



# Higher Education Review of Coventry University

February 2015

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## About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Coventry University. The review took place from 2 to 6 February 2015 and was conducted by a team of six reviewers, as follows:

- Professor John Baldock
- Ms Beatrice Ollerenshaw
- Professor Ian Robinson
- Dr Fiona Thompson
- Mr Howard White
- Ms Alyson Bird (student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Coventry University 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, 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
- provides a commentary on the selected theme
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice
- affirms action that the provider is taking or plans to take.

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. [Explanations of the findings](#) are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 6.

In reviewing Coventry University 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 2014-15 are Student Involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement 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](#)<sup>4</sup> and has links to the review handbook and other informative documents. For an explanation of terms see the [glossary](#) at the end of this report.

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<sup>1</sup> The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-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 web pages: [www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education/higher-education-review](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education/higher-education-review).

## Key findings

### QAA's judgements about Coventry University

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

- The setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards **meet** 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** at Coventry University.

- The contribution of the Library to the student learning experience through the provision of the Centre for Academic Writing, Sigma and the recent introduction of the Disruptive Media Lab (Expectation B3).
- The 'Promises' scheme which ensures that undergraduate students do not incur additional costs in the provision of core learning resources (Expectation B3).
- The comprehensive preparation of students for employment including the Add+Vantage modules (Expectation B4).
- The effective use of management information in the Course Quality, Enhancement and Monitoring process (Expectations B8 and C).
- The effective arrangements and comprehensive support for students undertaking professional placement opportunities (Expectation B10).
- The explicit link which the University establishes between internationalisation and the enhancement of student employability through outward mobility (Enhancement).

### Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to Coventry University.

By 1 July 2015:

- publish the current Admissions Policy on the websites of Coventry University College (CUC) and Coventry University London Campus (CULC) and create procedures to ensure that it is always publicly available (Expectations B2 and C)
- meet its obligations to make information regarding its collaborative partnerships publicly available for potential students and in so doing implement the recommendation of the QAA Collaborative Provision Audit 2009 to make publicly available an accurate register of its collaborative partnerships (Expectations C and B10).

By 1 September 2015:

- review the current variant regulations in partner institutions, address any issues of equity and ensure appropriate oversight by Academic Board of current and future approvals (Expectations A2.1, B1 and B6)
- ensure that the policy on the internal moderation of assessments is shared

- effectively with course teams and external examiners (Expectation B6)
- establish a mechanism for the central monitoring of academic reviews and appeals (Expectation B9)
- review the alignment of the typology of collaborative provision with the Quality Code to define more appropriately the University's contribution to the delivery of dual awards (Expectation B10)
- review the processes for the approval of partnerships to deliver co-tutelle research degrees to ensure that a proportionate due diligence process is always completed (Expectation B10).

By 1 December 2015:

- ensure effective processes are in place and documented to support consistent engagement by academic staff with the student representative system (Expectation B5)
- make explicit the procedures for monitoring the cumulative impact of changes to modules and programmes across all provision (Expectation B8).

### **Affirmation of action being taken**

The QAA review team **affirms** the following actions that Coventry University is already taking to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to its students.

- The action initiated in 2014 to meet the recommendation of the QAA Institutional Audit 2008 to clarify the delegation of authority between Academic Board and its subcommittees and strengthen the accountability and reporting arrangements (Expectation A2.1).
- The steps being taken to establish the Research Degrees Subcommittee planned for March 2015 so that it can undertake the responsibilities indicated in the draft terms of reference (Expectation B11).

### **Theme: Student Employability**

The University's approach to employability is founded in mission, its Strategic Plan and underpinning strategies including the Employment Strategy, as well as the close relationship with a range of employers, many of whom have a long association with the city, the University and its predecessor institutions. Employability skills in the form of graduate attributes are integral to the design of courses and to their review. The University has established a wide range of placements and volunteering which provide rich opportunities to further develop students' employability skills. Students are appreciative of employability-related initiatives embedded in their courses and extra-curricular opportunities.

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

## **About Coventry University**

Coventry University (the University) owes its origins to the establishment of the Coventry College of Design in 1843. Later successively renamed the Coventry School of Art, Municipal Art School and the College of Art, it was merged with the Lanchester College of Technology, itself opened in 1961 and the Rugby College of Engineering Technology to form Lanchester Polytechnic in 1971. The Polytechnic was incorporated in 1989 and became Coventry University in 1992.

The University describes itself as a forward-looking, modern university with a proud tradition as a provider of high-quality education and a focus on applied research. It has strong links with a wide range of local and international manufacturers and service providers. In its mission statement, the University states that it aspires to be 'a dynamic global enterprising university' and that it works in 'partnership with external organisations through our research and engages our students as partners in a community of learning'.

It opened a London campus - Coventry University's London campus (CULC) - in 2010 with a predominantly international student body. Coventry University College (CUC) was established on the Coventry campus in 2012, providing part-time professional courses. In the academic year 2013-14 student enrolments totalled 24,397 at its UK campuses. In the academic year 2013-14 enrolments totalled 24,397 across the three institutions which together form the Coventry University Group.

The University has an extensive range of collaborations and partnerships, both in the UK and in 16 overseas countries, managed by an Academic Partnerships Unit (APU).

In addition to the opening of CULC and CUC as noted above, major developments since the last QAA review include the establishment of the APU, and of CU Services (CUS) to support non-credit-bearing Continuing and Professional Development.

The University has addressed the majority of the recommendations of the QAA Institutional Audit in 2008 and Audit of Collaborative Provision in 2009 as well as those of other audits since the last QAA engagement. The review team noted that in some cases the response had been somewhat slow, particularly in respect of an advisory recommendation from the 2008 review requiring clarification of the role of the Academic Board and its delegation of authority (see Expectation A2.1).

## Explanation of the findings about Coventry University

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 setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards

**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* 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 established clear processes for the approval, monitoring and review of its academic provision both in its UK campuses and in other providers (see Expectation B10). The process guidelines explicitly point programme teams to the various national frameworks, qualification and Subject Benchmark Statements that define the national threshold academic standards, with which the University requires alignment.

1.2 For on-site provision, a Course Advisory and Approval Panel (CAAP) gives initial approval to develop new provision or to engage in the routine periodic review of existing programmes. Responsibility for the subsequent development of modules lies with the Faculty Board of Study which oversees their delivery, and finally a Review and Approval Panel (RAP) considers the detailed proposals. A RAP may hold a combined meeting with a Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB) if professional recognition is a necessary part of the approval process. RAPs have delegated authority from the University's Quality in Learning and Teaching Committee (QuiLT) to approve new academic programmes or the continuation of existing provision.

1.3 The University's Course Quality Enhancement and Monitoring (C-QEM) Process is designed to provide annual reassurance that on-site programmes are operating as planned. C-QEM embeds consideration of both a comprehensive data pack which summarises

student performance data and also reports from external examiners, and provides evidence to reassure that academic standards continue to be maintained.

1.4 Processes in Coventry University College (CUC) and Coventry University London Campus (CULC) adopt the same principles, and are broadly considered in the same manner as academic faculties within the University. The processes for considering arrangements for delivering programmes with other providers were equally well documented, and are considered in more detail elsewhere (see Expectation B10) in this report.

1.5 The review team explored the arrangements for ensuring that programmes were appropriately aligned with national threshold standards by scrutinising the University's processes for approval, monitoring and review; reading papers for and reports from validation and review events; reading a variety of annual monitoring reports and summaries; examining student handbooks, programme specifications, module specifications, and academic regulations; and meeting a range of staff from both Coventry and partner institutions who engaged with the various processes at different stages in the annual academic cycle.

1.6 The academic regulations and the guidelines for programme approval require programme teams to benchmark provision against the FHEQ, the national qualification and Subject Benchmark Statements, and any PSRB requirements and standards that apply. The Group Quality Unit (GQU) provides a number of supporting guidelines which assist programme teams in developing or reviewing their programmes. Documentation prepared for validation or review was thorough, and RAPs clearly gave detailed consideration to confirm that the standards defined within programmes and the associated programme specification aligned with national thresholds.

1.7 The data pack provided to a programme team to assist the preparation of its C-QEM is comprehensive, and provides robust evidence of student achievement to support the production of the detailed annual report. External examiners are formally asked to confirm the national comparability of academic standards, and do so in their annual reports. If the annual C-QEM process identifies matters that need early consideration, a formal process exists to consider changes to the programme to address them.

1.8 The robust institutional procedural guidance, requiring programme teams to benchmark against national standards, together with the detailed consideration given to the standards agenda in approval, monitoring and review exercises led the review team to conclude that Expectation A1 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 In addition to a broad range of General Regulations, the University, CUC and CULC have each developed comprehensive Academic Regulations which address Chapter A2 of the Quality Code. They are all readily available on the University's internet and intranet sites. The Academic Regulations specify among many other matters regulations governing admissions, assessment, assessment boards, progression, and classification of taught awards.

1.10 The Academic Regulations are reviewed regularly, and representatives from CU, CUC and CULC meet annually on a Regulations Away Day to consider changes that apply to all three institutions. Proposals are subsequently taken for approval to Academic Board.

1.11 The review team tested the University's arrangements for establishing transparent and comprehensive academic framework and regulations by scrutinising the University's General and Academic Regulations; reading papers from validation and review events which considered variant academic regulations; examining records of QuiLT and Academic Board at which Academic Regulations have been discussed; and meeting with a range of staff from both Coventry and partner institutions whose roles include close engagement with the Regulations.

1.12 The team found that the Academic Regulations of the University Group (CU, CUC and CULC) appeared, with a few exceptions, sound and robust, and properly addressed the appropriate aspects of the Quality Code.

1.13 The team explored the rationale behind the University, as the Group's authority for degree-awarding powers, creating three different sets of Academic Regulations. It was explained that the separate CUC and CULC regulations arose from the more focused mission and academic offering in those institutions. While comparing the different regulations it became apparent that the variant CUC and CULC regulations were largely a subset of the University regulations, principally reflecting operational rather than regulatory variation.

1.14 The annual Regulations Away Day prepares updates to the regulations for the Academic Board; formal consideration of updates to Academic Regulations had occurred throughout 2012-13 and 2013-14. Discussions with senior staff confirmed that a decision had been taken to reduce the differences to an absolute minimum, and that further updates were in hand to achieve this. The review team was therefore reassured that collaborative partners who had entered into relationships with two members of the Group will be unlikely to have differing academic regulations relating to their dealings with the University.

1.15 The review team was mindful of recommendations and observations from both QAA's 2009 Collaborative Provision Audit of the University and also its 2011 Audit of Overseas Provision in Singapore; both intimated the need to strengthen the University's arrangements for the approval and oversight of academic regulations relating to validated collaborative provision. The team was therefore interested to learn (see sections B6 and B10) that variant Academic Regulations, at least one giving academic advantage compared

to Coventry students, have been approved at CARP events for a number of collaborative programmes; indeed the terms of reference for a CARP appear to grant this authority.

1.16 CARP outcomes are reported to both QuiLT and the Standing Advisory Group on Collaborative Provision (SAGCP); the former in a formal oversight role, and the latter with an advisory remit. The team was unable to find records of any discussion of regulatory variations at QuiLT; the Committee simply accepting the Chair's action to accept the CARP validation report. Records of SAGCP indicate that the CARP events are simply noted; detailed papers are not circulated. The opportunity for institutional oversight is routinely missed at both QuiLT and SAGCP.

1.17 The Academic Regulations include a principle that regulations are subject to approval by the Academic Board itself. While they also acknowledge the occasional need for variant course-based regulations, neither the regulations themselves nor the terms of reference for Academic Board indicate that such approval may be delegated. It became clear in discussions with staff that the University Registrar and Secretary insisted on exercising personal executive authority to scrutinise and agree variations. However, despite the fact that she is a member of both QuiLT and the Academic Board, delegating the final approval of such variant regulations to CARP events, two deliberative levels subordinate to the Board, appears to bring risk to the oversight of academic standards and consistency in applying University regulations. The University acknowledged that a mechanism for bringing such regulations to the attention of the Academic Board needs to be established.

1.18 The team **affirms** the action initiated in 2014 to repurpose the Academic Board and its subcommittees, and, among other matters, to meet the recommendation of the QAA Institutional Audit 2008 to clarify the delegation of authority between Academic Board and its subcommittees and strengthen the accountability and reporting arrangements. The team believes that the University may wish to exploit this opportunity to ensure that the Academic Board is able to exercise full oversight of its Academic Regulations.

1.19 In the team's opinion, the executive oversight brought by the Registrar and Secretary and the detailed scrutiny exercised at CARP events has minimised any compromise to standards set for students, but nonetheless the review team **recommends** that the University reviews the current variant regulations in partner institutions, addresses any issues of equity and ensures appropriate oversight by Academic Board of current and future approvals (see sections B1 and B6).

1.20 The review team found that the University's regulatory framework was clearly defined within its comprehensive regulations. Despite some inconsistencies in Academic Board's consideration of the approval of changes and variations, the team concludes that Expectation A2.1 is met, although the associated level of risk is moderate due to the variability of deliberative oversight.

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

**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**

1.21 The University defines its UK-based programmes in standard programme specifications, making them available on the University, CUC and CULC public websites. The programme specifications form the central element of the documentation considered at programme approval events (RAPs). Postgraduate research programmes are also defined in programme specifications, detailing learning outcomes at an advanced level.

1.22 Module descriptors are similarly made available on the VLE through the Module Information Directory. These form part of the documentation set available at programme approval events, although the modules themselves are previously considered and formally approved by faculty-based Boards of Studies.

1.23 Programme and module specifications for programmes delivered in partner institutions are available to all staff on the University intranet. The programme specification is embedded within the formal agreement with partners.

1.24 The review team explored the University's arrangements for maintaining a definitive record of each programme and qualification by scrutinising a range of published programme specifications, module descriptors, and student handbooks; reading papers from approval events; and meeting a range of staff and students from the University and its partner institutions.

1.25 The comprehensive programme specifications comprise two parts; the first includes key regulatory material and basic information such as learning outcomes, programme structure, admissions criteria and arrangements for assessment. It also includes the outcomes of mapping exercises which demonstrate that the programme provides opportunities for students to achieve the learning outcomes and associated skills. The second part demonstrates alignment with the national qualifications framework, subject benchmarks and any PSRB requirements; articulates the teaching and learning strategy and the assessment strategy; and outlines the arrangements for managing the programme.

1.26 The module descriptors give detailed information on module learning outcomes, content, and specific teaching, learning and assessment methods. Authors classify the various assessment activities and describe in considerable detail how and how much these activities contribute to the measurement of achievement of learning outcomes for the module.

1.27 Any changes to programmes and modules are considered by the appropriate Board of Studies or the Faculty Collaborative Provision Committee (FCPC) and updated programme specifications and module descriptors are lodged centrally so that University records and online material can be updated.

1.28 While clearly both programme specifications and module descriptors form part of the data set from which material is drawn to populate the student record system, student transcripts and statutory returns, the team found that they were written in plain English that

would be easily understood by students, and gave clear signposts to sources of additional information. Programme specifications were easily found from both staff and student portals; module information is readily available on the VLE and the University's Module Information Directory is a powerful tool to provide detailed information for students. The team found that while not all the programme specifications and module descriptors for validated collaborative partnerships used the current University templates, they invariably contained the key essential information and appeared fit for purpose.

1.29 Student handbooks were detailed, clear and in the case of those for students on programmes delivered by partner institutions, contained sufficient material from programme and module specifications to properly inform the students about their programme of study.

1.30 Award certificates are accompanied by a detailed transcript matching the programme defined in the programme specification, and in the case of students studying in partner institutions, indicate both the language of instruction and the location of study.

1.31 The University's comprehensive arrangements for maintaining a definitive record of each programme and qualification, whether delivered on-site or in partnership with other institutions, led the review team to conclude that Expectation A2.2 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**

1.32 The University's Academic Regulations explicitly require that all its programmes are designed to meet standards defined by the level descriptors set out in the FHEQ and any relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and guidelines. The Academic Regulations also define where alignment with the standards of PSRBs is required to meet professional standards or allow for professional registration.

1.33 Oversight of the application of the regulations is delegated by Academic Board to the Quality in Learning and Teaching Committee (QuiLT) which monitors the detailed activity of course approvals conducted by Review and Approval Panels (RAPs), except in the case of programmes delivered by collaborative partners where the scrutiny is by a Course Approval and Review Panel (CARP). Where a partner will be providing a programme already approved at Coventry, a Partnership Approval and Review Panel (PARP) is set up to focus principally on the comparability of the student learning experience and the management of the programme. Responsibility for the approval of research degrees rests with the Research Committee which intends to delegate oversight to the forthcoming Research Degrees Subcommittee to ensure that programmes meet academic and research quality standards.

1.34 Similar principles guide the approval processes for all programmes leading to awards made by the University, whether programmes delivered by CU, CUC, CULC or its collaborative partners, and these are set out in the relevant guidelines for course approval. These approval processes involve appropriate external academic and professional expertise. The University regularly tests whether programmes are meeting the defined threshold standards through its annual monitoring process, at interim reviews one or two years after approval of collaborative arrangements, and when all programmes are revalidated at least every six years. The University's regulations and procedures governing the design and approval of its programmes provide a comprehensive framework for ensuring that its awards meet UK threshold standards.

1.35 The review team assessed how the University ensured that its programmes meet UK threshold standards by examining the regulations and guidelines governing approval processes and by reading the reports of panels that had approved programmes on behalf of QuiLT. The team also met academic staff who had participated in these processes as members of approval panels.

1.36 The minutes and reports of approval panels showed that they had explicitly addressed alignment with threshold standards. There was also evidence that external members of the panels had confirmed that relevant benchmarks had been taken into account. The reports of some approval panels included conditions requiring more detailed articulation of learning outcomes, but the review team were assured that these had been met before the programmes were delivered to students.

1.37 The review team concludes that the University's implementation of processes for the approval of programmes and ensuring academic standards meets Expectation A3.1 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**

1.38 The University has Academic Regulations for all provision which are clear that students can only receive an award if they meet the relevant requirements. This includes assessment relating to higher research degrees.

1.39 The assessment strategy is considered at the programme development stage and this is detailed in the programme specifications with modules mapped against programme learning outcomes and teaching, learning and assessment strategies mapped against programme learning outcomes.

1.40 The team tested this through scrutiny of the evidence provided by the University, through access to the staff intranet, and through meetings with relevant staff.

1.41 Module descriptors clearly identify assessment and how this measures achievement of the learning outcomes. Marking schemes are provided to support the identification of student attainment against clear criteria to ensure that threshold standards are achieved.

1.42 External examiners are asked to comment specifically on standards and the relationship between assessment and learning outcomes in their annual report. They are also required to comment on overall performance including 'any matters to do with pass rates, the distribution of marks and for each type of assessment task'.

1.43 The Group Quality web pages set out clear processes for annual monitoring - Course Quality Enhancement and Monitoring (C-QEM) for home provision and Collaborative Annual Quality Monitoring (AQM) for partners.

1.44 For the C-QEM process the template requires assurance that the course team has ensured that all relevant professional standards and benchmarks have been met. For collaborative provision the link tutors also comment on assessment as well as standards being monitored through the annual monitoring process (AQM).

1.45 After discussion at meetings concerning the approval and use of assessment criteria, the team was provided with the University Assessment Strategy, subtitled 'Principles and Assessment Criteria for the assessment of work of students on taught programmes' which includes generic assessment criteria and was approved in 2003. This provides additional reassurance of processes and principles for ensuring that UK threshold standards have been satisfied. Although this document was not well known to the staff members the team met, there was clear evidence of the principles being embedded in the approaches taken to assure that threshold standards have been satisfied across all provision.

1.46 From the evidence provided, the review team concludes that Expectation A3.2 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

1.47 The University monitors whether its programmes are meeting its own and UK threshold standards through the mechanisms of annual monitoring, interim reviews normally one year after collaborative approvals but in any case within two years of approval, and six-yearly review and revalidation of programmes.

1.48 Annual monitoring of programmes delivered in the UK at CU and CULC is managed using the Quality Enhancement and Monitoring (C-QEM) process, and at CUC by End of Module Reviews and an Annual Quality Report process. Programmes delivered in its partner institutions are monitored using the Annual Quality Monitoring (AQM) process. These methods all address the achievement of standards by monitoring data on student progress and reviewing external examiner reports. External examiners explicitly consider whether courses have met threshold standards and overviews of their reports and follow-up actions are considered annually by QuiLT and in the course of periodic reviews.

1.49 Periodic review, including revalidation, takes place every six years and involves student consultation. The Periodic Review Guide requires evaluation of statistical data on student progression and achievement and the meeting of threshold standards.

1.50 The procedures the University has in place to explicitly address and monitor alignment with threshold standards, together with the arrangements for the systematic review of these judgements at all levels from course teams to the Academic Board, provide a framework for securing the academic standards of its awards.

1.51 The review team read a selection of documents, analyses of progression data and minutes demonstrating the C-QEM, AQM and periodic review processes, and consideration of their outcomes by faculties, QuiLT and AB. The team met staff from CU, CUC, CULC and from four overseas partner institutions who had participated in annual and periodic reviews.

1.52 The evidence considered by the review team demonstrated that external examiner reports explicitly address whether individual courses have met internal and UK threshold standards, and that Boards of Studies and faculties produce and act on analyses and overviews of the external examiners' reports when carrying out the C-QEM and AQM processes. The examples of periodic review and revalidation seen by the review team showed that data on student achievement and external examiners' reports were considered. Although the AQM process requires evaluation, some reports produced by partner institutions were largely descriptive rather than evaluative. However, it was clear the University was alert to these issues and had requested further information where necessary. There was also evidence that link tutors from CU ensured that partners appropriately evaluated evidence of student achievement and monitored threshold standards.

1.53 The review team concludes that Expectation A3.3 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**

1.54 The University requires external involvement in two key areas of managing academic standards: through the work of external experts in approval and periodic review and through the appointment of external examiners.

1.55 The University requires all new courses to seek advice from independent external experts and specifically states this is not an external examiner. These experts are asked to assess the course content for academic currency and standards and a programme will not be approved without explicit written evidence that feedback has been received and, where appropriate, acted upon. For collaborative provision, post approval the University uses external examiners to ensure that academic standards are appropriately set and maintained.

1.56 The team explored this through consideration of written evidence and through meetings with relevant staff. External input into approval and review is required for collaborative provision via membership of course approval panels. For home provision external input is required at the development stage and independent experts are required to complete a template which informs the approval process and requires a response. Both this template and the regulations state that the external examiner cannot be the external expert. Further guidance is provided to staff via the Group Quality Unit pages; PRSB input is also captured where appropriate via documentation and membership of review panels. Given the University's emphasis on employability, advice is also sought from relevant employers at the development stage of provision.

1.57 External examiners are appointed for all provision. The process and criteria for nominations and approval as well as the roles and responsibilities are set out in the Academic Regulations.

1.58 The documentation indicates a robust approach that includes mentoring for nominees with limited external experience. To identify any possible conflicts of interest, the nominating faculty checks with the central register held within the Academic Registry.

1.59 External examiners are asked to comment at Subject/Programme Assessment Boards concerning the meeting of standards and this is reported. External examiners provide annual reports for consideration by the University through the annual review process. Programme areas take responsibility for responding to the issues arising in the report and there is clear evidence of full scrutiny and effective responses.

1.60 The annual monitoring template has a section on ensuring academic standards and requires a commentary on responses made to external examiner reports. As part of the annual monitoring of collaborative provision (AQM) the Link Tutor is required to report on the external examiner's report and action taken by the provider.

1.61 There was clear evidence of effective and appropriate practice. The review team considers that the different approaches taken to the involvement of independent external expertise at key stages for the approval and review of home and collaborative provision reflected a risk-based approach which assures the processes for the setting, maintenance and achievement of threshold academic standards. The review team concludes that Expectation A3.4 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

## The setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards: Summary of findings

1.62 In reaching its judgement about the setting and maintenance of academic standards, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex two of the published handbook. All of the Expectations for this judgement area were met and the associated levels of risk were low, except for a moderate risk arising from two aspects of oversight. One was the need to complete the clarification of the delegation of authority between Academic Board and its subcommittees and the strengthening of the accountability and reporting arrangements, in relation to which the review team has affirmed the steps being taken following a recommendation from a previous QAA review. The other was the need to review the variant regulations which apply to the University's provision in some of its partner institutions and the process of oversight of such regulations, in relation to which the team has made a recommendation. Overall the review team concludes that the setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards at the University **meet** 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 The University's processes for programme design, development and approval address relevant academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities and resources available to students. The University, together with CULC and CUC, has in place procedures, guidelines and templates for the design and approval of new modules and programmes that require alignment with UK threshold standards and address all relevant aspects of the Quality Code. In the case of awards delivered by partner institutions, the University's processes of partnership, institutional and course approval require course development teams and approval panels to systematically consider standards and the quality of the learning opportunities, and to ensure they meet UK thresholds and benchmarks, and the University's own standards (see also Expectation A3.1).

2.2 The review team assessed the University's methods of course design, development and approval by reading the reports of panels that had approved or reviewed programmes on behalf of QuiLT. The team also met members of academic staff who had participated in institutional and course approval, and in interim and periodic reviews. The team met students on programmes delivered in the UK, and at four overseas partnerships, who were able to report on the learning environments and resources supporting their learning.

2.3 The learning resources available to students and the quality of the learning opportunities are a key part of the University's procedures for the design and approval of programmes. Review and Approval Panels (RAPs), and in the case of programmes provided by partners, Course Approval and Review Panels (CARPs) or Partnership Approval and Review Panels (PARPs), are required to discover and address: teaching facilities, learning resources including the quality of staff and their development, and the requirements set by external professional bodies. When the panels are deciding whether existing programmes should be revalidated they must also take account of student views, the data on achievement of standards and patterns of progression, changes and modifications to modules and programmes, and approval required by external bodies. In the case of collaborative provision the approval panels always visit facilities and include at least one external member with relevant academic or professional expertise in the subject area of the course.

2.4 The decision to develop a new programme may come from a variety of sources in the University; from senior management when new strategic objectives are the drivers, or from academics within the faculties and schools. Outline approval is granted by the Course Advisory and Approval Panel (CAAP). The Associate Dean advised by a Head of Department nominates one or more members of staff to develop curriculum and approval documentation. They are assisted by relevant members of the University including an advisor from the Group Quality Unit (GQU), and, if the programme involves a partner institution, by an Academic Partnership Manager (APM) from the Academic Partnership Unit (APU). The draft curriculum and approval documentation will be reviewed by a Reading

Group within the faculty before submission to a RAP, or in the case of collaborative programmes to a CARP.

2.5 All programmes offered at CULC follow the University's design and programme approval processes. Proposals are considered at CULC's own Programme and Academic Boards and are then submitted for scrutiny and approval by the University committees. CULC operates its own set of Academic and General Regulations, similar but not identical to University Regulations, to reflect local circumstances. The programme monitoring and programme review processes, including external examining, follow the standard practice of the University and are reported through to University committees.

2.6 Similarly, programmes designed in partner institutions and approved through the University's programme approval processes are subject in some cases to variant regulations of those partner institutions. Reference is made (see Expectation A2) to these variant regulations and the team's recommendation that they be reviewed.

2.7 Externals on approval panels are asked to address achievement of standards and the quality of student learning opportunities. Where conditions of approval are imposed, the Chair of the Panel (through the Panel Secretary) is responsible for ensuring the approval or review process is completed within an agreed timescale. Where panels make recommendations the relevant Dean of Faculty is responsible for ensuring that all appropriate follow-up action is taken.

2.8 The review team concludes that the design and operation of processes for the design, development and approval of programmes ensure that Expectation B1 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 Admission of undergraduates and postgraduates to Coventry University (CU), Coventry University College (CUC) and Coventry University London Campus (CULC) is handled by the Coventry University Recruitment and Admissions Office for home/EU students and by the International Office, supported by overseas branch offices, for other students. In collaborative provision admission on the basis of criteria set by CU in the programme approval process is normally delegated to partners. A number of articulation agreements exist including one with Cambridge Education Group which has a Foundation Campus at CU.

2.10 Decision making is governed by process documents including for handling non-traditional applicants, those with disabilities or criminal convictions and those with relevant prior learning. There are special procedures for nursing, interview-based, portfolio-based and audition-dependent courses. Decisions are made by Recruitment and Admissions Office (RAO) and International Office (IO) staff on the basis of agreed criteria with non-standard cases referred to faculties (or link tutors in the case of collaborative provision), except for research postgraduate applications which are decided by academic staff at Faculty level.

2.11 RAO/IO staff receive continuous internal and external training, including by UCAS, and take the lead in training and briefing Faculty staff involved in admissions. The International Office also checks and briefs overseas agents. RAO/IO staff have overall responsibility for the websites and prospectuses (subject to sign-off from the relevant Faculty, Marketing and Communications and the Legal Office).

2.12 RAO/IO are also responsible for supporting applicants in the transition to University student status through induction information packs and activities, including newsletters for applicants and for parents/carers, although most induction activity is devolved to the faculties.

2.13 Performance is monitored by the Quality in Learning and Teaching Committee (QuiLT) through routine annual programme monitoring and periodic review and through a detailed annual report on course performance data. QuiLT has recently established a template to improve central monitoring of recognition of prior learning. RAO/IO monitor trend data and conduct applicant surveys. A Completions Group also meets several times a year to monitor retention.

2.14 The principles governing admission are set out in Chapters 2 (general) and 8 (research postgraduates) of the published Academic Regulations and in a formal Admissions Policy which is updated annually, although at the time of the review the current version of this document was not available on the CU/CUC/CULC websites. The team **recommends** that the University publishes the current Admissions Policy on the websites of Coventry University College (CUC) and Coventry University London Campus (CULC) and creates procedures to ensure that it is always publicly available.

2.15 Equal opportunity is established on the basis of ability to complete the programme as well as setting out general minimum criteria, a ceiling for accreditation of prior learning, timelines for decision making and information about how to receive feedback, complain or make an appeal. Much of this information is repeated in a more user-friendly form on the admissions pages of the CU/CUC/CULC websites. Admissions processes are mapped by the Group Quality Unit onto Expectation B2 of the Quality Code.

2.16 The team reviewed the publicly available documentation together with that submitted by the provider, discussed with a wide range of undergraduate, postgraduate and partner students their admission experience, and sought additional information in meetings with academic and administrative staff.

2.17 The team concludes that the documentation reflects the approach recommended in the Schwarz report and by the Supporting Professionalism in Admissions steering group. There is no evidence of unnecessary barriers to admission. Close monitoring of retention enables the University to check that its entry criteria are appropriate. Careful mapping ensures the reliability of articulation agreements including with the Foundation Campus. The team reviewed an audit trail demonstrating appropriate handling of a request for recognition of prior learning.

2.18 Recruitment activities are appropriate to the strategic aims of the University and the review team noted a number of good examples. The CUC and CULC websites are targeted at different applicant pools and are constructed and worded appropriately; the CUC website is exemplary in this respect. The team also noted the University's initiatives for widening participation including the Phoenix Partnerships, Student Progression Team initiative with local schools, and special provision for assisting applicants who are care leavers or who have disabilities.

2.19 The team found academic staff to be familiar with admissions procedures and able to answer a question about recognition of prior learning.

2.20 Students echoed the general satisfaction recorded in the Student Submission with the information provided to them at all stages and particularly with the conduct of Open Days and Clearing, although there was some variation in their experience of induction. The 'Just enrolled' tab in the intranet student portal provides useful information. The team noted the enthusiastic engagement of current students in publicity including the 'Student Voices' and 'I Love My Course' initiatives as well as serving as ambassadors and assisting at Open Days.

2.9 The review team concludes that Expectation B2 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

#### **Findings**

2.21 The University's approach to learning and teaching was articulated in the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy 2011-2015; a revised strategy is under discussion for 2015-16 onwards. The Strategy has five key themes including students' academic experience and is overseen by the Quality in Learning and Teaching Committee (QuiLT). Actions to support this theme include ensuring that students are engaged in their learning, refining the personal tutor system, reviewing learning and teaching where there were low National Student Survey (NSS) scores, introducing a developmental teaching observation scheme, and use of student questionnaire feedback. A review is currently underway to explore how postgraduate provision can benefit from the lessons learned in undergraduate programme development and delivery.

2.22 To explore this area the review team considered the documentation provided including policy and process documents, examples of programme-level practice and committee minutes and papers. The team also spoke to academic staff and students and to key support staff, and reviewed the websites of the relevant support services.

2.23 The review team saw evidence of a programme specification setting out the pedagogical principles of the programme and of programme teams exploring issues in teaching and learning in the Course Quality Enhancement and Monitoring (C-QEM) process. Discussion of the 2012-13 C-QEM overview report at QuiLT identified good practice including peer learning, simulation games, research and employer-informed teaching and learning, and student engagement through technology.

2.24 The physical learning environment at the University has benefited from investment in the award-winning library, Hub and Student Centre. Programme specifications describe relevant resources and in the annual planning round faculties can identify resource needs. Students were positive about the extension of student representation to the services, particularly the library, IT and estates, enabling issues to be addressed with the relevant provider. Learning resources for collaborative provision are explored at approval and review.

2.25 The library provides hard copy and electronic resources as well as spaces for group work and silent study. Professional librarians support both staff and students. The library is accessible to off-campus as well as on-campus students and part-time students appreciate remote access to electronic resources. The 2012-13 library report to QuiLT described developments including digitisation and increased access to videos on mobile devices; postgraduates value access to digitised materials. The Student Submission confirms that the library has been proactive in enhancing customer service, highlighting the employment of students as roving support assistants, the introduction of quiet zones, and 24-hour opening during the examination period. A Customer Service Excellence audit resulted in full compliance and QuiLT noted an increase in the relevant NSS score.

2.26 The library has been responsible, in consultation with faculties, for implementing the 'Promises' scheme. Students are provided with core textbooks or crucial equipment to an agreed value in their first and second years and with vouchers to spend through the

University's suppliers in their final year. The team regards this scheme, which ensures that undergraduate students do not incur additional costs in the provision of core learning resources, as **good practice**.

2.27 The Centre for Academic Writing is regarded very positively by students as a source of guidance. This Centre and Sigma (a centre for the support of numeracy skills) are both based in the library. The Disruptive Media Lab is a new development, also within the library, to explore new modes of learning and teaching including e-learning. This is a physical space where academics, library specialists and research staff can develop and test pedagogy, assess its impact and propose a suitable roll-out. There is an open call for project plans which are assessed by the Disruptive Media Lab team. Staff find it very supportive and students are enthusiastic about it as a way of 'doing things differently'. The review team regards the contribution of the library to the student learning experience through the provision of the Centre for Academic Writing, Sigma and the recent introduction of the Disruptive Media Lab as **good practice**.

2.28 It is University policy to secure comparability of quality and standards in the programme of study wherever it is taught but not necessarily to replicate the physical resources of Coventry University elsewhere. Coventry University London Campus (CULC) students access the electronic resources of the Coventry Library; the CULC library has been extended and IT provision is appropriate. However, students are aware of the establishment of the Disruptive Media Lab which is not available to them and the University will wish to ensure that all students benefit from it.

2.29 In 2012-13 University Library staff led the establishment of the Learning Resources Centre (LRC) at Coventry University College (CUC) and helped the College to identify a suitable professional staffing model. The College annual report for 2013-14 recorded the relocation of the LRC and increased opening hours to support evening and weekend teaching. Laboratory facilities were also enhanced and the Customer Services unit provides a one-stop shop for student support needs.

2.30 The Student Submission suggested that the VLE is well used but can be rather slow and discussion of the 2012-13 C-QEM overview report at QuiLT noted similar IT issues raised by the faculties. Testing was undertaken with student help to resolve problems and action was taken to change the supplier and increase the size of the server.

2.31 The Student Academic Support Framework established academic and personal tutors for undergraduates. Staff development opportunities are available for them and the intranet provides useful resources for handling tutorials including forms to support student reflection in advance of a tutorial meeting. The Student Submission states that students generally know who their tutor is and value their support but the review team learned that the student experience is variable. Despite a guideline of six to eight tutees per tutor, there have been instances of higher tutorial loads. QuiLT considers the personal tutor system in its review of C-QEM and has identified examples of good practice; the Chair of QuiLT meets with course directors quarterly and discusses issues arising. Staff offer a range of office hours, surgeries and open-door access and students at the University, CUC and CULC are generally able to contact someone to help with problems. This can be difficult, however, for part-time students. The University will wish to keep the operation of the personal tutor system under review to ensure consistency in the student experience.

2.32 Observation of teaching is carried out at the University, CULC and CUC, supported by guidance available on the web. It was refocused as a management-led exercise to promote consistency but in some subject areas remains a peer-to-peer activity as this is felt to be more developmental. There are similar practices in place at partner organisations.

2.33 The University's Professional Recognition Framework is accredited by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) against all four descriptors of the UK Professional Standards Framework. Staff development provided by the Organisational Development and Learning team offers a wide range of workshops including classroom teaching, e-learning, activity-led learning and student support. There is substantial take-up enhanced by the implementation of twilight sessions in response to demand. Impact is evaluated where applicable through data such as NSS scores. The 'Coventry Essentials' programme for new staff covers data protection, health and safety, and equality and diversity; new staff are supported through induction and mentoring and part-time staff are given guidance as to their role.

2.34 The Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education Practice is recognised by the HEA and the Nursing and Midwifery Council. It is mandatory for new staff and addresses institutional priorities. A bespoke delivery was offered to CULC staff in 2013-14 and it has also been made available to staff in some collaborative partner institutions by 'flying faculty'. Partner staff development needs are identified at approval and through link tutors and are addressed through the Academic Partnerships Unit (APU). A Postgraduate Certificate in International Higher Education Practice referenced to the UK Professional Standards Framework is under development specifically for overseas partner staff. The Postgraduate Certificate is overseen academically by the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences for historical reasons but this is under review.

2.35 A two-day Teaching and Learning Conference held in 2014 will now be held annually. The Conference brochure shows a comprehensive range of sessions which included input from the Students' Union. The conference was preceded by an International Partner Symposium and included Teaching and Learning Awards reflecting priorities in the Corporate Plan.

2.36 There is a formal process of staff Development and Performance Review (DPR) which includes reflection on teaching-related targets and staff development. The criteria for promotion include contributions to teaching and learning. University staff have a minimum of 20 per cent non-contact time in their workload for staff development, consultancy and research including curriculum development, and this is regarded as important as part of their 'authority to teach'. CUC staff also engage in employer-related professional development.

2.37 The review team concludes that Expectation B3 is met with examples of good practice in the 'Promises' scheme and the other work of the library to support student learning and academic development. 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**

2.38 Employability is one of the key themes of the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy 2011-2015 overseen by QuiLT. Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) data is one of the key performance indicators (KPIs) at institutional, faculty and programme levels which are identified in the Corporate Plan and reported to the Academic Board. Other KPIs are admission, progression and retention data.

2.39 The review team considered a range of information including policies, programme documentation, websites, and committee minutes and papers. The team also spoke to students, academic and support staff and to a number of employers who are actively involved in supporting the development of students' employment-related skills.

2.40 Programme learning outcomes articulate the skills which students are expected to acquire and the Student Submission indicates that they are generally understood. The team saw an example of initial programme development taking employment rates into account and of a programme being reviewed in the light of targets for DLHE and progression data.

2.41 Students on the University campus have a wide range of opportunities within the curriculum to develop employability skills. The Add+Vantage scheme offers modules including work experience, work-related projects, enterprise and entrepreneurship, foreign languages and IT skills. They are included in all undergraduate programmes to the value of 10 credits per year, with the exception of a few programmes where professional body requirements would not permit this but where those requirements themselves address preparation for employment. Students are introduced to the Add+Vantage modules at induction; comprehensive web-based information includes video-clips. Undergraduates are very positive about the opportunities this gives them and the support it provides towards obtaining employment.

2.42 The modules are delivered by the relevant subject area or an appropriate professional service and overseen by subject assessment boards and external examiners. Consideration is being given to establishing an assessment board to oversee the modules provided by professional services instead of locating them in the nearest cognate faculty. An annual report to QuiLT includes an analysis of pass rates and student feedback for each Add+Vantage module. Action plans for areas of concern are followed up by the scheme manager with the relevant faculties. An Add+Vantage Advisory Board chaired by the DVC Student Experience has recently been established to oversee the scheme and will select modules for inclusion.

2.43 Students at CULC have some concerns that they cannot take the Add-Vantage modules but they have alternative provision through two extra-curricular schemes, Get Ahead and High Flyers, which provide opportunities to develop business awareness and networking skills. Within the programmes at London there are employer-linked projects and skills-based modules assessed in ways relevant to the workplace. Master classes, careers information and CV guidance are also provided and the Global Leaders programme is being made available at CULC. CUC awards are all professionally oriented and students can take additional qualifications such as Level 3 diplomas and professional certificates in aspects of accounting, management and journalism. Some collaborative partners are developing provision based on the Add+Vantage scheme.

2.44 Internationalisation is seen as a means of enhancing employability and staff gave the example of Online International Learning (OIL) whereby students in Coventry and in overseas partners work together on a project online. Engineering and Computing students engaged in OIL are planning to visit their counterparts in Hong Kong to enhance their understanding of each other's cultures. The Global Leaders programme also enhances students' skills for a world of international employment: postgraduates described sessions run by international company directors and employees and a competitive opportunity for an overseas visit. Exchanges are run by the International Experience and Mobility Service.

2.45 Employers are very positive about the engagement of the University with commerce and industry and the involvement of the students in placements and employment-related projects. They find the students enthusiastic, committed and able to use their initiative and the staff broad-minded about embedding transferable skills in the curriculum. It was clear that there are many long-term relationships with employers which support significant numbers of students each year. The Employability Advisory Panel and similar subject-level groups such as the Psychology Stakeholder Panel provide an opportunity for employers to give input into curriculum development. The recently established Unipart Engineering and Manufacturing Institute provides a joint research and development facility and includes provision for PhD students.

2.46 Employers liaise with the faculty Employability Units which manage arrangements for students during their programmes of study. The Careers Service advises on job applications in the final year of study and supports CULC and CUC in developing their own provision. CUC draws on the University Careers Service while CULC has developed local support. Students from all the campuses and at all levels of study consistently referred to 'opportunity' as a key feature of their experience at Coventry and the review team regards the comprehensive preparation of students for employment, including the Add+Vantage modules, as **good practice**.

2.47 The University provides support for students at key points in their studies, and staff development around transitional issues covers induction, group work and general support. Programme specifications include statements of what will be covered in induction including key points of contact, the programme structure, assessment, plagiarism, degree classification, appeals and attendance requirements. Despite this, undergraduates found induction very variable in quality. International students receive bespoke information on life and study in the UK and their induction includes International Office sessions on British culture and visa issues. Subject areas with particularly large cohorts of international and direct-entry students make special provision such as ongoing support sessions covering communicating with academic and administrative staff, assignment writing and exam preparation.

2.48 The team was provided with information about progression from CUC to the University and the annual CUC report includes a review of progression data. CUC and Cambridge Education Group (CEG), the embedded college, hold progression events in which University staff tell current students about the options available to them and some subject areas bring them onto campus to spend time in the department.

2.49 There is support for students with disabilities and a counselling service. A contact form guides students through the process of seeking support and reasonable adjustments are made for examinations and other assessments as well as during teaching. The Disabilities Office records the details of recommended adjustments and the faculty registrar makes academics aware of what is required. Disability advisers provide advice and training for academic staff and disability information forms part of academic staff induction. A weekly 'friendly faces' group led by the Disability Coordinator provides ongoing support for students

with disabilities and includes input from the Careers Service. The University recognises the challenges in addressing disability with overseas partners.

2.50 The review team concludes that the range of provision in place to support student achievement within and beyond the curriculum ensures that Expectation B4 is met and the associated level of risk is low. The team regards the provision in relation to employability skills as good practice.

**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**

2.51 Student engagement at the University is established in a number of ways and embedded within the University's corporate plan. Students are represented on a wide range of University committees including the Board of Governors and the Academic Board with a University Governor acting as a trustee of Coventry University Students' Union. The student voice is captured through feedback mechanisms such as module and course evaluation questionnaires, student forums and the NSS or PRES. Feedback is collated through Course Quality Enhancement and Monitoring (C-QEM) reports and is discussed at a programme and institutional level. Action plans from student forums are regularly reviewed and maintained. The Coventry University Student Representation system is managed by the Students' Union and has grown considerably in recent years.

2.52 The review team analysed the operation and effectiveness of student engagement by examining the involvement of student representatives in University committee structures, the effectiveness of student representations structures, the impact of the student voice, and the feedback provided by the University in response to student comments. The review team examined documentation, explored the use of the student portal and met with students, their representatives, staff and employers.

2.53 The Student Representation System at the University is managed by the Students' Union, and led by the Representation and Welfare Office. Representatives are provided with handbooks and training to support them in their role as well as an invitation to the Representatives Conference that occurs once a term. There is a minimum of one course representative per year for every course who self-nominate at the start of each academic year. Course representatives are supported by two elected Senior Course Representatives who are responsible for student forums, which occur at least twice a term (more for CSAD, HLS and EC). Academic staff are expected to attend student forums by invitation of the Senior Course Representatives, and are jointly responsible for the resulting action plan. Minutes of student forums are countersigned by the Senior Course Representative as Chair, and the lead member of staff, prior to consideration at Board of Study. Minutes are made available on the Students' Union website. The review team saw documentation that confirmed that postgraduate student forums had taken place; however, these did not appear on the Students' Union website.

2.54 A Deputy Faculty Chair is elected to represent each department and attends Faculty Board, monthly meetings with the Head of the Department and termly meetings with the Dean. Faculty Chairs are elected to the Students' Union Executive and support student engagement within their faculty. Faculty and Deputy Faculty Chairs organise Faculty Representative Conferences with attendance from Heads of Department and Deans.

2.55 The student representatives met by the team understood and recognised the value of their role. Students were broadly satisfied with the representation system and made aware of their representatives, noting that contact details and photos are made available on the VLE, Students' Union website and on display around the University. However, the review team was advised that awareness of student representatives was lower for part-time students. Students are made aware of changes at student forums via their course representatives, information uploaded to the VLE and correspondence from staff.

2.56 The review team also examined student representation structures at CULC, CUC and collaborative partner institutions. While the University's Students' Union does not support those students in collaborative partners' institutions or Coventry University London Campus, Coventry University College students have recently become members of the Students' Union.

2.57 The review team found that CUC, CULC and collaborative partners have inconsistent approaches to student representation in comparison to CUSU; however, students did not appear to be dissatisfied with the approach taken within their respective institutions.

2.58 Several examples of monitoring and responding to the student voice in collaborative institutions were provided to the review team which students acknowledged led to a positive impact on their academic experience. The review team felt confident that student feedback was listened to and responded to by CUC, CULC and collaborative partners, through both the formal and informal systems of identifying and responding to student issues.

2.59 The review team heard of examples where insufficient influence was exercised over the accuracy of minutes and low staff participation at student forums. The University itself publishes no documentation that outlines the University's commitment to engage with, or support for, the Student Representation System. The University was clear that engagement is expected from staff as student feedback features in a number of University processes, for instance C-QEM and discussion at Boards of Study. While the University maintains that any issues with staff engagement can be raised with the Deputy Vice-chancellor (Academic), the review team **recommends** that the University ensures effective processes are in place and documented to support consistent engagement by academic staff with the student representative system.

2.60 The Students' Union has also recently introduced a Service Representative System whereby 12 students are elected to represent matters relating to IT, the library and estates. Both students and staff spoke positively of its value for focusing attention on support services that contribute to the student academic experience.

2.61 Student feedback is also sought at CARP and PARP meetings, and as part of Periodic Review, with specific reference to NSS data and the outcomes of course evaluation questionnaires since the last approval event. For collaborative provision, student feedback mechanisms are reviewed at Interim and Periodic Review.

2.62 NSS data is also considered as part of the C-QEM process, and at the Academic Board. PRES data is considered at Research Committee and monitored through faculty-level action plans. PTES was last run in 2011 and the results were disseminated across the University and to the Students' Union.

2.63 Overall, the review team finds that the approach to student engagement is appropriate. Despite the recommendation, the review team concludes that Expectation B5 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**

2.64 The University has clear assessment regulations and sets out details in the module descriptors, with mapping of modules to intended learning outcomes in the overarching programme specification (see also Expectation 3.2).

2.65 The programme specification sets out the programme assessment strategy while module descriptors detail the type of assessment.

2.66 The team explored this through meetings with students and staff plus scrutiny of a range of documentation. In addition, the team noted the outcomes of the University's mapping against Chapter B6 of the Quality Code in November 2013 which shows careful consideration of each indicator.

2.67 The assessment strategy for a programme is considered at approval events for provision and, at Periodic Review, teams are required to detail the assessment loading within modules and across the programmes, including parity with the Faculty/Departmental assessment tariff system. A comprehensive data set is provided to support effective analysis.

2.68 The University has clear assessment regulations which form section 5 of the Academic Regulations. The University will occasionally approve variants to regulations for collaborative partner institutions (see section A2.1) and the team noted that one partner allowed students to have resit opportunities to improve pass grades and so improve their Grade Point Average (GPA). The team's view was that this could lead to issues of inequity and so has recommended (Expectation A2.1) that the University review the current variant regulations in partner institutions, address any issues of equity and ensure appropriate oversight of current and future approvals.

2.69 University policy requires the internal moderation of all assessments. The Academic Regulations refer to moderation but without detailing the process. The University has an internal moderation policy which is also referred to in the mapping exercise of Chapter B6. Through meetings with staff it became clear that, while moderation was taking place, there was inconsistent awareness of this policy and some confusion over nomenclature with moderation being used both for the external examiner's role and the markers' role in determining the final agreed mark through a process of second or double marking. The moderation policy information is not detailed in the Handbook for External Examiners for Taught Courses. However, the external examiners' reports indicate that moderation between markers is taking place. The team, therefore, **recommends** that the University ensure that the policy on the internal moderation of assessments is shared effectively with course teams and external examiners.

2.70 Subject and Programme Assessment Boards' composition and terms of reference are detailed in the Academic Regulations. External examiners are required to sign off the 'Record of actions taken' form; their comments on the fairness and standards of assessment as well as the conduct of the relevant Board are recorded formally in minutes and they are

also required to comment on the organisation and conduct of the meetings via their annual reports.

2.71 Link tutor reports also provide assurance of the internal moderation of assessment (tasks and marking) for collaborative provision.

2.72 It is University policy for feedback on assessed work to be provided to students within two or three teaching weeks depending on the level of study. Students were aware of the policy and, in the main, agreed that it was met but with some inconsistency. Students also confirmed they were aware of the criteria for passing assignments. External examiners comment on the quality of feedback via their annual reports.

2.73 The University states that they make every effort to ensure that assessments are as inclusive as possible and the Academic Regulations detail the responsibilities of the Subject Assessment Boards in ensuring the equity of any variants to assessments. A range of approaches is taken to support students. There is clear guidance on the accreditation and recognition of prior learning and this is applied effectively in practice.

2.74 The two recommendations clarify processes for all stakeholders and, despite the recommendations, the associated level of risk remains low and, overall, the review team considered that the approaches taken to assessment were effective and that Expectation B6 is met.

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

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

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

#### **Findings**

2.75 The University has clear processes for the appointment of external examiners and appoints approximately 300 to cover all of its provision. The criteria for appointment are defined in the Academic Regulations. Nomination and appointment processes are followed through appropriately including where, exceptionally, a period of office is extended to mentor a new appointment with limited external examining experience.

2.76 The team explored the evidence relating to this Expectation via documents and meetings and noted that the University has a dedicated website for external examiners which provides a range of information including: report form templates; the external examiners' handbook; student handbooks; programme specifications; academic regulations and information about the external examiners' briefing held in September 2014.

2.77 The Handbook for External Examiners for Taught Courses is updated annually and provides detailed information about the role and responsibilities. This includes reference to the possible termination of an appointment and, in recent years, the University had to terminate an appointment. The team reviewed the audit trail and considered the process to be effective.

2.78 Following feedback arising from the January 2014 QAA Review of Emirates Aviation College, the University, through the Academic Partnership Unit, has reviewed all external examiner appointments for overseas collaborative provision and taken necessary action to ensure there are sufficient examiners to cover all overseas provision.

2.79 External examiners undertake a range of duties including consultation on assessment tasks; consideration of standards and ensuring standards are in line with sector norms; attendance at assessment boards; confirmation of satisfaction with assessment processes and submission of an annual report.

2.80 The annual report provides an opportunity for the external examiner to report on the effectiveness of processes for enabling them to fulfil their role. These reports are considered through the annual monitoring processes (C-QEM and AQM) which feed into QuiLT and the Academic Board. Through the annual monitoring processes there are clear indications of effective consideration of the reports and of agreed action to address any issues raised. Responses to external examiner reports are made via a template.

2.81 The report template also provides guidance to the external examiner on the process to be followed should they consider their report to be confidential - in which case it will be considered by the Chair of QuiLT.

2.82 The team also saw evidence of the effective use of the Interim Review Process for collaborations as an additional means for the University to assure itself of effective responses being made to external examiners' reports with a condition attached to the rewriting of the annual monitoring report to ensure effective analysis of the reports. As a consequence, the partner also provided detailed action plans.

2.83 All external examiners' reports are made available in full to students either via a website or on request.

2.84 The external examiner's approval is sought for any minor changes to a course partway through its period of approval and external examiners' reports are considered through the Periodic Review process.

2.85 After evaluating the evidence the team considered that the University makes scrupulous use of external examiners and that Expectation B7 is met. 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**

2.86 The University's procedures for conducting annual monitoring (C-QEM, AQM) and periodic reviews of its programmes (Interim Reviews, Course Reviews) provide a clear framework for the assurance of academic standards and the enhancement of learning opportunities (see also Expectation 3.3).

2.87 The review team read a selection of C-QEM, AQM and periodic review documentation as well as minutes recording oversight of these processes by QuiLT and AB. The team met staff from CU, CUC, CULC and from four overseas partner institutions, who had participated in annual and periodic review.

2.88 The C-QEM is a quality review and management process which consists of a rolling programme of meetings held throughout the year by course teams, Boards of Studies and Faculty Boards to review, discuss and report on issues raised by a range of information they receive on modules and programmes, including data on student performance, external examiners' reports and changes to course content. For each group of full-time undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses offered, course teams consider the course packs produced and updated by the Planning Office in June/July and January each year. These allow course teams to monitor the performance of their courses within key metrics and compare each course's performance with that of other courses within the University and elsewhere in the sector. The reports inform course teams as they work through the C-QEM process and lead to course reports and course action plans which are implemented by Faculty and School Boards. QuiLT annually reviews all course data and a sample of course reports. Where any major concern is raised, QuiLT launches a full quality audit by the Group Quality Unit into the course. The review team noted the quality of the statistical information available to support annual monitoring and regards the effective use of management information in the Course Quality, Enhancement and Monitoring process as **good practice** (see also Expectation C).

2.89 The six-yearly review panels (RAPs, CARPs) meet the course teams and address: resources and their deployment; staffing and staff development; student progression and support; views of students; facilities; attached conditions; where necessary, approval by external bodies; and the adequacy of information given to students. The review process involves the panel in meetings with students and external stakeholders (including employers, PSRBs, external examiners and alumni) to assess the validity of existing and proposed provision.

2.90 Reviews can be held sooner than every six years where cumulative changes to programmes are substantial. However, the review team could find no indication in the Group Quality Pages or the Regulations indicating how much change in a programme would be required to trigger an early review. In a meeting with senior staff it was indicated that this was a judgement that was left to relevant academics in the course team, and that early reviews may have been triggered more often than necessary. The review team **recommends** that the University makes explicit the procedures for monitoring the cumulative impact of changes to modules and programmes across all provision, allowing a clearer definition of when an early review of a programme should take place.

2.91 The review team concludes that Expectation B8 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**

2.92 Coventry University (CU), Coventry University College (CUC) and Coventry University London Campus (CULC) have near-identical procedures for academic reviews/appeals, set out in their Academic Regulations, and for complaints, set out in their General Regulations. Both are two-stage processes. In collaborative provision the right is established to make a complaint to CU if local processes have not resolved the issue.

2.93 A request for an academic review is initiated by e-mailing the Registrar. Cases are considered centrally at both stages by an Assessment Review Group and an Assessment Appeals Committee of the Academic Board. A complaint is initiated by submission of an online form. It is considered by the faculty/service concerned at the first stage, and centrally at the second stage.

2.94 Information about both procedures is provided on the student intranet portals and in the form of a standard entry in faculty student handbooks. There is guidance for staff on the staff portal. The complaints procedure can also be accessed from the CU public website.

2.95 Both processes are managed by the Registry's Policy Unit which gives factual advice to students and encourages them to seek personal advice from the Students' Union and, if appropriate, the Disabilities Office. CULC students, who are not members of the Students' Union, are currently able to draw on its advice until an alternative source of support can be established. The Policy Unit also issues completion of procedure letters which draw attention to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).

2.96 Student Services operate an informal 'complex query system' to pre-empt formal complaints and a conciliation scheme has been introduced for 2014-15 modelled on an award-winning scheme at the University of Huddersfield. For research postgraduates the Postgraduate Tutor in each faculty provides a source of advice and support in respect of concerns.

2.97 Complaints are monitored by the Quality in Learning and Teaching Committee through quarterly reports from the Policy Unit. The Academic Board exercises general oversight of policy and receives the annual letter from the OIA. However, there is currently no mechanism for the central monitoring of appeals, although the team were informed that the Policy Unit was considering presenting a combined quarterly report on appeals and complaints; the review team **recommends** that the University establishes a mechanism for the central monitoring of academic reviews and appeals.

2.98 The team reviewed the CU/CUC/CULC regulations, the advice published to students and staff, and the minutes of committees exercising central oversight. The team also tested student awareness and experience of both procedures.

2.99 The team concluded that the procedures were clear and fair. Admissible grounds, time limits and response times are clearly established and early informal resolution of problems is encouraged. The procedures do not make explicit reference to collective complaint or appeal, a face-to-face meeting is not normally part of the first stage of the

academic review process, and an academic review can be ruled invalid at first sight without right of appeal, but the team did not consider that these features presented significant risk.

2.100 The number of academic appeals against CU taken unsuccessfully to the OIA in recent years is well above the average for HEIs in the same band, suggesting that more could be done to deter hopeless cases and reinforcing the need for central oversight. Nonetheless, staff reported learning from appeals in respect of the need to find ways to take account of mental health problems.

2.101 The new conciliation scheme is evidence that the provider has learned from its experience of complaints and is able to draw upon good practice elsewhere in the sector.

2.102 Most of the students spoken to, including partner students, confirmed that they were aware of how to make an appeal or complaint and that this information was easy to find in handbooks or on the student intranets. No concerns about this area were raised in the Student Submission.

2.103 The review team concludes that Expectation B9 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**

**Approval, delivery, monitoring and review**

2.104 The University's collaborative portfolio is large, and both its operational and deliberative structures are augmented to better manage it. Deliberatively the University's Internationalisation Development Committee (IDC) oversees the initial approval to develop new partnerships. A central Standing Advisory Group on Collaborative Provision (SAGCP) advises QuiLT on partnership matters, and has delegated authority to act on QuiLT's behalf in the consideration of annual monitoring for collaborative provision, and to oversee the development of collaborative processes in the University. At Faculty level, the Faculty Collaborative Provision Committee (FCPC), or the host Programme Board at CULC, oversees and supports all Faculty collaborative activity, reporting variously within and outside the Faculty. Operationally the Academic Partnership Unit (APU) provides and coordinates support to collaborative relationships to ensure that the management and delivery of Coventry University collaborative programmes is successful.

2.105 The processes of approving, delivering, monitoring and reviewing programmes delivered by or with other institutions are similar in most respects to those for on-site provision, although with early augmentation to ensure that the proposed partnership is appropriate for the University.

2.106 Potential partnerships are initially explored by the APU in conjunction with the potential host Faculty. These inquiries include a senior staff visit to the proposed partner, the development of a business case, financial and legal due diligence, and consideration by IDC. The evidence gathered permits IDC to make a well informed decision as to whether to grant permission for more detailed development of the proposals.

2.107 Academic approval then follows the usual University processes (see Expectation A1); consideration by CAAP ensures that the wider University community is aware of the partnership; and then detailed scrutiny ensures academic integrity. The academic scrutiny is a two-stage process, initially through an Institutional Approval Panel (IAP) that considers the approval of the delivery organisation as a partner of the University; and secondly by a Course Approval and Review Panel (CARP) if the partner is designing the programme, or a Partnership Approval and Review Panel (PARP) if the programme already exists at the University. The panel terms of reference make it clear that the approval process must include a panel visit to the partner to bring the appropriate scrutiny to resourcing and facilities.

2.108 The operational responsibilities of the University and the partner are determined during the planning discussions and approval events, and are captured in an agreed Collaborative Framework Document, which is later embedded within the formal legal agreement (Programme Approval Agreement) between the partners. Once operational, the details of the partnership and associated programmes are recorded in the University's Registers of Collaborative Provision; one a detailed record for internal use, which may be used by the APU, GQU and others to prompt operational activities associated with the

partnership; the other associated with the APU's external website, limited to the more top-level information of use to a public audience.

2.109 Newly approved collaborative programmes undergo an interim review within two years of approval. The interim review provides a health check for the Faculty and SAGCP to reassure that the partnership is working as anticipated, and to enable early remedial action to be put in place if necessary. A collaborative programme is approved subject to full revalidation (Periodic Review) every six years for undergraduate courses, and every three years for taught postgraduate awards. Clear procedures for changes to programmes exist; minor amendments are approved by QuiLT chair's action; major changes will be referred to a full P/CARP event. These processes are identical to those for in-house provision.

2.110 Detailed partnership agreements between the University and another delivery organisation clearly define the length of the agreement, and the range of reasons that might trigger early termination. Were grounds for termination to emerge from, for example, annual monitoring, an Institutional Review Panel would be formed to explore the matter fully and establish whether there is substance in the evidence, and to appraise the continuing soundness of collaboration.

2.111 Collaborative programmes undergo a parallel, but slightly different process of annual monitoring (AQM) to on-site Coventry provision (C-QEM) (see paragraph 1.3). The Link Tutor oversees the partner's production of the AQM report, and author an accompanying Link Tutor Annual Report which provides a critical evaluation of both the programme and the partnership. Both reports are expected to comment upon feedback received from students during the year. The host FCPC, or the host Programme Board at CULC, considers in detail the AQM, the Link Tutor's report and any associated external examiner reports, agreeing an action plan to address any emerging issues.

2.112 The SAGCP conducts an Institutional review of all reports and action plans and submits overview reports on the overseas and UK collaborative AQM QuiLT. FCPC continues to formally monitor the progress the partner and Faculty are making with the action plan throughout the year.

2.113 The review team tested the University's arrangements for approving, delivering, monitoring and reviewing programmes delivered by or with other institutions by scrutinising a range of papers from approval, monitoring and review activities; various committee papers; the CP Register; the draft CP Handbook and associated intranet pages; and meeting with a range of staff and students from partner institutions.

2.114 In the team's meetings with staff and its reading of the comprehensive reports from institutional and P/CARP approval events, it was clear that the detailed and well documented processes for business planning, legal and financial due diligence, consideration of the overseas regulatory context, adherence to professional standards, and academic approval processes worked well. In particular the care taken when considering the implementation of placement learning in a collaborative partnership was noteworthy (see also subsection 'learning in the workplace'), as was the detailed work and care taken by Boards of Study and FCPCs when approving or revising the module curriculum. Similarly, documentation emerging from interim and periodic reviews indicates a thorough academic and operational scrutiny of the collaborative programmes. Examples of Collaborative Delivery Framework documents were well and thoughtfully populated, and would provide a useful prompt to effective operation of the partnership.

2.115 However, it also became evident that a number of partnerships embedded academic regulations that varied from those of the University or CULC. The CARP itself has delegated authority from QuiLT to approve the partnership arrangements, including the variant regulations, although this delegation appears to contradict the principles

underpinning the University's Regulatory Framework which anticipates that Academic Board itself will consider and approve all Academic Regulations. This matter is addressed in more detail in section A2.1 of this report.

2.116 The team scrutinised the registers of collaborative partnerships with care, being mindful of observations and recommendations regarding the availability and accuracy of the register in QAA's Collaborative Provision Audit of the University in 2009. The team found that the internal register was the more complete version, although it did not acknowledge all doctoral partnerships, and appeared not to have fully captured the dual award nature of some of the provision. The externally available register is dispersed, can only be viewed region by region, and does not contain all the partnerships and awards detailed on the internal register. The University's wish to become known as a 'global university' includes an ambition to significantly grow, from an already large base, the volume of students studying with partners. This was shared several times during the review and reinforces the team's view that an accurate statement of partnerships will be important in informing potential students of the opportunities for study. This matter is addressed further in Expectation C (see also Expectation C).

2.117 Scrutiny of AQM reports and their subsequent consideration at FCPCs and SAGCP reassured the team that although it had not been able to sight records of SAGCP's annual summary report to QuiLT, the annual monitoring process was working effectively at programme and Faculty level. For example, it is apparent that in some regions there have been continuing differences of cultural opinion regarding whether external examiner reports should be shared with students. In discussion, the team was informed that reports will be shared in all partnerships henceforth.

2.118 The AQM process is perhaps more formulaic than C-QEM, seeking answers to specific enquiries, rather than the more narrative style adopted for on-site courses. However, the team formed the opinion that the formulaic approach was fit for purpose in producing reports that permitted a more straightforward Faculty and Institutional comparison. The team learned that the Emirates partnership will pilot the C-QEM process in future to enable the University to make a direct comparison of the two processes in the collaborative environment.

2.119 It was clear from reading and from meetings with partner and University staff and partnership students that the both the Link Tutor and Academic Partnership Manager were crucial in developing a strong working relationship between the University and the partner; for example, link tutors coordinate the moderation of all assessments in partnerships before they are taken, and moderates samples of student work afterwards. The continuity provided by the APU, and the training package for link tutors, was a positive feature. Students asserted that they had a strong voice in their institution, and were confident that feedback from student representatives and from student surveys and module questionnaires was heard and responded to. Partner staff cited the launch of an annual partnership symposium, held at Coventry at the same time as the University's internal learning and teaching conference, as a positive initiative. It permitted partner staff to develop 'intra-partner' networks, and to engage in staff development alongside their Coventry colleagues. The appetite for further cooperation in staff development between Coventry and partners was strong; the aspiration for launching split-site PhD programmes, staff engaging in the University's PgC HE Practice, and the recently launched online PgC International Higher Education Practice being just three examples.

2.120 The review team found the Group Quality Unit and APU intranet pages to be a useful hub of procedural information, particularly for the multiplicity of necessary processes supporting collaborative partnerships. We learned prior to the review that the University had decided to additionally pool all the information regarding collaborative procedures into a

single CP Handbook. At the time of the review the draft was still awaiting final approval from SAGCP, although the team considered the draft to already have much value.

2.121 The draft handbook contains the University's current typology of different collaborative partnerships, which had been developed in response to one of the recommendations from the University's 2009 QAA Collaborative Provision Audit. The typology does not include doctoral partnerships, although it is appreciated that these have been defined elsewhere. It intimates that a dual award may be awarded as part of a franchised or validated arrangement, but does not appear to further define the nature of such an award. In its reading and discussions the team identified a spectrum of models that the University is currently labelling a 'dual award'; from programmes that are jointly designed and delivered by both institutions, through programmes that were largely developed by the partner and are delivered wholly by the partner, but with academic development and other non-teaching support from the University; to programmes that were entirely developed by other parties, and are delivered entirely by the partner. None of these are described in the typology, and indeed only one appears to align with the Chapter B10 definition of a dual award. While all were approved and are recorded as dual awards in the University's CP Register, the team was not able to discern any discussion at validation regarding alignment with the Code's definition of 'awarding bodies together provide a single jointly delivered programme (or programmes) leading to separate awards'.

2.122 The University's current mapping onto Chapter B10 of the Quality Code is labelled 'draft' on the University intranet, although the chapter has been fully operational since early 2014. At discussions in QuiLT in March 2014 it was reported that the way the University engages with Chapter B10 of the Code will need to be reviewed in the light of recent institutional initiatives including the new partnership commissioning model and the internationalisation strategy. SAGCP discussed a new draft mapping of Chapter B10 in July, although the paper does not reflect a consideration of possible implications of the phrase 'jointly delivered'. The team understands that the paper has been promulgated for wider consultation, and thus updated mapping is not yet complete.

2.123 The team found that there did not appear to have been a discussion in the period prior to or at approval as to how the delivery model aligns, or indeed whether there are appropriate reasons for it not to align, with the Quality Code's description of a dual award. The team appreciates that QAA is currently consulting on a new Qualifications Characteristics that may address some of the issues surrounding dual awards, but pending its publication **recommends** that the University review the alignment of the typology of collaborative provision with the Quality Code to define more appropriately the University's contribution to the delivery of dual awards.

2.124 The University's expectation is that its programmes will always be delivered and assessed in the English language, although on the very rare occasions that an exception might be approved, assessment material would be translated for external examiners and University staff. Should the University agree to a collaboration whereby the modules are taught and assessed in a language other than English, the expectation will be that academic staff in the department and external examiners are bilingual. The team learned that only one such arrangement is in place, and that teaching in French occurs at an academic level that does not contribute to the award classification. The award certificate and transcript make proper references to the location of study and the fact that some of the programme was delivered in French.

### **Partnerships for the delivery of research degrees**

2.125 The University has until recently had a number of partnerships with UK and overseas universities in which postgraduate research programmes have been operating in

the partner institution. This type of arrangement did not align with the University's emerging Research Strategy, and all have been terminated. Termination agreements were issued and existing students are being 'taught out' under the terms of the original partnership agreements.

2.126 Split-site and co-tutelle partnerships (which are essentially the same as split-site relationships except that the collaborating institution also confers an award on the student (dual award)) will, however, continue to operate in the new strategy. These are regarded as collaborative arrangements, although the University's normal arrangements for collaborative partnerships are not applied.

2.127 To understand the University's differing approaches to approving collaborative partnerships for research degrees, the review team scrutinised records of Research Committee and partnership approval events, and met a range of staff.

2.128 Research Committee has recently formalised its approach to managing split-site arrangements, so that they may be made for a single student at faculty level, but a more regular institutional arrangement requires University approval and a formal agreement. The associated Split-Site Research Degree Guidelines include a checklist which covers provision for the particular student but lacks the references to core legal safeguards which are found elsewhere. An individual agreement is signed off by the Associate Dean (Research) and Head of Department whereas an institutional arrangement requires a Memorandum of Agreement signed by the DVC Research or the University Director of Research. It is unclear why an individual student should be given less security in terms of the contractual arrangements underpinning his/her study than a group of students.

2.129 The team was also advised of plans at Middle Eastern College (MEC) to develop a split-site PhD arrangement to support the development of their own staff teaching on Coventry programmes and were informed that most of the University's split-site arrangements are of this kind, implying that a formal rigorous approval process would have already taken place. The internal collaborative register did not yet reflect this additional programme at MEC. Discussion at IDP of proposals for a partnership in China to deliver an undergraduate programme stated that 'this proposal would be the first collaborative partnership with them' although SAPG was aware that a split-site PhD had previously been in place and this was confirmed by extracts from an agreement provided to the team. The team was informed that the students involved had suspended their studies and that the agreement had lapsed.

2.130 The University will no doubt wish to ensure that the collaborative nature of a split-site PhD is fully understood and that such awards are appropriately reflected in the collaborative register.

2.131 Co-tutelle arrangements are similar to split-site PhDs but result in a dual award (from Coventry and the partner university) and are subject to a legal agreement prepared by Legal Services and signed by the DVC (Research) or Director of Research. The added value derived from a co-tutelle arrangement, in which the student is supervised by research staff at each partner organisation, was described in terms of access to different research strengths, cultures and travel opportunities. The legal agreement in respect of a current co-tutelle arrangement with an overseas university was shared with the team. This followed a template used by the overseas institution which addressed the key areas of the students' own requirements alongside intellectual property, indemnity and force majeure. The team learned that Coventry had not undertaken due diligence before signing the agreement because firstly the arrangement was for an 'in-bound' student (originally registered with the overseas university), and secondly the overseas university (which had made its own due diligence enquiries into Coventry) was a 'high-ranking' institution of inherently low risk. While a

proportionate approach is to be expected, the team was concerned that Coventry staff had made no checks on the matters indicated in the Quality Code as expectations of due diligence to protect both itself and the student. The team therefore **recommends** that the University reviews the processes for the approval of partnerships to deliver co-tutelle research degrees to ensure that a proportionate due diligence process is always completed.

### **Learning in the workplace**

2.132 The review team read of the University's core value to 'seek to foster excellence, innovation, creativity and enterprise among our students, staff and partner organisations'. In its engagement with the University, the team heard frequently of examples supporting this value, among them its close engagement with employers at every level; the embedding of professional qualifications within academic awards at CUC; the guaranteed internships for CULC students; the embedding of work placements in the partnership with Aegean Omiros College in Greece; and the work of the careers and employability service. This report returns to much of this in its commentary on the Employability theme (see Expectation 4).

2.133 A popular feature of much of the University's provision is its work-related and vocational nature; many programmes embed formal work placements in the curriculum. Each of the four faculties has established a placement team to support students in identifying and undertaking their placements.

2.134 The team explored the arrangements to support students in their placements by meeting with students, staff and employers, scrutinising material prepared to support both students and employers in workplace learning, scrutinising faculty online support material and reading validation reports and programme specifications.

2.135 The handbooks and other documentation prepared by faculties, while bespoke for each sector and programme, was uniformly user-friendly, comprehensive and thorough. Each addressed the preparation of both student and employer before the placement, the development of a learning agreement/code of practice, health and safety risk assessments, academic tutor visits and student assessment.

2.136 Academic staff, support staff and students clearly placed much value on the benefits of placements; not least in enhancing the employability of graduates. Employers in particular described proactive approaches to matching students to the needs of the company and support through the interview and selection process, spoke of positive engagements with visiting tutors, and indicated the sensitivity of help given by the University when placement students had experienced difficulties. A number of employers had returned regularly for further placement students, one large employer regularly placing in excess of 20 students each year.

2.137 In its reading the team noted that overseas partners are beginning to appreciate the value of placement learning, and that the University has already approved one partnership which includes work placements. It was evident from the approval documentation that the University had taken great care not just to scrutinise the procedures to secure placements, but had also audited a number of placement settings that had already been promised.

2.138 The team concluded that the University's effective arrangements and comprehensive support for students undertaking professional placement opportunities is **good practice**.

2.139 In summary, the University's processes for establishing, delivering, monitoring and reviewing provision in partnership with others are comprehensive, in most cases sound, and demonstrate good practice in respect of work-based learning. However, there are a number

of aspects where the processes appear not to align with the Quality Code and therefore the team concludes that while Expectation B10 is met, the associated level of risk is moderate.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Moderate**

**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**

2.140 The University has a relatively small number of research students but its newly approved Research Strategy, Excellence with Impact, will strengthen the research environment and provide a basis for growth in research student numbers, both PhD and Professional Doctorates, the latter building on the University's entrepreneurial approach to teaching. A review of postgraduate provision has led to the realignment of support arrangements for research students and the 'repurposing' of the Academic Board has reaffirmed its responsibility for research and research degree provision.

2.141 The review team explored the provision available to research students and the processes and structures for overseeing it by scrutinising the information, forms and guidance materials on the intranet, reviewing process documentation and committee minutes and papers, and talking with staff and students. The team was unable to meet with any Professional Doctorate students, of whom there are very few.

2.142 Research Committee, chaired by the DVC Research, has delegated responsibility from the Academic Board for postgraduate research degree provision including alignment with the Quality Code. Research Committee receives annual reports from each faculty covering research, the physical environment and the progress and experience of research students. Reference is made to actions in response to the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) and to Research Degree Qualification Rates (RDQR). Research Committee has discussed ways of supporting research student completion and an interim review of student progress after six months is being trialled with first-year PhD students.

2.143 The team learned that a new Research Degrees Subcommittee is to be established, following changes to the Academic Board committee structure arising from the University's response to the 2008 Institutional Audit (see Expectation A2.1). It is envisaged that this subcommittee will undertake the detailed work required to monitor and enhance research degree provision, especially in the light of the plans to increase research student numbers, but the terms of reference are still in draft form and the subcommittee has not yet met. The review team regards the establishment of the subcommittee as key to the oversight of postgraduate research programmes and **affirms** the steps being taken to establish the Research Degrees Subcommittee planned for March 2015 so that it can undertake the responsibilities indicated in the draft terms of reference.

2.144 Students are supported academically by their faculty and administratively by a new team led by the Head of Research Degrees who will in future report through Research Degrees Subcommittee. This co-locates support which was previously dispersed, to facilitate student access; the Graduate Centre is being disbanded. The implementation of Research Degrees Subcommittee is important if this approach is to operate as envisaged.

2.145 Research Centres at faculty and University levels are the focus of the research environment. Information is easily accessible from the website and the brochure Research Opportunities at Coventry outlines key areas of research and the support available to research students. They feel part of a research community with access to seminars

advertised University-wide on the VLE, and to faculty postgraduate symposia: in 2014 the best three presentations from each symposium went forward to a University-level conference.

2.146 Students can seek help from their supervisory team or from the faculty Associate Dean of Research the Postgraduate Tutor, who will intervene in the event of problems in the relationship with the supervisor. Student forums hold meetings and representatives keep in touch with fellow students by email. As a result of student feedback faculties have streamlined the system for obtaining financial support for activities such as conference attendance.

2.147 The entry requirements and timescale for considering applications are clearly articulated on the web, with links to forms and guidance notes for applicants and their referees. Interviews are held face-to-face, by telephone or via video-conference. Students make a research proposal as part of the application process and are supported to refine their research topic during the first year of study. Students confirmed that induction gave them an understanding of the expectations of their programme and that the Guide for Research Students and their Supervisors is comprehensive. Under the heading 'Supporting your academic journey' the website provides links to the main processes, regulations and forms including taught modules and the Progress Review Panel (PRP) procedure.

2.148 Introduction to Research Design and Writing is a compulsory module and students have access to other modules including many from master's programmes. Generic skills provision is delivered by the team who provide the Global Leadership Programme and were part of the former Graduate Centre. The opportunities are outlined in the Guide for Research Students and their Supervisors and in a detailed handbook of Postgraduate Skills Workshops. The Research and Key Skills Logbook supports student development through the PhD and is aligned to the Research Council's UK Framework for skills. Students are very positive about the structured approach which this provides to their PhD. They appreciate the support available from library staff and find taught modules well supported on the VLE. This is an area which will fall within the oversight of Research Degrees Subcommittee.

2.149 The supervisory team consists of an experienced Director of Studies and a secondary supervisor. The Guide for Research Students and their Supervisors sets out their responsibilities and the Research and Key Skills Logbook includes a form for students to prepare for supervisions and then record the outcomes. Students confirmed that meetings are held fortnightly with the notes being forwarded to the central team (previously the Graduate Centre) either at the time or with the annual PRP documentation.

2.150 Comprehensive staff development is available for supervisors; in 2014 training was made mandatory for new supervisors with compulsory attendance at at least one further course each year. Independent chairs of vivas also have training which is now mandatory. Research Committee has discussed the need for take-up of training to be monitored; the review team was informed that this would fall within the remit of the new postgraduate support team and training is also included in the terms of reference of the forthcoming Research Degrees Subcommittee. Postgraduates engaged in teaching have access to the Introduction to Teaching in Higher Education course which gives Associate Fellowship of the HEA. This too has been made mandatory and the University will wish to ensure that attendance is monitored and that postgraduates engaged in teaching are appropriately supported.

2.151 PRP provides an annual opportunity to review each student's progress. The process is documented with a timeline, a flowchart and a submission form and is well understood by students who find it a constructive experience. There is a formal decision and reporting structure, an appeal process and provision for deferral due to extenuating

circumstances. The student receives a detailed account of any actions required to improve his/her progress and records are kept in the Academic Registry.

2.152 University Research Committee and (when established) Research Degrees Subcommittee have responsibility for the quality assurance of research degrees. A planned review of the PhD framework in 2013-14 was postponed to 2014-15 and a document was shared with the review team which provides for the approval of new programmes and changes to existing ones. Staff recognised the concept of 'programme specification review' but it did not appear that a confirmed process is yet fully in place. This is a further area to which the implementation of Research Degrees Subcommittee will be essential.

2.153 The MPhil/PhD/Professional Doctorate regulatory framework, available on the website, sets out the assessment processes and credit requirements. There is a comparable framework for research master's programmes. Programme specifications define the learning outcomes to be achieved, aligned with the FHEQ (see also section A3.3), and staff regard these as the definitive statement of standards.

2.154 The regulations provide for the appointment of internal and external examiners and of an independent chair of a viva. Provision is made for reporting in the case of disagreement between viva panel members. Guidance to external examiners refers to the requirement for a doctorate to show originality and this is referenced in the examiners' initial report form which permits the viva to proceed. Neither this nor the final report form references the learning outcomes and it is unclear how an external examiner might be informed of those relevant to the programme in question. The example provided of a completed final report form lacked detail although the team was informed that further information would be appended to the report. The University may wish to consider how to articulate more explicitly to examiners the University's expectations of a doctoral award and to ensure that the rationale for award decisions is clearly recorded. Awards are recommended by the examination panel to the Chair of Research Committee who in turn passes the file to the Vice-Chancellor. It is unclear how the Academic Board or its committees exercise oversight of award decisions and this is something the University will wish to clarify.

2.155 The Guide for Research Students and their Supervisors includes information about complaints and appeals processes which are the same as for all other students at the University, but not all postgraduates feel confident about raising concerns. The team was provided with a list recording one complaint and four appeals in 2013-14 and the University will wish the Research Degrees Subcommittee to maintain oversight of this as part of its responsibility for quality.

2.156 The review team concluded that, while the implementation of the new Research Degrees Subcommittee will be essential to its ongoing oversight, the provision of postgraduate research programmes generally meets Expectation B11 and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

2.157 In reaching a judgement about the quality of learning opportunities, the review team considered a significant range of University documentation and met with students and staff from both the University and a selection of its collaborative partners.

2.158 Of the 11 Expectations in this area, all are met and the associated risks are either moderate or low; the team identified a number of recommendations primarily to clarify and articulate existing arrangements and to review the alignment of the typology of collaborative provision in respect of dual awards. It also drew attention to three areas of good practice relating to the University's contribution to the student learning experience and to its use of management information in monitoring its programmes.

2.159 At the same time the review team identified good practice in the area of the provision of professional placement activities both directly and with its partners, including the support provided for students to undertake the large range of placements which are available.

2.160 The review team found that the provider had considered the formal requirements of these sections of the Quality Code and had ensured that it was possible to demonstrate compliance with the broad Expectations and its engagement with the Indicators which inform these Expectations. It concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the University **meets** UK expectations.

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

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

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

#### **Findings**

3.1 Information about the mission, values and strategy of Coventry University (CU) and its subsidiaries is provided on its website in the form of the Corporate Plan. Further information about governance is also provided on the CU website including the minutes of the Board of Governors (although not for the current year), information about Intellectual Property Rights, Reports and Financial Statements, and CU's Freedom of Information Policy. Programme specifications are easy to locate.

3.2 Admission processes are explained very clearly on the CU, Coventry University College (CUC) and Coventry University London Campus (CULC) websites. Key Information Set (KIS) widgets are embedded in course admissions pages where appropriate. Extensive information is provided on the websites about the support available to prospective students, how equality of opportunity is assured, and careers. However, the current version of the Admissions Policy document was not available on the websites and the review team **recommends** that the University publishes the current Admissions Policy on the websites of Coventry University College (CUC) and Coventry University London Campus (CULC) and creates procedures to ensure that it is always publicly available (see also Expectation B2).

3.3 CU/CUC/CULC students have online access to standardised faculty handbooks (including prior to enrolment) and course handbooks. Once enrolled they have access to a Module Information Directory and to information about their current modules on the VLE. Mutual expectations are set out in the form of a Student Charter although this does not appear on the website and is not given prominence on the student portal or Students' Union website which was last reviewed in 2012. Students have easy access to University Regulations and information about resources, feedback and representation through the CU student portal. External examiners' reports are available to students on faculty intranets.

3.4 CU sets out its quality management framework in the Group Quality Unit pages on the staff intranet portal. Management information is compiled by the Planning Office and is used to support annual and periodic review at the programme level as well as to inform the senior management team and the central University committees. The Registry pages contain an Information Strategy (2008), an Information Security Policy (2014), a Website Policy (updated 2014), an Archive Policy (2010), a Freedom of Information Publication Scheme, a Data Protection Policy and additional information-related documents including, for example, guidance to staff on writing references for students. The Academic Partnerships Unit keeps records of collaborative provision and monitors the data on partner websites. Marketing and Communications control the CU websites while partners have to obtain approval in advance for materials used for recruitment and marketing of CU-approved provision.

3.5 Student achievement is recorded in the form of certificates and transcripts issued by CU. Non-academic achievement is not currently recorded but there are plans to develop a Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR).

3.6 The team tested the Expectation by examining the websites and intranets of CU/CUC/CULC, the information policy documents and examples of management information in use, and the websites of collaborative partners. Meetings were held with a cross-section of academic staff and students, including from partner organisations, at which the team asked about the quality, accuracy and accessibility of information.

3.7 The team concluded that information for the public is good although information about governance on the CUC and CULC websites is limited. Information on partner websites is accurate and partner staff are aware of their responsibility to secure CU approval of all publicity material. However, although there is a largely accurate register of collaborative provision on the Academic Partnership Unit intranet, the lists of partners by region published on the CU website was at the time of the review incomplete, did not identify partnerships by type or status (current and being discontinued) and in one case was geographically misleading. Part C of the Quality Code makes reference to the wider information requirements placed on English universities by HEFCE, defining the baseline information regarding collaborative partnerships that a university should publish. The review team **recommends** that the University meets its obligations to make information regarding its collaborative partnerships publicly available for potential students and in so doing implements the recommendation of the QAA Collaborative Provision Audit 2009 to make publicly available an accurate register of its collaborative partnerships (see also Expectation B10).

3.8 Information for prospective students is of good quality and the websites of CU/CUC/CULC are differentiated effectively to target different markets. However, on the CULC website support information is targeted exclusively at international students and does not contain advice for students with disabilities. For current students provision of information is partly devolved to faculties but can easily be accessed from the student portals. Faculty, department, course and module information is often of high quality, including advice on such issues as professional behaviour on placement and on social media. Student handbooks are clear, detailed and up to date including those provided in collaborative provision. The Student Charter is clear and well designed, although student awareness of it is low. Students are happy with the quality of information. Students reported that the search engine on the CU website was not very efficient and the VLE tended to be slow; the University is aware of these issues and has made efforts to address them. Student representatives also feel that feedback to students on the outcome of module evaluation could be improved.

3.9 Information for staff on the CU/CUC/CULC and faculty portals is generally good although the portals vary in design and content. There are a lot of materials on the CU staff portal including high-quality online resources to support personal tutoring. Staff felt they were kept up to date with changes in policies and procedures through briefings by Registry. The team considered the process diagrams provided on the Group Quality Unit intranet page for annual monitoring, periodic review and so on to be particularly helpful.

3.10 Recording of achievement is satisfactory including for collaborative provision, with the location and language of study clearly identified.

3.11 Information policies and the management information provided are fit for purpose. The team saw evidence of the effective use of management information in the course performance data reports presented to Quality in Learning and Teaching Committee (QuiLT), in the annual CU Course Quality and Enhancement Monitoring (C-QEM) process, and in annual faculty quality reports to QuiLT. The team noted the course performance report data packs compiled by the Planning Office to inform C-QEM which they consider **good practice** (also see Expectation B8). The metrics-driven module recovery process recently adopted at CUC was also felt to be highly effective.

3.12 The team concludes that Expectation C 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

3.13 In reaching a judgement on the accuracy, integrity and completeness of published information, the review team scrutinised a range of documentation (both published in hard copy and via electronic media) made available to prospective, current and former students and other stakeholders. The review team also explicitly considered the requirement of the Wider Information Set, and publication of external examiner reports as well as reflecting upon the implementation of a Student Charter by the provider. While attention was given to compliance with statutory requirements as relates to data protection, the provision and security of personal information and the expectations of the Freedom of Information Act, these fell outside the direct scrutiny of the review.

3.14 The review team found that the University had considered the formal requirements of this aspect of the Quality Code, and had ensured that it was possible to demonstrate its compliance with the broad Expectation and its engagement with the Indicators informing that Expectation. The University has provided stakeholders with appropriate levels of information and ensured that it is accurate, with approval mechanisms for published information, both internally and with collaborative partner organisations.

3.15 The team therefore concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the University **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 University's strategic approach to enhancement is evident through its Course Quality Enhancement and Monitoring process which is deliberately linked to the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy. The University's approach is not officially documented but the enhancement of the student experience can be seen through the comprehensive use of management information, and feedback from external examiners, employers and students, all of which are seen as key drivers to enable the institution to take steps to embed quality enhancement. The University's commitment to employability and its internationalisation links is clearly demonstrated across the University.

4.2 The review team analysed how the University operates its approach to enhancement by reviewing a number of documents including the corporate plan, reviews, reports, strategies and action plans. The team also discussed enhancement in meetings with the Vice-Chancellor, academic and support staff, students, and student representatives.

4.3 The review team saw a number of examples of enhancement activities that were both strategically driven by the University and had arisen from feedback gathered through the C-QEM processes. For instance, the University has embedded its commitment to employability across its programmes, and is an integral theme to the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy. The strategic approach to developing employability includes offering free placement opportunities, the embedding of credit-bearing Add+Vantage modules and the comprehensive support provided through the Employability Units at Faculty level and the Careers and Employability Centre. Further to this, the University places an emphasis on the international focus of its employability agenda. Through the provision of free language support classes and the opportunities to work, study and volunteer abroad, the University is dedicated to developing global leaders. This is further demonstrated in the Global Leaders Project offered to postgraduate students and high-achieving undergraduates. Here, students are required to demonstrate their global mindset, capabilities and competencies. The University has also embarked on an Online International Learning (OIL) project. This enables students studying at overseas partner institutions to work together collaboratively on a project with students based at the Coventry campus. The review team considers the explicit link which the University establishes between internationalisation and the enhancement of student employability through outward mobility as **good practice**.

4.4 The C-QEM process is integral to enhancement at programme level. The management data, which includes NSS, DLHE (Good Prospects), progression and attainment data, is presented to course teams from the Planning Office. The C-QEM documentation is deliberately mapped against the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy to ensure a coordinated approach to the University's strategic objectives, across the institution. QuiLT receives annual faculty quality reports as well as an assurance report on the effectiveness of the C-QEM process itself. The assurance report provides an overview of issues and actions identified at University level and the subsequent action plan which is monitored at future meetings. While C-QEM is used at CU and CULC, CUC and collaborative partner institutions use an equally comprehensive Annual Quality Report process.

4.5 The review team saw evidence that staff were committed to the continuous improvement and enhancement of the student experience through sharing good practice and staff development. The annual two-day Teaching and Learning Conference 'Celebrating Excellence: Inspiring Futures' and Partnership Symposium are used to share innovation and provide an opportunity for international partners to contribute to the development of Coventry University's Education Strategy for 2015 onwards. The Students' Union is invited to contribute to the sessions at the Conference and lead on the Teaching and Learning Awards. The team was advised of plans to consider how best to facilitate additional opportunities for staff in overseas providers to share practice.

4.6 The Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education Practice, which is endorsed by the Higher Education Academy, is compulsory for all new staff. A Postgraduate Certificate in International Higher Education is being developed to support staff in collaborative provision.

4.7 The University has recently developed a Disruptive Media Lab (see also Expectation B3) based in the library. The initiative is designed to explore new methods of teaching and pedagogy and evaluate its effectiveness and impact on learning before sharing more widely. The space is accessible to staff and students and is designed for collaborative working too. Staff are able to apply for funding to support such developments in learning and teaching projects and while it is still in its infancy, both students and staff appear very positive about the investment.

4.8 On the basis of its consideration of documentation, and meetings with staff, students and employers, the review team concludes that the University is taking appropriate measures to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities and therefore meets the Expectation with an associated low level of risk.

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

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

4.9 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The review team was able to conclude that the University takes deliberate steps to improve the quality of student learning opportunities. This is evidenced by: reference to the key drivers that enable the institution to take steps to embed quality enhancement through review of their provision, including feedback from external examiners, employers and students as well as the comprehensive use of management information, for example in the C-QEM process. The review team identified good practice where it has established explicit links between internationalisation and the enhancement of student employability opportunities, both of which are examples of its strategic approach.

4.10 Therefore, the review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the University **meets** UK expectations.

## 5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

### Findings

5.1 Student employability is a key driver at Coventry University. Employability is a key theme within the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy and its DLHE results are typically strong, rising in recent years, and the University has recently received the award for most Entrepreneurial University of the Year. Employability and its international links are clearly embedded throughout the University.

5.2 The University has its own commercial recruitment agency, 'thefutureworks', which is designed to offer flexible temporary and permanent recruitment solutions across all sectors and at all levels; it supports undergraduates, postgraduates and alumni to find employment.

5.3 The University engages with employers and external specialists in a number of ways. The University hosts Employer Advisory Panels which provide the University with an effective mechanism to receive information on employer and business requirements and seek feedback on programme development. Further, employers and external specialists are engaged in programme approval and development via External Expert Reports. The review team met a range of employers, who spoke positively about the University's commitment and responsiveness to its needs and interests. Employers provided examples of effective student engagement during work placements, as well as instances of partnership working with the University to identify and respond to the needs of the local economy. For instance, a collaborative project, supported by HEFCE, between the University and local employer Unipart will result in the creation of a new international centre of engineering and manufacturing excellence. The centre is designed to develop new undergraduate and postgraduate programmes within the discipline and contribute to product development and research activity.

5.4 Employment Units based in each Faculty support students throughout their academic programmes, with a particular focus on placement support. The University has taken the deliberative approach of focused subject-specific support and guidance, via the Employment and Placement Units, at Levels 4 and 5, with students supported by the Careers and Employability service at Level 6. The Careers and Employability Service is centred on supporting the transition from higher education to graduate employment, providing CV and interview support as well as delivering a programme of careers events and employer presentations on campus. The Careers and Employability Service is only available to Coventry University students.

5.5 Placements are prioritised across the University, with students being offered free placement opportunities. Students on placement are well supported before and during their placement, by the department and partner organisation. The University makes use of learning agreements, undertakes risk assessments and makes regular visits to the students in their respective workplace. The University's commitment to work placements has extended to collaborative provision with one overseas partnership with an approved work placement. At CULC and CUC, programmes are also designed to support students' employability prospects. At CULC, all undergraduate students are guaranteed a work experience opportunity, while postgraduate students are guaranteed an internship or employer-consulting project opportunity. CUC programmes are, wherever possible, designed around the qualifications of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) which underpin the content and therefore enable the student to graduate with an academic and professional award.

5.6 In addition to placement activity, undergraduate students are supported to identify and develop employability skills through Add+Vantage modules embedded within all programmes, with the exception of those programmes with PSRB requirements. All Add+Vantage modules are credit bearing and focus on employability, entrepreneurship and the development of new skills. Students studying at CULC have access to the Get Ahead and High Flyers schemes, although these are exclusive and participation is based on academic attainment.

5.7 The Global Leaders programme is focused on preparing postgraduate students to 'become the leaders of tomorrow' and develop a global mindset. The programme is not formally assessed; however, students receive a certificate that formally recognises their commitment to developing global capabilities and competencies. The global theme within employability is integrated into employability in a number of other ways. The Centre for Global Engagement, formally known as the International Experience and Mobility Service, provides opportunities for study, work and volunteering abroad. These include international projects and free language classes through the Linguae Mundi programme. Students are supported financially via a bursary, awarded through the International Experience Grant. The University has also embarked on an Online International Learning (OIL) project. This allows students studying at overseas partner institutions to work together collaboratively on a project with students based at the Coventry campus.

5.8 Overall, the review team recognises the University's commitment to employability and its international links.

## 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 29 to 32 of the [Higher Education Review 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

### **Enhancement**

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

### **Expectations**

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

### **Flexible and distributed learning**

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

See also **distance learning**.

### **Framework**

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

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

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

### **Good practice**

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

### **Learning opportunities**

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

### **Learning outcomes**

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

### **Multiple awards**

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

### **Operational definition**

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

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

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

### **Programme specifications**

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

### **Public information**

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

### **Quality Code**

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

### **Reference points**

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

### **Subject Benchmark Statement**

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

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

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

### **Threshold academic standard**

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

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

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

### **Widening participation**

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

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