



Higher Education Review of Cambridge Regional College

November 2014

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Cambridge Regional College. The review took place from 4 to 6 November 2014 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Dr Sally Bentley
- Dr Amanda Wilcox
- Mr James Lovett (student reviewer).

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

In Higher Education Review the QAA review team:

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

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

In reviewing Cambridge Regional College the review team has also considered a theme selected for particular focus across higher education in England and Northern Ireland.

The [themes](#) for the academic year 2014-15 are Student Involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement and Student Employability,² and the provider is required to select, in consultation with student representatives, one of these themes to be explored through the review process.

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

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

² Higher Education Review themes: www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=106.

³ QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus.

⁴ Higher Education Review web pages: www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education/higher-education-review.

Amended judgement July 2015

Introduction

In November 2014, Cambridge Regional College underwent a Higher Education Review, which resulted in '**meets** UK expectations' judgements for the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding body and other awarding organisation; the quality of student learning opportunities; and the enhancement of student learning opportunities. The College also received a judgement of '**does not meet** UK expectations' for the quality of information produced about its provision

Negative judgements are subject to a formal follow-up by QAA, which involves the monitoring of an action plan produced by the College in response to the report findings.

The College published its action plan in May 2015 describing how it intended to address the recommendations, affirmations and good practice identified in the review, and has been working over the last six months to demonstrate how it has implemented that plan.

The follow-up process included progress updates and culminated in a desk-based analysis by two reviewers of the provider's progress reports and the supporting documentary evidence.

The desk-based analysis confirmed that the recommendations relevant to the quality of the information produced about its provision had been successfully addressed.

QAA Board decision and amended judgement

The team concluded that the College had made sufficient progress to recommend that the judgement be amended. The QAA Board accepted the team's recommendation and the judgement is now formally amended. The College's judgements are now as follows.

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding body and other awarding organisation **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of the information produced about its provision **meets** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

The review can be considered to be signed off as complete.

Findings from the follow-up process

The team found that the College has made progress against the recommendations as follows.

Recommendations - Expectation C

During the 2014 review visit, the review team identified a wide range of errors and inconsistencies in the information available to both students and the general public across a range of media. The review team considered the evidence provided by the College and identified that some issues remained with the accuracy of the revised information such as minor discrepancies in the consistency of a course title. Following correspondence with the College, this was corrected and the definitive list of programmes provided by the College is aligned to the information on the website, the handbooks and the unit guides. The review team noted that the course leaflets have been amended to reflect the appropriate award and that, more generally, the information provided by the College is now fit for purpose, accurate and trustworthy.

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Cambridge Regional College

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Cambridge Regional College.

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding body and other awarding organisation **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **does not meet** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to Cambridge Regional College.

By March 2015:

- make sure that all current published information is fit for purpose and trustworthy (Expectation C).

By September 2015:

- articulate clearly and comprehensively its quality framework for all of its programmes (Expectation A2.1)
- develop policies and procedures to enable the College to have a clear oversight of assessment (Expectations B6 and A3.2)
- articulate clearly and comprehensively the annual monitoring of all programmes (Expectation B8)
- develop, implement and maintain a process for internal periodic review for all programmes (Expectation B8)
- develop, implement and maintain a policy and procedure for the production of published information (Expectation C)
- strengthen oversight to enable the implementation of strategic enhancement initiatives (Expectation Enhancement).

Affirmation of action being taken

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

- The steps taken to strengthen staff development arrangements (Expectation B3).
- The steps taken to enhance internal moderation procedures (Expectation B6).

Theme: Student Employability

As a vocational College, all programmes are oriented towards the career development of the student and the development of the sub-regional workforce. The College recognises that its engagement with employers is under-developed in its higher education provision compared

with its further education provision and it aspires to involve employers more in portfolio development and delivery. It does not have a separate employability strategy, or equivalent, and chooses to embed its approach to employability in everything it does.

The College is committed to integrating learning, work and experience of industry-standard equipment and routines. Its higher education programmes are principally designed by their degree-awarding body and awarding organisation and opportunities to involve employers in the design of the courses is limited, but employers have given their support to the development of some new courses, predominantly Higher National programmes. Some Higher National programmes include visits to employers and guest speakers.

The College is committed to offering real and meaningful workplace experience. Most programmes include work-related experience, whether work-based learning in foundation degrees or work experience in Higher National programmes. Students find their work-related experiences relevant and helpful in their studies and they provide them with stronger employability skills.

There is a commitment to support the skills development and professionalisation of the local workforce in the College's overall and higher education specific Strategic Plans. Many of the College's higher education students are in employment and are sent to the College to gain higher level skills. Two areas of their higher education portfolio are accredited by professional bodies, Architectural Technology and Construction, and this supports progression into relevant careers.

The careers teams, based in the whole-College Student Support Centre, provide both general and specific careers advice to students. Careers staff are professionally qualified and trained. Students find their advice and guidance helpful.

The College is aware of the importance of embedding professional and employability skills in its courses and is committed to workforce development. Students have the opportunity to gain relevant work experience and links with employers are continuing to strengthen.

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

About Cambridge Regional College

Cambridge Regional College is a large further education college located in the City of Cambridge primarily serving the communities of Cambridgeshire, north Essex, west Suffolk, east Bedfordshire and north east Hertfordshire.

The College offers a small range of higher education programmes with 137 full and part-time students currently registered on higher education programmes. The College has a partnership agreement with its degree-awarding body, Anglia Ruskin University, to deliver three foundation degrees and offers a number of Higher National Diplomas (HND) and Higher National Certificates (HNC) on behalf of its awarding organisation, Pearson. At the time of the review the College offered the following programmes:

- HNC Business
- HND Business
- HNC Electrical and Electronic Engineering
- Foundation Degree Construction (Years 1-3)
- Foundation Degree Architectural Technology (Year 1 only)
- Foundation Degree Early Years Play Work & Education (Years 1–3)
- HNC Sport
- HND Sport
- HNC Public Services
- HNC Travel & Tourism Management.

Since the last QAA review (Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review in May 2010), the College has refined its strategy for higher education by seeking developmental opportunities for providing management and professional programmes. In 2011 the College expanded its higher education provision to offer programmes in Business, Computing and Systems Development and Sports and Exercise Sciences (Coaching and Sport Development). The College further expanded its higher education portfolio in the 2012-13 academic year.

In 2012 the College reviewed its management structure by creating six directorates led by Senior Management Team members. There are two Deputy Principals who lead the Directorate of Teaching and Learning and the Directorate of Corporate Services; an Assistant Principal who leads Employer Engagement and an Assistant Principal who leads Quality and Innovation; and a Head of Human Resources.

Since the last review the College has made some progress in implementing the recommendations and developing the good practice set out in the report.

It was considered advisable that the College negotiates with the University to disaggregate individual College data from the annual monitoring and external examiner reports so that the College is able to take effective and relevant action for the benefit of College students. The review team noted that the College is still working with the University to achieve this.

The review team also considered the progress made by the College in addressing a number of recommendations considered desirable at the last review and noted that:

- the College is still considering ways of more effectively communicating feedback to students from questionnaires conducted by the University
- the College has not introduced workplace mentoring and handbooks for its Foundation Degree in Construction students because it does not consider this necessary as the work-based module on the Foundation Degree in Construction is not assessed

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- some progress has been made to monitor module handbooks for consistency and accuracy to ensure parity across all programmes but this is not yet complete
- some progress has been made in working with the University to ensure that College students and staff receive information in a timely manner, particularly assessment information
- some progress has been made in working with the University to ensure that reference is made to the College's higher education programmes on the University's website.

The review team considered the ways in which the College is building on features of good practice identified in the Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review and noted that:

- the College continues to develop its management and reporting structure for higher education provision
- the College continues to develop its monitoring processes, including student evaluations, to supplement the aggregated information supplied by Anglia Ruskin University although it identified in its self-evaluation document inconsistencies in its monitoring processes
- the College has not yet extended its mentor system and the mentor handbook for the Foundation Degree in Early Years Play Work and Education (see recommendation).

Explanation of the findings about Cambridge Regional College

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

d) consider and take account of relevant subject benchmark statements.

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

Findings

1.1 The College delivers programmes designed and approved by its degree-awarding body, Anglia Ruskin University (the University) and awarding organisation, Pearson. It has appropriate approval, contracts and agreements to verify this which set out its responsibilities. It is aware of its duty to maintain standards and exercises this duty in accordance with the procedures of its awarding body and awarding organisation. There are guidelines for managers on the actions they need to take to ensure they meet the key elements of the Quality Code.

1.2 These arrangements allow Expectation A1 to be met in theory.

1.3 The review team reviewed documentation and discussed the maintenance of threshold standards and the use of external reference points with staff at the College.

1.4 Programme and module specifications are designed by the degree-awarding body and awarding organisation. The College is aware that the programmes are positioned on the appropriate level of the relevant framework. External examiners and verifiers confirm that the teaching and assessment of the programmes is at the required standard.

1.5 The College is clear about how the programmes are aligned to the relevant qualification descriptor. In particular, it is aware of how its foundation degrees fulfil the expectations of the *Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark*, including within them such elements as work-based learning, flexible full and part-time modes of study and opportunity for students to progress to honours degrees.

1.6 Naming qualifications are in accordance with the titling conventions specified in the frameworks for higher education qualifications (for example HND, BA). See also section 3.

1.7 The qualifications offered by the College are designed and approved by the University and Pearson. It has positively defined learning outcomes which are well understood by teaching staff and students.

1.8 Staff understand credit values, their relationship to programme delivery and the associated volume of study. Staff are able to offer flexible timetable arrangements without compromising the need to provide agreed study time.

1.9 The University and Pearson are responsible for aligning programmes to the Subject Benchmark Statements during development and approval. Staff are aware of the Subject Benchmark Statements relevant to their programme and how they have been used in programme design.

1.10 Two areas of the College's higher education provision are accredited by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies. The Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists (CIAT) accredits the Foundation Degree in Architectural Technology and The Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) accredits the Foundation Degree in Construction. Staff are aware of the expectations of these institutes.

1.11 Staff development has been offered on the Quality Code, alongside training on the Higher Education Review briefing.

1.12 The review team concludes that Expectation A1 is met. The level of risk is low because the College does not have responsibility for programme development and staff have sufficient knowledge of the academic reference points to support programme delivery.

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

1.13 The College works within the academic frameworks and regulations of its degree-awarding body and awarding organisation in order to secure the standards of its programmes. These frameworks and regulations guide the College on delivery matters related to credits and level of study.

1.14 The College has a complex internal quality framework for a provider with a small number of higher education students. This has arisen, in part, because the College has embedded its higher education quality systems within its further education structures and processes as well as creating some higher education specific structures (notably its Curriculum Management Committee). Staff found it difficult to clearly describe the committee structure, staff responsibilities (particularly those of the Faculties) and some of its key processes (particularly monitoring and review). The committee/meeting structure is named in a confusing manner with the flow of information from one meeting to another not clear. Documentation aimed at representing the arrangements for the management of quality and standards in its higher education provision is not clear or coherent, needs careful verbal explanation and contains much duplication without clarity about each document's scope, purpose and relative status.

1.15 The College relies on the University's policies, procedures and guidance documents for its foundation degree provision and does not describe to staff how the University's systems integrate with College systems and processes. The Staff Handbook contains a collection of decontextualised documents, which offer guidance and forms for some of the quality management processes and procedures. In particular there is a potentially useful set of 'Management Guidelines', which currently describe a mixture of existing, new and potential activities.

1.16 These arrangements allow Expectation A2.1 to be met in theory, because, despite a confusing articulation of its arrangements, there is an appropriate framework in place. However, there remains real potential for confusion, particularly if the College realises its plans for growth. The review team **recommends** that, by September 2015, the College articulates clearly and comprehensively its quality framework for all of its programmes.

1.17 The review team studied documentation and met staff and students in order to evaluate how effectively the College's internal systems are implemented.

1.18 The frameworks and regulations of the awarding body and awarding organisation are implemented by the College despite its cumbersome systems and processes and helped by the small scale of the provision. Their implementation is overseen by the Innovation and Quality Team, with the Head of Development and Higher Education Responsibilities having particular oversight of the higher education portfolio. Staff found it difficult to articulate how the committees, systems and processes related to each other and where the responsibility for specific processes lay. They acknowledged the naming conventions of the meetings and processes were confusing.

1.19 The review team thus concludes that Expectation A2.1 is met. The level of risk is moderate because there are weaknesses in the operation of the College's governance structure and a lack of clarity about its quality management processes.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

Findings

1.20 Responsibility for the maintenance of the definitive records of each programme and qualification lies with its degree-awarding body and its awarding organisation. The exact responsibilities delegated to the College by the awarding body and the awarding organisation are laid down in partnership agreements.

1.21 These arrangements allow Expectation A2.2 to be met in theory.

1.22 The team examined documents relating to the College provisions in this area such as the Partnership Agreement with the University, the Cambridge Regional College Quality Assurance Framework, programme specifications, and module definition forms. The team also met staff and students to discuss the College's approach in this area.

1.23 The College has a partnership agreement with the University which clearly outlines the programmes it is approved to offer. The University is responsible for the programme specification for each foundation degree and for ensuring that credit and qualifications are awarded where outcomes and threshold standards have been met. Approval and changes to programmes are the responsibility of the University as set out in the academic regulations. For Pearson programmes, the College is responsible for the production of programme specifications and programme handbooks as set out in the Higher Education Staff Handbook. Records of study and certificates are produced by Pearson. The University retains responsibility for the production of certificates and transcripts for the foundation degree programmes.

1.24 The review team concludes that Expectation 2.2 is met. The level of risk is low because the College does not have responsibility for maintaining the definitive record of programmes and staff are aware of the reference points for delivery and assessment of each programme.

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

1.25 Responsibility for the design and approval of higher education programmes delivered by the College lies with its degree-awarding body and awarding organisation. They ensure that academic standards for each programme 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. In addition to these processes, the College has an internal approval process which has been designed to address its own requirements prior to the awarding body and awarding organisation approval.

1.26 For the University, a programme is approved for an indefinite period except in cases where a professional, statutory or regulatory body requires a finite period of approval. Each programme is subject to a five-yearly periodic review process. Revisions to curriculum structure, content and delivery may be made in the intervening period, subject to approval in advance, under the Curriculum Revisions process. For Higher National programmes, the approval for the College to deliver these programmes is valid for as long as there are students registered on the programme.

1.27 These arrangements allow Expectation A3.1 relating to academic standards to be met in theory.

1.28 The team reviewed documentation and met staff and students in order to evaluate how effectively the College engages with the degree-awarding body and awarding organisation's processes and to determine if its own internal systems are implemented appropriately to ensure that it fulfils these external requirements.

1.29 The College's internal programme approval process is largely a business case assessment of the viability to run proposed programmes. For programmes which can present a positive business case, they are proposed for approval by the Head of Development and Higher Education to the College's Senior Management Team before approval is sought from the degree-awarding body or awarding organisation. The process has recently been enhanced to incorporate elements of *Chapter B1: Programme Design, Development and Approval* of the Quality Code and to ensure that staff eligibility to teach on higher education programmes is validated. In meetings with the review team, staff were aware of the process and understood how it fitted in with approval processes for the degree-awarding body and awarding organisation.

1.30 The College's internal review processes include some discussion of whether courses are maintaining UK threshold academic standards, although there is some confusion in the review documentation between the concept of threshold standards, standardisation for the Higher National programmes and the high standards of a given programme.

1.31 The College delivers programmes fully designed by its degree-awarding body and awarding organisation for delivery at multiple sites and, as such, does not have a role in the modification of programme contents. See Expectation B4. There is some evidence of staff

involvement in the approval of foundation degree programmes with the University for Early Years, Construction and Architectural Technology.

1.32 The review team thus concludes that Expectation A3.1 is met. The level of risk is low because the College fulfils the expectations of its awarding body and awarding organisation in terms of its maintenance of threshold standards.

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

1.33 Responsibility for specifying programme and course learning outcomes lies with the College's degree-awarding body and awarding organisation. They ensure that credit is only awarded where student achievement has been demonstrated through assessment and that the required academic standards have been met. The College is responsible for fulfilling these requirements and, in order to do so, has procedures designed to ensure staff teach and assess the approved learning outcomes at programme and course level.

1.34 For University programmes, assessment tasks are provided by the degree-awarding body. College course teams internally moderate student work which is then subject to moderation at regional moderation events.

1.35 For Higher National programmes, assessment tasks are devised by the College against the awarding organisation's criteria. The College provides staff with a variety of supporting documentation to assist this process, although these are not higher education specific. The College is responsible for internal verification and moderation of assessment tasks and student work prior to it being externally verified by the external examiner. This is carried out by members of the course team against College criteria.

1.36 The College provides a comprehensive student support service which determines individual student needs and liaises with tutors to determine what reasonable adjustments to assessment processes are required for those with protected characteristics. For students on University programmes, this is carried out in collaboration with the degree-awarding body.

1.37 These arrangements allow Expectation A3.2 on academic standards to be met in theory.

1.38 The review team reviewed documentation and met staff and students in order to evaluate how effectively the College's internal systems are implemented.

1.39 Although the College claims that there are clear policies and procedures in place to support the assessment process, in both 2012-13 and 2013-14 external examiners of Higher National programmes noted issues with contextualisation of grading themes, monitoring of the sampling and standardisation of internal verification. In light of these issues, the College has instigated a Courses Causing Concern Panel to identify and monitor courses and to resolve issues which have been identified. Although cumbersome, this additional control is effective in ensuring that these and related issues are addressed.

1.40 Staff and students have a clear understanding of approved learning outcomes at programme and course level and how they should and can be demonstrated through assessment. Staff are becoming increasingly familiar with the Quality Code through the recent introduction of staff development sessions and are starting to draw upon appropriate

external reference points including Subject Benchmark Statements to inform their teaching and assessment practices. Examination boards and external examiners confirm that the appropriate standards are met. Staff participate in development events related to the assessment and moderation of student work. The assessment guidance provided by the College, although collectively appropriate, is difficult to navigate and can be confusing due to the number of documents involved. This has led to a recommendation under Expectation B6 that the College develops policies and procedures to enable it to have a clear oversight of assessment.

1.41 Assessment decisions are reached through degree-awarding body exam boards for University programmes and by College exam boards for Higher National programmes (with the results requiring external verification prior to release). There is, however, recent evidence that not all Higher National programmes have held an end of year exam board to formally sign off student results. The College indicates that this will be tackled by the recently enhanced verification process which checks that quality assurance processes are implemented consistently.

1.42 The review team concludes that Expectation A3.2 is met. The level of risk is low because the College is successfully meeting the requirements of its degree-awarding body and awarding organisation by awarding credit where learning outcomes have been met as demonstrated through its assessment processes.

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

1.43 Responsibility for the monitoring and review of foundation degree programmes lies with the degree-awarding body. The College is required to undertake annual monitoring of the foundation degree programmes as documented by the degree-awarding body. Under the degree-awarding body's regulations, a programme is approved for an indefinite period except in cases where a professional, statutory or regulatory body requires a finite period of approval. However, approval is subject to a periodic review process every five years. Revisions to curriculum structure, content and delivery may be made in the intervening period, subject to approval in advance, via the Curriculum Revisions process.

1.44 Responsibility for the periodic review and re-approval of Higher National programmes lies with the awarding organisation, Pearson. The awarding organisation does not engage with the College in any periodic review process. As such, there is no opportunity for the College to consider matters relating to threshold standards as part of a cross-cutting periodic review process through the awarding organisation. The College has no internal periodic review system in place. This has led to a recommendation in this area detailed under Expectation B8.

1.45 The College has an annual monitoring process, known as Course Review, which has been adapted to its higher education-specific provision. This provides the opportunity for matters relating to threshold standards to be commented upon.

1.46 These arrangements allow Expectation A3.3 on academic standards to be met in theory.

1.47 The review team discussed these documents and procedures with staff and students in order to evaluate the staff's understanding of their part in the maintenance of threshold standards.

1.48 The College conforms to the monitoring requirements of its degree-awarding body and awarding organisation. The annual monitoring reports that it submits to its awarding body contain explicit reassurance that external examiners have confirmed that the standards of the course are comparable to other higher education institutions. This is also discussed under Expectation B8.

1.49 The College's annual Course Review process for its Higher National and foundation degree programmes provide the opportunity for courses to confirm that standards are at the required level and include comments on any actions that need to be taken, but, in practice, the reports do not routinely or explicitly refer to threshold standards. The course reviews use the word 'standards' in varying ways referring to standardisation and high standards, rather than the standards of its degree-awarding body and awarding organisation and UK threshold standards.

1.50 In its self-evaluation document, the College has recognised that higher education Course Reviews have been weak and not systematically undertaken. The review process

has recently undergone some specific revisions to address these issues and reviews were carried out for all programmes at the end of the 2013-14 academic year. However, the process has not yet been systematically evaluated to ensure that it provides the College with effective oversight of all of its programmes.

1.51 The review team concludes that Expectation A3.3 is met. The level of risk is low because the College satisfactorily participates in the monitoring and review procedures of its degree-awarding body and awarding organisation.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.52 The College delivers programmes designed and approved by its degree-awarding body and awarding organisation and works with external examiners identified by them. It implements University and Pearson processes regarding external examiners as detailed under Expectation B7. In addition, it seeks to draw on independent external expertise whenever it believes it is helpful.

1.53 These arrangements allow Expectation 3.4 to be met in theory.

1.54 The review team studied documentation and met with staff in order to evaluate how effective the College is at involving independent external participation in the management of threshold standards.

1.55 The College routinely draws on the expertise of the University and Pearson. In particular, working relationships between programme-level staff at the University and the College are strong and effective.

1.56 An external adviser has been used to advise the College on its quality management systems and employers sometimes contribute to discussions on the currency of their curriculum.

1.57 Responsibility for ensuring independent external participation in the management of threshold standards predominantly rests with its degree-awarding body and awarding organisation, but the College makes effective use of the advice they provide to ensure it maintains academic standards.

1.58 The review team concludes that Expectation A3.4 is met. The level of risk is low because, although the College uses relatively few external advisors, it does not have responsibility for programme development or academic standards.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

1.60 All of the applicable Expectations in this area have been met and risk is judged low in all but one case where the risk is judged moderate. There are two recommendations arising which indicate that the College should articulate clearly and comprehensively its quality framework for all of its programmes and should develop policies and procedures to enable the College to have a clear oversight of assessment.

1.61 The review team concludes that the maintenance of the threshold academic standards of awards offered on behalf of the College's degree-awarding body and awarding organisation **meets** UK expectations.

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Chapter B1: Programme Design and Approval

Findings

2.1 The responsibility for the design, approval or modification of programmes and approval lies with the College's degree-awarding body and awarding organisation. The College's portfolio is offered within the context of its Strategic Plan for Excellence and further contextualised in its Higher Education Strategy, which aims to meet the educational needs of local people and the requirements of the local and regional workforce. To ensure that the portfolio remains aligned to the strategic plan, the higher education Performance and Business Review summarises the curriculum plans of the faculties which are considered by the Senior Management Team. The College also has a process to determine if there is a business case for it to run any new programme before it seeks approval from the degree-awarding body or awarding organisation.

2.2 These arrangements allow Expectation B1 to be met in theory.

2.3 The review team examined how the processes outlined in paragraph 2.1 operate in practice by considering the examples of course approval documentation provided by the College and through discussions with staff.

2.4 The College's internal process for programme approval is a desk-based workflow that requires course teams to submit a programme specification, course handbook, sample assignment, and resource requirements. The College reviewed and enhanced this process in April 2014 reflecting identified areas for improvement coming from the higher education self-evaluation document (2012-13) to include some requirement of the recognition of external benchmarks and the submission of the curricula vitae of anticipated teaching staff to ensure that they meet higher education requirements. Although staff resources and staff development are considered as part of the approval process, it is only during the 2014-15 academic year that the College has formalised the offer of higher education-specific staff development relating to the teaching and assessment of new courses at higher education level.

2.5 In meetings with staff, the review team heard that new programmes were generally proposed on the identification of a market need. The programme approval process is applied to test business case feasibility and once confirmed, these programmes are then signed off by the Head of Development and Higher Education and then discussed by the College's Senior Management Team who are responsible for deciding which programmes will be proposed to the degree-awarding body and awarding organisation for approval. In addition to this internal process, College staff have the opportunity to contribute towards the development of the University-led approval of the Foundation Degree in Early Years through attendance at an informal programme approval planning meeting and at the formal approval board.

2.6 For Higher National programmes, the College complies with the awarding organisation's approval procedure, which is also a desk-based process that covers similar

matters to the College's internal process (including resources and staff development). The College does not approve awards for third parties.

2.7 The review team concludes that Expectation B1 is met. The level of risk is low because the College does not have responsibility for the design, approval or modification of programmes, which rests with the degree-awarding body and awarding organisation.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.8 The College has a clear Admissions Policy which includes information on the College's approach to accessibility and diversity to ensure that all applicants have equality of opportunity throughout the process. Entry requirements for the degree-awarding body programmes are set by the University and those for the awarding organisation are set by the College. Students apply directly to the College and all course entry requirements are published on the College website. Applicants have the right of appeal as set out in the College' complaints procedure and the University's Admissions Complaints and Appeals procedure.

2.9 These arrangements allow Expectation B2 to be met in theory.

2.10 The review team analysed the self-evaluation document and the evidence pertaining to admissions which included the Admissions Policy, the Higher Education Regulations, and the College website. The team also discussed the operation of the policy with students and staff.

2.11 While there is no formal training for staff recruiting higher education students at present, a training plan has been devised and agreed for 2014-15 and includes specific training on the recruitment, selection and admission of students into higher education. Currently, applications for entry are reviewed by the Admissions Officers who check application forms, shortlist applicants for interview, and confirm offers following a decision by the interviewing member of staff. Failed applicants are entitled to feedback and the College may advise of alternative options either at interview or subsequently by letter. Students are satisfied with the College's arrangements as regards recruitment, selection, and admission, and praised the College for the support they received during the process.

2.12 The review team concludes that Expectation B2 is met. The level of risk is low because the review team considers that the design and operation of the policies and procedures to admit students are clear, fair, explicit and consistently applied.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.13 The College's approach to teaching and learning is in line with its strategic objectives. These articulate its commitment to organising its approach to teaching around the needs of the learner using deep learning principles and fostering the development of professional skills that meet the needs of employers. It is inclusive and is designed to meet the needs of students from a broad range of educational and personal backgrounds.

2.14 The College recognises the challenge of creating a higher education learning culture with small numbers of higher education students in a large further education college. It has recently revised its Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy, which, like its forebear, covers both further and higher education. The new strategy, in place from September 2014, is aligned to the College's Strategic Plan for Excellence. It articulates the new vision for delivering excellent teaching through the use of deep learning, andragogic approaches and appropriate use of digital technologies. A contextual note has been added to the strategy which confirms that the new strategy includes higher education teaching and learning.

2.15 Learning and teaching is monitored through the higher education-specific Curriculum Management Committee which considers the annual Course Review and a cross-section of management information. It is also reported on as part of the higher education-specific Performance and Business Review meetings.

2.16 The implementation of the College's new Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy is supported by a new Staff Development Strategy. This contains a description of the expectations of scholarly activity for higher education teachers. Staff curricula vitae are submitted to the degree-awarding body and awarding organisation as part of the approval process to ensure they are appropriately qualified and/or experienced. The College has doubled its staff development funding and is committed to enabling staff to develop both subject, teaching and professional skills.

2.17 In addition to its general staff development activities for all staff at the College, there is a new programme of internal staff development events bespoke to higher education staff. Staff new to the College have a general induction, as well some peer support from higher education experienced staff if they are new to higher education.

2.18 There is a regular system for peer observation for all College staff together with guidance notes on outstanding teaching, but the College has realised that there has been insufficient focused observation of higher education teaching and there are plans to ensure that higher education staff observe higher education teaching in the future. Excellence Coaches work with staff needing specific support and the College has identified those with the experience needed to support higher education staff. College staff have regular performance reviews.

2.19 These arrangements allow Expectation B3 to be met in theory.

2.20 The review team evaluated the effectiveness of the College's approach to learning and teaching by consulting documentation and discussing learning and teaching with staff and students.

2.21 The majority of teaching staff are qualified to at least the level at which they are teaching, although the number who have higher degrees varies significantly by programme. Most staff have or are taking a teaching qualification. No staff are accredited by the Higher Education Academy. Most staff undertake scholarly activity and keep up to date with relevant professional or industry practice in the five days assigned annually. Students report that their teaching is appropriately challenging and supportive. External examiners confirm that staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. Excellence Coaches have provided useful staff development on the virtual learning environment (VLE).

2.22 Increasingly, new staff are receiving peer support from higher education experienced staff, which they value highly. Before this year, staff development specifically for higher education staff was weak and was not differentiated from further education staff development. The new programme of events for higher education staff running since September 2014 is useful to staff. Recently, the College has made a step-change in its commitment to staff development for its higher education staff and the review team **affirms** the steps taken to strengthen staff development arrangements.

2.23 Learning and teaching is effectively monitored through the Curriculum Management and the Performance and Business Review meetings and the annual monitoring structures. Management information to inform the evaluation of learning and teaching, relating to student retention, progression and achievement, is submitted as required to its degree-awarding body and awarding organisation. It is considered at the Curriculum Management meetings to allow the identification of trends and aberrations. The data indicates that the College is steadily improving its key performance indicators offering reassurance that its strategy is having an impact on student learning.

2.24 Overall, the review team concludes that Expectation B3 is met. The level of risk is low because learning and teaching issues will be addressed by the full implementation of the staff development activity recently initiated.

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

2.25 The College is committed to enabling all its students to achieve their potential. The wide range of support services and resources in place for its further education students is also open to its higher education students. These services and systems include learning resources, student support, careers and IT. There is also a Higher Education Student Advisor whose responsibility it is to advise students on regulations, extensions and mitigation.

2.26 The College has a VLE to support teaching, learning and assessment.

2.27 These College-wide services and systems provide a support framework which enables Expectation B4 to be met in theory.

2.28 The review team evaluated the arrangements and resources the College has in place to enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential by scrutinising documentation and discussing arrangements with staff and students.

2.29 The College has strengthened its induction for students progressing on to its higher education courses, which this year's students have found to be helpful. This induction includes input from central professional support services including learning resource and student support teams. It includes sessions on study skills for higher education and plagiarism. Additional academic skills development is embedded in programme units and both staff and students recognised the value of these sessions to enable student achievement. Professional support service teams, such as careers advisers and learning support workers, also offer tailored sessions for each programme on request. The development of professional or vocational skills is an integral part of the College's higher education programmes given their nature and the College's commitment to the employability of its students. These skills are developed through the curriculum and supported by the provision of specialist facilities and relevant work experience.

2.30 The College has a small higher education cohort (137 at the time of the visit) and staff know their students well offering good levels of individual or in-class individual support. The College does not offer a standardised personal tutor system, but there is an expectation that all students have access to academic tutorial support. The College is aware that Higher National course teams have not been consistent in providing these in the past and the students have often chosen not to attend tutorials when they have been offered. Tutorials are now scheduled for all courses and students met by the review team are aware of the expectation that they should attend the scheduled slots. Students found this approach to tutorial support appropriate. The College has also recently drafted some higher education tutorial guidelines.

2.31 Students find the College's general student services to be a useful way of accessing advice about their studies and future careers. Some students are also familiar with the role of the Higher Education Student Advisor. Students find the information in the higher education Student Handbook to be helpful and this is available through the VLE.

2.32 Academic learning resources are provided through the Learning Resource Centre. Foundation degree students also have access to the paper and online resources of the University. The College is increasingly making use of electronic resources which allows

students to access reading material and journals at all times and it is committed to developing this further. A dedicated study and resource room has recently been established in the Learning Resource Centre for higher education students. Students are generally positive about the College's learning resources. Learning Resource Centre staff are appropriately qualified, well networked and keep abreast of the latest developments in learning resources. A member of the Learning Resource Centre sits on the higher education Curriculum Management Meetings where course-specific resources are discussed. External examiners endorse the appropriateness of the resources provided by the College. Where students have requested additional learning resources, these have been provided.

2.33 The College ensures that there are fair and equal learning opportunities for all learners. It offers a range of specialised support to students with specific learning difficulties and those with protected characteristics. Staff and students are clear about how students can access this support. There are prompts to students at different stages of the student journey if their specific learning needs are not picked up at application. Staff have a good knowledge of the background of each student.

2.34 The campus is fully Disability Discrimination Act compliant and accessible. The College has committed £100,000 based on a recent audit to improve access further. The College enables students to access the Disabled Students Allowance and has a track record of making reasonable adjustments where needed. Students are aware of the support available to students with specific learning needs.

2.35 Training and support on inclusive pedagogic practice is provided at College level, embedded in the College's teacher-training programme and provided by the Excellence Coaches.

2.36 The College takes a systematic approach to the development and review of its physical infrastructure, including IT and classroom facilities. In addition, course and management teams can review resources and facilities and request improvements through the budget planning cycle. Recent examples of this are new sport and engineering facilities. There is a commitment to ensure specialist spaces conform to appropriate accessibility and health and safety expectations. Facilities and equipment are discussed at the Higher Education Curriculum Management Meetings. Staff, students and external examiners report that the College's learning infrastructure is fit for purpose.

2.37 The College's VLE contains a wide range of course information, learning resources and guidance on academic skills and has access on and off-site. Students highly value the VLE and make regular and routine use of it. They are able to easily access their grades through it. Staff development on its use is available from the Excellence Coaches. The quality of the VLE's resources are audited by the Excellence Coaches as part of the Internal Quality Review process. Foundation degree students also have access to the University's VLE.

2.38 The review team concludes Expectation B4 is met. The level of risk is low because the College offers a wide range of support services, which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential.

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

2.39 The College's approach to student involvement is set out in its Learner Voice Strategy and articulated to students through the mutually agreed Higher Education Student Partnership Agreement. The Higher Education Student Partnership Agreement highlights the strategies employed by the College in this area to create an environment within which staff and students can discuss enhancements to the student and learning experience.

2.40 Students are represented at various levels within the College including the Faculty Board, Curriculum Management Meetings, the College's Student Liaison Committee which is chaired by the Principal, higher education forums and annual Higher Education Course Review Meetings. Training is provided to assist students in using these fora effectively. The College also has a formal system of one-to-one tutorials at course level where concerns can be fed back and other issues raised.

2.41 The College's policies and procedures allow Expectation B5 to be met in theory.

2.42 The review team evaluated documents such as the self-evaluation document, the Higher Education Strategy, the Higher Education Student Partnership Agreement, and the Learner Voice Strategy to examine the College's approach to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience. The review team also met students and staff to discuss the effectiveness of the College's provision as regards student engagement.

2.43 The College recognises that higher education learner participation in representation and feedback activities has been problematic in the past due, in part, to the part-time attendance of students and it is intending to improve this by introducing a number of actions, for example, by running the higher education forum on more than one day or to agree a common teaching day to enable higher education students to participate more fully. The students with whom the review team met reported that they feel very well supported by the College and that they have a clear means of raising issues and that issues which can be remedied almost always are. Students actively engage with the student representative system and student representatives regularly feedback the outcomes and action plans from meetings.

2.44 Overall, the review team concludes that Expectation B5 is met. The level of risk is low because the College actively engages with its student body and procedures are clear.

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

2.45 The degree-awarding body is responsible for all aspects, other than marking of student work, of the development and provision of assessment for foundation degree programmes. College teams internally moderate student work prior to attending regional moderation meetings with the University. External examiners are satisfied that moderation and marking is reliable.

2.46 The College is responsible for both the design and implementation of assessments using guidance provided by the awarding organisation for Higher National programmes. The College produces a range of information and guidance in various publications including the higher education staff handbook, the College assessment policy, the College assessment handbook, the College mitigating circumstances procedure and the College internal verification policy. In their entirety, these documents are comprehensive. However the review team found it difficult to find a single comprehensive source of the College's assessment process and requirements nor any document which explained how the College implemented the University's assessment expectations. The review team **recommends** that, by September 2015, the College develops policies and procedures to enable them to have a clear oversight of assessment.

2.47 The College has a policy for the recognition of prior learning and details of this process for students are outlined in the Higher National handbooks and on the College website. Standardisation of course handbooks for 2014-15 will improve information on this process for students. Course leaders are expected to support students through this process in liaison with the awarding organisation.

2.48 All proposals for accreditation of prior learning from foundation degree students are directed through the University.

2.49 These arrangements allow Expectation B6 to be met in theory.

2.50 The review team examined documentation including the policies, examples of internal verification, minutes of assessment boards, module information packs and guidance materials for staff, and met staff and students. The team also considered the annual Course Review documentation which demonstrates how external feedback from examiners and students is used to review the appropriateness of assessment.

2.51 Information about assessment is made available to University students in course handbooks and programme regulations and through the University website. Higher national students are provided with information about assessment through the VLE and higher education student handbook which has been enhanced and standardised for the 2014-15 academic year ensuring that consistent information is available to students. Students agreed that this document was useful. Evaluation of assessment practice takes place through the end of course review, where issues raised have led to the enhancement of processes or documentation.

2.52 The College has a policy governing internal verification but issues have been raised regarding consistency of compliance and sample sizes for moderation of student work. In order to address these issues, the process for document sign-off has been enhanced and regular standardisation events at higher education course team leaders' meetings have been scheduled for the coming academic year. The review team **affirms** the steps taken to enhance internal moderation procedures.

2.53 Staff suitability in relation to assessment is determined through the College's internal programme approval process. For foundation degrees, this initially takes place by the submission of curricula vitae through the College's internal approvals process prior to interrogation through the awarding body's approval process. For Higher National programmes, the College's internal approval process monitors the suitability of staff by the submission of curricula vitae. The College has recognised that it needs to provide more staff support and training on the management of higher education assessment, good assessment design, internal verification and moderation and, for 2014-15, has introduced specific development and support sessions on higher education assessment.

2.54 While students show overall satisfaction with the feedback on their assessments, some students on the Foundation Degree in Construction indicated through the student submission that the feedback that they receive is too generic and that they do not always get written feedback with their assignments. This issue is being addressed by the College and when the review team met construction students they indicated that they were happy with the level of feedback received. Generally in the meetings with the review team, students indicated that assessment tasks were relevant and varied and that feedback was extensive and promptly delivered. Individual tutorial time is scheduled for all higher education programmes to ensure that feedback can be accommodated during normal study time. Some Higher National external examiners have commented that feedback needs to be more developmental around the grading criteria. The College intends to monitor the quality of feedback through standardisation events planned for 2014-15.

2.55 Boards of examiners for University programmes are conducted in accordance with the degree-awarding body's regulations. The College introduced assessment boards in accordance with the awarding organisation's guidelines in 2012-13, but external examiners reports indicate that these are not yet employed consistently across all Higher National programmes. The College has now introduced additional measures to ensure consistency of exam boards across all programmes.

2.56 The College's internal processes ensure that the assessment of students is robust, valid and reliable and that the award of qualifications and credit are based on the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. Where issues have been drawn to the attention of the College by students or the degree-awarding body or awarding organisation, action has been taken to resolve them.

2.57 The review team concludes that Expectation A6 is met. The level of risk is moderate because, although the quality assurance procedures are broadly adequate they have some shortcomings in terms of the rigour with which they are applied.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining

Findings

2.58 The management of external examiners for both foundation degrees and Higher National programmes lies outside the College's responsibilities. The degree-awarding body appoints external examiners for the foundation degree programmes. The awarding organisation appoints external examiners for the Higher National programmes.

2.59 External examiners are nominated, appointed, prepared for their role and terminated by the University and Pearson. Similarly, both the University and Pearson retain responsibility for ensuring that their external examiners write a report and provide informative comments and recommendations.

2.60 The College has a range of internal procedures to support the external examining process. There is an internal Quality Assurance Handbook and a Staff Handbook which both describe arrangements for external examining for Higher National programmes. The Staff Handbook outlines expectations on how staff should publish information relating to external examiners and their reports to students. The Head of Development and Higher Education Responsibilities acts as the link tutor with the University, liaising on matters relating to external examining, and is also responsible for coordinating and monitoring actions arising as a result of external examiner reports. He identifies any significant issues requiring immediate response. Faculty staff see the reports and feed issues into the annual course review process and associated action plan, which in turn is discussed at the Curriculum Management Meetings. These course review action plans also feed into the termly Faculty and Higher Education Performance and Business Review meetings.

2.61 As a result of issues raised by external examiners on the Higher National programmes (2012-13 and 2013-14) relating to the contextualisation of grading themes, monitoring of the sampling and standardisation of internal verification, the College established a Courses Causing Concern procedure. This internal procedure is used in addition to the University's and Pearson's procedures for reporting on serious concerns. The Courses Causing Concern procedure is monitored through the Higher Education Curriculum Management Committee and the Higher Education Performance and Business Review meetings. Clear notes are kept of the initial Courses Causing Concern meeting and progress against planned actions is monitored and recorded.

2.62 The College has had ongoing issues with getting external examiners for the foundation degrees to differentiate their comments to enable the College to identify issues applicable to the College rather than to other providers. This matter formed part of a recommendation in the 2010 Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review. The University has adjusted the external examiners' form and requested that specific comments are made, but the problem has not been entirely resolved.

2.63 The policies and procedures of the College allows Expectation B7 to be met in theory.

2.64 The review team considered how the processes outlined above operates in practice by considering the examples of reports and action plans provided by the College, by looking at relevant meeting notes and through discussions with staff and students.

2.65 The review team found that the system for addressing issues raised in external examiner reports through the course review system and the Courses Causing Concern

procedure is being implemented, although the College is aware that it does not currently monitor the timeliness of responses. Responses are considered as part of the course review and Performance and Business Review processes and are discussed at Curriculum Management Committees.

2.66 The College is aware that there is some inconsistency in the stated policy of sharing the names of external examiners and their reports with students. Students have no knowledge of the external examiners for their course and have not seen any reports. The College has plans in place to ensure these are placed on the VLE and to check at the October standardisation meeting that the names of external examiners are included in programme handbooks.

2.67 The review team thus concludes that Expectation B7 is met. The level of risk is low because the College has a system in place that allows it to identify and respond to issues raised by external examiners.

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

2.68 The College is required to follow the systems and processes for monitoring and review expected by its degree-awarding body and awarding organisation. For foundation degrees, the process of the degree-awarding body allows for in-depth evaluation through a formal annual monitoring reporting system and through a five-year periodic review. For Higher National programmes, the College relies on the external verification process of the awarding organisation together with its own internal monitoring and review system. There is no internal College process for the periodic review of higher education programmes.

2.69 The College has an established internal system of annual monitoring designed originally for its further education provision. This consists of an annual course review which is then considered at faculty level in the production of a Faculty Self-Assessment Report and a Strategic Improvement Plan. These documents are then scrutinised by members of the College's Senior Management Team through the Performance and Business Review meetings which occur twice a year. The College has recently amended this process so that higher education course reviews and supporting information are considered independently from the Faculty by the Head of Development and Higher Education Responsibilities to produce a higher education-specific self-evaluation document and a related Higher Education Strategic Improvement Plan. These documents are then scrutinised by a Higher Education Performance and Business Review meeting. Action plans resulting from higher education course reviews are scrutinised at Curriculum Management Meetings which are convened twice a year. Additional to these processes, an Internal Quality Review at subject level is undertaken for both higher education and further education provision at two-yearly intervals. It is planned to introduce a higher education-specific Internal Quality Review during the 2014-15 academic year. The articulation of the review process for the College's higher education provision is complex and cumbersome resulting in a recommendation (see paragraph 2.77).

2.70 These arrangements allow Expectation B8 to be met in theory.

2.71 The review team considered examples of how the processes outlined above operate in practice by reading the examples provided by the College and through discussions with staff and students.

2.72 The College effectively follows the monitoring, reviewing and reporting procedures expected by its degree-awarding body and awarding organisation. There is a detailed annual monitoring report for the University which covers all relevant areas. It makes use of appropriate statistics to enable analysis and evaluation, includes comments from student representatives and surveys, picks up issues from the curriculum management meetings and allows trends that cut across all the foundation degrees to be identified as well as course-specific issues. Staff are fully aware of the process and their roles in it. College staff have actively participated in University periodic monitoring as required (Construction and Early Years).

2.73 The College's internal higher education Course Review process considers all key areas of the provision including monitoring implementation of identified actions, the quality of teaching and assessment, resourcing, student support and the quality of information for

applicants and students. It also takes account of external examiner reports, student feedback and key performance indicators.

2.74 The agenda for the new higher education Performance and Business Review process looks to consider a broad range of topics including student progress, resource-related matters, support for students, curriculum development and information for stakeholders, drawing on course reviews, external examiner reports, curriculum management meetings, key performance statistics and feedback from students. The College noted in its most recent Performance and Business Review that the link between Internal Quality Review and Performance and Business Review was not fully made and indicated that a higher education Internal Quality Review report might be a helpful improvement. There are plans for this to be implemented in 2014-15.

2.75 The College recognises that some elements of its internal annual review process for higher education programmes are weak and not systematically undertaken. The College plans to strengthen this process for 2014-15 by ensuring greater emphasis on the use of student data as a measure of quality.

2.76 The external examiner reporting system for the awarding organisation is effective. There is evidence that issues raised by external examiners in their reports have been identified by the College and that these have instigated the implementation of additional monitoring systems through the new Courses Causing Concern process. This process aims to identify and take action to rectify, improve or recommend closure of higher education courses to safeguard the learner experience in accordance with the Quality Code.

2.77 A number of new initiatives have been introduced by the College recently in response to issues raised by external examiners or as a result of its internal monitoring processes. The review team found it difficult to understand how all of the processes fitted together to provide the College with a coherent overview of its programmes. The review team **recommends** that, by September 2015, the College articulates clearly and comprehensively the annual monitoring of all programmes.

2.78 Students are invited to participate in monitoring and review through student feedback questionnaires. They are also invited to attend Curriculum Management Committee meetings and the higher education forum. In meetings with the review team, students confirmed that they had been invited to these meetings and that they were satisfied that their voice was heard and acted upon.

2.79 The College at present does not have any process in place for any periodic review of its higher education provision. The review team **recommends** that, by September 2015, the College develops, implements and maintains a process for internal periodic review for all programmes. This will allow the College to gain a strategic overview of the effectiveness and efficiency of its offerings. This will be particularly beneficial for the Higher National provision where no periodic review is undertaken by the awarding organisation.

2.80 The review team concludes that Expectation B8 is met. The level of risk is moderate because of a weakness in the operation of part of the College's (academic) governance structure.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

2.81 The College has an appeals and complaints procedure for all Higher National programmes. The process for making a complaint is set out in the Complaints Procedure and the process for making an appeal including the grounds for appeal is set out in a separate appeals procedure. The College administers appeals and complaints from students on University programmes by following the University's procedures which are set out in its Academic Regulations. The University retains responsibility for ensuring that appeals and complaints are responded to in a fair and timely manner.

2.82 The College's policies and procedures allow Expectation B9 to be met in theory.

2.83 The review team examined the self-evaluation documentation and the evidence provided pertaining to appeals and complaints, including the relevant policy documents. The review team also discussed issues surrounding complaints and appeals with staff and students.

2.84 There are few formal complaints, with two being recorded since 2012-13. The students whom the review team met had little awareness of the process, but were clear on the channels available to find out further information should they be dissatisfied with an academic issue. The College works closely with students to address concerns informally at an early stage to obviate the need for a formal complaint. Students have access to a personal tutor and well as a Higher Education Student Advisor and are positive about the College's response to issues raised.

2.85 Complaints about Higher National programmes are monitored by the Innovations and Quality department at the College and are reported to the Senior Management Team and governors annually. To enhance oversight of complaints, the Head of Development and Higher Education reviews any higher education-specific complaints. Appeals are monitored through the Curriculum Management Committee where the Higher Education Student Advisor reports on appeals raised

2.86 The review team concludes that Expectation B9 is met. The level of risk is low because the policies and procedure of the College and the degree-awarding body provide fair, effective and timely approaches for handling students' complaints and academic appeals.

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

2.87 The College is not a degree-awarding body. The focus of this section is, therefore, on the arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with other organisations in the form of work-based learning.

2.88 The College's foundation degrees include work-based learning modules. Its Higher National programmes contain work experience modules. In all cases providers have no role in assessment, but they do provide opportunities for work-based learning. Programme leaders are responsible for ensuring work-based learning is safe and that students are clear about the tasks that they need to undertake and are well-supported. Programme leaders undertake appropriate visits, offer guidance to employers and monitor that employers meet College expectations. Higher education course team meetings oversee work experience.

2.89 The College has strengthened, from the start of the current academic year, its guidance on work-based learning and placements. A pack of information including a checklist and a letter of understanding is now sent at the start of the academic year to all employers offering work-based learning and this clearly outlines employer responsibilities. Some programmes also have a detailed mentor handbook. Students find employers to be well prepared to offer them appropriate learning opportunities.

2.90 Information is provided in relevant module guides to students going on work experience or undertaking work-based learning. Students have no problem in securing the work experience they need. They find work-based tasks clear and understand the relationship between their work-based learning and their College assignments.

2.91 The policies and procedures of the College allow Expectation B10 to be met in theory.

2.92 The review team considered how the processes outlined operate in practice by considering the examples provided by the College and through discussions with students and staff.

2.93 All the students the review team met have undertaken or are expected to undertake work experience or work-based learning as part of their course. Students are supported by tutor visits or clear pre-visit briefings. They feel well advised and are clear about how to make best use of their work-related experience. Students find their work experience invaluable in helping them to develop relevant professional or industry skills. The annual review and monitoring process considers the success of work-based learning modules.

2.94 The College provides employers with all the information they need. Training for employers or workplace mentors is not normally offered, but the employer the review team communicated with was clear about who to contact at the College if they had questions. They have received the new letter of understanding outlining the employer's responsibilities. The employer noted the relevance of the College courses to the workplace and the benefit it had on developing employee's professional skills.

2.95 The review team concludes that Expectation B10 is met. The level of risk is low because the College is successful in ensuring the work experience and work-based learning of its students enables them to meet their learning outcomes and gain valuable professional or industry experience.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

2.96 The College does not offer research degrees.

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

2.98 All applicable Expectations have been met and risk is judged low in each case except for two Expectations (B6 and B8) where the level of risk is judged moderate. Three recommendations are made in relation to a total of two Expectations. Two affirmations are made covering two Expectations.

2.99 The two recommendations arising from the Expectations indicate that the College needs to develop policies and procedures to enable it to have a clear oversight of assessment, to articulate clearly and comprehensively the annual monitoring of all programmes and to develop, implement and maintain a process for internal periodic review for all programmes. The actions recommended will make good some minor oversights enabling the College to meet the Expectations more fully. The affirmations confirm the steps taken to strengthen staff development arrangements and the steps taken to enhance internal moderation procedures.

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

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1 The College uses a range of media for publishing information about itself to the public and to current and prospective students. The College website sets out programme information and prospectuses, details on student support and information such as the College Strategic Plan, and the most recent Ofsted report. The College also makes available to students the College Higher Education Handbook, College policies and procedures, and course and programme handbooks. The College has a VLE for the dissemination of materials and information to students.

3.2 Heads of Faculty have responsibility for ensuring that leaflets, prospectus entries and the website are accurate and course teams provide up-to-date course handbooks according to the template identified in the Staff Handbook. However, the College acknowledges that there is no College policy or documented framework for the oversight of the production of information for students, and the explanation of responsibilities given at meetings was fragmented and confusing although it was reported that the Deputy Principal is ultimately responsible for all published information. The review team recommends that, by September 2015, the College develops, implements, and maintains a policy and procedure for the production of published information.

3.3 The lack of College oversight of the responsibilities for the production of published information which is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy does not allow Expectation C to be met in theory.

3.4 The review team reviewed the relevant sections of the self-evaluation document and the student submission. It also reviewed samples of the documentation available to potential and current students such as the website, the prospectus, programme handbooks, the College Higher Education Handbook, College policies and procedures and the VLE. The team also conducted meetings with students and staff.

3.5 The students that the review team met indicated that pre-entry information is helpful. Current students have access to information about their programmes through programme and College handbooks, but they indicated that the VLE is their primary tool for gaining access to definitive programme information. The handbooks are generally thorough and student friendly. The College acknowledges that it has had a compliance issue with course guides not being routinely produced for all courses taught on higher education programmes, although this is now being addressed.

3.6 The College publishes programme information on its website for each programme that it offers. There are multiple inconsistencies and inaccuracies for each and every one of the programme details published on the website. This includes inconsistencies in the title of programmes, programme duration, modes of study, course details and entry requirements. Examples include the Foundation Degree in Early Years, Playwork and Education where it refers to the programme being full-time in the heading and in the opening paragraph refers to it being a part-time programme. The progression route refers to progression from the

Higher National Certificate (HNC) to the Higher National Diploma (HND) which is inappropriate for a foundation degree description. The Foundation Degree in Architectural Technology similarly has inconsistencies in the mode of attendance and progressions routes from the HNC to the HND. The website refers to this programme as being offered subject to approval despite having recruited students to it. These type of errors can be extrapolated to all programme details on the College website.

3.7 These inconsistencies make the information unreliable and not fit for purpose. Programme and course handbooks often contained less serious but still numerous errors such as spelling mistakes, and staff agreed that proofreading of publications is an area that needs improvement. The review team concludes that the combination of errors in published information and the lack of an identifiable process for the publication of information indicates a systemic issue with the College's approach to information management. The review team **recommends** that, by March 2015, the College makes sure that all current published information is accessible, fit for purpose and trustworthy.

3.8 The review team concludes that the wide range of errors and inconsistencies in the information available to both students and the general public across a range of media means that Expectation C is not met. There are significant gaps in policy, structures or procedures and the College has not recognised that it has major problems. The level of risk is therefore serious because there is no identified systematic process for ensuring that the information published is accessible, fit for purpose and trustworthy.

Expectation: Not met
Level of risk: Serious

The quality of the information produced about its provision: Summary of findings

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

3.10 Expectation C is not met and the level of risk is serious. There are two recommendations associated with the expectation which indicates that the College makes sure that all published information is fit for purpose and trustworthy and that the College develops, implements and maintains a policy and procedure for the production of published information.

3.11 The review team concludes that the wide range of errors and inconsistencies in the information available to both students and the general public across a range of media is serious because there is no identified systematic process for ensuring that the information published is accurate. There are significant gaps in policy, structures or procedures and the College has not recognised that it has major problems. The review team concludes that the quality of the information produced by the College about its provision is not fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy and thus **does not meet** 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 Although the College is starting to produce a number of internal policies and procedures to gather information on the quality of student learning opportunities for all of its higher education programmes, it does not articulate a clear and strategic approach to the enhancement of these learning opportunities.

4.2 The College has recently realised that its quality assurance systems would benefit from a more higher education-specific focus and has brought in a number of procedural changes to achieve this, including a strengthened internal approval process and a new higher education Course Review and Performance and Business Review in addition to the existing Curriculum Management Committee. In addition, a new Courses Causing Concern procedure has been brought in for all College courses. Together these will represent an important step change in the College's ability to strategically manage the enhancement of student learning opportunities. The new higher education Performance and Business Review process contains a standing item on programme enhancement although this predominantly identifies local initiatives and developments. Faculty Managers, who are designated as being responsible for both quality assurance and enhancement for the programmes under their charge, are members of both the Performance and Business Review and the Curriculum Management Committee.

4.3 These arrangements allow the Expectation to be met in theory.

4.4 The review team considered examples of how the processes outlined above operate in practice by reading the examples provided by the College and through discussions with staff and students.

4.5 Through these considerations, the review team was able to see evidence of improvements to processes that have been made relatively recently including higher education programme handbooks, higher education programme reviews, internal verification, the higher education staff handbook and the student induction process. Students explained how the student voice had been heard through both formal and informal mechanisms and how issues raised and improvements requested had been acted upon promptly, for example to improve gym facilities for sports students and to improve timetables and tutorial time for Higher National students.

4.6 In meetings with staff, the review team heard how good processes have been developed around the identification and sharing of excellence in teaching and learning. A key strategic initiative to enhance student learning opportunities is the deep learning project which was introduced in 2013-14. This is designed to refocus the approach to teaching and learning away from traditional tutor-led pedagogies towards andragogic approaches aimed at engaging adult students in deep learning. The staff development budget has recently been doubled to ensure that all staff are able to update their industry-related experience in order to ensure the currency of their teaching. The new role of Excellence Coach also provides a mechanism for the identification, support and dissemination of good practice.

4.7 Deliberate steps taken at College level to systematically enhance higher education provision are evident, however this is not clearly articulated in strategic documentation. There is a commitment to enhancement from senior members of staff, teaching and support

staff, and students confirmed that there is an ethos of continual improvement at the College. However, all these groups found it difficult to articulate what these deliberate steps were and how these would systematically bring about improvements. The course leaders' meetings are a useful mechanism for proposing enhancements that go beyond one course or student group. There is some opportunity for good practice to be shared and disseminated through the meeting structure, including Performance and Business Reviews, but there is only modest evidence that bottom-up developments have been used to inform strategic enhancement initiatives and this could be further developed. The review team **recommends** that, by September 2015, the College strengthens oversight to enable the implementation of strategic enhancement.

4.8 The review team concludes that the expectation is met. The level of risk is moderate because there are weaknesses in the operation of part of the provider's academic governance in the area of enhancement.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Moderate

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

4.10 The Expectation in this area is met and risk is judged moderate with one recommendation arising which indicates that the College should strengthen oversight to enable the implementation of strategic enhancement initiatives.

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

5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1 As a vocational College, all courses are oriented towards the career development of the student and the development of the sub-regional workforce. Due to the scale of the provision and the newness of some of its courses, the College is not yet in a position to evaluate its student destinations data in a meaningful way. The College is gathering some evidence that its approach to employability is improving its students careers prospects. It does not have a separate employability strategy, or equivalent, and chooses to embed its approach to employability in everything it does.

5.2 The careers teams, based in the whole-College Student Support Centre, provide both general and specific careers advice to students. Careers staff are professionally qualified and trained and students find their advice and guidance helpful.

5.3 To support its commitment to developing student employability, the College has joined the Gazelle College Group, a cluster of colleges committed to entrepreneurial business formation and growth. The College has embedded the Gazelle Group's commitment to develop 'T-shaped' skills (outstanding core skills with broader personal and enterprise capabilities) in order to strengthen the employability of its students. The development of these skills is embedded in the new Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy.

5.4 The College is committed to integrating learning, work and experience of industry-standard equipment and routines. Its higher education programmes are principally designed by their degree-awarding body and awarding organisation and opportunities to involve employers in the design of the courses is limited. The College recognises that employer engagement in the development of course materials and the delivery of the curricula is relatively undeveloped, but employers have given their support to the development of some new courses, predominantly HNCs. Some Higher National courses include visits to employers and guest speakers.

5.5 The College is committed to offering real and meaningful workplace experience. Most courses include work-related experience, whether work-based learning in foundation degrees or work experience in Higher National programmes. Most students the review team met had undertaken or expected to undertake work-related experience during their course. Students find their work-related experiences to be relevant and helpful in their studies and to provide them with stronger employability skills.

5.6 The College does not offer students the opportunity to create a Higher Education Achievement Record.

5.7 The Assistant Principal Employer Engagement is responsible for the strategic development of employer engagement and cascades information to the faculties. The College recognises that its engagement with employers is under-developed in its higher education provision compared with its further education provision and it aspires to involve employers more in portfolio development and delivery. The College has made use of the employers engaged in the recently developed University Technical College in Bio-medical and Environmental Science and Technology to support the development of its Higher National programmes in this area to ensure students have relevant qualifications that are aligned to workforce needs.

5.8 There is a commitment to support the skills development and professionalisation of the local workforce in the College's overall and higher education-specific Strategic Plans.

This is evident in the units selected for the Higher National programmes and the focus on professional skill development in the foundation degrees. There is good progression for the foundation degrees to higher levels of study and professional qualifications, notably in the area of Early Years. Many of the College's higher education students are in employment and are sent to the College to gain higher level skills. Two areas of its higher education portfolio are accredited by professional bodies, Architectural Technology and Construction, and this supports progression into relevant careers.

In conclusion, the College is aware of the importance of embedding professional and employability skills in its courses and is committed to workforce development. Students have the opportunity to gain relevant work experience and links with employers are continuing to strengthen.

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 27-29 of the [Higher Education Review handbook](#)

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

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

Academic standards

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

Award

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

Blended learning

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

Credit(s)

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

Degree-awarding body

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

Distance learning

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

See also **blended learning**.

Dual award or double award

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

e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning

Enhancement

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

Expectations

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

Flexible and distributed learning

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

See also **distance learning**.

Framework

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

Framework for Higher Education Qualifications

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

Good practice

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

Learning opportunities

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

Learning outcomes

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

Multiple awards

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

Operational definition

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

Programme (of study)

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

Programme specifications

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

Public information

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

Quality Code

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

Reference points

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

Subject Benchmark Statement

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

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)

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

Threshold academic standard

The minimum acceptable level of achievement that a student has to demonstrate to be eligible for an academic **award**. Threshold academic standards are set out in the national **Frameworks** for Higher Education Qualifications 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.

QAA1133 - R4020 - Mar 15

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Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786