



# Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) of Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd (Study Group UK)

## Liverpool John Moores University International Study Centre

May 2016

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## About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Liverpool John Moores University International Study Centre. The review took place from 19 to 20 May 2016 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Mrs Catherine Fairhurst
- Dr Sylvia Hargreaves.

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Liverpool John Moores International Study Centre and to make judgements as to whether or not its academic standards and quality meet UK expectations. These expectations are the statements in the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) (the Quality Code)<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 (Embedded Colleges) 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
- provides a commentary on the enhancement of student learning opportunities
- provides a commentary on the selected theme
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice
- affirms action that the embedded college is taking or plans to take.

In Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) there is also a check on Study Group's financial sustainability, management and governance (FSMG). This check has the aim of giving students reasonable confidence that they should not be at risk of being unable to complete their course as a result of financial failure of their education provider.

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. [Explanations of the findings](#) are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 4.

In reviewing Liverpool John Moores University International Study Centre the review team has also considered a theme selected for particular focus across higher education in England and Northern Ireland. The [themes](#) for the academic year 2015-16 are Digital Literacies and Student Employability,<sup>2</sup> and the provider is required to select, in consultation with student representatives, one of these themes to be explored through the review process.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.<sup>3</sup> A dedicated section explains the method for Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges).<sup>4</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> Higher Education Review themes: [www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=106](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=106)

<sup>3</sup> QAA website: [www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us).

<sup>4</sup> Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers): [www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight.aspx)

## Key findings

### QAA's judgements about Liverpool John Moores University International Study Centre

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Liverpool John Moores University International Study Centre (LJMUISC/the Centre).

- The maintenance of the academic standards of the awards offered on behalf of Study Group and LJMUISC's 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

### Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at Liverpool John Moores University International Study Centre.

- The sharing of good practice through peer-to-peer observations with another International Study Centres and University faculty staff (Expectation B3).
- The integration of educational visits into the student learning experience (Expectation B4).

### Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to Liverpool John Moores University International Study Centre.

By April 2017:

- ensure that definitive student progression data is clearly presented and analysed in annual programme monitoring reports (Expectations A3.3 and B8)
- work with the University to enable data on student progression at the University to be shared with the Centre (Expectations B4 and B8)
- ensure that Centre Review recommendations are fully incorporated into the action plan (Expectation B8).

### Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following actions that the Liverpool John Moores University International Study Centre is already taking to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to its students:

- the steps being taken to improve student achievement in English Skills for University Study (Expectation B4).

### Enhancement of student learning opportunities

The Centre documentation refers to a culture of enhancement within LJMUISC, demonstrated by staff and student contribution to Centre developments and by the systematic improvement of the provision through quality assurance processes. The team found various examples of enhancement activity, confirming this culture and evidencing the effectiveness of the Centre's drive for the continual improvement of the learner experience.

The close relationship between LJMUISC and the University supports and extends the enhancement agenda. The effectiveness of the relationship is manifested most recently in the collaborative working between the partners on major Centre enhancements within 'Project John Moores'.

### **Theme: Student Employability**

CareersAhead is the central employability enhancement initiative of the Study Group. This has been piloted at the Sussex International Study Centre. LJMUISC requires its Level 4 provision to contain a work-related theme within the curriculum and this is supported by the University's World of Work (WOW) programme. The International Year One engineering programme students undertake compulsory study trips, which are used as part of their assessment and enable them to achieve a bronze WOW award. Within Law modules, students attend the local courts. The strategic venture Project John Moores jointly conducted by LJMUISC and the University also features employability as a specific area to be developed and build on the existing good practice.

## **About Liverpool John Moores University International Study Centre**

Liverpool John Moores University International Study Centre (LJMUISC) was established in 2008. New contracts were signed in March 2014. An additional agreement was signed in 2015 for a new pre-master's programmes.

There is a Head of Centre and a Head of English. There are two permanent teaching staff on 0.5 and 0.75 contracts and nine sessional staff. There is one full-time and a one 0.8 administrative staff. There are 135 students.

There have been no significant changes since the last monitoring visit in 2015. In July 2015, a new Head of Centre came into post. The post-holder has since resigned and has been replaced by an interim Head of Centre, pending a permanent appointment to that post.

LJMUISC prioritises enhancing the student experience. This includes an emphasis on monitoring students and supporting their progression to the University. LJMUISC's current task is to work with the University to validate programmes in line with the University's new Academic Framework 2016-17 and the move to semesterisation and changes to credit values.

Since the Embedded Colleges Review for Educational Oversight in 2012, JMUISC has had two monitoring visits in June 2013 and May 2015. Both resulted in commendable outcomes. As such there are no outstanding issues to be addressed.

## Explanation of the findings about Liverpool John Moores International Study Centre

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

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

**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 University has ultimate responsibility for the academic standards of the programmes, which are all validated by the University and subject to its quality assurance processes. University programme validation and revalidation procedures use relevant external reference points, including national qualifications frameworks, qualifications descriptors, Subject Benchmark Statements and national credit frameworks, to ensure that academic standards are set at the appropriate level and are consistent. External examiners, appointed by the University, are asked to confirm that the standards set for the awards are in accordance with relevant external reference points.

1.2 The design of the process would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.3 The review team examined the effectiveness of the practices and procedures by reviewing contractual, validation and other documentation including process and guidance documents, validation documents, programme specifications, and external examiner guidance and reports.

1.4 The review team examined documentation relating to the most recent validation event, for the pre-master's programme in Business, Management and Law, in 2014.

1.5 The validation panel, which included two external members from other higher education institutions, scrutinised the programme specification and other documentation and confirmed the use of external reference points in setting academic standards.

1.6 Programme specifications examined by the review team confirm that all LJMUISC's University-validated programmes are designed in accordance with national qualifications and credit frameworks; relevant Subject Benchmark Statements are referenced and programme learning outcomes positively defined.

1.7 External examiners confirm that the standards set for the awards are in accordance with relevant national qualifications frameworks and applicable Subject Benchmark Statements and that academic standards are comparable with those in other UK higher education institutions with which they are familiar.

1.8 Relevant external reference points are used to secure, and ensure consistency in, academic standards. 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**

1.9 LJMISC's programmes are validated by the Liverpool John Moores University (the University) which has responsibility for academic standards. The LJMUIISC operates within the university's policies and procedures, which are contained in Academic Policies and Regulations for collaborative provision, Academic Framework Undergraduate Regulations and the Regulations in Practice.

1.10 The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group (QAEG) chaired by the Head of Centre oversees academic standards and is responsible for the LJMUIISC action plan. QAEG has a standard agenda and submits minutes to Study Group's Regional Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group (RQAEG). The Study Group's AQAEC and CLEC provide a central framework for academic standards and operational functions. The University has oversight and supports this collaborative activity through the Operational Group (chaired by the University's Registrar and Deputy Chief Executive) and the Programme Development Group (chaired by the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education)). A Board of Studies is responsible for enhancement and reports to the University Faculty Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee. The Programme Team meeting of teaching staff oversees the operations and the curriculum across all the programmes. The LJMUIISC Handbook describes the governance structure and terms of reference for the committees.

1.11 The design of the process would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.12 The review team tested the expectation through scrutiny of the University contract, the Study Group and the LJMUIISC's quality documents, external examiner reports and discussions with the LJMUIISC's staff and students.

1.13 There are strong transparent governance structures and oversight by the University which enable LJMUIISC to balance its quality procedures with the University and the Study Group. At the Board of Studies, LJMUIISC staff and students and University link tutors consider key sets of data on student progression trends, student feedback, External examiners' feedback and the annual monitoring report. The QAEG oversees and manages the LJMUIISC Action Plan. The link tutors have a key role in LJMUIISC's close relationship with the University. They are members of the Board of Studies, Operational Group, Module Assessment Meetings and Assessment Boards. The AMR contains the link tutor's report to the Operational Group.

1.14 Students and staff confirmed to the review team that they understand the regulations and know they are in the handbooks and on the VLE. To ensure that academic frameworks are consistently and systematically applied they are monitored in the annual monitoring report and scrutinised in the Centre Review by Study Group. The external examiners' reports demonstrate that the academic frameworks are systematically and consistently applied to secure academic standards.

1.15 LJMUIISC, with its oversight by the University and by the use of the Study Group's structures, operates within transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and



regulations which secure academic standards. Therefore, 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**

1.16 The programme titles, progression criteria and admissions requirements are detailed in the agreement between the Study Group and the University. There are programme specifications on University templates for each programme (except for the English for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Studies programme which is on the Study Group template) as definitive records of the programmes. The Study Group maintains a central library of these documents, together with module and student handbooks.

1.17 The design of the process would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.18 In testing the Expectation, the review team evaluated programme specifications, module specifications and course handbooks reports from annual monitoring and LJMUISC reviews. The review team also met senior and teaching staff and students.

1.19 Programme specifications include educational aims, learning outcomes, programme structure, admissions criteria, the relationship to the FHEQ, student study support and methods of programme evaluation. The Student Programme Guides refer to these specifications. Module guides contain aims, learning outcomes, syllabuses, teaching policy, assessment timetables and assessment criteria. Teaching staff and internal and external examiners use these documents as a definitive record for delivery, assessment and monitoring and review. The records are updated when any amendments to the programme are made through the validation processes. In addition to the annual monitoring process, the documentation is reviewed routinely at the Study Group's centre review. Students whom the review team met were very aware that they could find details of their programme together with progression and assessment regulations in the Student Programme Guide and on the virtual learning environment (VLE).

1.20 The programme documentation provided by LJMUISC for the University and Study Group is of sufficient detail to be used as the reference point for the delivery and assessment of the LJMUISC's programmes. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is therefore 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**

1.21 All the programmes included in the current review are validated by the University and subject to the University's quality assurance processes. University programme validation and revalidation procedures are designed to ensure that academic standards are set at a level that meets UK threshold standards and are in accordance with its own academic framework and regulations. The processes, which incorporate appropriate externality, require scrutiny of the use of external reference points, including levels and relevant Subject Benchmark Statements, and examination of learning outcomes and assessment strategies. LJMUISC staff work closely with University staff in programme design. The University asks external examiners to confirm that standards are set at the appropriate level and that assessment processes measure student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the programmes.

1.22 The design of the process would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.23 The review team examined the effectiveness of the practices and procedures by reviewing contractual, validation and other documentation including University regulatory, process and guidance documents, external examiner reports and programme specifications. The team also held meetings with students, teaching and administrative staff, senior staff and University representatives.

1.24 The review team examined documentation relating to the most recent validation event, for the pre-master's programme in Business, Management and Law, in 2014. In approving the programme, the University panel, which included external advisers for relevant subject areas and English language, confirmed that appropriate standards were being set; that the programme content, including the learning outcomes and assessments, were written at Level 6; that programme specifications clearly indicated that the standards were set in line with the FHEQ level descriptors; and that it was clear what students must do to achieve their certificate. Proposed assessment schemes were clearly set out and related to the proposed learning outcomes; marking and moderation would be in line with the University's academic framework and regulations. The external advisers confirmed that the programme aims and learning outcomes were linked and appropriate to the programmes and level.

1.25 Programme specifications reference relevant national qualification levels and Subject Benchmark Statements. External examiner reports confirm that academic standards are set at a level that meets relevant UK threshold standards, and are comparable with those in other UK higher education institutions with which they are familiar, and that assessment processes are used effectively to measure student achievement against the programme learning outcomes.

1.26 The University is moving towards semesterisation and has undertaken a strategic review of the curriculum. The LJMUISC programmes are to be submitted for revalidation this year to align with the University Academic Framework for 2016-17. The programme design project, undertaken by Centre staff in consultation with university link tutors and LJMUISC students, was led by an external consultant with associated subject discipline expertise who

had worked with the Sussex centre on programme design, assisted by a member of the Sussex ISC teaching team. Teaching staff, who were closely involved with the project and whom the review team met, had a clear understanding of external reference points and credit frameworks. They had applied this, in particular, in designing programme structure to reflect changes to credit ratings and to ensure that learning outcomes mapped to the learning outcomes of the relevant University degree programmes.

1.27 The programme approval processes ensure that academic standards are set at the appropriate level. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

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

**Findings**

1.28 The programmes at the LJMUISC are validated by the University. All programmes are aligned with the University's validation process, which considers learning outcomes and their assessment. The regulations specifically state that the purpose of assessment is to enable students to demonstrate that they have fulfilled the objectives of their programme. The LJMUISC is responsible for the design, conduct and marking of all assessments.

1.29 The Assessment Boards are chaired, managed and serviced by the University. Prior to the Progression/Awards Boards, the LJMUISC holds Module Assessment meetings to consider module performance, extenuating circumstances, academic misconduct and grades accuracy. The University provides guidance on extenuating circumstances.

1.30 The design of the process would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.31 To test the Expectation the review team considered a range of evidence including assessment regulations, student and course handbooks and external examiners' reports, met staff responsible for assessment and oversight, and met students.

1.32 Module handbooks clearly specify aims, learning outcomes, syllabus, learning outcomes mapped to mode of assessment and the assessment weighting.

1.33 Teaching staff confirm that their assessments are reviewed and verified before being issued. The verifier completes a template to agree that the assessment is appropriate for the level of study, has the correct weighting and is in accordance with the module descriptor. External examiners receive the draft examination papers for approval. External examiners commend the teaching teams for the rigorous internal moderation.

1.34 A senior member of the University chairs the Progression/Awards Board which confirms a student's marks and is attended by the external examiners. Results from all assessments are uploaded to the University's student information management system.

1.35 Students say that they are well informed about assessment requirements by their tutors, the module handbooks and the Student Programme Guide. The Module Handbooks and the Student Programme Guides are available in hard copy and on the VLE. Teaching staff have received staff development on student assessment and have access to the University's continuous personal development programmes.

1.36 Students' achievement of their programmes' learning objectives is demonstrated through assessment. These decisions are reached through senior academic authority and at formally constituted assessment boards. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

1.37 All LJMUISC's programmes are validated by the University and subject to the University's quality assurance processes, including annual monitoring and revalidation. LJMUISC must also comply with Study Group's monitoring and review processes, comprising ongoing programme monitoring through Centre action plans (CAPs), annual monitoring and Centre Review.

1.38 Under Study Group's processes, monitoring at LJMUISC level, recorded in AMRs, draws on module and programme review. Academic standards matters are addressed through the presentation and analysis of student progression, achievement and completion data, and analysis and commentary on external examiner reports. The processes require LJMUISC-level oversight of annual monitoring to be maintained through Centre QAEGs, which are tasked with receiving and scrutinising AMRs before submission to the relevant RQAEG. At the LJMUISC, the Board of Studies, established under university protocols, formally approves AMRs, which are also submitted to the University.

1.39 External examiners are asked to confirm that standards are set and maintained at the appropriate level and that assessment processes measure student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the programmes.

1.40 Centre Review is the process by which the Study Group seeks to assure itself that each ISC is effectively managing academic standards, managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities and publishing reliable information. Heads of Centre report directly to AQAEC regarding Centre Review outcomes and their responses.

1.41 CAP is designed to ensure the implementation of actions emanating from the review and monitoring of modules and programmes. The CAP, which is a live document recording continuous review, is monitored at Centre level by QAEG (as well as at regional and provider levels, respectively by RQAEG and AQAEC).

1.42 The design of the process would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.43 The team explored the effectiveness of the arrangements by examining contractual and other documentation including process documents; monitoring and review reports; the CAP; internal meeting minutes, papers, terms of reference and protocols; external examiner reports; and responses to external examiners. The team also held meetings with students, teaching and administrative staff, senior staff and University representatives.

1.44 The review team examined sample LJMUISC module review documentation and a range of LJMUISC AMRs for 2013-14 and 2014-15. This documentation evidenced appropriate collection and analysis of student achievement and progression data at module level. AMRs, which are produced as Foundation, International Year One and pre-master's reports, rather than as single, composite AMRs, are completed in University templates. The templates are pre-populated with University-sourced student completion and progression rates to the University. LJMUISC teams add their own sourced completion and progression

data, which is set out separately from the University data. The review team found significant inconsistencies between the two separate data sets in one particular AMR, and sought an explanation from senior staff. Following the visit, LJMUIISC confirmed that there was an error in these data. The review team concluded that the AMR in question failed to provide clear and definitive completion and progression data. The review team **recommends** that LJMUIISC ensures that definitive student progression data is clearly presented and analysed in annual programme monitoring reports.

1.45 AMRs address external examiner comments. While commentary on these is not extensive, formal responses to external examiners (together with the full reports) are appended to AMRs, and provide evidence of actions taken in response.

1.46 External examiner reports confirm that academic standards are set and maintained at a level that meets relevant UK threshold standards, and are comparable with those in other UK higher education institutions with which they are familiar, and that assessment processes are used effectively to measure student achievement against the programme learning outcomes.

1.47 The LJMUIISC Board of Studies, which includes student membership, receives and discusses external examiners' reports and discusses and formally approves AMRs. While meeting minutes indicate that QAEG does not receive AMRs directly, it exercises its responsibility for agreeing draft AMRs through receipt of reports from the Board of Studies, including confirmation that AMRs have been formally approved. There is evidence that all QAEG members have the opportunity to scrutinise AMRs, through their membership of the Board of Studies.

1.48 A Centre Review, conducted by the Study Group process in March 2015, examined LJMUIISC's management of academic standards. The panel made associated recommendations regarding the academic regulations, arrangements for external examiners to meet students, and assessment moderation systems. As required by the Study Group, the Head of Centre responded directly and fully to AQAEC, through the Study Group template, on the actions completed in response.

1.49 The CAP, which is discussed extensively at QAEG, provides evidence that standards-related issues (for instance on student progression rates and assessment moderation processes) are identified and that appropriate action is taken in response. However, the review team found that the CAP does not fully and demonstrably capture all the outcomes of Centre Review, leading to a recommendation to LJMUIISC (see also section B8, paragraph 2.77).

1.50 Processes for the monitoring and review of programmes explicitly address whether academic standards are maintained at the appropriate level. Overall, these processes are implemented effectively. The team makes one recommendation, to ensure that definitive student progression data is clearly presented and analysed in annual programme monitoring reports. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate because quality assurance procedures are broadly adequate, but there is a shortcoming in the presentation and analysis of progression data.

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

**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**

1.51 LJMUISC uses external academic members on programme (re)approval panels according to the university's procedures in order to ensure that threshold academic standards are set by reference to the national reference points. External examiners are appointed by the University to confirm that internal requirements are being consistently implemented.

1.52 Although the University validates the programmes, the faculty deans and link tutors contribute significant external expertise to LJMUISC. The Study Group also may provide a level of externality in the periodic Centre Reviews. The Terms of Reference of the Centre Review state the panel is composed of an external academic, the Head from another ISC and a Regional Director from another region.

1.53 The design of the process would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.54 The review team tested this Expectation by reviewing the University's and Study Group's regulations and policies and their application to programme validation reviews, external examiners' reports and minutes of meetings. The review team discussed arrangements for the involvement of external and independent expertise in meetings with staff.

1.55 The reports of the Approval Panels for the premaster's programmes and the pre-session English demonstrate the careful use that LJMUISC make of external involvement for programme approval. The Progression/Award Boards are chaired by the University and attended by the external examiners who give a verbal report and then submit a formal report on a University template. This enables them to confirm that academic standards are set, delivered and achieved. LJMUISC uses University link tutors systematically for external advice on academic standards. They produce a detailed annual report on the wide range of activities they have undertaken with LJMUISC.

1.56 LJMUISC has transparent arrangements to use external and independent expertise at key stages of setting and maintaining academic standards for its programmes. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met with an associated low level of risk.

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



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

1.57 In reaching its judgement about the maintenance of academic standards, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.58 LJMUISC effectively follows the requirements of the University to maintain academic standards. These processes are supported by LJMUISC's own internal procedures and guidance.

1.59 All seven of the Expectations in this area are met, and the level of associated risk is low in six Expectations and moderate in one. There is one recommendation to ensure that definitive student progression data is clearly presented and analysed in annual programme monitoring reports. The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered by itself and the University **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 and Approval**

#### **Findings**

2.1 As noted in section A3.1, paragraph 1.21, all the programmes included in the current review are validated by the University and subject to the University's quality assurance processes. University programme validation and revalidation processes, which incorporate appropriate externality, require scrutiny of arrangements to ensure the quality of student learning opportunities, addressing the curriculum, teaching and learning, learning resources, student support and guidance, and staffing. The processes draw on a broad evidence base, including a programme rationale document, programme specifications, module pro formas, student guides, and staff CVs, and incorporate panel meetings with partner staff and students.

2.2 LJMUISC staff work closely with University staff in programme design. Current provider processes require the approval of validation and revalidation documentation by the provider Programme Approval and Validation Committee (PAVC) before submission to the partner Higher Education Institution.

2.3 The design of the process would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.4 The team reviewed the effectiveness of the arrangements by examining contractual, programme validation and other documentation including University regulatory, process and guidance documents, programme specifications, and internal meeting minutes and terms of reference. The team also held meetings with students, teaching and administrative staff, senior staff and University representatives.

2.5 The review team examined documentation relating to the most recent validation event, for the premaster's programme in Business, Management and Law, in 2014. In approving the programme, the University panel, which included external advisers for relevant subject areas and English language, met with the programme team and senior managers. Although no students were available to meet them, the panel reviewed notes of internal meetings between LJMUISC staff and students. The panel approved the quality of the learning opportunities provided to students and confirmed the validity of the programme content in the light of developing knowledge in the discipline, practice in application and developments in teaching and learning. The panel noted that a variety of teaching and learning strategies were in place to support the development of the required skills, with a range of approaches including practical sessions, workshops, seminars and the use of the VLE. The panel took a tour of facilities, inspected learning resources, and scrutinised arrangements for staffing, staff development and mechanisms to ensure teaching quality, and found these to be appropriate to support effective learning.

2.6 Programme specifications, which are scrutinised and approved at validation, set out teaching, learning and assessment strategies and describe arrangements for assuring teaching quality, student support, student feedback, staff development and internal programme review.

2.7 LJMUISC's entire suite of University-validated programmes is to undergo a revalidation process this year (section A 3.1, paragraph 1.26). The programme design and development project, undertaken by LJMUISC staff working with link tutors and led by an external consultant, included consultation with students. The validation documentation has recently been submitted to the University, following formal approval by PAVC.

2.8 The processes for the approval of programmes, and LJMUISC arrangements for the design and development of programmes, work effectively to assure the quality of student learning opportunities. The team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

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

### **Quality Code, *Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission***

#### **Findings**

2.9 The contract between the Study Group and the University specifies the criteria for a students' entry onto a programme and the total target number. LJMUISC is responsible for ensuring students enrolling on a programme meet the entry requirements.

2.10 The recruitment, selection and admission of students is managed centrally by Study Group through an Admissions Centre located in Singapore and Brighton. This is a new process and will be reviewed after a full cycle has occurred. The Singapore office manages the application through to offer-issuing phases and the UK manages the confirmation to the students phase. Study Group's Admissions Policy describes the principles and structure of the central admissions function.

2.11 Trained admission staff assess all applications to ensure that they are academically qualified for the chosen course, their English test results meet the entry requirements, they conform to UK Visas and Immigration entry regulations, and references are checked. Any borderline exceptional cases outside the entry qualifications criteria are referred to the Head of Centre for a decision. There is a formal Admissions, Appeals and Complaints Policy.

2.12 The design of the process would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.13 In order to test this Expectation the review team examined the admissions policy, documentation and information on the website relating to admissions, and minutes of committees. The review team met senior staff as well as asking students about their admission experience.

2.14 The Admissions Policy provides a clear guide to the principles and policies and procedures for admissions. This enables admission processes to be conducted in a professional manner by authorised and competent staff. The selection processes are transparent with entry requirements maintained on centralised databases. The Admissions office refers prospective students to the LJMUISC information through a web link. The LJMISC website is accessible and provides an interactive online application form with clear admissions requirements including the equivalents in a wide range of countries.

2.15 LJMUISC works closely with the University's internal international admissions department and has access to a shared post who works with Study Group, LJMUISC and University admissions to refer students appropriately. The joint strategic Project John Moores enables the LJMUISC and University to work together on the recruitment and admission of students as well as their introduction to higher education.

2.16 New students receive comprehensive and helpful pre-arrival documents. On arrival, they have a diagnostic test which may indicate that they need further academic support. There is a comprehensive induction week when they are introduced to the LJMUISC, the university and the city of Liverpool. The students confirmed that these activities enable them to make a smooth transition from prospective student to current student.

2.17 The students confirmed that they had a smooth and efficient admissions experience. After their applications had been scrutinised, they were offered a place quickly and the review team were given examples of offers within a week.

2.18 LJMUISC has clear and comprehensive policies and procedures for the recruitment, selection and admission of students which adhere to the principles of fair admission and are applied transparently. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met with an associated low level of risk.

**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**

2.19 LJMUIISC's strategic approach to learning and teaching is not currently formalised in a single document but is manifest in centre-driven practical applications. These draw on teaching and learning approaches articulated in the handbook, programme-specific strategies and the CAP, such as the focus on professional skills development within the curriculum, the preparation of students for progression to the University, and the development of cross-institutional activity through peer review shared with the University and another centre. Study Group requires all centres to have learning and teaching strategies in place for 2016-17, and this item is incorporated into LJMUIISC's CAP.

2.20 There is a robust LJMUIISC staff appointments procedure. All teaching staff must be formally approved by the University before taking up appointment. Processes and support for staff appraisal, staff development; and peer and management review aim to ensure the ongoing quality of teaching are in place and set out in the staff and Centre handbooks, with associated templates. The VLE is used to support student learning, and although minimum requirements as to content are not formally documented, staff are clear about the LJMUIISC's expectations in this regard.

2.21 Ongoing monitoring through the CAP, the annual programme monitoring process (including student evaluation) and the Study Group's Centre Review process provide effective mechanisms for the systematic review of learning opportunities and their enhancement.

2.22 The design of the processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.23 The team reviewed the effectiveness of the arrangements by examining process documents, templates and other documentation including programme specifications, staff and student handbooks, link tutor reports and the CAP. It also viewed the VLE and held meetings with students, teaching and administrative staff, senior staff and University representatives.

2.24 These arrangements work effectively to support and enhance student learning opportunities. The appointment process is rigorous. New staff are appointed following an interview, a 'micro-teach' assessment (introduced recently and to be enhanced further with the addition of a student member to the observation panel), the provision of satisfactory references, and approval by the University. LJMUIISC provides a helpful induction and informal mentoring support from colleagues. Staff met by the review team confirmed the rigour of these processes and the helpfulness of the support provided.

2.25 Management teaching observation and staff appraisal systems, which have both developmental and performance management functions, operate in accordance with Centre requirements. Teaching staff are observed and appraised at least annually by the Head of Centre or Head of English. LJMUIISC also supports the professional development of staff through peer observation processes incorporating both internal and inter-institutional activity. Staff clearly valued, in particular, the opportunities provided to engage in peer observation

with staff from another centre and with University staff. Following the successful pilot of the scheme with University Business School staff, this activity is to be rolled out more widely to cover other subject areas. The sharing of good practice through peer-to-peer observations with another International Study Centre and University faculty staff is **good practice**.

2.26 Staff development opportunities are provided within the LJMUISC and from the Study Group. Staff have access to, and take up, staff development opportunities at the University and externally, including conference attendance funded by LJMUISC. A member of staff currently undertaking master's degree study was granted sabbatical leave and is receiving funding support from LJMUISC.

2.27 Students are satisfied with the quality of their learning opportunities. A variety of teaching, learning and assessment methods is used to enable them to acquire and demonstrate knowledge and academic and practical skills, including lectures, group problem-solving, presentations, and independent research. The VLE is used effectively by staff to support student learning, and provides access to a wide range of materials including programme specifications, module handbooks, teaching slides and notes, and assessment briefs.

2.28 In their submission for this review, students referred to changes in teaching staff which had occurred mid module and of the difficulty of readjustment to different tutors and teaching styles. Senior staff explained to the review team the unusual circumstances that had led to three tutors leaving within a short space of time. They outlined the action taken to mitigate the impact, namely swift replacement of staff, management observations of the newly appointed tutors and reassurance and information provided to students by the Head of Centre. Students whom the review team met confirmed that the situation had been handled well by LJMUISC, and that they had quickly adjusted to the staff changes.

2.29 Overall, LJMUISC keeps its learning opportunities and teaching practices under systematic review and development. LJMUISC learning and teaching intentions are understood by staff and applied in practice. Students confirm their satisfaction with the learning opportunities provided. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.30 In articulating its ethos and describing its culture, LJMUISC places the student experience in its entirety at the heart of its provision. Learning, teaching and support arrangements are focused on a curriculum and extracurricular activity that not only enable students to acquire the skills, knowledge and understanding to be successful in their degree studies, but also meet individual development needs. LJMUISC affirms the Study Group's commitment to equal opportunities and aims to create an environment that allows all who have the capability to benefit from studying at LJMUISC.

2.31 LJMUISC has in place arrangements for student induction and support; for monitoring student progression, and for preparing students for progression to the University and degree study. The curriculum and extracurricular activity are designed to provide students with the opportunity to develop academic, personal, practical and generic employability skills.

2.32 The design of the process would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.33 The team explored the effectiveness of the arrangements by examining contractual and other documentation including monitoring and review reports, student and staff handbooks, induction materials and student progress monitoring documentation. It also read the English review documentation and action planning and internal meeting minutes. The review team also held meetings with students, teaching and administrative staff, senior staff and University representatives.

2.34 Overall, the evidence demonstrates the arrangements to be effective in practice. Student induction for both January and September starters includes the provision of academic and welfare information, a tour of the city, a University library orientation and the opportunity to meet LJMUISC and University staff and enrol with the University. Students reported that the induction was helpful, and mentioned, in particular, their appreciation of the city tour.

2.35 Personal tutors, allocated to students at the beginning of the programme, operate a system of regular one-to-one meetings. Students confirmed that they take up the opportunity to sign up for these and found them helpful. Tutors are easily accessible in person or by email and respond quickly to individual student requests for one-to-one meetings. Students have full access to the University's student support and learning resources.

2.36 Tutors monitor student progress on an ongoing basis, and through the formal mechanisms of one-to-one mid-term and end-of-term reviews. The records of the discussion and outcomes, agreed between tutor and student and completed in a LJMUISC template, are reviewed by the Head of Centre. These records inform individual students' red/amber/green (RAG) ratings, which are recorded on the Centre's progress monitoring system and reported to Study Group. Within the Centre, tutors meet to discuss individual students' progress; completed or planned intervention strategies are recorded. There are clear disability and access policies and procedures, set out in the Centre Handbook and student handbooks. The team learned from senior staff of one case that had been handled appropriately in a previous year. There are no students with these specific needs currently enrolled on the programmes.



2.37 LJMUISC supports students in preparing for progression to the University and to degree study, through integration of independent learning and research skills into the curriculum; and the facilitation of student attendance at University lectures; talks from University staff; and engagement with the link tutor. Currently, LJMUISC does not receive University data on student achievement on their degree programmes. The review team **recommends** that LJMUISC works with the University to enable data on student progression at the University to be shared with the Centre.

2.38 Programme learning approaches incorporate a focus on the practical application of knowledge. This approach is clearly evidenced by the integration of educational visits into the student learning experience and (in some cases) assessment, through the articulation of visit aims and subject-specific programme learning outcomes. Students spoke with enthusiasm about these visits, which have included an engineering visit to the Mersey Tunnel, science visits to the Science Museum and a pharmaceutical company, and a business/law visit to the Crown Court. Students recognised, understood and appreciated the educational value of these learning opportunities. The integration of educational visits into the student learning experience is **good practice**.

2.39 Any additional individual learning support needs, identified by diagnostic Maths and English tests completed by students during induction, are addressed through the provision of extra classes. Students confirmed that, as appropriate, they take up and value this additional support.

2.40 Student achievement in English Skills for University Study (ESUS) in 2014-15, while showing some improvement from the previous year, was disappointing. The English Department conducted a review of ESUS provision, identified particular areas for improvement and put in place an extensive action plan, which is currently being implemented. The review team **affirms** the steps being taken by LJMUISC to improve student achievement in English Skills for University Study.

2.41 The respective responsibilities of LJMUISC and the University for learning resource provision are set out in the contract. The appropriateness and adequacy of LJMUISC's learning resources and facilities are checked by the University at validation and monitored by the joint University/LJMUISC Operational Group and through annual programme monitoring and Centre Review. Students are satisfied with the learning resources, and confirmed that they have full access to the University's student support and learning resources, including the library, and have sufficient computers and study space.

2.42 LJMUISC has arrangements in place to ensure that students are able to achieve their academic, personal and professional potential. 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**

2.43 LJMUISC has various mechanisms to engage students in the quality and enhancement of their educational experience. There is a well-established student representative system. The student voice is also heard through the Student Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC), student evaluation questionnaires and surveys. Student consultation forms part of programme design processes. The University's process for the upcoming revalidation of the Centre's programmes will be conducted by a panel that includes student membership. University programme validation processes and Study Group's Centre Review process incorporate panel meetings with students.

2.44 The design of the process would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.45 The team explored the effectiveness of the arrangements by examining a range of documentation including process documents, staff and student handbooks, validation documents, student representative training materials, internal meeting minutes, student module evaluation documentation, and annual programme reports. The team also viewed the VLE and held meetings with students, teaching and administrative staff, senior staff and University representatives.

2.46 Each teaching group has an elected student representative. Student representatives receive helpful training on their role from Centre staff and from the University Students' Union. They are members of, attend and participate fully in the Board of Studies, where annual programme reports and external examiner reports are presented and discussed. LJMUISC provides opportunities for student representatives to serve on QAEG, and recent QAEG minutes confirm student representative attendance. Student handbooks explain to students how they can contribute to the formal running of their programmes, and receive feedback on the outcome, through their representatives.

2.47 The SSLC is designed as a forum for student views to be sought and expressed. SSLC is chaired by the Head of Centre and its membership comprises student representatives, the LJMUISC management team, and teaching and administrative staff. Overall, SSLC meeting minutes examined by the review team provided evidence that student views are sought, their concerns are effectively addressed, and that staff feed back to them on actions taken. Board of Studies and SSLC minutes are available to students on the VLE.

2.48 Module evaluation questionnaires seek student feedback on the quality of teaching and of learning materials, the accessibility of tutors, the clarity of the assessment regulations, and the extent to which teaching has prepared them for university study. There was a low response rate at LJMUISC to the Study Group SPARK student survey, which was released during a vacation. Consequently, the results were less helpful than was anticipated. Annual programme monitoring reports comment on student evaluation and provide evidence of actions taken in response, such as improvements to the administration of student enrolment and additional exam practice and in-class tests.

2.49 Students are satisfied with the opportunities for student engagement. They confirmed that their voice is heard that staff respond, noting in particular that matters they

have raised have been included in the CAP, which student representatives had received by email in advance of the relevant Board of Studies meeting.

2.50 LJMUISC takes deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.51 LJMUISC's responsibilities for assessment include setting assessments, first marking of student work, moderation giving feedback to students on their work and responding to the external examiners' comments. The University appoints and guides the external examiners and chairs, manages and services the final Progression/Award Boards.

2.52 The University's Academic Framework and Regulations in Practice apply to all LJMUISC assessments.

2.53 The design of the process would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.54 The review team scrutinised relevant regulations, policy and strategy documents, minutes of meetings, minutes of annual monitoring, assessment panels and boards, and a range of link tutor and external examiner comments and reports. The team met staff and students and viewed an example of assessment-related information for students in programme guides and on the VLE.

2.55 LJMUISC operates effective processes for the assessment of students to enable them to demonstrate that they have achieved the learning outcomes. The processes are fully aligned with the university's assessment regulations. There is an Assessment Calendar so students and teaching staff are fully aware of the assessment deadlines for the academic year. The students are made aware about assignment deadlines at the start of their programme. All assessments are forwarded to the external examiners for comment and there are formal processes of internal moderation before assignment briefs are issued to students. The external examiners comment positively about the range of assessments used and the consistency within the moderation processes.

2.56 Students confirmed that feedback to them on their assessed work is timely, constructive and developmental. It is usually returned to them in two weeks, although the regulations stipulate within three weeks. They receive face-to-face feedback on their first piece of assessed work.

2.57 A Module Assessment Board, after external moderation, considers student and module performance, extenuating circumstances, academic misconduct and grades accuracy according to the University's regulations. The Progression/Awards Boards then formally determine the students' results. The link tutors and external examiners confirm the effective operation of these boards.

2.58 The Student Handbooks/Programme Guides contain detail about the assessment regulations and links to the University's full Academic Framework and Regulations. Students are introduced to the assessment regulations at induction and during English classes. They say they understand the regulations and know where to find the details. Student surveys show that guidelines are very clear. Students say that they understand how to avoid unacceptable academic practices and the penalties. They are provided with extensive advice

and guidance on plagiarism and referencing at induction and in taught modules. The students have access to plagiarism-detection software to support good academic practice.

2.59 LJMUISC operates assessment using robust procedures which are fully aligned to the University's regulations. These enable students to demonstrate they have achieved intended learning outcomes through equitable, valid and reliable processes. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met with an associated low risk.

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

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

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

#### **Findings**

2.60 The University, which has explicit policies and regulations, appoints three independent external examiners. The University also provides guidance for staff and for external examiners. External examiners attend the Award/Progression Boards where they report verbally. Their written reports on University templates are considered at the Board of Studies, which has student representation, and at programme team meetings. The Head of Centre responds formally by a written reply to their recommendations.

2.61 The external examiners' reports are appendices to the AMR and are submitted to the University Vice Chancellor's and the Quality Enhancement Office for consideration within the University processes. The Study Group has oversight through the reports' submission to its RQAEG and through the AMR submitted to QAEC for approval by the provider's AQAEC.

2.62 The design of the process would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.63 To test the Expectation the review team examined the University's policies and the LJMUISC's procedures, AMR reports, and external examiners' reports. The team also considered the Study Group's regulations and committee minutes. It met staff and students to establish the use made of external examiners by LJMUISC.

2.64 The LJMUISC uses the three external examiners to secure academic standards for the International Foundation programmes, the International Year One, the premasters Programmes and English for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Studies (EUPS). The reports are on University templates.

2.65 The appointment procedure and their reports demonstrate that they give impartial and independent advice, as well as informative comment on the assessment processes, the academic standards and on the achievement of students in relation to these standards. The reports show that external examiners receive appropriate information on assessment/ external examining procedures and practices, and assessment regulations from the University. Their reports also confirm that they have sufficient evidence to fulfil their role effectively and they receive appropriate responses to their suggestions/issues. The AMR and committee minutes show consideration of the external examiners' reports. The Students' Programme Guides describe the role of the external examiner and include their name, position and institution. The external examiners' reports are published on the VLE, although the students whom the review team met had not read them.

2.66 LJMUISC makes scrupulous use of external examiner reports. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.67 All LJMUISC's university-validated programmes are subject to the University's quality assurance processes, including annual programme monitoring (which incorporates link tutor annual reporting) and programme revalidation. Programmes and centres must also comply with the Study Group's monitoring and review processes, comprising ongoing programme monitoring through CAPs, annual monitoring and Centre Review.

2.68 Under Study Group processes, monitoring at LJMUISC, recorded in AMRs, clearly addresses the quality of student learning opportunities. Typically, AMRs cover learning, teaching and assessment, student support, feedback from students, staffing and staff development. Study Group requirements regarding Centre-level oversight of annual monitoring, and the role of the LJMUISC Board of Studies and QAEG in their implementation, are discussed in section A3.3.

2.69 Centre Review is the process by which the Study Group seeks to assure itself that each centre is effectively managing academic standards, managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities and publishing reliable information. Heads of Centre report directly to AQAEC regarding Centre Review outcomes and their responses.

2.70 The CAP is designed to ensure the implementation of actions emanating from the review and monitoring of modules and programmes. The CAP, which is a live document recording continuous review, is monitored at Centre level by QAEG (as well as at Regional and Study Group levels, respectively by RQAEG and AQAEC).

2.71 The design of the process would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.72 The team explored the effectiveness of the arrangements by examining process and other documentation including monitoring and review reports, the CAP and internal meeting minutes. The team also held meetings with students, teaching and administrative staff, senior staff and University representatives.

2.73 The review team examined sample LJMUISC module review documentation and a range of LJMUISC AMRs for 2013-14 and 2014-15. This documentation evidenced appropriate consideration of student learning opportunities, identification of areas for improvement, and actions taken or planned, at module level. AMRs, as well as addressing standards-related matters (section A3.3 paragraph 1.38), provide a reasonably full evaluation of student learning opportunities. They evaluate feedback from students, drawing on surveys, SSLC meetings and individual tutorials. AMRs identify emerging themes and issues and action taken. They also comment on staff development activity and mechanisms for ensuring teaching quality and evaluate resource provision; AMRs comment on liaison with link tutors and the University more generally. The reports provide feedback on action taken to address issues arising from the previous year's AMR. AMRs are informed by University link tutor annual reports, which are appended.

2.74 Currently, the LJMUISC does not receive University data on student achievement on their degree programmes (section B4, paragraph 2.37). The review team **recommends**

that the Centre work with the University to enable data on student progression at the University to be shared with the Centre.

2.75 As noted in section A3,3, paragraph 1.44, the review team found significant inconsistencies between the two separate data sets in one particular AMR and recommended that the LJMUISC ensure that definitive student progression data is clearly presented and analysed in annual programme monitoring reports.

2.76 A Centre Review, conducted under the Study Group process in March 2015, examined the LJMUISC's management and enhancement of the quality of student learning opportunities. The review included meetings with senior managers, academic and support staff, and University representatives. The panel did not meet students, who were on vacation at the date of the visit. The panel commended LJMUISC in a number of areas, including curriculum design, student support and staff development, and made recommendations concerning the student learning experience, including the timeliness of feedback to students. LJMUISC responded fully and effectively to the review outcomes. As required by the Study Group, the Head of Centre reported directly to QAEC, confirming the completion of actions to develop further the areas of good practice identified and to address the review panel's recommendations.

2.77 The CAP, together with its extensive scrutiny at QAEG, provides evidence of ongoing programme monitoring within the Centre. However, the review team found that the CAP does not fully and demonstrably capture and track progress on all the findings of Centre Review. The review team **recommends** that LJMUISC ensures that Centre Review recommendations are fully incorporated into the action plan. This will ensure that all recommendations are actioned and checked.

2.78 Overall, LJMUISC operates effective, regular and systematic processes for monitoring and review. The team concludes that 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**

2.79 The contract between Study Group and the University states that LJMUISC deals with student complaints proactively and in accordance with the University complaints and appeals procedures. All student academic appeals and academic misconduct appeals are subject to the University processes.

2.80 LJMUISC informs students about how to make a complaint through the programme guides and during induction by representatives from both the University Students' Union and welfare services. The University Student Governance can give further advice and Liverpool Students' Union operates an Advice Centre to provide confidential help and advice regarding complaints. The AMR template contains a section for reporting formal appeals and complaints with actions recorded at programme level.

2.81 The design of the process would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.82 To test the Expectation, the review team evaluated documents that describe the procedure for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of learning opportunities. The review team also met senior staff, teaching and support staff and students.

2.83 The complaints and appeals procedures are clear and time bound. The complaints procedure allows for early informal resolution at stage one with the head of LJMUISC. Grounds for academic appeal are also clearly described. The students' programme guides contain links not only to the University academic appeals and complaints procedure but also to the University Student Governance Office. Teaching staff are clear about the University's appeals and complaints procedures. Students were not so clear but knew that they could find information in the programme guides.

2.84 Students have opportunities to raise matters of concern without the risk of disadvantage and there are procedures that encourage constructive engagement with a fair, accessible and timely appeals process. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

2.85 In reaching its judgement about the quality of learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

2.86 All nine expectations are met with low levels of risk. LJMUISC has effective systems in place for programme approval, admissions, learning and teaching, student support, student engagement, assessment, programme review, complaints and appeals. There are two areas of good practice relating to peer observation of teaching and educational visits. There are three recommendations regarding the presentation analysis of student progression data, working with the University to share its progression data, and ensuring that Centre Review recommendations are incorporated into action plans.

2.87 The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at LJMUISC **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 Study Group requires each embedded college to produce or update annually centre documents, Centre handbooks, programme and module specifications and a Calendar of Business for the academic year and marketing brochure. The Academic Quality Handbook lists the documents that are required, together with templates. Regional Directors are responsible for reporting annually to QAEC that all documents are in place for each ISC in their region.

3.2 The marketing brochure contains information about the provision offered in that Centre, including details of programmes of study, the modules that comprise it, progression requirements and degree options and term dates. This information is collected with the cooperation and participation of the partner higher education institution and is managed centrally, by the Study Group Academic Manager.

3.3 The design of the process would allow the Expectation to be met.

3.4 In testing the Expectation, the review team evaluated a range of documents including handbooks and minutes of meetings demonstrating oversight, as well as the website and the VLE. The review team also met senior staff, teaching and support staff, and students.

3.5 Study Group, the LJMUISC and the University Corporate Communications Department review and revise annually the accuracy and the currency of the prospectus using specialist software. This ensures the information the students receive before entry is accurate.

3.6 The link from the University's website gives a comprehensive range of clear and accurate details about the International Foundation Year, the International Year One and the pre-master's programmes. This includes details including the process for application and admission to the programmes, information about English language support teaching, details to help prospective students select their pathway, fees and accommodation. It clearly states that students have to achieve the required grades to progress to the University. Students confirmed that they understood the progression requirements.

3.7 The VLE contains programme and module details. The students also receive this information in hard copy. Teaching staff upload their own module content onto the VLE and refresh it each year. This is coordinated by Heads of Subjects. There are currently no minimum expectations for this content but Study Group is in the process of developing these. The University link tutor reports on the accuracy of information given to students and the website annually.

3.8 The responsibilities for public information are clearly understood at LJMUISC. The students whom the review team met reported that they had been given accurate information at induction and during the programmes. They confirmed that this is useful, accessible and accurate.

3.9 LJMUISC produces clear and accurate information to prospective and current students. This enables them to select their programme with an understanding of the academic environment. LJMUISC, with the University and Study Group, has appropriate procedures in place to check that information is accurate. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

3.10 In reaching its judgement about the maintenance of academic standards, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

3.11 LJMUISC, working with the Study Group and the University, has effective systems in place to ensure that the information it produces is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

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

## 4 Commentary on the enhancement of student learning opportunities

4.1 The Centre's documentation refers to a culture of enhancement within LJMUISC, demonstrated by staff and student contribution to Centre developments and by the systematic improvement of the provision through quality assurance processes. The review team found various examples of enhancement activity, confirming this culture and evidencing the effectiveness of LJMUISC's drive for the continual improvement of the learner experience.

4.2 Some of these enhancements, such as the student progress monitoring system, the extension of student opportunities to experience the practical application of knowledge through educational visits, and the integration of employability modules into the curriculum, are already embedded within the provision, and discussed in sections B4 and Employability. Other enhancements, such as the actions being taken to improve English provision, also covered elsewhere in this report, are still in progress (see section B4, paragraph 2.40).

4.3 The close relationship between LJMUISC and the University supports and extends LJMUISC's enhancement agenda. The effectiveness of the relationship is manifested most recently in the collaborative working between the partners on major Centre enhancements within 'Project John Moores'. This project, agreed at the highest level between the University and Study Group, incorporates complete alignment with the University's strategic plan, and focuses on four key themes: student recruitment, product development, centre of choice and marketing. Phase 1 (student recruitment) is completed and the project is now progressing the 'centre of choice theme' for completion this year.

## 5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

### Findings

5.1 CareersAhead is the central employability enhancement initiative of Study Group. This has been piloted at the Sussex International Study Centre and enables students to develop a CV, a personal statement and a career development plan as well as being aware of the employment environment. Study Group intends to implement this across all the international study centres.

5.2 The University requires its Level 4 provision to contain a work-related theme within the curriculum and this is supported by the University's World of Work (WOW) programme. This is a structured personal development plan initiative and is widely commended by employers and other external bodies. The students studying the LJMUISC International Foundation programmes engage in enrichment activities that are vocationally focused. The modules also contain transferable skill components, such as report writing, presentations and group work.

5.3 The International Year 1 engineering programme students undertake compulsory study trips, for example to The Centre for Alternative Technologies, which are used as part of their assessment and enable them to achieve a bronze WOW award. Within law modules, students attend the local courts. The students met by the review team were very complimentary about the employability opportunities.

5.4 The strategic venture Project John Moores, jointly conducted by the Study Centre and the University, also features employability as a specific area to be developed and build on the existing good practice.

## 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 24-27 of the [Higher Education Review \(Embedded Colleges\) 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.

### 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

### Embedded college

Colleges, often operating as part of a network, that are embedded on or near the campuses of two or more UK higher education institutions (HEI) and that primarily provide preparatory programmes for higher education



### **Enhancement**

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

### **Expectations**

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

### **Flexible and distributed learning**

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

See also **distance learning**.

### **Framework**

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

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

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

### **Good practice**

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

### **Learning opportunities**

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

### **Learning outcomes**

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

### **Operational definition**

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

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

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

### **Programme specifications**

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

### **Public information**

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

### **Quality Code**

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

### **Reference points**

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

### **Subject Benchmark Statement**

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

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

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

### **Threshold academic standard**

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

### **Virtual learning environment (VLE)**

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

### **Widening participation**

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

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