



# Higher Education Review of Hugh Baird College

May 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 Hugh Baird College. The review took place from 19 to 21 May 2015 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Ms Colette Coleman
- Dr Elaine Crosthwaite
- Mr Mark Napier (student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Hugh Baird College and to make judgements as to whether or not its academic standards and quality meet UK expectations. These expectations are the statements in the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) (the Quality Code)<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 Hugh Baird College, 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/quality-code](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code).

<sup>2</sup> Higher Education Review themes: [www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=106](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=106).

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

<sup>4</sup> Higher Education Review 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 Hugh Baird College

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Hugh Baird College.

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

### Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at Hugh Baird College.

- The comprehensive and robust approach to curriculum development including effective mentoring, targeted staff development and the internal validation process (Expectations A3.1, B1 and B3).
- The comprehensive interview procedure and effective use of 'keep warm' postcards to widen participation by providing targeted information, advice and guidance to all prospective students at key points of the application process (Expectations B2 and C).
- The wide range of effective mechanisms for academic staff to observe and share experiences of teaching and learning and disseminate good practice which enhances the delivery of programmes (Expectations B3, Enhancement).
- The effective implementation of the Progression Strategy to enable student transition into higher education and employment (Expectation B4).
- The wide-ranging initiatives and support that raise student aspirations and enable students to achieve their academic, personal and professional potential (Expectation B4).
- The diverse range of mechanisms that provide effective oversight of workplace learning which enhances students' employability skills (Expectation B10).
- The strategic approach to enhancement which has contributed to a distinct higher education ethos and demonstrable commitment to the continuous improvement of student learning opportunities (Expectation Enhancement).

### Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following actions that Hugh Baird College is already taking to make academic standards secure and improve the educational provision offered to its students.

- The steps being taken to further develop student engagement, including the creation of a higher education Students' Union and the development of formal training for student representatives (Expectation B5).
- The work underway to develop standardised assessment documentation for validated provision (Expectation B6).
- The actions being taken to implement the Plagiarism and Academic Malpractice Policy to ensure the extension of plagiarism-detection software across all higher education courses (Expectation B6).

- The steps being taken to further disseminate the good practice identified in external examiners' reports (Expectation B7).

## **Theme: Student Employability**

The College Higher Education Strategy has a primary focus on the development of vocational expertise, with an emphasis on employability and regeneration of the local economy embedded in all course provision. The recent expansion of provision has been underpinned by consideration of student employability. The College has strong links with local industry in the Liverpool City Region, and targets new course development to support growing industries which offer employment opportunities for graduates. The College's commitment to raising the aspiration of local students is an important element in its approach to developing employability, and all higher education students experience work-based learning. The College has implemented a progression strategy to enable students to progress from Level 3 into higher education and subsequently into employment. Awarding bodies' course approval panels have identified a wide range of good practice related to employability, including a strong industry focus with employability embedded in several modules. The College process of planning and development is informed by labour market analysis and by engaging with employers to ensure that the College responds to changing market needs in a timely and effective way. Employers are actively involved in course design and delivery, for example as guest speakers and workplace mentors.

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

## **About Hugh Baird College**

Hugh Baird College (the College) is based in Bootle, Liverpool. It is a medium-sized general further education college with a mission 'to inspire, challenge and transform lives'. The local area has high levels of deprivation and the College is located in a neighbourhood that is within the 1.1 per cent most deprived in the country. The main focus of the College's Higher Education Strategy is on teaching and learning, and the development of vocational expertise.

Since 2012, the development and growth of higher education provision has been a strategic priority for the College. This has been reflected in the appointment of a Dean of Higher Education in May 2012, a restructure of the management team supporting the Dean, and the opening of the University Centre in January 2014.

At the time of its Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review (IQER) by QAA in 2011, the College had 229 higher education students. It now has 435 students on higher education programmes.

The College offers a range of foundation degrees, honours 'top-up' courses, a Foundation Entry BA (Hons) and PGCE/Cert Ed teaching courses. Programmes are offered across a wide range of curriculum areas including Creative Industries, Business and Management, Health and Social Care, Education, Information Technology, Hospitality, and Festival Management. The College delivers validated and franchised programmes as part of its longstanding relationships with two awarding bodies: the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) and Edge Hill University. The College is also in the process of developing a new partnership with Liverpool John Moores University to offer maritime courses.

The College has identified a number of key challenges facing its higher education provision, including: managing the growth of its higher education provision and ensuring it has the

infrastructure to support it; continuing to grow in the face of increasing competition for higher education students; managing and enhancing the student experience within the context of a further education college; and establishing a higher education culture both academically and socially.

The College has made good progress with the recommendations and further development of good practice made in the IQER. The new higher education management structure and the growing emphasis on staff development, employer contributions and support for students have considerably enhanced the higher education provision.

## Explanation of the findings about Hugh Baird College

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

# **1 Judgement: The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Findings**

1.1 The College's framework for the maintenance of academic standards is governed by the requirements of its two awarding bodies. In terms of the number of courses delivered by the College, the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) is the principal partner and validates or franchises the majority of courses. In action, three foundation degrees are franchised from Edge Hill University (EHU). The College provision is able to meet the requirements of the FHEQ and take account of the foundation degree qualification benchmark and Subject Benchmark Statements since it is assured through the approval and validation processes of the awarding bodies, and subsequently confirmed by external examiners. Course proposals for validation must satisfy the requirements set out in the UCLan Course Development Guide which includes demonstrating that course design and content take account of the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements. The College prepares the programme specification and module descriptors, and the alignment of learning outcomes with the relevant qualification descriptor is checked during the validation process. For franchised courses, the relevant awarding body takes full responsibility for ensuring that the College provision complies with reference points for academic standards. The College's processes meet Expectation A1 in theory.

1.2 The team reviewed the effectiveness of these practices and procedures by examining partnership agreements, approval and validation documentation, external examiners' reports, and programme specifications. The team also held meetings with senior staff and teaching staff.

1.3 The evidence reviewed shows the procedures to be effective in practice. The College works effectively with its awarding bodies to maintain academic standards and has a range of processes in place to support these activities. These include oversight and support for new course developments by the Dean of Higher Education, Higher Education Academic Leads (HEALs), and Curriculum Development Nurture Groups. There are well established internal processes for the development of new courses that guide course teams on levels, learning outcomes, benchmarks and the preparation of course documentation. Programme specifications clearly state the levels of the FHEQ and associated credits, and make reference to relevant subject and the *Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark*.

1.4 The College maintains standards in teaching and assessment through internal moderation and regular monitoring with reference to reports from external examiners. External examiners' reports confirm that the qualifications are positioned at an appropriate level of the FHEQ and take account of relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. Action plans arising from external examiners' reports are tracked through internal quality assurance processes which ensure that actions are completed.

1.5 While the awarding bodies have ultimate responsibility through their own regulatory frameworks for ensuring that the relevant external reference points are adhered to, there is significant evidence that the College effectively manages its own responsibilities for doing this within its partnership agreements, in particular through its own internal processes, including effective oversight and support, for new course developments. This is confirmed through a variety of mechanisms including approval and validation events held by the awarding bodies and the conclusions from external examiners' reports. The review team therefore concludes 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**

1.6 The College operates within the academic frameworks and arrangements of its awarding bodies, which are set out in partnership agreements. These indicate that the College must deliver courses in accordance with the university's academic regulations and any conditions set at the approval event. The College has delegated responsibilities to undertake assessment activities that contribute to the award of academic credit and qualifications.

1.7 The College's role in securing academic standards varies according to whether a course is validated or franchised by the awarding body. The arrangements for implementing the requirements of the awarding bodies are set out in the Higher Education Quality Handbook and Higher Education Assessment Policy. The College has a committee structure, in which the Higher Education Quality Group has operational oversight for standards and quality assurance, and makes recommendations to the Higher Education Strategy Group and the Curriculum and Quality Committee as appropriate. At corporation level, the Quality and Standards Committee (QSC), chaired by a governor, is the overarching body responsible for the standards and quality of the curriculum. The College's arrangements are subject to regular scrutiny by the awarding bodies through annual monitoring and the work of external examiners. The College's processes meet Expectation A2.1 in theory.

1.8 The team reviewed the effectiveness of these practices and procedures by examining academic frameworks and regulations, partnership agreements, terms of reference and minutes of key committees, student handbooks, programme specifications, module descriptors, external examiners' reports, and the College's implementation of actions arising from the reports. The team also held meetings with teaching staff and senior staff.

1.9 The evidence reviewed shows the procedures to be effective in practice. The College has appropriate and effective academic governance arrangements through its committee structure. The Higher Education Strategy Group provides oversight of academic matters supported by the Higher Education Quality Group. The team saw clear evidence that recommendations made by the Higher Education Quality Group are considered by the Higher Education Strategy Group, and then by the QSC at corporation level. Teaching staff whom the team met also gave examples of academic matters being resolved by the Higher Education Quality and Strategy Groups. Monitoring through the committee structure and by the i-Action Plan enables the senior management team to ensure that academic standards are secure.

1.10 Programme specifications clearly state the assessment frameworks and regulations that apply to courses. Through their close working relationships with awarding body representatives, staff whom the team met confirmed that they have a clear understanding of the relevant academic frameworks and regulations. External examiners' reports show that assessment is undertaken in a fair and appropriate manner, and in accordance with the frameworks and regulations of the awarding bodies.

1.11 The awarding bodies have overall responsibility for academic frameworks and regulations. In discharging its own responsibilities, the College operates a clear framework for the award of credit and qualifications and has processes governing assessment that meet the requirements of its two awarding bodies. Therefore, within the context of the partnership agreements with the awarding bodies, the review team concludes that the College's arrangements meet the Expectation in theory and in practice and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

**Findings**

1.12 For franchised provision, the awarding bodies produce and maintain definitive records in the form of programme specifications. For courses validated by UCLan, the College prepares the programme specification and module descriptors, and the alignment of learning outcomes with the relevant qualification descriptor is checked during the validation process. Responsibility for maintaining the specifications is shared between the College and the awarding body. Programme specifications and module descriptors clearly specify the aims and structure of the programme, learning outcomes, assessment methods, teaching and learning methods, and admissions criteria including considerations relating to the recognition of prior learning. Programme specifications are outlined in student handbooks and on the College virtual learning environment (VLE), while details of module descriptors are provided in campus and module handbooks. These approaches allow the College to meet Expectation A2.2 in theory.

1.13 The team reviewed the effectiveness of these practices and procedures by examining programme specifications and module descriptors and their role in internal quality assurance procedures, programme and module handbooks and the VLE. The team also met students, teaching and support staff, and senior staff.

1.14 The evidence reviewed showed the practices and procedures to be effective in practice. Programme specifications and module descriptors are comprehensive and clearly articulate relevant information such as course aims, learning outcomes and assessment methods. The team saw evidence that this information, along with course and assessment regulations, is clearly laid out in handbooks and on the VLE. Students and teaching staff whom the team met were aware of where to find the information available and how it was used in programme and module delivery.

1.15 Within its partnership agreements, the College effectively fulfils its responsibilities for producing and maintaining definitive records. The review team therefore concludes that the College meets Expectation A2.2 both in theory and in practice 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**

1.16 Apart from its franchised provision which is designed and approved by the awarding bodies, the College designs and approves its own programmes which are subsequently validated by UCLan (see also paragraphs 2.1 and 2.2). This process is outlined in the New Course Development Flowchart, which includes the formal approval of an initial proposal by the Higher Education Strategy Group. Once approved, the Dean of Higher Education and the Higher Education Quality Officer closely oversee course developments. In addition, the HEAL Standards and the Curriculum Development Group mentor course teams who also work closely with University link tutors throughout the process. The College has its own internal validation panel process to prepare staff and ensure new programmes are scrutinised prior to validation events with UCLan.

1.17 All new course proposals must satisfy criteria for academic standards as set out in awarding bodies' documentation. Validation processes require teams to take account of FHEQ, Subject Benchmark Statements, and the Quality Code in course design and the development of programme learning outcomes. Programme specifications are produced for each award in accordance with Academic Regulations. Academic regulations and quality assurance handbooks outline procedures and provide templates which govern how qualifications are awarded. The College has also produced its own Higher Education Quality Handbook to outline how it operates in relation to its awarding partners. These processes enable the College to meet Expectation A3.1 in theory.

1.18 The team reviewed the effectiveness of these practices and procedures by examining documentation relating to programme approval, internal and external validation events, partnership agreements, programme specifications, and the Quality Handbook. The team also held meetings with senior staff, teaching staff, and students.

1.19 The team found that the processes for programme approval work effectively. When designing and approving programmes for validation, the College demonstrates a comprehensive awareness of the FHEQ and relevant Subject Benchmark Statements, and learning outcomes are appropriately matched to the qualification descriptors and meet the academic frameworks of its validating universities. Validation reports confirm that the College meets the academic requirements of its awarding bodies.

1.20 The team saw evidence of an appropriate level of externality in panel membership of validation events run by the awarding bodies. The College also takes account of feedback from employers and students throughout the stages of programme design and approval, for example focus groups being held for students to provide input into new Dance and Graphics degrees.

1.21 The College has an effective approach to curriculum development (see paragraphs 2.4 to 2.5). Responsibilities are clearly defined and staff are trained and supported to carry out design and approval tasks. The review team considers the comprehensive and robust approach to curriculum development, including effective mentoring, targeted staff

development and the internal validation process, to be **good practice** (see also Expectations B1 and B3).

1.22 Within the context of the partnership agreements with its awarding bodies, the evidence from documentation and meetings clearly shows that the College is effectively fulfilling its responsibilities for programme approval to ensure that each of its qualifications is allocated to the appropriate level of the FHEQ and takes account of relevant benchmark statements. The approval processes are embedded within the College, understood by staff and adequately informed by external influences. The team found the comprehensive and robust approach to curriculum development to be good practice. Therefore, the review team concludes that Expectation A3.1 is met both in design and operation 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**

1.23 The awarding bodies set the academic standards for their awards and confirm through approval panels that courses operate at or above threshold standards. All course proposals must satisfy explicit criteria as set out by the awarding bodies to test whether modules, courses and qualifications satisfy academic frameworks and regulations. Each module specifies an assessment strategy which ensures students meet minimum expectations for awards. The College carries out assessments in accordance with the awarding partners' assessment policies. Course approval panels also check whether the assessment process is appropriate and effective in enabling students to demonstrate achievement of the intended learning outcomes. The awarding bodies have responsibility for ensuring that student achievement of learning outcomes receives academic credit through moderation internally and by external examiners. Assessment boards are convened by the awarding bodies, and the College introduced its own subject boards in 2014 to approve assessment decisions before they are reported to the awarding bodies. These procedures allow the College to meet Expectation A3.2 in theory.

1.24 The team reviewed the effectiveness of these practices and procedures by examining documentation including course and module handbooks, academic frameworks and regulations, partnership agreements, and the VLE. The team also held meetings with senior staff, teaching staff, and students.

1.25 The evidence reviewed showed the policies and procedures to be effective in practice. The team saw evidence that robust mechanisms exist to ensure that assessment is fair and appropriate, and enables achievement of learning outcomes. Reports from external examiners and collaborative visits are positive and confirm the fair and consistent operation of assessment procedures, as well as the successful achievement of learning outcomes and academic standards in students' work. Relevant information for students about processes and regulations is clearly set out in handbooks and the VLE, while assessment grades are added to the student record system and discussed with students during tutorials.

1.26 The evidence from documentation and meetings clearly shows that the College is effectively managing its responsibilities for the award of credit and qualifications. The assessment methods and assignments provide appropriate opportunities for students to achieve the learning outcomes. This is confirmed by evidence from external examiners' reports. Therefore, the review team concludes that Expectation A3.2 is met both in design and operation 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**

1.27 The College follows the awarding bodies' processes for programme monitoring and review and also has its own effective internal processes. The Higher Education Quality Handbook outlines the approaches taken by the College in respect of programme monitoring and review. College staff produce course and institutional annual monitoring reports using awarding body templates and action plans each year for discussion and approval at partnership meetings with the awarding bodies. The action plans are monitored through review meetings with awarding partners.

1.28 In addition, the College has its own 'wraparound' process whereby course leaders produce an additional annual monitoring document and course-level quality improvement plans which provide opportunities for greater depth of discussion and peer review each year; these are presented to the Higher Education Quality Group at its autumn internal course review moderation event. Actions in the resulting Quality Improvement Plan are monitored at course committee meetings and any actions deemed to be appropriate for monitoring outside of these meetings are included in the higher education section of the College-wide i-action plan and reviewed monthly by the Vice Principal for Curriculum and Quality, the Dean of Higher Education and the HEALs. The Higher Education Quality Group is responsible for the ongoing monitoring of actions. The Dean produces an overall self-assessment report (SAR) for higher education which is presented to an SAR validation panel comprising members of the Corporation, including the Higher Education Governor and external representation. The Corporation further oversees quality through the Institutional Higher Education Review and the i-action plan, outcomes of which are monitored four times a year. The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality has strategic oversight of annual review processes, while the Dean of Higher Education, HEALs, Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality and College Teaching, and the Learning and Assessment Coordinator critically evaluate the quality of annual reviews and provide feedback to course leaders. All programmes undergo periodic review by the awarding body every five years. The College's own processes and its adherence to those of its awarding bodies enable it to meet Expectation A3.3.

1.29 The effectiveness of the College's practices was tested by examining relevant documentation including annual monitoring and periodic review reports and action plans, and minutes of committee meetings. The team also held meetings with the Principal, teaching staff, senior staff, and students.

1.30 The evidence reviewed showed the procedures to be effective in practice. The College staff maintain good working relationships and clear lines of communication with relevant University staff. Arrangements for programme monitoring and review are robust as confirmed in periodic review reports and commendation letters from UCLan. The College underwent successful periodic reviews with its awarding bodies in 2011 and 2013. The College makes appropriate use of management information to monitor student attainment throughout the year and this is analysed at the Higher Education Quality Group and reported to QSC. The team also saw evidence that annual monitoring and periodic

review processes take appropriate account of feedback from students, external examiners and partner institutions.

1.31 The College also maintains oversight of performance at College level through its monthly meetings of the Curriculum Performance Group. These meetings provide robust monitoring of key performance indicators such as attendance, retention and achievement. At a recent meeting, an issue was identified with retention on a newly validated programme, and the team saw evidence of actions being taken including staff changes, additional support, changes to the curriculum and ongoing monitoring.

1.32 The evidence from documentation and meetings clearly shows that the College has effective systems in place for programme monitoring and review and is operating in accordance with the requirements of its awarding bodies. The review team therefore 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**

1.33 The overall responsibility for obtaining external expertise lies primarily with the awarding bodies, who appoint external examiners to oversee the maintenance of the academic standards of their awards, and engage external members to contribute to approval and validation processes. The College also uses external and independent expertise in programme design and approval and in its quality assurance processes. The College has processes for engaging with external examiners, by review of external examiners' reports, reflection and commentary in annual monitoring reports, reporting to the awarding bodies, and monitoring the actions arising from external examiners' reports. These approaches allow the College to meet Expectation A3.4 in theory.

1.34 The team reviewed the effectiveness of these practices and procedures by examining validation and approval documentation, external examiners' reports, annual monitoring reports and course reviews. The team also held meetings with senior staff, teaching and support staff, employers and students.

1.35 The review team found these processes to work effectively in practice. The College, together with its awarding bodies, makes effective use of external expertise in course development and approval processes and in the maintenance of academic standards. The College has a close and supportive relationship with its awarding bodies who provide external advice to the College during course development and delivery through the appointment of link tutors and subject specialists. The team saw evidence that, as part of validation and review, external advisers comment on the extent to which the standards set are appropriate with reference to the FHEQ and similar awards at other institutions, and approvals panels consist of university staff who are independent of the development process.

1.36 The College's internal processes for new course development clearly set out the requirement for course teams to use external academic advisers. The team saw evidence that external academic and professional expertise has been obtained from a range of sources for recently validated programmes, including the foundation degrees in Creative Make Up Design and Practice, Digital Imaging and Photography, and Contemporary Media Practice. The College has strong relationships with local employers and obtains their expert advice in curriculum development. Employers whom the team met confirmed that they had advised the College on industry and professional body requirements.

1.37 The College makes systematic use of external examiners' reports. External examiners appointed by the awarding bodies provide an independent perspective on student performance and the conduct of assessment processes through attendance at awards boards and in their annual report. The team saw evidence that the College formally considers the external examiners' comments in annual monitoring reports and course reviews, and actions are identified for follow-up in quality improvement plans. The external

examiners' reports confirm that academic standards are being met at appropriate qualification levels.

1.38 The evidence from documentation and meetings shows that the College is effectively managing its responsibilities for maintaining academic standards and making use of external expertise. This is confirmed by external examiners' reports and the team saw evidence of productive relationships with local employers. The review team therefore concludes that the College processes and procedures meet the Expectation and the associated level of risk is low.

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

## The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies: Summary of findings

1.39 In reaching its positive judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published Handbook. All of the Expectations for this judgement area are met and the associated levels of risk are low. The review team makes no recommendations or affirmations in this section. There is one feature of good practice regarding the comprehensive and robust approach to curriculum development including effective mentoring, targeted staff development and the internal validation process (Expectation A3.1). The review team therefore concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies at the College **meets** UK expectations.

## 2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

#### **Findings**

2.1 The College has a clear process for programme design, development and approval which was introduced in 2012 to support the change to a validated model (see also paragraphs 1.16 and 1.17). After consideration of labour market analysis and engagement with key stakeholders, proposals for new courses begin with informal discussions by Directors prior to formal approval by the Higher Education Strategy Group and, subsequently, submission to the relevant committee at each awarding body. The College Directorate and Dean also consider new proposals and this provides strategic oversight of new course development. As well as specific course documentation and programme specifications, Course Leaders also have to produce an academic case and a resource audit. The Curriculum Development Group, chaired by the HEAL Standards, provides operational support and training, and progress with curriculum development is monitored through the Higher Education Quality Group. The Dean of Higher Education oversees the process of internal validation which prepares staff for internal events.

2.2 Once the internal process of programme design and approval has been completed, the College follows the procedures of the awarding bodies and submits the course proposals to the relevant validation panels and committees. The College follows the processes outlined in the Academic Quality and Awards manual, UCLan Course Developers Guide, UCLan Collaborative Provision Policy and Procedures, and the EHU Quality Management handbook. The College's own processes for programme design, development and approval and its adherence to those of its awarding bodies allow it to meet the Expectation in theory.

2.3 The review team considered the effectiveness of these practices and procedures by examining documentation relating to programme design and approval, validation events, partnership agreements, programme specifications and relevant manuals and handbooks. The team also held meetings with senior staff, teaching and support staff, students, and employers.

2.4 The College's processes for programme design, development and approval work effectively in practice (see also paragraphs 1.19 to 1.21). The College has clear and effective procedures and clearly understands the delegated responsibilities set out by its awarding bodies. The College has successfully completed formal validation procedures for its awarding bodies, with the Higher Education Quality Group receiving updates on how the College is meeting conditions/recommendations set by validation panels and fulfilling its responsibilities for monitoring course developments. The review team saw evidence that course development teams liaise closely with the awarding bodies' subject and quality teams, employers, student focus groups and other stakeholders. The College consulted Level 3 students as part of the process of designing programmes and examples were provided of focus groups being held for students to provide input into new dance and graphics degrees.

2.5 Curriculum development responsibilities are clearly defined and the Curriculum Development Group provides operational support and training and allocates mentors with experience of course development to support course leaders. Course development teams and roles are agreed through appraisal and teams are required to make contact with employers early in the process. Staff developing programmes are supported by remission from teaching and through scheduled staff development and briefing events. Effective mentoring is also provided by HEALs and through the various higher education Nurture Groups. Effective oversight is provided by the senior management team, for example through the Dean of Higher Education overseeing the process of internal validation to prepare staff for external validation events. The review team considers the comprehensive and robust approach to curriculum development including effective mentoring, targeted staff development and the internal validation process to be **good practice** (see also Expectations A3.1 and B3).

2.6 The College's comprehensive and robust approach to curriculum development was highlighted as a feature of good practice. There are strong processes in place including internal validation of all programmes prior to validation by awarding bodies, and the course development responsibilities are clearly defined and appropriately resourced. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met in theory and in practice and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.7 The College has clear and transparent Higher Education Admissions Policy and Procedures, which are easily accessible to prospective students via the website and the Higher Education Course Guide. The College runs regular open days and other events related to higher education including a progression week held in April each year. Full-time students apply via UCAS and those wishing to study part-time apply directly via the website. All applicants are interviewed. If support with an application is needed, applicants can make use of the 'request a call back' service which is available via the website. The Admissions Coordinator oversees the higher education admissions process, while course leaders conduct guidance interviews in line with the Higher Education Policy and Procedures. Prospective students and relevant parties are signposted to both UCAS and the Student Loans Company through the website. The College has recently developed an admissions complaints procedure which can be found in the Admissions Policy. The Higher Education Information and Guidance questionnaire is used to monitor and review recruitment activities. New students are provided with a comprehensive Induction Pack including key handbooks. The College has clear and transparent policies and procedures for applications and enrolment and this allows it to meet the Expectation in theory.

2.8 The review team examined the effectiveness of the recruitment, selection and admissions practices by analysing documentation including the Admissions Policy and Procedures. The team also held meetings with students, teaching staff, senior staff and support staff.

2.9 The team found that the policies and procedures for recruitment, selection and admission work effectively in practice. Students reported on the effectiveness of the information provided from application through to induction, particularly the USB memory sticks containing the course and College information.

2.10 The HEAL (Information) reviews the Higher Education Admissions Policy and Procedures annually and this includes validation by the People and Organisational Development Committee. Operational procedures surrounding admissions are also reviewed annually, or as necessary. The Higher Education Admissions Team meet weekly to ensure that any problems can be dealt with swiftly, while the Higher Education Admissions Nurture Group meets monthly to monitor the process, discuss issues and update staff on any developments.

2.11 The interview procedure is comprehensive and works effectively to support students to make optimum choices. The College provides new course leaders with support through training from the HEAL (Information) and opportunities to shadow experienced interviewers. Staff appraisals identify training needs and these are fed into the University Centre staff development plan. Staff are required to use the Higher Education Admissions Interview Record sheet to ensure consistency in the communication of information to prospective students. The team saw evidence of the interview process being strengthened as a result of issues to do with retention on a recently validated programme.

2.12 Students whom the team met were very positive about the interviewing process as an effective way to learn about the College and potential choices. Students also commented on the quality and impartiality of the information, and advice and guidance provided by staff, for example students being encouraged to re-apply after gaining additional skills. In addition, staff whom the team met referred to 'finding the right student for the right course', even if the course is outside their department. Senior staff recognise that an effective interview process is integral to ensuring that prospective students enrol on the most appropriate course, while also fitting in with the widening participation agenda, minimising appeals and supporting retention. To ensure that the College is able to maintain its policy of interviewing all applicants, the team heard that 'group interviews' are being trialled on two courses to supplement individual interviews and, if successful, are likely to be expanded to other courses. Students with additional learning needs are identified and appropriate support is offered at interview. In addition, every student completes an assignment during induction week to provide a diagnostic assessment to identify students who may require additional support.

2.13 The Higher Education Admissions team also use a process for all applicants whereby 'keep warm' postcards are sent to students to ensure they are kept up to date with their obligations between the period of application and enrolment. The postcards clearly detail what actions are required, the date at which they will occur, the location and what items or documents are needed. Students whom the team met spoke enthusiastically about the positive impact the postcards had on overcoming the potential barriers to enrolment, particularly given the proportion of adult returners and non-traditional higher education students. The review team regards the comprehensive interview procedure and effective use of 'keep warm' postcards to widen participation by providing targeted information, advice and guidance to all prospective students at key points of the application process as **good practice** (see also Expectation C).

2.14 The evidence from documentation and meetings shows that the College has recruitment, selection and admissions policies and procedures which adhere to the principles of fair admission. They are transparent, reliable and underpinned by the appropriate organisational structures and processes. The College supports students by offering effective information through the 'keep warm' process and by ensuring all prospective students are interviewed. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met both in design and operation 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**

2.15 The College has a Higher Education Strategy 2015 and a Higher Education Teaching and Learning Strategy 2015-2018, with associated action plans. The primary strategic foci are the development of independent learning, employability and vocational provision to meet local and regional needs. The College has established new structures and posts to support its strategies (see paragraphs 1.7 and 1.9). These include a monthly College-wide Excellence Group and higher education-related Nurture Groups to support staff innovation in delivery and enhancement of the student experience. The Learning and Teaching Nurture Group also provides a mechanism to monitor strategic action plans. The College has a number of mechanisms to review teaching and learning practices including weekly higher education team meetings, module evaluation questionnaires (MEQs), student questionnaires, the National Student Survey (NSS), and a Higher Education Teaching and Learning Committee. The Learning Sets initiative enables course team members to observe their peers and share good practice on a chosen theme. The annual teaching and learning fair, called a Learning Room, is a cross-College event where staff present examples of their teaching practice.

2.16 The Human Resources (HR) Strategy 2012-2015 outlines the College's plans for the development and updating of staff to teach in higher education. The College also operates a higher education teaching observation scheme. A new University Centre has been created and courses are enhanced with guest speakers, industrial visits and work placements. Students have access to information on College policies in student handbooks. The College's processes allow it to meet the Expectation in theory.

2.17 The review team examined the effectiveness of teaching and learning strategies and procedures by considering relevant documentation including the Higher Education Strategy, Teaching and Learning Strategy, HR Strategy, teaching and learning observation scheme, course approval reports, annual monitoring reports, minutes of meetings, and staff development records. The team also held meetings with senior staff, teaching and support staff, employers and students.

2.18 The review team found the strategies and procedures for teaching and learning to work effectively in practice. Students whom the team met spoke enthusiastically about the quality of teaching and support which enables them to develop as independent learners and achieve their potential. Support includes study skills resources given at induction, reasonable adjustments being made where appropriate, and personal tutors to monitor individual and group progress. The team saw significant evidence that the College actively uses course review processes, student feedback and external examiners' reports to review and evaluate learning and teaching practices.

2.19 There is a comprehensive range of schemes and initiatives for academic staff to share experiences of teaching and disseminate good practice. The higher education teaching observation scheme enables the identification of areas for improvement and good practice which are disseminated through staff development events. Examples of good practice identified through observation include the use of resources to enhance learning,



developing independent learning, making links to employability skills, and helping students to recap previous knowledge. Staff whom the team met were very positive about the scheme and its impact in fostering a culture of learning among colleagues. Staff also praised the significant contribution made by HEALs and Nurture Groups to supporting and mentoring them. Examples have included a HEAL delivering a session on approaches to teaching at Level 5 compared with Level 4, and Nurture Groups providing peer support and mentoring to proactively enhance student learning through the VLE. Other effective ways for staff to disseminate good practice are through higher education Learning Sets, a Learning Rooms event and staff development workshops. The review team regards the wide range of effective mechanisms for academic staff to observe and share experiences of teaching and learning and disseminate good practice, which enhances the delivery of programmes, as **good practice** (see also Enhancement).

2.20 The College has effectively supported the recent expansion of the higher education curriculum through significant investment in staffing and staff development (see also paragraph 2.5). As well as the initiatives mentioned in the previous paragraph, the College strongly encourages staff to undertake scholarly activity, through remission from teaching, to inform and enhance teaching and learning, particularly in those curriculum areas that are being developed. The team heard that several members of staff have been actively funded and supported to undertake higher degrees to enable them to support students up to Level 6, while research-informed teaching has contributed to curriculum development and course delivery. The team also heard that scholarly activity has been disseminated through a range of activities including staff journals, a staff-student conference, a photographic exhibition and dissertation training workshops. UCLan has commended the College for the development of staff expertise to support the provision and the student-centred design of the curriculum geared towards the development of individual skills. The review team considers the comprehensive and robust approach to curriculum development including effective mentoring, targeted staff development and the internal validation process to be **good practice** (see also Expectations A3.1 and B1).

2.21 The College has a comprehensive approach to learning and teaching and systems and processes to effectively support the development of staff and students in higher education. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met in both design and operation and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.22 The College's Higher Education Strategy indicates a commitment to growing higher education provision which is vocational and linked to local regeneration. The development of new curriculum is centred on a range of foundation degrees, and providing progression to honours degrees. The College supports student development and achievement in a variety of ways including: separate higher education curriculum and learning environment; a transition strategy and tutorial scheme to support student progression and development; and the establishment of new support roles such as the Student Engagement Officer. Student development and achievement is supported through bursaries to all higher education students, including the provision of specialist equipment to support study, and embedding international travel into course provision. Each course has a section on the VLE with a minimum core of resources including course-level student handbooks, module handbooks and assignment briefs, the personal and academic tutorial schedule, and external examiners' reports. There are also links on the VLE to awarding bodies' resources. The College monitors the arrangements and resources for student development and achievement throughout the academic year using a range of mechanisms which include personal tutorials, review by course teams in annual monitoring reports, and monitoring by the Higher Education Quality Group. The processes the College has in place allow it to meet the Expectation in theory.

2.23 The review team tested the effectiveness of the College's arrangements and resources by scrutinising relevant documents including the Higher Education Strategy, Personal Academic Tutorial Policy and Procedures, Work Experience Policy and Operational Procedures, annual monitoring reports, and minutes of meetings, and reviewing the information provided to students on the VLE. The team also held meetings with senior staff, teaching and support staff, the Principal, students and employers.

2.24 The review team found that the procedures for implementing, monitoring and evaluating arrangements and resources work effectively in practice. The College has effective systems for supporting and tracking students. Personal tutorials provide regular progress review meetings and individual target setting, and are highly valued by students because they enable them to identify and address areas requiring improvement, and provide study skills support. The HEAL (Standards) keeps close track of student attendance and progress via the electronic student record system. When students are undertaking work-based learning, course teams liaise with employers through visits and email contact to oversee the progress of students. Students confirmed that resources on the VLE are appropriate to enable them to meet their learning outcomes. The College's excellent support for students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential is regularly highlighted at validation events, by external examiners and through student feedback.

2.25 The College provides comprehensive support for students to progress internally from Level 3 courses into higher education and subsequently into employment, by implementing a Progression Strategy. Students have responded positively to the information and support provided, and the number of students who have progressed from Level 3 to Level 6 has tripled over the last two years. Monitoring of progress in meeting the Strategy is undertaken by the Curriculum and Quality Committee. Students confirmed that, prior to enrolment on higher education courses, they benefited from regular informative dialogue with tutors on the range of higher education opportunities available. The Student

Engagement Officer provides workshops and one-to-one sessions on academic skills, thus supporting their transition from further to higher education. The team regards the effective implementation of the Progression Strategy to enable student transition into higher education and employment as **good practice**.

2.26 The College's strong commitment to raising the aspirations of local students to undertake higher education is evident in the development of the physical environment and the range of pastoral and support services available to students. The establishment of and significant investment in the dedicated premises for higher education in the University Centre, together with a staffing structure and resources to support the expansion of higher education, are symbolic of and central to the achievement of the College's strategy. The University Centre provides students with higher education-specific library and online resources, a VLE, personal tutorials, Skills Focus sessions and support for academic studies provided by the Student Engagement Officer, and careers and employability support provided by the Student Services Team. The approach to learning and teaching has a strong student-centred focus which is evident in the small class sizes, excellent staff-student contact and an emphasis on meeting individual student needs. The College enhances the student experience through funding bursaries for local, national and international educational and cultural visits to enrich the curriculum on a number of courses. In addition, the College holds degree shows to celebrate success and demonstrate that students are ready for employment. Students were impressed by the investment in new resources and were very positive in particular about the library resources and the learning environment of the University Centre. They indicated that the academic support from personal tutors and the Student Engagement Officer, strong focus and encouragement to develop employability, and the experience of study visits and exhibitions raised their confidence and aspirations. The review team regards the wide-ranging initiatives and support that raise student aspirations and enable students to achieve their academic, personal and professional potential as **good practice**.

2.27 The team concludes that the College has appropriate arrangements and resources to support students' development and achievement. It identified two features of good practice around initiatives to raise aspirations, support progression and enable the achievement of academic, personal and professional potential. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

**Expectation (B5): Higher education providers take deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student Engagement**

**Findings**

2.28 The College has a clear and accessible Higher Education Student Charter. It outlines both what students can expect from the College and what the College expects from its students. There is also a College-wide Student Involvement Strategy which has recently been updated to incorporate higher education. The College has a HEAL Student Experience and a Higher Education Student Engagement Officer. There are student representatives on all courses, with several courses also having a deputy representative. In addition, the College established a Student Experience Team (SET) to enhance the student experience and work in partnership with management in terms of strategic planning and development. SET meets weekly and is led by the Student Governor and its membership comprises all HEALs, the Student Engagement Officer, Student Ambassadors, and students from a range of courses. These strategies and procedures enable the College to meet the Expectation in theory.

2.29 The review team tested the effectiveness of the procedures in place to engage students by examining documentation including the Student Charter, Student Involvement Strategy, and meeting minutes for course committees and the Higher Education Quality Group. The team also held meetings with students, teaching and support staff, and senior staff.

2.30 Overall, the team found the processes for engaging students to work effectively in practice. Students reported a positive working relationship with staff at the College. There are several mechanisms available for students to provide feedback and to participate as partners in the quality assurance and enhancement of their educational experience. The College gathers students' views through focus groups, tutorials, student questionnaires, module evaluation questionnaires and a monthly Principal's focus group, all of which inform the College's strategies and provide a focus on enhancing the student experience. Students have the opportunity to meet with external examiners and key messages from external examiners' reports are fed back and discussed with students at course committee meetings.

2.31 Although student representatives are not part of the formal membership of the Higher Education Quality Group, the team saw evidence that student representatives have attended. In addition, student representatives regularly attend course committee meetings and annual course review meetings. Students are also represented through the Higher Education Student Governor, Student Engagement Officer, Student Council, weekly tutorials and the SET. The Student Governor is an elected student leadership position and sits on SET, Student Council, Higher Education Teaching and Learning Committee and the Board of Governance, and regularly attends the Principal's Focus Group. In addition, the SET reports to the Higher Education Quality Group. The team heard several examples of how students had been consulted and the changes that had arisen as a result of feedback from students. These include the design and use of new buildings, most notably the University Centre, the purchase of industry-standard equipment and software, and library opening times and access.

2.32 Although student representatives receive a briefing on their role, there is currently no formal training available to them. The College has recognised this as an area for development and is working towards the creation of a comprehensive student representative training process, for example by working with both awarding bodies to adapt their training.

2.33 Staff and students whom the team met described the close links the College has with the National Union of Students (NUS), for example through the creation of a transparent governance structure which includes a Higher Education Governor and Student Governor. The Higher Education Governor has received full NUS Governor and Leadership training, and the NUS has recognised the College as a 'champion of student engagement through governance' in regard to its transparent and non-hierarchical approach. The development of a formal Students' Union has been driven by the Principal, in close consultation with the Governor and Student Governor. For example, the team heard that the Governor had been encouraged to attend the annual NUS Conference to learn more about the development of a Union. In addition, the SET produced a Higher Education Student Action Plan, part of which outlined the actions required to develop the Union. As a result, it is expected that the Union, with a dedicated physical space, will be ready for the academic year 2015-16. The review team **affirms** the steps being taken to further develop student engagement, including the creation of a higher education Students' Union and the development of formal training for student representatives.

2.34 Overall, the College makes robust efforts to gather student views and act on them. Where there are weaknesses in the system, the College has recognised them and is taking steps to further develop student engagement, notably through the creation of a Students' Union and the develop of formal training for student representatives. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

**Expectation (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**

2.35 The College is required to comply with the assessment policies, regulations, and processes of its awarding bodies which are outlined in partnership agreements and the College's Higher Education Quality Handbook (see also paragraph 1.23). Included in this documentation are grading systems, extenuating circumstances, recognition of prior learning, internal and external moderation procedures, and systems and deadlines for providing assessment feedback to students. The specific responsibilities delegated to the College vary between the awarding bodies. Therefore, the College has recently approved a Higher Education Assessment Policy which outlines the procedures and practices for staff to follow in conducting fair assessment processes. Course leaders agree annual assessment plans which include details of assessment type, deadlines for submission and return of marks. These are subsequently approved by the HEAL Standards and forwarded to the respective university for approval before being published on the VLE and in module handbooks. University academic regulations set out requirements for Module and Course Assessment Boards, and the College introduced its own Subject Boards in 2014 which formally receive internal marks. Students receive guidance on assessments in campus and module handbooks, on the VLE and at induction. The College's own policies and procedures for assessment and its approach to complying with its awarding bodies' regulations allow it to meet the Expectation in theory.

2.36 The team reviewed the effectiveness of these policies and procedures by examining documentation including the Higher Education Assessment Policy, assessment regulations, validation reports, programme specifications, and student handbooks. The team also held meetings with senior staff, teaching staff, students and employers.

2.37 The evidence reviewed showed the policies and procedures to be effective in practice. Reports from external examiners and awarding bodies confirm that the College's assessment practices are appropriate.

2.38 The College uses a range of assessments, including live briefs to develop employability skills and enhance learning opportunities, and these are highly valued by students and employers. The College has a clear policy and methods of assessment are appropriately designed and conducted to provide opportunities for students to demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes. Students whom the team met confirmed that assessment expectations are clearly presented and information is comprehensive. Assessment schedules and the module assessment strategy are provided to students via a USB stick, the VLE and in campus and module handbooks.

2.39 Feedback on assessments is timely and constructive. The requirements for how and when to provide assessment feedback are set by the awarding bodies and outlined in academic regulations, the College's Assessment Policy, and campus and module handbooks. The templates provided by the universities set out the minimum requirements for feedback and the team saw several examples of comprehensive feedback given to students. The effectiveness of assessment feedback is reviewed as part of the annual monitoring process.

2.40 Staff are provided with guidance on assessment through staff development activities delivered by HEALs and awarding bodies. Enhancement of assessment and feedback has been a key feature of these staff development activities. The Assessment Nurture Group has also enabled staff to discuss and share good practice, for example in the development of University Centre assessment documentation for validated provision to be introduced in 2015-16. This has included revising briefs which provide clear guidance on tasks and grading criteria, and standardised feedback sheets. The review team **affirms** the work underway to develop standardised assessment documentation for validated provision.

2.41 Plagiarism-detection software has not previously been used for higher education courses. Instead, staff have been expected to use their experience and knowledge of individual students to detect instances of plagiarism and then liaise with university link tutors to award penalties. The team was informed that the College is currently piloting plagiarism-detection software on two programmes. Students are made aware of plagiarism and its consequences during induction, at workshops and course lectures, and in handbooks, and sign a declaration as part of the course assessment sheet. The College has drafted a Plagiarism and Academic Malpractice Policy which has been considered by the People and Organisational Development Strategy Group but is subject to amendment prior to final approval. The team was informed that the College also intends to establish a Plagiarism and Academic Malpractice Committee and was provided with draft membership and terms of reference. The draft policy makes reference to UCLan courses but not EHU, although the team was informed that discussions had recently taken place with EHU to extend the policy and detection software to these franchised courses. The review team **affirms** the actions being taken to implement the Plagiarism and Academic Malpractice Policy to ensure the extension of plagiarism-detection software across all higher education courses.

2.42 Overall, the College's processes provide students with appropriate opportunities to demonstrate the intended learning outcomes for the award of credit or qualifications. The College works closely with its awarding bodies and complies with their regulatory frameworks. It supports students well, particularly with high-quality and timely feedback. The team makes two affirmations concerning work underway to develop standardised assessment documentation and to extend plagiarism-detection software across all courses. The review team therefore considers the Expectation to be met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

#### **Findings**

2.43 The awarding bodies appoint external examiners, and have policies which prescribe how the College engages with external examiners. The College fulfils its responsibilities as set out in the awarding bodies' quality assurance handbooks for nominating potential external examiners for approval and appointment by the universities. All College courses have at least one external examiner. The external examiners receive induction information including the examiners' handbooks, academic regulations and definitive course documents from the awarding bodies, and the College provides course-level information. This includes information on assessment practice and procedures, student handbooks and class lists. Subsequently, College staff are responsible for communicating with external examiners, providing samples of assessed work, and making arrangements for them to visit the College.

2.44 External examiners provide reports using standard University templates. There is a serious concerns procedure, whereby an external examiner can raise matters directly with the awarding body Vice Chancellor. Reports are submitted to the awarding bodies who send them to each College course leader, who forwards them to the Higher Education Quality Assurance Officer. The reports are circulated to all course staff responsible for teaching, learning and assessment, and are discussed at course team meetings. The Course Leader provides a response to any recommendations, while the Dean of Higher Education sends an immediate written response to the external examiner if any essential concerns are raised. Copies of responses are also sent to the Quality Assurance Officer. The College's procedures, and its adherence to those of its awarding bodies, allow it to meet the Expectation in theory.

2.45 The review team examined the effectiveness of these procedures in practice by examining a range of documentation including external examiners' reports and associated responses, partnership agreements, annual monitoring reports, course reviews and minutes of meetings. The team also held meetings with students, teaching staff and senior staff.

2.46 The evidence reviewed showed the procedures to be effective in practice. External examiners' reports confirm that academic standards are at an appropriate level and that processes of assessment, marking and moderation are operating effectively. Several courses are delivered within a consortium arrangement and some external examiners' reports are not explicit regarding which provider their comment relates to. However, staff whom the team met confirmed that they are able to learn about any issues in meetings they attend with external examiners including moderation meetings, course boards and assessment boards convened by the awarding body.

2.47 The College formally considers the external examiners' comments at course team meetings, with student representation, and as part of the end-of-year annual review and monitoring processes. The reports and resulting quality improvement action plans have a key role in College-level processes. An analysis of themes, trends and actions is prepared by the College Quality Unit for monitoring by the Higher Education Quality Committee. Reports are shared with students through their course VLE and discussed with them in group tutorials. Students were aware of the reports and where to find them.

2.48 The HEALs work with staff to support development and disseminate the good practice arising in external examiners' reports. The College's analysis of the good practice identified in reports is used by the HEALs to identify themes to cover in staff development



workshops and activities including learning rooms and learning sets. The College recognises that more could be done to highlight the strengths identified in external examiners' reports so as to impact across all provision. Plans are in place to further disseminate good practice through staff development events. Forthcoming sessions are identified in the Staff Development Calendar and include dissemination of good practice in marking and feedback on the foundation degree in Digital Imaging and Photography. The review team therefore **affirms** the steps being taken to further disseminate the good practice identified in external examiners' reports.

2.49 The College recognises the key role that external examiners play in assuring academic standards, and, in line with the requirements of the awarding bodies, makes scrupulous use of external examiners' reports in course monitoring processes. The team affirmed the actions underway to further disseminate the good practice identified in reports. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.50 The College follows the awarding bodies' processes for programme monitoring and review and also has its own effective internal processes (see paragraphs 1.27 to 1.28). These processes allow the College to meet the Expectation in theory.

2.51 The effectiveness of the College's practices was tested by examining relevant documentation including annual monitoring and periodic review reports and action plans, and minutes of committee meetings. The team also held meetings with the Principal, teaching staff, senior staff, and students.

2.52 The evidence reviewed showed the policies and procedures to be effective in practice (see also paragraphs 1.30 and 1.31). The College has a thorough internal process for programme monitoring and review and adheres closely to the processes of its awarding bodies. Annual monitoring reports and 'wraparound' documents draw upon feedback from external examiners, industry contacts and student feedback. Actions and course review processes are monitored effectively through a variety of mechanisms including the Higher Education Quality Group, Higher Education Committee, i-Action Plan, course committee meetings, and by senior management. Staff whom the team met confirmed that they are provided with guidance and development on writing annual reviews and these events also provide an opportunity to share good practice.

2.53 The comprehensive self-assessment processes and oversight through the deliberative structures are clearly understood by staff and work effectively in practice. They ensure that the College is maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities for students on its own behalf and in accordance with the requirements of its awarding bodies. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

**Expectation (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**

2.54 Arrangements for appeals and complaints are clearly outlined in the Memorandum of Cooperation and published quality assurance documentation of both awarding bodies. The College Students Complaints Procedure and Academic Appeals Procedures also outline the processes for students to make formal complaints and appeals. The complaints and appeals procedures are available to students via the College website, VLE and student handbooks. These processes enable the College to meet the Expectation in theory.

2.55 The effectiveness of the College's policies and procedures was tested by examining the documentation referred to in the previous paragraph. The team also held meetings with teaching and support staff, and students.

2.56 The team found that the processes for academic appeals and student complaints work effectively in practice. The appeals and complaints procedures are clear and coherent, and include clear informal and formal resolution and review stages. While there have been no formal complaints or appeals in recent years, students whom the team met showed a clear understanding of where to access the appropriate information, and an understanding both of the support available and the processes themselves. Student Services staff are available to provide clear and impartial advice to students about procedures.

2.57 There are clear timeframes for appeals, including for the College to respond. The processes for appeals and complaints are reviewed each year by HEALs. In addition, the Study Programme Coordinator and Principalship Secretary meet regularly to monitor complaints and appeals, while informal complaints are tracked on the electronic student record system. The Quality and Standards Committee receives regular reports as to the number and nature of complaints and the meetings are attended by the Higher Education Student Governor.

2.58 Information about appeals and complaints is clear and students have a good understanding of the procedures. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.59 The College has delegated responsibility from UCLan and shared responsibility with EHU for managing relationships with other partner organisations. Its Higher Education Strategy identifies a focus on the development of vocational expertise and employability, including the provision of foundation degrees. The College also has a Work Experience Policy and Procedures. It makes arrangements with employers for the delivery of learning opportunities in a range of work-based settings and has systems in place for the coordination and quality assurance of work-based learning. All undergraduate courses are designed with work-based learning embedded in the curriculum. There are three modes of work-based learning: block placements; practice-based professional learning; and industry-based '10 degrees' activities which include live projects for clients, work shadowing, and work experience placements. Each course offers one of the three modes of work-based learning.

2.60 Students who undertake work-based learning modules are responsible for finding their own placements, with assistance and guidance from tutors, and are prepared for the placement as part of the module content. Practice-based learning is monitored through tutor visits and observations. The College provides a Student Placement Handbook and a Work Placement Handbook for employers.

2.61 Course leaders have overall responsibility for the assessment of work-based learning, with input from employers in the form of references and feedback. Employers do not undertake assessment, with the exception of Initial Teacher Training where mentors carry out observations of a trainee teacher, which form part of the teaching practice portfolio. Employers who provide assignments or placements contribute formative feedback by attending critique sessions or giving developmental commentaries. Work-based learning modules are monitored through the moderation process overseen by external examiners and through module evaluation questionnaires and student questionnaires, and also annual monitoring reports reflect on work-based learning. The College's systems and procedures enable it to meet the Expectation in theory.

2.62 The review team tested the College's arrangements for implementing and managing work-based learning opportunities through scrutiny of its policies and procedures, information packs for students, employers and placement providers, and a sample of student work experience and placement records. The team also met with employers, teaching and support staff, senior staff, and students.

2.63 The team found that the processes for managing higher education provision with others work effectively. The College has comprehensive arrangements for the management and quality assurance of workplace learning. The arrangements are clearly set out in the Higher Education Work Experience Policy and Procedure, which was developed by the University Centre Work Based Learning Nurture Group. The Nurture Group is chaired by the HEAL (Information) who reports on work-based learning activity to the Higher Education Quality Committee, enabling effective College oversight through governance structures. Oversight of the operational aspects of work experience, including health and safety and risk assessment, is maintained by the cross-College Work Experience Group, chaired by the

Work Experience Coordinator. The Higher Education Work Based Learning Coordinator is also a member of this Group and has a significant role in arranging placements, primarily for the FdSc Information Technology. The team saw evidence that the Group has developed a spreadsheet recording work-based learning activities on every course, and this will be used to inform the Higher Education Academic Record.

2.64 The Work Experience Policy and Procedure includes a clear specification of the responsibilities of curriculum directors, work placement coordinators, work placement providers, and processes for pre-placement activity, visiting a student during placement and review on completion. The team also saw evidence of clear and standard documentation including a student placement handbook, a work placement handbook for employers, and a student agreement which is completed before workplace activity commences. Employers providing work placements confirmed that they had received the College handbook and appropriate briefing and support from College tutors. Students whom the team met confirmed that the College had provided helpful briefing and support during their placements and that workplace learning significantly enhanced their employability skills. The review team regards the diverse range of mechanisms that provide effective oversight of workplace learning which enhances students' employability skills as **good practice**.

2.65 The team found that the College has robust systems in place to ensure that arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with others are implemented securely and managed effectively. The range of mechanisms in place to provide effective oversight of workplace learning is regarded as good practice. Students and employers commented positively on the support they receive from the College. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.66 The College does not offer research degrees, therefore this Expectation is not applicable.

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

2.67 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published Handbook. All of the 10 applicable Expectations are met with low risk.

2.68 The review team makes four affirmations in this section which relate to the actions being taken to: further develop student engagement (B5); develop standardised assessment documentation for validated provision (B6); implement the Plagiarism and Academic Malpractice Policy to ensure extension of plagiarism-detection software (B6); and further disseminate the good practice identified in external examiners' reports (B7).

2.69 The review team identifies five features of good practice which relate to: the comprehensive interview procedure and effective use of 'keep warm' postcards (B2); the wide range of mechanisms for academic staff to observe and share experiences of teaching and learning and disseminate good practice (B3); the effective implementation of the Progression Strategy to enable transition into higher education and employment (B4); the wide-ranging initiatives and support that raise student aspirations and enable students to achieve their potential (B4); and the diverse range of mechanisms that provide effective oversight of workplace learning (B10). The team also repeats a feature of good practice from A3.1 regarding the comprehensive and robust approach to curriculum development (B1).

2.70 The review team therefore concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the College is **commended**.

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

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

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

#### **Findings**

3.1 The College has a clear Higher Education Public Information Policy and Procedures. There are a variety of internal processes for auditing information relating to marketing material, information for the public, VLE content and handbooks. The College also operates a Marketing Partner Approval Tracker and a Public Information Annual Schedule to ensure accuracy of information. Course and module leaders are responsible for signing off course and module handbooks. The HEAL (Information) provides effective oversight of the information about higher education published by the College.

3.2 Information is made available to current and prospective students through the website, VLE, handbooks and in the Higher Education Prospectus. The College mission, values and strategy are available through the College website, along with course content and the Student Charter. Course information available via the UCAS website is maintained by the Admissions Coordinator. Course information is also accessible via the awarding partners' websites. Information regarding the Key Information and Wider Information Sets, and some NSS data, is on the College website. These practices and procedures allow the College to meet the Expectation in theory.

3.3 The team tested the effectiveness of the practices and procedures by reviewing the website, VLE, handbooks and documentation referred to in the previous paragraph. The team also held meetings with students, teaching staff, senior staff, employers and support staff.

3.4 The team found the policies and procedures for checking and producing information about higher education provision to be effective in practice. Students whom the team met confirmed the accuracy and usefulness of the information on the website, VLE and in handbooks for prospective and current students. This also includes the specialised work-based learning packs provided for students and employers. In the induction week, a checklist is given to all new students so they can tick off the relevant policies and procedures. The College also provides new students with a one-to-one induction interview during their first term to ensure that they have been provided with all the relevant information. This is recorded on the electronic student record system. Quality assurance information for staff is detailed in the Higher Education Quality Handbook.

3.5 The comprehensive interview procedure and the process by which the Higher Education Admissions team use 'keep warm' postcards for all applicants were outlined in paragraphs 2.11 to 2.13. The interviews allow students to make optimum choices and staff receive training to ensure the interview process is consistent and effective. The postcards clearly detail what actions are required, the date at which they will occur, the location and what items or documents are needed, and students spoke enthusiastically about the positive impact the postcards had on overcoming the potential barriers to enrolment. The review team regards the comprehensive interview procedure and effective use of 'keep warm' postcards to widen participation by providing targeted information, advice and guidance to all



prospective students at key points of the application process as **good practice** (see also Expectation B2).

3.6 The evidence from documentation and meetings clearly shows that the College is effectively managing its responsibilities for providing information about its higher education provision that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. Students are positive about the information provided by the College and know where to find what they want. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

3.7 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published Handbook. The Expectation is met with a low level of risk.

3.8 The review team makes no recommendations or affirmations in this section. The team repeats one feature of good practice from Expectation B2 regarding the comprehensive interview procedure and effective use of 'keep warm' postcards.

3.9 The team concludes that, overall, the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the College **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 Enhancement is embedded throughout the College at strategic and operational levels. The Higher Education Strategy has specific aims 'to continue to enhance all aspects of the higher education student experience and to continue to enhance the quality of all higher education provision'. These aims are underpinned by the College's approach to growing its higher education provision and the resulting infrastructure which has been developed to support this, including a bespoke higher education lesson observation scheme, increased focus on targeted staff development, and an annual process where staff performance is reviewed against criteria relevant to higher education. The College has also focused on developing a distinct higher education experience by creating separate marketing activities, admissions procedures, Nurture Groups, policies and procedures, data reporting, and tutorials. The Higher Education Strategy action plan 2015-18 clearly identifies a range of actions to further enhance students' experience and the quality of their learning opportunities including targeted support for curriculum development and delivery of Level 6 provision; further development of nurture groups; further development of data and quality assurance systems to identify and share good practice in teaching, learning and assessment; and further development of the student experience through targeted support, student engagement, development of a Students' Union and participation in extracurricular activities. To oversee these strategic developments, higher education has been brought together into one area managed by the Dean of Higher Education, with HEALs being appointed to provide operational management. The College's strategies and procedures allow this Expectation to be met in theory.

4.2 The review team evaluated the effectiveness of the strategies and procedures by examining the Higher Education Strategy and action plan, minutes of meetings, external examiners' reports, periodic review documents, validation documents, student feedback, self-assessment reports and quality improvement plans. The team also held meetings with the Principal, senior staff, teaching and support staff, employers and students.

4.3 The team found that the College's strategies and procedures for enhancement work effectively in practice. The team was provided with considerable evidence of the College's strategic approach to enhancement and how this has contributed to a clear and strong higher education ethos. The College has made significant investment to support its strategic plans, for example in the building of the University Centre in 2014 as a dedicated facility for higher education, and in extensive staff development and remission for scholarly activity. An example of staff development is the funding and support available for staff to study for master's degrees.

4.4 The team has commented on the comprehensive range of schemes and initiatives for academic staff to share experiences of teaching and disseminate good practice, with examples including the higher education teaching observation scheme, Nurture Groups, higher education Learning Sets, a Learning Rooms event and staff development workshops. The College established Nurture Groups to engage staff and students in exploring and enhancing all aspects of higher education to further enhance the quality of learning opportunities. For example, the enhancement of assessment and feedback has been a key feature of staff development activities. The Assessment Nurture Group has enabled staff to discuss and share good practice and apply this to the development of standardised

assessment documentation to be introduced in the academic year 2015-16 (see paragraph 2.40). The Higher Education Quality Group receives reports from the Nurture Groups and discusses their relevance to quality assurance and enhancement. The review team regards the wide range of effective mechanisms for academic staff to observe and share experiences of teaching and learning and disseminate good practice, which enhances the delivery of programmes, as **good practice** (see also Expectation B3).

4.5 The College encourages students and their representatives to provide feedback about their experiences and there are numerous ways for them to do this (see paragraph 2.31). These mechanisms include course committee meetings, annual course review meetings, student surveys and module evaluation questionnaires. Students are also represented through the Higher Education Student Governor, Student Engagement Officer, Student Council, weekly tutorials, and the Student Experience Team. The review team heard several examples of how students had been consulted and the changes that had arisen as a result of feedback from students, including in the design and use of the University Centre.

4.6 The College makes effective use of its quality assurance processes to identify opportunities for enhancement. An example is the introduction of the 'wraparound' document to further improve its annual monitoring process. The documents now explicitly reference the Quality Code and include separate actions arising from comments from external examiners, students and course teams. The annual monitoring report required by EHU includes an action plan for enhancement which identifies work placements and partnership working as examples of good practice. Staff whom the team met explained that the College is currently reviewing its 'wraparound' documents and is in the early stages of implementing explicit reference to enhancement in the documents. Therefore, the review team regards the overall strategic approach to enhancement, which has contributed to a distinct higher education ethos and demonstrable commitment to the continuous improvement of student learning opportunities, as **good practice**.

4.7 The evidence from documentation and meetings clearly demonstrates that the College is taking deliberate steps to enhance the quality of students' learning opportunities. The College has a strong culture of self-assessment and its quality assurance processes are central to the promotion of high-quality, continuously improving higher education provision. The strategic approach of continuous quality improvement is well embedded throughout the College and there is significant evidence of good practice in teaching, learning and supporting students being shared through various mechanisms. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

4.8 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published Handbook. The Expectation is met with a low level of risk.

4.9 The review team makes no recommendations or affirmations in the enhancement of student learning opportunities. There is one feature of good practice which relates to the College's strategic approach to enhancement. The team repeats the feature of good practice from Expectation B3 about the wide range of effective mechanisms for academic staff to observe and share experiences of teaching and learning and disseminate good practice.

4.10 Using the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the Handbook, there are two examples of good practice in this area and no recommendations for improvement. The College clearly has plans to improve this area further, while managing the needs of students is a clear focus of its strategies for enhancement. There is a strong ethos which expects and encourages enhancement, while the second feature of good practice in this area reflects the range of mechanisms available for staff to identify, support and disseminate good practice. Finally, the College makes effective use of its quality assurance procedures, such as the 'wraparound' process, to identify opportunities for enhancement. The review team therefore concludes that, overall, the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the College is **commended**.

## 5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

### Findings

5.1 The College Higher Education Strategy has a primary focus on the development of vocational expertise, with an emphasis on employability and regeneration of the local economy embedded in all course provision. The recent expansion of provision has been underpinned by consideration of student employability. The College has strong links with local industry in the Liverpool City Region, and targets new course development to support growing industries which offer employment opportunities for graduates. This has led to the recent creation of courses in the creative industries and in particular, those linked to the 'visitor economy'.

5.2 The College's commitment to raising the aspiration of local students is an important element in its approach to developing employability. It has articulated an Employability Statement to communicate the vocational nature of provision and strong links with industry. This indicates that courses have been designed through working closely with experts from relevant industries so that students can be sure their course meets the needs of potential employers. The College's emphasis on employability is embedded throughout the curriculum. All higher education students experience work-based learning.

5.3 The College is working with the L20 Hotel School and the Port Academy Liverpool to prepare students for the job opportunities available as a result of developments in the Liverpool City Region. Foundation degrees are being developed with a range of employers to ensure that students obtain the most relevant qualifications for their career and progression route. Examples of course development are the creation of new foundation degrees in Creative Audio Technology, Hospitality in the Visitor Economy, and Festival Management.

5.4 The College has implemented a progression strategy to enable students to progress from Level 3 into higher education and subsequently into employment. The academic focus on employability is backed by an equally strong emphasis on the practical and pastoral aspects of life at the College and all students have timetabled tutorial sessions which cover personal development planning, reviews and careers guidance provided by the Student Services Team.

5.5 Awarding bodies' course approval panels have identified a wide range of good practice related to employability. This includes the strong industry focus with employability embedded in the modules of the Creative Audio Technology courses and FdA Creative Makeup Design and Practice. The approval panel for the BA Hons Design Foundation Entry Course reported that the industry-relevant skills being developed were outstanding and based in the local and wider community, including work placement opportunities and engagement with local employers through live briefs.

5.6 The College process of planning and development is informed by labour market analysis and by engaging with employers to ensure that the College responds to changing market needs in a timely and effective way. Industry partners and employers are consulted in the development of courses to ensure that the curriculum content is current and skills needs are met. These employers also regularly provide opportunities for students to engage with live projects such as the recent Wirral Council ECO brief.

5.7 Employers are also involved in delivery of the curriculum as guest speakers and workplace mentors. Industry experts visit the College to deliver a programme of lectures and workshops and help to guide students in terms of employment opportunities and careers advice. Additionally, there are many extracurricular work-based learning projects available

such as the College Christmas design and installation and end-of-year festival event. The annual exhibition of the art and design students is backed by a number of industry figures, some of whom studied at the College. Students confirmed that the College provides invaluable opportunities to develop employability through professional skills development modules, work placements, live briefs and industry-linked assignments.

## 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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