



Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of London School of Academics Ltd

September 2016

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at the London School of Academics Ltd. The review took place from 14 to 16 September 2016 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Mr Kevin Kendall
- Professor Kris Spelman Miller.

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

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

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

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

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.² A dedicated section explains the method for [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).³ For an explanation of terms, please see the [glossary](#) at the end of this report.

¹ The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code.

² QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us.

³ Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers): www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/RSCD.aspx.

Key findings

QAA's judgements about the London School of Academics Ltd

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at the London School of Academics Ltd.

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

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at the London School of Academics Ltd.

- The detailed care taken in the admissions process to identify the strengths and needs of individual students (Expectations B2 and B4).
- The individualised support offered to the diverse student body enabling students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential (Expectation B4).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to the London School of Academics Ltd.

By January 2017:

- establish and implement a formal process for consideration of the annual report of the External Quality Assurer (Expectation B7)
- formalise the relationship between the College and work placement providers to ensure a shared understanding of the responsibilities of each (Expectation B10).

By July 2017:

- strengthen strategic planning to support long-term enhancement goals (Enhancement).

Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following actions that the London School of Academics Ltd is already taking to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to its students:

- the introduction of the virtual learning environment to support teaching, learning, assessment and administration (Expectation B3)
- the steps being taken to strengthen consideration of data on progression of students from entry to completion (Expectation B8).

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

About the London School of Academics Ltd

The London School of Academics Ltd (the College) is a privately financed college, established in 2010 and operating from a campus site in Rainham, Essex. Its goal is to create excellence in the training and development of teachers, targeting individuals who want to improve their lives and the lives of others.

The College is accredited by City & Guilds to offer programmes leading to the award of the level 5 City & Guilds Diploma in Education and Training, enabling diplomates to progress towards Qualified Teacher Status. At the time of the review, 100 students were enrolled on this programme. The College employs four teachers.

The College regards the key challenge facing it as being recruitment to its programme up to its maximum permitted numbers. Its current strategic priorities relate to the development of learning resources for its students, including the establishment of a virtual learning environment, growth in the stock of books available to students, and the provision of a bus for transport to extracurricular activities.

The most recent QAA review was a Review for Specific Course Designation, which took place in December 2013. It resulted in positive judgements concerning the College's management of standards and quality, and about its provision of information. The review team made four advisable and eight desirable recommendations, and identified one feature of good practice. The subsequent monitoring visit in December 2015 resulted in a conclusion that the College had not made acceptable progress with implementing the action plan arising from the review.

The College has continued to address the recommendations arising from the review of 2015, and has demonstrated progress in doing so. The majority of recommendations are now met - at least in part. The College has continued to support the good practice in relation to the identification of student needs, and students expressed appreciation of this aspect of the provision.

Explanation of the findings about the London School of Academics Ltd

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 and/or other awarding organisations

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1 The College currently offers one programme at level 2, two at level 3 and one at level 5. The review concerns itself with the level 5 programme leading to the award of the Diploma in Education and Training from City & Guilds, which has accredited the College for the delivery of this award. This full-time programme of 120 credits is delivered over one year.

1.2 This qualification lies within the Qualifications and Credit Framework and was developed by City & Guilds with the Learning and Skills Improvement Service. The structure of the programme is outlined in the City & Guilds handbook.

1.3 The level 5 Diploma in Education and Training is a teaching qualification designed for those working or wishing to work as teachers and has a requirement that each student must complete 100 hours of teaching practice.

1.4 The programme is designed and approved by City & Guilds. The College is required to deliver the mandatory units, but has some choice in its selection of optional units. The responsibilities of the College and of the awarding organisation are clear, which therefore enables the Expectation to be met.

1.5 The review team examined a range of documents relating to the maintenance of academic standards, including the awarding organisation handbook, which contains the

programme and module specifications. The team also scrutinised the websites of the awarding organisation and of the College, and met senior staff, academic and support staff, and the awarding organisation's External Quality Assurer (EQA) to explore the relationship between the College and its awarding organisation.

1.6 The academic standards of the award are embedded in guidelines published by City & Guilds, including key aspects on the assessment of learning outcomes, assessment criteria and threshold academic standards as found in the qualification handbook.

The College provides staff training in aspects of the Quality Code and uses the guidance supplied by City & Guilds in the delivery of the programme. College staff are aware of the level of the award in relation to academic standards, and this is supported by the EQA.

The College has limited delegated responsibility, the primary area being in the marking of student work, although responsibility for the setting of assignments rests with City & Guilds.

1.7 An annual course review ensures effective management of the relationship and that all areas of College responsibility are mapped, in some detail, to those areas of the Quality Code that the College regards as relevant.

1.8 The review team confirmed that the College fulfils the requirements of the awarding organisation effectively and ensures that academic standards are maintained. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.9 The College's staff fulfil multiple roles within the organisation, which maintains a committee structure including a Board of Governance that operates with clear lines of reporting and responsibilities. Standardisation meetings and the Internal Quality Assurance Process (IQAP) are particularly important in relation to how the College quality assures the assessment process.

1.10 The College uses the City & Guilds qualification handbook as a guide to managing the programme and aligns its procedures with it. The College also has a number of policies and procedures that it uses in the management of the programme: for example, the Teaching and Learning Policy, the Assessing Policy, the Unit Submission Policy, the Academic Misconduct Procedure, the Appeals Procedure, and the Complaints Procedure.

1.11 The Assessing Policy makes reference to the Assessors' Guidance and Grading Criteria from City & Guilds for each unit; the IQAP clearly defines the roles of internal quality assurers. The process for standardisation is also set out in a document for staff guidance. The learner handbook informs students of relevant information in relation to assessment.

1.12 The College's policies, academic frameworks and regulations are sufficient to enable this Expectation to be met.

1.13 The review team examined a range of documents relating to academic governance, frameworks and regulations and held meetings with senior staff, teaching and support staff, students and the EQA.

1.14 The College has relevant policies and procedures in place that govern how students are awarded credit and qualifications, and teaching staff have a clear shared understanding of assessment, quality assurance and academic standards.

1.15 An appropriate committee structure is in place to formally oversee standards and quality assurance and the College has an effective system of recording and collating student grades.

1.16 Academic frameworks and regulations are in place and are effective. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.17 The definitive record of the programme is held by City & Guilds. The College has no delegated responsibility for programme design or programme amendment. The College uses the qualification handbook as their reference for delivering the programme. The learner handbook contains information for students about programme structure.

1.18 The definitive programme record is published on the City & Guilds website and is widely used in documents produced by the College. It constitutes the reference point for the delivery and assessment of the programme and enables this Expectation to be met.

1.19 The review team examined the approval documents from City & Guilds, the qualification handbook, the learner handbook and annual review documentation. The team also met senior staff, academic staff and students.

1.20 The provision of all summative assessment is controlled by City & Guilds. However, programme and module details are published and easily available to all staff and students.

1.21 The City & Guilds documentation also outlines the number of credits attached to each unit, plus the cumulative number of credits needed to achieve the award, in addition to details of course structure, learning outcomes and assessment. These documents are closely and effectively followed by staff and understood by students.

1.22 The programme has a number of core units that all students are required to complete. While the selection of optional units is made by the College itself, its course review process allows the choice of optional units to be discussed following feedback from students.

1.23 Senior staff of the College attend focus groups, which are run for City & Guilds approved centres to provide opportunities for feedback on course structure.

1.24 The College is aware of the qualification structure and content provided by City & Guilds and uses them extensively in its own documentation. Secure processes are in place to maintain and disseminate definitive records and these are used appropriately by staff. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.25 The responsibility for the design and approval of the programme rests with City & Guilds, which ensures that the qualification reflects the relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. The programme specification as outlined in the handbook contains detailed guidance on the nature and scope of the qualification and its component units at levels 4 and 5. The specification indicates the summative assessment requirements in addition to the course structure and confirms that the College has no devolved responsibility for assessment design. Although the College does not have responsibility for the design of the programme, it does exercise choice in the optional units it delivers.

1.26 The responsibilities of the awarding organisation for approving the College as a centre for delivery of the Diploma, and the process in place for monitoring delivery through the EQA, would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.27 The review team examined documents relating to the relationship with City & Guilds and its website, and the College's website. The policies in student and staff handbooks that describe the College's academic and regulatory framework and minutes of meetings in relation to the College's management of its provision were also considered. In addition, the team met senior staff, teaching staff and the EQA.

1.28 The process and criteria for approval of the College by City & Guilds are articulated in the awarding organisation's Qualification Approval Form. Status approval is subject to satisfactory delivery of the qualification as monitored by the EQA, assessment at the site, and updating of staff or centre changes on the Centre Update Form. Evidence was provided of the approval status of the College and of regular monitoring through annual Centre Activity Reports of the College's performance. Based on the sampling of student scripts, and meetings with students and staff, the EQA judges the school to be low risk.

1.29 Although programme design is determined by City & Guilds in relation to the allocation of credits, the composition of units and the learning outcomes, the College does have discretion to select the optional units to be delivered. This selection is justified in terms of student feedback, the teaching team's expertise and the needs of the sector, for example in relation to the module in Inclusive Practice. Although no evidence was seen of senior management decisions concerning the approval and design of the current programme, or of potential future programmes, the review team noted the decision to offer units and to re-sequence delivery of these following feedback on delivery. The team heard from the Managing Director about the possibility in the future of developing new programmes to meet demands in the areas of functional skills and management subject to the approval of City & Guilds.

1.30 The City & Guilds Centre Activity Report indicates its satisfaction with the College's management of the programme. The report confirms that appropriate standards are achieved by students on the programme and commends the Centre Manager on 'the high standard of the respective programmes sampled'. The evidence of student achievement,

as considered at the Quality and Diversity Committee, indicates an appropriate level of internal monitoring in relation to student performance.

1.31 The College has secure arrangements for managing its responsibilities for academic standards. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

Expectation (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

1.32 The academic standards of the level 5 qualification as determined by the awarding organisation are set out in the qualification handbook and unit pack. This includes the credit value of each unit, and the definition of learning outcomes and assessment in line with these learning outcomes. The College has no delegated responsibility in setting assignments. The College notes that 'credit and qualifications are not awarded unless students have, through assessment, demonstrated that they have achieved all the relevant learning Outcomes' and asserts that assessors mark in accordance with the guidelines provided by City & Guilds. A process is in place of standardisation, as articulated in the IQAP and the Assessing Policy.

1.33 In terms of the College's responsibility in the award of credit, the policies and academic frameworks in place would enable this Expectation to be met.

1.34 Scrutiny of documents, and meetings with senior, teaching and support staff and students, and with the EQA, provided the review team with assurance that the College has in place appropriate processes to ensure the award of credit through assessment.

1.35 Available handbooks contain relevant unit specifications from City & Guilds, clearly documenting the learning outcomes and assessment criteria. Teaching staff and students confirmed their understanding of the threshold standards in the assessment of student work. The review team saw evidence that the College carried out assessment of learning outcomes in accordance with City & Guilds requirements.

1.36 Through the IQAP, selected assessors sample three units of work from each student once each term and record their comments on students' scripts. The review team did not see evidence of the resolution of discrepancies in assessment through this process, but noted the role of the internal quality assurer in confirming successful outcomes.

1.37 Standardisation meetings provide an opportunity for the teaching team and assessors to discuss a range of issues concerning the programme, and although meetings include reference to the IQAP, they are not focused on agreeing individual student outcomes. Through the role of the EQA the awarding organisation exercises its oversight of the quality assurance processes, including the adequacy of internal quality assurance, which is verified through sampling. This is confirmed in a Centre Activity Report, which includes a risk rating for new qualification approval. For the past two years, in 2014 and 2015, this risk has been judged as low.

1.38 The College has secure processes for the assurance of standards through internal and external mechanisms. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.39 The processes of internal and external quality assurance as determined by the awarding organisation are designed to ensure that academic standards are achieved and maintained. Confirmation that these requirements are being fulfilled is given through the annual Centre Activity Report. The College has introduced an annual programme review process through which a range of information is considered, including student performance data in the form of unit and course statistics. These systems would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.40 The review team considered the Expectation through documentary evidence of the monitoring of academic standards in the Centre Activity Report, and in records and minutes of meetings. The team also held meetings with senior and teaching staff.

1.41 The review team noted that the College has arrangements for the consideration of standards at a variety of levels: at unit level, through the tracking of student performance; at the end of term, through the consideration of outcomes in standardisation meetings; and in annual programme review meetings, where the progression and completion of students is a standing item. While the College does not systematically undertake analysis of trends in the relevant student data, it is taking steps to strengthen its consideration of student performance data as part of its regular internal processes.

1.42 The College has systems for maintaining standards through its processes for programme monitoring and review, and is operating in accordance with the requirements of its awarding organisation. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.4): 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

1.43 The responsibility for engaging external expertise to advise on the setting and maintenance of academic standards resides largely with the awarding organisation. Through the EQA standards achieved by students at the College are confirmed. Through visits to the centre, the EQA gains an understanding of good practice and areas for development, which are reported through the annual Centre Activity Report. Where an area for development is identified, an action plan is drawn up in the Centre Activity Report and a response from the College is required. The College also draws on external expertise through its relationships with employers and external agencies, including those who provide placement opportunities.

1.44 The processes in place to use external independent expertise would allow the College to meet the Expectation.

1.45 The review team met the EQA and a number of placement providers in order to confirm their relationships with the College.

1.46 The review team saw evidence that the EQA provides advice and support to the College in relation to the setting and maintenance of standards, both through formal processes of sampling and reporting, and through visits to the College.

1.47 Placement providers do not directly contribute to the assessment of student learning, although the experience gained in the work environment is relevant to student achievement. Each student is required to demonstrate completion of 100 hours of teaching practice, and is observed by College staff on eight occasions. While work placement providers confirmed that they did not generally contribute ideas or advice to the College, the panel noted external independent membership of the Quality and Diversity Committee and of the Board of Governance.

1.48 The College makes use of independent external expertise in fulfilling the requirements of the awarding organisation in relation to assessment processes and the award of credit. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

1.49 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. All Expectations in this judgement area are met with a low level of associated risk.

1.50 There are no features of good practice, recommendations or affirmations in this judgement area.

1.51 The College has secure frameworks to ensure that standards are maintained at appropriate levels and that the definitive record of each programme is used to govern the award of academic credit and qualifications.

1.52 The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of the awarding organisation 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 responsibility for designing, developing and approving the programme sits with the awarding organisation. However, in accordance with the City & Guilds award framework, the College has scope to determine the selection of optional units to be delivered. The College was previously approved to offer the level 5 Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector and when this programme was replaced by the Diploma in Education and Training the College gained fast track approval. The first cohort of students on this programme of study entered in September 2014. The College states that any proposed changes to the selection of optional units or new units would follow annual monitoring and review.

2.2 The College is operating within the framework of the awarding organisation in relation to the design and approval of the programme, and this in principle would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.3 The review team considered a range of documentary evidence, including the respective awarding organisation and College websites, relevant handbooks and minutes of meetings. The team also met the senior staff and the EQA.

2.4 The review team saw evidence in student and staff handbooks and communications with the awarding organisation of compliance with the design and assessment of the City & Guilds qualification. Scrutiny of meeting minutes did not reveal discussion of the design of the new Diploma in Education and Training beyond brief reference to changes in the unit assessment and the requirement for new library resources. However, the College confirmed that optional units were selected on the basis of fit with previous units, student feedback and the teaching team's specialisms. The team was assured that senior staff at the College were aware of the formal approval process by which any future programme development, for example in the area of functional skills and management, would be approved by the awarding organisation.

2.5 Opportunities for the review of the programme at unit level, and on termly and annual bases, are used by the College to reflect on the content and design of the programme. The team noted the College's response to feedback from students concerning the repetitive nature of some tasks, which was fed back to City & Guilds through a focus group. Other responses to student feedback included the introduction of additional support and the review of some activities.

2.6 The College is operating appropriately within the limited scope that it has for programme development. Although there was no evidence of formal discussion of changes to the design of the existing programme or of the introduction of new provision, the College has the formal structures in place to manage this process. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.7 The College's website sets out its entry requirements and provides a link to the entry requirements of City & Guilds in relation to qualifications and prior experience. The website and the learner handbook set out the programme's intended constituency, including intending teachers and trainers in the further education and skills sector, and existing teachers, trainers and assessors, as well those progressing from previously completed awards.

2.8 The College states that recruitment is through advertising, recruitment days at local shopping malls, and open days. The admissions process is set out in the Admissions Policy for staff, which sets out entry requirements and the process for interview, as well as an interview checklist and a script for interviewing. There is a separate policy statement on the accreditation of prior learning.

2.9 Prospective students are required to attend an open day where they receive detailed information about the programme, have a tour of the campus and meet the teaching team. Staff must meet defined criteria to be on the admissions team and receive training in the interview process, which requires staff to work in pairs to carry out a structured interview using a checklist. There is also a Fitness to Practice Procedure available on the website, which informs decisions following interview. Information provided at interview is supplemented by additional detail on the College website and in the learner handbook.

2.10 Prospective students initially may undergo a telephone interview prior to attending the College for interview. The interview is structured in order to check that candidates meet City & Guilds requirements. Accreditation of prior learning may be possible as set out in the relevant policy. The Admissions Policy includes a process for appeals against a decision to refuse entry.

2.11 Successful applicants are provided with information regarding policies, procedures, assessment and the student experience to enable them to make the transition from applicant to student through an induction day. Participation in an induction day before the start of teaching is compulsory for all successful applicants.

2.12 The College keeps summary data regarding the process and outcomes of the admissions process; after each admissions period a review meeting is held to discuss recruitment methods and whether changes need to be made with regard to the admissions process. Additionally, in annual programme review meetings, consideration is given to recruitment and the Admissions Policy.

2.13 The structured admissions process, the focus on staff training, and the quality of published recruitment information for staff would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.14 The review team examined documents with respect to the admissions process and discussed their use and effectiveness with senior staff, with teaching and support staff, and with students.

2.15 The College has a well-structured and defined admissions process that ensures all prospective students are treated equally and fairly. This is working well in practice and the individual attention offered to applicants is appreciated by students.

2.16 Staff are carefully selected to be on the admissions team and undergo effective training to ensure that they meet the requirements of the admissions process in a fair manner, with a view to considering each prospective student on an individual basis. The interview checklist provides a secure basis for the conduct of interviews. There is an effective appeals process available to applicants.

2.17 The minutes of the Recruitment and Admissions Review indicate reflection on the process through the admissions team meetings, which have led to actions including a more robust approach to telephone interviews, an increase in the number of interviewers present at each interview from one to two, and the formalisation of guidance for staff.

2.18 The College enrolls students from a diverse range of backgrounds and with a wide diversity of qualifications on entry. Students spoke in positive terms of the supportive care offered by the College to ensure that their diverse needs were identified at entry: the success of students in finding employment after completion attests to the thoroughness of this care. The detailed care taken in the admissions process to identify the strengths and needs of individual students is **good practice**.

2.19 Recruitment, selection and admission policies and procedures adhere to the principles of fair admission. The admissions process is well-structured and detailed, underpinned by appropriate organisational structures and processes, and enables the selection of students who are able to complete their programme irrespective of their entry qualifications. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (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

2.20 The Enhancement Strategy sets out the College's commitment to enhancing learning opportunities, building on feedback from students, staff and management, through the annual monitoring process. The College regards itself as taking a student-centred approach to learning and teaching, with the Learner Representative Society voicing the views and needs of students in addition to views expressed through the unit feedback survey.

2.21 The Teaching and Learning Policy gives guidance on the peer observation and review process, which entails reflecting on teaching practice and formally reporting outcomes using the template provided. A number of policies are also in place to support the learning and teaching experience, including the Welfare Policy, IT Policy, Equality and Diversity Policy, and Resource Policy.

2.22 The College highlights the tutorial opportunities for students and opportunities through tutorials to monitor academic development and progress. Teaching is guided by a scheme of work for each unit, with session plans for each week. Staff complete a self-reflective evaluation to record issues to inform annual programme review.

2.23 Staff are appointed according to the College's staff recruitment process, which includes City & Guilds requirements. Additionally, CVs of teaching staff are checked by the EQA. There is a structured approach to staff training using a training agreement, a training and development schedule, and formal records of training attended. Staff are required to undergo a performance review twice per year.

2.24 At the start of the programme, students complete a Learning Agreement and are allocated a personal tutor whom they meet formally twice per term to monitor their progress against the programme learning outcomes. In addition to undertaking academic study at the College, each student is required to complete a minimum of 100 hours of teaching practice, which is assessed by means of eight formal observations linked to the learning outcomes of two core units.

2.25 The organisation of the learning experience described above and the evidence of evaluation by academic staff and students through peer observation and review, annual monitoring, and feedback from students would enable this Expectation to be met.

2.26 To consider the College's approach to managing the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices, the review team examined the College's policy documents in relation to teaching and learning, and met senior staff, teaching and support staff, and students.

2.27 All teaching staff are appointed subject to City & Guilds approval and appointments are recorded using the City & Guilds Centre Update Form. With a view to ensuring that teaching practice remains current, each member of teaching staff is required to complete 30 hours of training or development during each year. The range of staff development activities

undertaken includes sessions on the Quality Code, skills workshops, and assessor training. Staff also engage in effective lesson observation and peer review activities.

2.28 The focus of learning and teaching is the unit-based learning outcomes provided by City & Guilds. In support of these, academic staff are actively involved in the production of learning material, and work to an agreed scheme of work and session plan. Each session is delivered more than once in the course of a week: the use of standardised presentation materials by teaching staff enables students to have some choice in the sessions they attend.

2.29 The Enhancement Strategy confirms that there is a formal mechanism for identifying and reflecting on the student experience through the annual monitoring process. Minutes of such review meetings and discussions with students provide evidence of feedback from learners, drawing on unit feedback survey and students through the Learner Representative Society. Minutes of meetings with student representatives confirm opportunities for the students to feed back on their experience. The student submission to this review confirms that the student body is able to put across its views and that there are opportunities to feed back on their teaching and learning through the online survey. The learner handbook and discussions with students confirm that effective tutorial support is available.

2.30 The development of a virtual learning environment is scheduled for completion in September 2016 and is intended to provide a means for communication with students and the distribution of learning materials, which is superior to the email system currently used for these purposes. The College also plans to develop the use of the virtual learning environment for assessment submission, plagiarism checking and grade recording over the coming months. The review team **affirms** the introduction of the virtual learning environment to support teaching, learning, assessment and administration.

2.31 Feedback from the EQA, feedback in the student submission to this review, and discussions with students indicate an effective and varied learning experience. Data on students' progression to employment shows that, of 72 students completing in 2014-15, only two are currently seeking employment, suggesting that the programme is equipping students to successfully complete the prescribed learning outcomes and to progress to employment. In view of the structured and managed learning environment and the positive evaluation of its effectiveness by staff and students, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement

Findings

2.32 The College has policies in place to support a range of student needs, including the Equality and Diversity Policy and the Welfare Policy. On entry, students complete an enrolment form on which they can declare any additional support needs.

2.33 The learner handbook indicates that students select their preference for attendance on one of four days in the week, group sizes being limited to 25 per day. Students who miss classes on their planned day may instead attend on one of the other days on which those classes are scheduled.

2.34 All students are assigned a personal tutor and their progress is monitored through scheduled tutorials held twice per term. Feedback is given on formative assessments to support students in achieving the learning outcomes, which are used to monitor progress against an Individual Learning Plan and a final student review.

2.35 Employability is a key focus of the Enhancement Strategy of the College. In addition to the opportunities through placement, the College assists students to develop their employability skills through workshops on academic referencing and writing, information technology skills, CV writing and job searching. Students also have access to careers advice through a series of careers days and sessions led by external speakers.

2.36 The College's standardised resources for each teaching session include presentations, which are emailed to students, and the learner handbook, which contains College policies and assessment criteria.

2.37 Students have access to smart boards at the College, which enable them to develop their skills in using modern technology. They also have access to teaching texts in the College library: students confirmed that the library is suited to their needs. The Resource Policy shows how resources have developed in recent years and how the College plans its resource requirements for the future.

2.38 The College's support structure for students and its managed learning environment promote effective achievement of learning outcomes and would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.39 The review team examined policy and strategy documents in relation to supporting learning, including the Equality and Diversity Policy, the Welfare Policy, the Enhancement Strategy and Individual Learning Plans, and discussed the effectiveness of support with senior staff, teaching and support staff, and students.

2.40 Through regular tutorials and Individual Learning Plans, the College ensures that all students can monitor their progress and further their academic development as they receive feedback on the achievement of learning outcomes and grades from lesson observations.

2.41 Student tracking records indicate there is an effective means of recording student progress with regard to learning outcomes and employment destinations. In 2014-15, the most recent year for which data is available, 73 out of 76 students (96 per cent) successfully completed the programme. Of these, 70 (92 per cent) were in employment by December 2015, 62 of these (82 per cent) in teaching roles. In the four previous years, completion rates

have ranged from 84 per cent to 100 per cent. The success enjoyed by the College's students in achieving employment related to their programme is indicative of the care taken by the College in selecting students for admission to the programme, and supports the good practice identified in Expectation B2.

2.42 The College is committed to providing an inclusive learning environment. Students comment favourably on the support they receive from the College. Student success and employment rates indicate that the system promotes achievement, and that student support is effective.

2.43 The student experience on the programme starts with an induction day and concludes with careers advice, CV development and job searching advice. In between, there are support mechanisms to promote effective and enjoyable learning. Students spoke very positively about the strengths of the College's individualised support for them, drawing attention in particular to support for students with disabilities, the supportive role and wide availability of their personal tutors; the frequent and supportive feedback offered in lesson observation; and the ability to attend alternative classes on different days. The individualised support offered to the diverse student body enabling students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential is **good practice**.

2.44 The College has effective systems in place to monitor and evaluate arrangements and resources, which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student Engagement

Findings

2.45 Student representation is the key mechanism for student engagement. The Learner Representative Society is described in the College documentation and referred to in the student submission as providing an opportunity for raising issues and commenting on the student experience. Feedback from students is also elicited through the online unit feedback survey, which provides an opportunity for individual comments and responses, which are in turn referred to in the end-of-term review and annual programme review process.

2.46 The mechanisms in place to capture and consider feedback from students in order to enhance the learning experience would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.47 The review team considered mechanisms for student engagement by examining documentary evidence of meetings, student feedback as reflected in annual reviews, and unit feedback survey responses. The team also met students and staff.

2.48 Student feedback is very positive, indicating a strong sense of a learning community. The student representative process enables collective feedback to be brought to the attention of the College through consideration at formal meetings, including student representative meetings, standardisation meetings, and programme review meetings, to which students are invited. The composition of the Quality and Diversity Committee includes student representation, and minutes of meetings confirm their active participation in providing feedback on the educational experience.

2.49 Students spoke in positive terms about the College's responsiveness to their views. The College solicits feedback from students on the quality of the delivery of units, and, where appropriate, actions are identified. The unit feedback survey has highlighted a number of programme issues relating to assessment and support. Other issues raised include the availability of library resources, levels of difficulty and engagement on units, and issues concerning catering. As a result of this the College reported back to the awarding organisation, which subsequently responded with details of proposed changes.

2.50 Student representation is supported through training, and scheduled meetings feed into the annual monitoring process. Although students have an opportunity to meet the EQA, they confirmed that there is no formal mechanism for consideration by them of any issues arising from the EQA's report.

2.51 The College has effective processes for engagement with the student body at unit and programme levels. 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

2.52 The assessment requirements for the programme are set out by the awarding organisation in its qualification handbook, which includes coursework assignments and eight observations of teaching practice. The College has delegated responsibility for the initial marking and second marking of student submissions, and has in place a number of policies relevant to assessment, including the Appeals Procedure, Mitigating Circumstances Policy, the Accreditation of Prior Learning Policy, and the Academic Misconduct Procedure. Following internal quality assurance, internal grades are subject to external review by the EQA, whose role is to consider whether assessment processes are appropriately executed.

2.53 The processes in place and the role of City & Guilds in the assessment process would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.54 The review team tested this Expectation through examination of a range of the College's policies relating to assessment, the learner handbook and examples of student work, including teaching portfolios and records of teaching observations, and in discussion with senior staff, teaching staff and students.

2.55 The Assessing Policy provides staff with a brief overview of the marking process, while the qualification handbook and unit pack provide detailed programme and assessment information. Assignment rubrics are available on a restricted site on the City & Guilds website, and relevant information, including grading criteria and forms for the recording and evaluation of work, is also provided by the awarding organisation. The Assignment Policy and Unit Submission Policy provide guidance on the format of submission.

2.56 The College takes steps to ensure that assessment processes are transparent and a section of the learner handbook is dedicated to this area. A range of policies relevant to assessment, including the Academic Misconduct Procedure, Mitigating Circumstances Policy and an Appeals Policy are available to students, in addition to the Assignment Policy and the Unit Submission Policy.

2.57 Staff actively involved in assessment are qualified to a minimum of level 3 assessor, and undergo training in assessment on two occasions each year. Formal assessment is conducted by College staff only. This includes the observations of teaching, which take place on eight occasions in the location of the placement. In addition to the teaching observations, students are required to produce a teaching portfolio documenting the 100 hours of teaching practice, and fulfilment of the practice requirements is confirmed by the placement provider in a written reference. The College provides guidance on the standards of feedback to students, which include both written and face-to-face feedback through tutorials. A record of tutorial discussion is noted on the students' Individual Learning Plan. Teaching staff were clear about the submission and resubmission arrangements.

2.58 The review team saw evidence that assessors provide annotated feedback to students and comments on a front sheet. The IQAP entails the sampling of work by a

second assessor. The EQA then checks the quality and outcomes of the marking through sampling.

2.59 Students confirmed their satisfaction with the assessment process in terms of the quality of the feedback they received, and access to support during the course of their studies. Following submission by email, student work is scanned for checking through a grammar and authenticity checker. The introduction of a virtual learning environment will offer an opportunity for this process to become more streamlined.

2.60 Marks for student work are recorded by the lecturer responsible, and are then emailed to a central account. While this process is understood by staff, it is not formally documented in the assessment guidelines. The introduction of a virtual learning environment may facilitate the central collation of marks for more systematic analysis of unit and cohort performance and oversight by the College.

2.61 The College is discharging its responsibilities with regard to assessment. Assessment processes are based on a range of relevant policies, are conducted by trained staff, and involve both internal and external quality assurance. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining

Findings

2.62 The nature and scope of the role of EQAs is determined by City & Guilds, which is responsible for their appointment. The EQA visits the College annually, meeting lecturers, assessors and students. The subsequent Centre Activity Report notes points of good practice and any causes for concern in addition to confirming marks of sampled scripts. Where issues are raised an action plan is set, with responsibilities identified and a time frame for completion established.

2.63 The positive nature of recent reports suggests that the College is meeting the requirements of the awarding organisation, and that the Expectation would be met.

2.64 The review team considered the Expectation by reviewing Centre Activity Reports, the College's responses to them, and in discussion with the EQA, senior staff, teaching staff and students.

2.65 The most recent Centre Activity Reports, relating to 2013-14 and to 2014-15, do not raise any concerns, and the College is deemed by the EQA to be low risk. The EQA expressed positive views about the effectiveness of the College's arrangements for standardisation of assessment, and drew attention to his view that the standard of teaching at the College is very high and that the College is very supportive of its students.

2.66 An earlier Centre Activity Report had resulted in an action plan and response by the College. However, the review team heard that unless actions are raised, there was no requirement to respond to the EQA's report. There was no evidence that the external report, including any comments concerning good practice, is shared in any formal setting with staff, governors or students, although students were aware of the EQA who visits the College. With a view to ensuring that feedback from the EQA is used to inform the College's practice, the review team **recommends** that the College establish and implement a formal process for consideration of the annual report of the External Quality Assurer. This would allow the College to strengthen its oversight of the outcomes of external quality assurance, as part of its regular programme review process.

2.67 The College makes scrupulous use of the EQA in maintaining academic standards. However, the lack of a formal process to consider the EQA's report constitutes a shortcoming in the rigour with which its quality assurance procedures are applied. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

2.68 The College's arrangements are described in its annual monitoring and programme review process. Programme monitoring entails the gathering of data from students, student representatives, the teaching team and external reference points, including City & Guilds. Programme review takes place after the delivery of each cohort, in August and in December/January. This process draws on feedback from formal and informal sources, including unit feedback surveys and reports, meetings of staff and students, teaching evaluations, student performance data and employability reports.

2.69 The process for programme monitoring and review that the College has in place would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.70 This Expectation was tested through examination of a range of documentary evidence, including policy documents, examples of student feedback, minutes of annual monitoring meetings and annual monitoring action plans, and in discussion with senior staff, teaching and support staff, students, placement providers and the EQA.

2.71 The process of annual monitoring and programme review as illustrated in the minutes of meetings held at the end of the period of study entails discussion of relevant aspects of the provision. While the records of discussion show evidence of consideration of a number of relevant sources of evidence, they nevertheless make no reference to the EQA's Centre Activity Report. Feedback from students, gathered through unit feedback surveys, is reported in general terms at this review meeting. There is evidence from these discussions of actions taken as a result of specific student feedback to enhance the learning experience, for example by introducing additional tutorials and greater focus on academic writing.

2.72 Standardisation meetings provide opportunities for programme review, including aspects of course delivery and student feedback. Taken together, these meetings confirm that the College takes advantage of regular opportunities to monitor its programme and the student experience.

2.73 In the monitoring and review of the programme, however, there is only limited evidence of systematic consideration of data on student admission, progression and completion. While the review team heard evidence of the achievements of students as a result of their studies, and successes following completion of the programme, there is no evidence of the College conducting a review of such outcomes.

2.74 The effective use of unit and course statistics was the subject of an advisable recommendation in the QAA Review for Specific Course Designation in 2013. The review team recognised the progress made in establishing a system for gathering data from a variety of sources to review its provision, but notes only limited systematic consideration of data relating to student achievement, completion and employment post-award. In recognising the progress the College has made in introducing regular monitoring and review, and in establishing opportunities to engage in more systematic analysis and discussion of data in order to further enhance the quality of its learning opportunities,

the review team **affirms** the steps being taken to strengthen consideration of data on progression of students from entry to completion.

2.75 The College has effective, regular and systematic processes for monitoring and review of its programme. 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

2.76 The College has separate policy documents for appeals and student complaints, both of which are published on the College's website. The documents outline the bases for appeals and complaints, and provide clear guidance on the process. A structured form is included for student use in each policy document. The appeals process includes reference to the role of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator in the event of an inability to resolve an issue. The College notes the availability of the Student Welfare Officer in advising on either process.

2.77 The availability of structured guidance indicates that the Expectation would be met. This was tested through consideration of the policy documentation and in discussion with students and staff, including the Student Welfare Officer.

2.78 The information currently available concerning appeals and complaints is available to students and staff, with appropriate timescales stated for the communication of outcomes and with a clear sense of awareness of the need to show equality of opportunity in managing the processes. Although the review team noted no current evidence of the system being tested, students confirmed that they were aware of the formal process. Students drew attention to good lines of communication within the College and to access to relevant support and advice from the teaching team.

2.79 The College has satisfactory procedures for handling student appeals and complaints. 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

2.80 Students are required to undertake 100 teaching practice hours, typically carried out in the workplace at a suitable placement provider. Students who are already in employment may complete their teaching practice on an in-service basis; for others, the College helps students to find suitable placements. The qualification handbook sets out arrangements for observation and assessment of teaching practice and for the portfolio of evidence that students compile to evidence that they have met these requirements.

2.81 The learner handbook conveys the above information to students and also contains a section explaining the programme and the teaching practice requirement to placement providers. This is also repeated in the teaching placement letter. Students are required to maintain a teaching log, schemes of work, session plans and obtain a letter from their placement provider confirming the number of hours completed.

2.82 The College provides observation guidance for assessors with regard to their health and safety when at the work placement. A standard City & Guilds pro forma is used to record observations, feedback and grading, and a record of observation grades is kept on a tracking sheet.

2.83 With regard to work placements, the College operates within the structured system designed by City & Guilds, which would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.84 The review team examined the documentation relating to teaching practice and work placements, and spoke to senior staff, teaching staff, students and work placement providers.

2.85 The College complies with the requirements of the awarding organisation with regard to teaching practice and work placements; the learner handbook gives clear guidance to students on what is required of them and the placement provider.

2.86 Students keep effective teaching logs during their placement and the College fulfils the requirement to undertake assessed lesson observations and to use the grades to contribute to the relevant City & Guilds units. The review team noted the substantial time commitment made by teaching staff to carry out the required number of teaching observations for each student and to provide feedback on them.

2.87 The College does not regard itself as having responsibility for managing relationships with placement providers. It does not put in place formal agreements with placement providers who do not routinely receive guidance documentation directly from the College. There is no evidence of discussion about the roles and responsibilities in managing relationships with work placement providers. The roles and responsibilities of the student, the College and the placement provider are not clearly documented. The review team **recommends** that the College formalise the relationship between the College and work placement providers to ensure a shared understanding of the responsibilities of each.

2.88 Work placements make a significant contribution to the quality of learning opportunities. Students spoke in positive terms about their placement experience and about the commitment on the part of teaching staff to ensuring that placements contribute to their learning. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met. The lack of formalised relationships with placement providers is indicative of a shortcoming in the rigour with which quality assurance procedures are applied: the level of associated risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

2.89 The College does not offer research degrees, therefore this Expectation does not apply.

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.90 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. All Expectations in this judgement area are met. Two Expectations (B7 and B10) have a moderate level of associated risk. The level of risk was judged to be low for all other Expectations.

2.91 There are two features of good practice in this judgement area, relating to the care taken in the admissions process and to the development of students' academic, personal and professional potential.

2.92 The review team made two recommendations in respect of the quality of student learning opportunities. The first relates to the need for a formal process for consideration of the annual report of the EQA. The second follows from the lack of formalised relationships between the College and work placement providers.

2.93 The review team made two affirmations of actions being undertaken by the College. The first arises from the development of the College's VLE. The second relates to the steps being taken to strengthen consideration of data on progression of students.

2.94 The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the College **meets** UK expectations.

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1 The College provides information for the public and prospective applicants by means of the College website, which includes a link to the online prospectus. The website describes the College's mission, values and overall strategy, and, on the page for the level 5 Diploma in Education and Training, offers detailed information for prospective students on the admission process.

3.2 The level 5 Diploma in Education and Training qualification handbook is available on the City & Guilds website. Successful applicants are provided with information regarding policies, procedures, assessment and the student experience to enable them to make the transition from applicant to student through an induction day.

3.3 After being accepted onto the programme, students complete a Learning Agreement and have access to the learner handbook, plus documents detailing misconduct procedures. Students also receive documents relating to teaching, learning and assessment, including the scheme of work and the Unit Submission Policy. With respect to student representation, they receive the Learner Representative Schedule, the Learner Representative Handbook and associated training.

3.4 The documentation referred to above, including the College website and the process for approving and signing off published information, indicates that the College has a structured approach to the management of information, which would enable the Expectation to be met.

3.5 The review team examined a range of documentation, including policy documents public information and student handbooks, and met senior staff, teaching and support staff, and students at the College.

3.6 The website also contains an overview of the programme, including a breakdown of the structure of units and information on the College environment. Information on policies and procedures includes the Welfare Policy, outlining the support that is provided for students.

3.7 A range of useful information is produced by the College in both paper and electronic format, for use by staff, students and prospective students. The qualification handbook and the learner handbook contain helpful and relevant information on the course structure, course timetable, Attendance Policy, Assignment Policy and the Complaints and Appeals Policy.

3.8 The College's Published Information Policy, aligned with the Quality Code, includes a process for signing-off information that allocates responsibility and sets out the timescale involved. The quality of information provided by the College indicates that the sign-off procedure is effective.

3.9 Students find that the website is user-friendly and accurate, and is continuously updated and edited. Students confirmed that the information provided by the College was fit for purpose and accessible.

3.10 The information provided by the College about its provision is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

3.11 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The College manages its responsibilities for the production of information for its various audiences effectively. The Expectation for this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk is low.

3.12 There are no recommendations, features of good practice or affirmations in this judgement area.

3.13 The review team concludes that 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 The College's Enhancement Strategy 2016 sets out the process for gathering information on the student experience, drawing on programme monitoring and review. The strategy identifies a number of actions around the themes of student employability, and student personal and academic development. The College identifies a number of improvements to its provision that are identified as enhancing the quality of learning. These relate to physical and learning resources: namely, the move to current campus location, the move of the library to a larger space, and the availability of more technology to support learning. The student submission to this review notes 'the ethos of continual improvement in the College', which it regards as being widely communicated and promoted throughout the College.

4.2 The College identifies a number of examples of positive change that have led to perceived improvements in the learning experience. The steps the College is taking are linked to programme monitoring, and are articulated in a formal document. In principle, therefore, the Expectation would be met.

4.3 The review team held meetings with senior and teaching staff, and considered written documentation, including the Enhancement Strategy, policy documents and minutes of meetings, including senior management meetings and programme review meetings.

4.4 The Enhancement Strategy document refers to the current year's activity, with actions grouped under the two general themes of student development and employability. The team found evidence of actions taken by the College that relate to these themes, for example, increasing support for students' academic writing and access to tutorial support and personal development. The introduction of Individual Learning Plans, smart targets, an Attendance Policy, and a careers adviser to support future employability prospects addresses the aims set out in the Strategy.

4.5 Good practice is shared through peer observation and mentoring, in the weekly team meetings and in discussion at programme review meetings. For instance, the College has arranged a class for staff to learn about the implementation of new software. Staff development opportunities also enable staff to draw on practice elsewhere in the higher education sector.

4.6 The College regards the introduction of the virtual learning environment as a challenge, but does not identify it explicitly as a strategic enhancement. Nevertheless the review team saw evidence of the progress the College is making with respect to its virtual learning environment, and heard of training for all College staff in its use.

4.7 The review team found no evidence in senior management meetings or in other documentation of explicit discussion of the key priorities for enhancement or of longer term planning in terms of initiatives or developments. In this sense, the College's approach to enhancement is not systematic. Although the College's commitment to enhancing learning opportunities for students was clearly articulated by staff at all levels and by students, its approach to enhancement is reactive, rather than proactive, drawing largely on feedback from students through the programme monitoring process. The review team **recommends** that the College strengthen strategic planning to support long-term enhancement goals.

Setting a forward-looking strategy, which identifies clear objectives, responsibilities and timeframes, may be beneficial to the College in planning and managing its priorities for the future.

4.8 In view of the College's commitment to enhancement, and examples of areas of improvement, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met. However, the need for a managed, strategic approach to development is indicative of a weakness in the operation of the College's academic governance structure: the associated level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Moderate

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.9 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The College takes deliberate steps at provider level to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities. The single Expectation for this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk is moderate.

4.10 There are no features of good practice or affirmations in this judgement area. The single recommendation relates to the need to strengthen strategic planning to support long-term enhancement goals.

4.11 The review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the College **meets** UK expectations.

Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Definitions of key operational terms are also given on pages 22-25 of the [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\) handbook](#).

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

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

Academic standards

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

Award

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

Awarding organisation

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

Blended learning

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

Credit(s)

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

Degree-awarding body

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

Distance learning

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

See also **blended learning**.

Dual award or double award

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

e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning

Enhancement

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

Expectations

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

Flexible and distributed learning

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

See also **distance learning**.

Framework

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

Framework for higher education qualifications

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

Good practice

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

Learning opportunities

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

Learning outcomes

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

Multiple awards

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

Operational definition

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

Programme (of study)

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

Programme specifications

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

Quality Code

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

Reference points

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

Self-evaluation document

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

Subject Benchmark Statement

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

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)

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

Threshold academic standard

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

Virtual learning environment (VLE)

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

Widening participation

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

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