Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) of Navitas UK Holdings Ltd

Birmingham City University International College

April 2016

Contents

About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Birmingham City University International College. The review took place from 18 to 19 April 2016 and was conducted by a team of 2 reviewers, as follows:

- Mrs Catherine Fairhurst
- Mrs Gillian Butler.

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Birmingham City University International College and to make judgements as to whether or not its academic standards and quality meet UK expectations. These expectations are the statements in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code)[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 (Embedded Colleges) 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
- provides a commentary on 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.

In Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) there is also a check on the provider's financial sustainability, management and governance (FSMG). This check has 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 of their education provider.

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 5.

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

The QAA website gives more information about QAA and its mission.[3] A dedicated section explains the method for Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges).[4] 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] 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 (Embedded Colleges):
www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight-.aspx

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Navitas UK Holdings Ltd's provision at Birmingham City University International College

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Birmingham City University International College (BCUIC).

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of Navitas and BCUIC's degree awarding body **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **is commended**.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at Birmingham City University International College:

- the comprehensive and extensive provision of teaching and learning material on the VLE that provides an equal and effective opportunity for students to achieve intended learning outcomes (Expectation B3)
- the range of opportunities for student engagement in developing learning facilities and resources (Expectations B5 and B3)
- the flexible and effective assessment feedback mechanisms which enable and promote student learning (Expectation B6)
- the effective use of tracer data from the University in reviewing curricula and student performance and achievement (Expectation B8).

Enhancement of student learning opportunities

BCUIC's strategic approach to enhancement of the student experience is based on Navitas UK's policy and procedure. The College Enhancement Team (CET) is the formal quality enhancement mechanism which includes students and staff. Its purpose is to engage students and enhance areas that most directly affect their experience.

Theme: Digital Literacies

Navitas UK has an overarching Virtual Learning Strategy that aims to support and promote the development of digital literacy throughout the network of UK Navitas Colleges. This strategy provides a focus for the direction of the development of Digital Literacy within the College.

About Birmingham City University International College

In 2011, Navitas Ltd and Birmingham City University (BCU) entered into agreement to form an exclusive partnership to establish the legal entity Birmingham City International College Ltd (BCIC), which would operate as an embedded pathway college located at the University's Bournville campus. BCIC Ltd is a wholly owned subsidiary of Navitas Holdings (UK) Ltd, which is wholly owned by Navitas Ltd and trades as Birmingham City University International College (BCUIC). BCIC Ltd and Navitas UK Holdings Ltd are both registered in the UK with Companies House.

BCUIC opened to students in September 2013 and is now entering its third year of operations offering a range of pathway provision across three of the university's Faculties: Business, Law and Social Sciences (BLSS); Art, Design and Media (ADM) and Computing, Engineering and Built Environment (CEBE). During this time, student numbers by semester have increased significantly. This increase was planned for in advance between Navitas and BCU and the College structure was established to support an organic increase in student numbers.

BCUIC's strategic plan sits within the Navitas organisational strategy and is led by the company focus on excellence in student experience, successful student outcomes and effective business practice. Areas such as teaching and learning remain at the core of Navitas UK's strategic objectives hence providing a close fit to the college-based strategic plan moving forward, and BCUIC follow the key metrics outlined in the Navitas UK Learning and Teaching Strategy 2013-18.

BCUIC has a College plan which tracks enhancements and areas of focus updating on a quarterly basis. This document is shared at the College Learning and Teaching Board. The overall framework of this action plan is informed by the Navitas Teaching and Learning Strategy and QAA action plan, and incorporates the action plan arising from the most recent BCUIC QAA ECREO report.

All academic programme content is aligned with Subject Benchmark Statements and recognised in the documentation pertaining to module and programme delivery (Definitive Programme Documents for instance). Examples of this are included in the accompanying academic documentary evidence.

As programmes are developed in partnership with BCU, the pathways are also aligned with BCU curriculum content and this is reflected and assured through the course approval process.

BCU also provide externality in the assurance of quality in academic delivery. This is provided through the designation of link tutors to lead on faculty representation in BCUIC governance structures including committees with joint BCUIC and BCU membership. The link tutor role is defined within the Operations Manual and is a key role is supporting partnership quality assurance. The link tutor may provide externality for instance through input into the assessment process and participation in both module and progression boards. This role also provides key input into the module review and annual monitoring process and is a member of the College Learning and Teaching Board, a committee that provides oversight of the academic process for the College. The appointment of an external examiner to provide moderation for first year Business programmes is also a recent development and seen as an enhancement by both the College and BCU.

Explanation of the findings about Birmingham City University International College

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

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

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

a) ensure that the requirements of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (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 Birmingham City University International College (BCUIC) embedded in Birmingham City University (the University/BCU) is not a degree-awarding body, and does not award credit. BCUIC provision is part of the University FHEQ Level 6 undergraduate degree qualification or the FHEQ Level 7 postgraduate degree qualification.

1.2 The University awards mark the achievement of the outcomes set out in the FHEQ qualification descriptors. Navitas UK's and the University's approval processes, the templates for programme specifications and the Definitive Module Document (DMD) require the consideration of Subject Benchmark Statements relevant to a module or programme. The learning outcomes described in the programme specifications reflect the qualifications descriptors in the FHEQ, for programmes set at Levels 4-6.

1.3 The University through its Collaborative Provision Committee approves recommendations for the introduction of programmes to an award. The Joint Strategic Planning and Management Board (JSPMB) and Academic Advisory Committee (AAC) have overall responsibility for the academic standards of the awards.

1.4   Navitas UK has oversight of the standards of the College provision through the programme approval process, receiving summaries of AAC reports and annual monitoring reports.

1.5   The design of policies and procedures in place at BCUIC would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.6   The team tested the Expectation by examining a range of documents including programme specifications, DMDs, approval and review documents, procedural and policy documents, external examiner and link tutor reports and by holding meetings with academic and support staff including senior University representatives.

1.7   The documentation and the external examiners report and the University assurance/confidence demonstrates that BCUIC adheres to both Navitas UK's and the University's programme approval, monitoring and review procedures, which safeguard academic standards. BCUIC has reviewed all documentation to ensure the FHEQ is appropriately referenced and explicit.

1.8   These procedures ensure that all programme learning outcomes are aligned appropriately to the FHEQ. The programme and module specifications make it clear that each module and its associated learning outcomes have been developed and calibrated against the requirements of the FHEQ .The programme specifications show that the College explicitly maps learning aims and outcomes against assessment tasks. External examiners' reports confirm that academic standards are maintained at appropriate levels and that learning outcomes are being met.

1.9   The College is effective in securing threshold academic standards through close adherence to Navitas UK's and the University's policies and procedures. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk 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

1.10   The academic framework and governance for the College is based upon Navitas UK's policies and regulations, but localised to align with BCU regulations. The College Director/Principal is responsible for quality assurance and enhancement in the College and accountable to the Executive General Manager of Navitas (University Partnerships Europe). However, the University is the degree-awarding body and retains ultimate responsibility for the assurance of academic standards.

1.11   Governance is exercised through the AAC, chaired by the University PVC (Academic Quality). AAC is responsible for the regulation, oversight and quality assurance of the academic work of the College. This includes ensuring that the College programme learning outcomes align with the FHEQ.

1.12   The AAC reports to the overarching JSPMB which is also chaired by a University PVC and is where decision-making and accountability reside, with the exception of programme approvals and modifications, where decisions are made by the University Collaborative Provision Committee. Membership of the committees within this framework reflects the partnership, with the chairing and constituency of the committees shared between the partners.

1.13   Oversight of academic standards is also exercised by Navitas UK Director of Student Experience and Quality, who is an ex-officio member of the AAC. Within the College, the College Learning and Teaching Board (CLTB), chaired by the College Director/Principal, has ongoing operational responsibility for maintaining academic standards, which includes responsibility for convening College module panels and progression boards and ensuring that all assessment is carried out in accordance with the regulations. This academic framework and the associated policies and procedures would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.14   In considering this Expectation the review team examined the terms of reference of the JSPMB, the AAC and the CLTB; academic regulations addressing programme approval and review, assessment and annual monitoring; the Quality Manual; organisational and committee structures; reports and minutes from committees, annual monitoring and programme and partnership reviews. The team also held discussions with members of staff from the College and the University.

1.15   The College regulations describe the processes for programme approval, modifications and review; annual monitoring; assessment, including marking, moderation and the operation of assessment boards. Both the University and Navitas UK have oversight of the standards of the College provision through programme approval processes set out in the regulations and membership of governance committees. This robust approach to quality processes and oversight ensure that academic standards are appropriately set and maintained. The Navitas Quality Standards Office has responsibility for ensuring that policies are regularly reviewed and updated as required by any changes to the UK Quality Code or other changes in the operating environment.

1.16   The comprehensive assessment regulations address all aspects of the academic arrangements required including internal verification, coursework submission, marking, internal/external moderation, feedback to students, module panels, progression boards, extenuating circumstances, assessment offences, adjustments for students with disabilities, and invigilation rules. Staff whom the review team met were cognisant of the College regulations, policies and procedures relevant to their respective roles. Information about assessment regulations is available on the VLE and new students receive a memory stick. Students whom the review team met were confident that they knew where to find information that they needed. Reports from external examiners and faculty link tutors from the University confirm that assessment and moderation processes are appropriate and examination boards operate effectively.

1.17   The College has a comprehensive, transparent academic framework and regulations, developed in partnership with the University as the awarding body, which governs the award of academic credit. The review team therefore considers that Expectation A2.1 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

1.18   Programme specifications define the intended learning outcomes of each programme of study approved and represent the definitive record of the programme. DMDs contain the detailed module outline. The College does not award qualifications; College provision is part of the educational offering of the University and provides pathways/progression routes to University awards. The programme specifications and DMDs are completed using Navitas UK pro formas, which requires that learning outcomes and credit values are specified and reference is made to the appropriate FHEQ levels and Subject Benchmark Statements. These documents provide the key reference points for students and staff.

1.19   The programme approval and modification processes require that formal notification of full approval is received by Navitas UK and the partner University before any changes can be made to the records of provision held by Navitas UK, the College and the University. Other changes to a module must be notified to the Navitas Quality Standards Office by the College Director/Principal or nominee via the Module Management form.

1.20   Annual monitoring entails a comprehensive review of the records and their maintenance and may result in the revision of programme specifications and DMDs. The continued validity and accuracy of programme information is also scrutinised by the partner University through the process of periodic review and by Navitas through institutional review. All College definitive programme information and student achievement is stored in the College student records system, MAZE, which is due to be replaced in the autumn by a new system, Navigate. The records are also stored in the University Strategic Information Technology Service records system.

1.21   The requirements of the University and Navitas UK, together with the regulations and procedures of the College, would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.22   In considering this Expectation, the review team examined the relevant College regulations policies and supporting documentation; sample programme specifications and DMDs and reports from annual monitoring. The review team held meetings with staff and students.

1.23   The documentation seen by the team demonstrates full compliance with the regulations. Learning outcomes were appropriately specified at programme and module levels. The DMD form identifies the module title, the FHEQ level, credit value and any prerequisites that may restrict a student's ability to undertake it. The form includes detailed information and describes the module's aims, content, resources and details both specific and generic learning outcome along with the assessment types by which they are demonstrated.

1.24   The programme specification seen by the team was properly completed and is available on the VLE. A copy is provided to each student at initial registration and there are

links from student handbooks. Students whom the team met were very clear about their programmes of study, the modules they were taking and the assessment requirements.

1.25   Annual monitoring reports seen by the team were fully completed and demonstrated close scrutiny by the University. They were also considered by the Quality Standards Office and signed by the Navitas Director of Student Experience and Quality. There has not yet been a Periodic Review as the first cohort of students began in September 2013 and reviews takes place in accordance with the timescales of the University. However, in December 2014 following the QAA ECREO report, Navitas conducted an internal monitoring visit to evaluate progress in addressing the recommendations and provide additional scrutiny of the continued fitness of the provision through a period of rapid growth. The documentation seen demonstrates a very thorough approach to oversight by Navitas UK as well as a commitment to continuous improvement by the College.

1.26   On the basis of the evidence seen, the review team considers that programme specifications and DMDs provide a definitive record of the College's provision, and are approved and modified through due process undertaken with the partner University and oversight from the Navitas Quality and Academic Standards Office. Therefore, the review team concludes that Expectation A2.2 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.27   Navitas UK has a central process for the approval and periodic review of the College stages of programme pathways. Navitas UK gives strategic approval and approval in principle after consideration of the market and resources. The proposed programme pathway is then subject to the University's adapted approval procedure. This is in the localised Operations Manual and described in section B1.

1.28   The University has validation responsibility for ensuring compliance with the FHEQ and professional benchmarks; confirming module content, associated learning outcomes and assessment strategies for the programmes.

1.29   All programmes are subject to annual monitoring and to a periodic review by the University every five years. This will take place in 2019.

1.30   The programme approval procedures ensure that academic standards are set at a level that meets UK threshold standards and are in accordance with relevant academic frameworks and regulations which would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.31   The implementation and effectiveness of the approval processes undertaken at BCUIC was tested by scrutinising the Operations Manual, Committee Minutes, programme approval documentation, new programme specifications and Definitive Module Descriptors. Discussions with University and BCUIC senior staff, teaching staff also contributed to the assessment of this Expectation.

1.32   A recent example of programme approval in civil engineering demonstrates that the processes described above operate effectively and as intended. Attention is paid to standards throughout the preparation and approval of new programmes. The policies and processes in place for programme approval are designed to ensure the alignment of content and assessment with the UK threshold standards contained within the FHEQ.

1.33   The alignment to the University's and Navitas UK's programme approval and modification procedures ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meets UK threshold standards and are in accordance with relevant academic frameworks and regulations. The Expectation is therefore met and the associated level of risk 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

1.34   The College operates within the Navitas UK academic infrastructure and is an affiliate college of BCU with whom it has a Recognition and Articulation Agreement. The standards, purpose and principles of assessment are set out in the localised College assessment regulations. The governance arrangements and details of processes to be followed are described in the Operations Manual. Guidance on assessment practice, threshold standards and the design of modules is provided by the Navitas Academic Quality and Standards Office. These documents, together with the course approval process provide coverage of credit definition and levels. The College does not make awards.

1.35   The requirements and processes documented in the assessment regulations and Operations Manual address the awarding University's academic standards, UK threshold standards and the level and definition of credit. These processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.36   The review team tested the systems in place by reviewing documentation in the academic regulations, the Quality Manual and the guidance document on best practice in assessment. The review team looked at documentation relating to annual monitoring, periodic review, external examiner reports, examination board minutes, programme specifications and DMDs. The review ream discussed assessment processes in a range of meetings with staff from the College, staff from the partner University and with students.

1.37   The regulatory framework requires the College to convene module assessment panels and College progression boards of examiners. The roles and responsibilities of module panels and boards of examiners are clearly detailed. The panel is responsible for considering the academic performance of students on each module, and for confirming the integrity and fairness of the assessment process including marking/grading and moderation. There is a rigorous approach to ensuring the independence and quality of decision making of the boards, hence following the 2014 ECREO review, boards are now chaired by the manager of academic services and the Director of Academic and Student Services and include the link tutor from the University. Examination board minutes and feedback from external examiners and link tutors confirmed that these boards were properly constituted and operating fairly and in accordance with their terms of reference. Minutes of key committees and the Institutional (Periodic) Review also confirm that appropriate oversight is exercised.

1.38   The College assessment regulations detail the requirements in relation to the assessment of students and stipulate that each student must be assessed in accordance with the approved programme specification. The programme specification seen by the review team conformed to the Navitas pro forma. It contained generic grade descriptors which provided clarity about what constitutes threshold level in accordance with the FHEQ levels and specified the knowledge, skills and other outcomes that would be gained from

successful completion of the programme. The DMDs seen by the review team followed the pro forma guidance and clearly set out the learning outcomes to be assessed at module level, the summative assessment method and weightings of assessments. DMDs are available in hard copy and on the College virtual learning environments (VLEs).

1.39   The assessment regulations and the accompanying documentation on moderation and best practice in assessment and feedback provide detailed guidance on the process of assessment, marking, grading and moderation. Survey data confirms that a high percentage of students understand what is expected of them in relation to their assessments and find the feedback useful. This was confirmed by students whom the team met during the review. They were clear about the requirements for their assessments, clear about where to find relevant information and understood the feedback that they received.

1.40   The College's academic infrastructure and partnership agreement with the University provides an effective framework for the assessment of learning outcomes that is clearly understood by staff and students. The review team concludes that credit is awarded where the achievement of relevant learning outcomes has been demonstrated through assessment. The Expectation is therefore met and risk in this area 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

1.41   Navitas UK policies and regulations provide the framework for the monitoring and review of programmes to ensure appropriate academic standards are achieved. BCUIC monitors its programmes through the annual review report for each pathway, which include annual monitoring reports, feedback from teaching staff, students, faculty link tutors and moderators. There is an action plan for the next academic year.

1.42   Navitas UK and the University have oversight through the Academic Advisory Committee. A faculty link tutor from each of the faculties offering pathways programmes with BCUIC is a member of the AAC as well as the CLTB.

1.43   Annual reports are considered by BCUIC through its committee structure and submitted to the Associate Dean (Academic) of the relevant University faculty.

1.44   The policies and procedures detailed in the Operations Manual would allow this Expectation to be met.

1.45   The review team scrutinised a range of evidence to test the success of the framework and its associated processes. This included documentation including the Operations Manual, committee minutes and annual review reports. Discussions with BCUIC and senior University staff further contributed evidence that programme monitoring and review processes address the achievement of academic standards.

1.46   Annual review reports and the report to the AAC demonstrate that BCUIC maintains regular, clear and extensive communications with the University. The University link tutors are key to those relationships as they are members of the AAC and the CLTB. The chair of the JSPMB is also chair on the BCUIC committee, which further aids maintenance of academic standards. The University periodic review is normally every five years but as BCUIC recruited its first cohort of students in 2013, Navitas UK conducted a review after one year's operation. An outcome of this review was that BCUIC monitored and reviewed policies, regulations and documentation to maintain the most efficient processes for BCUIC and interaction with BCU.

1.47   The Navitas review has been augmented by annual module, and pathway monitoring.

1.48   The documentary evidence and discussion with staff confirm that BCUIC has in place sound and effective processes of programme monitoring that address the achievement of threshold academic standards and those required by the University.

1.49   Navitas UK's and the University's monitoring and review processes are scrupulously followed. 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

1.50   In accordance with the Recognition and Articulation Agreement (RAA) with BCU, the University acts as the external for the College and is responsible for assuring academic standards by way of operational mechanisms, including programme approval, moderation and assessment boards. Navitas and the College use the term 'external' to describe any party external to the College, including members of staff from the partner University.

1.51   The regulations of the University, aligned with those of the College require the appointment of two external advisers for all new programme approvals. The development must be undertaken jointly with the University and the scrutiny panels are chaired by the University, operating in accordance with its arrangements for collaborative provision. Guidance on the design of programmes makes reference to the need for consistency with external reference points.

1.52   External representatives are also required as part of the periodic review process which will take place every five years in accordance with the University regulations. Annual monitoring includes feedback and reports from external examiners, link tutors and moderators.

1.53   The University applies its regulations to the validated academic provision of the College and appoints external examiners to provide oversight of academic standards and the quality of the learning opportunities for Stage 2 undergraduate level (FHEQ Level 4) programmes. For foundation level modules external scrutiny is provided by University faculty link tutors who are appointed by the relevant Dean. Guidance within the Operations Manual sets out the expectations of the role in relation to maintaining threshold standards. Additionally, the College Learning and Teaching Board has appointed an external examiner for first year foundation level modules to fulfil the role of moderator and add further externality to the process.

1.54   The operation of the RAA with the University and the regulatory and policy framework of Navitas UK and the College would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.55   The review team tested the Expectation by reviewing documentation and guidance in the Navitas and College policies and regulations relating to approval, monitoring, review and the role of external examiners. The team also reviewed documentation from the College in relation to reports of institutional review and annual monitoring, curriculum reviews, minutes of meetings including examination boards, external examiner reports and the responses to them. Additionally, the review team discussed arrangements for the involvement of external and independent expertise in a range of meetings.

1.56   Link tutor and/or external examiners, where appointed, attend College module panels and progression boards. They are able to review module boxes and provide comments in relation to the maintenance and achievement of threshold academic standards.

Evidence from these panels and boards provides confirmation of standards and adherence to internal and external requirements.

1.57   The external examiner and link tutor comments and reports seen by the review team confirm that standards meet the threshold requirements, that courses remain current and course learning outcomes are in line with the relevant qualification descriptors and subject benchmark statements. The appointment of a cross-Navitas external moderator for the ILSC module provides a useful opportunity for an external perspective on standards within Colleges, as well as across the Navitas provision overall.

1.58   The commitment of the College to seeking independent perspectives to ensure that standards are robustly set and maintained is clear. It has appointed externals to Foundation programmes, and has changed the chairing arrangements of the Progression Board to offer an increased level of independence from the College Learning and Teaching Board, which is chaired by the College Director/Principal (CDP). This was an enhancement introduced following the February 2014 ECREO review.

1.59   Evidence of rigorous oversight of new programme approvals and effective monitoring of the ongoing maintenance of standards is provided through annual monitoring, institutional review, the College Learning and Teaching Board, the Academic Advisory Committee and the Navitas Quality Standards Office. There was satisfactory evidence of responsive and thoughtful consideration of link tutor and external examiner comments.

1.60   Meetings with staff from the College and from the University, including a link tutor, demonstrated a robust approach to the maintenance of quality and the value of externality at both strategic and operational levels.

1.61   The evidence provided demonstrates that the regulations of the College, aligned with those of the partner University, are implemented effectively. These ensure that independent external perspectives are used to set and maintain academic standards for all academic provision. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation A3.4 is met and the associated level of risk is low, as the College has very clear procedures that are implemented effectively.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered by on behalf of the awarding bodies: Summary of findings

1.62   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.

1.63   The College effectively uses the processes of its awarding body, Birmingham City University, to ensure that academic standards are maintained in line with the relevant level of the FHEQ and external reference points. The College's own internal processes, including effective programme approval and monitoring procedures, also make a valuable contribution to the maintenance of standards. There are appropriate opportunities for the use of external expertise within these processes.

1.64   The College has met all seven Expectations is this area and the associated level of risk is low. Therefore, the review team concludes that the College's maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding body **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 and Approval*

Findings

2.1   Navitas UK approves new programmes (and major modifications to existing ones). Once given initial approval by QaSO, the documents are passed to the University for consideration and approval. A University Faculty Design Review Panel including external representation ensures that intended learning outcomes, learning, teaching and assessment strategies and methods and content are aligned to the FHEQ and relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. This is then ratified at the Collaborative Provision Committee, which is responsible to the University Academic Board for the operation of collaborative provision and the maintenance of academic standards. The AAC has oversight of the regulation, governance and quality assurance of the academic work of the College and considers and approves the introduction of new modules or programmes leading to an award.

2.2   The procedures for programme design, development and approval would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.3   The effectiveness of the design, development and approval processes of programmes was tested by documents including committees' minutes, programme approval documentation, external examiners' reports and meeting with University and BCUIC staff.

2.4   Recent examples of the programme approval for BSc Gemmology and Jewellery clearly demonstrate that BCUIC works closely with the University faculties, and uses student achievement data and market data to develop new programme and modules. Design and development of new programmes is enhanced by peer review by the University link tutor arrangement and by external reviewers.

2.5   Pathway extensions and modification are approved at faculty level with sign off by the Dean and link tutor; CPC again notes this sign off.

2.6   The process for the design, development and approval of programmes aligns with Navitas UKs' quality systems and the University regulatory framework governing course approval. This rigour and externality of the process enables the Expectation to be met and the level of risk low

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission*

Findings

2.7   The College Admissions policy is based on the standard Navitas Policies and Regulations which align with the Quality Code Expectation B2. The College Admissions Policy is approved by BCU and its recruitment strategy is aligned to the University Internationalisation strategy and commitment to widening participation. The Joint Strategic Partnership Management Board (JSPMB) has strategic oversight of recruitment with representation from both the University and BCUIC. Operational oversight is afforded by the Marketing Planning Advisory Committee (MPAC).

2.8   Appendices to the policy governing the particular requirements for admission are agreed jointly with the University. They are reviewed annually and must be approved by the Navitas Quality and Standards Office and the Navitas UK compliance team. Applicants not meeting the standard entry criteria may be considered within the process for non-standard entry.

2.9   The Admissions Policy emphasises the importance of operating within an ethical framework and therefore seeks to ensure that the associated procedures only select and admit students who have the ability and desire to study on their chosen course. Navitas have introduced a comprehensive application verification process across the College network which may include interviews via the internet or telephone with individual applicants. All applicants' qualifications are checked before an offer is made and checks of English language qualifications on verification websites may be undertaken, ensuring that Tier 4 sponsored applicants meet the necessary English language requirements.

2.10   Procedures for the recognition of prior learning are detailed as part of non-standard entry in the admissions policy. This provides for the accreditation of prior learning, or admission with exception. Applications are referred to the College Academic Board, chaired by the Principal, which is responsible for making decisions in respect of applications that do not meet the standard entry requirements.

2.11   Where decisions require an element of academic judgement, the College refers the decision to the University.

2.12   The Admissions Policy, associated procedures, documentation and website information would allow Expectation B2 to be met.

2.13   In order to test this Expectation the review team examined the Admissions Policy, documentation and information on the website relating to admissions, training for those involved with recruitment, the role of recruitment agents and minutes of committees. The review team considered student survey data and met staff involved with recruitment and admission as well as asking students about their admission experience.

2.14   Student admissions are managed by the Admissions Team. Each Admissions Officer undergoes training from the National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) and is provided with mentoring in the early stages of appointment to ensure that they are familiar with policies and procedures. The policy provides detailed guidance on the

fair and consistent handling of applications. This process is reported through and monitored by the Marketing, Promotion and Admissions Committee (MPAC), which reports to JSPMB. A risk-based approach is adopted in relation to ensuring a genuine intent to study.

2.15   Agents play a central role in the recruitment process; accordingly, Navitas UK conducts robust checks prior to contracting with an agent. The contract requires a commitment to ethical behaviour in accordance with the Admissions Policy. Agents are supported by Source Country Officers and are trained by Navitas marketing and admission staff and required to use the Agent Manual, which is supplemented by guidance, tools and online apps that support agents through the process of advising students.

2.16   Students completing surveys and students whom the review team spoke to considered that they had been well supported and advised through the process of making an informed decision, by admissions staff and by agents. They understood how the admission process worked and were clear about what they needed to do. They considered that they were appropriately prepared for the transition to College.

2.17   The College website is accessible and has a comprehensive range of resources which provide clear information to applicants in relation to courses, links to Key Information Sets (KIS) data, admission requirements, language and academic qualification equivalents, the College and the process of applying. However, some students reported being unclear about the initial location of the course. The College has addressed this confusion and the current website information appears to the review team to be very clear.

2.18   There is a clear procedure specifying the grounds for making an appeal against a decision to reject a student. Appeals are made to the Admissions Office, who report their deliberations/decision to the CLTB. If necessary, the CLTB may refer the appeal to the Quality and Standards Office.

2.19   Monitoring and review of the operation of recruitment, selection and admission policies and procedures forms part of the reporting process through MPAC committee and JSPMB. The terms of reference of the MPAC Committee are set out in the Operations Manual and require that it meets at least twice a year. Any changes or additions to published information or the website must however be signed off by the University.

2.20   The review team saw evidence of inclusive and effective recruitment policies and carefully detailed procedures for the recruitment, selection and admission of students. Practices are transparent and supportive, adhering to the principles of the Quality Code, *Chapter B2*. On this basis of the evidence considered, the review team concludes that Expectation B2 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.21   The approach to learning and teaching at BCUIC is based on the Navitas UK Learning and Teaching Plan which emphasises a high quality learning environment. The College Learning and Teaching Board monitors and reviews learning and teaching and reports to the AAC. The Operations Manual details responsibilities in relation to learning and teaching.

2.22   The policies and practices of the College would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.23   The review team tested the Expectation and the effectiveness of teaching and learning by scrutinising College and provider strategy documents, student surveys, external examiner reports and by meeting tutors, students and professional support staff.

2.24   The varied classroom based activities are supplemented by workshops, studios and the two virtual learning environments (VLE). There has been recent extensive development of the campus. There is a comprehensive student induction programme including a freshers' fair when they are introduced to the University.

2.25   The students have access to the University VLE and that of BCUIC. These are used extensively by the students and staff to support learning. Tutors upload teaching material in advance with pre-sessional exercises which provides every student with an equal and effective opportunity to achieve intended learning outcomes. This is **good practice**.

2.26   The appointment of Academic Teaching Staff is with approval from the University. Many staff also work at the University offering continuity of practice for the student.

2.27   There is a range of opportunities for staff development including access to the University staff development programme. BCUIC arranges specific development days at the beginning of each semester for teaching staff. All new staff receive an induction programme at BCUIC and at the University and an Academic Teaching Staff Handbook.

2.28   All tutors are subject to management observations by the Principal and Manager of Academic Services. Tutors also participate in the peer-review process to share good practice.

2.29   BCUIC monitors and reviews the effectiveness of learning opportunities by module evaluation surveys each semester, formal surveys such as the Navitas Student Experience Survey and International Student Barometer, the Student Forum, Student Council and CET. The results and actions are presented to the staff and students through the committee structure and the VLE. Informal feedback and evaluation systems include the student nomination of tutors for the Navitas Teaching Awards.

2.30   The students are well supported in their development as independent learners based on the Student Charter. They say that they have a smooth transition to studying at the University. The transition is helped by visits and workshops, joint projects, use of the library and other university resources. They comment favourably on the support they receive from

the staff at BCUIC and the access they have to the University although they would prefer to be on the University city centre campus.

2.31   Learning resources and student support are in place to support student learning and achievement and prepare students for university study. There are systematic and effective assurance and review processes in place to ensure that the quality of provision is enhanced. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.32   BCUIC's strategic approach to enabling student development and achievement is articulated in its Student Charter. Navitas UK's Student Charter has been developed in collaboration with the Student Forum and College Enhancement Team. It states that BCUIC is committed to providing a challenging learning environment for its culturally and geographically diverse international student population.

2.33   BCUIC has appropriate policies and processes in place to enable students to develop their academic personal and professional potential. There are also suitable quality procedures to enable BCUIC to evaluate the achievements.

2.34   The review team tested the effectiveness of these procedures by scrutinising documentation including policies, reports, handbooks, the VLE and committee minutes. The team met BCUIC students, tutors and support staff and those of the University including link tutors.

2.35   There is a wide range of activities providing a challenging learning environment and enable students to fulfil their potential. There is a dedicated orientation week at the beginning of their studies when they are introduced to their BCUIC student mentors and to the University and its link tutors. This is the beginning of the smooth transition to their ultimate studies at the University. The students say they have a smooth transition. The staff say this is accomplished by their participation in joint workshops, orientation visits, and the important role of link tutors. The ILSC module encourages students to take proactive developmental steps throughout their study at BCUIC. The students have access to the University library and learning centre and are supported by the Students' Union.

2.36   The students obtain specialised support from BCUIC Academic Services and Student Services teams which report to the Director of Academic and Student Services. The Student in Jeopardy programme has been enhanced with additional tutorials. Students take advantage of the remedial classes in English language and mathematics which further prepares them for transition to higher education.

2.37   Students' professional potential is developed by access to the University Careers Service who give regular talks and various relevant visits to companies and courts.

2.38   As well as the induction programme, information about learning opportunities and support is available through the student portal on the VLE and in the student handbook.

2.39   The annual monitoring process and the periodic review clearly evaluate these activities. The students say in meetings that their introduction to BCUIC and transition to the University has been very well supported.

2.40   This support contributes greatly to their development and achievement and so 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

2.41 BCUIC expectations for student engagement are based on Navitas UK's Enhancement Strategy and detailed in the Operations Manual. Students sit as members of the BCUIC Student Council and the CET. These committees report to the College Teaching and Learning Board which has a student member. Students elect their representatives each semester. All student representatives are given training by the University's Students Union.

2.42 Individual student feedback through module surveys, internal satisfaction surveys and external surveys, is evaluated and relevant actions are taken through the BCUIC monitoring processes.

2.43 There are appropriate policies in place for this Expectation to be met.

2.44 The review team tested the Expectation and the effectiveness of student engagement at BCUIC by reading strategy documents, handbooks, review reports, student surveys, the student submission and by meeting senior staff, tutors, students and professional support staff.

2.45 There are a range of opportunities for students to engage in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience. Information to students on the range of opportunities available for student engagement is made available through the VLE, verbal briefings and the handbooks. There is a specific handbook for student representatives to supplement their training. Students whom the review team met demonstrated a good level of awareness of the opportunities available to them.

2.46 The Student Council and CET are the main mechanisms for the representative student voice to be heard. The minutes demonstrate that explicit consideration is given to student opinion. Improvements initiated in response to student feedback provided through these meetings include improvement of BCUIC learning environment, access to the university sports facilities, a comprehensive orientation week, the introduction of mentors, a careers workshop, welfare week, and the adjustment of teaching hours and amendments to the pre-departure guide for new students. This range of opportunities for student engagement in developing learning facilities and resources is **good practice**.

2.47 Student have access to the results of student satisfaction surveys and module evaluation surveys which are posted regularly on the VLE together with minutes of committees. In their meeting with the team, the students said their voice is heard and in the student survey they said feedback on their course is taken seriously and acted upon.

2.48 BCUIC with Navitas UK reviews the effectiveness of student engagement regularly and this has resulted in the further enhancement of the student voice for example the Student Council Member Handbook has recently been updated.

2.49 The mechanisms for student representation, and the deliberate steps taken to engage all students in the assurance and enhancement of their learning experience means the Expectation is met and the risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.50   The College assessment regulations are based on the Navitas framework but are localised in order to align with the regulations of the partner university. The regulations govern all aspects of assessment practice. The implementation of the regulations is the responsibility of College Learning and Teaching Boards and is monitored by the AAC and the Quality and Standards Office (QaSO). The regulations are accompanied by pro formas and a guidance document which supports the implementation of the assessment regulations.

2.51   Procedures for the recognition of prior learning are detailed as part of non-standard entry in the Admissions Policy (see Expectation B2). This provides for the accreditation of prior learning or admission with exception and is then referred to the College Academic Board as a non-standard application.

2.52   The academic regulations, policies and very clear procedures of the College would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.53   The review team scrutinised relevant regulations, policy and strategy documents, minutes of meetings, minutes of annual monitoring, assessment panels and boards, staff development resources and workshops relating to assessment, Student Survey data and a range of link tutor and external examiner comments and reports. The team met a range of staff and students and viewed an example of assessment-related information for students on the Navitas VLE.

2.54   The regulations and guidance support academic staff in designing assessment strategies and tasks. Templates are included for programme specifications, definitive module documents, module guides and assessment feedback. Effective use of the framework provided by the Navitas policies and guidance was revealed in the programme specifications, definitive module documents and module guides seen by the team. These reveal an inclusive approach to assessment, designed to accommodate the diverse student needs and prepare them for summative assessments.

2.55   The assessment regulations set out a clear process for marking assessments and for the moderation of marks. The moderation process is rigorous, involving external moderation by an independent moderator or University link tutor of a significant percentage of student work, plus scrutiny by an external examiner where one is appointed. The evidence seen by the review team confirms that the processes for marking and moderating assessments are clearly articulated, understood and implemented by those involved in the assessment process.

2.56   The College operates a two-tier system of formal processes to agree assessment outcomes: College module panels and College progression boards. The composition, terms of reference and process to ensure the secure recording of results are set out in the assessment regulations and College Operations Manual. Arrangements for ensuring the independence of decision-making in examination boards have been put in place as

confirmed in the 2015 ECREO monitoring report (see A.3.2). The effective operation of the boards was confirmed by the link tutors and external examiners.

2.57   Meetings with students and staff confirmed that the good practice highlighted in the 2012 Navitas UK Institutional Approval in relation to providing timely, individualised feedback on coursework assignments is firmly embedded in practice, in accordance with the assessment regulations.

2.58   Meetings with staff revealed a very thoughtful understanding of the role of assessment in learning, combined with a commitment to providing individualised, timely and useful feedback in ways that responded to students' needs. Student surveys reveal high levels of satisfaction with assessment and feedback. Students whom the review team met provided examples of responsive individualised feedback which had helped their learning. This was confirmed by students involved with compiling the student submission. The flexible and effective assessment feedback mechanisms which enable and promote student learning are **good practice**.

2.59   The ILSC module is taken by all Navitas embedded college students. The development of good academic practice is a central part of this module. Within the assessment regulations there are appropriate mechanisms for defining, explaining and addressing academic misconduct. The College also makes use of electronic plagiarism-detection methods as a developmental tool, as well as for detection for all text-based submissions. Students whom the team met felt that they had received very helpful instruction and found the detection software extremely helpful. Staff were attuned to the particular needs of international students and the cultural differences in academic practice.

2.60   Students had an adequate understanding of the existence of appropriate mechanisms for making reasonable adjustments and reporting mitigating circumstances. They were confident about how to access help if needed and saw the student services staff as key in signposting them to whatever help they required.

2.61   Rigorous oversight of the academic progress of students is ensured through careful monitoring internally within the College as well externally by the partner University and Navitas. Tracer data is produced by the University which enables a comparison of the performance of BCUIC students with those directly recruited to the University and KPIs focus on pass rates, progression rates and retention. Monitoring takes place within the partnership with the University through JSPMB, AAC and annual monitoring; within the College through the Learning and Teaching Board, as well as at programme and module level and by Navitas through the Senior Management Team and the Quality and Standards Office.

2.62   The review team concludes that the College has in place comprehensive assessment regulations, policies and processes that support all students to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes as required by Expectation B6. The flexible and effective feedback mechanisms are considered good practice. The review team concludes that Expectation B6 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B7: External Examining*

Findings

2.63   The College RAA with the University states that BCU has responsibility for assuring academic standards. As part of this responsibility, BCU acts as the external examiner for the College. Where the University regulations require the appointment of an independent external examiner, they are appointed using the University regulations for external examining. The arrangements are specified in the College policies and regulations and the Operations Manual and are designed to ensure that external examiners are independent and can fulfil their duties without conflict of interest.

2.64   Where the University regulations do not require the appointment of an independent external examiner, external scrutiny is provided by the faculty link tutor, or a subject specialist within the University. The role of the link tutor is specified in the College Operations Manual. In the case of the ILSC modules where there is no equivalent provision within the Universities, externality is provided by a Navitas-appointed external moderator.

2.65   Operational responsibility for the appointment and removal of external examiners lies with the BCUIC Learning and Teaching Board. This enables the College to use the services of an external, who is independent from the University and the College, for specific purposes as part of the quality assurance processes. The College has chosen to exercise the option, has appointed an external examiner for the Stage 2 (Level 4) Business programme and is planning to increase the remit to cover the PG Business programmes.

2.66   External examiner and link tutors are required to produce reports, which form a key part of the data considered at annual monitoring and periodic/institutional review. Their comments may result in actions being taken which are then recorded in action plans and monitored. Oversight and monitoring is provided by QaSo, the College Learning and Teaching Boards and the AAC.

2.67   This regulatory and policy framework provides for external examination through moderation and scrutiny by independent and University-based staff. There are mechanisms for ensuring that their comments receive proper attention. This would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.68   The review team tested the application of the policy and procedures by scrutinising relevant regulations and guidance, a range of link tutor and external examiner reports, College responses to link tutor and external examiner reports and the minutes of annual monitoring. The review team also discussed the sharing of external examiner reports with staff from the University, including a link tutor, staff from the College and students.

2.69   There is a robust approach to the oversight of external examiner reports which is ensured through the respective requirements of the University, the College and the Navitas Quality Standards Office. External examiners are appointed by BCU to Level 4 undergraduate programmes in accordance with their regulations and the University takes responsibility for their induction, ensuring their broader understanding of their roles and responsibilities as external examiners. It also exercises scrutiny over the responses to reports through its own procedures for quality assurance of external examiners reports.

2.70   Navitas provides guidance on the role of external examiners which clarifies the responsibilities of the Colleges in relation to the appointment and induction of external examiners. The link tutor and external examiner reports were appropriately completed and

confirmed their understanding of their roles in maintaining standards and affording independent external perspectives.

2.71   The partner University is closely involved in the quality assurance of marking and moderation of all assessed work. The link tutors from the relevant department provide an external perspective in the moderation of marks exercise, which provides them with a clear remit in terms of independent quality assurance. There is evidence of an appropriate level of challenge.

2.72   External examiners (where appointed) and link tutors are present at College module panels and progression boards. Their reports and minutes of boards confirm a robust approach to the maintenance of standards. Their reports are shared with all tutors following the boards.

2.73   The reports seen by the review team were fit for purpose, predominantly very positive about the quality of provision, confirmed that standards meet the threshold requirements, that courses remain current and that course learning outcomes were in line with the relevant qualification descriptors and Subject Benchmark Statements.

2.74   External examiners' reports are placed on the College VLE so that students can view the comments made. Students are then able to discuss any items with the College through the CET via a representative on the student council. However, the effectiveness of this approach may need further consideration as there is as little evidence of discussion in these meetings and little awareness of the availability of external examiner reports by students whom the team met. After evaluating the evidence, the review team was confident that there was no evidence of a lack of independent external challenge. The College has made effective use of feedback from link tutors and external examiners and is proactive in considering where to further develop engagement with external examiners to enhance their provision. The review team considers that the current policy and regulatory framework of Navitas UK enables proper use of external examiners and concludes that Expectation B7 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.75   BCUIC conducts the annual monitoring of its programmes within Navitas UK's framework together with the University's processes. An annual review report for each pathway (programme) is considered by the College Learning and Teaching Board and then presented to the AAC. It is also forwarded to Navitas UK's Quality and Standards Office where any trends and common issues will be identified for action, as well as features of good practice for dissemination across the Navitas UK Colleges via the Learning and Teaching Committee.

2.76   The policies and procedures of the College would allow this Expectation to be met.

2.77   The review team scrutinised a range of evidence to test the success of the framework and its associated processes. This included documentation including annual monitoring reports and action plans. Discussions with all categories of staff further contributed evidence that programme monitoring and review processes assure and enhance the quality of learning opportunities.

2.78   Annual monitoring of pathways and associated reports show thorough consideration of module and programme performance with clear actions, targets and goals identified. Teaching staff are involved in annual monitoring of modules and can initiate minor amendments such as teaching material. The completed actions from the 2014 report include embedding a visit schedule to University faculties for students and enhancing the Student in Jeopardy programme.

2.79   The periodic review in 2014 included a wide range of BCUIC areas including academic standards, teaching, learning and assessment, and student support. The review panel was chaired by another Navitas college with a student representative and an external adviser. The panel noted seven areas of good practice and made six recommendations. An action plan was developed which has been addressed.

2.80   The University is working with BCUIC to track student performance using tracer data. This enables the review processes to compare BCUIC international students with those directly recruited to the University. This effective use of tracer data from the University in reviewing student performance and achievement is **good practice**.

2.81   The College has appropriate and effective policies and procedures in place for the annual monitoring of its academic provision. Programme monitoring takes place against clear criteria. Staff are involved in the monitoring process through membership of the College Learning and Teaching Board. Students confirm they contribute to the monitoring and review processes through student surveys, and membership of the College Enhancement Team, the Student Council, the College Learning and Teaching Board.

2.82   With the support of the University, the monitoring and review processes are scrupulously followed. 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

2.83　The College has a Student Appeals and Grievances Policy which is based on a standard Navitas policy, adapted to the requirements of the College. Students at BCUIC are required to use the College complaints procedure for all issues relating to their experience at the College. However, for matters directly within the control or responsibility of the University, students are directed to use the University Appeals and Complaints procedures.

2.84　The College Learning and Teaching Board has responsibility for implementing, monitoring and reviewing the policy. The policy includes a procedure for appeals on informal grounds, against the decision of module boards or progression boards and a procedure for complaints, by students who hold grievances about aspects of their learning experience. The appeals procedure identifies four possible grounds on which an academic appeal can be made. With respect to complaints, there is an informal stage followed by a formal two-stage procedure.

2.85　The complaints and appeals procedures are appropriately detailed and timescales are included. They are signposted in the College Operations Manual and on the student portal. The College has satisfactory policies and procedures in place which would enable Expectation B9 to be met.

2.86　The review team tested the effectiveness of the procedures by examining documentation, including the policies for complaints, the Operations Manual, the VLE and webpages of the College and the University. The review team also held meetings with staff and students.

2.87　The Operations Manual provides clear guidance and direction for students regarding the appropriate University or College procedure to follow. It also explains that where it is appropriate for the student to use the University procedure, they may complain to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator if they remain dissatisfied, having exhausted the University's complaints procedure.

2.88　The College policy is comprehensive, without being over lengthy. The procedure and grounds for making an appeal against the outcome or conduct of an examination or coursework is very clear and straightforward.

2.89　The procedure for complaints includes consideration of complaints made by students under the age of 18 years and of complaints brought by groups of students. It gives due regard to confidentiality for staff and students and seeks to ensure that no student is disadvantaged by bringing a complaint. There is encouragement within the policy to try to resolve complaints locally at the informal stage. If a complaint has not been resolved to the student's satisfaction under the informal procedure, the student submits a complaint form to the Navitas Quality and Standards Office, which must be acknowledged by the Director of Student Experience and Quality within five working days. Attempts to facilitate conciliation are encouraged where appropriate. If there is no resolution an appeal can be made to the Navitas Director of Learning and Teaching Quality, who may convene a panel chaired by the Executive General Manager of Navitas, so providing further separation from those in direct contact with the student and the issues raised.

2.90   Students who the review team met were made aware of the policy for Appeals and Grievances during their initial Orientation Programme and were confident that they knew where to find the information on the student portal. They were clear about the distinction between an academic appeal and a complaint about a grievance.

2.91   They identified a range of ways in which they could seek further information or support if required, including through the student representatives who had received training on complaints and appeals as part of undertaking their role; through College Student Services staff and through the University Students' Union they were aware that they could access representation and advice. The students confirmed that the College is very responsive to any issues that they had raised. They were not aware of any formal complaints.

2.92   Where possible, the College attempts to use the outcome of complaints in a positive way and provided examples of enhancements that had been made to existing practices and processes as a result of complaints.

2.93   The evidence from the documentation and the meetings held with staff and students demonstrates that they are clear about the policies and procedures in place and how to access this information, if needed. There is a culture, supported by the policy framework, that seeks to ensure that complaints are resolved informally wherever possible. The review team concludes therefore 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

2.94   In reaching its commended 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.

2.95   All of the Expectations in this area are met and the associated level of risk is low in each case. The team identifies four features of good practice. There are no recommendations. The features of good practice identified include the comprehensive and extensive provision of teaching and learning material on the VLE that provides an equal and effective opportunity for students to achieve, the range of opportunities for student engagement in developing learning facilities and resources and the flexible and effective assessment feedback mechanisms which enables and promotes student learning. The review team also recognises the College's effective use of tracer data from the University in reviewing curricula and student performance and achievement.

2.96   The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at Birmingham City University International College is **commended**.

3   Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1   The College works with the University to create a coordinated approach to published information, ensuring accuracy of detail and clarity of information. All material must be approved by the University. All content published by the College is managed under the remit of the Director of Marketing and Admissions who is responsible for ensuring that marketing information is regularly updated and meets the needs of its stakeholders. Approved marketing materials are reported and noted at the joint Marketing Advisory Committee which meets once per semester.

3.2   The College adopts a multi-faceted approach for information delivery, using printed material, comprehensive online information, recruitment fairs, virtual presentations and social media. Navitas has a centralised design department that assists with the design of communication and marketing materials and ensures oversight.

3.3   College website content is reviewed quarterly to ensure accuracy and the main student guide is revised annually. The College's policies and regulations are included in the Operations Manual which is reviewed annually by the JSPMB. They are available to staff and students on the portal and in hard copy in the College.

3.4   Full information about the College, the location and courses available, along with the process for application and admission to the College is provided on the College website with links to the University website and other useful sites.

3.5   At enrolment and registration, students receive a USB with the key College documents and attend introductory talks clarifying expectations and academic protocols. Students are inducted into the use of the VLE and have a timetable generated for their specific programme of study.

3.6   Detailed information for enrolled students is provided on the VLE, in handbooks and by email. There is a Student Charter, clearly setting out the responsibilities of the College and the responsibilities of students.

3.7   BCUIC does not make any awards; on completion of their studies with the College, students receive a Confirmation of Attainment certificate, detailing their achievement at the College. This approach to the quality of the information about learning opportunities is consistent with the Quality Code, Part C and would allow the Expectation to be met.

3.8   The review team examined the effectiveness of the policies and procedures in place for information by examining relevant documentation, including minutes of meetings demonstrating oversight and by exploring the extensive information available on webpages. The review team also held meetings with students, teaching staff and professional services staff.

3.9   The information on the webpages and the VLE, seen by the review team was very clear, current and accurately reflected the College and the provision available to students.

It was accessible and comprehensive, with links to other resources that students might need to refer to in order to make choices and to apply. Minutes of meetings and email correspondence confirmed the close involvement of the University in ensuring that information is current and accurate.

3.10   The students whom the review team met were very satisfied with most of the information that they had received through the process of application and arrival, a view confirmed by the students involved in compiling the student submission. Some students whom the team met raised an exception to this, and were confused about the initial location of study on arrival; a similar but slightly different issue to that was raised in the ECREO monitoring visit in 2015.

3.11   Scrutiny of the BCUIC website by the review team confirms that the College has since amended the information on the webpages, which is now very clear. However, some of the materials used by Navitas agents may still be ambiguous. The College demonstrated a strong commitment to continued vigilance in locating any possible sources of confusion.

3.12   Students whom the review team met confirmed that the initial orientation programme was very informative and that detailed course information is easy to find on the VLE. Staff reinforce information and encourage students to use the VLE. The students were confident in their knowledge of College policies and procedures, and if unsure about anything, that they would know how to find the information. Students involved in compiling the submission highlighted the availability of information on the VLE about what they would be learning, in advance of the taught session, as of particular value. They also stressed the willingness of staff to respond to any queries that they had.

3.13   The College makes available clear and accurate information to prospective and current students enabling them to make informed choices about programmes of study. The College has appropriate mechanisms in place to check that information is accurate and although the team found some remaining ambiguity in one piece of marketing material, this does not pose a threat to the quality of learning opportunities. 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 quality of the information about learning opportunities: Summary of findings

3.14 In reaching its judgement relating to the quality of information about learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. There are no recommendations or affirmations in this area.

3.15 The College has robust systems for the production and monitoring of information. The team also recognises the effective use of the virtual learning environment for the provision of information for prospective students and for the management of assessment for current students.

3.16 The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at Birmingham City University International College **meets** UK expectations.

4 Commentary on the enhancement of student learning opportunities

Findings

4.1 BCUIC's strategic approach to enhancement of the student experience is based on Navitas UK's policy and procedure. The CET is the formal quality enhancement mechanism which includes students and staff. Its purpose is to engage students and enhance areas that most directly affect their experience.

4.2 The strategic themes for BCUIC enhancement are student representation and further campus development. The minutes of the CET demonstrate the thorough consideration of these themes and the commitment of senior staff. As the College is only entering into its third year of operation, strategic considerations are inevitably related to consolidation. However, there have been enrichment activities relating to learning and teaching. This includes numeracy and literacy support for all new students, study skills workshops run at BCUIC by University library staff, and lunchtime careers sessions. The students say they welcome these developments

5 Commentary on the Theme: Digital Literacy

Findings

5.1 Navitas UK has an overarching Virtual Learning Strategy that aims to support and promote the development of digital literacy throughout the network of UK Navitas Colleges. This strategy provides a focus for the direction of the development of Digital Literacy within the College.

5.2 A major consideration for the College has been establishing a satisfactory IT infrastructure; ensuring good wireless access coverage, a sufficient supply of computers, open access learning space and well-equipped teaching rooms. In addition to the facilities on campus, students also have access to a wide range of University IT facilities. Students value the supportive, flexible access to both the College and the University portals, where they can access a wide range of resources as well as information, news, course materials in advance of taught sessions, timetables and assessment results.

5.3 Students and staff described a range of ways in which the development of digital literacy is being embedded in the curriculum, from support for the development of basic skills within the Interactive Learning and Communication Skills module, to the use of discipline-specific software within particular pathways. University library staff also provide training for the College students to assist them in developing internet search skills.

5.4 The portal is used extensively to support and enhance assessment. Electronic plagiarism-detection software is used as a developmental tool, enabling students to clearly identify and avoid any potential academic misconduct. Students are then required to provide evidence that they have used the software. Tutors are able to view the similarity reports when marking to check the originality of students' work. Additionally, the College is piloting marking and feedback on line.

5.5 Staff are able to access specific IT training within the College, supporting their ability to use the functionality within the VLE. They receive regular notification of training opportunities provided by the University IT team which they are able to access, including the PG Certificate in Learning and Teaching.

5.6 The College is at an early stage in developing and exploiting the potential of technology-enhanced learning. There has hitherto been an appropriate focus on securing resources and supporting staff to use the VLE, which should provide a firm foundation for exploring the interactive and dynamic potential of social media and internet technology, which students are clearly ready for.

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 24-27 of the Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) 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.

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

Embedded college
Colleges, often operating as part of a network, that are embedded on or near the campuses of two or more UK higher education institutions (HEI) and that primarily provide preparatory programmes for higher education.

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.

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

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

Programme specifications
Published statements about the intended **learning outcomes** of programmes of study,

containing information about teaching and learning methods, support and assessment methods, and how individual units relate to levels of achievement.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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