Higher Education Review of Bishop Grosseteste University

January 2016

Contents

About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Bishop Grosseteste University. The review took place from 18 to 21 January 2016 and was conducted by a team of four reviewers, as follows:

- Professor Susan Bloxham
- Mr Gregory Clark
- Professor Denis Wright
- Ms Grace Burton (student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Bishop Grosseteste University 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, the QAA review team:

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

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. [Explanations of the findings](#) are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 6.

In reviewing Bishop Grosseteste University the review team has also considered a theme selected for particular focus across higher education in England and Northern Ireland.

The [themes](#) for the academic year 2015-16 are Student Employability and Digital Literacy,[2] and the provider is required to select, in consultation with student representatives, one of these themes to be explored through the review process.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.[3] A dedicated section explains the method for [Higher Education Review](#)[4] and has links to the review handbook and other informative documents. For an explanation of terms see the [glossary](#) at the end of this report.

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[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 web pages:
www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education/higher-education-review.

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Bishop Grosseteste University

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Bishop Grosseteste University.

- The setting and maintenance of the academic standards of its own awards and the maintenance of the academic standards of the awards offered on behalf of its research degree-awarding body **meet** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at Bishop Grosseteste University.

- The integrated, institution-wide academic and pastoral support for students that supports the development of their academic, personal and professional potential (Expectation B4).
- The strategic embedding of the Students Creating Change scheme across schools and professional services, which engages students in the quality assurance and enhancement of learning opportunities (Expectations B5, B3 and Enhancement).
- The comprehensive and integrated annual monitoring process, which engages students and enhances their learning opportunities (Expectations B8, B5 and Enhancement).
- The extensive, systematic and sustained provision of student employability opportunities, accompanied by detailed University-wide support (Expectation B4).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to Bishop Grosseteste University.

By October 2016:

- define learning outcomes for named exit awards within programme specifications (Expectations A1, A3.2 and B1).

Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following actions that Bishop Grosseteste University is already taking to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to its students.

- The steps being taken to develop a Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education, which will form part of an enhanced Professional Accreditation of Teaching Framework (Expectation B3).
- The introduction of an annual report on the recognition of prior learning process and decisions to strengthen oversight of student achievement and progression (Expectation B6).

Theme: Student Employability

Bishop Grosseteste University notes that the commitment to developing student employability and graduate attributes implies an emphasis on curriculum development to promote transferable skills. A framework for embedding employability and entrepreneurship more deeply in the curriculum is therefore being developed as part of the revised Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy.

The University's Five Year Strategy for 2014-19 enables 'students to make a difference to their world as graduates'. It sets out a commitment to embedding employability and enterprise education within all degree programmes, reflected in the aims of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. Employability is embedded throughout the student experience, from pre-registration to post-award.

The University makes students aware of employability opportunities in various ways: open days, freshers' fairs, induction presentations, welcome packs, employability and volunteering awards, a networking club, online resources and placements. In 2015 the University also established a set of Graduate Attributes, which have been introduced to new student cohorts. The attributes address the needs of the labour market, local communities, personal development and broader social development. They provide a framework for students to measure their development.

About Bishop Grosseteste University

Bishop Grosseteste University (the University) is located in Lincoln and was founded in 1862 as the Lincoln Diocesan Training School, an Anglican teacher training college for women. It was renamed Bishop Grosseteste College in 1962 in honour of Robert Grosseteste, the thirteenth-century educator and Bishop of Lincoln and, on gaining taught degree awarding powers in 2006, became Bishop Grosseteste University College. The University title was confirmed by the Privy Council in December 2012. The University is a member of the Cathedrals Group and of the worldwide Colleges and Universities of the Anglican Communion. It also engages with five further education colleges and one school-centred Initial Teacher Training organisation, and participates in regional widening participation networks covering Lincolnshire and the East and North East Midlands.

The University's mission is to excel at teaching, learning and research, enabling all students to achieve the highest possible standard in their chosen field of study. This entails provision of life-enriching opportunities through self-development, the recognition of achievement and aspiration, and participation in regional, national and international partnerships.

The University describes itself as a supportive, challenging and intimate community distinguished by its academic coherence. It has three academic schools, with over 2,000 full-time and part-time student enrolments. The campus has benefited from a refurbished and extended library and halls of residence, investment in information technology, and the provision of additional student accommodation in upper Lincoln, close to the University campus.

As a provider of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) leading to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) or equivalent, as well as other degrees related to teaching, the University adheres to the frameworks, rules, recommendations and inspections of the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) - and, related to this, to the decisions of the National College for Teaching and Leadership. The established portfolio of teaching courses has expanded in recent years to include new Social Sciences, Humanities, Business, and Health and Social Care programmes that lead to FdA, BA and MA qualifications. The University's EdD and PhD programmes, validated by the

University of Leicester (the awarding body), have been supplemented by the establishment of Research Clusters and the appointment of research-focused staff.

The strategic themes of the University's Five Year Strategy 2014-19 include Learning and Teaching, Student Engagement, Enhancement of the Academic Portfolio, Research, Participation, Internationalisation, Employability and Enterprise, External Engagement, Partnerships and the Community, and Environment and Sustainability. The Strategy is supported by a Change Management Programme and strategic oversight for its implementation is maintained by a Strategy Sponsor Board.

The senior leadership team involves the Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellor, Registrar and Secretary, two Executive Deans, and the Director of Resources. This leadership layer is supported by three recently appointed Heads of School, as well as the Corporate Leadership Team formed by middle managers with specialist portfolios.

The University notes that as a small institution many of its staff undertake multiple roles. A revised committee structure was established following a review conducted between July and October 2015, based on the need to reduce duplication of discussion and responsibilities, and clarify reporting lines and the scope of meetings. The current structure includes: school boards; a Joint Board of Studies (JBoS); and committees for research, learning and teaching, quality assurance, and internationalisation. The Academic Enhancement Committee (AEC) has oversight and reports to the Senate.

The University has engaged in the completion of external audits, including those of Ofsted. The 2009 Institutional Audit by QAA concluded that confidence could reasonably be placed in the soundness of management of academic standards and the quality of the learning opportunities available to students. The mid-cycle follow-up report confirmed that all required actions had been addressed.

Since that date the University has extended its good practice for student feedback, and the provision of opportunities for self-development and staff development. Action planning has also addressed various recommendations, including the strengthening of oversight for collaborative provision, formalising the role of Chief External Examiner (CEE), the completion of a Student Journey Project for reviewing record systems, and the creation of a Partnership Office for managing all placements in educational settings across the University. The University has also pursued the development of research degree experience, with aspirations to achieve research degree awarding powers. The importance of attracting and recruiting international student numbers is seen as one of the key challenges for the University.

Explanation of the findings about Bishop Grosseteste University

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 setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1   The University's academic regulations include a common Awards and Credit Framework with associated codes of practice, regulations, policies and procedures. These explicitly locate awards within *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and the Higher Education Credit Framework for England (HECFE). The University's Awards and Credit Framework requires that progression and the award of qualifications are dependent on the achievement of positively defined programme learning outcomes and these are specified in the standard templates for programme specifications. Taught degrees, including foundation degrees, incorporate Levels 4 to 7 of the FHEQ and include intermediate awards that are available to students who exit with the requisite amount of credit. Credit is awarded at module level on the achievement of defined learning outcomes. This framework would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.2   As discussed in Expectation B11, the University's research degrees (PhD and EdD) are validated, approved and awarded by the University of Leicester (the awarding body), through a formal Partnership Agreement. The University's Regulations Governing Doctoral Research Degrees are drawn from and agreed by the awarding body.

1.3   To test this Expectation, the review team considered a range of documentation and discussed details through meetings with senior, academic and professional services staff.

1.4   The team noted a robust approach to incorporating the FHEQ within the University's approval, review and examination processes. The Awards and Credit Framework is aligned to appropriate qualification and level descriptors with awards positioned at the appropriate level and qualifications named in accordance with the titling conventions specified by the FHEQ.

1.5   Documentation and discussion confirmed that programme approval documentation makes reference to appropriate external reference points, including the FHEQ; Subject Benchmark Statements; and professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) requirements. School-level review of validation documents is done by a panel including one external member. University validation panels include one or two external participants (the second in the case of seeking expertise from a relevant business or other organisation), providing external confirmation on the alignment of programme proposals to relevant frameworks. The programme approval process produces a detailed report demonstrating due consideration of aspects of the FHEQ and other relevant external frameworks.

1.6   Annual monitoring includes a check that individual modules and programme learning outcomes remain relevant and at the appropriate FHEQ level for the award. External examiners, in their annual reports, are explicitly requested to comment on the appropriateness of the assessment in enabling students to demonstrate achievement of the intended learning outcomes. External examiners comment on comparability with the standards of other providers.

1.7   Completed examples of course approval and review documentation and programme specifications confirm that the University's requirements are being met. The University has made efforts to test the quality assurance of the course approval processes including the use of consultants. The Awards and Credit Framework provides a definitive guide for programme developers to ensure that programmes adhere to national qualification and credit frameworks.

1.8   The team confirmed that progression and the award of qualifications are dependent on the achievement of positively defined programme learning outcomes. Programme specifications list the qualifications available to students who exit their course prematurely. However, the learning outcomes are not specified separately for some named subsidiary exit awards - for example, in the programme specifications for the MA awards in Health and Social Care, Theology and Religious Studies, English Literature, and Social and Cultural History. There is no guidance on the learning outcomes for subsidiary awards in the Programme Development Manual. The review team **recommends** that the University define learning outcomes for named exit awards within programme specifications.

1.9   Staff at the University and partner institutions have an understanding of external reference points and the operation of the University's procedures for approval, review and monitoring of courses. They are well supported by the staff of the Quality Assurance and Student Data (QASD) team.

1.10   Learning outcomes are referenced directly to assessment in module descriptions to demonstrate how they are achieved. Programme specifications list the modules that contribute to the programme by title, level and credit value. Programme learning outcomes are clearly mapped to modules to demonstrate where they are achieved.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.12   The University maintains oversight of the quality and standards of its provision through its committee structure. Senate is the senior academic authority and oversees the governance and management framework for academic standards. Academic policies, procedures and regulations are approved by Senate, except where authority is delegated to AEC or its subcommittee; the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC).

1.13   The AEC has oversight of academic governance ratified by the Senate and is responsible to Senate for the development, monitoring and review of the academic portfolio, enhancement of learning opportunities and the setting and maintenance of academic standards. AEC undertakes detailed scrutiny of documentation relating to quality assurance, enhancement and regulation, and for the maintenance and enhancement of the student learning experience. The QAC was formalised as an independent subcommittee of AEC in 2015.

1.14   Responsibility for University leadership and management rests with the Vice Chancellor and the SLT with support from the CLT. The Senate delegates to Assessment Boards responsibility for the assessment of students in accordance with the academic regulations. The University's postgraduate research programmes lead to awards of the awarding body.

1.15   The QASD team is responsible for all the University's procedures, policies, codes of practice and quality assurance and programme documents. This central management of quality processes includes module approval and minor course modifications. Minor modifications to programmes are considered by School Boards and approved by the QAC, with external examiners and students being consulted. These systems and frameworks would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.16   The review team examined the University's Senate and committees' terms of reference, codes of practice, academic regulations, organisational and committee structures, committee minutes and reports of course approval events. The team explored details through discussions in meetings with academic and senior staff and representatives from partner institutions.

1.17   The team noted the changes in the University for developing quality assurance systems and structures to deliver its strategic priorities while also securing academic standards. The recent review of the committee structure has reduced duplication of discussion and personnel, clarifying the scope of meetings and ensuring clear reporting lines. A response to the previous QAA review has led to increased delineation between the deliberative and executive committees.

1.18   The academic framework comprises a comprehensive series of relevant codes of practice, regulations, frameworks and procedures. These are consistent with the relevant national frameworks and other reference points. There are suitably defined procedures for testing partner organisations' processes for assuring quality and standards. Staff (including those at partner institutions) are familiar with the University's academic framework including

policies, procedures, regulations and arrangements for the assessment of students. Students are aware of the University's requirements and relevant information is easily accessible for them.

1.19   AEC minutes and related documentary evidence confirm effective oversight of the development, monitoring and review of the academic portfolio, enhancement of learning opportunities and the setting and maintenance of academic standards. There is a regular review of policies and procedures. This review takes account of appropriate reference points. It is carried out by the University Registrar and Secretary and the QASD team, and is approved by AEC. Regulations Road Shows are used to inform staff of revisions to relevant policies and guidance.

1.20   The University has rigorous policies for the provision of credit transfer and the recognition of prior learning (RPL), and sets out the limits on the volume of credit that may be awarded through such processes. There are also appropriate and clearly defined codes of practice that are effectively implemented for a range of matters related to assessment, including grading, classification, appeals, extenuating circumstances, compensation and academic misconduct.

1.21   To check that recent rapid expansion of the portfolio is no threat to standards, the University audited its systems, resulting in a strong positive assurance of processes. Staffing increases have been implemented to reduce pressure on the QASD team.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.23   Module and programme specifications provide the University's definitive records of its qualifications and also form the main documentation for programme and qualification approval. These documents are required to comply with the University's academic policies, procedures and regulations, with award and constituent modules including FHEQ level and credit values in accordance with the University's academic framework and regulations. These specifications and processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.24   The review team explored documentary evidence provided by the University and considered programme and module information on the University website. Details were discussed in meetings with senior, academic and professional services staff, representatives from partner organisations, and students.

1.25   The team noted that guidance is in place for the development of programme and module specifications, taking into account the Quality Code requirements for programme design. There is a requirement for the capture of relevant data used to produce public information, including Key Information Sets (KIS). Definitive programme documentation is held centrally by QASD, and made available to staff online and to students and external examiners via the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). The challenges of version control have been addressed through revisions to the University's online facility that places areas containing definitive programme documentation under the strict control of QASD.

1.26   Programme specifications use a template and include a curriculum map demonstrating how modules contribute to achieving the programme outcomes. Definitive programme documentation is used as source material to produce information and guidance for students - such as handbooks and assignment briefs - and is used in planning the delivery and assessment of programmes. Responses to external examiners and student feedback captured during the annual monitoring process ensure that definitive programme documentation remains current and fit for purpose.

1.27   The Code of Practice for Changes to Validated Programmes sets out a comprehensive process for making modifications to modules and programmes. Major modifications require revalidation, while minor modifications can be approved at the School level through School Boards and approved by QAC. Proposed changes are also discussed with external examiners and evidence of their agreement must be presented. Consultation with student representatives is via their position on the relevant School Board.

1.28   Definitive module information is presented in module specifications using a standard template. Information held on the Student Record System (SRS), taken from definitive documents, is used to generate data required by internal and external stakeholders and examination boards, and informs the production of students' and graduates' transcripts. A transcript is issued to each student at the end of each academic year with Diploma Supplements issued on request. Together, the University's transcript and electronic Record of Professional Development (eRPD)/Development Career Plan (DCP) meet all of the

information requirements contained in the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) and Diploma Supplement.

1.29   The QASD office works with the Schools to ensure conditions of approval have been met and are reflected in the programme specifications. QASD ensure modifications are correctly categorised as major or minor. Oversight of modifications by QAC allows QASD to monitor the totality of the changes made and their effect on the validated programmes.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.31   The University's processes for the approval and amendment of undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes are set out in the Code of Practice for the Validation of Programmes and the Code of Practice for Changes to Validated Programmes. Both Codes of Practice are explicitly referenced to Chapter B1 of the Quality Code, and are set within the context of the University's Award and Credit Framework which explicitly uses FHEQ and the Credit Framework for UK Degree-Awarding Bodies (2014) as points of reference. Oversight, advice and guidance on these processes are provided to Academic Coordinators and Heads of School by QASD.

1.32   Award titles, programme design and assessment strategies are scrutinised at validation to ensure all intended learning outcomes are aligned to awards at the appropriate FHEQ level and to the qualification descriptors. Standard programme templates facilitate this process, detailing notional learning hours, volume and level of credit, learning outcomes (informed both by Subject and Qualification Benchmark Statements and PSRB requirements) and a detailed exposition of assessment. The validation process includes external academic expert, employer and student input. Oversight of validation is provided by QAC and AEC. The Portfolio Management Group (PMG) separately oversees the University's programme portfolio and the approval of the business case for a new programme. The design of these systems and procedures would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.33   In its review of the evidence, the review team scrutinised the relevant Codes of Practice, actual validation documents and reports, and academic deliberative committee consideration of validations. Details were discussed in meetings with senior, academic and professional services staff, partner organisation representatives, students and employers.

1.34   The team found that programmes were set at the appropriate standard for the level of the award, taking account of Subject and Qualification Benchmark Statements. Proposals were appropriately specified in the context of the University's Award and Credit Framework and consistent with its relevant Codes of Practice. Validation reports demonstrated alignment with level and subject benchmarks, embedded in programme design, approval and amendment processes. Assessment strategies and curricular mapping, supporting the teaching and assessment of learning outcomes, formed an integral part of the University's processes and were understood and used by staff.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.2): Degree-awarding bodies ensure that credit and qualifications are awarded only where:

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

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

Findings

1.36   The University's Awards and Credit Framework is used to align the intended learning outcomes for programmes and modules with FHEQ and the Credit Framework for UK Degree-Awarding Bodies (2014). The Programme Proposal Form requires the mapping of the intended learning outcomes with the methods of assessment. Programmes are designed with reference to the appropriate level for the award described in the FHEQ and the relevant Subject Benchmark Statements.

1.37   The AEC is responsible to Senate for the development, monitoring and review of the academic portfolio and the setting and maintenance of academic standards, and undertakes scrutiny of documentation relating to quality assurance, enhancement and regulation. The Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) is accountable to the AEC for advising on matters relating to Learning, Teaching, Assessment and Student Engagement.

1.38   The University's Awards and Credit Framework and associated deliberative processes address the University's academic standards, UK threshold standards and the level and definition of credit. These systems and procedures would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.39   The review team examined documentation on the University's regulatory framework and policies and procedures on the assessment of learning outcomes leading to the award of credit. They looked at how assessment issues are considered in programme design, validation, monitoring and the planned periodic review process, and how students are made aware of assessment processes and the criteria used for assessment. The implementation and use of policies and procedures were explored in meetings with senior, academic and professional services staff as well as students.

1.40   The team confirmed that the University's Awards and Credit Framework is used to align learning outcomes for modules and programmes with the FHEQ, and to ensure that credit and qualifications are awarded only when a student completes assessment that demonstrates achievement of pre-defined learning outcomes for a module or programme of study.

1.41   The University's Programme Proposal Form includes a section on the assessment and learning methods to be used for each module and level. Programme specifications in course validation documents incorporate an Assessment Map where individual assessments are matched to module learning outcomes, which are in turn matched to the programme learning outcomes. As noted in Expectation A1, the review team found that programme specifications do not explicitly define the learning outcomes for exit awards.

1.42   Validation, monitoring and review documentation, alongside relevant committee minutes and meetings with staff, demonstrate the effectiveness of University processes for

confirming that assessments are appropriate. The assessment strategy for each programme is explicitly examined to ensure that academic standards and the assessment strategy remain valid and relevant. External examiners review and approve the suitability of the assessments used to demonstrate achievement of intended learning outcomes, and their reports are considered and responded to in an effective manner as discussed in Expectation B7. Boards of Examiners confirm student achievement of learning outcomes and the effectiveness of assessment procedures and processes.

1.43   The University uses a common marking scheme for all taught awards, with a generic set of descriptors. The Code of Practice for Assessment of Students sets out the expectations for staff and students for the achievement of grades. Staff and taught students commented consistently on the accessibility of this information through the VLE with students also obtaining such information from their tutors. The University's Code of Practice for Students with Access Needs affirms its commitment to making reasonable adjustments while maintaining academic standards to ensure that students are treated equitably.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.45   The University's processes for the monitoring and review of programmes are set out in the Code of Practice for the Annual Monitoring of Academic Programmes and in the Code of Practice for the Periodic Review of Academic Provision. Both are explicitly mapped to Chapter B8 of the Quality Code within the context of the University's Award and Credit Framework, which explicitly uses FHEQ and the Credit Framework for UK Degree-Awarding Bodies (2014) as points of reference. As noted in Expectation A3.1, oversight, advice and guidance on these processes are provided to Academic Coordinators and Heads of School by QASD.

1.46   Under its Code of Practice for the Annual Monitoring of Academic Programmes, an Annual Monitoring Review (AMR) report is produced for each programme or subject to ensure that all aspects of the University's taught provision, including collaborative partners, are appropriately considered. The report covers academic standards and quality of students' learning opportunities and, in addition to an integral enhancement plan, addresses actions arising from external examiner reports. This includes the appropriateness of assessments for enabling the demonstration and achievement of learning outcomes, School and University Enhancement Plans, and good practice and issues to be monitored at School or University level. To facilitate this, standard templates, with associated guidance, and a compendium of centrally provided aggregated statistical data - the Statistics Handbook - are produced.

1.47   The report is checked for accuracy and completeness by the Head of School, and a student representative from the Students' Union has to sign off the report before consideration at School Board. The report is overtly intended to test the continued validity of awards, programme design and assessment strategies and their alignment with intended learning outcomes. The Head of School then produces a School Report for consideration at AEC and in turn the School Reports, along with professional support services reports, form part of the evidence base for the Annual Report on the Academic Health of the Institution, which is considered by AEC and Senate.

1.48   Under its Code of Practice for the Periodic Review of Academic Provision, the University sets programme validity at no more than five years and then conducts a Periodic Review led by the Head of School, working with the Academic Coordinator. The information required comprises self-evaluation and programme documents; a programme specification with module descriptors; supporting evidence; and a Head of School overview. This material is considered by a panel appointed by QAC to include an external academic expert and student representation, with the possibility of employer input. The University also liaises with individual PSRBs on their preferred involvement in this process. A review event then takes place involving meetings with a broad range of relevant staff, focusing on the continuing appropriateness and currency of learning outcomes and the learning, teaching and assessment strategy. A report from the review event is received by QAC and the outcome is reported to and approved by AEC and Senate. The design of these systems and procedures would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.49   In its review of the evidence, the review team scrutinised the relevant Codes of Practice, annual monitoring and School overview reports, and Annual Reports on the Academic Health of the Institution and related academic deliberative committee consideration. The review team did not consider periodic review reports as the University had recalibrated its provision in recent major reviews of its portfolio - as noted in Expectation B8. The review team also discussed details in meetings with senior, academic and professional services staff, representatives from partner organisations, students and employers.

1.50   The review team considered the annual monitoring process to be comprehensive and appropriately analytical, including provision by collaborative partners. There is an appropriate and consistent focus on the maintenance of academic standards within the context of the University's Award and Credit Framework, with a strong emphasis on external reference points. Head of School, staff and student representative input is clear, with evidence of understanding of systems and procedures. The review team found appropriate levels of aggregation of emerging analysis at School and University level and the requirements of the process in relation to action planning and linkage to enhancement are seen to be duly observed. The review team also noted examples of minor programme changes arising from annual monitoring reports being signed off at School Board - described as 'module housekeeping'. This procedure is in accordance with the Code of Practice for Changes to Validated Programmes.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.4): In order to be transparent and publicly accountable, degree-awarding bodies use external and independent expertise at key stages of setting and maintaining academic standards to advise on whether:

- **UK threshold academic standards are set, delivered and achieved**
- **the academic standards of the degree-awarding body are appropriately set and maintained.**

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

Findings

1.52   The University uses external input during programme validation, annual monitoring and periodic review to help confirm that its internal processes and procedures are consistently applied. External expertise is used at each stage in the development of programme proposals, and external advisers are appointed as panel members for both School and University-level approval exercises.

1.53   The University's Codes of Practice state that external advisers are independent of the University, and they are not permitted to be external examiners for the new taught programme. The use of external specialist advisers also helps to ensure that PSRB requirements are met for accredited programmes. The adoption of good practice from elsewhere in the sector - together with benchmarking and comparison of threshold academic standards - is facilitated through School interaction with external examiners and by participation of University staff as external advisers and examiners at other institutions in the UK and internationally. The University's Code of Practice for the Conduct of Boards of Examiners describes the role of the external examiner in relation to Module and Programme Examination Boards. As discussed in Expectation B7, the AEC oversees the University's external examiner policy and procedures and ensures that Schools and the University respond where appropriate to external examiner feedback. These Codes of Practice, policies and processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.54   The review team explored the University's use of external consultants, employers, stakeholders and professional networks. The team examined documentation relating to the University's use of external expertise in quality assurance processes, including programme design and approval, external examiner reports, AMRs, and periodic review. How externality is used in practice to support the management of threshold academic standards was discussed at meetings with academic and professional services staff, partner organisation representatives, and employers.

1.55   The team confirmed that the University seeks external expertise for the development of programmes through the appointment of external advisers to approval events at both School and University level and in the periodic review of existing courses. Programme validation documents demonstrated that external expert advice had been sought and where relevant guidance had been followed to ensure that PSRB requirements were met. The reports for new programme approvals demonstrate the engagement of external advisers in the process.

1.56   Subject Periodic Review was paused in 2014-15 due to the formation of the new School structure and the review of the academic portfolio. Employers commented on their involvement in programme design and in previous periodic reviews. Participation in professional networks provides the University with additional assurance that the management of standards and learning opportunities is effective and informed by reference to practice in the sector.

1.57   As discussed in Expectation A3.2, the University's Code of Practice for the Conduct of Boards of Examiners specifies the role of the external examiner in Module and Programme Examination Boards. The QASD office manages the appointment of external examiners for all programmes, overseen at institutional level by the External Examining Oversight Group (EEOG). The review team found there were clear procedures for the appointment of examiners, which ensure that conflicts of interest and reciprocity are avoided. The template for external examiners' reports allows the institution to be assured that examiners can comment on alignment with UK threshold academic standards, as illustrated by external examiner reports seen by the review team.

1.58   The University has a rigorous process for the management of examiners' reports. The Academic Quality Manager (AQM) in QASD reads all reports and produces a summary report for AEC. Academic Coordinators are required to identify good practice and proposals for change in examiners' reports, and to report on action through the AMR process to the relevant School Board. Academic Coordinators complete detailed responses to external examiners' reports and Schools are required to inform external examiners of the response to their reports. Key findings from each examiner's report are collated for discussion at the AEC and incorporated into the Annual Report on the Academic Health of the Institution and Enhancement Plan. All external examiner reports are seen by the Vice Chancellor, who will take action if there is a matter of serious concern.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards: Summary of findings

1.60   In reaching its judgement about the setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered by the University, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.61   All of the Expectations in this area are met, with a low level of associated risk in each case.

1.62   The University matches programme outcomes and volumes of study to appropriate levels in the FHEQ and takes account of relevant subject and qualification benchmark statements. Appropriate procedures and systems maintain, review and update definitive information. Consistent and appropriate academic and regulatory frameworks are used at all times and for all levels of award. Externality is achieved through involving appropriate expert authorities in programme approval and periodic monitoring, thereby ensuring the validity and relevance of higher education provision.

1.63   There is one recommendation relating to Expectation A1 concerning the absence of defined learning outcomes for subsidiary awards in a sample of programme specifications.

1.64   The review team concludes that the setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards at the University **meet** UK expectations.

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

Findings

2.1 The University's process for the design, development and approval of new programmes, including those delivered by collaborative partners, is set out in its Code of Practice for the Validation of Programmes which is referenced overtly to Chapter B1 of the Quality Code. This is supplemented by the Code of Practice for Changes to Validated Programmes for programme amendment. Programme teams are guided by a Programme Development Manual. The QASD team provide advice and guidance on these processes to Academic Coordinators and Heads of School, with academic deliberative committee oversight by AEC and its subcommittee, the QAC.

2.2 A separate business case for a new programme is considered by PMG. The process for academic approval is initiated by a Head of School using a proposal template with sign-off by key professional services staff in relation to resources. The proposal is considered by QAC with approval by AEC leading to the agreement of a validation schedule.

2.3 As noted in Expectation A3.4, the University contracts specialist external academic advisers to assist in the development of new curriculum areas with particular regard to academic standards, Subject and Qualification Benchmarks, and PSRB requirements. Programme teams submit an extensive range of information, reflecting internal and external requirements in relation to academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities, for academic approval. This process involves two levels of scrutiny, with School and University panels including expert external specialists, internal staff and student members who receive detailed guidance on their role. The documentation includes a programme specification containing programme aims, outcomes and structure that include modules, credit values and options. It also includes an assessment strategy and curriculum map showing where programme outcomes are achieved through module delivery and assessment. Similar documentation is then required for all modules. Standard templates for both programme and module specifications ensure all required information is provided.

2.4 School scrutiny may set conditions for sign-off by the relevant Academic Coordinator, Head of School and panel Chair before referral to University scrutiny, which may again set conditions for sign-off, before reporting to QAC. A positive validation report that confirms the meeting of conditions - using a Record of Decision template - is then forwarded to AEC with validation being recommended to Senate. The University operates particular safeguards in relation to the status of programmes 'subject to validation'.

2.5 The design of these systems and procedures would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.6 In its review of the evidence, relevant Codes of Practice, validation documents and reports, and academic deliberative committee consideration of validations were scrutinised by the review team. Details of programme design, approval and amendment were discussed

with senior, academic and professional services staff, partner organisation representatives, students and employers.

2.7   The review team found conscientious and detailed compliance by programme teams with the requirements of the Codes of Practice. As described in more detail in Expectation A1, the team noted that programme learning outcomes were not set out for subsidiary exit awards in postgraduate programme specifications. There was otherwise consistent use of standard templates, including for collaborative partners. Validation reports and records of decision are detailed and accurately identify issues, allowing informed consideration within the academic deliberative committee system.

2.8   External input at both programme design and approval is achieved and there is evidence of student and employer input to programme design and approval at both School and University level. Academic staff, in addition to members of School and University scrutiny panels, confirmed that they were well guided and supported and showed clear understanding of processes - for example, in relation to the University threshold for differentiating minor and major programme changes and for safeguarding against cumulative minor programme changes.

2.9   In the context of the recent high volume of validation and revalidation activity (discussed further in Expectation B8), the University commissioned an independent evaluation of its processes, which found the system of internal control and governance to be 'effective' in its Review of Portfolio Diversification and Development in February 2015. The University also operates a complementary Procedure for Discontinuing Programmes, factoring in both the business case and academic issues with oversight by PMG and AEC.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.11   The University sets out its procedure for recruitment and admission in its Code of Practice for the Admission of Students. The code was approved by Senate and developed in consultation with students, and is informed by the University Strategy 2014-19. It also details the procedures to be used for monitoring the equitable treatment of prospective students, and a member of the Recruitment and Admissions team is a member of the University's Equality and Diversity Committee (EDC). In July 2015 the Code was aligned with the Internationalisation Strategy.

2.12   The Code of Practice is overseen by AEC and the University handles complaints about the admissions process using its Admissions Complaints Procedure. The Procedure outlines the process and timescale to be followed by the appellant and the University, grounds for complaints and the right to appeal. The University operates a Recruitment and Retention Oversight Group, renamed in 2015-16 as the Heads of Admissions, Marketing and Recruitment Group.

2.13   The University outlines its process for application and admission to its programmes of study in its prospectus and on its website. Prospective students are provided with information on all stages of the application process, from open days to offers as outlined in the Code of Practice.

2.14   The institutional oversight of recruitment, selection and admissions procedures demonstrated in these policies and practices would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.15   The review team tested the University's approach to recruitment, selection and admissions through examining minutes and terms of reference of committees, Codes of Practice and related procedures. Details were discussed in meetings with students and academic and professional services staff, and representatives from partner organisations.

2.16   The University acts appropriately in accordance with Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) guidance and publishes information relating to courses of study and financial elements such as fees and bursaries. Where applicable, further costs associated with specific courses are included, and in doing so the University allows prospective students to make informed decisions about their application and course of study.

2.17   The University also hosts Open and Applicant Days to further inform applicants' decisions. Any changes to courses during the application process are communicated to applicants by the University in line with UCAS guidelines. Students were complimentary about their communication experiences before joining the University, and that this positive viewpoint extended to the induction experience.

2.18   Discussions with staff revealed clear shared understanding of the respective responsibilities involved in the admission of students to programmes delivered by collaborative partners. The review team learned that the University uses the point of enrolment as its primary opportunity to monitor admissions decisions made by staff in

partner colleges, and also noted the possibility of earlier oversight of the decisions made by partner colleges to University programmes. The review team concluded that the current system in operation allows sufficient University involvement, with training and support provided by University colleagues ensuring that correct admission decisions are being made in partner organisations.

2.19   The review team found that the University makes reasonable adjustments at interview for applicants who have identified themselves as having additional needs, and supports such applicants throughout the application process as appropriate. The review team learned that the University provided a comprehensive portfolio of training and development opportunities relating to recruitment, admission and selection for staff engaged in this activity, including training on CMA guidance and for conducting interviews.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (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 LTA Strategy (2015-19) supports the University's Five Year Strategy (2014-19). The University aims to revise its overall approach to learning, teaching and assessment, and supports active and accessible learning in a variety of research-informed and enriched environments, delivering an academic portfolio that equips its graduates for work and further study. The Learning and Teaching Committee monitors the overall development and implementation of the LTA strategy and reports to the AEC. The University has appropriate policies and processes in place to allow the Expectation to be met.

2.22   The review team explored strategy, policy and procedure documents, committee papers and online information. Details were discussed in meetings with academic and professional services staff, partner organisation representatives, employers and students.

2.23   The review team noted that the University has an inclusive approach to learning and teaching, in line with the Quality Code, ensuring all students are offered equal and effective learning opportunities. This approach was seen to be embedded in the programme design, validation, annual monitoring and periodic review processes, and in the Annual Report on the Academic Health of the Institution and associated Enhancement Plan.

2.24   The University provides a wide range of learning opportunities, including work-based learning and placements. As discussed in the Theme on student employability, students are made aware of what is available to them, including co-curricular and extracurricular activities, through programme handbooks on the VLE.

2.25   Students receive written feedback for both formative and summative assessments, with tutorials available to provide further guidance. Student reflection is captured in various ways, including ePDPs for academic and professional development.

2.26   The University's Professional Development Education framework incorporates a flexible and distributed approach to learning, teaching and assessment with the use of various technologies to support learning and teaching. Individualised learning plans are discussed and agreed with tutors so that students can select appropriate modules for their needs.

2.27   The University encourages and supports all staff in undertaking continuing professional development (CPD), with discussion during annual staff performance reviews extending to doctoral studies (as noted in Expectation B11). New and established staff confirmed how much they value professional development events and programmes. All new staff are inducted with an allocated mentor, and their performance is regularly reviewed throughout their probationary period. The University encourages the enhancement of learning and teaching practices through staff development events, including the annual Learning and Teaching Conference and Regulations Road Shows. There are approximately 70 such events per year, with the Centre for Enhancement in Learning and Teaching (CELT) running fortnightly sessions as well as one-off events, linked to regular support for Higher Education Academy (HEA) accreditation.

2.28   The University assures itself of the appropriateness of the qualifications of staff involved in teaching or facilitating learning through its Professional Accreditation of Teaching (PAT) framework, which it is reviewing to ensure continued alignment with the UK Professional Standards Framework. The University is also developing a Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education (PGCHE). The review team **affirms** the steps being taken to develop a PGCHE, which will form part of an enhanced Professional Accreditation of Teaching Framework. Currently, 42 per cent of academic staff are HEA Fellows and 67 per cent have a teaching qualification. The University aims to recruit academic staff qualified to doctoral level, although relevant experience is also recognised, particularly in professional areas.

2.29   The University has made significant recent investments in learning resources, including extending and refurbishing the library building and upgrading the library systems. In 2014, Library Services participated in an Enhanced Periodic Review. The panel expressed full confidence in Library Service provision with commendations in a number of areas. Additional learning spaces were created in 2015 to support diversification of the academic portfolio and to accommodate projected increases in student numbers. Investment in Information Technology (IT) has established wireless access across the campus, including halls of residence, 24-hour IT access in an extension to the Library, and an IT helpdesk. The University reviewed the use of its VLE in 2011-12 to ensure parity of student experience across subject combinations.

2.30   The review team noted partnership working between staff and students through the use of the deliberative committee structure as well as forums and projects, with effective student feedback systems to develop and enhance the learning environment. As detailed in Expectation B5, in addition to participation in the National Student Survey (NSS) and Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES), the University runs online module evaluations after each semester and the annual BGU Student Satisfaction Survey (BGUSSS). Summaries of module feedback and staff responses are available to students on the VLE and are discussed by staff and students at Departmental and School Committees. Institutional responses to the NSS and BGUSSS are produced with specific issues addressed through the LTC and working groups.

2.31   In general, students appear to be satisfied with the University's learning resources. In the 2015 NSS and 2014-15 BGUSSS, some students refer to difficulties with accessing eBooks, and with the number of physical copies of texts available. The team recognised, however, the very high BGUSSS (2014-15) score of 97 per cent satisfaction with Library Services. Furthermore, students commented on the usefulness of the VLE for both lecturers and students, with BGUSSS satisfaction scores averaging 90 per cent.

2.32   The University's identification of students' responsibilities for engaging with learning opportunities is set out in a Student Charter, which outlines expectations for both parties. A revised Charter was launched to staff at a Learning and Teaching Conference in 2015, and communicated to students through presentations at Student Council and as part of the Course Representative training. Students are able to contribute to their independent learning processes through the negotiation of activities, including research topics and placement opportunities. Students are aware of the Charter and its purpose.

2.33   Students play a key role in the University's Student Engagement Group (SEG), a subgroup of the LTC, which is led by the Student Engagement Facilitator supported by the Student Union. The SEG has an equal student and staff representation and allows students to constructively raise issues as well as play a role in the development of new engagement and enhancement initiatives. A new Student-University initiative involves the introduction of Teaching, Assessment, Resources, Careers and Organisation (TARCO) Forms, to collect

students' views so that any issues can be resolved while a module is in the process of being studied.

2.34 The University actively supports students as co-creators of learning, an early example being a digital literacies project, which in 2014 led to a new module co-created by students. The Student Engagement Facilitator developed the Students Creating Change project, launched in September 2015. Academic staff are required to report on their engagement with this project as part of annual monitoring. The strategic embedding of this project across schools and professional services has led to good practice referred to in Expectation B5. In Expectation B4 further good practice is detailed for the institution-wide academic and pastoral support of students.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.36   The LTA Strategy (2015-19) supports the commitment of the University to promote independent student development and achievement and meet the diverse needs of the student body. Policies and procedures are in place to facilitate student transfer between programmes, suspension of studies and consideration of requests for extenuating circumstances. These policies and procedures are systematically reviewed and updated. Datasets on retention, progression and graduation are considered at School and University level through the committee structure and form an integral part of the AMR process. The LTC has the responsibility for developing, implementing and monitoring the LTA Strategy. The LTC reports to AEC and liaises regularly with Schools, QASD, e-Learning, Learning Development, CELT and BG Futures.

2.37   The University supports students through its various professional support and advice services, including Accommodation, Library and IT Services, e-learning, QASD, Student Advice, Financial Support, Learning Development, Accessibility Support, Counselling, BG Futures and Careers, Employability and Enterprise. All of these policies, systems and procedures would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.38   The review team examined relevant documentation, including policies and procedures and committee minutes, and viewed online resources supporting student development and achievement. Details were discussed in meetings with academic and professional services staff, partner organisation representatives, employers and students.

2.39   The LTA Strategy lists aspirational Graduate Attributes, including the realisation by students of their full potential through meaningful engagement with the learning process, and taking responsibility for their learning. As discussed within Expectation B3, a key requirement involves flexible modes of delivery for programmes tailored to the needs of different learner groups while making efficient use of facilities.

2.40   The University's website has clear and comprehensive sections on induction, enrolment, and student support services. Upon arrival, students are provided with an Enrolment and Induction Booklet, which includes information on the Schools Office, Student Advice and Learning Development, BG Futures, Careers, Employability and Enterprise, the Chaplaincy, Library, and the Sport and Fitness Centre. Introduction to these services is an integral part of the two-day induction process, which includes a campus tour and introductions to the University's VLE, the Library and Student Advice and Learning Development (SALD). Students also meet their personal tutors, who provide academic, pastoral and professional oversight during their programmes of study.

2.41   Students complimented the well-organised transition to undergraduate or postgraduate study provided by the University, which was well supported by tutors. The team further recognised the high 2013-14 retention statistics of 96 per cent for undergraduate and 94 per cent for postgraduate taught students, with 92 per cent of undergraduate students progressing to the next level of study or graduation. The Diversity and Equality Committee (DEC) monitors and reviews data related to the equality of opportunities and protected characteristics, with an annual report to Senate.

2.42   The University informs students from induction onwards about the opportunities available to them, including study skills, transferable and subject-specific skills development, digital literacy, placements, cocurricular and extracurricular awards and activities, and clubs and societies. These activities support students' acquisition of the necessary tools for their academic, personal and professional development and aid retention. The BGUSSS annual survey provides the University with data on the effectiveness of its induction processes, including student awareness of its support services. Examples were noted of actions taken in response to student feedback.

2.43   The University provides resources and develops learning opportunities associated with student employability. The full range of procedures and activities is detailed in the Theme, with the team noting extensive initiatives and resources including the BGU Employability and Volunteering Awards, the Networking Club, the use of PDPs in tutorials, the Professional Contexts second-year module offering work placements, and the work of the BG Futures team in helping students to build their job interview and application skills. This support also extends to academic staff to strengthen the University's identification of students' employability needs. The extensive, systematic and sustained provision of student employability opportunities, accompanied by detailed University-wide support, is **good practice**.

2.44   The SALD teams are based in the Library and provide services for all students; in the case of Student Advice, extending to prospective students. Learning Development works with academic departments to develop students' academic competencies, contributing to the skills elements embedded within modules. Student Advice provides general guidance on welfare and financial issues, including access to the BGU Learning Fund and the BGU Bursary, support for students who have been in care, and support for students with disabilities - including specific learning differences and other access needs. The review team learned of the support available to admissions staff in relation to disability awareness and decision-making, with Heads of Schools agreeing competency standards for programmes of study.

2.45   A counselling service is available to students through a local independent private practice. Student access to services is monitored monthly for each School to identify trends and plan interventions such as access needs. Detection of mental health issues involves networking with academic staff, who may be the first to notice problems. Students spoke highly of the support available to them, including student advice specialists, learning development and disability support. Personal tutors were also highly valued.

2.46   The Head of SALD, a member of QAC and AEC, scrutinises programme proposals. The programme approval form includes areas that all professional support services have to sign off in terms of resource implications. The monitoring of learning opportunities within the University and its collaborative partners is undertaken through the AMR process. Academic Departments liaise with the University's professional support services as part of the review process to identify and initiate improvements and enhancements to student support.

2.47   The integrated, institution-wide academic and pastoral support for students that supports the development of their academic, personal and professional potential is **good practice**.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B5: Student Engagement*

Findings

2.49   The student body is represented on the University's Council, Senate, QAC, LTC, AEC, and the Employability and Enterprise Oversight Group as well as at validation events and School and Professional Services Enhanced Periodic Review Boards.

2.50   The University, in partnership with the Students' Union, launched a refreshed Student Charter to staff in June 2015 with communication to student representatives in October 2015. The University maintains a student representative system, the effectiveness of which is reviewed annually with the results presented to the Student Engagement Group, a subgroup of the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC).

2.51   The strategic oversight of student engagement at an institutional level demonstrated by the work of these systems and procedures would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.52   The review team explored committee minutes and terms of reference, and documentation relating to strategy and student engagement initiatives. Details were discussed in meetings with senior, academic and professional services staff, students, and student representatives.

2.53   The team noted that the Students' Union refers positively to the relationship between the University and the Students' Union. Students reported a high level of satisfaction with the nature and extent to which the University engages with them. At management levels this includes monthly Deputy Vice Chancellor and Students' Union meetings, and members of the University's management team attend the Students' Union Council. The review team recognised that this reciprocal manner of communication effectively fosters a positive culture of mutual respect between staff and students. Awareness of the Student Charter, launched as a University/Students' Union partnership in October 2015, has been promoted through clear displays throughout the University with its implications being articulated successfully by students.

2.54   The University has refreshed the student representation structure along with the new School framework which came into effect at the start of the 2015-16 academic year. The TARCO model has been adopted to facilitate meaningful conversations between staff and students at School levels, with staff, student representatives and students describing this as a helpful tool.

2.55   The University administers the BGUSSS, with the University producing an institutional analysis to responses received from students at all levels of study. Students and staff clearly understand the role BGUSSS has in paying due consideration to the student voice.

2.56   As noted in Expectation B3, the team explored the development of the Students Creating Change scheme, and found that a wide range of staff and students had a comprehensive and detailed understanding of the initiative and its importance to both academic and professional services departments. The team learned that it has evolved from a series of previous student engagement exercises dating back to 2009, and that currently all AMRs must include a Students Creating Change initiative to be signed off by the LTC. The strategic embedding of the Students Creating Change scheme across schools and

professional services, which engages students and enhances their learning opportunities, is **good practice**.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.58   The University's arrangements for assessment are set out in the Code of Practice for Assessment of Students which is explicitly informed by Chapter B6 of the Quality Code and cross-referenced to other University Codes of Practice including the Conduct of Boards and Examiners and for Work-Based Learning. These arrangements are in the context of the University LTA Strategy and Award and Credit Framework. They are complemented by the University's suite of taught award regulations which set out modules and programme requirements, accumulation and transfer of credits, assessment and reassessment, extensions, pass marks, progression, classification and merit or distinction. QASD provides operational support for these processes, with AEC oversight. Module Boards of Examiners confirm module grades and the possible retrieval of failure, while Programme Boards of Examiners confirm programme grades, progression, award and classification.

2.59   The Code of Practice for the Assessment of Students requires schemes of assessment, approved at validation, to cover all modules and levels. A range of assessment methods are published in programme handbooks with cross-referral to relevant award regulations. Bunching of assessments must be avoided and a detailed assignment brief for each assessment, audited annually by the Academic Coordinator, must specify which learning outcomes are to be assessed. The Code of Practice for the Assessment of Students is supplemented by associated guidance and procedures. This includes Guidance for the Marking and Moderation of Student Work which sets out University-level grade descriptors supplemented by arrangements for cross-moderation in association with collaborative partners. Other examples include the Procedure Governing the Administration and Conduct of Examinations Codes of Practice on Academic Appeals and Academic Misconduct and Extenuating Circumstances.

2.60   The University's RPL arrangements are set out in the Code of Practice for the Accreditation of Prior Learning. An Accreditation of Prior Learning panel of senior University staff evaluates, reviews and determines individual applications made in a set format.

2.61   The design of the University's assessment procedures and systems would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.62   In its review of the evidence, the review team scrutinised the University's taught award regulations and its range of Codes of Practice and detailed supplementary guidance relating to assessment. Documentation included on-campus and partner organisation provision, programme and module specifications with assignment briefs, mark sheets as presented at Boards of Examiners, Board of Examiner agendas, minutes and associated notifications to students, applications for Accreditation of Prior Learning, and staff and student development material relating to assessment. Assessment details were also discussed with senior, academic and professional services staff, partner organisation representatives and students, on-campus students, and employers.

2.63   The team found that the University duly and consistently applies its regulatory and procedural framework in regard to assessment, paying particular attention to consistency of

marking and moderation across the University and with collaborative partners. Staff stated that they are appropriately trained in the University's assessment procedures and well informed about University initiatives. One example involves the introduction of anti-plagiarism software and the University's continuing roll-out of e-submission and eventually full e-assessment.

2.64   The identity of individual students is known at the Boards of Examiners but the University protects the fairness and consistency of the assessment process through the maintenance of confidentiality in the Code of Practice for the Conduct of Boards of Examiners. This includes reminding participants of the confidential nature of the process as a key item on the standard agenda, and requiring declarations of interest as another key item.

2.65   Students reported general compliance by staff on such matters as useful and timely assessment feedback. They are aware of how to access assessment information - usually through the VLE - and consider themselves to be well prepared for the demands of assessment, with a clear understanding of assessment criteria for their own academic progress and development.

2.66   The Code of Practice for the Conduct of Boards of Examiners succeeds in explaining the University's two-tier system for the operation of Module and Programme Boards of Examiners. The team noted that it offers model agendas, minimum and recommended levels of participation, chairing and recording arrangements, and input from a separate Extenuating Circumstances Panel. Boards of Examiners operate in compliance with the University's requirements although the team noted some variability in the clarity of recording assessment decisions. Minutes captured necessary information in all instances but, in some cases, with a brevity which required a deeper understanding of the background data and processes that had been factored into particular decisions. In other cases, the lack of clarity arose because of University nomenclature. One example is the use of 'the average mark for a student who falls within 3% of the upper limit of any band' as a factor in the classification calculation. In discussion with senior staff and staff with responsibilities for quality assurance, the review team was advised that the use of that factor was effectively automatic for all eligible students, even though it was technically still for ratification by the Board of Examiners, and on that basis there was no University-level retrospective oversight of the application of its use. Boards of Examiners' minutes were also provided by the University in evidence of this use. However, at the factual corrections stage the University maintained that this use was automatic only in the sense that all eligible candidates were put forward. The particular Board of Examiners still determined whether to apply the factor to the benefit of individual candidates, but without any University-level, retrospective oversight of those determinations.

2.67   The team sought evidence from the University for the oversight of assessment decisions in relation to RPL. The University responded that it had recognised that the Accreditation of Prior Learning Panel did not report through the academic deliberative committee structure and had already amended committee terms of reference so that, from the end of the academic session 2015-16, the Accreditation of Prior Learning Panel would report to QAC for onward notification to AEC. The review team **affirms** the introduction of an annual report on the recognition of prior learning process and decisions to strengthen oversight of student achievement and progression. Similarly, the review team sought evidence of actual comment by external examiners on the RPL process and the Accreditation of Prior Learning Panel assessment decisions. However, although external examiners had had the opportunity in theory to sample such assessment material, in practice none had done so. The annual report will offer the opportunity to factor in external examiner comment on this aspect of assessment.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B7: External Examining*

Findings

2.69   The University's Code of Practice for External Examining indicates the roles, powers and responsibilities of the University's external examiners and the process for the appointment of new external examiners following national criteria. The CEE is appointed for programmes and subject areas that encompass multiple subject awards. Each School identifies potential external examiners and a subcommittee of AEC approves nominations. The University issues all its external examiners with a handbook describing their role and responsibilities and invites all newly appointed examiners to visit the University's campus to undergo an induction. The AEC oversees the University's external examiner policy and procedures, and ensures Schools and the University respond where appropriate to external examiner feedback. These systems and procedures would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.70   The review team examined relevant regulations and guidance, external examiner reports, and their discussion and subsequent actions at School and University level. Details were discussed in meetings with academic and professional services staff, representatives from partner organisations, and students.

2.71   The team notes that the University assures itself of its responsibilities relating to external examining in its Code of Practice for External Examining. The Code sets out the expectation for external examiners making informative comment and recommendations on academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. The University's Code of Practice for the Conduct of Boards of Examiners specifies the role of the External Examiner in Module and Programme Examination Boards.

2.72   The Head of School is responsible for ensuring that all modules and programmes delivered by the University or a collaborative partner have a suitably qualified external examiner. There are clear criteria and guidance on who can be appointed with appointments managed by QASD, and oversight by the AEC's EEOG. The review team found that there were clear procedures for the appointment of examiners, ensuring that conflicts of interest are avoided. The CEEs provide assurance for joint programmes delivered across the Schools of Social Sciences and Humanities, and for the suite of Applied Studies programmes taught by the University and collaborative partners. The CEEs liaise with each other to ensure the equitability of provision across the University. The University has also appointed a CEE for the School of Teacher Development.

2.73   All new external examiners visit the University prior to their period of tenure to meet the relevant academic team and to receive induction from QASD, including the requirement to approve assignments and examination questions, and their right to raise concerns with the Head of the University. External examiners are provided with the relevant Codes of Practice and regulations, and with the External Examiners' Handbook, which provides a detailed description of the role, responsibilities and examining process.

2.74   The External Examiners' Report template includes sections on the appropriateness of the structure and content of the programme to the level of the qualification, the subject area (including professional standards), the learning outcomes and the appropriateness of the methods of assessment, marking and classification, good practice and areas for development. External examiners are also asked to provide verbal comments on the outcomes, which are recorded in Examination Board minutes. The team noted that external examiner reports were appropriately completed and confirmed the role of the University in

enabling them to discharge their responsibilities. The template for external examiners requires them to record 'Partner Institutions (where applicable)', although there is no specific instruction to comment on specific provision in partner organisations.

2.75   As noted in Expectation A3.4, the University has a rigorous process for the management of external examiners' reports. They are considered by academic teams and disseminated at University level. Academic Coordinators are required to complete a response to external examiner reports. In addition, external examiner recommendations are included within the enhancement plans contained in each AMR. The AQM in QASD compiles a summary of all reports for discussion at the AEC. Areas for improvement and features of good practice are incorporated into the University's Annual Report on the Academic Health of the Institution and the related Enhancement Plan. All reports are seen by the Vice Chancellor, and if there is a matter of serious concern the Vice Chancellor will take the required action. The reports and responses are made available to students on the VLE. Students are aware of their external examiners and confirmed the accessibility of associated reports as well as discussions with student representatives through the committee structure.

2.76   For provision involving partner organisations, the University has robust processes of cross-moderation involving Link Tutors. The University runs cross-moderation events twice a year for all Applied Studies programmes to ensure standards and marking practices are comparable. For each pathway, there is a programme-related external examiner whose remit includes the University and partner organisations delivering the pathway. The CEE looks at the work from core modules across all partners.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.78   The University's monitoring process is set out in the Code of Practice for the Annual Monitoring of Academic Programmes and includes provision in collaborative partners. The Code of Practice overtly references Chapter B8 of the Quality Code but additionally states that it is 'not merely retrospective but has as its central purpose the enhancement of standards and quality'. Consequently, the report must cover academic and professional standards, and the quality of learning opportunities. Proforma are designed to ensure that the process achieves that purpose and guidance notes on completion are available.

2.79   The University has a Code of Practice for the Periodic Review of Academic Provision setting programme validity at no more than five years with the Head of School working with the Academic Coordinator, leading the review process. The required documentation comprises self-evaluation; a programme document including rationale, specification and module descriptors; supporting evidence; and a Head of School overview. Information is considered by a Panel appointed by QASD, which must include an external academic expert and student representation, and may include employer input. The University also liaises with individual PSRBs on their preferred involvement in this process.

2.80   A review event then involves a broad range of relevant staff and students. A final report is received by QAC and the outcome is reported to and approved by AEC and Senate. The University also reviews its professional services units under a complementary process known as Enhanced Periodic Review. QASD provides operational support for these systems and procedures with QAC oversight. The design of these processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.81   In its review of the evidence, the review team scrutinised the relevant Codes of Practice, annual monitoring reports, sign-off by student representatives and referrals by Heads of School, School overview reports, Annual Reports on the Academic Health of the Institution, and related academic deliberative committee minutes. Details were discussed with senior, academic and professional support staff as well as collaborative partner representatives and employers and students.

2.82   The team noted that the monitoring and review process includes the production of an action plan for ongoing monitoring by the School Board. It includes issues arising from external examiner reports, School or University enhancement agendas, and the identification of good practice for wider dissemination. A menu of qualitative inputs is cited including external examiner reports, PSRB reports and staff and student feedback. The menu also incorporates student module evaluations and feedback from placement partners, former students and employers. The quantitative inputs are provided through the Statistics Handbook, a compendium of centrally provided statistical data. This includes trend analysis of admissions, retention and progression, awards and employment destinations.

2.83   The report is checked for accuracy and completeness by the Head of School, and a student representative from the Students' Union has to sign off the report before consideration by the School Board. The School reports form part of the evidence base for the Annual Report on the Academic Health of the Institution, which is considered by AEC

and Senate, factoring in other evidence including professional services responses to annual monitoring issues. The team further noted that reporting processes are linked to University-evidenced staff development for improving the reflective quality of annual monitoring reports.

2.84   The review team considered this annual monitoring process to be comprehensive and appropriately analytical, including provision within partner organisations, with due focus on evaluating programme effectiveness and student achievement and taking forward enhancement. The University uses aggregated programme data and analysis well, and ensures the required consideration of matters reported and issues raised at each subsequent level. The gatekeeper roles of the Head of School and student representative of the Students' Union were each seen to be in operation. The process evidences sound integration between academic and professional services units. The action planning maximises the added value of the process by overtly linking to School and University enhancement initiatives. The comprehensive and integrated annual monitoring process, which engages students and enhances their learning opportunities, is **good practice**.

2.85   There were no recent examples of the University periodic review process for the team to consider as the University had revalidated its provision in a major Portfolio Review in 2012-13, described by the University as 'a mass-migration event', with subsequent revalidation of the programme portfolio of the School of Teacher Development. A further recent organisational restructure prompted a subsequent review exercise with implementation by the Portfolio Review Group and oversight by AEC. This has been exhaustively and persuasively evidenced in a supplementary narrative submitted as part of this review. In the context of the high volume of validation and revalidation activity, the University commissioned an independent evaluation of its processes by Internal Audit which found the system of internal control and governance of the process to be 'effective'.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B9): Higher education providers have procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of learning opportunities; these procedures are fair, accessible and timely, and enable enhancement.

Quality Code, *Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints*

Findings

2.87   The University maintains a Code of Practice for Academic Appeals and a Student Complaints Procedure, both of which are monitored by Senate. The timescale and scope of appeals are outlined along with the right of appellants to escalate their appeal to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) if they are dissatisfied with the outcome. The University articulates an expectation that partner institutions should have complaints procedures that are aligned with those of the University. The University supplies information for students about complaints and appeals in the Student Handbook which is hosted on the VLE, and students are introduced to the processes as part of their induction to the institution. Policies relating to complaints and appeals are also accessible on the University's website. The deliberate steps taken by the University in its approach to appeals and complaints would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.88   The review team examined the relevant Code of Practice and related policies, and explored details through discussions with undergraduate and postgraduate students and student representatives, and with academic and professional services staff.

2.89   The process outlined in the Students Complaints Procedure has been developed in consultation with the Students' Union. The Procedure clearly articulates the processes for both formal and informal complaints and informs complainants of their right to process their appeal to the OIA. Students report no issue with relation to the timeliness of the handling of complaints.

2.90   The team notes that the University followed guidance from the OIA and the CMA for the involvement of student representatives in the development of policies relating to students.

2.91   The University's Student Advice Team, the Students' Union and QASD provide opportunities for students to discuss their complaints and appeals.

2.92   A guide for handling student complaints is made available to staff, along with templates of documents such as letters to be used in the instance of a complaint. Staff are also trained in conciliation skills so that they may facilitate the early resolution of informal complaints. Academic staff confirm that specific training is provided for Academic Coordinators relating to complaints and appeals, and that QASD operates a robust system of attendance and monitoring, with supplementary sessions provided to colleagues not able to attend previous sessions.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.94　　The University states that the quality assurance of all programmes delivered by partner organisations remains the responsibility of the University to ensure equivalence of learning opportunities. There are formal agreements with five further education colleges and one School-Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) organisation for the delivery of foundation degrees in the Arts, BAs and Diploma in Education and Training Programmes. The University has a variety of other partnership agreements, including teacher education and work-based learning. The University does not offer programmes of study leading to a joint award with other higher education providers. There are a range of policies and practices designed to provide an appropriate framework for the management of higher education with others, including AMR and Periodic Review, Codes of Practice for Collaborative Provision and Work-Based Learning, Memoranda of Cooperation (MoCs), the operation of the JBoS, a Register of Collaborative Provision, and oversight via AEC.

2.95　　These arrangements for working with other organisations would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.96　　The review team examined relevant policies, strategies, procedures, external examiner reports, and the minutes of committees and assessment boards with responsibility for partner organisations including practice-based learning and work placements. Details were explored through discussions with senior, academic and support staff, staff and students from partner organisations, and providers of placement-based learning.

2.97　　The recently developed Handbook for Collaborative Provision is an amalgamation of policies and procedures governing the delivery of learning opportunities with others and provides a useful source of information for partners. The Code of Practice for Collaborative Provision formally defines the process for establishing a partnership and the roles, rights, obligations and responsibilities of each party. There is consistent use of a legally binding MoC that includes safeguards against financial impropriety and conflicts of interest, clarifying processes for risk management and termination of the relationship, and the requirement for periodic re-approval.

2.98　　The business case for a proposal is considered independently from the academic case. This process includes scrutiny of detailed documentation covering all aspects of the partner organisation, including a financial statement and an assessment of learning resources required to deliver programmes. In a further stage of the approval process, a University panel comprising senior staff visits the partner organisation to meet relevant individuals and check the suitability of learning resources.

2.99　　The University has made a range of changes following the 2009 QAA Institutional Review's advisable recommendation to review the operation of the quality management processes for provision involving partner organisations. The JBoS, overseen by the AEC, monitors partner organisation provision and this provides a forum for colleges to meet with University representatives. Senate also confirms key stages in a collaboration such as due diligence, risk management and the outcome of periodic reviews. The SLT regularly engages in bi-lateral meetings with senior staff at partner institutions in recognition of the

potentially sensitive nature of discussing commercial and strategic plans in open forum at the JBoS. The team also recognised the University's current strategic intention to review and extend its partnerships with proposals for organisational development including plans to establish a University Collaboration and Partnership Centre (CPC), within the remit of the Executive Dean Research and Knowledge Exchange.

2.100   The validation process for individual programmes is undertaken after the partnership arrangement is approved. This process follows the normal University Code of Practice for Validation. Participation by students from partner organisations in quality assurance processes is encouraged.

2.101   The MoC states that admissions to programmes are to be undertaken by the College in consultation with the University and in accordance with the specific entrance requirements stipulated in the programme documents approved at validation. As noted in Expectation B2, while the team found no evidence of impropriety, commentary from staff indicates that the University could assure itself more formally of the appropriate application of criteria during the admissions process.

2.102   The day-to-day oversight of learning, teaching and assessment opportunities involving partner organisations includes the Academic Coordinator for Flexible and Distributed Learning (AcFDL), the Liaison Tutor in the School of Teacher Development, the Link Tutors at the University and the programme leaders at the partner institutions. The Collaborative Handbook sets out the respective roles and responsibilities at different stages in the life of a collaboration. Programmes are subject to the normal AMR and Periodic Review processes of the University with partner organisations operating their own programme committees attended by the AcFDL, liaison or link tutor as appropriate.

2.103   Evidence of extensive cross-moderation of student assessment ensures comparability of standards across the University and partner organisations. In the case of termination of a partnership, the University will ensure that students already admitted to a programme are able to complete their award. Students have access to the complaints procedures of the partner institution with the exception of those on the franchised programme who, as enrolled students of the University, are entitled to use the University's complaints procedure.

2.104   External examining procedures and arrangements are discussed in more detail in Expectation B7, with evidence of effective cross-moderation procedures and the use of the CEE. External examiners comment positively on their involvement in examining provision in partner organisations. The team noted that there is no specific question within the report template on the comparability of standards across relevant partner organisations and, where appropriate, with the University's on-campus programmes in the external examiner template.

2.105   Students studying in partner organisations are aware of policies and procedures, particularly in relation to assessment. They know how to access relevant information on programme and University websites, complementing teaching and support and agreeing that they broadly receive an equivalent experience to students studying at the University.

2.106   The team recognised some historical student dissatisfaction with work-based learning arrangements, with the University reviewing its approach to relevant administration and organisation. The team noted improved institutional oversight, incorporating new posts to provide a greater resource and an overview of all placements to enhance the consistency of provision and documentation. A further restructure of support for placements is currently underway to provide a centralised arrangement in the Partnership Office.

2.107   Students are generally positive about opportunities and support for work-based placements. They confirm strong tutor and mentor support and the use of consistent

procedures and proforma. Placements are offered across many non-professional programmes. A recent Ofsted report generally endorses the beneficial learning opportunities provided on teaching placements.

2.108   A Code of Practice for Work-Based Learning and the Placement Operational Handbook detail the management and quality assurance of placements, including responsibilities of the various parties for assessment, student support and links to the FHEQ. Course teams produce comprehensive handbooks for placement preparation, professional conduct in the workplace, health and safety, and sources of support and guidance. Workplace agreements are signed by students, tutors and mentors and confirm placement arrangements and individual responsibilities.

2.109   The team noted documentation and positive commentary from University and partner organisation representatives for the provision of appropriate information, mentoring and training. As discussed in Expectation C, information published by partner organisations undergoes regular checks by University staff for accuracy and compliance with University guidelines for presentation.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

2.111   The University's PhD and EdD research degrees are validated by the University of Leicester (the awarding body), using a formal Partnership Agreement. The University's Regulations Governing Doctoral Research Degrees (2015) are drawn from and approved by the awarding body.

2.112   In 2014 the University's Code of Practice for Doctoral Degrees was assimilated into the current Regulations, with a separate Code of Conduct for Doctoral Researchers. The core documentation is updated or amended as necessary to reflect any changes to awarding body regulations, to respond to external policy developments as well as the dissemination of good practice. The University's Research Ethics Policy provides a framework for staff and student research and raises issues that should be fully considered by researchers and their supervisors before undertaking any activity.

2.113   The Research Student Group (RSG) reports to AEC through the Research Committee and monitors the progress of each research student, including transfer to their thesis stage (for the EdD) or from their probationary period (for the PhD). RSG also oversees the referral of candidates to the awarding body and further considers supervision capacity, capability and expertise. The Doctoral Programmes Group (DPG) has a similar membership with the addition of student representation. The DPG reports to the Research Committee and has a broader remit, monitoring operational and strategic aspects of doctoral programmes, ensuring that students are provided with a high-quality research experience.

2.114   These strategies, policies, procedures and structures would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.115   The review team examined relevant documentation, including regulations and the Code of Conduct, the research student handbook, committee minutes and online resources. Details were discussed in meetings with academic and professional services staff, a representative from the awarding body, and research students (none of whom were also members of University staff).

2.116   The University has a small research community of staff and doctoral students. In 2015-16, 18 students were registered for PhD or EdD degrees - all part-time - including some members of staff. The team noted that the University aims to invest in and grow its research capacity and capability in line with the University's Strategy (2014-19). Research is undertaken in five research clusters across all Schools, and is centrally coordinated by the Research and Innovation Centre, overseen by the Executive Dean Research and Knowledge Exchange. Research support funding to stimulate and maintain research activity, including sabbatical leave, is made available to all eligible staff by application.

2.117   The team noted that the Regulations for Doctoral Research Degree Programmes and the Code of Conduct for Doctoral Research specify detailed and comprehensive responsibilities and procedures associated with managing the research environment. Students confirmed the usefulness of the information provided, including its availability and

progression rules. They also demonstrated clear understanding of the University's Regulations Governing Doctoral Research Degrees.

2.118   Annual student evaluations and progress reports form part of the quality assurance processes, measuring the University's compliance with academic standards for research degrees and the quality of learning resources and opportunities. Programme leaders use PRES and other external sources, including membership of external networks such as the UKCGE, for benchmarking and enhancement of learning opportunities. An Annual Monitoring Report for Research Degrees is submitted to AEC.

2.119   The University has a clear process for the admission of students to research degrees with the Student Recruitment and Admissions Office making formal and centrally recorded offers of admission to the degrees of PhD or EdD. The awarding body receives all paperwork and approves student registration and supervisory teams. The Head of Research (previously referred to as the Head of Doctoral Studies) is responsible for ensuring that staff receive training in the selection and admission of research degree applicants. Students complimented the clarity of the application, interview and induction process. Induction is typically at a weekend with the review team noting flexibility where possible to fit in with students' diaries.

2.120   Training and CPD for new and existing supervisors starts with an initial two-day event followed by regular meetings between colleagues. Each research student is allocated a trained supervisor selected against a defined set of criteria. The University maintains a record of all supervisors and their students and membership of supervisory teams is carefully regulated so that there is no conflict of interest relating to the proposed research. The team were reassured that supervision of staff registered for research degrees is by independent University staff and not by line managers.

2.121   Students and staff confirm that regular meetings with their first and second supervisors take place at monthly or two-monthly intervals. All agree that their supervisors support them and that supervision is effective. Several students experienced a change in their supervisory team, which they describe as well managed. The students are aware of the Student Charter and of their own and their supervisors' responsibilities. They have access to bookable study space and all have sufficient resources to conduct their research.

2.122   All students maintain PDPs using proforma from the Doctoral Research Student Handbook. Students complimented the University's study skills audit, the induction process, the weekend skills activities, the master class series and the research seminar series. Furthermore, the Vitae and Research Development Framework were considered to be effective training resources, as were programmes and events organised by the awarding body, or Epigeum, based on the University's CREST membership. Training requirements are monitored, discussed and reviewed at supervision sessions, the DPG and the Research Committee.

2.123   The team noted that research degree assessment is fair and consistent, operating within the guidelines of the Code of Conduct and relevant regulations. Information on the examination process is provided to students as part of the registration process and at induction. Students confirmed that they understood the assessment process.

2.124   Administration of external examiners for research degrees is managed by the Research Innovation Centre and overseen by the Research Committee, which reports to the awarding body for approval. Where external examiners raise a matter of concern or highlight good practice, these are reported to AEC through the Research Committee.

2.125   As discussed in Expectation B4, research students are aware of the availability of pastoral support, independent of the supervisory team, including the personal tutor and the

student support services available at the University. They note that the University listens to what they say and takes action where possible, and that there is an effective representation system for research students.

2.126   The complaints and appeals processes are defined and fully described in the University's Regulations and Codes of Practice. Formal complaints and appeals are dealt with independently and beyond the immediate supervisory team. Every effort is made to resolve issues at an early stage to reach a fair and satisfactory resolution. Students are aware of regulations and the relevant Code of Practice.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

2.129   All of the 11 Expectations in this area have been met, with a judgement of low risk being reached in each case.

2.130   There were four instances of good practice in this area. For Expectation B4, academic and pastoral support is integrated throughout the University and linked to the development of students' academic, personal and professional potential. Student employability opportunities are extensive and systematic, accompanied by detailed University-wide support. With Expectation B5, student engagement in quality assurance is strategically embedded through an institution-wide scheme entitled Students Creating Change. In Expectation B8 there is reference to the comprehensive and integrated annual monitoring processes that engage students and develop enhancement.

2.131   There were also two affirmations. Expectation B3 refers to the development of an enhanced Professional Accreditation of Teaching Framework, and Expectation B6 notes the University's introduction of procedures that strengthen reporting and oversight of the recognition of prior learning process and decisions.

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

3   Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1   In October 2015 the University introduced a Website and Prospectus Information Process and a Website and Prospectus Information Checking Log, outlining standard procedures to be followed for assuring and maintaining the accuracy of information published. The University maintains oversight of information using the Communications Oversight Group (COG), a committee developed in the 2015-16 academic year to bring together the work of the former Internal Communications Oversight Group and the External Communications Oversight Group. At the end of each year of study students are issued with an academic transcript. Upon concluding their studies, students are provided with an electronic RPD and DCP to enable them to provide evidence of their achievements. The design of these systems and procedures would allow the Expectation to be met.

3.2   In its review of the evidence the review team examined the University's website and VLE alongside relevant policies and procedures, and minutes of committees with responsibility for communications oversight. Details concerning procedures, systems and accessibility were discussed through meetings with academic and professional services staff, representatives from partner organisations, employers and students.

3.3   The team noted that the main source of public information about the University is its website, which contains information relating to its mission, values and strategy as well as its governance and policies. The University maintains a section of its website dedicated to its arrangements for managing academic standards, and students can access information relating to their programme and modules on the University's VLE.

3.4   The review team learned of very recent changes made to the committee with responsibility for the oversight of public information, with the first meeting of the COG scheduled to take place in February 2016. Through discussions with staff involved in the production and oversight of public information, the review team was assured that the University maintains appropriate oversight of information during this transitory period.

3.5   The review team explored the VLE for students, noting that it contained relevant, personalised portfolios of information for each student at School, programme and module levels, as well as comprehensive guides to aid understanding of University policies and procedures - for example, instructing students how to proceed if they become unwell during the course of an assignment.

3.6   The review team learned that the Schools Office periodically check all of the information on the VLE to be assured of its accuracy. Students confidently cited the VLE as the primary source of information or news from the University and find the information supplied on the VLE to be appropriate and accurate.

3.7   The University's information checking procedures were explored through discussions with staff, where the review team learned that Academic Coordinators are responsible for ensuring the accuracy and relevance of all public information about their own provision, and that staff with information responsibilities, including Heads of Schools,

Admissions and Marketing, are provided with training to enable them to effectively discharge their duties. The team also learned about a mystery shopping initiative whereby each of the University's partner organisation colleges audits each other's public information.

3.8   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

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

3.10   The Expectation for this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk is low. There are no recommendations, affirmations or features of good practice.

3.11   The University provides information for the public about its higher education provision. The information is accessible, appropriate and accurate for prospective and current students, as well as those with responsibility for maintaining standards and assuring quality.

3.12   The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the University **meets** UK expectations.

4   Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

Expectation (Enhancement): Deliberate steps are being taken at provider level to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities.

Findings

4.1   The University describes three strands for its approach to enhancement: Responsive, Developmental and Innovative. Strategic drivers for enhancement include actions arising from the Annual Report on the Academic Health of the Institution and the University, LTA, Research and Internationalisation strategies. The AEC is responsible for oversight of enhancement, as specified in its terms of reference. It commissions and evaluates institution-wide initiatives, for example through working groups which, in some instances, have become standing elements of the University academic structure. The University claims that the combination of structural and other less formal forums and networks is indicative of an approach to continuous improvement through informed discussion. These strategies, policies and procedures would allow the Expectation to be met.

4.2   In its review of the evidence, the review team considered a range of strategies as well as the detailed case studies put forward by the University in support of its description of the three enhancement approaches. Details were discussed in meetings with senior, academic and professional services staff, partner organisation representatives, employers and students.

4.3   The review team considered numerous examples of enhancement projects outlined by the University. Within the Responsive strand, the University includes the framework of existing quality assurance mechanisms put in place to support institutional strategy and policies, such as annual monitoring and action planning, validation, surveys and a range of other review and evaluation mechanisms. As described in Expectation B8, the inclusion of enhancement in the annual monitoring process has been recognised as a consistent and systematic process that constitutes good practice.

4.4   In the Developmental strand, the University includes the institutional promotion of local-level good practice. This can include something picked up in annual monitoring and disseminated across the University in staff development workshops and/or learning and teaching conferences by CELT. A prime example cited by the University is the development of digital literacies, which received national recognition from the Joint Information Systems Committee. Another illustration, discussed in Expectation B5 as good practice, involves the co-creation of curricula, especially as this is described as having influenced the establishment of the subsequent SEG and Students Creating Change project. The University has also evidenced the gathering of local good practice to inform institutional improvement, for example in marking and moderation.

4.5   In the Innovative strand, the University includes specialist internationalisation work with the HEA and experimentation with 'cutting-edge' initiatives such as the national Changing The Learning Landscape initiative and the development of a Student as Co-Producer project, where transferable and practical skills relevant to an educational research project are targeted. The development of the BA (Hons) Business (Team Entrepreneurship) programme is also highlighted by the University as a curriculum initiative designed to apply theoretical concepts to the contextualised, real-world setting of creating and sustaining a fully functioning, legally owned and operated business.

4.6   The team notes, however, that the University developed the 'Responsive, Developmental and Innovative' strand terminology for the purposes of explaining its approach to enhancement in the context of the QAA review. They do not constitute descriptors or categories that have been endorsed by the University in any formulation of an enhancement strategy. Nevertheless, the team considers the descriptors to be helpful for gaining an understanding of the University's approach to enhancement, and to have further development potential for the University's own use.

4.7   The team also considered the University's inclusion of a range of other interventions described as examples of enhancement. While contributing to improvement, they do not always appear to be formally and strategically embedded in a University-wide enhancement strategy and policy. Examples include improving the attendance of student representatives and the production of generic oversight reports on standard processes such as validation and periodic review. Similarly, the detailed description of the introduction of anti-plagiarism software, while again being beneficial, is more of a routine and expected development within the higher education sector.

4.8   Nevertheless, the wealth of possible projects put forward did, in the review team's view, reflect the University's undoubted desire to see continuous improvement within all its processes and across all its activities, including the dissemination of good practice. Overall, the University demonstrates a strategic approach to the enhancement of student opportunities and seeks to integrate and interrelate a broad range of centrally conceived and locally derived enhancement initiatives. The University has made efforts to engage students in its approach to enhancement, although during discussions with partner organisation staff, the team noted there was less awareness of the University's enhancement agenda.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

4.11   The Expectation for this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk is low. There are no recommendations, affirmations or features of good practice, although links are made between enhancement and good practice observations within Expectations B5 and B8. The University has provided numerous examples of projects and initiatives for three categories of enhancement, labelled Responsive, Developmental and Innovative. This model has been developed recently for the purposes of the review, but is not at present embedded within a formal institutional strategic framework or policy for enhancement.

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

5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1 Enhancing student employability is a key driver for the themes of External Engagement, Partnership and Community within the University's Five Year Strategy. Careers, employability and enterprise developments are shaped by a steering group and a subgroup of the LTC, the Employability Oversight Group (EOG). Both academic teams and the Careers Enterprise and Employability Team (CEET) are responsible for employability. There is an enterprise centre, BG Futures, which has a key role in promoting employability. It houses CEET, start-up businesses and 'virtual tenants'. While BG Futures and CEET are separate entities, as the brand has strengthened, the CEET team is most often now described as the BG Futures Team.

5.2 As noted in Expectation B4, there is extensive evidence demonstrating the successful establishment of student employability, culminating in the recognition of good practice. The University has achieved excellent DLHE results: for the 2012-13 cohort, 96.5 per cent of graduates had moved into employment or further study within six months after graduation, placing the University fifth nationally. In 2013-14, this increased to 98.1 per cent of graduates achieving a positive outcome. Students and alumni were universally positive about their preparation for employment. Employers also complimented the University's contribution to student employability and were involved in student recruitment, curriculum design, teaching and the development of codes of professional conduct.

5.3 There is an annual agreement between the Students' Union and BG Futures including joint working and representation by students. The partnership between staff in BG Futures and academic programmes is cemented in programme documentation, the personal tutor system and student portfolios. A representative from the team participates in the University's deliberative and executive committee structures, for example through membership of LTC and CLT. Careers and Employability is a key section within the Programme Proposal documentation for new programmes. The Head of CEET has the opportunity to sign off these proposals to ensure employability is given proper consideration throughout programme development. For all courses outside of the School of Teacher Development, students undertake a module called 'Professional Contexts' in their second year, designed to consider links between the subject discipline and the professional setting. This module normally includes a placement experience, and all students receive input from the BG Futures Team supporting the development of their application and interview skills. An innovative programme which specifically integrates employability and enterprise using a 'coaching' model of teaching has recently been launched.

5.4 Employability is also embedded through the Personal Tutor System. In the Schools of Humanities and Social Science, students work on DCPs with their personal tutors, listing formal and informal qualifications, extracurricular activities and hobbies. Within the School of Teacher Development, students engage with the eRPD.

5.5 There is a programme of cocurricular opportunities associated with employability which is available to all BGU students. The programme is internally advertised and responsive to student needs as identified during induction. It includes a BGU Employability Award, a popular Networking Club and a volunteering award. Resources for employability include the open access Careers Employability and Enterprise Centre (CEEC) and various online resources. A range of short films has been produced to support the promotion of volunteering, interview skills, networking and the BGU Employability Award.

5.6   CEET provide widely promoted services to alumni for two years after completion of their programme. There is a strategic approach to identifying and supporting students in need of assistance following graduation. A vacancy service is offered to students.

5.7   A set of Graduate Attributes has been introduced via student induction, the Matriculation Ceremony and through personal development planning systems and portfolios. University staff are undertaking research funded via the Higher Education Careers Service Unit to better understand how to approach students and engage them in employability. Training to support academics in recognising employability support needs among students is also offered.

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 30 to 33 of the Higher Education Review handbook.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.