



# Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of The Minster Centre

February 2017

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## About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at The Minster Centre. The review took place from 8 to 9 February 2017 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Professor Anthony Whitehouse
- Ms Claire Alfrey.

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provision and to make judgements as to whether or not academic standards and quality meet UK expectations. These expectations are the statements in the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) (the Quality Code)<sup>1</sup> setting out what all UK higher education providers expect of themselves and of each other, and what the general public can therefore expect of them.

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Key findings

### Judgements

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

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

### Good practice

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

- The care taken in the admissions process, which ensures that the Centre recruits with integrity and that students have the qualities and motivation to succeed on their programme (Expectation B2).
- The strategic approach to the employment of professional practitioners whose teaching is informed by experience and research (Expectation B3).

### Recommendations

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

By July 2017:

- ensure that information for applicants details the entirety of the entry requirements (Expectations B2 and C)
- produce a definitive document which sets out placement requirements, expectations and responsibilities of all stakeholders (Expectation B10).

By September 2017:

- fully implement an overarching quality committee, which includes students in its membership (Expectations B8 and B5)
- develop and implement a formal strategy for the production and approval of public information, ensuring that information reflects current legislation and CMA guidance (Expectation C).

By December 2017:

- fully document the revised internal process for the design and development of programmes, which involves all stakeholders (Expectation B1)
- formalise procedures for ensuring that deliberate steps are taken to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities (Expectation Enhancement).

## About The Minster Centre

The Minster Centre (the Centre) was established in 1978 and was incorporated as a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity in 1994. The Centre provides training and academic programmes in psychotherapy and counselling and offers psychotherapy and counselling services.

The Centre offers programmes at all levels including open-entry 10-week introductory counselling skills courses and professional training for psychotherapists and counsellors accredited by professional bodies. The Centre delivers two master's degree programmes: MA Professional Practice (Psychotherapy and Counselling) and MA Integrative Psychotherapy and Counselling. The Centre has offered postgraduate programmes validated by Middlesex University for over 20 years.

The MA courses fit into the overall range of training provided by the Minster Centre in two ways. The MA Integrative Psychotherapy and Practice forms the final two years of a four-year professional training for students training to be psychotherapists. The MA Professional Practice is a post-qualification training for people who are already qualified and practising as psychotherapists and counsellors but want to undertake further training and obtain a postgraduate qualification.

Both programmes are offered part-time and there are currently approximately 100 students across the two programmes. The vast majority are mature students retraining for second careers or undertaking training to extend their skills and prospects within an existing career. The Centre also provides a community-based, Low Cost Therapy Service (LCTS) which is integrated into the training and education work of the Centre.

The Centre has a Board of Trustees which delegates the day-to-day operations of the Centre to the Director and her team of staff. The senior management team consists of the Director and two Deputy Directors.

This was the first QAA review of the Centre.

## Explanation of findings

This section explains the review findings in greater detail.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### **Findings**

1.1 The programmes delivered by the Minster Centre (the Centre), under the agreement with its awarding body Middlesex University (the University), are validated programmes, designed by the Centre and approved by the University. The University defines validated programmes as 'a programme of study, developed, assessed and delivered by a Partner Institution, awarded by and ultimately quality assured by the University'.

1.2 The University is responsible for approving programmes and relevant national reference points, including the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements, which are used to secure academic standards.

1.3 The Centre follows the policies, guidance and practices of the University in accordance with the requirements set out in the University's Learning and Quality Enhancement Handbook and the University's Regulations. Current programmes were designed by the Director of the Centre and senior staff who rely on the University credit framework to ensure level.

1.4 The Centre's procedures and its engagement with the requirements of its awarding body would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.5 The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of a range of documentation. The review team also held meetings with students, teaching and professional support staff (including a member of staff from the University), and senior staff from the Centre.

1.6 The current programmes were most recently successfully reviewed and revalidated in 2014. Programme specifications and other documentation presented and approved as part of the validation process demonstrate that the qualifications are positioned at the appropriate level of the FHEQ. Programme learning outcomes align with the relevant FHEQ qualification descriptors. The qualifications awarded demonstrate the achievement of defined learning outcomes, and programme design takes into account relevant Subject Benchmark Statements.

1.7 The Centre's adherence to the policies and procedures of the University ensures that programmes are aligned with the FHEQ, Subject Benchmark Statements and the relevant qualification characteristics. External examiner reports confirm that academic standards are maintained at appropriate levels and that learning outcomes are being met. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

1.8 The Centre is required to adhere to the academic governance arrangements and regulations set out in the partnership agreement with the University. As part of this agreement, the University appoints a Link Tutor to work with the Centre. The Centre also appoints a member of its staff as a Centre Link Tutor, who acts as the first point of contact between the Centre and the University. The Centre participates in the University's annual quality monitoring process via an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) that is considered by the University.

1.9 The Centre follows all of the University's academic regulations and policies except those relating to student appeals and academic misconduct. The Centre has its own regulations and policies for complaints and grievances. These local policies are informed by the University's regulations, and mirror them in principle while being adapted to the Centre's circumstances. Academic regulations are made available to staff and students through programme handbooks.

1.10 The Centre has a defined committee structure with each committee having Terms of Reference (ToR). The Assessment Board considers module results, progression and awards of higher education qualifications.

1.11 The Centre's procedures and its adherence to the regulatory requirements of its awarding body would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.12 The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of a range of documentation. The team also held meetings with students, teaching and professional support staff (including a member of staff from the University), and senior staff from the Centre.

1.13 Assessment boards are convened under the remit of the University and follow the University's requirements, including attendance by external examiners and the University Link Tutor. Assessment board decisions are sent to the University's Academic Partnerships Office and the University provides transcripts to the Centre to send to students.

1.14 External examiners, appointed by the University, confirm that appropriate academic standards are met through the teaching, learning and assessment processes. They also confirm that sufficient credits have been achieved for progression or award as appropriate. Students confirmed that they were aware of the academic regulations for their award.

1.15 The University's Link Tutor confirmed that the University receives the Centre's AMRs which are submitted to the University's Centre for Academic Partnerships for consideration. The Link tutor completes a response which is sent back to the Centre for consideration at the relevant Board of Study.

1.16 The Centre complies with the regulations and frameworks of its awarding body supported by its own internal processes, which ensures that there are transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern the award of academic

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

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**



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

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

**Findings**

1.17 The University is responsible for the final approval of definitive programme information, including programme specifications, through the validation process. The Centre is responsible for preparing programme information for validation and for making it available to students after it has been approved by the University. University validation, review and modification processes include scrutiny of programme and module specifications and assessment arrangements.

1.18 The definitive record of each higher education programme is the programme specification, which uses the University's template and is included in the relevant programme handbook. Programme handbooks are revised annually in line with guidance provided by the University, copies of which are provided to the University as well as students.

1.19 Programme specifications for all higher education provision define the names of awards and the level and credit rating of their constituent modules. Module descriptors, which define level, credit value, learning outcomes and the mode of assessment, are included in programme handbooks.

1.20 The Centre has produced a staff training handbook, which provides supporting information about procedures and regulations for all staff. The handbook is reviewed annually by the senior management team (SMT).

1.21 The arrangements in place for the maintenance and use of definitive programme records would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.22 The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of a range of documentation. The team also held meetings with students, teaching and professional support staff (including a member of staff from the University), and senior staff from the Centre.

1.23 The review team heard from students and staff that they are clear about what is expected of them from the information provided in programme handbooks, programme specifications and assignment briefs.

1.24 Staff are aware of the University's requirements regarding programme design and development and assessment. Students were satisfied with the definitive records that were provided to them and were clear on how to access these.

1.25 Current students reported being fully aware of the entry requirements for their programme. However, the review team found that not all entry requirements and criteria for gaining the award were explicitly stated on the website and this led to the recommendations in Expectation B2 and C (Information). In particular, clarity is needed around DBS requirements and the need to complete 450 hours in clinical practice in order to gain the academic award to meet professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) requirements.

1.26 The Centre adheres to the requirement to maintain definitive records of each programme of study on behalf of the University. Staff are clear about their responsibilities in providing accurate programme documentation to students, and students are satisfied with the quality of the documentation. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

**Findings**

1.27 The Agreement with the University confirms that programmes are subject to the approval, quality assurance and monitoring and review procedures of the University. Programmes delivered by the Centre are validated and subject to the standards set out in the University's Learning and Quality Enhancement Handbook.

1.28 Centre staff are responsible for the initial design and specification of programmes submitted for approval through the University's validation and review processes. The University's validation process ensures that appropriate external references are used and 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. Programmes currently delivered at the Centre were designed by the Centre Director in consultation with key staff and with the University. The design used the relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and external reference points, the FHEQ, and incorporated professional body requirements.

1.29 The Centre's adherence to the University's processes for programme development, approval and review would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.30 The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of a range of documentation. The team also held meetings with students, teaching and professional support staff (including a member of staff from the University), and senior staff from the Centre.

1.31 The Centre has been delivering programmes validated by the University since 1996, with successful revalidations taking place every six years. Experience of delivery, together with a re-evaluation of the market, led to the development and validation of one replacement programme and a new programme during 2014. Programmes are accredited by the relevant professional body which enables successful students to obtain a professional qualification required for membership. To obtain an MA award students are required to complete the assessed elements of the programme and to have completed specified numbers of hours of supervised clinical practice. The MA Integrative Psychotherapy and Counselling requires 450 supervised hours.

1.32 Student feedback was considered during the design of current programmes; however, students were not directly involved in the process and they have expressed a desire to be more involved in developing future programmes.

1.33 Students confirmed they registered for their programme in order to qualify for membership of the relevant professional body and to obtain a master's degree. The experience and knowledge gained during the required hours of clinical practice, while not directly assessed, is used when completing assessed assignments.

1.34 The Centre has recognised the need for a more formal internal process for the design and development of programmes prior to submission to the University for validation.

The process will require programmes to be approved for development by the Board of Trustees and then considered by the Training Committee. Input to the design will be sought from external stakeholders, including the University Link Tutor, external examiners and the relevant professional bodies. Programme design and development, will in future, follow a four-stage process before submission to the University for validation. The new process identifies that students will be involved during the consultation and outline design stage. At the time of the review the process had been set out in outline but not yet in detail, leading to the recommendation under Expectation B2 that the Centre fully documents the revised internal process for the design and development of programmes, which involves all stakeholders.

1.35 The oversight by the University ensures that academic standards are set at a level that meets the UK threshold standard and are in accordance with the University's academic frameworks and regulations. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

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

**Findings**

1.36 The University retains overall responsibility for the programmes and for the MA awards. Assessment is delegated to the Centre using the procedures specified in the University's Code of Assessment Practice. Assessment regulations used at the Centre are adapted from the University's regulations and are approved by the University at validation. Learning outcomes and their assessment are set out in programme specifications that form part of the University validation process.

1.37 Assessment information for students is detailed in programme handbooks that are also approved by the University as part of the validation process. Assessment boards are held at the Centre, chaired by the Centre Director, and include the external examiner and University Link Tutor.

1.38 The Centre's assessment procedures and the oversight of the University would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.39 The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of a range of documentation. The team also held meetings with students, teaching and professional support staff (including a member of staff from the University), and senior staff from the Centre.

1.40 The assessment process, overseen by the University as the awarding body, is effective. Assessments are set by Centre teaching staff to test students' ability to meet the validated learning outcomes. Assessment tasks are subject to an internal validation process by a group of academic staff. Assessment tariffs and schedules are made available to students. All written work is either double marked or moderated, and a sample is reviewed by the external examiner. The final marks are considered at the Assessment Board.

1.41 Detailed and transparent guidance is provided for students and staff on assessment tasks in the Aids to Study documents.

1.42 External examiners are appointed by the University and provide written reports to the University and to the Centre, to which the Centre provides a formal response. The report and response forms part of the evidence considered for the AMR which is submitted to the University. External examiners confirm that the standards set are appropriate for the qualifications, grades allocated to students are appropriate and assessments are academically stretching.

1.43 The Centre Director chairs assessment boards, in attendance are the external examiner and University Link Tutor in order to ensure the University's academic standards and requirements have been satisfied. The external examiner and the University Link Tutor sign decisions made at the Board.

1.44 Oversight by the University, which includes the appointment of a University Link Tutor and an external examiner, ensures that threshold standards and the standards of the University are satisfied, and the achievement of relevant learning outcomes is demonstrated through assessment. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

**Findings**

1.45 The University reviews the Centre's validated programmes every six years. The review process includes consideration of a range of data to assess whether the programmes continue to meet the UK threshold academic standards and the University's own standards. Data is collected through consistent monitoring and review of student recruitment, retention and performance, consideration of student feedback and external examiner reports.

1.46 The University requires the Centre to prepare and submit AMRs using a University template. AMRs include consideration of progress on actions identified the previous year and the identification of new actions for the future.

1.47 The Centre's processes, and its participation in the University's monitoring and review processes, would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.48 The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of a range of documentation. The team also held meetings with students, teaching and professional support staff (including a member of staff from the University), and senior staff from the Centre.

1.49 Oversight by the University ensures the process is effective. The Centre Link Tutors and Registrar are responsible for collecting cohort data for inclusion in the AMR. To prepare the AMR, the Centre Link Tutor holds discussions with the Director, the Head of Research, with individual course leaders/year heads and reviews minutes of the Training Committee and Staff meetings.

1.50 The Centre Link Tutor provides a brief commentary on the data collected which includes student feedback, external examiner reports and progress on actions, all of which are entered in the AMR template provided by the University. The Centre receives a brief response from the University Link Tutor unless there are issues or concerns.

1.51 Centre AMRs are approved by the Centre Training Committee and then sent to the University's Centre for Academic Partnerships to be considered at the University's Annual Monitoring and Enhancement meetings. The University holds a meeting for each subject area where collaborative partner programmes are discussed. The University confirmed they had received all the Centre AMRs and that the Link Tutor had responded. Unless there are issues or concerns the University does not specifically record comments about the Centre in the minutes of these meetings.

1.52 The Centre's arrangements for annual monitoring, including consideration of and responses to the AMRs by the University, address whether threshold standards are achieved and the standards required by the University are being maintained. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

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

**Findings**

1.53 The University, through its validation and annual monitoring processes, ensures that UK threshold academic standards are set, delivered and achieved. All postgraduate programmes provided at the Centre are validated by the University. The validation process requires two specialist external advisers to be members of the University validation panel. The assessment process for the programmes is overseen by external examiners appointed by the University.

1.54 The Centre designs programmes of study to meet the requirements for membership of the relevant professional bodies. The Centre is subject to review by two professional bodies, the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and the UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP). The Centre's programmes are subject to the UKCP HIPC's training standards.

1.55 The arrangements in place, including participation in the University's approval and monitoring processes, would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.56 The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of a range of documentation. The team also held meetings with students, teaching and professional support staff (including a member of staff from the University), and senior staff from the Centre.

1.57 The University provides oversight to ensure that its own and UK threshold academic standards are set and maintained through the validation process (which includes external input), annual monitoring, the role of the University appointed Link Tutor and the appointment of external examiners.

1.58 External examiner reports, together with University scrutiny through annual monitoring, allow the Centre to assure itself that UK standards are being met. External examiners attend assessment boards to consider and verify assessment outcomes and reports seen by the team confirm that the Centre is meeting the required academic standards. External examiner reports are considered by the Centre and the University as part of the annual monitoring process.

1.59 The review team concludes that the Centre's participation in the quality assurance processes and procedures of its awarding body ensures that independent external expertise is used in the approval of programmes and in the setting and ongoing maintenance of academic standards. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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



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

1.60 In reaching its judgement about academic standards, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The team also took into consideration that the Centre's awarding body has ultimate responsibility for the setting of academic standards.

1.61 The Centre's main responsibilities for maintaining academic standards are for adhering to the policies and procedures of its awarding body. The positive judgement in this area demonstrates that the Centre does so effectively.

1.62 All Expectations in this judgement area are met and the associated level of risk is low in all cases. There are no recommendations and no affirmations. There is however a related recommendation in Expectation B1 relating to the Centre's process for the design and development of programmes.

1.63 The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards offered on behalf of the Centre's degree-awarding body **meets** UK expectations.

## 2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

#### **Findings**

2.1 The Centre takes a strategic approach to the development of its programmes, which are all within its specialist area of psychotherapy and counselling, and aligned with its Strategic Plan. Proposals for new programmes are provided to the Board of Trustees who consider if the proposal is in line with the Centre's charitable purposes and strategic priorities. The Board receives information on the potential market, as well as the financial and resource implications of offering the programme.

2.2 Programmes approved in principle are then submitted to the University for consideration. If proposals are accepted by the University the Centre then further discusses them at the Training Committee and prepares full documentation as required by the University for its validation process. Documentation submitted to the University validation process must include fully completed University templates for programme and module specifications.

2.3 The Centre's processes and the requirements of the University's programme approval procedures would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.4 The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of a wide range of documentation. The team also held meetings with students, teaching and professional support staff (including a member of staff from the University), and senior staff.

2.5 The process for the development of current programmes requires proposals to be considered internally by the Board of Trustees and Training Committee. Consideration includes an analysis of annual monitoring outcomes, staff and student views and an analysis of job opportunities and industry trends. Following this, proposals are then sent to the University Academic Provision Approval Committee for consideration.

2.6 Following approval from the University, programme and module specifications are developed using the University's templates. A draft of the validation document is then discussed with the University and feedback incorporated into the final document before it goes forward to the University for validation.

2.7 The most recent programme validation, and changes to an existing programme, were undertaken within the validation and programme change requirements of the University. The Centre designed the MA Professional Practice for validation in 2014. The existing MA Integrative Psychotherapy and Counselling was restructured at the same time. Minor changes to the programmes have been identified and were submitted to the University for approval.

2.8 Independent external expertise is incorporated in development of programmes and module specifications. University validation events include two external specialist panel members.

2.9 The Centre recently reviewed the internal process for the design and development of programmes. In future, programmes will be developed using a more formal process, which will consist of four distinct stages before programmes are submitted to the University for validation. The internal stages include strategic oversight, consultation and outline design, and development. Approval to move to the next stage will be required by the relevant Centre committee; the Board of Trustees, the Centre Quality Committee and the Training Committee. At the consultation stage, the Centre plans to consult with staff, students, graduates, external examiners, the University; and (where relevant) PSRBs, placement providers, employers and specialist services. Although the Centre explained the proposed new process to the review team, and a diagrammatic outline of the process was provided, the process is not yet documented in detail. The review team **recommends** the Centre fully document the revised internal process for the design and development of programmes, which involves all stakeholders.

2.10 The validation process and oversight by the University ensures that the Centre operates effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes. The recommendation in this Expectation relates to the completion of activity that is already underway. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

**Findings**

2.11 The Centre is responsible for student recruitment and admissions to its postgraduate programmes, which are delivered in part-time mode. Regular recruitment events are held throughout the year attended by senior members of staff. The events are held at evenings and weekends to suit the availability of potential applicants who are mainly working adults. Open events inform prospective students about the process for application.

2.12 The Centre's admissions team process completed application forms and invite successful applicants for interview. Senior staff, using a standard template, conduct interviews.

2.13 Students progressing from Year 2 of professional training at the Centre are not required to make a further application or be interviewed if they have met the progression criteria as stated in handbooks. Applicants joining the Centre at Level 7 are required to submit an application and be interviewed. Admissions requirements and processes are available on the Centre's website.

2.14 Students who join a programme at the Centre are enrolled as a student of the Centre and registered at the University for the award. The Centre has its own policies for admissions, admissions complaints and the handling of fraudulent applications.

2.15 The policies and processes for recruitment, selection and admission at the Centre would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.16 The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of a range of documentation. The team also held meetings with students, teaching and professional support staff (including a member of staff from the University), and senior staff from the Centre.

2.17 The Centre's Trustees and SMT have strategic oversight of student numbers and recruitment. They ensure that recruitment reflects the nature and resources of the programmes and the Centre.

2.18 Recruitment activity includes open evenings, which students reported were thorough and accurate in terms of their experience on the programme. Such events are attended by staff and current, or former, students who can discuss the programme with prospective students. Students felt that meeting this range of people was very helpful. Many students reported that they had been recommended to the Centre via word of mouth. Admissions staff are developing new recruitment approaches such as open coffee mornings, again with staff and students involved, and are exploring social media to further enhance recruitment.

2.19 Students confirmed that they had been made aware of programme requirements such as the need to find their own placement and of their relationship with the University. However, the review team found that the Centre's website was not clear about the entry

requirement of a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check or how students would apply for it, although Centre staff detailed their process for DBS checking to the review team. The team **recommends** the Centre ensure that information for applicants details the entirety of the entry requirements.

2.20 To support a wider diversity of applicants, students with non-conventional academic backgrounds are able to study a foundation course prior to the master's qualification. The majority of students entering the MA Integrative Psychotherapy and Counselling will have completed the previous two years of professional training with the Centre. These students can progress onto the MA on the basis of having successfully completed all assessed work, met progression criteria in terms of personal development and clinical skills, meeting attendance and clinical practice requirements and staff recommendation. Thus, students with non-conventional academic backgrounds are able to access a Level 7 qualification.

2.21 The Centre is responsible for making its own offers. The Admissions Officer informs the applicant of the outcome of interviews. Interview assessment forms are retained with application forms and all supporting documentation in new student intake records, and for successful applicants, on their student records. The Centre scrutinises records of admissions and holds meetings to review the admissions process which may focus on specific issues, for example this year there had been a higher level of rejections at application stage and the review team was told that an analysis of reasons for rejection would be taking place. A previous review had informed changes to the accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL) process.

2.22 Academic and professional service staff reported full involvement with the admissions and recruitment processes. Students felt that open days had been thorough and had covered all the areas on which they needed information. Academic staff are involved with the ongoing review of the admissions processes which includes discussion of issues and amendments to processes if necessary.

2.23 Staff outlined the Centre's complaints procedure, which would apply to students wishing to make an admissions complaint, but noted that it had not been used in the last eight years.

2.24 The review team identifies the care taken in admissions, which ensures that the Centre recruits with integrity and that students have the qualities and motivation to succeed on their programme, as **good practice**.

2.25 The team identified care and integrity in the admissions process and the students spoke positively of their experience of the recruitment, selection and admission processes. The review team concludes that the policies, procedures and operation of recruitment, selection and admission of the Centre ensure that the Expectation is met. The associated level of risk is low because the recommendation relates to minor omissions in documentation.

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

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

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

#### **Findings**

2.26 The Centre underwent review and revalidation with the University in 2014. At that event, learning resources and the learning and teaching strategy were discussed. The Centre's learning, teaching and assessment strategy is informed by relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and the training standards and ethos of BACP and UKCP.

2.27 The Centre's overall approach to teaching and learning is set out in the handbook for each programme with information on the learning outcomes and the teaching approach for each module set out in the module narratives at the end of the handbook. Further detailed information on assessment is provided in the Aids to Study documents so that the expectations and requirements for each assessment are transparent.

2.28 The Centre's Training Committee has strategic oversight of the learning, teaching and assessment strategy with terms of reference which include the requirement 'to discuss and implement measures to assess, assure and enhance the quality of training'. Additionally, the Boards of Study have a remit to consider and evaluate the effectiveness of the Centre's teaching, learning and assessment strategies.

2.29 The Centre ensures that academic staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. The Centre has developed a training handbook for all staff, which includes the Centre's approach to learning and teaching. As part of that approach the Centre has adopted a system of peer observation and feedback, which is outlined in the training handbook.

2.30 Student feedback on learning and teaching is regularly sought. An annual survey is carried out, feedback from which is analysed for the SMT who receive an overview of all student feedback and information about individual modules and tutors. Heads of Year/Programme receive feedback about all the modules, and tutors relevant to their part of the programme and individual tutors receive the feedback that relates to them individually.

2.31 The arrangements at the Centre, including the involvement of stakeholders in the review and enhancement of learning opportunities and teaching practices, would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.32 The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of a range of documentation. The team also held meetings with students, teaching and professional support staff (including a member of staff from the University), and senior staff from the Centre.

2.33 The review team heard that a range of learning and teaching strategies including seminars, tutorials, subject specific weekend inputs, triad learning, reflections on practice, placements, case studies and supervision are used. Staff outlined a 'layeredness to training' in that the experience includes personal therapy, clinical experience, supervision and academic learning through the different processes of the training. This holistic approach was supported by students who reported that the blend of experiential and academic learning

was very valuable. Students also reported that their academic work is integrated with becoming a professional psychotherapist. Indeed, students felt that the approach allowed them to be 'treated as unique individuals'.

2.34 Students stated that they felt the quality of teaching was good, with staff who are very knowledgeable, effective at conveying knowledge and who employ a variety of teaching approaches. Students felt that the professional range and experience of tutors allows them to role model skills and requirements in teaching sessions which brings different perspectives to their learning.

2.35 Many staff are employed sessionally and work in practice alongside their employment at the Centre. As such, they have to undertake continuous professional development to meet the requirements of their professional bodies. Training staff are qualified and practising psychotherapists and counsellors, and have experience of training. Several staff are research active with students citing articles published by staff used to inform teaching. The review team views as **good practice** the strategic approach to the employment of professional practitioners whose teaching is informed by experience and research.

2.36 It is mainly the most experienced staff who teach on the MA programmes. Where staff are subject experts, but inexperienced at Level 7, senior staff teach alongside experienced tutors, helping develop lesson plans and encouraging an understanding of relevant learning outcomes and the level. This approach enables subject experts to deliver independently.

2.37 Peer review is undertaken although not in a formalised manner. Academic staff reported that once or twice a year co-teaching takes place following which they provide feedback to each other. They found this approach helpful. Training days are provided on specific subjects identified from either staff or student feedback. One such day was on race. Supported by an external speaker, staff considered how to best integrate race or ethnicity into their teaching and learning. Students cited this training as a positive response to their feedback and reported that they had noted a better awareness of the issues around race and diversity in teaching sessions.

2.38 The Centre provides opportunities for students to give detailed feedback on teaching in respect of modules and weekend sessions. Students reported that they are encouraged to communicate openly and would not feel inhibited in making negative comments if they felt it necessary. Student representatives confirmed that there are opportunities for students to raise their views on the Board of Study agenda that are then discussed. Student representatives are responsible for cascading the feedback and decisions to their peers, although the minutes are also available on the intranet.

2.39 The Centre, through its holistic approach to learning and teaching, ensures that staff are suitably qualified, both academically and professionally, and provides a wide range of learning and teaching experiences to enable programme learning outcomes to be met. Students identified that the Centre's provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices enables them to be 'treated as unique individuals'. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and that the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.40 The majority of the Centre's students are mature and have embarked on training in counselling or psychotherapy as a second career, or as a means of enhancing and expanding a current or previous professional role.

2.41 From the beginning of their training, students are encouraged to engage with a process of self-assessment as the Centre believes critical reflective practice is integral to working as a counsellor/therapist. This process is encouraged through tutorials with module tutors and heads of year or course as well as peer review. Individual progress tutorials with a head of year/course are held at least once a year and individual students can request additional meetings. Additionally, any student who fails an assessment is offered a tutorial to ensure they have understood the feedback and to identify what support they need to help them to resubmit.

2.42 Students are provided with comprehensive information about their programme of study and the assessment requirements in the relevant handbook and Aids to Study, with further information available on the intranet.

2.43 Students' overall progress is monitored by staff who meet at least twice a year to consider individual students' progress and to identify any students of concern. Students of concern are discussed at the relevant Training Committee after which a tutorial is held with the student to discuss how to address these concerns. These procedures are set out in the relevant handbooks.

2.44 The Centre's Disability Co-ordinator works with students to identify adjustments that will support them reaching their potential. A learning agreement sets out what students can expect. Individual tutors are informed of adjustments. Students who experience financial difficulties during their training can apply to the Hardship Fund. Additionally, a bursary scheme is available to fund students who could not otherwise train.

2.45 Over the last five years the Centre has made a concerted effort to improve access to learning resources including its book stock and access to electronic resources.

2.46 The approaches, processes and procedures in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.47 The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of a range of documentation. The team also held meetings with students, teaching and professional support staff (including a member of staff from the University), and senior staff from the Centre.

2.48 Students reported that the Centre is very supportive of their professional and personal growth. Its approach is relational and students felt they were treated as individuals with their specific needs being addressed. Academic and clinical experiences are integrated.

2.49 Academic staff outlined how formal and informal tutorials and supervision enable them to identify students who may not meet the required level. Where additional support is possible, such as with written or spoken English, provision has been put into place to enable students to complete successfully.



2.50 Within the curriculum, additional academic support has been provided when requested. Optional workshops on writing case studies and research methods to support specific assessments have been offered. Additionally, the review team heard that tutors provided group tutorials to support assessment writing. Students felt that they were provided with comprehensive feedback on assessments which is supportive in terms of their development and understanding.

2.51 A formal, mid-year review is held to monitor progress. Students write a self-assessment to which tutors respond. Students saw this as a positive, holistic opportunity to identify how they were progressing and to identify their next steps which may include additional support if necessary.

2.52 Students reported that even though they are studying on a part time programme tutors are very accessible, with frequent contact that they found reassuring. All students reported that when they asked for help (via emails, phone, requests for additional tutorials or dropping in to see tutors face to face) assistance is always provided by tutors, who are very approachable and supportive.

2.53 The review team heard from senior staff and students that new guidance for students with disabilities had been developed. Students commented on the draft guidance before it was adopted. The new process has been implemented, students have met with the Disability Co-ordinator this academic year and learning support plans have been developed.

2.54 Students are able to access a range of learning resources at the Centre to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. Although students are not able to access the University's library they spoke very positively about support received from the Centre's Librarian who is able to locate appropriate articles through subscriptions to external libraries and professional networks; as well as providing more focussed one-to-one sessions to support specific subject searches, literature reviews and research proposals.

2.55 Students reported feeling very well supported by a range of professional service staff. Staff provide support for students on financial matters, general programme queries, placement opportunities and IT. Staff can be contacted via email, phone or face to face.

2.56 The Centre's virtual learning environment (VLE) currently provides a key repository of information for students including all handbooks, Aids to Study, complaints procedures, samples of previous assessments with markers' comments, external examiner reports and minutes from the Boards of Study. Students find the Centre's intranet very helpful. The Centre is updating its intranet this academic year and will be considering student feedback in its design.

2.57 The Centre, through a range of formal and informal mechanisms provided by academic and professional staff, enables students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. Students reported that their programme has been transformative. 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**

2.58 The Minster Centre seeks to promote student engagement and a sense of open communication between students and staff. Students elect representatives from each year of each programme to the Boards of Study, which is the formal Staff-Student forum for programmes of study.

2.59 The Centre committee structure includes a Training Committee with terms of reference which include the requirement 'to discuss and implement measures to assess, assure and enhance the quality of training'. Due to the nature of the business considered at the Training Committee, student representatives are not included in the membership.

2.60 Information for students about the Centre regulations and procedures is available in programme handbooks and on the student intranet. The Centre provides guidance in programme handbooks to encourage student participation and guidance to staff on how to encourage student engagement.

2.61 Student feedback is obtained at the end of each academic year and at the end of each training weekend. Final year students are used to assist on some of the teaching weekends and at open events. The results of the annual student surveys are analysed and reviewed by the SMT, Heads of Year/Course and individual tutors.

2.62 The arrangements in place to engage students in the quality assurance of their programme would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.63 The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of a range of documentation. The team also held meetings with students, teaching and professional support staff (including a member of staff from the University), and senior staff from the Centre.

2.64 Students confirm full engagement with the Centre; however, they express some concern that although they are members of the University, they have no right of access to University resources, do not receive a University ID card or become members of the University Student Union. Students confirmed, however, that they were made aware of this situation prior to admission.

2.65 The Board of Study is the forum for discussing the operation of programmes. The minutes of meetings show that there is full student participation and that a wide variety of issues concerning the quality of learning opportunities are discussed. Training needs for student representatives are discussed at Boards of Study. Training material sourced from the University is used to train student representatives; however, students found these to be inappropriate for students who are studying part-time at the Centre.

2.66 An extensive survey and evaluation of students demonstrates a very positive view of the quality of the teaching and learning provided at the Centre. Students confirmed that surveys results are discussed at the Boards of Study, and are also uploaded to the student intranet. External examiner reports are discussed with student representatives at the Boards of Study and all students have access to the reports on the Centre's intranet.

2.67 Although students were not formally involved in the design of current programmes, the Centre plans to include them in any future programme developments.

2.68 The Centre is extending its committee structure to include a Quality Committee, which will include students in its membership. The Quality Committee will develop, consider and track an overall Quality Action Plan arising from quality assurance and enhancement actions identified at the Training Committee and Boards of Study and through annual monitoring and external review. The Quality Committee will be charged with identifying good practice and supporting its dissemination. The review team understood from meetings that the existing committees will report to the Quality Committee on all issues relating to the quality of student learning opportunities, except where it would not be appropriate (for example, issues relating to individual students), giving it an overarching role. The review team makes a recommendation in Expectation B8 that the Centre fully implement an overarching Quality Committee, which includes students in its membership.

2.69 The Centre engages students individually and collectively in the quality assurance of their academic experience. The recommendation in Expectation B8, relating to the implementation of the overarching Quality Committee, which includes students in its membership, will further enhance the arrangements for engaging students. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.70 The University devolves responsibility to the Centre for setting assessments, for marking, moderation, and for giving feedback to students. Assessment regulations are adapted from the University's regulations and then approved by the University at validation. The procedures used are specified in the University Code of Assessment Practice.

2.71 Assessment at the Centre is a continuous process, combining both formal summative and informal formative elements. Learning outcomes and their assessment are provided in programme specifications, contained within programme handbooks, which form part of the documentation considered during the University validation process. Assessments on all programmes include written assignments, live assessments, self and peer assessments, and tutor feedback.

2.72 Assessment boards are held at the Centre, chaired by the Director of the Minster Centre, and include the University Link Tutor and external examiner.

2.73 An APEL policy and procedure has been agreed with the University which enables a student to submit for Recognition of Prior Learning. Students cannot apply for APEL of more than two-thirds of the credits of the programme.

2.74 The Centre's processes and procedures for assessment and APEL would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.75 The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of a range of documentation. The team also held meetings with students, teaching and professional support staff (including a member of staff from the University), and senior staff from the Centre.

2.76 The process for assessing students is effective. Assessment information is contained in the programme handbooks and in the Aids to Study handbook which provide guidance. Students confirmed that assessments and assessment criteria are clearly explained to them. Students confirmed annual assessment schedules are made available before the start of the academic year, enabling them to plan and read ahead during the summer break.

2.77 Assessments are set and marked by each tutor, a moderator then samples the marked work and provides a written report which is submitted to the external examiner. Moderator reports seen by the team contain detailed comments and evidence effective processes for dealing with cases where moderators do not agree with the first marker.

2.78 Assessment boards are conducted under University regulations and are held at the Centre chaired by the Centre Director. Assessment boards consider the results of module assessments for both progression and awards. It is a University requirement that both the external examiner and University Link Tutor are present at, and sign outcomes of, all assessment boards. Detailed minutes are recorded, which include the comments made by

the external examiner and University Link Tutor. The University Link Tutor is then responsible for conveying the results to the University's Centre for Academic Partnerships. External examiners have confirmed their satisfaction with the assessment process.

2.79 Students confirmed that tutors and the Librarian are accessible and provide support to assist students to improve assessment submissions. Tutorials are available to discuss draft assignments on request. Assessments are submitted in hard copy and via email, with feedback provided by email.

2.80 The Centre has not received an application for recognition of prior learning for credit against the assessed elements of the programme since the current programmes were validated. Students who can provide proof of recent clinical practice can be credited with the hours up to the required 450 hours to meet the professional body element of the programme.

2.81 The Centre operates reliable procedures for assessment, and there is oversight and management by a University-appointed external examiner and by the University Link Tutor. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

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

### **Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining**

#### **Findings**

2.82 The University appoints an external examiner for validated programmes being delivered at the Centre. The agreement with the University requires the Centre to nominate a suitable external examiner by completing a University form which is evaluated by the University Quality Enhancement Manager. Final approval of external examiner nominations is the responsibility of the University Academic Quality Service and the Deputy Dean of School.

2.83 The role and responsibilities of the external examiners are set out in Section D of the University's Regulations. External examiners are required to attend all assessment boards. At the conclusion of assessment boards external examiners produce a report on a University pro forma. External examiners are required to attend a training session at the University in preparation for their role. A summary of external examiners' reports is provided to the Board of Trustees.

2.84 The arrangements in place for external examining allow the Expectation to be met.

2.85 The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of a range of documentation. The team also held meetings with students, teaching and professional support staff (including a member of staff from the University), and senior staff from the Centre.

2.86 The appointment and duties of external examiners are set out in University regulations for validated programmes. Programme handbooks and the Aids to Study are made available to the external examiner. All assessments, submissions and resubmissions are available for viewing by the external examiner in advance of an assessment board. The examiner is required to look at all fails, all distinctions, a range of grades in between, and all resubmissions. They also have access to all the moderator's reports. The external examiner can request further information and is required to approve any changes made to modules or programmes.

2.87 External examiners attend assessment boards and produce a pro forma report for the University that includes comments on each element of the assessment process. The report is sent to the University Link Tutor and Deputy Dean of School. The Centre and the University Link Tutor provide a response to the external examiner reports. Individual reports would only be considered at a University committee if there were specific issues or concerns.

2.88 Centre Boards of Study and Training Committee receive and discuss external examiner reports. Reports are also considered as part of the evidence for preparing AMRs for the University. External examiner reports have recently been made available to students on the Intranet.

2.89 The Centre's adherence to the procedures of the University and the oversight by the University Link Tutor and the University Academic Quality Service ensures that scrupulous use is made of external examiners. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.90 The SMT is responsible for the monitoring aspects of all programmes, including the curricula, modules, teaching, staff recruitment, and marketing for student recruitment. Annual monitoring and review of the Centre is shared with the University. The Centre is responsible for reviewing all aspects of the programmes and for the production of AMRs for the University.

2.91 In line with University regulations, periodic monitoring and review of programmes is carried out by the University every six years. The University also carries out an institutional approval event every five years. In addition, professional body accreditation takes place every five years.

2.92 The Centre's arrangement for monitoring programmes, and the operation of the University's requirements for periodic review and annual monitoring, would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.93 The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of a range of documentation. The team also held meetings with students, teaching and professional support staff (including a member of staff from the University), and senior staff from the Centre.

2.94 Annual monitoring satisfies the requirements of the University as the awarding body. The most recent University review and validation in 2014 obtained successful outcomes. Conditions set by the validation panel were met and signed off by the University. The University also carries out an institutional approval event every five years and following the event in 2015 a new Partnership Agreement was signed.

2.95 Professional body monitoring takes place every five years and the detailed and wide-ranging report of the latest review in 2012 commented on the 'high standards and quality of the training being delivered'.

2.96 Programmes are monitored by the Centre Training Committee whose terms of reference include a duty to assess, assure and enhance the quality of training. AMRs are prepared by the Centre Link Tutor using University templates to conform to University regulations. Evidence for the reports is obtained from data on recruitment and retention, progression, achievement, student feedback and external examiner reports. AMRs are discussed at Boards of Study meetings before being submitted to the University.

2.97 AMRs seen by the team are comprehensive and contain commentary on recruitment, progression, curriculum developments, learning, teaching and assessment, resources, student support and quality management. A rolling action plan is produced and updated.

2.98 Currently the Centre does not have an overarching committee which considers issues arising from annual monitoring, quality assurance and enhancement actions identified at the Training Committee, issues raised at Boards of Study or matters arising from external reviews. The Centre has recognised the need to extend its committee structure to include a Quality Committee which will be used to develop, consider and track an overall Quality

Action Plan to enhance the programmes. The proposed Quality Committee will be charged with identifying good practice and supporting its dissemination. The review team understood from meetings that the existing committees will report into the proposed Quality Committee on all issues relating to the quality of student learning opportunities. The review team **recommends** the Centre fully implement an overarching quality committee, which includes students in its membership.

2.99 The internal process together with oversight and approval of programme monitoring and review by the University ensure that there are effective, regular and systematic processes for monitoring of programmes. The recommendation in this Expectation relates to a need for action which the Centre has already acknowledged. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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



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

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

**Findings**

2.100 Under the agreement with the University, the Centre operates its own procedures for academic appeals, academic misconduct, student grievance and complaints. The procedures are set out in programme handbooks with further information available on the student intranet.

2.101 The Student Grievance and Complaints Policy is a formal three-stage process which does not cover academic appeals. Appeals against academic decisions are set out in programme handbooks. If the Centre's complaints or appeals procedure is exhausted, students who remain dissatisfied are able to use the University procedures. The Centre also subscribes to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator. Complaints and appeals are recorded in the AMR to the University and form part of the evidence to be considered in preparing the report. The Centre operates an admission complaints procedure.

2.102 The arrangements in place for handling academic appeals and student complaints would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.103 The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of a range of documentation. The team also held meetings with students, teaching and professional support staff (including a member of staff from the University), and senior staff from the Centre.

2.104 The Centre last considered a formal complaint in 2014, which was from a student in professional training and not on a programme of higher education. The complaint led to a discussion of the process at a meeting of the Training Committee and a more simplified process was established. The Centre confirmed there have not been any formal complaints or academic appeals since 2014.

2.105 Students confirmed that they were aware of the procedures set out in the programme handbooks with further information available on the student intranet, and that they would know how to submit a complaint or appeal if they wished to do so.

2.106 The Centre has in place procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of learning opportunities, which are fair, accessible and timely; and the procedures allow for students to refer complaints or appeals to the University. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.107 Overall responsibility for placements sits within the Training Committee and ultimately with the Director of the Centre. Placements are overseen by one of the Centre's Deputy Directors supported by a placement and membership officer. Prior to any placement, the Centre requires that students obtain a 'Readiness to Practice Form' that has to be completed by the student and signed by the head of year or supervisor.

2.108 It is the students' responsibility to obtain their own external placements. Guidance on placements is included in programme handbooks. The Centre provides students with a list of approved placement organisations. If a student requests a placement not on the list, the Centre scrutinises the placement using a 'placement agreement form'. The form is designed to ensure students are in an environment conducive to their development.

2.109 External organisations that have provided placements are given the opportunity to feed back to the Centre on placements, including the clinical readiness of students and information on whom to contact should they have concerns about a student on placement.

2.110 Students on the MA Integrative Psychotherapy and Counselling undertake a Mental Health Familiarisation Placement (MHFP), usually completed in the final year of training.

2.111 At the end of their placement, students complete a placement closure form. This allows the Centre to assess the student's experience of the placement.

2.112 Placement guidance is provided for students and a number of processes and procedures are in place that enable the Expectation to be met.

2.113 The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of a range of documentation. The team also held meetings with students, teaching and professional support staff (including a member of staff from the University), and senior staff.

2.114 The MA Integrative Psychotherapy and Counselling, the MA currently operating, requires students to undertake 450 hours of supervised clinical practice to meet PSRB requirements. These hours are not credit-bearing in themselves; however, work with training clients undertaken during those hours is brought to internal supervision, which contributes to the assessment of the modules. Students are required to complete the hours before or during study to be awarded their MA.

2.115 The mental health familiarisation placement is not aligned to a credit-rated module but is a requirement of the PSRB. The Centre Director, who sits on the training committee of one of the PSRBs, described the nationwide issues facing students in trying to find such placements. The Centre is considering other ways in which students can gain information about mental health conditions about which they can write a reflective piece. Any changes would need to meet the PSRB requirements and be taken through a minor modification process with the University.

2.116 Students confirmed that they were aware on application that they would have to find their own placements. This is standard practice across the sector for the professional

qualification which was confirmed by a clinical practice provider. The Centre provides details of opportunities via email and fliers. There is also a presentation by the placement and membership officer to support the finding of placements.

2.117 The Centre holds a database of placement providers. The review team heard that the Centre is developing its database further to bring together information including hours completed and feedback. It will also draw upon the placement closure form, which asks students if they would recommend the placement to other students.

2.118 Staff and students confirmed the approval process for new placement providers. The placement approval form includes details of who to contact at the Centre if there are any concerns whilst on placement although the placement provider survey found that 50 per cent of placements were not clear who to contact if there were issues. The Deputy Director with responsibility for placements makes the final decision about suitability of new providers.

2.119 Students were positive about placements and the link between academic and practice work. They reported that the blend of experiential and academic is very valuable.

2.120 A placement provider survey was carried out in the last academic year enabling providers to submit feedback on their experience of working with the Centre. Placement providers the review team spoke to were positive about the students they had received from the Centre. Senior staff recognise that the mental health familiarisation placement providers had not responded in great numbers to the survey.

2.121 The review team scrutinised all the documentation provided relating to the mental health familiarisation placement. Students and placement providers were clear about the processes but the team found that not all examples of placement closure forms had been signed. Senior staff recognised that some formalisation of this process was needed. Staff and students were clear that this was a requirement and that students would not be able to gain their MA without all relevant paperwork being completed for the mental health familiarisation placement.

2.122 The team discussed with senior staff the requirements of DBS as an entry requirement and the ongoing monitoring (as recorded in Expectation B2). Senior staff outlined the Centre's process including that the placement and management officer is trained to carry out DBS checks.

2.123 The review team was told that students usually have to provide information about the training they are undertaking, and their progress, to obtain placements. Students are able to draw this information from handbooks as necessary. Students have asked the Centre to provide a letter to placement providers explaining the purpose of placement, and the Centre is taking this request forward. The review team **recommends** that the Centre produce a definitive document which sets out placement requirements, expectations and responsibilities of all stakeholders.

2.124 The review team found that there are systems and processes in place which ensure that students and placement providers report positive experiences. The Centre does, however, need to amend or update details in its documentation. These amendments, which do not need major structural, operational or procedural change, will ensure that arrangements for delivering learning opportunities within placements are implemented securely and managed effectively. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

### **Findings**

2.125 The Centre does not offer research degrees therefore this Expectation is not applicable.

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

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

2.127 All of the 10 applicable Expectations in this judgement area are met and all are judged to be of low risk. The team identified two areas of good practice in the Centre's approach to the management of learning opportunities. These were the care taken in the admissions process, which ensures that the Centre recruits with integrity and that students have the qualities and motivation to succeed on their programme, and the strategic approach to the employment of professional practitioners whose teaching is informed by experience and research.

2.128 There are four recommendations in this judgement area: that the Centre should ensure that information for applicants details the entirety of the entry requirements; that the Centre should produce a definitive document which sets out placement requirements, expectations and responsibilities for all stakeholders; that the Centre should fully implement the proposed overarching Quality Committee, which includes students in its membership and that the Centre should fully document the revised internal process for programme design and development, which involves all stakeholders.

2.129 The review team concludes that the quality of learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

### 3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

#### Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

##### Findings

3.1 The Centre's website contains information about its ethos and details of the training and services offered. Information on training includes programme details, entry requirements, application procedures, contacts and fees. Applicants are directed to the Admissions Officer. The current website is maintained and updated by the IT Officer, overseen by the SMT and the Registrar. The website is scheduled to be updated and rebranded. Extensive consultation with staff, current and previous students is being undertaken as part of the project. Open events are provided for prospective students. There are differentiated open days for specific programmes.

3.2 On commencing their studies students receive an induction which includes meetings with administrative and finance staff and their heads of year. Students have access to the Centre's intranet that includes information on procedures, including appeals and complaints, Boards of Study minutes and learning resources. Specific programme information, including programme handbooks and an Aids to Study handbook provide information about the expectations of students, information about clinical work and placements, and a calendar with all key dates. Key documents are updated annually. Following an assessment board at the Centre, students are provided with degree certificates by the University.

3.3 The approach to the production and updating of information would allow the Expectation to be met.

3.4 The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of a range of documentation. The team also held meetings with students, teaching and professional support staff (including a member of staff from the University), and senior staff from the Centre.

3.5 The Centre recognises that the website needs updating and has set up a project group to carry out this activity. Staff outlined how, once a structure has been identified they will be reviewing the information provided and the current processes and procedures for signing off information. However, the review team heard that the new website is currently at the development stage and the timescale for completion could not be confirmed. Senior staff did recognise the need to ensure their website and other public information is updated, and have identified that staff training for the Centre team on relevant legislation and guidance will need to be provided to support this work. The review team noted that in some cases information had been specifically written for the website rather than providing links to relevant external information (for example in relation to disabled student allowance), which means that the relevant pages need to be reviewed regularly to ensure that the information remains current. The review team **recommends** that the Centre develop and implement a formal strategy for the production and approval of public information, ensuring that information reflects current legislation and CMA guidance.

3.6 Senior staff also accepted that there is a need for some work on the website, prior to its redesign, to ensure potential students are fully aware of programme requirements, for example entry requirements including DBS and full requirements for programme completion. This led to the recommendation in Expectation B2, that the Centre should ensure that information for applicants details the entirety of the entry requirements.

3.7 Students reported that the information provided about their programme at recruitment events was helpful and accurate. They were aware of their status in terms of their relationship with the University and that they would have to find their own placements. Students felt the information they received was thorough and that their experience was everything they had expected it to be.

3.8 Students spoke highly of the information, post enrolment, provided in handbooks and on the intranet. They also reported that staff at the Centre were supportive in providing information on a variety of areas including finance and registration and admissions.

3.9 Changes to the programmes are communicated through programme handbooks which are updated annually. Boards of Study discuss student feedback and actions to be taken as a result. Any changes or actions are disseminated through student representatives and minutes are placed on the intranet. The Centre has also reinstated a newsletter for students to support with dissemination of changes.

3.10 Staff are aware of changes through the Centre's Training Committees, staff meetings and through the head of year. Staff meetings include sessional staff and staff who deliver at weekends.

3.11 The current students are positive about the information they received prior to their programmes and since they have enrolled, finding it fit for purpose and accurate. The Expectation is met. The level of risk is moderate as there is a need to develop and implement a formal strategy for the production and approval of public information.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Moderate**

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

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

3.13 The Centre has in place mechanisms to ensure that the information it produces relating to its higher education programmes is fit for purpose and reliable. However, the review team noted the need for the Centre to work on its website and to ensure that the website and other public information is updated and that staff are trained on relevant legislation and guidance. The review team therefore made one recommendation, that the Centre develop and implement a formal strategy for the production and approval of public information, ensuring that information reflects current legislation and CMA guidance.

3.14 The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate as there is a need to develop and implement a formal strategy for the production and approval of public information.

3.15 There are no affirmations associated with this judgement area and no areas of good practice.

3.16 The review team finds that the quality of the Centre's information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.



## 4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

### Findings

4.1 The Centre has a strategic objective to ensure that the quality of all Centre programmes is assured and enhanced. There is a requirement for the Director to report back to the Board of Trustees on this objective. The maintenance and enhancement of all the training programmes offered is recognised as central to the activities of the Centre and a responsibility of the Board of Trustees.

4.2 Student evaluations, together with regular formal and informal meetings with students, are used to identify steps required to improve learning opportunities. Heads of Year take an overview of all elements of programmes, including feeding into quality assurance and enhancement.

4.3 The formal and informal processes for enhancement of learning opportunities would allow the Expectation to be met.

4.4 The team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of a range of documentation. The team also held meetings with students, teaching and professional support staff (including a member of staff from the University), and senior staff from the Centre.

4.5 Enhancement has not been separately defined by the Centre. Terms of reference for Boards of Study include 'To promote effective systems of quality assurance and enhancement within the programme(s) and spread good practice'. The terms of reference for the proposed Quality Committee include development, consideration and tracking of an overall Quality Action Plan for the Centre arising from quality assurance and enhancement actions agreed by Training Committees, Board of Studies, AMRs, internal projects and external reviews; and identifying good practice and supporting its dissemination.

4.6 From the initial evidence supplied the review team was unable to identify that deliberate and documented steps were taken by the Centre to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities. Following a request for further evidence the Centre provided the team with examples of enhancements made during the previous two academic years. The team felt many of these would have improved the student learning experience and this view was confirmed during discussions with staff and students. The Centre has systems to identify and disseminate good practice and makes use of review mechanisms to identify opportunities for improvement. The Centre has recognised the need to consider how it approaches enhancement in a more formal way, and particularly how it includes students in this process; however, at the time of the visit a formal process had not been established. Therefore, the review team **recommends** the Centre formalise procedures for ensuring that deliberate steps are taken to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities.

4.7 The review team concludes that the current process enables the Expectation to be met. However, as there is a need to formalise procedures for ensuring that deliberate steps are taken to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities the associated risk is moderate.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Moderate**

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

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

4.9 There are no areas of good practice. There is one recommendation, that the Centre should formalise procedures for ensuring that deliberate steps are taken to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities.

4.10 The Centre has systems to identify and disseminate good practice and makes use of review mechanisms to identify opportunities for improvement. A range of enhancement initiatives is ongoing. The review team concludes that the Centre is making progress to fully develop a strategic approach to enhancement, but that there is a need to formalise the processes.

4.11 There is one Expectation in this judgement area, which is met. As there is a need to formalise procedures for ensuring that deliberate steps are taken to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities, the level of risk is moderate.

4.12 The review team finds that the Centre's approach to the enhancement of learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

## Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Definitions of key operational terms are also given on pages 21-24 of the [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\) handbook](#).

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

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

### Academic standards

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

### Award

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

### Awarding organisation

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

### Blended learning

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

### Credit(s)

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

### Degree-awarding body

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

### Distance learning

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

### Dual award or double award

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

### e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning

### **Enhancement**

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

### **Expectations**

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

### **Flexible and distributed learning**

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

### **Framework**

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

### **Framework for higher education qualifications**

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

### **Good practice**

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

### **Learning opportunities**

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

### **Learning outcomes**

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

### **Multiple awards**

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

### **Operational definition**

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

### **Programme (of study)**

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

**Programme specifications**

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

**Quality Code**

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

**Reference points**

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

**Self-evaluation document**

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

**Subject Benchmark Statement**

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

**Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)**

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

**Threshold academic standard**

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

**Virtual learning environment (VLE)**

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

**Widening participation**

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

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