Initial Review of the partnership between North Lindsey College and John Leggott Sixth Form College

July 2016

Contents

About this review

This is a report of an Initial Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at North Lindsey College and John Leggott Sixth Form College. The review took place from 6 to 7 July 2016 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Kevin Kendall
- Lucy Bannister (student reviewer).

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

In Initial Review, 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
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice
- affirms action that the provider is taking or plans to take.

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. Explanations of the findings are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 5.

The QAA website gives more information about QAA and its mission.[2] A dedicated section explains the method for Initial Review[3] and has links to the review handbook and other informative documents. For an explanation of terms see the glossary at the end of this report.

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[1] The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: www.qaa.ac.uk//the-quality-code.
[2] QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us.
[3] Initial Review web pages: www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Initial-Review.aspx.

Key findings

QAA's judgements about the partnership between North Lindsey College and John Leggott Sixth Form College

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the partnership between North Lindsey College and John Leggott Sixth Form College.

- The maintenance of the academic standards of the awards offered on behalf of John Leggott Sixth Form College **is likely to meet** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **is likely to meet** UK expectations.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **is likely to meet** UK expectations.

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at North Lindsey College about the partnership between North Lindsey College and John Leggott Sixth Form College.

- The reflective and proactive approach to Higher Education management, which enhances the experience of students (Expectations B3 and B8).
- The effective student engagement mechanisms that have a positive impact on the partnership programme (Expectations B5 and B6).
- The role of the partnership with John Leggott Sixth Form College in widening participation in response to local and regional employer and student needs (Expectation B10).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to North Lindsey College about the partnership between North Lindsey College and John Leggott Sixth Form College.

By April 2017:

- further engage John Leggott Sixth Form College teaching staff in developmental activities to support teaching and learning (Expectations B3 and B8).

Affirmations

The QAA review team makes the following **affirmations** to North Lindsey College about the partnership between North Lindsey College and John Leggott Sixth Form College.

- The steps taken to ensure that the virtual learning environment is fit for purpose for students studying on the partnership programme (Expectations B3 and C).
- The steps taken to monitor and support student achievement through Progress Panels and Monthly Operations Meetings (Expectation B4).

Further explanation of the key findings can be found in the Guidance available on the QAA webpage explaining [Initial Review](#).

About the partnership between North Lindsey College and John Leggott Sixth Form College

North Lindsey College's University Centre accommodates around 1,100 students. The University Centre currently has 42 subject specialist members of permanent academic staff and over 15 part-time subject specialist members. This infrastructure has, over a number of years, enabled the development of Higher Education-specific approaches towards teaching, learning and assessment, and quality management and enhancement. Higher Education at North Lindsey College is delivered on behalf of Sheffield Hallam University, the University of Hull, the University of Huddersfield, Bishop Grosseteste University, the University of Lincoln and Pearson. The University Centre aims to challenge the social, cultural, dispositional and accessibility barriers that have restricted progression into Higher Education.

The focus of the Higher Education provision is one of raising aspirations of college leavers and returners to study within north Lincolnshire. It is within this context that North Lindsey College has developed a partnership with neighbouring John Leggott Sixth Form College to offer Higher National Certificate/Diploma (HNC/D) Computing and systems development. The provision caters for 15 students studying on one programme and came into being for the 2015-16 academic year. The students apply to, and are enrolled with, North Lindsey College, with the teaching being delivered at John Leggott Sixth Form College. There is a Service Level Agreement which devolves minimal responsibility to John Leggott Sixth Form College. The provision operates under the quality assurance processes and academic infrastructure of the University Centre at North Lindsey College.

Explanation of the findings about the partnership between North Lindsey College and John Leggott Sixth Form College

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

1 Judgement: The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its awarding organisation

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1 The College currently offers the HND in Computing and Systems Development in partnership with John Leggott Sixth Form College which is delivered at John Leggott Sixth Form College under a Service Level Agreement.

1.2 The HND Computing and Systems Development programme is subject to Pearson's quality assurance procedures, which confirm the alignment of programmes with the FHEQ through Pearson's approval processes. As an awarding organisation, Pearson remains responsible for the design and approval of its qualifications and that they align with QAA's guidance on qualification characteristics and the national credit framework, and take account of the relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. The programme is monitored for ongoing currency through the University Centre's annual quality cycle processes.

1.3 These processes would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.4 The review team tested this Expectation by examining the programme specification, checking Pearson's approval processes and holding meetings with senior staff, academic staff and students.

1.5   Staff understand the HND programme specification and use it in their teaching, learning and assessment. It is also accessible by students. The review team judges that the programme is being managed effectively and aligns with the relevant external benchmarks.

1.6   The review team confirms that the College fulfils the requirements of the awarding organisation and ensures that academic standards are maintained with reference to appropriate external benchmarks. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is likely to be met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Is likely to meet
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.7   The Service Level Agreement between the two colleges gives details of each of their responsibilities in delivering the programme. Responsibility for Higher Education quality and standards rests with the University Centre Leadership Team. There are regular quality and standards update reports to the College Senior Leadership Team and reports to the Performance and Quality Subcommittee of the Corporation Board.

1.8   The Higher Education Quality and Standards Performance Group is chaired by the Director of Higher Education and reports to the Higher Education Board of Studies, which has oversight of quality and standards.

1.9   The College has a recently revised management and reporting structure, which shows the responsibility for the HND Computing and Systems Development programme.

1.10   The College has a Learning and Teaching Strategy and is guided by relevant Pearson documents, for example the BTEC Centre Guide to Managing Quality and the BTEC Centre Guide to Assessment Level 4-7.

1.11   These agreements and reporting structures would enable this Expectation to be met.

1.12   The review team tested this Expectation by examining the documentary evidence and discussing these with the Principal, senior staff, academic staff and support staff.

1.13   The division of responsibilities between the two colleges is clearly articulated in the Service Level Agreement and the College has the management and committee structure in place to effectively manage the programme following Pearson guidelines. This was confirmed in conversations with a range of College staff and students.

1.14   Academic frameworks and regulations are in place and are effective. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is likely to be met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Is likely to meet
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

1.15   Programme specifications for Pearson programmes at the College follow the University Centre's template, which aligns with Pearson guidelines. This enables the College to write its own programme specification for the HND Computing and Systems Development.

1.16   The definitive programme specification for the HND Computing and Systems Development is available on the College's internal network (G drive), where access is restricted to relevant staff, and is also available to the public via the College website.

1.17   Students can additionally access programme information through the VLE and the module handbooks.

1.18   Changes to the programme specifications are first agreed by the College through its annual review processes and then forwarded to Pearson for approval according to Pearson's regulations.

1.19   These processes would enable this Expectation to be met.

1.20   The review team examined the programme specification, programme approval documentation, the College's G drive, the VLE and module handbooks, and spoke to College staff and students.

1.21   The Course Team, including staff at North Lindsey and John Leggott Sixth Form College, are aware of the location of the definitive programme specification and how it is used in learning, teaching and assessment.

1.22   The programme specification is available in multiple locations in both electronic and paper copies. The team was able to confirm this on the visit, as had the external examiner previously.

1.23   The review team confirms that staff at both colleges are aware of the requirements set out in the programme specification and ensure that learning, teaching and assessment are aligned to this. The team considers that processes are in place for maintaining definitive records and that staff use these appropriately. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is likely to be met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Is likely to meet
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

1.24   Pearson has responsibility for the approval of Higher National awards and the College informs the awarding organisation of the chosen units, observing the rules of combination. This framework is aligned with the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). For the John Leggott Sixth Form College provision, the HND Computing programme had previously been approved by Pearson and was inherited by North Lindsey College. During the preparatory phase leading up to the start of the current academic year, the Director of Higher Education conducted a review of the programme structure. This was documented within the Partnership Development Plan.

1.25   The review team finds that the HND delivered by the College meets with the QCF, aligns with UK threshold standards and adheres to the framework provided by Pearson.

1.26   The review team analysed documents from both the College and Pearson and met staff and students from both colleges during the review visit.

1.27   North Lindsey College has recently established a new developmental consent process for undertaking programme design and approvals, which includes academic planning and the initial business case for approval of a new programme. However, due to the HND Computing and Systems Development programme already being delivered at John Leggott Sixth Form College, the design and approval process which the College undertook was a less formal approach due to the minimised risk involved in inheriting an existing programme. The team reviewed the evidence provided by the College of a proposed programme currently undergoing the process, which in practice appears to be an effective development mechanism, although the College is in the early stages of embedding this process. The Higher Education Quality and Standards Performance Group hold responsibility for internal programme approval processes.

1.28   The review team concludes that the College, with the support of Pearson, delivers an HND programme that is set at a level that meets UK threshold standards. The team considers that the Expectation is likely to be met and that the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Is likely to meet
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

1.29   The College's Higher National programmes are assessed under the Pearson Higher Education Assessment Policy. The Assessment Policy is subject to annual review by the Higher Education Quality and Standards Performance Group and was part of the evidence presented in November 2015 for the Pearson Annual Quality Review visit for Higher Education. Academic Regulations and procedures are made available to students via their programme handbooks.

1.30   The College adheres to Pearson's assessment policies and procedures, which are reviewed annually, and ensures credit and qualifications are only awarded when intended learning outcomes and threshold academic standards are met. This would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.31   The review team examined College policies and guidance and met academic staff, who are also internal verifiers, and students.

1.32   The review team finds that there is an effective system for the assessment of students that requires them to demonstrate that they have met learning outcomes, which is communicated to students via assignment briefs and the programme handbook. Fairness and accuracy are ensured through a system of internal verification, which is overseen by the programme leader and external standards verification from Pearson, which includes the checking of assessment briefs.

1.33   The team concludes that the Expectation is likely to be met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Is likely to meet
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

1.34   The College is a Pearson-approved delivery centre for Higher National programmes and these are approved through Pearson's quality processes. External examiners confirm the maintenance of standards and these are reflected on through the College's annual monitoring processes. External examiners are also involved in the approval of assessment briefs.

1.35   The review team judges that the design of the programme is likely to meet the Expectation as the College has processes in place for programme monitoring and review that are designed to ensure that the standards are aligned with UK threshold standards through the Pearson framework.

1.36   In testing this, the review team analysed documentation provided by the College and met senior staff and academic staff who are involved in programme assessment and monitoring and review.

1.37   Responsibility for the monitoring and review of standards is shared between the College and Pearson. The process for internal and external verification ensures that programmes are delivered as approved and that Pearson's standards, aligned with the QCF, are met.

1.38   The College has robust reporting structures in place for the monitoring and review of its Higher Education provision. The Higher Education Board of Studies, chaired by the Assistant Principal for Higher Education, and its subcommittees have oversight of academic standards and quality. A report is produced three times per year for the Performance and Quality subcommittee of the Corporation. The Higher Education Development Plan summarises actions arising from annual reporting and is monitored by the Higher Education Board of Studies. There are two Quality and Standards Performance Managers who chair monthly operational meetings, which form part of the annual reporting cycle.

1.39   The review team finds that the annual monitoring processes operate effectively. External verification and annual monitoring in the form of the annual monitoring report and the Higher Education Development Plan both result in the identification of opportunities to improve the partnership provision. The outcomes of the external examiners' reports, student feedback and unit evaluations also feed into the annual monitoring report.

1.40   On the basis of the evidence provided, the review team concludes that the College, with the support of Pearson, has appropriate policies in place for ongoing monitoring and review of its Higher Education provision. Therefore, the Expectation is likely to be met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Is likely to meet
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

1.41   The responsibility for setting and maintaining standards, including the provision of external examiners and standards verifiers, rests with the awarding organisation, Pearson. The College operates within the frameworks provided by Pearson, which ensures that they align with threshold academic standards, the FHEQ and Pearson's standards.

1.42   The review team considers that the design is likely to meet the Expectation. External expertise is obtained through external verifiers and standards verifiers for this particular programme, which is delivered in partnership with John Leggott Sixth Form College.

1.43   To test this, the review team analysed relevant documentation provided by the College, which included external verifiers' reports. The team also met senior staff, academic staff and students.

1.44   The College uses external examiners and standards verifiers as the external expertise when setting and maintaining academic standards. External verifiers comment on assignment briefs and confirm the maintenance of academic standards via their reports, the outcomes of which are reflected upon in the annual monitoring report and the development plan. Industry professionals with independent expertise were not present during the validation of this programme. However, North Lindsey College has a strong theme of external involvement across its existing, well-established Higher Education provision, and is looking to extend this practice across the partnership provision to involve employers and local industry within the programme design and delivery in the future. This was highlighted by the College as an area for development.

1.45   The team concludes that the Expectation is likely to be met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Is likely to meet
Level of risk: Low

The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its awarding organisation: Summary of findings

1.46   In reaching its positive judgement, the team matched the findings against the criteria set out in the *Guidance for Providers Undergoing Initial Review*, published by QAA, December 2014.

1.47   The team took into consideration that the College's awarding organisation has ultimate responsibility for setting the academic standards. All seven Expectations for this judgement area are likely to be met and the associated level of risk has been assessed as low for all. The team notes that the primary responsibility for setting standards lies with Pearson. A positive judgement in this area demonstrates that the College is aware of its responsibilities for maintaining those standards.

1.48   The team concludes that the policies and procedures at North Lindsey College about the partnership between the College and John Leggott Sixth Form College **are likely to meet** UK expectations in maintaining the academic standards set by its awarding organisation.

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 The College is an experienced Higher Education provider and delivers a wide range of Higher Education courses in partnership with a number of validating bodies. It has aspirations to grow the Higher Education provision by 50 per cent from over 1,000 students as outlined in its Higher Education Strategy and Strategic Plan. However, the scope of this review is limited to the programme validated by Pearson and delivered in partnership with John Leggott Sixth Form College, HNC/D Computing and Systems Development. The College adheres to Pearson's framework and selects units from the subject specification publications, observing the rules of combination.

2.2 The review team finds that the College has appropriate systems, processes, policies and procedures in place for the design, development and approval of Higher Education programmes.

2.3 The review team investigated this approach through meetings with senior managers and academic staff, and explored the minutes of team meetings to consider the planning and approval process.

2.4 The HNC/D Computing and Systems Development programme did not follow the usual programme approval route at North Lindsey College due to it being inherited from a previous partnership. This also meant that the College had a minimised role in the design and development of the programme. However, it was scrutinised by the College's Director of Higher Education who conducted a review of the programme structure during the preparatory phase. The review team is confident that the approval process undertaken by the College was well managed and sound procedure is demonstrated across its Higher Education provision with other validating partners.

2.5 The College has recently established a new developmental consent process for undertaking programme design and approvals, which includes academic planning and the initial business case for approval of a new programme. The Higher Education Quality and Standards Performance Group scrutinises new programme proposals through the Development Consent documents. The decision to proceed with a new programme is ultimately made within the University Centre Leadership Team structures. The origin may come from several sources through programme committee meetings, subject team meetings, employer demand or collaborative working with teams from awarding body partners. Students report that they feed into programme development via meetings and discussions with the Programme Leader, but were not involved in this particular programme approval process.

2.6 The review team concludes that the evaluative steps taken by the College to develop a new programme design process mean that the Expectation is likely to be met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Is likely to meet
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 primarily markets its Higher Education courses through its website.

2.8   The College has a Higher Education Admissions Policy, which applies to all its Higher Education students, including those under this partnership.

2.9   The University Centre's Leadership Team set student number targets, selection criteria and recruitment processes, and Programme Leaders recruit, select and admit students on to their programme. Recruitment is a standard agenda item on the Monthly Operations Meetings.

2.10   Students are invited to bitesize activities, open events and to an interview with the Programme Leader. The University Centre Information and Advice Team provide advice on finance and support applicants through the process. Successful students are sent an offer letter and a copy of the Student Admissions Terms and Conditions. The College keeps a University Centre Interview Record.

2.11   The College has mature systems in place for use by this partnership programme which would enable this Expectation to be met.

2.12   The review team examined all relevant documentation concerning admissions, including the website and prospectus, and held meetings with College staff and students.

2.13   Widening participation is a strategic objective for Higher Education at the College and this partnership is consistent with that objective. Many of the current students are either progressing from a Level 3 programme at John Leggott Sixth Form College or transferring from another HND at the College. A small number of students are also recruited new to the College.

2.14   Course information is available prior to and during application, which is through UCAS. Course tutors are available for questions and applicants know what to expect from the interview and acceptance process. Although some of the admissions procedures were not used in this case, they are available to use in the future. Students confirm that they receive appropriate information about the programme and that the admissions process is fair.

2.15   The College recognises prior learning and used this to transfer existing students at John Leggott Sixth Form College on to the second year of the programme.

2.16   The College has mature admissions processes in place in relation to this specific partnership which could be used more extensively for future recruitment. Current students talk positively about their experiences. The team concludes that the Expectation is likely to be met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Is likely to meet
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.17   The College has a Higher Education Learning and Teaching Strategy which emphasises learning opportunities, learning and teaching, employability and lifelong learning. This is supported by the University Centre Student Charter which sets out a way of working to enhance the student experience and directs students to the programme and module handbooks.

2.18   The College operates a Higher Education Observation of Learning and Teaching scheme which was informed by UKPSF which also includes John Leggott Sixth Form College staff, some of whom are dual observed by staff from both institutions.

2.19   The College scrutinises staff CVs from John Leggott Sixth Form College and plans to extend this to introducing a John Leggott Sixth Form College Teacher Status process in 2016-17. The College Higher Education Quality Assurance and Enhancement Development scheme provides the opportunity for staff to attend internal staff development sessions.

2.20   Learning and teaching on the HND Computing and Systems Development takes place in the computing zone at John Leggott Sixth Form College and students are able to access the VLEs of both North Lindsey College and John Leggott Sixth Form College.

2.21   Student feedback on their experience of learning and teaching is gathered through module evaluations, attendance at Programme Committee meetings, the internal Higher Education Survey (HES) and informal discussions.

2.22   The strategies employed by the College would enable this Expectation to be met.

2.23   The review team examined documents relating to learning and teaching, sampled the VLEs and held discussions with a range of College staff and students.

2.24   The College is successfully extending its policies and procedures relating to learning and teaching to the partnership programme. The external examiner report states that standards are appropriate. There has been an issue, however, with the John Leggott Sixth Form College VLE which was regarded unsympathetically by students. The College worked with John Leggott staff in aligning the content of the VLEs to ensure that the John Leggott platform better supported the needs of HE students. The review team **affirms** the steps taken by the College to ensure that the VLE is fit for purpose for students studying on the partnership programme. There has also been difficulty in supporting and engaging John Leggott Sixth Form College staff in staff development sessions; however, support following lesson observations has been productive. The review team therefore **recommends** that the College further engages John Leggott Sixth Form College teaching staff in developmental activities to support teaching and learning. However, the College is well aware of these issues and is able to gather feedback and react quickly to make improvements. The reflective and proactive approach to Higher Education management, which enhances the experience of students, is **good practice**.

2.25   The College staff conveyed to the review team a strong sense of their commitment to enhancing learning and teaching. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is likely to be met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Is likely to meet
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.26   All new students are invited to the University Centre Enrolment and Induction Event and the Programme Leader of the HND Computing and Systems Development organised and led specific activities for these students. All students also receive a copy of the Academic Advice and Guidance Handbook, which informs students about academic matters, support available, course management and quality assurance of the programme.

2.27   Students on the partnership programme are allocated an academic advocate who provides tutorial support throughout the programme. Students needing additional support are identified during the application process or can be referred later by their tutors. The University Centre Interview Record gives details of the initial disclosure of additional learning support needs. The University Centre Information and Advice Office also gives student support and advice on any matter of concern throughout the programme.

2.28   The College employs a Student Support and Inclusion Officer who can refer students to a specialist disability support partner.

2.29   Students have access to the Higher Education Library and learning resources at the College in addition to the online resources available through the VLE. Academic Year Plans, handbooks, module information and assessment briefs are also available through the VLE. Study skills, for example referencing techniques, are offered to partnership students through the Higher Education Library at the College.

2.30   Student Progress Panels take place at the mid-year point and at the end of the year. These panels record achievement and agree intervention strategies for those students who need additional support to achieve.

2.31   The mechanisms the College has in place would enable this Expectation to be met.

2.32   The review team examined documentation relating to induction, advice and guidance, student support and the Progress Panels. The team also scrutinised the VLE and held meetings with academic staff, support staff and students.

2.33   The support mechanisms available to Higher Education students on the College campus are extended to partnership programme students who are based at John Leggott Sixth Form College. Although these resources are fit for purpose, the College does not take this for granted and is responsive to student needs. For example, it has upgraded software in response to student requests and has mirrored the John Leggott VLE on its own VLE, as it was considered not fit for purpose.

2.34   The Higher Education Library offers appropriate resources and support for these students although many of them prefer to access information online.

2.35   Students are very positive regarding support received on the programme, including the accessibility of staff, the pastoral care given by tutors and the usefulness of the VLE for resources.

2.36   The College has plans to strengthen the student support further by developing a specific pre-entry programme for these students and promoting an earlier disclosure of

additional learning needs. The Progress Panels have been particularly effective this year and there are plans to strengthen this further. The review team therefore **affirms** the steps the College is taking to monitor and support student achievement through Progress Panels and Monthly Operations Meetings.

2.37   Overall, the review team found evidence that there are effective resource and support mechanisms in place that enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. The Expectation is therefore likely to be met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Is likely to meet
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

2.38   The College's key documents have a common theme of student engagement. The Higher Education Strategy promotes a student-centred approach, and outlines their role and contribution. The College has a Higher Education Development Plan which considers a range of student engagement opportunities at an operational level. The College provides students with an Academic Advice and Guidance booklet which identifies the various ways students can engage with the College and with its quality assurance mechanisms and also feeds into the student-centred approach outlined within the Higher Education Strategy. The College uses both formal and informal student engagement mechanisms to improve the student experience.

2.39   The Expectation is likely to be met as the College takes deliberate steps to engage students, both on a formal and informal basis. This includes informal feedback, module evaluations and survey outcomes. Feedback from students is also fed into the College's annual monitoring process.

2.40   The review team analysed documentary evidence such as a student submission for this review, survey outcomes and student feedback. The team then triangulated this evidence in a meeting with students during the review visit.

2.41   The College has student engagement structures in place for its Higher Education provision. All student engagement outcomes and feedback are fed into the College's monitoring and review mechanisms. HND Computing and Systems Development students completed the Higher Education Survey and the points raised were considered at the Annual Partnership Review meeting. This also provides an opportunity for students to give a verbal report. Students undertake surveys and module evaluations which are reported as part of the Programme Area Interim Review.

2.42   Student representatives are elected from each programme and receive a Student Representative Handbook. While no formal training is currently delivered for student representatives, the College has outlined developing student representation training as an area for development. The partnership programme student representatives attend Programme Committee meetings. The Student Experience Group provides students with a forum in which to discuss the non-academic aspects of the overall student experience but students from the partnership programme have yet to attend. There will also be a partnership programme student in attendance on the Higher Education Board of Studies meeting from the beginning of the next academic year. The College has recently appointed a Higher Education Outreach and Engagement Officer to support effective student engagement and who coordinates the work of the student interns. Student representatives gather informal feedback through discussions, and formal feedback via surveys, meetings and module evaluations.

2.43   During the review visit, the team met students who reported how effective and timely the College's responses to student views were. Students were able to give examples of this, which included improved computer systems, clearer assignment briefs, providing an additional VLE site for students to enable them to access the information they require, and the improvements made to formative feedback provided on the course. The effective

student engagement mechanisms that have a positive impact on the partnership programme are **good practice**.

2.44   The review team concludes that the College takes deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, and that therefore the Expectation is likely to be met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Is likely to meet
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

2.45   The College's assessment processes operate within the framework and guidance provided by Pearson. The Pearson Higher Education Assessment policy establishes the principles for assessment practice.

2.46   The design of assessment is likely to meet the Expectation as there are College and awarding organisation processes to secure equitable, valid, reliable assessments to demonstrate the achievement of intended learning outcomes.

2.47   The review team scrutinised external examiners' reports and further documentation relating to assessment. The team also met academic staff and students during the review visit to confirm the clarity of assessment briefs, the processes of assessment and achievement of learning outcomes.

2.48   The Pearson Higher Education Assessment Policy sets out the University Centre's expectations regarding the conduct of assessment specifically for the Pearson provision. The Academic Advice and Guidance Handbook provides students with general information relating to the assessment processes and the reporting of achievement.

2.49   Programme handbooks give more detail contextualised to the programme.

2.50   The assessment criteria for each grading are outlined on the assignment brief. All work is internally verified following initial marking, and then provided to the external verifier for review. The external examiner confirmed that 'the internal verification procedures for both assignments and assessment decisions are in place and have been implemented in a timely and constructive way'.

2.51   Students receive an assessment schedule, which was confirmed by students during the review visit. Assessed work should be returned within four weeks, although students reported a quicker turnaround time. Formative assessment workshops enable students to receive feedback, and summative feedback is given via the assessment front sheet. The external examiner stated that while some module tutors provide detailed and constructive feedback, there are instances where feedback is limited. However, both students and College staff report that changes had already been put in place to rectify this.

2.52   The College's Unfair Means advice is in the Academic Advice and Guidance booklet. Allegations of academic offences or applications for extenuating circumstances are administered centrally by the University Centre Information and Advice Office.

2.53   The College closely monitors student achievement. The progress of students is discussed at the Progress Panels, which take place during the academic year. Programme Area Interim Reviews contain an Academic Assessment and Achievement Summary.

2.54   Students report that assessments are submitted via the VLE, which outlines the assessment deadlines and allows them to submit their assignments regardless of location.

Students feel that assignment sheets are clear, and confirmed that they receive formative feedback following marking of their assignments. There was an issue with the detail of this formative feedback at the beginning of the course, but the situation has now been rectified.

2.55   The College has secure procedures for equitable, valid and reliable assessment practice, which is confirmed by the external verifier. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is likely to be met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Is likely to meet
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code*, Chapter B7: External Examining*

Findings

2.56   The College works closely with Pearson, who appoint standards verifiers to take on a role similar to that of an external examiner. The External Examiner highlights good practice and recommendations on assessment processes, which inform the content of the annual monitoring report, which undergoes scrutiny by the Annual Monitoring and Review Panel as part of the College's monitoring and review process.

2.57   The design would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.58   The examined documentation provided by the College, which included an external examiner's report and meetings with academic staff and students, confirmed that they were aware of the External Examiner and what the role involved.

2.59   The external examiners' report highlighted some areas to be addressed, particularly around the consistency of marking and feedback on assessed work and access to the VLE. External examiners' reports are reviewed at the Programme Committee meeting and form part of the Annual Monitoring Report. The Higher Education Quality Standards Performance Group and the Higher Education Board of Studies receive the external examiners' reports on a matrix. External examiners' reports are available to students as part of the Programme Committee meeting and via the North Lindsey College VLE. The Annual Partnership Review meeting includes the formal consideration of the external examiners' report.

2.60   The College makes scrupulous use of external examiners through a system of internal verification and external verification operated by Pearson. There are also appropriate processes in place for staff interaction with the standards verifier. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is likely to be met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Is likely to meet
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

2.61   The College has very clear and effective reporting structures and mechanisms for the monitoring and review of its Higher Education provision. Although the course within the scope of this review is in its infancy with North Lindsey College, the College delivers a range of other long-standing Higher Education courses. The reporting structure includes a Higher Education Quality Standards and Performance group which reports to the Higher Education Board of Studies. Annual Monitoring Reviews also take place and are an ongoing process throughout the academic year, and are presented to the Annual Monitoring Report Panel.

2.62   Partnership meetings also take place during the academic year to ensure that the partnership is running smoothly and that any problems students are facing are resolved in a timely and satisfactory manner. From this, an action plan is developed and monitored over the following year.

2.63   The College's policies and processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.64   The review team tested the Expectation through the scrutiny of evidence and through meetings with staff and students.

2.65   The College has appropriate mechanisms and structures in place for the effective monitoring and review of its Higher Education provision. The Higher Education Board of Studies has oversight of the effective operation of programme monitoring and review. The Board of Studies is chaired by the Assistant Principal Higher Education and has staff and student membership from John Leggott Sixth Form College, although attendance has been low over the course of the last year due to timetabling clashes; this is cross-referenced to the recommendation made under Expectation B3.

2.66   The Higher Education Board of Studies receives summaries of all programme-level reports and action plans and also reviews and monitors the Higher Education Development Plan. The Higher Education Quality Standards and Performance Group was introduced in 2015-16 and provides reports to the Higher Education Board of Studies and the University Centre Leadership Team. Monthly Operations Meetings, chaired by the relevant Higher Education Quality Standards and Performance Manager, provide a forum for the routine oversight of quality assurance, and monitoring of action plans. The College has a very effective approach to monitoring and review, which cross-references to the area of good practice identified under Expectation B3.

2.67   The Annual Monitoring Report is presented to the Annual Programme Monitoring Report Panel which is chaired by the Director of Higher Education. The Report is based on outcomes from the External Examiner report and student surveys, and is monitored in Programme Area Interim Reviews and Monthly Operations Meetings.

2.68   The review team concludes that the Expectation is likely to be met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Is likely to meet
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.69   The Higher Education Complaints Procedure is part of the College complaints procedure and is available to staff and students on the College VLE. This formal procedure was approved through the College Corporation in 2015. The College is registered with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).

2.70   The Pearson Higher Education Assessment Policy, which is also available on the VLE, gives guidance on policies relating to assessment, including malpractice and academic appeals, and encourages students to speak to their institution in the first instance. Tutors would then advise students on how to make a formal appeal if appropriate.

2.71   Students are informed about the complaints and appeals procedures through the Academic Advice and Guidance Booklet, which emphasises the informal procedure and signposts students to where to go next.

2.72   The complaints and appeals procedures are appropriate and available to students so would enable this Expectation to be met.

2.73   The review team examined the Higher Education Complaints Procedure, the Pearson Higher Education Assessment Policy and the Academic Advice and Guidance Booklet. The team also scrutinised the VLE and spoke to a range of staff and students at the College.

2.74   Although there have been no complaints or appeals yet on this programme, there are systems in place should students wish to use them. Students also confirmed that they are aware of what to do should they wish to make a complaint or appeal.

2.75   The absence of complaints or appeals this year reflects the success of the College's informal processes to resolve issues at an early stage. However, formal procedures for handling complaints and appeals are in place and therefore this Expectation is likely to be met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Is likely to meet
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

2.76   The College Strategic Plan 2016-2020 includes growing Higher Education towards 1,500 students by 2020 and meeting the needs of the local community, both employers and individuals. The College sees the relationship with John Leggott Sixth Form College to be important in capacity building.

2.77   A Partnership Proposal Document was produced in early 2015 for the initial meeting between senior members from each institution. Following this, a Service Level Agreement between North Lindsey College and John Leggott Sixth Form College was signed in June 2015 which covers the arrangements for the management of quality assurance, the enrolment and registration of students and the financial arrangements for the HND Computing programme for the period 2015-17. The agreement states that North Lindsey College will provide the overall academic standards and quality assurance oversight and external reporting accountabilities.

2.78   This agreement is reviewed annually through the annual planning and review process. The Annual Partnership Review Meeting is a formal opportunity for reflection and action planning.

2.79   The College's policies and procedures and Pearson's guidance and regulations apply to the HND Computing and Systems Development programme delivered at John Leggott Sixth Form College and are implemented largely the same as on the College site. This is monitored through the Assistant Principal Higher Education who is a member of and presents reports to the Senior Leadership Team.

2.80   The HND Computing and Systems Development does not require students to undertake work placements, so the College does not have responsibility for learning opportunities delivered in the workplace.

2.81   The adoption of the College's Higher Education policies and procedures supported by the Service Level Agreement between the two colleges would enable this Expectation to be met.

2.82   The review team tested this Expectation by examining the Service Level Agreement and the annual review process as well as a range of policies and procedures relevant to Higher Education. The team also held meetings with the Principal, senior staff, academic staff, support staff and students at the College.

2.83   The Service Level Agreement clearly states the responsibilities of each college in respect of the partnership programme. Staff at each college are aware of this and act accordingly.

2.84   The policies and procedures used by the College, for example in admissions, assessment, annual review, learning and teaching and in student engagement and support, are being used effectively in the partnership programme.

2.85   The programme annual monitoring and review process is in place, is working effectively and is embedded into the College's programme review cycle. It is supplemented by the Annual Partnership Review, which looks specifically at partnership issues relevant to this programme. The College is self-critical and reflective in its approach to quality assurance and improvement.

2.86   The role of the partnership with John Leggott Sixth Form College in widening participation in response to local and regional employer and student needs is **good practice**.

2.87   The team concludes that the partnership is working effectively for this programme and therefore this Expectation is likely to be met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Is likely to meet
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

2.88   The College does not offer any research degrees.

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.89 In reaching its positive judgement, the team matched the findings against the criteria set out in the *Guidance for Providers Undergoing Initial Review*, published by QAA, December 2014.

2.90 Of the 10 applicable Expectations for this judgement area, all are likely to be met with a low level of risk.

2.91 There is one recommendation associated with this judgement area.

2.92 The team makes one recommendation under Expectation B3, cross-referenced to B8. The recommendation orientates around the need to further engage John Leggott College teaching staff in developmental activities to support teaching and learning.

2.93 The team also identifies three areas of good practice. The first is to do with the reflective and proactive approach to Higher Education management which enhances the experience of students. This is under Expectation B3, cross-referenced to B8. The second is to do with the effective student engagement mechanisms that have a positive impact on the partnership programme. This is under Expectation B5, cross-referenced to B6. The final area of good practice is to do with the role of the partnership with John Leggott College in widening participation in response to local and regional employer and student needs. This is under Expectation B10.

2.94 The team also makes two affirmations. The first, under Expectation B3 and cross-referenced to C, is around the steps taken to ensure that the virtual learning environment is fit for purpose for students studying on the partnership programme. The second, under Expectation B4, involves the steps taken to monitor and support student achievement through Progress Panels and Monthly Operations Meetings.

2.95 The team concludes that the policies and procedures of North Lindsey College about the partnership between North Lindsey College and John Leggott Sixth Form College **are likely to meet** UK expectations in the quality of the student learning opportunities.

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.

Findings

3.1 The College provides varied written and electronic information for its stakeholders. This includes student booklets with information about the University Centre, the HND Computing and Systems Development information leaflet, the University Centre Student Charter, the Programme Handbook, the programme specification, module handbooks, the Academic Advice and Guidance Booklet, the North Lindsey College and John Leggott Sixth Form College VLE, and the College website.

3.2 The Assistant Principal for Higher Education holds ultimate responsibility for the accuracy and completeness of information published externally and for promotional materials. There is a procedure for approvals which evidences the audit trail from the originator of a document to final sign-off approval. Information is approved at different points in the College structure. For example, programme handbooks are audited and approved by the Quality and Standards Performance Manager, module handbooks are produced by the Module Leaders and approved by the Programme Leader, and teaching staff are responsible for the content of the VLE, which is subject to an audit by the Programme Leader.

3.3 On completion of their programme, students receive a transcript of their results which is informed by the examination board, having been signed off by the Chair and the external examiner.

3.4 The College undertakes audits of information it provides, for example the Publicity and Marketing Audit, the Programme Handbook Audit and the VLE Audit.

3.5 The processes that the College has in place for checking information would enable this Expectation to be met.

3.6 The review team examined a large sample of different types of information produced by the College for its stakeholders, scrutinised the results of internal audits and spoke to a range of staff and students at the College.

3.7 Information provided for students, for example the programme specification, the Programme Handbook, the module handbooks, the Academic Advice and Guidance Booklet, the VLE and the website, is comprehensive and students confirm that in their view the information provided is accurate and complete.

3.8 The College is taking steps towards streamlining VLE access for students on the partnership programme. The current system is that students can access both the College's VLEs, with the idea being that each site mirrors the other. However, in practice this is not the case. For example the external examiners' report is not available on John Leggott Sixth Form College's VLE, but is available on that of North Lindsey College. The introduction of two VLE sites was due to the problems encountered by students early on in the course, when the VLE at John Leggott Sixth Form College experienced downtime. Students reported that the College was very proactive in resolving the problems. The College is now looking to just have the one VLE site to ensure content is readily available for students on a reliable and easy-to-access site.

3.9   Staff are clear about who is responsible for producing and signing off information and there are audits in place to check that these processes are effective.

3.10   Following this, processes have been put in place to confirm College expectations with regard to the approval of module handbooks and the use of the VLE.

3.11   Overall, the review team concludes that the College has effective processes in place for ensuring that information is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. Therefore the Expectation is likely to be met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Is likely to meet
Level of risk: Low

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

3.12   In reaching its positive judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria set out in the *Guidance for Providers Undergoing Initial Review*, published by QAA, December 2014.

3.13   The College produces information for its students and stakeholders about the Higher Education it offers that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

3.14   The team concludes that the approach of the College to information about learning opportunities in the partnership between North Lindsey College and John Leggott Sixth Form College **is likely to meet** UK expectations.

Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers.

If you require formal definitions of other terms please refer to the section on assuring standards and quality: www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality

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

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

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

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

Credit(s)
A means of quantifying and recognising learning, used by most institutions that provide Higher Education **programmes of study**, expressed as numbers of credits at a specific level.

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

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

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

e-learning
See technology enhanced or enabled learning

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

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

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

Framework
A published formal structure. See also **framework for Higher Education qualifications**.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or **e-learning**)
Learning that is delivered or supported through the use of technology.

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

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

Widening participation
Increasing the involvement in Higher Education of people from a wider range of backgrounds.

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