Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of Amity Global Education Ltd t/a Amity University [In] London

November 2016

Contents

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 Amity Global Education Ltd t/a Amity University [In] London. The review took place from 1 to 3 November 2016 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Ms Penny Renwick
- Mr Peter Hymans.

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Amity Global Education Ltd t/a Amity University [In] London 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 academic standards
  - the quality of student learning opportunities
  - the information provided about higher education provision
  - the enhancement of student learning opportunities
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice
- affirms action that the provider is taking or plans to take.

A 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.

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

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

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[1] The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code.
[2] QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us.
[3] Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers):
www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight-.aspx.

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Amity Global Education Ltd t/a Amity University [In] London

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Amity Global Education Ltd t/a Amity University [In] London.

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

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at Amity Global Education Ltd t/a Amity University [In] London.

- The comprehensive academic, professional and pastoral support, which enables students to reach their potential (Expectation B4).
- The extensive range of opportunities for student engagement, combined with the evaluation of engagement activity, which ensures that students are central to the development of the University (Expectation B5).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to Amity Global Education Ltd t/a Amity University [In] London.

By March 2017:

- provide more comprehensive externally facing information for research students to inform their application process (Expectations C and B2).

By September 2017:

- rationalise the assessment policies and procedures to ensure they are fit for purpose for staff (Expectations B6, A3.2 and C).

Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following actions that Amity Global Education Ltd t/a Amity University [In] London is already taking to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to its students:

- the steps being taken to improve the quality of the University's website (Expectation C).

Financial sustainability, management and governance

The financial sustainability, management and governance check at Amity Global Education Ltd t/a Amity University [In] London has been satisfactorily completed.

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

About Amity Global Education Ltd t/a Amity University [In] London

Amity Global Education Ltd t/a Amity University [In] London (AUIL) is an alternative provider, which is part of the Ritnand Balved Education Foundation, a large global higher education group operating principally in India and at other sites globally. Its mission is to strive for excellence; to value and practice equality, transparency and tolerance; to work in partnership with the business and the community; to promote research, innovation and creativity; and to encourage knowledge transfer. Based in central London, AUIL is managed by its Principal, who reports to its owners and directors, with oversight from a Governing Body that maintains ultimate responsibility for AUIL's activities. An Academic Board oversees AUIL's academic affairs and delegates some responsibilities to subcommittees. An Executive Team provides AUIL's leadership.

AUIL has partnership agreements with the University of Northampton for the delivery of franchised taught degree programmes, and the University of Bolton for research degrees. Both partnerships are relatively new, as a franchise agreement with its former degree awarding body came to an end in 2014. Its taught programmes are limited to a BA (Hons) in Business Management, a BSc in Computing, and an Executive MBA, although only the latter has enrolled students and AUIL has not yet recruited to the other programmes. AUIL will support the delivery of PhDs through its partnership with the University of Bolton, although students have yet to enroll. At the time of the review AUIL had 10 students on its MBA programme, and eight students approved by the University of Bolton awaiting enrolment onto PhDs. It has 11 members of academic staff, seven of whom work full time but three also have some managerial responsibilities; it has a further four part-time members of academic staff.

Since its QAA Review for Educational Oversight in 2012, AUIL changed its trading name from Amity London Business School to Amity University [In] London, a title approved for use by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills in 2013. It has also relocated locally, from one building to another within the same street. It has entered into the two new aforementioned partnerships and ceased delivering degrees on behalf of Anglia Ruskin University. In 2013, AUIL restructured its student services to create one unit, the Integrated Student Services Unit (ISSU). The ISSU provides a focal point for student and faculty cooperation, facilitating referral and knowledge exchange between the various student services, and now comprises advisory services, careers, counselling, accommodation and student finance. AUIL also restructured its Marketing Unit, established a Learning Support Unit, and developed a Research Unit.

AUIL considers its key challenges to include its drive to become a high quality academic institution, adapting to current and recent legislative changes related to higher education, student recruitment in a competitive market, and maintaining financial viability while running higher quality programmes.

The 2012 QAA review team identified three features of good practice and made three desirable recommendations. It has furthered the features of good practice by introducing a Peer Observation of Teaching Guide and an annual peer observation report, with good practice shared at away days; it has established the ISSU to further enhance its responsiveness to students' issues; it has introduced a toolkit for student services to assess their effectiveness; and it has developed a Student Fellow Scheme. AUIL has responded to a recommendation to enable more effective monitoring or provision by developing its subject review process. In response to a second recommendation to share module-specific

feedback, it has integrated student survey data into an annual student feedback report.
In response to a third recommendation, it introduced a system to review public information.

Explanation of the findings about Amity Global Education Ltd t/a Amity University [In] London

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1 AUIL has recently established franchise agreements with the University of Northampton for its level 6 and level 7 programmes, and with the University of Bolton for the provision of research degrees. Responsibility for ensuring that the qualifications meet national threshold standards set out in the FHEQ lies with the awarding bodies. The University of Northampton's regulations for taught programmes define its qualifications, both in terms of the FHEQ level at which they are set, and in terms of a minimum credit attainment threshold, consistent with the *Higher Education Credit Framework for England*. Postgraduate research programmes follow the University of Bolton's Code of Practice for Research and make use of the Research Councils UK Statement of Expectations for Doctoral Training.

1.2 The programme approval processes used in the approval of AUIL's programmes make reference to appropriate external sources, including the FHEQ; Subject Benchmark Statements; professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) requirements; QAA's *Doctoral Degree Characteristics Statement*, and Vitae. AUIL's Internal Framework for Enhancing and Maintaining Academic Standards and Quality clearly sets out the external frameworks that programmes operate within. These processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.3   The review team tested the effectiveness of the arrangements through the examination of documentation including partnership agreements, validation reports and course documentation, and in requests for further clarification in advance of the visit. The review team also met with AUIL staff, and staff from the University of Bolton.

1.4   The review team found that AUIL has appropriate contracts and that it operates under the respective regulatory frameworks. Programmes and arrangements for delivery have been approved by the awarding bodies. The franchise arrangements are currently being realised, with an intake to the MBA in April and September 2016 and an intake to the undergraduate programmes planned for January 2017. To date, the University of Bolton have approved eight research students, but they have yet to commence their studies.

1.5   On the basis of documentary study supported by discussion, the review team confirms that these procedures are effective, and that policies and procedures make appropriate use of all relevant reference points. 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

1.6   The University of Northampton's documents Managing Education with Others Handbook, the regulations for taught degrees, Academic and Student Regulations 2015-16, and the Collaborative Operational Handbook provide a framework for managing and maintaining academic standards for its franchised programmes, and includes the regulations for programme operation, assessment and examination. The University of Bolton's Research Degree Regulations 2015-16 set the framework for managing and maintaining academic standards for research degrees delivered by AUIL. The primary responsibility at AUIL for maintaining standards and quality lies with its Academic Board, with operational responsibility held by the Quality Assurance Unit. The design and operation of the awarding bodies' academic regulations and the adherence of AUIL in following those regulations would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.7   The review team tested the effectiveness of the arrangements and resources through the examination of the awarding bodies' regulations and handbooks, together with a review of the terms of reference of AUIL's Academic Board, a review of resources on AUIL's virtual learning environment (VLE), and through discussions with staff and students.

1.8   AUIL's governance arrangements are clear, with the Academic Board maintaining overall responsibility for academic standards, the management of which is then devolved to the Quality Review and Assurance Committee (QRAC) and its subcommittees, including the Teaching and Learning Committee and the Curriculum Management Committee. The terms of reference of all deliberative committees are clearly set out. The awarding bodies appoint the external examiners in all cases. In going beyond the awarding body regulations, and to further enhance the assurance of standards and quality, AUIL has appointed its own external examiner, who acts as a critical friend. AUIL has not yet reached the examination stage in the provision of its research degrees, but the University of Bolton will manage arrangements for their external examination.

1.9   AUIL complies with the regulations and frameworks of its awarding bodies, supported by its own internal processes, and is effective in meeting its responsibilities in securing academic standards. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A2.2): 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

1.10   Programme and module specifications describe AUIL's programmes and form part of the key documentation considered at the respective awarding body's validation and periodic subject review. Programme specifications set out aims, intended outcomes, entry criteria and relevant reference points, including the FHEQ level and relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. The awarding bodies provide certificates, academic transcripts and European Diploma Supplements for completing students. The evidence submitted to the review team would allow this Expectation to be met.

1.11   The review team examined the effectiveness of maintaining definitive records for programmes of study through examining programme and module handbooks, and met students, student representatives and staff.

1.12   The awarding bodies' validation and review processes approve programme specifications for taught programmes. If AUIL requires changes other than minor amendments once programme specifications are approved, it must submit changes to a periodic review panel. If it requests significant changes, the awarding body may bring forward a periodic review. As the University of Northampton has recently approved all programmes, AUIL has not yet made modifications. Students and academic staff can access programme specifications through the AUIL website and module specifications through the VLE.

1.13   An appendix to each programme specification provides an award map that shows the volume and level of credits for the modules that make up the programme. Programme handbooks and module guides contain comprehensive and detailed information about programme aims and outcomes, and module information including assessment requirements. Students can access programme handbooks online and in hard copy.

1.14   The University of Northampton maintains the definitive records of programmes taught by AUIL, and AUIL provides key information from these in programme and module handbooks. Staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities for providing accurate programme documentation to students, and students were satisfied with the quality of the documentation. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.15   AUIL does not have degree awarding powers and is not therefore responsible for the validation of the programmes it delivers. The awarding bodies' processes for the design and approval of taught programmes are set out in their own handbooks and regulations.

1.16   The University of Northampton validated and approved the programmes delivered by AUIL in 2014. The University of Bolton has no formal process for the approval of collaborative partners supporting the delivery and supervision of PhD training programmes. Instead, the University of Bolton approved a proposal for a partnership with AUIL for the joint delivery of PhD programmes in 2014. AUIL's Executive Team, Academic Board and Governing Body agreed to the collaboration in principle, before pursuing formal approval with the University of Bolton. Minutes of the Academic Development Committee and the QRAC demonstrate that consideration of the partnerships took place at all levels within AUIL. The Head of Quality reviewed the submission for approval before AUIL sent it to the University of Bolton.

1.17   The terms of reference of AUIL's Academic Board include consideration and development of academic activities and the resources needed to support academic work; however, it is not explicit how AUIL should accomplish this. The QRAC has delegated authority for the detailed management of academic standards and quality processes, including the approval and systematic review of programmes. AUIL's Quality Assurance Unit defines how staff should develop new programmes and provides a flow chart for course approval - at the time of the review, however, no programmes had been developed according to this process. AUIL's Internal Framework for Enhancing and Maintaining Academic Standards and Quality is a comprehensive document that establishes the reference points for maintaining academic standards.

1.18   The review team tested the Expectation through consideration of the awarding bodies' regulations and approval documentation. It also discussed AUIL's arrangements for approving programmes with academic, senior, and professional support staff.

1.19   Meetings with staff and scrutiny of documentation confirmed that AUIL complies with its awarding bodies' requirements for approving programmes that ensured the secure setting and maintenance of academic standards. The review team also considered AUIL's internal procedures for the approving programmes but it had yet to implement these. AUIL's engagement with the approval processes of the awarding bodies demonstrates its ability to deliver their taught and research degrees.

1.20   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

1.21   The University of Northampton is responsible for setting all assessments on the programmes it validates. According to its delegated responsibilities, AUIL undertakes first marking, and the awarding body will carry out second marking and hold award boards. Under its partnership arrangements with the University of Bolton, AUIL will assess students in accordance with the University's Research Degree Regulations. The University of Northampton's Assessment and Feedback Policy sets out the principles that govern the design, delivery and management of assessment and feedback, and the requirements for the achievement of learning outcomes, to determine the award of credit.

1.22   The awarding bodies' regulations ensure that credit and qualifications are only awarded for the achievement of positively defined learning outcomes that satisfy the threshold and institutional academic standards for the awards. As such, the awarding bodies' policies and procedures would allow the Expectation to be met. The review team tested the Expectation by considering the agreements with the awarding bodies, meeting with staff and students, and considering AUIL's documentation relating to assessment.

1.23   The University of Northampton designs the assignment briefs for AUIL's taught programmes and sends them to AUIL, which then incorporates them into module information and posts them on the VLE. Students submit assignments through plagiarism-detection software used to detect malpractice. AUIL's teaching staff undertake the first marking of assessments; all teaching staff have been assessed at higher education level at other institutions and received training from the University of Northampton prior to the start of the current programme.

1.24   Although not required by the awarding bodies, AUIL carries out a standardisation process with its staff with its own appointed external examiner, a practice it adopted with its previous awarding body. The University of Northampton will undertake second marking and give feedback to students within four weeks. Students confirmed that they found the feedback on assessments that they undertook on former programmes at AUIL helpful in progressing with their studies.

1.25   AUIL has several policies relating to assessment: the Assessment Approaches Guidelines, which define different types of assessment; the Formative Assessment Strategy; Good Practice in Assessing Students; and the Assessment Principles Policy and Procedures. The MBA programme handbook also has an assessment strategy section. The number of different documents relating to assessment may lead to academic staff not engaging with all aspects of AUIL's assessment strategy and has the potential to cause confusion. This finding supports the recommendation under Expectation B6.

1.26   The responsibilities of AUIL in relation to assessment for the new programmes are the same as for the previous programmes it delivered with another awarding body.

Based on the evidence of annual monitoring and external examiner reports from those programmes, the review team has confidence in AUIL's ability to meet its responsibilities for the maintenance of academic standards.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.28   AUIL carries out annual programme monitoring for taught programmes according to the annual monitoring processes of its respective awarding body. The University of Northampton sets out its processes for monitoring and review of taught programmes in its Managing Education with Others Handbook. The University of Bolton articulates its processes for monitoring and review of the research programmes in its Research Degree Regulations.

1.29   AUIL's Academic Board is remitted to review courses. The QRAC has delegated authority for the detailed management of academic standards and quality processes, including the systematic review of programmes. AUIL is responsible for carrying out module-level reviews under new arrangements with the University of Northampton, which should include the analysis of student feedback and achievement data. The Head of Student Services collects student feedback at module level, which informs module reviews, as do the outcomes of peer observations. AUIL has a clear process for the internal consideration of annual reviews, which identifies matters for consideration and specifies the way in which the reports are approved before being sent to the awarding body. The Quality Assurance Unit has trained staff in conducting annual reviews.

1.30   These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met, as the overall responsibility for annual monitoring of academic standards rests with the awarding bodies. Additionally, AUIL has rigorous processes for meeting its own responsibilities and has developed its own processes for periodic subject review.

1.31   The review team tested the Expectation by means of the scrutiny of the awarding bodes' quality guidance, AUIL policies and procedures, and the reports of reviews at programme and subject level. The team also tested the Expectation through meetings with academic and senior staff, and students.

1.32   The annual monitoring reports produced for the previous awarding body demonstrate clear reflection on academic standards through consideration of module and course statistics, and inclusion of the external examiners' opinions on the academic standards achieved by the students. Annual monitoring reports are comprehensive and include a review of actions arising from the previous report and an action plan for the following period.

1.33   As the opportunity for a periodic subject review had not arisen with its previous awarding body, AUIL carried out its own periodic review for Business programmes in 2013. Its periodic subject review process contains a section on the effectiveness of the subject's managers in maintaining academic standards, and concludes that the academic standards set continue to meet subject, university and sector expectations.

1.34   The review team has confidence that AUIL's record of engagement with the previous awarding body's annual monitoring procedure and its development of a periodic subject review demonstrate its ability to meet the Expectation in the future.

1.35   The joint procedures of the awarding bodies and AUIL are effective in allowing the Expectation to be met. AUIL engages rigorously with the awarding bodies' procedures and has created its own review procedures to ensure greater scrutiny. 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

1.36   The use of external and independent expertise in the maintenance of academic standards is determined by the awarding bodies within their processes for approval, review and the assessment of students; and through their use of external experts in the setting of academic standards and external examiners in assessment. According to AUIL's Internal Framework for Enhancing and Maintaining Academic Standards and Quality, the QRAC has delegated authority for the detailed management of academic standards and quality processes, including consideration of reports from external agencies. A key role of AUIL's Governing Body is to provide managers with academic, commercial and industrial insight, and as such its membership includes industry representatives. Collectively, these processes enable this Expectation to be met.

1.37   The review team tested the effectiveness of AUIL's arrangements for this Expectation through the examination of the documentation presented, including validation documents and annual review documents, and through meetings with academic and senior staff.

1.38   External examiner reports received under AUIL's arrangement with its previous awarding body indicate that AUIL is able to maintain UK threshold standards in the delivery of programmes. AUIL considers external examiner reports within its annual monitoring processes, where it summarises and responds to their findings to ensure the currency and quality of the awards being offered. AUIL makes external examiner reports available to students on the VLE and students also confirmed that they receive them in student committee meetings.

1.39   Above and beyond its awarding bodies' processes, AUIL has created its own external examiner role to act as an internal reviewer of the marks awarded by AUIL module leaders before it submits assessed work to the awarding body for second marking and further external examining. This role provides a further opportunity for the external oversight of the work of AUIL's academic staff, but the titling of the role could cause confusion for staff and students.

1.40   AUIL is fully aware of its responsibilities through responses to external review activities under previous awarding body arrangements. AUIL makes satisfactory use of relevant external experts and is seeking to enhance external oversight through the appointment of an additional role. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

1.42   AUIL has met all of the Expectations of this judgement area, and the level of risk for each Expectation is low. The review team makes no recommendations in relation to this judgement area and identified no affirmations or features of good practice.

1.43   The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies at AUIL **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   AUIL's awarding bodies designed, developed and approved the programmes delivered at AUIL, and approved AUIL to deliver the programmes under franchise arrangements. The University of Northampton validated and approved the programmes delivered by AUIL in 2014. The University of Bolton has no formal process for the approval of collaborative partners supporting the delivery and supervision of PhD training programmes. Instead, the University of Bolton approved a proposal for a partnership with AUIL for the joint delivery of PhD programmes in 2014. AUIL's Executive Body, Academic Board and Governing Body agreed to the collaboration in principle, before pursuing formal approval with the University of Bolton. The awarding bodies' procedures for the approval of AUIL's capacity to deliver these programmes under a franchise arrangement, would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.2   AUIL has developed a process for the development of new programmes that includes the responsibilities of staff at different stages of the process, including external referencing and the establishment of academic standards within the national framework. The responsibility for programme approval is clearly delegated to its committees, with the QRAC giving final authority to proceed to the specially convened Validation Panel, which considers the relevant Subject Benchmark Statement, learning and teaching strategies, national standards and frameworks, and PSRB requirements, and checks quality assurance arrangements. The process would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.3   The review team tested the Expectation through consideration of the awarding bodies' regulations and approval documentation. Meetings with staff confirmed that the awarding bodies' requirements had been met. The review team considered AUIL's internal procedures for the approval of programmes but these have yet to be implemented.

2.4   In practice, the approval processes of the awarding bodies are effective in establishing the ability of AUIL to deliver the programmes under a franchise arrangement. AUIL's internal processes for programme approval have yet to be used so there is no evidence on which to base a judgement.

2.5   The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low, as the responsibility for programme design and approval remains with the awarding bodies. However, AUIL also has a rigorous process for its own internal approval of new programmes.

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

2.6   According to its collaboration agreements, AUIL has delegated responsibility from its awarding bodies for recruitment and a shared responsibility for admissions. Both awarding bodies set each programme's entry criteria, including English language requirements, against which to assess applications from prospective students. The University of Northampton clearly articulates AUIL's responsibilities for admissions but maintains responsibility for accreditation of prior learning decisions. The University of Bolton retains final authority to admit research students; at the time of the review the University had approved eight research students but not yet formally admitted them onto the PhD programme. AUIL has an active Admissions Committee and Marketing Committee that oversee these processes. There is a formal admissions policy approved by the QRAC that confirms AUIL's commitment to promoting equal opportunity. The evidence submitted to the review team, including minutes of the Admission Committee and the admissions policy, would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.7   The review team examined the effectiveness of the recruitment and selection processes through analysis of the awarding body requirements and AUIL admissions policies and procedures documentation. The team analysed the information made available to applicants and prospective students in hard copy and on the website. It also held meetings with students and staff, including those responsible for admissions.

2.8   Under the authority of the QRAC, the Chair of the Admissions Committee maintains oversight of relevant policies to ensure they conform to external expectations. The Marketing Committee is responsible for developing, reviewing and revising recruitment and marketing strategies and their associated policies and procedures. The Committee receives regular updates on marketing, recruitment, admission and applications conversion, scholarships and bursaries.

2.9   AUIL provides clear information on taught programmes for its applicants in a prospectus and on its website, which also contains programme specifications. AUIL has a complaints and appeals procedure for applicants but this is not in the prospectus nor easy to find on the website. The AUIL website and social media inform applicants about open days and applicant visits. Students who met the review team spoke positively about a personalised admissions and induction experience supported by all staff. Annual monitoring statistics show excellent retention and progression rates, indicating that the admission processes are fit for purpose.

2.10   AUIL provides a separate research prospectus, but has no accessible information about research staff expertise, how to contact potential supervisors, or how to prepare a research proposal. This finding supports a recommendation under Expectation C.

2.11   There is a comprehensive policy for the admission of international students that AUIL reviews annually. AUIL has a detailed admissions flow chart that supports staff in the recruitment of international students, and provides training in admissions. It has undertaken a mapping exercise of the admissions policy against the Quality Code to ensure the currency

of its processes and to address the Expectations of the Quality Code. AUIL evaluates the impact of open days, surveys of applicants about their admissions experiences, and recommendations are made to the Admissions Committee.

2.12   AUIL has appropriate policies and procedures in place to ensure an effective and fair admission experience for students from application to enrolment. Staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and provide a very supportive process for students. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (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

2.13   The QRAC has responsibility for the institutional oversight of student learning opportunities, supported by the Teaching and Learning Committee. It reports on these matters to the Academic Board. The Student Services Committee, reporting to the Executive Team, oversees and sets the strategic framework for student services provision. Two overlapping strategies, the Teaching and Learning Strategy and the Teaching, Learning and Student Experience Strategy, provide the framework for its teaching provision and the development of student learning opportunities. Informed by a Human Resources Strategy, AUIL has a clear intent to recruit and retain high quality staff. A staff development policy, a personal and professional development policy, and a peer observation of teaching policy and guide inform the professional development of staff. The policies, procedures and mechanisms in place provide a basis for effective learning and teaching, which would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.14   The review team tested the effectiveness of these arrangements through examination of the documentation presented, such as teaching and learning strategies, observation records, and an audit of the VLE. It also explored the effectiveness of these arrangements in discussions with senior, academic and professional support staff, and with students.

2.15   AUIL has a small team of experienced staff, many of whom hold relevant teaching qualifications and fulfil academic and student support or administrative roles. It provides new staff with an induction pack, a helpful induction checklist, and a mentor. Staff development opportunities include funding for postgraduate qualifications and attending conferences, peer observation of teaching, staff workshops, and useful and detailed guides for staff in areas such as assessment and induction. A staff away day provides an opportunity for staff to share research findings and good practice. Staff view the support for their professional development as one of AUIL's strengths, although there is scope for AUIL to strengthen the uptake and evaluation of the impact of staff development.

2.16   There is an active Student Committee chaired by the student president, with representation from year representatives, in addition to the respective students responsible for social activities and different working groups. Through this Committee, students gain an oversight of the quality of teaching by considering reports such as the Annual Student Feedback Report that reflects on module surveys. The Curriculum Management Committee, which contains student members, maintains oversight of programmes and discusses annual monitoring reports before they are submitted to the QRAC, Academic Board and respective awarding body in turn. In meetings with the review team, students clearly articulated how AUIL has enabled them to develop as independent learners.

2.17   AUIL has effective mechanisms and oversight in place to ensure the provision of appropriate learning opportunities and teaching practices so that it can support students to develop as independent learners. It has appropriately qualified teachers who participate in peer observation processes, and provides opportunities for staff development and the

sharing of good practice. 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

2.18   AUIL's Academic Board delegates responsibility for maintaining and enhancing the quality of learning resources to an Academic Development Committee. A strategic agreement with Birkbeck College enables students to access resources at the University of London, including the College's library, computer laboratories, Wi-Fi, and classrooms, plus student services such as restaurants and an IT help desk. Students can also access the University of London's Senate House Library, as well as the University of Northampton and University of Bolton digital libraries. Guidance to support students in developing their academic, personal and professional skills includes student support services and personal tutoring. Staff are supported in delivering these services through guides and a policy for personal tutoring and signposting students wider support services. AUIL has a Student Charter, approved by Academic Board, which sets out the responsibilities of students and AUIL in order to foster a shared responsibility for student development and enhancement. The availability of these resources and support mechanisms for students would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.19   In its review of evidence, the review team explored strategies and guides associated with enabling student development and achievement. It explored the range of documentation provided to staff and students, and minutes and papers of relevant committees. It also explored arrangements for student support in meetings with senior, academic and professional support staff, and in meetings with students.

2.20   AUIL provides an induction process for new students to help them adapt to life at AUIL and to inform them of the availability of resources and training arrangements. During induction, AUIL shares detailed information of programmes of study, academic talks, resources, support services, workshops on plagiarism, and the use of the VLE. Each new student enrolled on taught programmes is assigned a Student Fellow to help introduce them to colleagues and student activities, and students confirmed that they appreciate this scheme. Students spoke particularly positively about the additional support provided and about the responsiveness of staff in recognising and responding to particular learning needs through the provision of additional skills sessions.

2.21   AUIL provides students with a detailed student information handbook and a programme handbook in hard copy and on the VLE. These contain details of the services provided by AUIL and information about the programme of study.

2.22   In 2013 the University adopted a more coordinated approach to the management of student support by restructuring its Student Services Unit. The new ISSU facilitates a more holistic approach to the delivery of student support. Its wide-ranging service includes accommodation information, coaching, and financial and careers support; the ISSU produces a comprehensive annual report underpinned by user statistics.

2.23   AUIL established the Learning Support Unit as an integrated unit in 2013. The Unit provides an integrated approach to learning support designed to enable students to become independent learners. A Disability Liaison Officer supports students with additional learning needs, and facilitates the work and communication between the Academic Unit, students and professional services. Staff can access guidance to inform their work with students with additional learning needs.

2.24   The Academic Unit runs a series of workshops for postgraduate students, and also for students for whom English is not their first language. The classes cover topics such as time management, academic writing, presentation skills and examination techniques. A significant number of students use an academic writing club and their feedback indicates it has a very positive impact. The Academic Unit provides a useful annual report including detailed statistics on retention and attainment. This identifies improving attainment rates, with an attainment rate of 100 per cent in the most recent report.

2.25   AUIL has an employability strategy that aims to raise students' awareness of employability skills and their relevance to students' future careers, and to encourage students to gain such skills during their time at AUIL. Students undertake research and industry-based projects during the course of their programmes. An Entrepreneurship Club, launched during 2013, helps students to better understand entrepreneurialism and encourages them to learn more about entrepreneurship and set up their own businesses; the review team met students who had already set up their own businesses. All student support services conduct a careful and detail evaluation of their services, underpinned by statistics. The comprehensive academic, professional and pastoral support, which enables students to reach their potential, is **good practice**.

2.26   AUIL has in place, monitors and evaluates a wide range of resources, support services and opportunities for students to develop their potential; the quality of support provided is good practice. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B5: Student Engagement*

Findings

2.27   Student engagement is highly developed within AUIL. Its Student Engagement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy sets out its commitment to student engagement through inviting feedback at module and institutional level, representation on all committees, and the formation of a Student Committee; AUIL responds to students' feedback through reports and committees.

2.28   The Student Voice Policy is a comprehensive document that clearly sets out the importance of students' views, and staff and students' responsibilities for gathering and interpreting feedback from students and using it for enhancement purposes. The Student Charter includes explicit reference to student involvement in the management of their course.

2.29   The Student President is a member of the Governing Body and Academic Board. Chaired by the Student President, the Student Committee provides an official voice for students within AUIL, and a forum in which student representatives and staff can identify and discuss issues affecting students. It also provides a means of disseminating and exchanging information on decisions that have been reached by the Governing Body, Academic Board, committees and the Executive Team.

2.30   The policies and procedures AUIL has developed to engage students in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience would allow the Expectation to be met. The review team tested the Expectation by evaluating AUIL's policies on student engagement, committee remits, committee structure and through meetings with students, the Student President, and senior, academic and professional support staff.

2.31   The processes for student engagement work well in practice. Students stated that AUIL has responded to their feedback, for example by providing social activities. The Student Committee discusses key reports on services for students, including the ISSU annual report, student support report and the annual student report. The Student Committee also approved the student submission for this review.

2.32   The membership of committees includes student members on the Governing Body, the Executive Team, the Teaching and Learning Committee, and the QRAC, but the remit of the Academic Board does not show a student member. Nevertheless, minutes show that students actively participate in all the committees including the Academic Board. Students confirmed that they felt included in the governance and management of their programmes. Staff also valued the inclusion of students in the running of AUIL.

2.33   Students participated in the periodic review of business programmes undertaken in 2013, with the Student President as a full member of the review panel. The resultant report clearly shows that students' views on teaching, learning and assessment formed the major part of the review. Issues raised by students during the review appear in the subsequent action plan.

2.34   The extensive range of opportunities for student engagement, combined with the evaluation of engagement activity, which ensures that students are central to the development of the University, is **good practice**.

2.35   The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of
risk is low, as students are engaged in the assurance and enhancement of their educational
experience through all AUIL governance and management structures.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.36   The University of Northampton Academic Regulations set out the general principles for the assessment of taught programmes. Module assignment guides set out the summative assessment methods, coursework, assignments and examination papers for all University of Northampton modules and are available on the VLE. The University of Northampton module leaders communicate the assessment criteria for each item to staff and students through the module guides or in assignment briefs. AUIL module tutors assess all taught degree work initially and then engage in a standardisation process involving other staff and AUIL's appointed external examiner as described under Expectation A3.2.

2.37   For research degrees, the University of Bolton Research Degrees Regulations articulate procedures for assessment. AUIL will assess research degrees jointly with the University of Bolton, with AUIL's assessors appointed and trained by the University. The University of Bolton supports AUIL's assessors in their role through annual update training.

2.38   AUIL's awarding bodies maintain responsibility for students' claims for recognition of prior learning, extenuating circumstances or appeals, although AUIL provides a guide on what constitutes extenuating circumstances.

2.39   Apart from the first marking of assessment on taught programmes and joint assessment of research students, all the responsibility for equitability, validity and reliability of assessment remains with the awarding bodies. The regulations and processes of its awarding body partners to support the equitability, validity and reliability of assessment would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.40   The review team tested the Expectation through meetings with academic staff and students, and a representative from the University of Bolton. The team also examined policies and procedures relating to assessment from both awarding bodies and AUIL.

2.41   AUIL has no involvement in design of assessment or assessment processes; however, it has appointed its own external examiner to carry out standardisation of its first marking of assessments on taught programmes before they are sent to the University to further secure the reliability of assessment. In practice, AUIL engages in the assessment of taught students rigorously and in doing so meets its responsibilities for assessment within the terms of its agreements with the awarding bodies.

2.42   AUIL has developed many of its own policies and procedures relating to assessment, in addition to those of its awarding bodies. It has an Extenuating Circumstances Guidance and the Assessment Information Guide. It also has the items discussed under Expectation A3.2 of this report: the Assessment Approaches Guidelines, which define different types of assessment; the Formative Assessment Strategy; Good Practice in Assessing Students; and the Assessment Principles Policy and Procedures. The MBA programme handbook also has an assessment strategy section. These provide a good resource for teaching staff but could lead to confusion between guidance from the

awarding bodies and AUIL. Repetition and inconsistencies appear across the documents; for example, the importance of formative assessment is described in the Formative Assessment Strategy, briefly in the Assessment Approaches Guidelines and at length in the Good Practice in Assessing Students. However, the MBA programme handbook makes no mention of formative assessment within its assessment strategy. To reduce duplication and contradiction and to ensure that AUIL reflects its awarding bodies' processes appropriately, the review team **recommends** that, by September 2017, AUIL rationalise the assessment policies and procedures to ensure they are fit for purpose for staff.

2.43   The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low, as the problem identified relates to a need to amend and update details in documentation, which will not require or result in major structure, operational, or procedural change.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B7: External Examining*

Findings

2.44   The University of Northampton maintains responsibility for appointing and training external examiners for AUIL's taught programmes. AUIL delivers these programmes under a new partnership agreement, and it has not yet reached the stage in delivery at which it receives an external examiner report from the University. AUIL plans to use external examiner reports to inform its annual programme monitoring process in the same way as under previous awarding bodies. The University of Northampton does not require AUIL to respond to external examiners directly in response to their reports.

2.45   AUIL routinely considers external examiner reports at the QRAC, Curriculum Management Committee and Academic Board. It also considers them at the Student Committee and makes them available on the VLE.

2.46   AUIL has established its own arrangements for engaging the advice of external academic experts in the running of its programmes. It has created the AUIL external examiner post, with a role similar to that of the awarding body's external examiner but devoted exclusively to AUIL's provision. The AUIL external examiner engages in the standardisation and moderation of assessment after first marking.

2.47   AUIL arrangements for considering external examiner reports at its committees, and responding to them through its annual programme monitoring processes, would enable it to meet the Expectation.

2.48   The review team tested the Expectation by considering external examiner reports received from AUIL's former awarding body, reports from the AUIL external examiner, annual monitoring reports, and the minutes of committees where AUIL considers reports. The team also met senior staff, academic staff, and students.

2.49   The external examiners' reports for AUIL's previous awarding body cover provision within the awarding body and at its other delivery partners as well as that delivered by AUIL. They do not distinguish between the quality and standards of provision at different delivery sites and are of limited use in evaluating AUIL's programmes. The annual monitoring reports for the programmes appropriately contain a section to reflect on the external examiner reports. To date, these reflections have been brief due to the limited reference to AUIL provision in external examiner reports. AUIL has made the best use of the outputs of the external examining arrangements of its previous awarding body and the review team is confident it will continue to do so under its new partnerships.

2.50   AUIL discusses external examiner reports at relevant committees, and minutes show that they raise no significant issues. The AUIL external examiner produces a report each semester; however, the reports for 2015 and 2016 did not provide detailed feedback.

2.51   The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low, as AUIL appropriately considers external examiner reports at its committees, and responds suitably through its annual programme monitoring process.

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

2.52   AUIL carries out annual programme monitoring for taught programmes according to the annual monitoring processes of its awarding bodies. The University of Northampton sets out its processes for monitoring and review of taught programmes in its Managing Education with Others Handbook. The University of Bolton articulates its processes for monitoring and review of the research programmes in its Research Degree Regulations.

2.53   AUIL's module reviews inform annual monitoring reports developed for its previous awarding body. AUIL has written its own periodic subject review process to further develop its own capacity to manage its responsibilities for enhancing the quality of learning opportunities.

2.54   AUIL's engagement with the awarding bodies' policies and procedures in relation to annual and periodic review, and its internal processes for periodic subject review, would allow the Expectation to be met. The review team tested the Expectation by evaluating AUIL's policies and procedures for programme monitoring and reports of reviews at programme and subject level. The team also tested the Expectation through meetings with senior and academic staff, and students.

2.55   Module-level reviews include student feedback on teaching and peer observation. Detailed programme annual monitoring reports produced for AUIL's previous awarding body demonstrate AUIL's rigorous approach to enhancing the quality of learning opportunities. The programme annual monitoring reports consider student feedback, scholarly activity and staff development, and matters arising from course management committees.

2.56   The detailed action plans arising from programme annual monitoring reports, the latest of which is due for completion in 2016-17, make reference to actions already taking place, for example action to continue to enhance the collection of student feedback. Similarly, the actions relating to them do not always have hard targets. The format of the action plan is the responsibility of the former awarding body and will change in the current academic year.

2.57   AUIL carried out a rigorous and detailed periodic subject review, which considered the effectiveness of enhancement to the student learning experience, and concluded that it had well-established processes for monitoring and review.

2.58   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

2.59   Responsibility for processing student appeals lies with AUIL's awarding bodies. AUIL initially considers students' formal complaints, and students retain the right to escalate an unresolved complaint to the awarding body partner and, if the case requires, to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator. AUIL has a complaints procedure and flowchart, approved by its awarding bodies, that sets out informal and formal stages for complaints from both taught and research students; it is overseen by the QRAC, although the Academic Board also receives an annual report on complaints. The Academic Director and Head of Student Services are responsible for the implementation of the appeal and complaint procedures. AUIL also has specific complaints and appeals procedures for applicants to its programmes. Research degree appeals are managed through the process identified in the University of Bolton Research Degree Regulations and are entirely the responsibility of the awarding body. AUIL has appropriate policies and procedures available to staff and students that would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.60   The review team examined the effectiveness of the complaints and appeal processes by examining documentation including policies for complaints and appeals, student handbooks, the VLE and reports to the Academic Board. The team also held meetings with senior staff, teaching staff, students and student representatives.

2.61   The annual report to the Academic Board on complaints and appeals helpfully includes informal complaints as, to date, it has received no formal complaints. AUIL provides training sessions to staff on complaints.

2.62   AUIL has mapped its complaints procedure to the Expectation B9 of the Quality Code. The procedure, as featured in student handbooks, does not mention that complainants can refer their complaint to their awarding body, but it does make clear that they can refer unresolved complaints to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator. Likewise, the complaints procedure for applicants does not make reference to the awarding body. However, recourse to the awarding body is included in a complaints procedure flow chart available on the VLE and the students that met the review team understood that they can escalate a complaint to the awarding body once they had exhausted AUIL's internal process. The VLE signposts students to further information on how to make a complaint but information for applicants on how to make a complaint is difficult to find on AUIL's website.

2.63   AUIL has fair procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of learning opportunities that are understood by students. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (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

2.64   AUIL does not manage higher education provision with others, therefore this Expectation does not apply.

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

2.65   AUIL has a key strategic objective to become a research-active higher education institution. In support of this, it has taken a series of strategic actions, including the development of an aspirational Research Strategy and introducing a Research Committee reporting directly to the Academic Board. AUIL aims to establish a research unit capable of developing applied research to actively support business practices and to extend its postgraduate curriculum. In pursuit of this, AUIL has appointed a Head of Research and developed a Research Unit to manage and oversee its research collaboration with the University of Bolton.

2.66   AUIL will deliver research programmes in collaboration with the University of Bolton under a franchise agreement. The contract defines responsibilities for each party in joint delivery of the research programme, as described in a PhD manual for staff and students. The University of Bolton retains control of the academic standards relating to its award. Its framework for managing the academic quality and standards of its research degrees is set out in its Research Degree Regulations and Awards and a Code of Practice for Research. The University of Bolton also determines the annual monitoring arrangements for these programmes.

2.67   The University of Bolton approves programmes in line with its policies and procedures, and maintains responsibility for admission and enrolment, although AUIL assists with recruitment. The University of Bolton's Graduate School oversees programmes, and a Research Coordinator acts as the main point of contact for staff at AUIL.

2.68   The provision by AUIL of a Research Unit, a Research Committee that reports to the Academic Board, together with the strategic agreement with Birkbeck College that enables students to access the College library, plus access to the University of London's Senate House Library, and the University of Bolton digital libraries (with additional oversight provided by the University of Bolton) create an appropriate framework that would enable the Expectation to be met. In its review of evidence, the review team explored the arrangements with the University of Bolton; the steps taken by AUIL to develop a research community through the introduction of a Research Unit and the Research Committee; and reviewed minutes and papers of relevant committees. It also discussed AUIL's plans to deliver and assess research degrees with senior and academic staff and a member of staff from the University of Bolton.

2.69   The research pages on the website and the research prospectus produced by the Research Unit and approved by the University of Bolton contain basic information, but lack information on the expertise of the staff, how to make contact with them or how to prepare a research proposal. This finding supports a recommendation under Expectation C. AUIL has a detailed induction checklist and programme for students upon their enrolment to support their adaptation to the course. AUIL also articulates its expectations of students through a Research Student Charter.

2.70	AUIL staff have identified the first cohort of students and the University of Bolton has approved an intake of eight students, but they have yet to commence their programmes. Approximately half of the students will be distance learners. The students will be studying as a single cohort, and are expected to attend a structured training programme on site before continuing as distance learners. The University of Bolton and AUIL will provide this training jointly. AUIL has identified space to locate the research students within its premises. The University of Bolton has already provided training for AUIL staff on the delivery of research programmes and requires them to engage with regular updates.

2.71	The new Research Unit is seeking to create a community of doctoral researchers. AUIL will encourage students to participate in an annual conference and will make funding available for conference attendance. It will encourage students to act as representatives on its Research Committee. AUIL has a cadre of suitably qualified staff approved by the University of Bolton and the composition of supervisory teams is currently being determined. The University of Bolton will approve all supervisory teams that will always include at least one member of University of Bolton staff. Supported by the awarding body, staff are confident that they have secure plans in place for the provision of online supervisory meetings with students studying at a distance.

2.72	AUIL is putting in place the necessary arrangements for the creation of a research environment that will provide students with the quality of opportunities and the support they need to achieve successful outcomes from their research degrees. The review team particularly noted the creation of the Research Unit, the experienced staff team and the resources being made available to the research students, together with the support being provided by the University of Bolton.

2.73	AUIL is fully aware of its responsibilities for assuring the quality of the research degrees awarded by the University of Bolton, and has taken clear steps to establish a research environment that will provide students with the quality of opportunities and the support they need to achieve successful academic, personal and professional outcomes from their research degrees. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.74   In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

2.75   AUIL has met all of the Expectations of this judgement area, and the level of risk for each Expectation is low. The review team identified two features of good practice relating to student support and student engagement that make a particularly positive contribution to the judgement area. The review team makes one recommendation related to rationalising assessment policies and procedures where the problem identified relates to a need to amend and update details in documentation, which will not require or result in major structure, operational, or procedural change.

2.76   The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at AUIL **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   A Public Information Process Handbook sets out the approval process for a range of externally facing information. It sets out principles for the management of public information to ensure its published information is accurate, impartial, reasonable and timely, and complies with all legislation, regulations and other policies including data protection legislation. The Principal has overall responsibility for the management of published information but the Information Coordinator, in conjunction with the Head of Marketing, has overall responsibility for ensuring public information is factually accurate and complete. The process requires a formal sign off by key staff. AUIL has an approval process to authorise the publication of handbooks, which are signed off by the Information Officer. AUIL's Student Charter sets out the mutual expectations and obligations between AUIL and its students, which it developed with some student involvement. These arrangements for assuring the quality of information allow the Expectation to be met.

3.2   The review team examined the effectiveness of the policies and procedures in place to assure the quality of information by examining documentation including the policies for oversight of information, and reviewing the website, VLE, and handbooks and prospectuses. The team also held meetings with teaching staff, students and professional services staff.

3.3   AUIL is redeveloping its website according to a website enhancement plan, due for completion in 2018. Staff acknowledge that further improvements are needed and the review team **affirms** the steps being taken to improve the quality of the University's website. AUIL's website is clearly laid out, with information focused mainly on student recruitment. The website provides straightforward information for prospective students for taught programmes about the courses offered, including how to apply, the awarding body, and the programme specifications.

3.4   AUIL provides minimal information on its website for prospective research students, with no information on the research environment or how to prepare a research proposal. This paucity of information is replicated in the PhD programme prospectus. The review team **recommends** that, by March 2017, AUIL provide more comprehensive externally facing information for research students to inform their application process.

3.5   The printed prospectuses for applicants for taught and research students mirror the information AUIL provides on its website; documents provide evidence of a clear approval process for the prospectuses. Information about AUIL's mission, values and strategy is relatively inaccessible and difficult to find on its website.

3.6   AUIL provides students with a detailed student information handbook and a further programme handbook in hard copy and on the VLE. These contain details of the services provided by AUIL and information about the programme of study, together with practical and regulatory information.

3.7   The induction procedures for new staff include an outline of the public information policy and the information approval process contained in the public information process

handbook. AUIL also delivers a training programme for staff on data protection. AUIL makes use of a wide range of management information particularly in areas such as planning, annual monitoring and in student services reports. Additionally, AUIL has mapped its procedures for assuring the quality of information against Part C of the Quality Code. The repetition and inconsistencies across the documents relating to assessment has led to a recommendation under Expectation B6.

3.8   AUIL makes accurate and trustworthy information available to prospective and current taught students. However, the provision of information for prospective research students requires improvement, which is the subject of a recommendation. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met; the associated level of risk is moderate, as the problems identified are confined to a small part of the provision.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

3.9   In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

3.10   AUIL has met the Expectation of this judgement area, and the level of risk is moderate. The review team makes one recommendation and resolved that the risk is confined to a small part of AUIL's provision. The review team identified one affirmation related to the steps AUIL is taking to improve its website.

3.11   The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at AUIL **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   AUIL's Strategic Plan 2011-16 sets out an ambitious agenda and seeks to achieve excellence in teaching and learning through innovation and enhancement. It has recently revised its Quality Enhancement Strategy, which clearly identifies its objectives for enhancing the quality of teaching and learning, developing externality, developing students as independent learners, and enhancing their employability. The Executive Team, chairs of committees, QRAC and the Teaching and Learning Committees share responsibility for implementing the Strategy. The Teaching and Learning Strategy 2015-18 contains a clear commitment to enhancement, and states that AUIL fosters and facilitates world-class excellence in learning and teaching through development, enhancement, research and reward.

4.2   The quality assurance and enhancement reporting mechanism outlines the multiple lines of reporting between AUIL's committees, but only the QRAC, the Teaching and Learning Committees and the Student Services Committee explicitly have responsibilities relating to the enhancement of students' learning opportunities within their remits. A Quality Assurance and Enhancement Process provides a framework for enhancement but only mentions enhancement in relation to course-level annual monitoring, and not AUIL's broader activities.

4.3   AUIL has made several structural changes to enhance the student experience, which include the creation of the ISSU and the Learning Support Unit, together with senior appointments to lead them.

4.4   AUIL evaluates student satisfaction, progression and completion data comparing these with external benchmarks such as the National Student Survey. AUIL has an annual student feedback report but recognises that with a small number of students the data can be misleading and finds more use in the students' evaluative comments.

4.5   AUIL provides several opportunities to share good practice including through a peer observation process that takes place between individual team members, although good practice is disseminated more broadly. An overview report of peer observation is presented for discussion by the chair of the Teaching and Learning Committee. Periodic Research Seminars provide opportunities for staff and students to debate issues in specific subject areas. Industrial talks provide opportunities for staff and students to understand industry needs and help students to understand the employability skills they need to acquire to compete in the job market. An away day provides an effective platform for staff to share research findings and good practice in supporting students' learning opportunities.

4.6   The review team tested the Expectation through meetings with senior, academic and professional support staff, and with students. The team also evaluated documents relating to enhancement including the Quality Enhancement Strategy and the Teaching and Learning Strategy, and committee remits and minutes. The team also considered AUIL's VLE.

4.7   AUIL staff demonstrated commitment to improving the student learning experience but some showed a limited understanding of enhancement by referring in meetings to extracurricular activities and student engagement as examples of enhancement.

4.8   AUIL's informal processes identify opportunities for enhancement, for example the idea of student involvement in teaching observations came about through discussions with students. There was also an initiative to develop a Student Corner, which provides a rich resource for students within the VLE, and working group discussions with staff and students on different aspects of the course led to changes to the student induction process.

4.9   Despite the limited understanding of enhancement among some members of staff, AUIL takes deliberate steps to enhance the quality of learning opportunities at programme and provider-level. In light of examples of enhancement activities leading to identifiable improvements in the student learning experience, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.10   In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

4.11   AUIL has met all of the Expectations of this judgement area, and the level of risk is low. The review team makes no recommendations and identified no affirmations or features of good practice.

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

Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Definitions of key operational terms are also given on pages 21-24 of the Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) handbook.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

e-learning
See technology enhanced or enabled learning

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

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

Flexible and distributed learning
A programme or module that does not require the student to attend classes or events at particular times and locations.
See also **distance learning**.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or **e-learning**)
Learning that is delivered or supported through the use of technology.

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

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

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