



Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of The London College, UCK Ltd

April 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 College, UCK Ltd. The review took place from 18 to 20 April 2016 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Mrs Joanna Coward
- Mr Eric Macintyre
- Mrs Rebekah Osborne (student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by the London College, UCK 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
- 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 check is also made on the provider's financial sustainability, management and governance (FSMG) with the aim of giving students reasonable confidence that they should not be at risk of being unable to complete their course as a result of financial failure.

In reviewing The London College, UCK Ltd the review team has also considered a theme selected for particular focus across higher education in England and Northern Ireland. The [themes](#) for the academic year 2015-16 are Student Employability, and Digital Literacy,² and the provider is required to select, in consultation with student representatives, one of these themes to be explored through the review process.

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.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.³ A dedicated section explains the method for [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).⁴ For an explanation of terms 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 Higher Education Review themes: www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2859

³ QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us.

⁴ Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers): www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight.aspx

Key findings

QAA's judgements about The London College, UCK Ltd

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at The London College, UCK Ltd.

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding body and other 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.

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to The London College, UCK Ltd.

By July 2016:

- clearly articulate the policy and procedures for academic appeals on Higher National programmes and ensure they are accessible to students (Expectations B9 and C).

By September 2016:

- Revise and refine terms of reference for the governance structure that ensures appropriate levels of rigour and criticality to enable the College to meet its responsibilities for maintaining academic standards (Expectation A2).
- develop a comprehensive programme of training and support for student representation and ensure that there is a defined structure of student engagement at all levels (Expectation B5)
- implement a formal structure for examination boards and other related assessment processes in support of Higher National awards to ensure a comparable level of management and oversight to those awards conferred by the College's awarding body (Expectation B6)
- re-examine the arrangements for students undertaking work experience placements on the Higher National Health and Social Care programme to ensure that all necessary documentation is in place for the College, students and placement provider (Expectation B10).

Theme: Student Employability

The London College, UCK Ltd (the College) references employability in its mission and for the College to be an employer focused institution. The College tries to achieve this through embedding employability in the curriculum, including work placements on certain courses. The College also supports students through career development and adopting the University of Derby's careers and Employment Service and using their University Careers Advisers. Many of the academic staff at the College are industry practitioners and professionals. Various opportunities through work or industry related activities are made available to students for them to engage with employers.

Financial sustainability, management and governance

There were no material issues identified at The London College, UCK Ltd during the financial sustainability, management and governance check.

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 College, UCK Ltd

The London College, UCK Ltd (the College) is a medium sized, not-for-profit independent college situated in Notting Hill Gate London, with 950 full-time equivalent higher education students and 28 full-time equivalent academic staff. The College has been in operation for over 60 years and in the 1980s ran a range of undergraduate and postgraduate American university programmes. The College delivers 24 Pearson Higher National Certificate/Diploma programmes and seven top-up degree programmes validated by the University of Derby. The College's mission statement is to 'become the institution of opportunity that is renowned for our widening participation. We will develop our students and staff to reach for vocational excellence and become recognised as a leading alternative provider of quality higher education programmes and to be an employer-focused institution connected with our local communities, providing teaching and learning which open doors and meet the needs of employers'. The College has implemented and updated its Strategic Plan 2013-2017 to take into account slight changes in the management structure of the organisation.

Major changes to the College since the last review in 2012 include partnership approval with the University of Derby to deliver seven top-up degree programmes from September 2012 which resulted in standardised handbooks across all programmes and the introduction of the 3Rs process of Rights, Responsibilities and Regulations for students. The College employed a full-time University Coordinator in 2013 to help administer the main elements of the University of Derby programmes and liaise with University staff. The College's management structure changed in 2015 to reflect the need to focus primarily at course level with a more devolved system. The College established a Student Council in 2013 and is working with the University of Derby to establish a Students' Union at the College.

Key challenges for the College include strategic planning difficulties with the adherence to annual redesignation by Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) department which can impact on the recruitment timescales, and proposals to move funding of Higher National programmes from the Higher Education Funding Council for England to the Skills Funding Agency.

Future developments for the College include a move from the College's Higher National programmes to the University of Derby's full three year degree programmes from September 2017. The College also intends to fully refurbish its building commencing summer 2016.

The College underwent a QAA review of Educational Oversight in 2012 and has built on and responded to the good practice and recommendations resulting from the review. The College has also engaged in two annual monitoring visits carried out by QAA under BIS requirements one of which was judged commendable, which meant that a monitoring visit was not required in 2015.

Before the review visit the review team were requested to follow up two concerns from an initial enquiry instigated by the QAA through its concerns scheme. These concerns are around the variability of assessment feedback to students on Higher National programmes and the use of the acronym UCK in the College's name. These areas are reported on in the respective Expectations, B6 and Information.

Explanation of the findings about The London College, UCK 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 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* 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 delivers programmes through its agreements with one awarding body and two awarding organisations. The awarding body is the University of Derby. The awarding organisations are Pearson and the Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality. The College offers seven top-up undergraduate degrees through its agreement with the awarding body, 24 Higher National programmes are awarded by agreement with Pearson and one Postgraduate Diploma awarded through arrangement with by the Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality. The Postgraduate Diploma is being 'taught out' and is no longer being recruited to. All programmes offered, regardless of awarding partner, have been accredited under the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) and developed using the appropriate Subject Benchmarks Statements.

1.2 The College itself is not a degree-awarding body and as such has no responsibility for the initial setting of academic standards for the awards it delivers. However, the College assures itself that these UK threshold standards are met by offering only appropriate QCF accredited programmes. The awarding body and the organisations design the programmes, position their qualifications at the appropriate level of the relevant framework for higher education qualifications and ensure that programme learning outcomes align with the respective qualification descriptor in the relevant framework for higher education qualifications. The awarding body and organisations also set and monitor standards.

1.3 The collaborative agreement with the University of Derby (the University) was established in 2012. The roles and responsibilities of each party is detailed in the Partnerships Operations Manual. The University is responsible for the setting and maintenance of academic standards while the College is responsible for the delivery and assessment of students. The University ensures the maintenance of standards through periodic review, annual monitoring and through the appointment of external examiners who oversee standards at programme level

1.4 The College's adherence to its awarding body and organisations' regulations under its agreements would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.5 The team examined the respective roles and responsibilities of each of the awarding body and awarding organisations and the College which are laid out clearly through a set of agreements and operating manuals. Similarly, consideration was given to how each awarding partner ensures academic standards are maintained through external examiner, external assessor and annual monitoring reports. Discussion of how these processes work in practice took place in meetings with senior and other staff which included representatives from the University of Derby.

1.6 The College uses its teaching and learning strategy, the Quality Code, and Subject Benchmark Statements to inform delivery of its responsibilities. For the programmes awarded by the awarding organisation, the role and responsibilities of both the awarding body and the College are laid out in the *BTEC Guide to Assessment*.

1.7 The agreements with the College's awarding body and organisations are prescriptive and do not allow for any variation or discretion in how the College discharges its responsibilities. Each party has a good level of understanding of each other's responsibilities and accountabilities. The awarding partners, through their appointed external examiner or external assessors and in the case of the University the appointed Link Tutor, have stated their confidence in the manner in which the College manages its responsibilities.

1.8 The College effectively discharges its responsibilities in this area as outlined in agreements with its awarding bodies and organisation. Partnerships between the College and its awarding body and organisations are working effectively and staff are aware of their responsibilities in adhering to those agreements. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A2.1): 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 operates within the academic frameworks set out by each of its awarding body and organisations which also awards academic credit. The College's Academic Board has terms of reference which include responsibility for ensuring that processes are in place for programme approval and review, ensuring that the policies of the awarding body and organisations are adhered to and for the maintenance of academic standards at the College. The College ensures parity of opportunity across the delivery of programmes, regardless of awarding partner through the implementation of the University's policies and procedures and, from 2015, through the standardisation of student handbooks, again for all awards delivered at the College.

1.10 The awarding body and organisations set the learning outcomes at both programme and module level as well as the assessment criteria. Both the learning outcomes and assessment criteria at module level are detailed in the respective module handbooks. For University awarded programmes, these handbooks are provided by it, which the College then tailors for local delivery. These tailored handbooks are then approved for issuing to students by firstly the University-based Course Leaders and also the College Quality and Standards Committee. Student Handbooks for the College's higher national programmes and postgraduate diploma are similarly provided to students.

1.11 The College ensures that Course Leaders receive regular training in support of the monitoring and maintenance of standards. The College also receives information from the University on academic standards which it disseminates to all staff via staff meetings and training. For students, this information is included in handbooks and also during their induction. There are regular visits from University representatives to support College staff in undertaking this activity.

1.12 The processes and procedures of the College, which ensure adherence to the awarding body's and organisations' academic frameworks and regulations, would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.13 The review team considered a range of evidence including the terms of reference for the College's academic governance structure, documents provided by each of the College's awarding body and organisations, module and student handbooks as well as meetings with senior and academic staff.

1.14 There are clear and explicit academic frameworks set by the awarding body and organisations for the maintenance of academic standards across all the College's provision. The College has established structures by which it seeks to enable both staff and students are fully familiar with this aspect of academic provision. The primary means by which the College achieves this is through its academic governance and committee structure. The College has recently revised its academic governance to ensure that it supports the maintenance of academic standards across the College. The terms of reference for the main College committees clearly set out respective remits and responsibilities. The relatively small senior management team, commonplace for a provider with a similar size of student registrations, means that the chairing and membership of committees overlap. For example,

both the Academic Board and the Quality and Standards Committee are both chaired by the Principal even though the Quality and Standards Committee reports to the Academic Board.

1.15 This concentration of committee-level responsibilities within a small senior management team does carry with it some risk in that it may not allow for appropriate levels of scrutiny, impartiality and criticality to take place. It also does not allow for the possibility of developmental opportunities for existing staff. While the review team found no evidence that the current governance structure in operation is impartial or lacks criticality, any changes in personnel or circumstance could provide a moderate risk of this occurring. Therefore, the review team **recommends** the College should revise and refine terms of reference for the governance structure that ensures appropriate levels of rigour and criticality to enable the College to meet its responsibilities for maintaining academic standards.

1.16 The governance arrangements, policies and procedures currently allow the College to effectively manage academic standards on behalf of its awarding body and organisations. However the review team found that a clearer remit between the College's senior committees was required to ensure more effective impartiality which has resulted in a recommendation. Therefore, the team concludes the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate as there are weaknesses in the operation of part of the College's academic governance structure.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

Findings

1.17 As the College is not an awarding body in its own right, definitive course documentation for all top-up degrees is produced and provided by the awarding body and organisations and is both comprehensive and fit for purpose. This documentation is made accessible to students through the virtual learning environment (VLE) and in student handbooks.

1.18 The Pearson programme handbook makes reference to academic frameworks, academic credit and the requirements of the award. Programme Specifications are developed by the awarding body, the University. Distinct Programme Specifications for the Higher National programmes are developed by the College and contain programme information supplied by the awarding organisation. All programme specifications are available to students through handbooks and on the VLE. They contain all relevant information pertaining to the module content and structure, assignment briefs and sets out alignment with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) level descriptors and Subject Benchmark Statements.

1.19 The College's adherence to the requirements of its awarding body and organisations for the maintenance of definitive programme records would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.20 The review team tested the effectiveness of the arrangements and resources through an analysis of the programme handbooks and programme/module specifications, a review of the College's VLE and discussions with senior staff, academic staff and students.

1.21 The review team found that although the Pearson programme specifications contained substantive information about the course units, information regarding such areas as entry requirements, accreditation of prior learning, and extenuating circumstances were not included. There is a process in place for ensuring that all student handbooks and programme documentation for the BA top-up programmes is accurate and fully signed off by the awarding bodies. These are used effectively by the provider and made accessible to students. All programme information is centrally held and monitored by the College's Quality Office to ensure compliance with its awarding body and organisations and consistency.

1.22 The College is effectively following the compliance of definitive programme documentation of its awarding body and organisations. Documentation is maintained and updated where appropriate. While the Higher National programme specifications lack certain elements, the College is not required by Pearson to use programme specifications in addition to programme handbooks. Therefore the documentation held and used by the College allows for a definitive record of each programme and qualification to be maintained. Therefore, the review team conclude 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

1.23 The College's awarding body and organisations have procedures in place for programme design and approval which ensure that awards are set at the correct level in terms of UK threshold standards. The awarding body and organisations are responsible for confirming that programmes meet the qualification descriptors and threshold standards in *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*, (FHEQ) and Subject Benchmark Statement. Internal course approvals or strategic decisions, such as to seek validation with the University, are subject to approval by the College's Academic Board.

1.24 The College follows the procedures and process for course approvals established by its awarding body and organisations which would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.25 The review team tested the effectiveness of the arrangements and process through the examination of documents such as programme specifications, validation documents and discussions with academic staff and students. The meetings also involved staff from the University.

1.26 The College's responsibilities in course approval is limited and as of yet it has not designed or written any courses for approval. College staff acknowledged that external input, such as from employers would have to be included into course design in the future when the College's strategic and curriculum plans are implemented. Student's views would also be elicited in course design and approval in the future.

1.27 The College adheres to those processes for programme approval securing academic standards set down by its awarding body and organisations. Although engagement with programme design is currently limited the team found that that the current process for approving courses in the College is fit for purpose. 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 (A3.2): Degree-awarding bodies ensure that credit and qualifications are awarded only where:

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

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

Findings

1.28 The awarding body and organisations ultimately retain responsibility for the setting and maintaining academic standards for the College's programmes. The College delivers programmes in accordance with its institutional agreements and the associated regulations and all programmes are examined annually by external examiners.

1.29 Internal moderation for the awarding body awards ensures that learning outcomes are being correctly assessed. These decisions are then ratified by the formal Examination Boards run by the awarding body. There is also a process for the internal verification of the Higher National awards whereby a trained Lead Internal Verifier approves the assessment.

1.30 Processes of the awarding body and the College that assess the learning outcomes and ensure that credit is awarded at the appropriate level would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.31 The review team tested the effectiveness of the arrangements and resources through the examination of moderation documentation assessment records and examination and assessment board minutes. The review team also held discussions with staff and students. The meetings involved staff from the University of Derby.

1.32 The College has adopted the University's modules almost in their entirety and is thus subject to the assessment, moderation and award regulations of its awarding body. There have only been some very minor changes to modules proposed by the College and University staff confirmed that these had all been through their formal processes. This includes internal approval by the College's Academic Board.

1.33 For Higher National programmes the College had not sought any changes to the approved course structures.

1.34 For provision validated by Pearson, Examination Boards are held with external examiners present. Their reports are used as a source of confirming that external benchmarks are being met in awarding credit or qualifications. For Higher National programmes, the external examiner is not required to attend the Examination Board in the College. The review team found that the College's internal assessment boards for the Higher National Programmes are conducted in the manner of internal moderation sessions rather than formal, minuted Examination Boards where the final achievement of credit is discussed and overall awards confirmed. However, through the recent approval of College practice through annual monitoring Pearson is satisfied with the way its awards are verified. The review team found some inconsistencies in practice and has made a recommendation under Expectation B6.

1.35 The College follows its awarding body's assessment regulations and procedures effectively. The review team found that assessment practices for Higher National programmes are less effective and therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate as the procedures are broadly adequate but have some shortcomings in terms of the rigour with which they are applied.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Moderate

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

1.36 The College has developed a cycle of internal programme monitoring and review which includes provision across the College and considered at course and senior level to produce the College Annual Monitoring and Enhancement Plan. The College also undergoes annual and periodic monitoring and review under requirements from its awarding body and organisations which results in reports and action plans.

1.37 The College's arrangements for internal processes of course monitoring and review and external monitoring by its awarding body, organisations and external examiners enable the College to establish that academic standards have been achieved and maintained. The current systems in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.38 The review team tested the effectiveness of the arrangements and process through the examination of documentation including annual monitoring reports module evaluations and discussions with staff and students. The meetings involved staff from the University of Derby.

1.39 The processes undertaken and overseen by the awarding body and the organisations are effective in terms of monitoring and reviewing programmes in the College.

1.40 Students University awards complete module feedback forms and these are collated by the Course Leader and a summary of the main points is incorporated into each Collaborative Provision Programme Monitoring Report. The College Annual Monitoring Report draws on the student feedback forms which in turn include a summary of student feedback. The report also uses student feedback collected in other ways, such as student council meetings and programme committee meetings. Students attend programme committees at the University.

1.41 The College compiles an annual Academic Management Review for its Higher National programmes which include the follow up of actions and recommendations, assessment brief overview and details of the teaching and learning.

1.42 External examiners are appointed by the awarding body and external verifiers are appointed by the awarding organisations and the resulting reports confirm that programmes meet threshold and institutional academic standards.

1.43 The external stakeholder viewpoint has not thus far been elicited as part of the monitoring and review of programmes. But could be considered as the provision expands with the University.

1.44 The College has effective internal course monitoring and review processes in place as well as following the requirements of its awarding body and organisations thus ensuring the maintenance of academic standards. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (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

1.45 The College is not responsible for validating its own awards as its awarding body and organisations take the lead in setting academic standards. The University works closely with local, national and international employers. Local and regional employers are represented via employer forums held at the University which are structured to encourage views on the design, content and delivery of hospitality programmes. Employers are also involved in providing content for live assessment briefs. Placement providers offer an additional opportunity to seek industry views on curriculum issues and currency in Health and Social Care.

1.46 The adherence from the College to the processes and mechanisms employed by the awarding body and organisations and the College's own internal process would enable this Expectation to be met.

1.47 The College makes good use of its external examiners to provide external and independent expertise on the maintenance of academic standards. External examiners are appointed by the awarding body and organisations respectively. External examiner reports are used by the College to provide an opportunity for staff to gather collectively to reflect on comments made, which informs their annual monitoring reports, the production of action plans and the enhancement of the student experience. The College also composes a response which is included with the response made by the awarding body to the external examiner.

1.48 The review team found that external examiner reports from the awarding body and the organisations were very positive and ensured the College that academic standards are being maintained.

1.49 Through meetings with staff and students the review team found that the College does not appear to make explicit reference to formal mechanisms for gathering student or employer views and input on the development of programmes. It was evident that both staff and student industry expertise was heavily drawn upon to inform the design of assessments which enable students to meet the relevant academic standards, to provide case study material and at times to directly inform curriculum development. There was also evidence of student consultation on optional modules.

1.50 The College's approach to the use of external expertise follows its awarding body and organisations' requirements. The College has limited responsibility for the use of external input in programme and module design but uses some externality in assessment design and the College makes effective use of external examiner input as appropriate. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

1.52 All of the applicable Expectations in this area have been met and the risk is judged low in each case. There were no features of good practice or recommendations in this area.

1.53 The review team found that the College adheres and follows the requirements of its awarding body and awarding organisations in order to maintain the academic standards of the programmes. The College's governance structure is adequate for its current provision but the review team considered that the overlap and similarity of personnel at its senior committees could be at risk to impartiality and lack of objectivity if personnel changes or other circumstances were to impact the membership, therefore a recommendation to revise terms of reference for the governance structure is included.

1.54 The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards 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 an internal process for the identification of potential new provision or awards. Student views, annual course data and the demands of the wider market are used in assessing new proposals. The model can either be a top-down or bottom-up process for new course proposals, with ideas coming from either the senior management or academic staff before being put through the College processes. The College does not design or approve new programmes which is currently the remit its awarding organisations and the University of Derby.

2.2 The College's internal processes in identifying new programmes that fit with the College strategy would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.3 The review team tested the effectiveness of the arrangements and resources through the examination of the documentation presented such as validation reports and programme specifications and discussions with staff and students. The meetings involved staff from the University.

2.4 As the review team's findings explain in A3.1 and A3.3, the College has not written any courses or modules for approval by either their awarding body or organisations. Decisions on seeking external validation or approval are made by the College's Academic Board and the senior management team. Examples were provided whereby changes to module delivery structures were made as a result of student feedback and University staff were complimentary on some of these ideas emerging from the College.

2.5 In terms of its wider future intention to more effectively gather the Student Voice, the College plans to involve students in discussing developments for new programmes and/or amendments to existing ones in a more formal manner. The College also intends to involve external stakeholders such as employers.

2.6 The College is limited in its responsibilities with regards to programme design and approval but the review team found that the current processes are fit for purpose.

2.7 The College has formal processes in place in deciding the type of provision the College wishes to deliver. The College acknowledges that students and external stakeholders could be more involved in informing potential provision. There are also internal mechanisms in place to submit minor changes which staff are aware of and follow effectively. Therefore the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated 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

2.8 The College's admissions policy which is informed by the College's strategic plan and contains procedures for the recruitment, selection and admission of students based on principles of fair admission, transparency, reliability, validity and inclusivity. The College's admissions team is responsible for the implementation of the admissions policy and its responsibilities include marketing, recruitment and admission of students. The College also employs a full-time member of staff to coordinate admission to the University top-up programmes who liaises with the University admissions department to ensure applicants meet its entry requirements. All offers to applicants who apply for these awards are approved by the University before any offer is made. The team reports to the Director of Quality and Admissions.

2.9 Students are recruited through a variety of means including UCAS, Hotcourses, general advertisements, exhibitions, recruitment agents and student fairs as well as the College website and open days. The College selects students on the basis of criteria based on academic ability, level of English language, financial circumstances, age and any other criteria required by the awarding body and organisations and the College's admission policy. Students are required to provide evidence of their academic and employment history as well as a personal statement. Students with prior recognised learning can apply for exemptions using the College's Recognised Prior Learning policy. The College supports students throughout the admission process to ensure students are admitted to the most appropriate programme. In addition, any applicant, who may require a reasonable adjustment due to special needs, is evaluated and supported through the admission process.

2.10 The admissions policy contains specific procedures for applicants declaring a disability as well as for care leavers and applicants declaring a criminal conviction. Applications are made through UCAS although applicants can apply directly to the College through its online application system. Some international and European applicants use recruitment agents contracted to the College to assist their application.

2.11 All the information required by applicants and prospective students can be found on the College's website, its prospectus and social media.

2.12 The College's processes for admissions and the staff's awareness of their responsibilities and engagement with the mechanisms for student recruitment would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.13 The team reviewed a number of documents including the College's admission policy, its Recognition of Prior Learning policy as well as examining the College's website and prospectus. Meetings were held with College staff responsible for marketing, recruitment and admissions. The team also discussed with current students their experience of the admissions process, its procedures and their choice of application route.

2.14 There are well established processes for the admittance of students to the University of Derby's Level 6 top-up programmes. All offers made to applicants to these programmes are approved by the University's admissions department to ensure that all applicants who are admitted meet the agreed entry criteria. Admissions staff are clear about the procedures to be followed for admitting students onto the Higher National programmes where decisions on admittance are made by College staff. The College's equal opportunities policy informs the admission policy although age is listed as a criterion for admission despite it being contrary to recent anti-discrimination law. However, the criterion is applied with fairness and transparency. What is less clear, however, is how the College's admission policy and associated procedures are systematically reviewed and monitored across all provision at the College. This may hinder the informing of future practice in this area and wider strategic planning.

2.15 Overall the College's admission policy is administered well. Admissions staff understand their roles and responsibilities. The requirements of each of the awarding partners are clear and implemented fully. While the College could leverage the benefits of a more systematic approach to review and monitoring, 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

2.16 The College's learning and teaching strategy underpins the delivery of learning and teaching at the College. The strategy seeks to enhance the learning environment and ensure the employability of all students. The College recognised the need for additional support for students entering the College to aid their potential achievement. From September 2014 a revised comprehensive eight week skills and induction programme was introduced which includes sessions on the development of critical thinking, academic referencing, how to learn independently as well as support for those making the transition from Levels 5 to 6. From September 2015 the scope of this induction programme was widened to include students progressing from Levels 4/5 to Level 6.

2.17 Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning through individual learning contracts and are supported in this by regular meetings with their personal tutor. Class sizes are limited to 30 to support this much individualised approach to learning and to ensure that all learning styles can be catered for. Tutorial time has been built into student contact time. The student learning experience is further enhanced through the use of educational visits, work placements (where the programme allows), occasional attendance at University classes on the University's campus and student membership of appropriate professional bodies. The College's learning environment is well equipped with a combination of classrooms and laboratories. The on-site library contains copies of all required texts, electronic journals and books. Students' use of the library is supported by the College Librarian and a library user guide. Learning and teaching is also underpinned by the use of a VLE supported by the College's IT department. Depending on the programme enrolled on, students use one of two VLEs. Students can access the IT Helpdesk with any issues relating to their use of these VLEs. All student submissions are made via the VLEs and plagiarism-detection software. The Student Charter clearly explains student responsibility to engage with the learning opportunities provided to shape their learning experience.

2.18 Academic staff are qualified to postgraduate, doctoral and professorial level and many are also practitioners in their respective industries. A number of staff are also members of professional organisations such as the Institute of Engineering and Technology (IET), the Institute of Civil Engineers (ICE), the Chartered Management Institute (CMI) and the Institute of Hospitality (IOH). Membership of these professional bodies provides numerous opportunities for staff to participate in forums, conferences and other activities. Students are also given the opportunity to become student members of relevant professional bodies providing enhanced learning and access to professional resources. Guest speakers are invited to the College to share industry intelligence and experience with the students and this is seen as an initiative to boost students' employability. Relevant teaching and learning resources can be accessed by the students through professional bodies' web portals. Periodical industry magazines published by the professional bodies are available through the College.

2.19 The College's teaching and learning strategy and its accompanying culture of encouraging staff development and developing student potential would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.20 The review team tested the application of the College's approach to learning and teaching by considering documentation including its teaching and learning strategy, staff development documentation and external examiner's reports. The review team also met students, College academic and professional staff and University staff.

2.21 The College makes it a mandatory requirement that staff engage in continuous professional development. The College has one Principal Fellow and one Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (HEA.) There are currently a further 11 members of the staff working towards achieving HEA Fellowships and Senior Fellowships. The College operates a peer observation policy which ensures that the teaching of each member of academic staff is observed every semester. The observation is carried out by the respective Course Leader or a senior member of staff. An action plan is produced after each observation. In addition the College operates a formal staff appraisal policy.

2.22 External examiner reports confirm satisfaction with the quality of learning and teaching provided by the College.

2.23 The College's commitment to ensuring that its academic staff are well qualified and retain academic currency in their subjects is evident. Staff are encouraged to share information and good practice relating to learning and teaching at course team meetings and Course Leader meetings. The College offers regular staff development workshops on a range of topics including the Quality Code, assignment grading and feedback. Some staff attend the annual University of Derby's Collaborative Conference and the Learning and Teaching Conference. The College similarly uses its learning and teaching strategy and the experience and knowledge of its staff to support and develop the learning and teaching experience of its student body. The development of the new skills based induction programme is a response to an identified need within the student population.

2.24 Students are complimentary about the level of personal support they received during their studies. They confirmed that academic staff are available to provide tutorial support whenever it was needed and on an individual basis. They welcomed the family-like atmosphere at the College and the open-door policy for access to academic and professional services staff alike. Students noted that feedback on their assignments was timely and they were made aware of how they could improve their grades in the future. College staff were described as being very responsive to concerns or issues raised by students citing examples of investment in laptops and computers as an example. Overall students felt that their studies at the College were preparing them well for future employment.

2.25 The College's learning and teaching strategy is well established and is designed to develop the potential of its student population. It is also effective in ensuring that its academic staff are both well qualified but are also aware of current practice and innovations in learning and teaching. The strategy does not directly address how pedagogy is developed, delivered and managed across the College that has a diverse student intake. Although the College has a peer observation policy in operation, it lacks consistency in that the observer is often whichever member of staff is available at the time of the observation rather than a subject specialist or a member of the senior management team. While this in itself does not mean that the policy is not appropriate or its operation is not compliant with policy, it does potentially mean that the benefits to the delivery and management of learning and teaching is not maximised.

2.26 Overall the College's approach to learning and teaching is effective and while there is some untapped potential to be realised a more systematic approach to its delivery this does not affect the overall culture of providing a sound basis for students to develop their potential through teaching and learning. 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 (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

2.27 The College seeks to ensure that students achieve their potential primarily through their enrolment on the programmes offered across the College. Students are provided with information on their programmes initially through the College website and prospectus. Once enrolled, students then access programme and module handbooks as well as the VLE used for their programme, which provides further detail on content, learning outcomes and assessment and the expectations of the programme. The curriculum content of each programme includes subject specific components as well as the opportunity to develop transferable skills as part of the College's emphasis on developing employability. Most of the Level 5 higher national programmes and some Level 5 top-up programmes contain PPD and research modules which aim to enable the fusion of learning and practice.

2.28 In addition to teaching activity, student development and achievement is managed through tutorials and feedback on written work. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own development and learning throughout their studies. This encouragement begins at the point of a revamped induction programme and continues through activities at programme level. Where there is a need for support for individual learning and as mentioned in Expectation B3, students enter into individual learning contracts. The College seeks to make reasonable adjustments which include additional time for submission where required by students. Programmes are delivered by only appropriately qualified academic staff supported through the implementation of the College's learning and teaching strategy.

2.29 The College's overall approach to ensuring student's achieve their potential includes a number of systems in place to monitor and evaluate arrangements and resources for developing student achievement such as student evaluations, tutor feedback and audits. These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.30 The review team tested the College's approach to meeting the Expectation by reviewing documentation such as handbooks, the Student Charter and the induction programme, and by meeting senior and academic College staff, professional and University of Derby staff and students.

2.31 The use of the relevant VLE (depending on the programme being studied) enables students to access a range of academic resources and information. The College offers drop-in workshops for the Higher National students' VLE and plagiarism-detection software, in addition to mandatory training for the top-up students' VLE. There is also a 'Blackboard Champion' to assist students to use all the potential resources available through this VLE. The College undertakes an informal audit of resources on the Higher National VLE, which would benefit from a more formal approach to ensure currency and volume of resources for students. Students are also supported through the on-site Library provision and through the work of the College Librarian. Since 2014 the College has installed plagiarism-detection software for students on all programmes to support students to improve their academic writing. There is also a plagiarism policy in place to ensure students are fully familiar with good academic practice.

2.32 Course Leaders are responsible for ensuring that student development and achievement is an outcome of students' enrolment and participation in their chosen programme. The College evaluates student achievement through its annual monitoring processes. These are used to underpin the strategic, operational planning, quality assurance and enhancement of the student achievement. These monitoring processes have identified the need for resources to facilitate development and achievement. The College has installed high speed internet and purchased further laptops for students to borrow. A significant number of additional books were also purchased for the library. Students confirmed that staff provided timely support and feedback to facilitate their ability to meet learning outcomes. Students also noted that staff employed a range of teaching styles using relevant case studies derived from industry and workplace environments to support student achievement. Students particularly appreciated this commitment as it recognised the diverse nature of the student intake.

2.33 The College also has a number of strategies and frameworks which set out objectives and operational approaches to ensuring student achievement through the delivery of effective teaching. The College undertakes module evaluation, staff appraisal and peer observation which are used to support the evaluation of student achievement.

2.34 The College has effective systems in place with which it monitors and evaluates the level of student achievement. The primary means is through annual monitoring and those processes which feed into it. There is clarity in terms of respective responsibilities between staff and students for ensuring students have the opportunity to develop and achieve their potential. There is a clear commitment to ensuring that students have access to the quality and quantity of learning resources they need with the College ensuring investment where additional needs are identified. Therefore the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of associated 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

2.35 The College uses both formal and informal mechanisms to engage students in the quality assurance of their learning experience, however, there is no formal College student engagement strategy or policy. The College has a student charter and code of conduct applicable to all students, regardless of level of study. Student engagement is encouraged at programme level through programme committees, Student Council meetings and mid/end-of-module evaluations.

2.36 The College's current formal and informal mechanisms for student engagement would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.37 In testing this Expectation the review team considered documents such as the minutes of a recent Student Council meeting, 'You Said, We Did' poster campaigns, and the student submission. The review team also met the College Principal, senior academic staff, and professional support staff, staff from the University of Derby and a number of students, including alumni.

2.38 Module evaluations completed by students are considered by programme teams and feed into the College's annual monitoring reports. Feedback gathered from Programme Committees and Student Council meetings result in the publication of 'You Said, We Did' posters which are on display throughout the College. Feedback garnered from Student Councils and Programme Committee meetings are also taken to the Quality and Standards Committee for the College's Strategic Management Team to take appropriate action. Two student representatives for each course are elected at the start of each academic year and are voted into their position by their peers.

2.39 While student participation in quality assurance is largely informal, staff and students reflected positively on the ability to raise and resolve issues informally and in a timely manner, however, the College acknowledged that there was a need to engage students in a more formalised manner and attempts are being made both to more fully engage in and formalise groups such as the Student Council with formal minutes now being recorded.

2.40 Students confirmed that two student representatives for each course are elected at the beginning of the year and receive a briefing, however, no other formal training was cited. The College does not currently offer student representative training, nonetheless student representatives felt they were able to effectively carry out their role.

2.41 Students and staff explained that the informal nature and structures of the College provide a supportive atmosphere where students felt confident raising issues in person, or via the suggestions box. Staff acknowledged that they had tried various different incarnations of the Student Council but due to the nature of the student body, and their work and family commitments, obtaining representation on the Student Council has been challenging.

2.42 While it is evident that students are engaged in the quality assurance and enhancement of their educational experience to a degree, it appears that it is mostly reactive and largely informal in nature. There is currently no student representation at senior College forums which involves strategic decision making. There is also a lack of formal training for

current student representatives. Therefore the team **recommends** that the College should develop a comprehensive programme of training and support for student representation and ensure that there is a defined structure of student engagement at all levels.

2.43 The College seeks to engage students in evaluating their learning experience, playing a role in quality assurance and becoming involved in deliberative structures and mechanisms. Students are able to have some influence in decisions regarding quality assurance but this is currently done in a largely informal manner and representatives are not provided formal training which has led to a recommendation. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and that the associated level of risk is moderate as the procedures relating to the Expectation are broadly adequate but have some shortcomings in terms of the rigour with which they are applied.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Moderate

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

2.44 The College manages assessment processes that meets the requirements of its awarding bodies. The University's academic regulations govern the management of assessment processes for its programmes. The College follows Pearson's checklist in relation to assessment responsibilities. It also has an assessment strategy which sets out how to design assessment and to test the learning outcomes at module level for each module delivery. The strategy includes the drafting of schemes of work which detail, week by week, module content. This is supported by the use of an academic planner which outlines key deadlines and is distributed to all staff at the beginning of each semester.

2.45 The College's Internal Moderation policy provides guidance on the design of assessment, how to link assessment to learning outcomes and contextual grade descriptors for those Higher National programmes. Assignment briefs are verified by either the Lead Internal Quality Assessor or a senior academic specialist before being issued to students. Academic staff design assessment using a standard template which has been developed with input from the awarding body and feedback from external examiners. The University of Derby designs and approves all assessment for its Level 6 top-up programmes, which is then provided to the College to be administered locally.

2.46 Where the College designs assessment methods and instruments, it places emphasis on the linking of academic theory to practice in each module, varying it to meet the needs of students. Assessment briefs are provided in module and programme handbooks and discussed thoroughly with students during lectures. The College assesses student performance against the achievement of relevant learning outcomes. There is good variety in the modes of assessment, enabling students to demonstrate and develop a range of skills.

2.47 Students are provided with guidance on assessment submission and deadlines. Students who require reasonable adjustments made may be granted additional time for assessment submission. There is also a procedure for mitigating circumstances managed by the Examinations Office. Students on the University of Derby Level 6 top-up use an extended extenuating circumstances policy operated and managed by the University.

2.48 Students submit their assessment online via different virtual learning environments depending on the programme concerned or where practicable. Assignments submitted by the due date are marked within three weeks of the final submission date. For programmes awarded by Pearson there is a procedure for late submission and referral. All students are provided with feedback on each of their summative assessments which is linked to each assessment criteria and grade descriptors.

2.49 The College has a clear Recognition of Prior Learning Policy in place which ensures that learners are admitted to the highest level of award for which they are qualified and that they are awarded the maximum amount of relevant credit to which they are entitled by virtue of their prior learning achievements.

2.50 The College operates under agreements, regulations and with its own policies and procedures, providing a clear framework for equitable, valid and reliable assessments. College has procedures for the recognition of prior learning and moderation which would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.51 The review team considered the College's supporting documentation, including internal moderation and verification outcomes, handbooks and documentation supporting the operation of assessment and meeting minutes. The review team also met senior and academic staff as well as staff from the University, and students

2.52 Moderation for Pearson programmes is conducted by the external examiner. For its awards, the University of Derby manages both internal and external moderation. Pearson external examiners also provide feedback on the quality of assignment briefs prior to their annual visit.

2.53 The College is responsible for marking assessments according to the relevant criteria and its awarding body and organisation monitor this compliance through internal moderation and external verification. It receives regular positive feedback from its awarding body and organisation external examiners, confirming that the College adheres to the relevant academic standards.

2.54 External examiner reports confirm that the assessment of learners is robust, valid and reliable, indicating that the required achievement of the intended learning outcomes at the appropriate level is met.

2.55 The College's internal moderation policy provides clear guidance on how assessment should be managed and delivered. Standardisation meetings are managed by the Lead Internal Quality Assessor or Course Leaders to ensure parity of assessment. These are supported by staff workshops on assessment-related topics. Marking is sampled and recorded on internal moderation forms with decisions communicated to staff. Assessment Boards are held at the College to consider the performance of students on the Pearson awards. For University awards, consideration of student performance is considered by its staff at assessment boards held at the University with a College representative in attendance.

2.56 The College has clear policies in place of the operation of assessment for each of the provision of its awarding body and organisations. For the University of Derby there is a high level of prescription and no local autonomy is allowed in terms of assessment design or moderation. All assessment decisions on the award of credit and the student achievement of awards are managed at examination boards held at the University.

2.57 College staff are trained and supported in the management of assessment processes although College staff were inconsistent in explaining how assessment processes are managed in relation to the Pearson awards. The terms of reference provided for College's examination boards did not specify membership of the boards nor detail precisely the authority the boards have in determining the recommendation of the awarding of credit or the management of other assessment-related issues relating to student achievement. In describing the operation of the boards, academic staff outlined processes that were akin to internal moderation rather than the awarding of credit or the recommendation of the conferment of awards. There is inconsistency in who chairs the boards and the minutes do not detail the reasons for changes in student grades. None of the minutes received recorded recommendations for the awards. While the awarding organisation's External Verifier has confirmed that the College provides effective oversight, the current level of informality could potentially lead to future challenge to decisions and recommendations the boards make and the current standard of examination board minutes would not provide an audit trail to support decisions made. There was also a lack of transparency in the ways in which the College

manages mitigating circumstances to ensure equitable treatment for students. Overall the seemingly informal management of assessment process of Pearson awards is in stark contrast to those of the University of Derby. Therefore the team **recommends** that the College should implement a formal structure for examination boards and other related assessment processes in support of Higher National awards to ensure a comparable level of management and oversight to those awards conferred by the College's awarding body.

2.58 The cause for concern was around the variability of student feedback, the review team reviewed the concern raised and considered documentary evidence and discussed issues with College staff. In reviewing samples of student feedback presented, the team found that there were variations evident in the extent and quality of the feedback provided to the four students on their achievement or otherwise of the learning outcomes; there is only limited evidence of internal verification, namely only the names of the internal verifier printed and no comments made by the internal verifier. However, the matter needs to be placed in its wider context in that the quality of assessment practice and internal verification evident in the samples would be found in many centres offering these awards, the award was approved for certification by the Pearson external examiner and there is no evidence of malpractice by staff in respect of these assessments.

2.59 The College's management of assessment includes the effective processes of moderation, design of assessments and marking. However, the review team found disparity between the management of examination boards between the degree and Higher National programmes which has led to a recommendation. Although the review team concludes the Expectation as being met, the level of associated risk is deemed as moderate as there is a current weakness in the operation of part of the College's governance structure and insufficient emphasis given to assuring quality in its planning processes to some of its provision.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining

Findings

2.60 External examiners for the Higher National programmes and BA top-up degrees are appointed by Pearson and the awarding body respectively. External examiners report on all work submitted by students at the College. Pearson externals visit the College to carry out their examination. External examiners are approved and appointed by the awarding body but may be proposed by the College. External examiner reports are used to inform programme monitoring and review.

2.61 The responsibilities of the University and Pearson, in addition to the College's own mechanisms for managing external examiner processes, would allow this Expectation to be met.

2.62 The review team tested the College's approach to the Expectation by reviewing documentation, including external examiner reports and meeting minutes. The review team also met academic and senior College staff, staff from the University of Derby, and students.

2.63 Responsibility for responding to reports concerning the top-up degree programmes resides with the programme leader/project manager at the awarding body, however, the College also receives the reports and academic staff collectively read, discuss, respond to and use the reports to inform annual monitoring and College action plans. This is also the case for the Pearson external reports. College staff make use of feedback from external examiners to ensure that academic standards are maintained and to inform learning, teaching and assessment.

2.64 Moderation for Pearson programmes is conducted by the external examiner. While the awarding body has both internal and external moderation. Pearson external examiners also provide feedback on the quality of assignment briefs prior to their annual visit.

2.65 The student submission confirms the discussion of external examiner reports during Programme Committee meetings and Student Councils. Student representatives are responsible for feeding this information back to the student body.

2.66 Students confirmed that they were aware of the role of the external examiner and that external examiner reports were easily accessible on the relevant VLE for either top-up students or Higher National programme students. Although top-up students have access to both VLEs the College does not currently replicate external examiner reports for top-up students on their VLE.

2.67 The College responds to all external examiner actions through the annual monitoring process. The Quality Office checks that actions have been responded to.

2.68 Through its quality assurance mechanisms and the ultimate responsibilities of the awarding body and awarding organisation, the College satisfactorily engages with external examining processes. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and that the associated 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

2.69 Annual monitoring and periodic review are the responsibilities of the awarding body and organisations and the College is required to adhere to these processes. The College also operates internal programme monitoring and review processes. These use a variety of data such as retention and achievement figures and include the student viewpoint through survey results. Action plans are developed from these processes and the plans are monitored and actions followed up.

2.70 The annual and periodic review processes are designed to improve the overall quality of provision and to make necessary improvements in practice. The action plans are discussed and approved at the Quality and Standards Committee and ultimately by the Academic Board.

2.71 The College's adherence to the monitoring requirements of the awarding bodies and organisation as well as the establishment of its own monitoring mechanisms of programmes would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.72 The review team tested the effectiveness of the arrangements and resources through the examination of the documentation such as annual reports from both an internal and awarding body perspective and had discussions with staff, students and employers. The meetings involved staff from the University of Derby

2.73 The College employs a variety of approaches to gather information to support its monitoring and review processes. These include module evaluations completed by students at the end of each semester and the comments from external examiner reports. This information is used to inform the completion of annual course monitoring reports which are moderated under the direction of the Quality Office.

2.74 The University of Derby and Pearson, as awarding partners, undertake annual monitoring and review processes with the College to ensure the quality of provision. College students attend programme monitoring committees at the University.

2.75 Students are represented at College course team meetings where key measures of annual review and monitoring are discussed and action plans developed. This is confirmed in the Student Submission and in meetings held during the review.

2.76 These course team meeting discussions on monitoring and review feed into the annual monitoring processes. Action plans drawn up for both University and Pearson programmes are monitored by the Quality Office and subject to scrutiny and approval by the Quality and Standards Committee and Academic Board therefore ensuring College oversight at a senior level.

2.77 The College has an effective monitoring system which takes account of student and external examiner input. Oversight is assured through the College's Academic Board and the monitoring of the subsequent action plans through a central office. 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

2.78 The academic appeals and complaints policy currently in use belongs to the awarding body and has been adopted by the College for its entire higher education provision. This policy is outlined in the student handbooks, highlighted and explained during Induction Week and can be accessed online through the VLE. Students can also refer to the Student Support Office for further guidance and support with making a formal appeal.

2.79 The College mechanisms for appeals and complaints and the adherence to the regulations of the awarding body and organisations would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.80 In testing the College's approach to the Expectation, the review team scrutinised the College's complaints and appeals policy and procedures and met senior and academic staff and students.

2.81 Complaints are dealt with informally in the first instance by approaching staff delivering the programme, or the student support office. Should students wish to formalise their complaint, forms are available from the student support office and the Complaints Procedure which is available on both VLEs. Programme handbooks also detail the steps the student must take and outlines the subsequent stages.

2.82 There is a similar emphasis on resolving appeals and complaints informally in the first instance at the College. The relevant information can be found on the VLEs and in Programme Handbooks. However, should an appeals panel be convened, membership consists of a course leader with responsibility for the student's programme, as Chair; two members of academic staff, normally drawn from the membership of Academic Board or the Quality and Standard Committee. A student representative, normally class representative; and the Director of Quality or nominee will act as secretary to the Panel. This panel would be convened at the University and therefore would only be applicable for students studying on the top-up degrees. Students on Higher National programmes also have the right to make academic appeals, however, these have never warranted an appeal panel and students have been satisfied with the College's ability to deal with complaints and appeals informally. However the College recognises the need and potential benefits of engaging students in a more formal process.

2.83 The review team scrutinised the appeals and complaints policy and found that while the policy itself is satisfactory it does not adequately cover the College's entire provision as it does not allow for an appeals panel to be convened for students on Higher National programmes. In meetings held with senior, academic and professional support staff and students it was noted that students regularly seek informal resolutions to potential appeals and complaints and are not disposed to pursue formal channels. However, students confirmed that they were aware where to locate the relevant policies which were highlighted during induction, and which members of staff were available to assist should they wish to formalise and academic appeal or complaint.

2.84 In the case of both appeals and complaints, if the student is not satisfied with the final outcome, both policies make reference to contacting the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

2.85 The embedded practice of informal resolution, while praiseworthy, highlights a gap in the application of policy and for this reason the review team **recommends** that the College clearly articulates the policy and procedures for academic appeals on higher national programmes and ensure they are accessible to students.

2.86 The College has a number of mechanisms in place for the resolution of complaints and appeals. Due to the largely informal and supportive nature of the College, students generally approach staff informally where resolution is usually expedited quickly. However, the review team found that there was a disparity and inconsistency of a formal appeals process between degree and Higher National programmes which leads to a recommendation. Therefore, the review team concludes that Expectation is met and associated level of risk is moderate as there is a weakness in the governance structure.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Moderate

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

2.87 The University and Pearson delegates the responsibilities for collaborative partners or the organisation and management of work placements to the College, where they form an assessed part of the programme. The College does not have any collaborative partners but currently requires assessed work placements within the curriculum area of health and social care. The self-evaluation document, submitted as part of this review, alludes to a number of relationships with, for example, professional institutes which enhance student learning opportunities. The arrangements for the work placement activity include health and safety checks and the provision of documentation setting expectations for students, placement providers and the College.

2.88 The College's mechanisms in supporting the operation for work placements and work-related learning would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.89 The review team tested the effectiveness of the arrangements and resources through the examination of the documentation presented such as the Level 6 Health and Social Care Placement Handbook, the information issued by the College to placement providers and discussions with staff, students and one employer. The meetings involved staff from the University.

2.90 The College provides opportunities for students to undertake work-related learning in the curriculum areas. Many students are already in employment when they enrol at the College and they can use their workplace to find evidence for course units, for example the Personal and Professional Development modules which encourage students to reflect on their practice in the workplace and teach them on how to establish their own personal development plans. These opportunities are informal and include day visits, visiting speakers and visits to exhibitions and events, but they are highly valued by students, staff and employers.

2.91 Initially the team found that only one programme required work placements as a mandatory part of study, however, during the course of the review visit it became clear that work placements are mandatory on two courses, the BA in Health and Social Care and the HND in Health and Social Care.

2.92 The College Work Placement Coordinator works with students undertaking work placements. For the University-validated Level 6 award, comprehensive and effective arrangements are place, with documentation provided on the vetting of placement locations and the responsibilities outlined for students, placement providers and the College.

2.93 For the Higher National programme in Health and Social care award the process is more informal and the same level of documentation is not provided as on the Level 6 award with only a brief introductory letter from the College to placement providers. Assessment is not carried out by placement providers but feedback is required on student's progress from the mentor assigned at the workplace. The informality of the documentation does not clearly articulate responsibilities and understanding for the College, employer and students. Despite the College confirming that most students on the Higher National programme are in

employment when they commence the course, the lack of formality could pose problems and risk for the College, students and placement providers if issues were to occur.

2.94 The review team **recommends** that the College should re-examine the arrangements for students undertaking work experience placements on the Higher National Health and Social Care course to ensure that all necessary documentation is in place for the College, students and the placement provider.

2.95 The College has responsibility with working with others in respect of ensuring assessment which is carried out in the workplace is effectively supported by liaison by College staff and appropriate documentation. The College does this effectively with the provision validated by the awarding body. The Higher National programme is less formally managed which has led to a recommendation to ensure risk is negated by establishing necessary documentation. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated risk is moderate as the problems identified are confined to a small part of the provision.

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

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

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

2.98 Of the 10 applicable Expectations in this area all were met. Six Expectations have a low level of associated risk, while the remaining four have a moderate level of associated risk.

2.99 There are four recommendations identified in this area. The first relates to Expectation B5. The review team found the College had established some mechanisms for student engagement which were limited to standard feedback formats and programme-level engagement. The review team acknowledges the difficulty in recruiting an established body of representatives given that the majority of the student cohort is made up of part-time students. However, student representations do not occur at the more senior-level committees where strategic decision making and input is considered. Furthermore, the training of student representatives lacked a systematic and consistent approach which would allow the College to ensure itself that students were being properly and appropriately prepared and informed of their role as representatives. The Expectation is met but the risk is moderate as it was considered that the weaknesses in the system of student engagement could be easily rectified.

2.100 The review team found that the assessment practices for the University of Derby programmes were well established and worked effectively. The structures for assessment for the Higher National programmes were less effective and more inconsistent. In particular the review team found that the current examination board structure was too informal, lacked clear outcomes, was ineffectively recorded and had no clear structure for chairing responsibilities. Therefore the review team has included a recommendation for the College to implement a formal structure for examination boards. The Expectation B6 is met as the weaknesses did not affect all College provision and the practices had already been approved by Pearson.

2.101 The College has clearly defined policies for complaints for students and while in the main complaints are handled informally this system is effective with timely resolutions. The review team found that there was a disparity between the clarity of appeals on the degree programmes and the Higher National programmes with the process of the latter reliant on the College's own internal engagement with appeals which the team found was informal and lacked structure. A recommendation in Expectation B9 asks for clarity and accessibility in this area.

2.102 The final recommendation is in Expectation B10 and focuses on the work placement activity on one of the Higher National programmes. Again, the requirements of the University of Derby programmes are understood and adhered to by staff and this is the case for work placements on the awarding body programme. The review team acknowledge that many work placement experiences are undertaken by students at their place of employment and therefore placement providers are not usually sought. However, the review team found that the systems and documentation to support placements is not currently robust enough to mitigate any risks on the Higher National programmes. The Expectation resulted in a moderate risk as the weakness only affected a very small part of the provision.

2.103 The review team concludes that the quality of information about 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 website contains information describing its mission, values, course information and admissions and application policies. Information about higher education programmes and study is also provided through a printed prospectus.
- 3.2 All information regarding the College which is intended for use in the public domain is signed off by Academic Board. It falls within the remit of the Director of Quality to ensure that information displayed on the website is up to date and accessible, and to approve the College prospectus with the information originating from course teams.
- 3.3 The College is also responsible for the generation and distribution of publicity and marketing material, however, all marketing material is first approved by the awarding body, the University. A full-time staff member is also employed to ensure the accuracy and currency of all information shared in the social media.
- 3.4 Level 6 programme information is jointly held by the awarding body and the College. All programme and module handbooks are approved by the University and subsequently made available to students both electronically and in print. These provide detailed information about programme content, term dates, assignment deadlines and expected return of work and feedback, and relevant policies. Pearson programme information is held by the College and managed by the Quality Office. This is made available to Level 4 and 5 students via the College's VLE.
- 3.5 The Quality Office is also responsible for checking, maintaining and updating of Pearson module grades. Students receive their module feedback and grades via the Quality Office and student monitoring software. The Director of Quality is responsible for ensuring correct reporting of grades to Pearson. To improve the quality of data held about students the College has recently acquired a new management information system, which includes monitoring software and a student interface. The College envisages much better reporting and monitoring facilities in addition to improved information for students in regards to recording and informing students of their grades.
- 3.6 There is also a Student Charter and Student Code of Conduct which clearly defines the responsibilities of the College and the student during their period of study.
- 3.7 The College has sufficient mechanisms in place to ensure the appropriateness and accuracy of the information it produces about learning opportunities which would allow the Expectation to be met.
- 3.8 The review team tested the College's approach to the Expectation by reviewing information on the College's website and VLE. The review team also considered documentation such as handbooks, prospectus and policies and spoke with the College Principal, senior, academic and professional staff and students.

3.9 Prior to this review a concern was raised about the use of the acronym 'UCK,' used in the College's title which used to stand for 'University College Kensington.' The team were tasked with investigating whether the London College, trading as 'the London College, UCK' were actively implying university status in any of the information provided to students or the public.

3.10 Meetings with the College Principal and quality staff confirmed that the College has been running for 60 years and when initially registered with the Companies House the owner bought the title University College Kensington. Changes regarding the use of University title in the 1980s meant that the College could no longer use the term 'University' in its title. The College was incorporated in 1998 and trades as 'the London College, UCK.' The College has retained the acronym due to branding and its reputation across London which staff explained sets them apart from many other London colleges. The College's accounting history is also tied to the current name and would be lost as a result of eliminating 'UCK.' Students confirmed that they often refer to the College simply as UCK because of ease, but not everyone was aware what UCK actually stood for in the past. Students were clear that they were attending a College, and in many cases, definitively chose to study at the College instead of a University for various reasons. The College were made aware of examples found of the use of University College Kensington on external websites and implications from the Competition and Markets Authority. It was acknowledged that the College's control over this external use was limited and the College explained that they would use legal advice where necessary. The team did not find any evidence of the College advertising itself as a University and concludes that the College has not been misleading potential students or stakeholders with a University title.

3.11 Students confirmed that prior to application and enrolment students accessed information about the College, course content, application requirements and process via the website, printed prospectus, agencies, local publicity and College open days and that students were happy that it was fit for purpose and accurately reflected their learning experience.

3.12 The team also heard that following the successful Level 6 study skills induction week programme in 2014-15 all Level 4 students on Higher National programmes now attend an eight week embedded study skill/orientation to higher education induction programme. It is during this programme that students are also informed about the policies and regulations in place as well as instructed on how to use the VLE and library. The induction has been well received by the students and this was positively highlighted throughout the review visit. Students also reported their satisfaction with information provided in module and programme handbooks.

3.13 Both internal and external-facing information produced by the College about its higher education provision and to aid student learning is comprehensive, accurate and well received. Staff were aware of the processes for sign off for accuracy and followed awarding body and organisation regulations where necessary. In light of the concern raised, the review team were satisfied that the acronym UCK was not used to mislead or imply the College had University status, that its origin was historical, that there were sound financial reasons for retaining the acronym and that the acronym was not being used in full by staff, students or agencies to indicate University status. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation Information 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

3.14 In reaching its positive judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The Expectation for this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk is low. There are no recommendations, affirmations or features of good practice. The review team therefore 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 self-evaluation document, which was submitted as part of this review, states that 'The College, as part of its quality commitment, is always seeking to strategically enhance its students' learning experience and achievements.' The College's draft strategic plan 2015-2018 sets out many key College priorities such as moving to offer three year degrees validated by the University of Derby, plans for refurbishing the College and upgrading learning resources.

4.2 The strategic plans which ensure the deliberate steps in respect of enhancing the student learning experience would allow the Expectation to be met.

4.3 The review team tested the effectiveness of the arrangements and resources through the examination of the documentation presented such as the draft strategic plan and successful resource allocation bids, discussions with staff current students, alumni and employers. The meetings involved staff from the University of Derby.

4.4 The College has made major commitments in its outreach, employer liaison and local community activities to widening participation and this allows many students who would not otherwise access higher education provision to achieve that aim and realise their potential. This is greatly valued by students on all courses.

4.5 The College has entered into a major collaborative partnership with the University of Derby for Level 6 awards and this is governed by clearly set out arrangements. Staff from the University confirmed that this partnership was operating effectively in all respects. It is on this basis that the College is seeking to extend the curriculum offer with the University from 2017.

4.6 The College views the sharing of good practice across curriculum teams as a key feature of its enhancement strategy. This can include the lesson observation process, annual monitoring and review and comments from external examiners. These features of good practice are discussed at course team meetings and ultimately at the Quality and Standards Committee. Action plans are drawn up to ensure that the good practice identified is shared across curriculum teams and monitored to ensure its effective implementation.

4.7 In seeking to enhance the student learning experience, the College undertook a review of induction activities for students and this resulted in the development and delivery of a College-wide induction programme. It was devised after significant planning and approved by the Academic Board. Staff confirmed that the programme has had a significant impact on student achievement and progression and it is also highly valued by students. The programme is under continual review and alternations to it will be made as lessons emerge from this evaluation process.

4.8 The College uses student feedback, internal review processes and external examiner comments to evaluate its learning resource provision. Subsequently, the College has made significant investment in library, computer and other learning resources, for example for engineering courses, and these bids have been approved by the Board of the Corporation. Teaching, support staff and students confirmed that these resources have enhanced the student learning experience.

4.9 The College through its strategic plan and oversight from the Academic Board has developed a strategic approach to the enhancement of student learning opportunities. Enhancements initiatives are identified through quality assurance processes and approved at provider level. Implemented initiatives are then evaluated for their effectiveness. Students are engaged in the enhancement process and good practice is identified and monitored through senior level committees. Therefore the review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities 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

4.10 In reaching its positive judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The Expectation for this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk is low. There are no recommendations, affirmations or features of good practice. The review team therefore concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the College **meets** UK expectations.

5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1 The mission of the College has a clear focus on employability. The mission notes that 'We will become the institution of opportunity that is renowned for our widening participation. We will develop our students and staff to reach for vocational excellence and become recognised as a leading alternative provider of quality higher education programmes and to be an employer-focused institution connected with our local communities, providing teaching and learning which open doors and meet the needs of employers'. To achieve this, the College has sought to embed student employability within curriculum design of all the programmes it offers. This is particularly the case in relation to the College's Higher National programmes which have incorporated a Level 5 Personnel Development Plan module into their programme structure. This module encourages students to reflect on their own academic, personal and career development. It also supports students to identify their own needs in terms of skills and career development. One Higher National programme, Health and Social Care, includes a work-placement element which enables students to become reflective practitioners as part of their work experience. For students enrolled on the University of Derby Level 6 top-up programmes, there are links with the University Careers and Employment Service and the College has adopted the University's Employable Student Framework. Students on these programmes also benefit from visits from University Careers Advisers who offer specific professional careers advice and a number of informal lunch time briefing and one-to-one sessions for students.

5.2 Module content and assessment tasks are based on real life scenarios enabling students to develop the skills and knowledge required to be successful in the work place. Skills developed include delivering presentations, leadership skills, delegation and team building.

5.3 There is a very strong link between the College's learning and teaching and industry practice. Many of the tutors are also industry professionals and practitioners are members of their relevant professional body and this helps to inform curriculum delivery. The College provides free student membership to various industry institutes so they can access resources, conferences and workshops provided by them. The College also arranges for representatives from these organisations to visit the College to speak to students. Students are taken on field trips to industry events and to the University of Derby and are provided with networking and professional development opportunities; career forums and events organised by the University and London employers.

5.4 Overall the College ensures that it explores a range of policies and practices to ensure that employability is embedded within the curriculum and that students have every opportunity to develop their employability skills.

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* (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.

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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Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Tel: 01452 557 050
Website: www.qaa.ac.uk