Progression Boards are held once per year to confirm student progression and consider extenuating circumstances.

1.70 Module monitoring and evaluation reports are being introduced in September 2016 to summarise the outcomes of assessment for each module and identify any changes required to the module. They will use a standard template and will contribute to the Review and Enhancement Process reports.

1.71 Students can appeal against an assessment decision using the Assessment Decision Review Request Form. This procedure and acceptable grounds for appeal are set out in the Student Handbook. Students were aware of the appeals process.

1.72 Staff development workshops were held to address issues raised by the external verifiers and included guidance on providing better feedback to students and standardisation of marking.

1.73 The Academic Management Review report and the external verifier reports confirm that the College conducts its assessment processes in accordance with the expectations of the awarding organisation, and that they are transparent and auditable, leading to reliable certification claims set against national standards.

1.74 The College recognises that submission and completion rates require improvement, and is monitoring submission, progression and achievement data through resubmission reports and the Review and Enhancement Process reports. The Head of Programme Delivery provides reports on the latest submission and progression data to the Principal's Executive Group.

1.75 Since the implementation of the various monitoring procedures described above, the submission rates for the Business programme have increased from 26 per cent to 56 per cent for the 2014 cohort and for the 2015 cohort from 55 per cent to 75 per cent. For the Hospitality Management programme the submission rate for the 2014 cohort has increased from 79 per cent to 88 per cent but for the 2015 cohort it has decreased from 77 per cent to 72 per cent. Data made available at the time of the review identified further improvement in submission rates, with the 2014 business cohort rate increasing to 84 per cent, the 2015 business cohort to 87 per cent and the 2015 Hospitality Management cohort increasing to 78 per cent. Progression rates have improved considerably, although the drop-out rate for the 2014 Business cohort is 30 per cent. The College intends to continue to closely monitor submission and progression rates and plans to introduce a progression policy that will reflect submission, pass rate and disciplinary action.

1.76 The College has effectively implemented detailed assessment policies and procedures that enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit or qualification being sought. The College has

effective processes for monitoring the impact of its assessment policies, and the awarding organisation and awarding body maintain oversight of the assessment process. 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

1.77 Oversight of the College's external examiner process is undertaken by the Academic Board, programme committees and the Internal Verification Committee. As a provider of validated provision, the College is subject to annual visits from an appointed external verifier, who scrutinises documents, and meets staff and students. A report is then submitted to the College, awarding organisation and awarding body. The College considers all reports and a formal response is produced by programme leaders. In addition to being considered by the Academic Board, programme committees and the Internal Verification Committee, the report and subsequent actions are considered and monitored through the Review and Enhancement Process (see Expectation B8). External verifiers and external examiners review progress against previous recommendations. External verifiers and external examiner reports are made available to staff and students via the College VLE.

1.78 The process is aligned to the requirements of the Quality Code and includes procedures to use external examiner and verifier input to sustain the standards of the provision and provide a basis for continuous improvement, which would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.79 The review team reviewed external verifier reports, associated responses and action plans produced by the College and committee minutes. The team discussed the operation of the external examining framework with staff and students.

1.80 External verifiers' reports confirm that the College is meeting the requirements of Pearson. The review team found from reviewing committee minutes and programme leaders' responses that the College had carefully considered these reports and that programme leaders had formulated an appropriate action plan. The review team learned from staff that the College provides training and support to facilitate effective staff responses to external verifiers' reports. The Academic Board was found to maintain effective oversight of this process. The team noted actions being implemented by the College in response to recommendations from an external verifier in the area of formative feedback. The review team also noted that external verifiers were satisfied with academic standards and the resources available to the students. Reports and responses are made available to staff and students on the VLE.

1.81 Issues raised by external verifiers were found to be reported and subsequently considered via the annual programme monitoring process. External verifiers were also found to be satisfied with the College's response to previous reports.

1.82 The College has entered into a partnership with the University to provide foundation degrees and degree top-ups. At the time of the review the College was awaiting confirmation of appointment of the external examiner by the University as the awarding body. Staff reported that they had received training and support from the University to support the College in meeting the University requirements with respect to external examining.

1.83 College policies and procedures for the use of the external examining process and their implementation are effective. Staff are aware of their responsibilities in this area and the College makes appropriate use of, and responds to, the external examiner feedback as within the established quality assurance cycle. 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

1.84 The Academic Board has oversight of College monitoring and review processes and their outcomes. Programme leaders produce termly Review and Enhancement Process reports. These reports are considered and approved by programme committees. An annual Programme Monitoring Report, covering all programmes, is considered by the Academic Board and the Board of Governors. The College has mapped its procedures onto the requirements of Expectation B8. Annual review reports are produced by a Pearson appointed external verifier. These are submitted to the College and the awarding organisation and are considered by the College, resulting in a written response for each report.

1.85 These procedures, which enable the College to undertake regular overviews of its programme, would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.86 The review team discussed the College's approach to programme monitoring and review with senior staff, teaching staff and professional support staff. The team reviewed policy documents and considered reports and minutes of relevant committees. The team also discussed monitoring and review processes with students.

1.87 The review team agreed that termly Review and Enhancement Process reports provide useful information to the College on a number of different aspects of its provision, such as a review and evaluation of the external examiner report; a review of student feedback and teaching staff evaluations; reports on peer reviews and teacher observations; a consideration of student results, progression and achievement; progress against previous action points and proposals for new actions. The annual Programme Monitoring Report was also found to provide the Academic Board with a good analysis of student feedback and corresponding actions to improve student feedback. The review team considered that these processes provided information to the Academic Board, which enabled it to have an effective overview of the operation of programmes with awareness of areas targeted for improvement. The review team noted that the Academic Board had recently identified some shortcomings in the annual Programme Monitoring Report, particularly in terms of the statistics and breadth of performance indicators in the report. The team also agreed that the Programme Monitoring Report could be better aligned with the reporting requirements of the validating organisation. The team found that the Programme Monitoring Report did not draw fully on the information available in the individual Programme Review and Enhancement Process reports. In view of these issues the Academic Board has agreed a new College Review and Enhancement reporting process to be introduced for the 2016-17 academic year. In particular, the team noted that this would have a more central focus on student progression and achievement.

1.88 The Academic Board has also approved a new Review and Enhancement Process report template for the Higher National programmes. This new reporting process would be conducted annually; alongside this is a new Module Monitoring and Evaluation Report template. The review team found that the new Review and Enhancement Process reporting procedure includes the collection and analysis of a larger dataset, and noted helpful prompts in the report template to assist with an effective analysis of the data. Meetings with staff confirmed that they were very familiar with the intention to move to a new monitoring and

review process; furthermore, staff articulated a range of benefits that they believed would accrue from following the new process. Student involvement with the new review process includes student feedback and evaluation of teaching and a student enhancement survey, alongside a requirement that students be informed of any changes that are implemented. Student representatives will continue to be involved in the discussion of Review and Enhancement Process reporting at programme committees and the new Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee. The team also learned that the action plan formulated in response to the 2015 QAA annual monitoring visit would be incorporated into the new Review and Enhancement Process reporting process going forward.

1.89 The College has recently finalised an agreement with the University to deliver foundation degrees and top-up programmes, which will require the College to follow the University's process for monitoring and review. The review team noted that the College had considered the reporting requirements of the University as the validating partner and had worked collaboratively to achieve greater overlap with their own reporting requirements. The team also noted that the University had specific benchmarks for student progression and achievement embedded within its reporting mechanisms, which the College will use in its reporting.

1.90 The review team saw evidence of the College having recently placed more emphasis on student progression and achievement within its existing review and monitoring procedures. The team noted that this had improved module submission rates for assessed work to 78 to 87 per cent for the Higher National programmes. The review team recognised this progress and concluded that the new review and monitoring procedures would be likely to improve these rates further. Recognising initial progress in this area with the possibility of further improvements in student attainment, the review team **affirms** the implementation of the new annual programme monitoring process, which includes the thorough analysis and evaluation of student metrics, particularly in relation to student attainment.

1.91 The Academic Board has very recently agreed the introduction of a new triennial College review process, which will include external input and consider the full portfolio of programmes. The College is currently developing a specification for this process with the intention that the Academic Planning Committee should be responsible for this periodic review. The review team recognises this as a positive development that will inform the development of the College's academic programmes going forward. The review team noted that the new College review linked with the enhanced oversight of programme approval, discussed in Expectation B1, would result in the Academic Planning Committee having a strengthened strategic role in the ongoing development of the College.

1.92 The review team recognises recent good progress in this area and agreed that recently approved changes to programme monitoring should enable greater oversight by the College resulting in the identification of any issues on shorter timescales. The team also agreed that the additional data that the College intends to regularly collect and analyse as part of the new Review and Enhancement Process should enable the College to identify if and where issues are arising and formulate any necessary actions to address these. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate, as there needs to be time for the new monitoring procedures to be embedded and operating effectively.

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

1.93 The College has a Student Complaints Policy and an Assessment Decision Review Request Policy approved by the Academic Board. These policies are made available to students through the Student Handbook and the VLE. Students can initiate one of the procedures by completing the appropriate form.

1.94 These procedures are consistent with the requirements of the Quality Code and would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.95 The review team considered policy documents and discussed appeals and complaints with staff and students.

1.96 The review team found the Student Complaints Policy to be clearly articulated, including a process chart that shows the various stages of a complaint, including referral to the awarding body and subsequently the Office of the Independent Adjudicator upon completion of the College's internal procedures. The documentation encourages students to seek informal resolution in the first instance. Students confirmed their awareness of their right to make a formal complaint. Students also commented favourably on the positive culture prevalent in the College, whereby many felt that issues could be resolved without recourse to a formal procedure.

1.97 The College operates an Assessment Decision Review Request Procedure. Documents make clear to students that this should be within 14 days of the decision being confirmed by an assessment panel. The Head of Academic Services reviews the request and a decision is communicated to the student within 20 working days. The review team found clear information on this process provided to students through Student Handbooks and the VLE. Within the policy students have the right to request consideration by the external verifier if they are not satisfied with the College decision. Students confirmed that they were all aware of this process although none had used the process. The College confirmed that no complaints or assessment decision review requests had been submitted by students. The team noted this and formed the view that this may be due in part to good staff/student relations and the provision of effective feedback concerning assessment decisions.

1.98 The College's processes around student complaints and appeals are fair and accessible. Staff and students are aware of the policies and where to find them, but, given the nature of the positive relationships between staff and students, resolutions are naturally found informally and the formal processes are rarely utilised. 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

1.99 The College does not currently offer work placements or any assessed work-based learning opportunities, therefore this Expectation does not apply.

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

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

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

1.101 In reaching its judgement about the quality of student learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. There are two examples of good practice, two recommendations and two affirmations in this judgement area.

1.102 The areas of good practice fall under Expectations B3 and B4. The review team found that students are provided with supporting course materials for the University programmes, which are of a high standard and are valued and used by the students. In addition to these materials, students also have access to an extensive supportive system through a personal tutoring and academic support skills structure, which was made available at all times. Both these supporting mechanisms provide the students with a highly supportive environment, allowing them to achieve their academic potential.

1.103 The two recommendations both relate to Expectation B1. Although the review team found some evidence of a programme of design and approval, the scrutiny of new programmes was vague at the committee that considered them, and the robustness of the process was not clearly distinguished. Further, meetings of the committee responsible for programme design were informal. The team acknowledges that the processes in place are developing but in order to ensure consistency and allow all staff to understand the procedures and their role in the process, the review team recommends that the process becomes more structured. In addition, there was evidence of student and external input into the design and approval process but this appeared to be on an ad hoc basis and not systematic. To allow a consistent student and external presence in the consideration of new programme proposals, the review team recommends that the terms of reference on the current Academic Planning Committee be revised.

1.104 The review team acknowledges that the College has undertaken work to improve the quality of learning opportunities for students and affirms these developments in relation to two Expectations. The College acknowledged that it had low progression and achievement rates; the implementation of the extensive tutoring system is one area where the College has taken steps to improve student performance statistics, which was identified as good practice. In addition, the College has begun to implement a process analysing student application data, which will be used to inform any future admissions criteria. This affirmation is identified in relation to Expectation B2.

1.105 In relation to Expectation B8, the College recognised that with the introduction of University programmes the previous programme monitoring system was not fit for purpose, and therefore developed a more extensive and comprehensive system, which will include data analysis, and is expected to have a positive impact on student progression and achievement rates. As both these affirmations are work in progress it is expected that the developments will be evaluated and reviewed for success going forward.

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

2 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

2.1 The College articulates a commitment to the continuous enhancement of learning opportunities for its students. A number of College committees are involved in processes that improve the student learning experience, including the Board of Governors, the Principal's Executive Group, the Academic Board and programme committees. The College also uses action plans associated with minutes of these committees as a mechanism for improving the student experience. The Principal's Executive Group identifies areas in which the College can improve its provision. The College's annual action plan captures areas of enhancement-related activity.

2.2 These arrangements allow the College to select areas for improvement, develop an approach for improvement and monitor its effectiveness, and would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.3 The review team discussed the College's approach to enhancement with staff and students. The team also reviewed policy documents and committee minutes to obtain evidence of enhancement working in practice.

2.4 Responsibility for enhancement sits with the Academic Board. The Principal's Executive Group plays an important role in the effective operation of enhancement, with the Group having regular discussions on enhancement-related activity, using this to identify areas for enhancement, often in response to issues raised by students through feedback channels. The review team found that recently the Group had taken a more proactive approach to monitoring student submission and progression rates. The Principal was also able to describe areas of enhancement-related activity that had resulted in improvements to the student experience, such as the introduction of top-up degrees in response to student demand and a series of ongoing improvements to the teaching rooms alongside new library, IT and study space at Gants Hill.

2.5 The programme monitoring process as described under Expectation B8 is also an important element of enhancement activity. The review team found evidence of issues that were raised by students feeding into programme reports produced by programme managers. Issues were also identified through monitoring of individual modules. The team found that student feedback was consistently collected via questionnaires, the Student Representative Committee and exit surveys. These issues subsequently became areas of focus for enhancement that were followed through the programme committee minutes and associated action plans. The team noted that the external verifier had also observed regular enhancements to the student experience at the College such as improvements to teaching resources.

2.6 College staff confirmed that the widespread peer review and observation that occurs across the College provides opportunities for regular sharing of good practice. Students were also positive about steps the College had taken to improve teaching, student support, resources and facilities.

2.7 The review team learnt about changes to staffing and committee structures within the College, which were designed to further develop the College's approach to enhancement. The College has expanded the student support team to include two full-time

academic support staff. Students confirmed that this was considered a valuable support and readily used by students. The College had appointed a Head of Programme Delivery, who is responsible for working with programme leaders to enhance all programmes at the College. Going forward, the College has renamed the Internal Verification Committee to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee. This reflects in part greater awareness among College staff that assurance and enhancement activities are complementary and can be operated effectively in parallel. The review team concludes that these changes, together with the changes to programme monitoring and review reported under Expectation B8, would enable the College to build on its enhancement activities. Furthermore, the team agreed that embedding these in the College's monitoring activities would increase the efficacy of its enhancement approach, with the planned analysis of a range of performance indicators, specifically student progression and achievement.

2.8 The review team concludes that the College has successfully identified areas for enhancement and has examples of improvements to the student experience that were often in response to student feedback. The new approach to programme monitoring and review will provide the College with a greater range of key performance data, which will enable the College to more readily identify areas for enhancement in addition to responding to student feedback. 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

2.9 In reaching its judgement about the enhancement of student learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. There are no examples of good practice, recommendations or affirmations in this judgement area.

2.10 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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