



Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of BPP University Ltd

December 2017

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at BPP University Ltd. The review took place from 6 to 8 December 2017 and was conducted by a team of four reviewers, as follows:

- Dr Demelza Curnow
- Dr Laila Halani
- Professor Hastings McKenzie
- Stuart Cannell (student reviewer).

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

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

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

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

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

² QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk.

³ Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers): www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education.

Key findings

Judgements

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision.

- The setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice**.

- The extensive and proactive engagement with employers in the design and delivery of programmes, which ensures that programmes and graduates are fit for purpose and business ready (Expectations B1 and B3).
- The range of tailored resources and support from the Learning and Teaching Unit, which enables new and experienced staff to operate effectively and continue to develop as practitioners and academics (Expectation B3).
- The Career Ready Strategy, which is embedded through learning and teaching, enabling students to build and develop relevant skills for their future success (Expectations B4 and B3).
- The opportunity for student representatives to create an annual Student Written Submission that feeds into the University's strategic planning processes (Expectation B5).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations**.

By May 2018:

- revise the published information relating to the McTimoney College of Chiropractic so that it accurately reflects the status of the provision within the School of Health (Expectation C).

By September 2018:

- ensure that all students benefit from individual assessment feedback, so that they are able to further develop as independent learners and enhance their capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking (Expectations B6 and B3)
- ensure that the information on transcripts is complete and fully reflects modes of study to provide a full understanding of student achievement (Expectations B10 and C).

Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following actions already being taken to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to students:

- the steps being taken to review the Staff Student Liaison Committees, to ensure that all members are appropriately trained and that there is effective oversight from both the Students' Association and the University (Expectation B5).

About the provider

BPP University Ltd originated as the BPP University Law School in 1992 and became the BPP College of Professional Education in 2005. It is a division within the BPP Professional Education Group and has a vision to be the global leader of education and training dedicated to the professions. The University achieved degree awarding powers in 2007, university college title in 2010 and university title in 2013.

Subjects offered include Law, Legal Practice, Business Management, Accounting, Finance, Psychology, Chiropractic, Nursing and Health Service Leadership. The law subjects include LLB, GDL, LLM and Bar Professional Training. These subjects are taught within the School of Law, the School of Business and the School of Health. The University has a strategic priority to continue to develop degree apprenticeship programmes.

Approximately 16,000 students studied with the University in 2016-17, comprising 70 per cent full time and 30 per cent part time. These numbers have more than doubled since the last review. Numbers are about equally split between undergraduate and postgraduate students and 65 per cent are home or EU students.

In the 2017-18 academic year, the University has 687 permanent staff plus many more on short-term contracts who deliver its programmes from 15 centres at nine locations in the UK, namely Abingdon, Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Croydon, Leeds, Liverpool, London and Manchester.

In December 2012, BPP University College of Professional Studies Ltd, as it was then called, was subject to an Institutional Review by the Quality Assurance Agency. At this review the University met UK expectations for academic standards and the quality and enhancement of student learning opportunities but was judged as requires improvement for information about learning opportunities. The review identified two features of good practice, four recommendations and four affirmations. The University addressed the recommendations in an action plan and the review team confirmed that the expectation relating to information had been met by March 2013. At the QAA monitoring visit in February 2017 the review team concluded that the University had made commendable progress with implementing the action plan from the December 2012 Institutional Review.

As a result of the University transferring to new ownership in January 2017, it underwent a successful review of taught degree awarding powers, university title and course designation by HEFCE and the DfE. A number of senior staff, including the Vice-Chancellor, left during this time and this has led to some key changes in senior management during 2017. Other major changes since the last review include the expansion of health-related subjects, the provision of degree apprenticeships, and the expansion of distance learning and of collaborative arrangements such as endorsed overseas partners.

Key challenges identified by the University include improving student retention rates on undergraduate programmes, better articulating and improving, where necessary, the University's provision in relation to feedback and academic support and assuring the effectiveness of the provision of management information, particularly for external agencies. In addition, the University is aware that it needs to continually ensure that its programmes meet the changing needs of the professions that it serves.

Explanation of findings

This section explains the review findings in greater detail.

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 (FHEQ)* are met by:

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1 The University Approval Panel, with an independent and usually cognate Chair from the Academic Council, is tasked with the responsibility of approving and re-approving programmes based on guidance set out for programme design and approval in the General Academic Regulations (GARs), and the Manual of Policies and Procedures (MoPPs).

1.2 The guidance sets out a standardised approach to design, approval and ongoing scrutiny of programmes requiring that relevant academic, vocational and professional standards are met. The Quality Code, including the FHEQ, Subject Benchmark Statements and, where relevant, professional body specifications are the key reference points for programme design, approval and review. The University has mapped credits within the FHEQ to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System.

1.3 The appropriateness of assessment for students with protected characteristics is reviewed during programme approval. The University's implementation of reasonable adjustments is overseen by a cross-University Reasonable Adjustments Panel.

1.4 The programme approval process checks each module in relation to its intended learning outcomes, credit weighting, level and assessment and explicitly checks for alignment to the FHEQ and other sector benchmarks. The six-stage approval process has externality on at least four of them. These include independent internal staff, including staff from a different school, at least two external academic advisers including industry experts and, where relevant, professional body representatives. A student representative is included at stage four. Review and approval is through the University's committee structure.

1.5 Though the self-evaluation document (SED) states that the Programme Approval Record Certificate (PARC) is the definitive programme record, the University clarified in meetings with the review team that the Programme Handbook is the definitive record as it includes learning outcomes for interim awards. In future the University intends to make the 'PARC Plus' the definitive record. The continued alignment to external reference points is further monitored through annual programme monitoring, quinquennial programme re-validation and external examiners.

1.6 The design enables Expectation A1 to be met through the clear policy requiring externality at documentation and approval level. Annual monitoring and the external examiner processes also enable ongoing monitoring.

1.7 The team reviewed completed Programme Proposal Forms, the template, guidance, and reports of the University Approval Panels and the Programme Approval Scrutiny Panel. They also reviewed minutes of the Academic Council and external examiner reports. The team spoke to senior staff, professional support staff, academic staff and employers who were familiar with the regulations and spoke of their experiences of participating in the process at design, approval, re-approval and monitoring stage.

1.8 It is evident from the documentation that robust policies and procedures are used for the external reference points, including industry and subject experts, to inform the design and approval of programmes. The relevant committee minutes (Academic Council and Programme Approval Scrutiny Panel) and University Approval Panel reports indicate a consistent and thorough approach to the approval process.

1.9 Staff also confirm that the procedures that are used and the guidance provided ensure a consistent and robust approach. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation A1 is met and that 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

1.10 The University's transparent and comprehensive academic framework is set out in the General Academic Regulations (GARs) and Manual of Policies and Procedures (MOPPs). The processes are managed by key bodies including the Education and Training Committee, Board of Examiners, Academic Appeals Board, Mitigating Circumstances Panel, Academic Misconduct Panel and Academic Regulations and Awards Committee. Oversight and annual review of policies are carried out by the Academic Council, which owns both documents.

1.11 The GARs and MOPPs are comprehensive and the oversight from the Academic Council is appropriate. These enable Expectation A2.1 to be met.

1.12 The review team considered the two key documents and minutes of the Academic Council, the body responsible for them both. The team met senior staff, academic staff, professional support staff and employers. Relevant staff members confirm their understanding of the documents and associated policies.

1.13 Comprehensive oversight and regular review by the Academic Council ensures effective implementation of the policies and procedures set out in the GARs and MOPPs. Provision is made for any exemption from a regulation ('derogation').

1.14 There is also a transparent approach to Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) which references the shared interests and requirements of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs).

1.15 The clear and comprehensive regulations relating to the conferment of awards are also reflected in the programme documentation and in the staff's familiarity and confidence in understanding and implementing the policy. This leads to the transparent and sound award of academic credit and qualifications. Therefore, Expectation A2.1 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.16 The General Academic Regulations (Schedule B) includes a list of all of the awards of the University, including any exit awards and the dates of approval. Schedule C within the General Academic Regulations additionally notes those awards that are made under agreement with other awarding bodies.

1.17 The Programme Handbook is the full definitive record of a programme, including the learning outcomes for interim awards where relevant. This is approved during the programme approval process and re-confirmed annually through submission to the Academic Affairs Department. A standard form known as a Programme Approval Record Certificate (PARC) is produced at the end of the approval process and forms the published definitive record of a validated programme. This is approved at the initial point of validation and updated in accordance with any approved modifications. The PARCs are created and maintained by a member of the Academic Affairs Department and are held centrally to ensure the integrity of the information and to manage version control. This design enables Expectation A2.2 to be met.

1.18 In addition to the General Academic Regulations and the Manual of Policies and Procedures, the review team saw evidence relating to the programme approval process in operation and the definitive records of programmes. The review team also met with staff who described the process and outlined the status of the Programme Handbook and the PARC, as well as the management of these.

1.19 The University is in the process of developing PARC Plus. This will strengthen practice, for example by including the learning outcomes of interim awards, which are currently only contained in Programme Handbooks, and addressing current ambiguity regarding the definitive record. The process for approval is clear, however, and the management of information centrally is sufficiently robust to ensure that the institution can maintain a definitive record of each programme and qualification that it approves (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. Therefore, Expectation 2.2 is met, and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.20 Processes for the approval and modification of taught programmes are set out in the General Academic Regulations and the Manual of Policies and Procedures. These are supported by templates for use in the programme approval process, which are complemented by guidance for staff. Oversight is by the Academic Council for approvals and the Education and Training Committee (ETC) for modifications. The associated Regulations, Policies and Procedures and the complementary templates make clear reference to alignment with UK threshold academic standards and any specific requirements of PSRBs, which govern many of the programmes.

1.21 Information required in the definitive documents (the Programme Approval Record Certificate - PARC and the Programme Handbook) includes detail relating to assessment and learning outcomes and the status of all modules, including any which are non credit-bearing. The Programme Proposal Form requires information relating to any reasonable adjustments that may be necessary in addition to the University's usual provision.

1.22 Documentation of substantial external consultation and involvement is required across the various stages of approval and re-approval. Monitoring of standards is through the external examining system (also set out within the General Academic Regulations and Manual of Policies and Procedures), in which the annual external examiner report is key. This design enables Expectation A3.1 to be met.

1.23 The review team considered documentation that included the academic frameworks and governance arrangements (General Academic Regulations and Manual of Policies and Procedures); documents relating to the approval process (including programme proposal forms, handbooks, PARCs and external review reports); minutes from deliberative bodies of the institution demonstrating oversight of the approval process; reports from panels involved in both programme and module approval processes; and external examiner reports. The review team also met staff with a range of roles and responsibilities in the approval process and representatives of external professional bodies.

1.24 The process for the approval of taught programmes, including external reference points, has been clearly established and is understood by staff. Documentation relating to the approval process demonstrates effective institutional oversight through records of the deliberative decision-making bodies of the institution, thereby ensuring a consistent application of the process. These are supported by documentation from the approval process that demonstrates an appropriately robust approach to ensuring that academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification and are in accordance with the institution's academic frameworks and regulations. The team therefore concludes that Expectation A3.1 is met and that 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

1.25 In order to determine that threshold standards have been met, explicit alignment with external reference points, including Subject Benchmark Statements, the FHEQ and the requirements of PSRBs are embedded within programme development and approval. The validity and relevance of learning outcomes and their relationship to methods of assessment are embedded at module level and evaluated during programme approval or module approval. The Boards of Examiners are responsible to Academic Council and ensure that credit and qualifications are only awarded where learning outcomes have been achieved. External examiners appointed by the University are asked to confirm the appropriacy of learning outcomes and that standards are maintained at an appropriate level.

1.26 These arrangements enable Expectation A3.2 to be met. To test their operation the team scrutinised relevant documents submitted in support of the review and met with University staff, students and employers.

1.27 The Programme Proposal Form is used by programme development teams to demonstrate how they have taken external reference points into account and to justify intended learning outcomes. The outcomes contained within module specifications are mapped against FHEQ level descriptors and PSRB requirements to ensure that standards are appropriate. It is the responsibility of the University Approval Panel to conduct programme approvals and the process places an emphasis on ensuring that the achievement of learning outcomes can be demonstrated through assessment. The Academic Council provide final approval and award outcomes.

1.28 External examiners submit annual reports in which they are asked to comment upon academic standards. These reports require explicit commentary on the alignment of programmes to the FHEQ and benchmarks, the alignment and appropriacy of learning outcomes to the assessment strategy, and the rigour, integrity and fairness of assessment processes. An annual Summary Analysis of External Examiners' Annual Reports is produced for Academic Council and comments on academic standards. The Board of Directors also maintains an oversight of standards through consideration of an Annual Report on Threshold Academic Standards.

1.29 The University has effective systems in place which ensure that credit is only awarded on meeting relevant learning outcomes and that threshold and its own academic standards have been satisfied. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation 3.2 is met, and that 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

1.30 The monitoring and periodic review of programmes at the University are governed by the GARs and the MoPPs. Programme re-approval includes a critical review and otherwise mirrors the approval process, taking into account external reference points to ensure that UK threshold standards remain met. The annual programme monitoring process has a role in ensuring that programmes remain up to date and have adapted to any changes in Subject Benchmark Statements or the requirements of PSRBs. The arrangements in place enable Expectation 3.3 to be met.

1.31 In considering this Expectation the review team examined documentation relating to programme monitoring and met with University staff and students.

1.32 The programme re-approval process provides an in-depth review of a programme against external benchmarks and considers the effect of cumulative changes made. It ensures that programmes remain appropriate and aligned to their original or an updated purpose and ensures that UK threshold standards are still met.

1.33 Effective use is made of data in benchmarking the student achievement and the annual programme monitoring report (APMR) process provides adequate opportunity to reflect on the achievement of threshold academic standards. As such, due consideration is made of external examiner recommendations and observations, although there is not always a consistent method of response to their reports. The team also noted that measures are being taken by the University to improve the consistency of approach taken in the completion of APMRs.

1.34 The review team concludes that monitoring and review in the University is effective in explicitly addressing whether threshold academic standards have been met, and so Expectation A3.3 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

1.35 The University's commitment to externality in setting and maintaining academic standards is set out in the General Academic Regulations and Manual of Policies and Procedures. The programme proposal form and School Review Board reports make explicit provision for external and independent subject and industry experts, particularly from employers and, where relevant, PSRBs.

1.36 The University Approval Panel and the Programme Approval Scrutiny Panel are normally chaired by one of the independent members of the Academic Council.

1.37 External examiners are also required to comment on academic standards through their annual reports, with central oversight through the Education and Training Committee and the Academic Council.

1.38 The provision for externality at various stages in the design of the programme approval and review processes and the external examiner system provides significant opportunities for contribution of external contributors at the design, approval and monitoring stages of setting and maintaining academic standards, and therefore enables Expectation A3.4 to be met.

1.39 The review team tested the design through scrutiny of documents relating to programme approval and external examining including programme proposal forms, external reviewer reports, University Approval Panel reports, external examiner reports, committee approval of new external examiners, and receipt of list of external examiner appointments. They also met senior staff, academic staff, professional support staff and employers. Relevant staff members confirmed their understanding of the documents and associated policies.

1.40 It is evident from discussions with staff and employers that there is ongoing and significant scope for externality at all levels of design, approval and re-approval and through the external examining system. This is in addition to the requirements of PSRBs, whose systematic engagement was evident in the meetings with employers. The use of industry experts at various levels of the design and approval, and re-approval, ensures relevancy of the programmes. The University also keeps an external engagement register to track all external engagements.

1.41 The processes described above are understood by staff, and put into practice, so the review team concludes that Expectation A3.4 is met and that 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

1.42 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) Handbook.

1.43 All of the Expectations for this judgement area are met and the associated levels of risk are low. There are no recommendations or affirmations in this section.

1.44 The review team concludes that the setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards at BPP University **meets** UK expectations.

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

Findings

2.1 The University's processes for programme design, development and approval are set out as principles in the General Academic Regulations, supported by operational detail in the Manual of Policies and Procedures. These documents form the University's academic framework and are overseen and reviewed annually by the Academic Council. Clear distinctions are drawn between programme approval, non-award course approval and module approval.

2.2 Programme approval follows a six-stage process and completion of each stage is required before progression to the next. These stages are intended to ensure that there is a strategic case for programme development and that a business case has also been approved before more detailed programme design takes place. Progression through the process is monitored by the Education and Training Committee.

2.3 Key information relating to threshold academic standards is established through the documentation required during the detailed development stages of programme approval, as well as any additional considerations including requirements for reasonable adjustments beyond the University's standard arrangements.

2.4 The detailed development stages are informed by student representation and feedback, alumni and external consultation. External input informs the design of the programme, which is detailed on the Programme Proposal Form. Scrutiny by independent external members forms part of the approval process via the external reviewer report as a minimum at the School Review Board. Provision is also made for external input through membership of the School Review Board if deemed appropriate, and at the University Approval Panel, which requires two external members (normally one academic/specialist and one industry/employer) as well as normally being chaired by an independent member of Academic Council. The Programme Approval Scrutiny Panel, which advises Academic Council at stage 5 of the approval process, is also chaired by an independent member of the Academic Council.

2.5 Non-award courses follow a three-stage process, with oversight by the University's Education and Training Committee. The second stage of the process for non-award courses requires an external member of the panel. Arrangements for programme approval with partner providers follow the same processes as for those programmes being delivered by the University. The design of the programme design, development and approval process enables Expectation B1 to be met.

2.6 The review team scrutinised documentary evidence that sets out the approach to programme design, development and approval, and a range of supporting documents that illustrate the process in operation and the support available for staff involved in the process. The team also met a range of staff and employer representatives with various involvement in programme design, development and approval.

2.7 The review team considers that the process works effectively. Principles, operational detail and both internal and external reference points are clear in the documentation and are subject to regular review, as evidenced through documentation relating specifically to the process and committee minutes for Academic Council and the Education and Training Committee. The documentation also provides clear evidence that the process is operating as designed. Central oversight is maintained through the Academic Council, which also articulates between the University and the Board of Directors.

2.8 Support for staff in programme design, development and approval includes Academic Levels Showcase resources, the Learning and Teaching Strategy and Assessment Enhancement Strategy, and more specific guidance for completing the documentation and for good practice in programme design. In meetings, staff provided illustrative examples of how they had used these resources and been supported effectively in programme design and approval.

2.9 There is explicit provision for student engagement in the design of new programmes as well as in the formal approval stages, such as the University Approval Panel and deliberative committees with oversight of the process, and the review team saw some evidence of this operating.

2.10 External input in design and approval is transparent and substantial. In addition to the externality described above, which is documented through the programme approval process, the representatives of employers who met with the review panel outlined a range of ways in which the institution sought to engage with them in relation to programme design, development and approval. This included the institution opening dialogue with employers when a new initiative or opportunity was being considered, as well as conversations during the design and approval process to ensure that a programme would appropriately meet the needs of various employers. Furthermore, employer representatives described an approach that enabled the institution to respond quickly and flexibly to sector needs. The review team considers that the extensive and proactive engagement with employers in the design and delivery of programmes, which ensures that programmes and graduates are fit for purpose and business ready, is a feature of **good practice**. Therefore, Expectation B1 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 had a thematic review of the approach to marketing and published information in 2014 and a thematic review of domestic admissions in 2015, which has helped to shape the current processes and procedures surrounding the recruitment, selection and admission policies and procedures. The Vice-Chancellor agrees school-by-school strategic priorities with each Dean, who set the standard offer tariffs for their respective programmes ahead of the September start each year.

2.12 Students can apply to the University through one of three application processes, all of which can be found on the University's website. These include through UCAS, applying directly to the University or applying via an external body. Each applicant has a dedicated Admission Officer who can process the offer, if the standard entry criteria are met. The Admission Validation Officer is responsible for validating the approved applicants from the Admission Officer. The Quality Performance Manager oversees the work of the Admission Validation Officers.

2.13 The University provides a variety of support throughout the admission process including: phone calls from tutors; visits to centres; open days; workshops; webinars; school events; international events; engaging in social media; and enquires with the learning support and inclusion team. Nursing is the only programme within the University that requires students to be interviewed, as per the requirements of the professional standards regulatory body.

2.14 Applicants with disabilities are encouraged to make disclosure so that assistance can be provided as early as possible. A Learning Support Agreement will be created and signed by the student. Further adjustments may be made, if necessary, through a Cross-University Reasonable Adjustments Panel.

2.15 The University has a domestic recruitment team and an international recruitment team, which both report to the Chief Marketing Officer. Applications are split between the domestic team and international team. The international student recruitment team is separated into regions with a regional director responsible for creating awareness and demand in their allocated area. Agents work in-country to recruit students onto the University's programmes. Agents receive training at least three times per year. The University has the appropriate processes, procedures and policies in place to allow Expectation B2 to be met.

2.16 The review team examined all appropriate evidence in relation to the recruitment, selection and admission of students within the University. The team questioned staff involved with the decision making to understand what internal processes with numerous roles are involved, and discussed with students how they found the admission process in general and whether they were provided with sufficient information about their programme.

2.17 Students receive adequate information and guidance about their programme and how to apply to the University, and if applying from another country also receive cultural

information. Students also commented positively on the induction process and the information available within the Induction Guide. The team found that this level of support and information available to students throughout the induction process is very positive and enables students to begin their respective programmes with all necessary information and guidance.

2.18 Staff involved in the admissions process receive adequate training, including an intensive four-week induction with regular top-up training provided throughout the year.

2.19 There has been one appeal against an admission judgement over the previous two years. The procedure for appealing against an admission judgement is set out in the MoPPs, which is available on the University's website.

2.20 Overall, the University has sound admission processes in place to support the recruitment, selection and admission of students. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation B2 is met and that 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 University's General Academic Regulations and Manual of Policies and Procedures set out the strategic direction and approach, through a range of strategies, policies and committees, the learning and teaching activities and environment. Committee oversight is by the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Enhancement Committee (LTAEC), a subcommittee of the Education and Training Committee, which itself reports to the Academic Council. The LTAEC is supported by the Faculty Learning Development Committee, which oversees more of the operational matters and also funds attendance at learning and teaching-related events.

2.22 The Learning and Teaching Strategy, along with a range of other strategies including the Strategy for Faculty Learning and Development, Assessment Enhancement Strategy, Technology Enhanced Learning Strategy and Strategy for Scholarship and Research, guide and support learning and teaching. The teaching and learning activities and strategies are systematically reviewed on a regular basis through the committee structure, with annual summaries and reports prepared by the Dean of Academic Affairs and the Dean of Learning and Teaching and submitted to the Academic Council. The strong link with professional bodies provides an additional oversight, as many of the programmes are subject to PSRB oversight.

2.23 There is a Learning and Teaching Department and a Learning and Teaching virtual learning environment (VLE) site which offers induction to new staff and provides an ongoing resource to experienced staff. This includes guidance on various aspects of programme design and an Academic Levels Showcase provided by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) specifically for the University.

2.24 Systematic staff development is in place to ensure that content and pedagogy are appropriate and up to date with industry standards. CVs of all staff are checked and teacher training (PGCPHE) is offered by the University for newly appointed staff, though non-teaching and more experienced faculty can follow the Headway programme as another route to Fellowship (FHEA) as well as Senior Fellow and Principal Fellowship of the HEA. Mentorship for new staff, peer observation and encouragement to act as external examiners are other opportunities for staff growth and development. The Annual Scholarship and Research Census and annual appraisal provide an opportunity to track staff qualifications, engagement with learning and teaching development, and indicate key development needs. The review team considers the range of tailored resources and support from the Learning and Teaching Unit, which enables new and experienced staff to operate effectively and continue to develop as practitioners and academics, to be a feature of **good practice**.

2.25 The University ensures consistency across its centres through the deliberate mechanism of national module leaders and teachers teaching across centres.

2.26 The University's approach to career readiness of its students is embodied in its Career Ready approach, which embeds employment skills at all levels including into the curriculum from programme design and approval, to teaching and assessment. There is

reference to career-ready skills under each module on the VLE for students.

2.27 The University Handbook provides students with clear information on the learning and teaching strategies and approaches. The policy on plagiarism is clear and is re-iterated at various levels, such as induction, handbooks and the VLE. The range of policies including systematic training and tracking of staff development, deliberative committee for oversight, systematic reviews and reporting, and externality, including industry oversight, enable Expectation B3 to be met.

2.28 The review team tested this through policy documents, the Learning and Teaching Strategy, the Strategy for Faculty Learning and Development, Assessment Enhancement Strategy, Technology Enhanced Learning Strategy, and Strategy for Scholarship and Research; reports prepared by the Dean of Academic Affairs, minutes of Academic Council, guidance documents and similar resource documents evidencing the programme approval process. They also met senior staff, academic staff, professional support staff, students and employers.

2.29 Policies and procedures are clearly disseminated to staff and students through the GARs, MoPPs, the VLE and handbooks, and oversight by committees works effectively. Central oversight of activities and reports is a priority for the University. The strategy to appoint national teams, including national programme leaders, enables consistency across centres.

2.30 The programme design and approval process requires cross-institutional engagement and has appropriate institutional oversight of sufficient detail to ensure that students have equal opportunities to achieve intended learning outcomes. There is faculty-level as well as institutional-level overview. Specialists from each subject area also meet teachers annually to ensure that teaching reflects the real world. Staff confirmed that they received training to use the teaching and learning VLE. A high percentage of teaching staff are practitioners from industry, ensuring relevance of content and approach. Approximately 80 per cent of staff have professional qualifications, which also reflects external pressures for staff to have appropriate qualifications. Additionally, 38 per cent of staff are Fellows of the HEA.

2.31 The Student Assessment, Retention and Achievement Committee has institutional oversight of key issues of student performance and there has been programme re-design in recent years to support student success. There is currently a project underway on Equality Retention and Achievement through Inclusive Curriculum ('ERATIC') to enhance practice.

2.32 The student written submission to the review highlights issues with lack of examination preparation time, exam bunching, late production of timetables and marks delivered only after a new semester has started, as well as concerns about the quality of recordings, including live recordings. The University is aware of these issues and is taking steps to address them. The University has also reviewed its Assessment Feedback Policy, which is referred to in a recommendation under B6.

2.33 Students are familiar with the career-ready skills in the design and delivery of their modules and appreciate the insights and skills brought by teaching staff who are industry practitioners. Policies and structures in place to support teaching staff are effective, and students and the employers are positive about the quality of teaching and the career readiness of the students. This career-ready strategy and the engagement with employers in the design and delivery of programmes contributes to the good practice identified in B4 and B1.

2.34 The team considers that the policies, procedures and oversight through committees ensures that students are consistently well supported to develop as independent learners,

enhancing their analytical, critical and creative skills. The review team concludes therefore that Expectation B3 is met, and that 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

2.35 The University sets out its strategic approach through the University Professional Education Group Business Strategy, which informs the Academic Development Plan. The Manual of Policies and Procedures, drawing from principles set out in the General Academic Regulations, includes the Equality and Diversity Policy, the Disability Disclosure Policy and the Learning Support Policy. The University also has in place a Learning Support Strategy and an Equality Strategy. The University Handbook provides student-facing information on the academic framework. The Academic Council maintains central oversight of the student experience through annual reports on quality and standards, student services, and those related to student achievement and satisfaction.

2.36 There is a specific panel to consider students requiring reasonable adjustments. The close association with the industry provides students with opportunities for extensive work-based learning and supports students with employability.

2.37 The University Library and Information Services (LIS) Strategy and Collection Development Policy are reviewed and updated biennially. Vital Source Bookshelf is in place as the e-core text platform and provides students with their key text reading as soon as they have access to the modules, and this is used to provide particular support to students with sight impairment. Informal support from Library staff is available, including weekly online drop-in sessions.

2.38 Students have access to the VLE as their key source of general information related to their studies and support and particular information related to their programme. The University has placed digital skills as a priority and a strategic approach to digital literacy led to a QAA quality enhancement case study, and the University has continued work in this area with a programme of Digital Skills Workshops.

2.39 The University has a Strategy for Career Ready 2017-20. A number of co-curricular and extracurricular activities enable students to develop employability skills; for example, Pro Bono operates as a free legal advice centre which provides law students with an opportunity to gain experience, overseen by qualified lawyers, as well as a number of other courses offered in relation to practice. CareerHub software is in place for students and alumni which enables them to look for jobs and also access a range of support from the Careers Services. The Career Ready Strategy, which is embedded through learning and teaching, enabling students to build and develop relevant skills for their future success, is a feature of **good practice**.

2.40 The Student Charter (University Handbook) states that all students can expect to be assigned a personal tutor or student manager.

2.41 The strategic approach to supporting and enhancing student experience, as set out in policies and procedures, plus the regular reviews enables Expectation B4 to be met.

2.42 The review team considered a range of documentation that outlines the University's approach to student support and enabling student achievement. These included: policies and procedures, thematic reviews of aspects of the student experience, material relating to extracurricular opportunities and committee minutes. The team also met with senior staff, academic staff, support staff, students and employers.

2.43 Policies and procedures are in place to support students and enable student achievement. There is institutional oversight with committees overseeing support across schools and individual sites. Robust measures to involve employers and industry experts in supporting students is evident and effective.

2.44 Currently, different teams provide student support and the University is working, in consultation with students, on identifying a new approach and has received approval from school boards. Every student will have a personal tutor with a clear academic support role.

2.45 Link tutors for the nursing programmes visit students on placement and ensure that they are relevant to current studies. If a student is not meeting the required standards and expectations, there is provision for this to be dealt with by the partnership.

2.46 In response to concerns raised by students, recording of lectures is done in special rooms to ensure sound quality, and compatibility with some mobile platforms is being addressed.

2.47 The University has strong engagement with employers. Last year, the careers service engaged with 243 employers and 114 employers attended the careers fairs. Employers are involved in programme design and review, in committees and in mentoring students and speak highly of their experiences of working with the University. The CareerHub is on the VLE for every student and students note the support they receive in practising interviews and applying for jobs.

2.48 The University ensures consistent levels of support across sites through weekly meetings for programme and module leaders. The curriculum and assessments and external examiners are consistent across centres. Staff and students spoke about the consistency of support across centres though students mentioned some differences in services across schools. The University acknowledged that while equivalence of experience is being sought, some inconsistencies exist, which it is addressing through the student written submission action plan.

2.49 The close connection of the Library with schools and boards is effective as it allows for the collection to be relevant to the needs of the student. Heads and team members of support services meet on a regular basis, and take into account student surveys and comments and share good practice.

2.50 The University has a systematic approach, through regulations, policies and procedures, along with ongoing and relevant training, support and oversight through committees. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation B4 is met and that 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

2.51 The University established the Students' Association as an independently managed entity, within the overarching University structure, with its own Board, Managing Director, budget and support staff in 2015. The role of President was introduced, which replaced the pre-existing role of Chief Executive of Students. From September 2017, each centre has an elected Vice-President, replacing the pre-existing Branch President position. The President and each Vice-President collectively form the National Student Council, and decide which elected members will represent students on each of the University committees. These include, but are not limited to, two for Academic Council, two for the Education and Training Committee, four for the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Enhancement Committee, two for each School Board and two for the Published Information Governance Group.

2.52 The University has staff student liaison representatives for the majority of its programme cohorts, capturing the views from students and informing their respective programme area of any issues. This is one of the primary areas in which students are able to engage in the quality assurance of their programme. The University also includes student representatives on several committees and internal procedures, including programme approval panels and thematic reviews.

2.53 The University facilitates a number of surveys throughout the year, such as module surveys and the Student Experience Survey, held a few weeks after students arrive.

2.54 The broad range of representative and feedback mechanisms in place, which enables student engagement to occur, allows Expectation B5 to be met; however, there are a number of disparities between the student written submission and the self-evaluation document.

2.55 The review team examined all relevant evidence, including the student written submission, minutes from all appropriate committees and any further evidence relating to the effectiveness of student engagement at the University. The team spoke to staff regarding how they listen to and act on student feedback, and students confirm that they feel their voices are heard and acted upon. Furthermore, the team explored the nature of the University's involvement in relation to preparing staff student liaison representatives for each of their roles and how Staff Student Liaison Committees are managed.

2.56 Students are satisfied that they have sufficient opportunity to provide feedback to the University and engage with quality assurance processes. Staff highlighted the outcomes from implementing inclusion representatives within the University. The team found the initial outcomes from creating inclusion representatives to be successful and to the benefit of the student body. Since the last QAA review visit in 2012, the University has provided the opportunity to the student body to create an annual student written submission. The University pays for the National Student Council to work together on the document over a number of days. The way in which this is facilitated and how the University responds to each of the recommendations is very beneficial and demonstrates that the issues are listened to and acted upon when appropriate, which is followed up through an action plan. Therefore, the team concludes that the opportunity for student representatives to create an annual student written submission that feeds into the University's strategic planning processes is a feature of **good practice**.

2.57 There are a number of issues in the management and training for Staff Student Liaison Committee meetings, which are also commented on within the student written submission. Student representatives receive a variety of different training for their various roles, with some not receiving any training. The management of the Staff Student Liaison Committee meetings is devolved to each of the programme leaders. Having a devolved approach may result in a variation in how each Staff Student Liaison Committee meeting operates; however, the University has a standard agenda with any actions being resolved through an action plan. Following the most recent student written submission the University is now conducting a review of the Staff Student Liaison Committee meetings. This should resolve issues relating to the training of representatives and management oversight of the process. Therefore, the team **affirms** the steps taken to review the Staff Student Liaison Committees to ensure that all members are appropriately trained and that there is effective oversight from both the Students' Association and the University.

2.58 Overall, the University actively seeks feedback and engagement from students across each branch, with work being conducted in how to improve these processes for the benefit of the students. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation B5 is met and that 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

2.59 The University GARs and MoPPs detail the regulations and processes for the assessment of students. The terms of reference and composition of all assessment-related University committees, boards and panels are set out in the GARs and include the Education and Training Committee, the Boards of Examiners, the Academic Regulations and Awards Committee, the Student Assessment Retention and Achievement Committee, the Academic Appeals Board, the Mitigating Circumstances Panel, the Reasonable Adjustments Panel, and the Learning, Teaching, Assessment and Enhancement Committee.

2.60 Programme-level learning outcome maps are provided within Programme Handbooks and articulate how learning outcomes are covered at a modular level. These handbooks are updated annually and contain module specifications with details on assessment methods.

2.61 The principles governing the amount and timing of assessment are set out in the Assessment Strategy and Framework, published alongside a comprehensive policy for the Agreement and Implementation of Reasonable Adjustments in the MoPPs. The University has an annual calendar which specifies the pattern of teaching, consolidation, and assessment weeks and written feedback on formative and summative individual written submissions and examinations is provided within two to four weeks.

2.62 The APL process is separate from the admissions process. Module exemptions are considered by admissions tutors or programme leaders and decisions are reported to the relevant Board of Examiners and the student record system updated. Where possible, advance standing is built into programmes during approval.

2.63 The processes for assessment of student learning and APL enable Expectation B6 to be met. The review team tested this by scrutinising documentation such as Programme Handbooks and assessment policies. The team also held meetings with a range of staff members and students.

2.64 The assessment regulations are reviewed at least annually as part of the review of the GARs and MoPPs. At an institutional level, approaches to assessment are reviewed and developed through the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Enhancement Committee (LTAEC), and the Education and Training Committee (ETC). Academic Council oversight of the assessment process is provided through the Academic Regulations and Awards Committee which reviews the minutes of Boards of Examiners and considers and approves recommendations for awards, and the Student Assessment, Retention and Achievement Committee which monitors matters arising in the conduct of examinations and the pattern of student results on modules and programmes.

2.65 Programme approval panels are specifically asked to comment upon the validity and effectiveness of assessment methods. The Programme Handbooks and annual calendar provide students with clear information on assessment methodology and practice. The marking criteria for each programme are included in the Programme Handbook,

as are the regulations including the rules governing progression and award classification. All assessments are approved by internal examiners and the relevant external examiners, after which provisional marks may be made available to students. These internals and externals are members of the Boards of Examiners, at which the outcome of assessments and the achievements of learning outcomes are confirmed and after which the confirmed results may be published.

2.66 Staff involvement in programme development and assessment design is encouraged through the performance development review process. The University Learning and Teaching Team and schools' Training Teams provide marking and feedback training and guidance for all markers and additional useful information is provided for staff on the Learning and Teaching VLE site. Assessment and feedback practices are therefore informed by reflection and the close involvement of employers ensures that it is often underpinned by professional practice. The University is also alert to student needs and makes reasonable adjustments as required.

2.67 APL recognition is built into a number of the awards, including MSc Accounting and Finance, LLM Commercial Legal Practice, and BSc (Hons) Healthcare Practice, as part of the approval and re-approval processes. Applicants are also made aware of opportunities for APL during application and are informed that the process is separate from that of admission. Appropriately specialist subject staff judge APL submissions and report the results to the Head of Examinations.

2.68 Students are informed about good academic practice and the difference between poor academic practice and academic malpractice. Detailed information is contained in the programme handbook and the students' University Handbook. Summative written assessments are all submitted through an online plagiarism detection gateway and students have an opportunity to review and respond to the similarity report before final submission. An annual report is provided to the ETC and the Academic Council which includes information on the number and nature of cases of academic misconduct.

2.69 The Learning Support Office assists in the development of student Learning Support Agreements that reflect agreed adjustments, including exam concessions. This information is shared with the Examinations Office.

2.70 At the time of the review, the University was developing a standardised assessment feedback policy that embedded a requirement for students to request receipt of individual summative assessment feedback if an assignment or exam was awarded a pass mark or grade. The review team determined that this requirement for a student to proactively request individual feedback could deny some of them valuable opportunities for feedforward. It was hence considered inappropriate as a University-wide approach for all awards and modes of study. Consequently, the review team **recommends** that the University ensures that all students benefit from individual assessment feedback so that they are able to further develop as independent learners and enhance their capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking.

2.71 Overall, the review team concludes that the processes for assessment of student learning and APL are effective. Expectation B6 is therefore 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

2.72 The University's principles, policies and procedures are set out in the General Academic Regulations and the Manual of Policies and Procedures. These are complemented by the External Examiner Handbook for the University's external examiners. The criteria for the appointment of external examiners and their functions are set out in the GARs and MoPPs. Where external examiners are appointed by PSRBs, these are recorded centrally and reported to the University's deliberative bodies.

2.73 Schools send their nominations for external examiners to the Dean of Academic Affairs. These are scrutinised by the Education and Training Committee and approved by the Dean. Final oversight and approval lies with the Academic Council, which delegates scrutiny to the Academic Regulations and Awards Committee prior to confirming a decision. The Deputy Dean of Academic Affairs has the responsibility for maintaining a list of the University's external examiner appointments and thus any conflicts would be identified. External examiners are provided with induction training by Academic Affairs and an induction at school level.

2.74 External examiners comment on threshold academic standards, matters relating to learning and teaching and assessment, which will support the enhancement of the student learning opportunities. They are required to be present at examination boards where they can provide their comments in addition to submitting their full reports. External examiner reports are submitted directly to the Vice-Chancellor, copying in the Dean of Academic Affairs. Confidential reports may also be made direct to the Vice-Chancellor. Responses are shared with the external examiners in a variety of formats, both written and verbal.

2.75 External examiner reports are available to student representatives on School Boards, and through committee papers to student representatives at the Education and Training Committee and the Academic Council. External examiner reports are only available to other students on request.

2.76 Institutional oversight of reports is maintained by Academic Council through an Annual Summary Report prepared by the Deputy Dean of Academic Affairs and full scrutiny of reports in School Boards.

2.77 The University encourages and recognises the work of its own staff as external examiners through academic promotions, and information on examinerships held by the University's staff is included in the Scholarship Census and checked by the Dean. A scrutiny team ensures that there are no reciprocal arrangements for external examining.

2.78 The design is robust and enables Expectation B7 to be met, though the process would be strengthened if external examiner reports were more readily available to students instead of students having to request them.

2.79 External examiners are invited to comment on enhancement during induction and examination boards and there is the opportunity to comment on good practice on the External Examiner Report Form. The design requires the external examiner to confirm that they have received either a written or verbal response to their previous report, thus ensuring that the loop is closed.

2.80 The review team considered documentary evidence including the relevant policies and procedures, external examiner reports, responses to external examiner reports, summary reports on the analysis of external examiner reports, committee approval of new external examiners and receipt of list of external examiner appointments, nomination forms, minutes of examination boards, communications with external examiners regarding appointment, responses to reports and reminders. They also met senior staff, professional support staff, academic staff and students.

2.81 Staff are familiar with the system and some are serving as an external examiner elsewhere. Students see the full external examiner reports at School Boards and they are also on the VLE. The summary reports and action plans are seen by student representatives at the Education and Training Committee and the Academic Council as well as being discussed on the Student Written Submission Away Day.

2.82 External examiner reports demonstrate the thoroughness of reporting. There is an annual analysis of reports to the Education and Training Committee and the Academic Council. Different formats, including written and verbal methods, are used to respond to the external examiner. Although method of response varies, pertinent issues are captured in the action plans from each report. An action plan for each report is outlined in the summary report.

2.83 Committee minutes indicate diligence around appointment of external examiners, with discussion in relation to some nominations and not all nominations receiving approval. Communication with external examiners regarding appointment and reports is clear. It is evident that external examiners draw upon their experiences of examining other programmes at the University, helping to ensure valuable learning and consistency of approach.

2.84 The policy, handbook for examiners, appointment and training for external examiners, and committee-level oversight and scrutiny are robust and followed by all staff. The team therefore concludes that Expectation B7 is met and that 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

2.85 The University's regulations and procedures for programme monitoring and periodic review are set out in its GARs and MoPPs. Programmes are approved by Academic Council for a maximum of five years after which re-approval is required. All programmes are also subject to annual monitoring through the production of APMRs. These reports include information that has been discussed at School Boards, including student feedback, performance statistics and progression and achievement data. A subcommittee of the Education and Training Committee (ETC) considers all APMRs and a summary report is produced for ETC and Academic Council, which provide institutional oversight of the process. The arrangements in place at the University enable Expectation B8 to be met.

2.86 The team tested this Expectation by reviewing the processes for programme monitoring and review along with documentation such as APMRs. The team also held meetings with a range of staff members, students and employers.

2.87 Module leaders are responsible for producing annual module reports that contribute to the annual monitoring process and programme leaders and the Director of Programmes can then add further commentary. Under a new process for 2016-17 the draft APMR is reviewed for compliance by the Deputy Dean of Academic Affairs, and referred back to the Dean of School with recommendations. It is then considered by the School Board before scrutiny by the subcommittee of ETC. There is some variability in the production of APMRs, for example in the written evaluation of management information, and this new process has the potential to produce more consistent reporting across programmes and schools.

2.88 In addition to the APMR summary report to Academic Council, the Board of Directors maintains oversight of the achievement of academic quality indicators through regular scrutiny reports throughout the year, including an Annual Report on Threshold Academic Standards.

2.89 Academic staff are required to critically review their programmes as part of re-approval. This presents the programme teams with an opportunity to evaluate and refresh programmes in response to student, staff, external examiner, employer, and alumni feedback. Use is made of cumulative programme data, usually from its full five years of operation, and internal and external expertise to evaluate the currency of intended learning outcomes, assessment, delivery and resourcing. Student representatives are also members of the periodic review panels and members of all the academic deliberative committees where annual review and monitoring reports and their outcomes are considered and addressed.

2.90 The University has measures to protect the academic interests of students if a programme is closed and the process by which the approval of a programme may be suspended or withdrawn is set out in the GARs. The regulations require the Academic Council to ensure that the interests, rights and learning opportunities of the students on the programme are protected.

2.91 The systems of monitoring and review as expressed in the GARs and MoPPs and followed by the University are effective and measures have been undertaken to enable

greater consistency in the conduct of annual monitoring processes. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation B8 is met and that 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

2.92 The Office of Regulation and Compliance deals with both academic appeals and complaints, with ultimate authority resting with the Academic Council. The Office of Regulation and Compliance produces an annual report addressing identifiable patterns within mitigating circumstances, formal complaints and academic appeals processes. The report includes an annex that outlines in detail when the formal complaint was lodged, the nature of the complaint and whether it was resolved. The annual report is submitted to the Academic Council and Education and Training Committee for scrutiny.

2.93 The University operates an Academic Appeals Board that considers all academic appeals that are referred by the Office of Regulation and Compliance. The Board is chaired by a Dean of School, or a nominee, up to five senior academics and an external member.

2.94 The University permits anonymous complaints, which are accepted and investigated at the discretion of the Dean of Academic Affairs. Appeals against the formal complaints process are considered by the Vice-Chancellor. If students are dissatisfied with the outcome, and have exhausted internal procedures, they are able to submit a complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) within 12 months of the date of the Completion of Procedures Letter.

2.95 Information on academic appeals and complaints is held within the MoPPs and GARs, which are available on the virtual learning environment, University website and Students' Association Website. A key guide has also been created on 'what to do when things go wrong', which contains key information about the procedures. The University has policies and procedures in place that enable Expectation B9 to be met.

2.96 The review team examined all appropriate evidence including the relevant policies and procedures relating to academic appeals and complaints, minutes from all appropriate committees and the annual report produced by the Office for Regulation and Compliance. The team confirmed with staff their knowledge and understanding of complaints and academic appeals processes, and further checked with students what they would do if they wished to raise a formal complaint or academic appeal.

2.97 Students are confident that they know what to do if they want to make a formal complaint or lodge an academic appeal. Some students have raised informal complaints, which were resolved successfully and effectively. Some students had formally applied for, and were successful in receiving, a mitigating circumstance consideration prior to an assessment deadline.

2.98 The University attempts to resolve complaints informally but will not discourage students if they wish to make a formal complaint. The University has received only a very small number of anonymous complaints and these have not been significant. A large portion of academic appeals come from unsuccessful mitigating circumstances considerations. This is largely to do with having a strict timeline for providing evidence and in some cases, this evidence is unable to be presented to the Office of Regulation and Compliance prior to the deadline. Furthermore, the volume is also high because there could be many mitigating circumstances considerations relating to one student who has several assessments.

The University is currently starting to review the terminology around mitigating circumstances and academic appeals to ensure that students are not disadvantaged by the process. Although there is a large number of academic appeals and mitigating circumstances being considered, the process and procedures operate effectively.

2.99 Overall, the University has in place adequate processes and procedures for the resolution of informal and formal complaints and academic appeals. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation B9 is met and that 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

2.100 The institution's strategic position with regard to collaborative provision is that it does not have any franchised or validated arrangements for the delivery of programmes of study. Rather, its collaborations enable work-based learning, support for distance learning and the use of third-party specialist resources. The principles governing collaborative provision, including a taxonomy of arrangements, are set out in the General Academic Regulations, Chapter 2 Part M. This is supported by the Manual of Policies and Procedures Part M which sets out the procedure for the approval of Approved and Endorsed Providers and the approval of Employers for Work-Based Learning Opportunities. These procedures include suspension and withdrawal.

2.101 Institutional oversight is through reporting to the Academic Council, with day-to-day responsibilities delegated. The Academic Council is also responsible for approving the academic proposal while the Board of Directors considers the business case in order to keep the two separate. Academic Council approves the termination of collaborative arrangements.

2.102 Since 2016, approval of employer partners has been devolved from Academic Council to the schools with oversight from the Academic Collaborations Office (part of the Deanery of Academic Affairs).

2.103 The Academic Council receives an Annual Report on Academic Collaborations, which provides detailed information on all the University's partnership arrangements and includes review reports where reviews have taken place. Primarily, the partnerships are related to work-based learning opportunities or placements, including partnerships with employers for apprenticeships.

2.104 Seven collaborations are with overseas Endorsed Providers who provide local support for students on distance-learning programmes. This is an optional service that students can choose to take up in addition to full delivery and support by the institution. Endorsed Providers also support students through the application and admissions process but the decision to admit an applicant remains with the institution.

2.105 Assessment is by University staff, with the exception of some pass/fail assessments on the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) approved nursing programmes for clinical competence. In this instance, it is part of the NMC Standards and the institution supports mentors in the workplace who carry out the assessment, as well as offering students within the institution the opportunity to undertake modules that will enable them to become mentors on graduation. Link tutors are in place and guidance documents exist to support students and mentors in the workplace around their expectations and responsibilities in assessment in this instance.

2.106 All published information must be approved by the institution and, in most cases, material is provided to partners by the institution with limited opportunity for amendment. Regular checks are carried out by the Deanery of Academic Affairs and there is an identified post-holder with responsibility for this. The design of the policies and procedures relating to managing higher education with others enables Expectation B10 to be met.

2.107 The review team scrutinised documentation that set out the University's approach to managing higher education with others and provided evidence of how this was implemented, including relevant policies and procedures, reports and minutes, confirmation of status and permission to operate from international agencies; relevant legal documents and sample degree certificates, transcripts and student records. The review team also met a range of staff, students and employers who had some level of engagement in the relationship between the institution and a third party.

2.108 Minutes from the Academic Council reflect institutional consideration and approval of new collaborative agreements and the terminations of agreements. In addition, there was evidence of wider discussion around matters relating to partner provision (for example, apprenticeships) also reflected in the minutes of meetings. The delegated authority is working effectively, and the institution continues to monitor this area and evolve practice in line with its activities, for example through the Academic Collaborations Development Forum which was instigated from 2016-17, the introduction of the Strategic Partnerships Oversight Group from August 2017 and the Apprenticeship Steering Group.

2.109 Endorsed Providers are observed on at least one open day a year by University staff visiting for the purpose. An online training session is provided to staff within the Endorsed Provider who are supporting students through the admissions process, and they are also provided with a Salesforce Training Manual. A conference to support Endorsed Providers is scheduled for January 2018 to enable the enhancement of practice. McTimoney College of Chiropractic is part of the School of Health at the University and is not a collaborative arrangement (see Information below).

2.110 The student certificate and transcript for those students studying overseas in conjunction with an Endorsed Provider indicate whether the student is considered full-time or part-time but do not include the information that the student is studying by distance learning. The transcripts for students on the Chiropractic programmes include an additional line that the programme is 'taught at McTimoney College of Chiropractic and awarded by BPP University'. The review team concludes that, currently, some of the information on transcripts could be considered misleading and therefore **recommends** that the institution should ensure that the information on transcripts is complete and fully reflects modes of study to provide a full understanding of student achievement.

2.111 Thus, while Expectation B10 is met, the level of risk is moderate because there are some shortcomings in the rigour with which the quality assurance procedures are applied with regard to the accuracy of information on transcripts. As this is the record that a graduate will take forwards for the future, this may have implications for entry to other institutions or for employers.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

2.112 The University does not offer research degrees; therefore, this Expectation does not apply.

Expectation: Not applicable

Level of risk: Not applicable

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.113 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) Handbook.

2.114 All of the Expectations relating to the University's quality of student learning opportunities are met, all with a low risk except for B10, where the risk is moderate. The review team makes two recommendations in this section relating to ensuring that all students benefit from assessment feedback and ensuring that information on transcripts is complete and fully reflects modes of study.

2.115 The review team identified one affirmation in this section relating to the steps being taken to review the Staff Student Liaison Committees.

2.116 There are four features of good practice in this section. These relate to the extensive and proactive engagement with employers, the range of resources and support for teaching staff, the Career Ready Strategy and the opportunity for student representatives to create an annual student written submission.

2.117 The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at BPP 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 The University has a clearly-stated mission which is foregrounded on its website, via which members of the public can also access information on programmes, governance, and key policies such as the Code of Business Ethics and Modern Slavery Statement.

3.2 The Public Information Approval Policy is enshrined within the University's General Academic Regulations, Part N. Its principles are also incorporated into the operational detail in the relevant place of documents. The University's General Academic Regulations and Manual of Policies and Procedures also stipulate the responsibility for information published by partners and set out the policies and procedures in place to ensure this is managed. The Public Information Approval Policy explicitly covers social media, both for official University use and those not acting on behalf of the University.

3.3 The institution has conducted a thematic review of public information. There is now an established Marketing and Communications team which has been structured to meet the needs of staff and students at the University. To maintain critical distance for the compliance aspects of accuracy of published information, a specific post exists within the Academic Affairs Team (Academic Quality Officer - Published Information) and the post-holder has a clear list of responsibilities relating to the maintenance of accuracy.

3.4 Comprehensive information is published on the University's website in relation to admissions requirements, including specific country information for international applicants. This includes guidance on fees, loans bursaries and scholarships. The University's terms and conditions are published on the website and explicit attention is drawn to them when an offer is made to a student.

3.5 Definitive programme documentation is managed in a repository which enables restricted access and editing rights and tracks changes for audit purposes. This includes the Programme Approval Record Certificates which are created and maintained by Academic Affairs and communicated via an email address that includes key areas such as Marketing and Admissions.

3.6 Comprehensive records are kept in relation to partner provision. The annual report to the Academic Council provides key information relating to all arrangements for delivering or supporting learning opportunities that are subject to a formal agreement. A register of these is also published on the institution's website. Promotional material is not normally produced separately by partners and there is limited opportunity for the partner to amend the information provided by the institution. If a partner does intend to carry out marketing itself, there is contractual provision for the institution to approve this in advance and the institution's academic framework also makes provision for the oversight of any information that may not be in English. Websites of partners are routinely monitored as part of annual review and the Associate Dean (Partnerships) and Academic Quality Officer (Published Information) also have specific responsibilities for regular checks of partner websites.

3.7 Students are issued with transcripts on completion of an award. A Data Protection

Policy is in place which stipulates the period for which student records will be maintained after a student has left.

3.8 A thorough training programme is offered to agents up to three times a year, delivered via webinar and Skype and offering updates and refresher training on key aspects of the University as well as related matters such as changes to UKVI requirements.

3.9 There has been a Published Information Governance Group in place since January 2016 which acts as a cross-University forum for sharing good practice, promoting innovative developments and enabling liaison and supporting co-operation between key areas. The terms of reference for this Group are set out within the General Academic Regulations and it formally reports to the Education and Training Committee. The existence of this Group makes provision for enhancement activity with regard to maintaining the accuracy of published information.

3.10 The arrangements that the University has in place and the principles, policies and procedures that govern these are comprehensive and robust and therefore enable this Expectation to be met.

3.11 The review team examined documents that set out the University's approach to the Expectation, including principles, policies and procedures, and evidence that illustrated the operation of these, including handbooks, minutes and reports, training materials for agents, and comprehensive documentation relating to all activity of the McTimoney College of Chiropractic. The review team also met with a range of staff and students to explore their understanding and perception of the institution's management of information.

3.12 The General Academic Regulations, Manual of Policies and Procedures and University Handbook are clear and comprehensive documents and all easily accessible from the Governance page of the University's website. The University Handbook (which includes the Student Charter) and External Examiner Handbook distil key information for the appropriate audiences, students and external examiners respectively and are also readily accessible.

3.13 The institution monitors the management of public information through a formal Annual Report on the Quality of Public Information and this led to specific action with regard to the quality of information by partners.

3.14 In meeting with the review team, students confirmed that all relevant information is accessible and accurate.

3.15 The General Academic Regulations make provision for a student to request the full external examiner report, with the exception of a confidential report made direct to the Vice-Chancellor. Similarly, the University does not routinely provide students with the name, position and institution of their external examiners in the module and/or programme information provided to them. Rather, this is available through committee papers to student representatives and the student understanding is that other students would receive the list on request only. Student awareness of and familiarity with the external examining system was variable and there may be an opportunity for the institution to strengthen practice here.

3.16 The McTimoney College of Chiropractic initially appeared to be presented as a collaborative arrangement owing to the institution's relationship with the McTimoney Trust. This was further reinforced through the associated provision appearing on a separate website with different branding and a note that programmes were validated by BPP University. Transcripts for students registered on this provision also included an additional line that the programme was 'taught at McTimoney College of Chiropractic and awarded by BPP University'. After carefully considering the documentary evidence relating to this area of

provision and discussing the place of the provision with staff of the institution, the review team established that the McTimoney College of Chiropractic is a department within the School of Health. As the published information relating to this area of provision could be interpreted quite differently, the review team **recommends** that the institution revises the published information relating to the McTimoney College of Chiropractic so that it accurately reflects the status of the provision within the School of Health.

3.17 The review team also observed that the transcripts for distance-learning students did not reference distance learning as the mode of learning, even though this was the defining characteristic of the nature of these students' learning (see Expectation B10 above).

3.18 While the need for clarification with regard to the McTimoney College of Chiropractic is acknowledged, the review team considers that this constituted a minor omission or oversight in the overall context of the institution's approach to producing information for its intended audiences about the higher education it offers. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation on information is met and that the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

3.19 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) Handbook.

3.20 The Expectation for this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk is low.

3.21 There are two recommendations relevant to information. One relates to the public information about McTimoney College of Chiropractic and the other relates ensuring that information on transcripts is complete and fully reflects modes of study.

3.22 The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at BPP 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 University strategies that influence enhancement include the Strategy for Learning and Teaching, the Strategy for Assessment Enhancement, and the Technology Enhanced Learning Strategy. The LTAEC, its working groups, and institution-wide teams that include the Learning and Teaching Team are responsible for the discussion and dissemination of innovative developments and enhancements that directly or indirectly benefit the student learning experience. For example, the use of online technology has been used to support staff induction and refresher training. As the University has a wide geographical spread in the UK this led to the production of a Learning and Teaching Online Induction in 2014. Available to all staff at the University, it includes guidance on University academic regulations, effective feedback, teaching students with special educational needs and running webinars. Another example has been the Technology-Enhanced Learning Working Group, which organised online webinars for staff to measure interest in promoting innovative practices. The result was a Showcase in 2013, a full-day event featuring keynote speakers and demonstrating the use of innovative technologies in teaching. It was run by the Learning and Teaching Team and attended by over 150 staff from across the University.

4.2 The Technology-Enhanced Learning Strategy 2016-20 in particular supports a commitment to the development of digital technologies to beneficially support teaching and learning. Indeed, the University has pride in these enhancements, which further evolved recently following a University-wide review of digital literacy in 2016. Outputs have included staff and student conferences, conference papers, training programmes and the recruitment of eight student champions to support training and promote digital skills. A Microsoft Office Specialist qualification is also now offered to all students and the University submitted case studies for consideration to the first QAA Quality Code Enhancement Project Case Studies review in 2017.

4.3 The University has also been active in enhancing staff development opportunities and its HEA accredited Headway programme, launched in 2013, works alongside the PGCPPE programme to support staff in becoming HEA Fellows. Since launch, the Headway scheme has increased ten-fold the number of HEA Fellows at the University. Work is also ongoing within the University to further promote accessible learning, equality and inclusion. This has resulted in the Inclusion and Learning Support Team working in collaboration with the Learning and Teaching Team on a number of initiatives.

4.4 The review team concludes that the Expectation on enhancement is met and the associated level of risk is low, as the University supports and promotes enhancement, taking deliberate steps to improve the quality of learning opportunities and therefore the enhancement of student learning opportunities.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.5 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) Handbook.

4.6 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 identified in this area.

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

Glossary

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

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

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

Academic standards

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

Award

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

Awarding organisation

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

Blended learning

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

Credit(s)

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

Degree-awarding body

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

Distance learning

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

Dual award or double award

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

e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning.

Enhancement

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

Expectations

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

Flexible and distributed learning

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

Framework

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

Framework for higher education qualifications

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

Good practice

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

Learning opportunities

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

Learning outcomes

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

Multiple awards

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

Operational definition

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

Programme (of study)

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

Programme specifications

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

Quality Code

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

Reference points

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

Self-evaluation document

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

Subject Benchmark Statement

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

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)

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

Threshold academic standard

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

Virtual learning environment (VLE)

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

Widening participation

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

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