Higher Education Review of Canterbury College

May 2014

Contents

About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Canterbury College. The review took place from 13 to 16 May 2014 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Mr Martin Stimson
- Ms Ann Hill
- Mr Axel Palmer (student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Canterbury 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 threshold 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 5. Explanations of the findings are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 9.

In reviewing Canterbury 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 2013-14 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.

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[1] The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at:
www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code.
[2] Higher Education Review themes:
www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education/higher-education-review.
[3] QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us.
[4] Higher Education Review web pages:
www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education/higher-education-review.

Amended judgement October 2016

Introduction

In May 2014, Canterbury College underwent a Higher Education Review, which resulted in judgements of 'meets UK expectations' for academic standards; 'requires improvement to meet UK expectations' for Quality of learning opportunities and Information about higher education provision; and 'does not meet UK expectations' for Enhancement.

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 March 2015 describing how it intended to address the recommendations identified in the review. The follow-up process included three progress updates against the action plan and culminated in the review team's scrutiny of the College's progress reports and the supporting documentary evidence, along with a two-day visit from 12-13 October 2015 with three reviewers. The team met senior, academic and professional support staff and students to discuss progress and triangulate the evidence base received over the preceding months. The team also attended a virtual learning environment (VLE) demonstration.

The visit confirmed that the recommendations relating to the Quality of learning opportunities and Information about higher education provision had been addressed satisfactorily, but that those relating to Enhancement had not, although progress had been made, and these judgements were confirmed by the QAA Board in December 2015. When negative judgements are not amended after the follow-up process, providers are subject to the application of HEFCE's Unsatisfactory Quality Policy (UQP.

The UQP process began with an initial visit with QAA and HEFCE representatives to agree a revised action plan. It was followed by two progress updates and culminated in the review team's scrutiny of the College's progress reports and the supporting documentary evidence, along with a one-day visit on 11 July 2016 by two reviewers. The review was conducted in accordance with the requirements of *Higher Education Review: A handbook for providers, June 2013* and the further guidance in *HEFCE's policy for addressing unsatisfactory quality in higher education institutions and further education colleges that are eligible for HEFCE funding from academic year 2013-14*.

During the visit the team met the Principal; senior, academic and support staff; and students to discuss progress and triangulate the evidence base received over the preceding months. They were also provided with a demonstration of the VLE.

The visit confirmed that the recommendations relating to Enhancement had been successfully addressed. Actions against recommendations relating to the Quality of learning opportunities, which received a positive judgement, had also been completed on schedule and contributed to the progress against Enhancement.

HEFCE and QAA Board decision and amended judgement

The review team concludes that the College had made sufficient progress to recommend that the judgement be amended. The HEFCE and QAA Boards 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 **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

The team found that the College had made progress against the recommendations from the follow-up process as follows.

Recommendation 1 - Expectation Enhancement

The evidence clearly demonstrates a more stable and considered approach to the use of internal quality assurance systems and processes for the purpose of developing enhancement. The revised APMR and its consistent implementation across the College is central to this activity and is currently effective, but still evolving, as staff become more familiar with the process. The review team concludes that the provider is making sufficient progress against this action.

Recommendation 2 - Expectation Enhancement

The Higher Education Team at the College had enthusiastically embraced the notion of students as partners. Students and staff acknowledged a significant step-change in the higher education culture at the College and student involvement as partners in the decision making process was beginning to impact positively on the quality of the learning environment. For this reason the team concludes that sufficient progress is being made against this action.

Recommendation 3 - Expectation Enhancement

The VLE contains a wide range of new, relevant and visually attractive content which has been produced to a high standard by both teaching and professional support staff.
The College has included careful consideration of the Quality Code *Chapters B3-B5* in the development of the VLE higher education policy. Progress made regarding the production of teaching and learning content reflects this, for example, in the development of the use of online assessment. The review team concludes that the College is taking deliberate steps to ensure that staff own the concept of enhancement in their own programmes and, as such, is making sufficient progress against this action.

Recommendation 4 - Expectation Enhancement

The revised academic committee structure allows students to provide feedback relating to the development and improvement of the website as well as to other aspects of their learning experience. Staff spoke confidently about the revised committee structure and its role in ensuring the effectiveness of the new website format. In due course, when these developments are fully embedded and tested through a number of academic cycles, the actions taken have the potential to further increase the effectiveness of the College's underpinning quality assurance framework. The review team therefore concludes that the College is making the required progress against this action.

Recommendation 5 - Expectation Enhancement

The team concludes that the strategic aspirations of the College to embed employability consistently in the curriculum and the specific action relating to employability in the Enhancement Action Plan was impacting positively on the student experience. Students recognised that employability was a central theme in their curriculum and through the

Faculty meetings staff were aware of the theme and were making appropriate changes to the delivery and assessment of the courses to include employability skills. The team therefore concludes that the College is making sufficient progress with this action.

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Canterbury College

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

- The maintenance of the threshold academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding bodies and awarding organisation **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **requires improvement to meet** UK expectations.
- The quality of the information produced about its provision **requires improvement to meet** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of learning opportunities **does not meet** UK expectations.

Recommendations

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

By December 2014:

- develop a strategic and consistent approach to maximising the effectiveness of the virtual learning environment as a learning and teaching tool (Expectation B3)
- develop a strategic approach to the planning of higher education staff development, including scholarly activity, and ensure its impact is effectively monitored (Expectations B3, B4 and Enhancement)
- implement a systematic and consistent approach to plagiarism detection across the higher education provision (Expectation B3)
- ensure that there is effective liaison between the Learning Resource Centre and the higher education teaching teams to develop systematic and consistent procedures to regularly review and update learning resources (Expectations B4 and B3)
- develop effective opportunities for student engagement and representation, including training and support for student representatives (Expectation B5 and Enhancement)
- ensure the deliberative committee structure has clear roles and responsibilities which formalise the consideration of higher education matters (Expectation B8)
- further develop mechanisms for the institutional reporting and oversight of higher education complaints (Expectation B9)
- develop the existing mechanisms to ensure that promotional and publicity materials are trustworthy (Expectation C)
- clarify the responsibilities for the management of higher education information to ensure that it is fit for purpose (Expectation C)
- take deliberate steps at strategic level to effectively capture enhancement opportunities arising from quality monitoring processes (Enhancement).

By March 2015:

- ensure strategic oversight of the annual monitoring process for higher education provision so that processes are applied systematically and operated consistently (Expectations A4, B7, B8 and C)
- strengthen the formal internal process for the design and approval of new higher education programmes (Expectations B1 and A4)

- formalise the arrangements to develop employability skills to inform the curriculum, and ensure parity of student experience within higher education programmes (Expectations B3, B10 and Enhancement).

Theme: Student Employability

The team did not find specific evidence of a planned, cohesive approach to provision of skills training or a systematic attitude towards engagement with actual and potential employers, aligned with market demand. Where skills training was provided on individual courses or by individual tutors, it was welcomed and appreciated, however this was sporadic and not embedded in all curriculum areas. Similarly, any effective collaborations (as with the companies the team met), including guest speakers, visits to employers, voluntary work placements and industry assessed work, were the result of informal arrangements by individual staff members and the representatives of the employers. Such activities, though recognised as valuable to the learning experience of students involved, were not credit bearing or part of a validated academic programme. Employers confirmed that they were not invited to contribute to programme design or annual course review processes, and they do not sit on any committees, however their views were sometimes sought informally and they found the relationship with the individual staff members to be productive. Overall, the team concluded that there was no structured approach to employer involvement, and more could be done to strengthen this area, based on instances of informal engagement which they heard about.

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

About Canterbury College

Canterbury College (the College) is a general further education college, which also delivers higher education programmes. The College recruited to its first top-up degree with the University of Kent in 2002. Currently, there are 400 higher education students enrolled at the College (373 full-time equivalents), comprising 346 full-time students and 54 part-time students. These students are enrolled on 17 Higher National Diplomas (HND) (270 students), five Higher National Certificates (HNC) (48 students) and five BA/BSc top-up degree programmes (82 students, of which 76 are full-time and six part-time).

More recent changes relate to funding and partnership arrangements. In 2011, the College was successful in its bid to the Higher Education Funding Council of England (HEFCE) and was awarded a directly funded student number control contract through the core-margin exercise, commencing August 2012. The College delivers higher education programmes in partnership with the University of Kent, Canterbury Christ Church University and Pearson. The College offers indirectly funded provision franchised by the University of Kent but also has part of its own (directly funded) provision validated by this University, mainly the BA and BSc top-up degrees. The remainder of the direct contract provision is Pearson HND/C qualifications. The College has retained one higher education programme, which is franchised from Canterbury Christ Church University, and terminated the partnership with the University of Greenwich, which was active at the time of the last QAA review.

The higher education provision at the College forms a separate faculty, along with the Teacher Training and Access to HE programmes. The faculty moved into a new, custom-built Higher Education Centre in September 2013, though use is still made of cross-College specialist resources. Students confirmed that the new Centre is further contributing to the higher education ethos at the College, but steps are still to be taken before a complete higher education identity is developed.

The review team found that the College had initially responded to the Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review (IQER), conducted in 2010, through an action plan but there was no evidence that the plan was updated regularly or evaluated. Some of the recommendations were still ongoing, for example, in relation to staff development, and the virtual learning environment (VLE). Good practice identified in the IQER had not been built upon.

Explanation of the findings about Canterbury 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: Maintenance of the threshold academic standards of awards

Expectation (A1): Each qualification (including those awarded through arrangements with other delivery organisations or support providers) is allocated to the appropriate level in *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ).

Quality Code, *Chapter A1: The national level*

Findings

1.1   The College's awarding partners are ultimately responsible for setting threshold academic standards and allocating each qualification at the appropriate level in the FHEQ.

1.2   Partnership agreements and supporting documentation confirm the responsibilities for each partner in respect of standards and quality. The College has produced a Higher Education Quality Manual to promote 'consistency of good practice across the Directorate of Higher Education in relation to the maintenance of academic standards and enhancement of quality, as well as provide information on key bodies relevant to the delivery of higher education'. This manual makes reference to the role of partners as awarding bodies, where responsibility for action lies, the Quality Code and qualification descriptors. Dissemination and advice on higher education quality and standards matters is supported by the Higher Education Curriculum Development Officer.

1.3   The way in which the FHEQ level of the award is described responds to the institutional partner's requirements and is identified on the programme specifications, where the College also identifies the volume of learning in relation to credit.

1.4   Validation processes vary depending on the partner, for example, Pearson or the University of Kent, and conform to their requirements and make use of College approval forms, which senior staff comment on. External examiner reports confirm that standards of the award are benchmarked at the appropriate level. External examiners have identified 'a robust approach to academic standards'.

1.5   The team reviewed a wide range of documentation used in the validation and approval process, including partnership agreements, annual monitoring reports, external examiner reports, programme specifications, and assignment briefs. The team also met with academic managers, representatives of the University of Kent, teaching staff and students, to discuss their use and understanding of the FHEQ as a reference point in the maintenance of academic standards.

1.6   There is clear evidence that the programme specifications make appropriate reference to the FHEQ and define the structure, the learning outcomes and assessment strategies for programmes. Staff teams demonstrated an appropriate specific understanding of the FHEQ in relation to programme development but, more generally, were unable to provide evidence to show how the Quality Code might more widely support their work. There was evidence of internal deliberation and development of the specifications prior to final approval by the awarding partner, and the external examiners reports confirmed that provision aligns with the appropriate level in the FHEQ.

1.7   The team concludes that in relation to the allocation of programmes at the appropriate level and in light of the partnership arrangements, which are driven by the awarding bodies' requirements, the College is effectively fulfilling its responsibilities; therefore the team concludes that Expectation A1 is **met** and the risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A2): All higher education programmes of study take account of relevant subject and qualification benchmark statements.

Quality Code, *Chapter A2: The subject and qualification level*

Findings

1.8   The College's degree-awarding bodies and awarding organisation are ultimately responsible for taking relevant subject and qualification benchmark statements into consideration during the design and approval stages. The College makes use of its partner's frameworks for developing and approving courses. General guidance to support the use of benchmark statements is available to staff through the Higher Education Quality Manual and the Higher Education Curriculum Development Officer (HECDO).

1.9   The team reviewed approval documentation, and considered the programme specifications for courses approved by the University of Kent and Pearson. The team met with senior staff, programme leaders, and staff from the University of Kent. For Higher National provision, staff make good use of the awarding organisation's programme specifications to identify reference to the relevant subject benchmark.

1.10   The meetings with staff confirmed that subject benchmarks are used in programme development and review, are cross referenced with the learning outcomes of each programme and are acted upon.

1.11   An objective of the Periodic Review of Taught and Research Programmes of Study is to identify the use of external reference points and the team found evidence of this in the documentation.

1.12   The College effectively fulfils its responsibilities to uphold standards, on behalf of its awarding bodies, through the explicit use of programme specifications. The team concludes that Expectation A2 is **met** and the level of risk low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3): Higher education providers make available definitive information on the aims, intended learning outcomes and expected learner achievements for a programme of study.

Quality Code, *Chapter A3: The programme level*

Findings

1.13   For university and Pearson programmes information on aims, intended learning outcomes and expected learner achievements is provided through programme handbooks, programme specifications, module specifications and guides. The College prepares these using standard templates in accordance with its responsibilities with support and advice from the HECDO. An overarching Information and Learning Technology (ILT) Strategy and a Teaching Learning and Assessment Policy provide institutional guidance.

1.14   After approval by awarding partners, information is disseminated to students via hard copy and the VLE which is audited for accuracy and minimum standards. Definitive versions of programme documentation are managed by the HECDO. Programme specifications and module specifications include assessment regimes and are contained in the Student Handbook.

1.15   Information about each programme is available on the website, the VLE and awarding body website. Information about programmes, including the programme specifications, is included in a comprehensive handbook. Programme specifications are also published on the internet and the VLE (see also Part C).

1.16   Students are provided with assignment briefs for each module which include assessment criteria. Information relating to assessment dates and hand-in dates appear in a calendar and students can access an institutional assessment policy.

1.17   The team scrutinised a wide range of documentation including programme handbooks, programme specifications, definitive module documents and assignment briefs. The team also met with members of the teaching team, students, and academic managers to understand the provision of information at the programme level. Furthermore, the team received a demonstration of the VLE with staff and students to understand its application.

1.18   Meetings with the students confirmed that they are provided with relevant information regarding the respective programmes of study in hard copy form and also through the VLE. Students confirmed that the documentation is helpful to them for their learning and assessment activities.

1.19   Overall the review team concludes that the College makes available appropriate and relevant programme level information and Expectation A3 is **met**, with a low risk.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A4): Higher education providers have in place effective processes to approve and periodically review the validity and relevance of programmes.

Quality Code, *Chapter A4: Approval and review*

Findings

1.20   Responsibility for the academic standards of the higher education programmes ultimately lies with the two awarding bodies and Pearson. The College has in place processes for the approval of new course proposals and adheres to the arrangements for the validation, monitoring and periodic review of programmes in line with the specifications of the quality assurance arrangements of the awarding bodies and awarding organisation. Annual monitoring processes follow the partner quality assurance arrangements.

1.21   The College's involvement in the design, approval and monitoring, and review of programmes enables standards to be maintained and allows students to demonstrate learning outcomes of the awards. Students confirmed that they understand the stated aims and learning outcomes of their programmes. The areas of responsibility of the College and the two degree-awarding bodies are clearly set out and described in memoranda of agreement. Likewise, the arrangements for Pearson HND/Cs are clearly articulated and understood.

1.22   Processes to approve new courses in line with the University of Kent's templates are satisfactory, but it is not clear how the course approval procedure is considered formally within the College's committee process, or at which committee. For example, informal discussion regarding the planning for future higher education provision takes place at annual development meetings but it is not clear how this discussion aligns with the College's higher education strategic plan or action plan. Moreover, the draft action plan does not align with the higher education strategic plan and the team could find no evidence that progress is either monitored or evaluated.

1.23   The team heard that all the higher education programmes are monitored and reviewed according to College processes, but it was unclear from the evidence provided and in discussion with staff, how the quality assurance cycle worked in practice to maintain academic standards and enhance learning opportunities, or how activities and priorities were linked, or how they were formally reported upon (see recommendation under B1). The College does not have a higher education cycle process plan for annual monitoring to ensure that staff and students are aware of specific calendared activities.

1.24   The team considered a wide variety of evidence, and in discussions with staff, found that there was a lack of clarity arising from action planning in relation to the College's processes and systems for the monitoring and review of higher education programmes. For example, it was not clear how action plans are produced in a consistent manner to summarise activities arising from all sources for the year. The team found that some action plans were incomplete and that progress was not routinely monitored or effectively evaluated, including the IQER action plan arising from the previous QAA review. The team **recommends** that by March 2015 the College ensures strategic oversight of the annual monitoring process for higher education provision so that processes are applied systematically and operated consistently,

1.25   The team concludes that the College adheres to the requirements of the awarding bodies and, in effect, **meets** Expectation A4 with a low level of risk. Strategic oversight at College level of approval and review processes would further ensure that monitoring of results from these processes is consistent and sufficiently rigorous. The recommendation

formulated under A4 also impacts on B1. The recommendation under B1 which highlights the need to strengthen formal internal process for the design and approval of new higher education programmes is also relevant for A4.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A5): Higher education providers ensure independent and external participation in the management of threshold academic standards.

Quality Code, *Chapter A5: Externality*

Findings

1.26   In line with its delegated responsibilities, the College fulfils its obligations and makes use of appropriate externality in its higher education programmes. Pearson permits the College to develop its own programmes, certified by Pearson. This is a customised process which allows the design to be reviewed by Pearson staff and an independent subject specialist, who reviews the content of the submission.

1.27   External examiners are appointed for the College's programmes by the University of Kent, Christ Church University and Pearson. Staff confirmed that external examiners visit the College at least once a year.

1.28   The universities appoint a link tutor for each programme whose role is to provide advice on academic matters. Staff confirmed that they found this role was valuable.

1.29   The evidence shows that use is made of the external examiner visits and that recommendations are responded to. For example, in response to one recommendation, the College has adopted the categorical marking scheme of the University of Kent.

1.30   The external examiners produce an annual report for each programme and these are summarised within each College course review. Recommendations for any actions which may be necessary are articulated within course review action plans.

1.31   The College produces an annual report of collated responses to external examiner reports and this is monitored by the Dean of Higher Education. However, it is not clear how cross-college oversight of external examiner reports facilitates the identification of themes affecting programmes across the College's provision, or how good practice in learning and teaching is formally identified.

1.32   In discussion with staff, it is not clear how good practice arising from the reports is formally shared across the higher education provision. Although there is informal sharing of good practice at a weekly meeting of higher education staff, it is not clear what the impact is and how it is measured.

1.33   Professional support staff do not routinely receive external examiner reports directly or via a deliberative committee, which restricts the opportunities for such staff to actively contribute to the maintenance of academic standards and enhancement of learning opportunities.

1.34   The team heard about some very good examples of informal external contribution to the higher education programmes from a limited range of employers, but noted that they are not formally engaged with the College in operational processes regarding the development of programmes. The team heard that employers do not routinely sit on College forums which deal with higher education matters. Only some programmes include employers in the delivery, but this is not standardised and it is ad-hoc practice based on personal contacts, more so than institutional commitments (see Expectation B3 and Theme).

1.35   The team concludes that Expectation A5 is **met** and the associated level of risk is low as evidence confirmed that externality is provided, mainly by external examiners, in the management of threshold academic standards. Dissemination of external input is yet to be strengthened, but this does not immediately impact on the level of risk.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A6): Higher education providers ensure 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.

Quality Code, *Chapter A6: Assessment of achievement of learning outcomes*

Findings

1.36   Overall, the College expresses confidence in the effectiveness and appropriateness of all aspects of assessment. Following scrutiny of documentary evidence, and in meetings held, the team concurred with the College's view. Assessment is undertaken according to the awarding bodies' procedures. The form and length of assessments is built into the programme validation documents and the learning outcomes map directly onto the summative assessments. Assignment briefs are internally verified and external examiners confirm that robust internal verification processes are in place.

1.37   The team considered a range of evidence, including the student submission and external monitoring. In addition, the team considered the College's teaching, learning and assessment policy, however the team could not gain clarity from the documentation received or the meetings it held as to how this policy is used or how it is effectively implemented to inform teaching practice.

1.38   The student submission indicated general satisfaction with turnaround time for assessed work, but less so with the consistency of feedback, some of which was oral, some written, some extensive and some not. When this was explored in meetings with students, there were varying experiences but the majority of students who participated in the meetings were satisfied with the feedback they had received.

1.39   Students with whom the team met also confirmed that information on modules, assessment and learning outcomes is contained in course handbooks and they are familiar with, and understand, the various marking grids and criteria. Students were mostly aware of the different forms of assessment used on their programmes, but were unclear about the differences between formative and summative assessment. Students presented varying experience regarding their satisfaction with the range of assessment methods, some students were generally satisfied with the range of assessment methods utilised on their programmes, others were concerned regarding a limited range of assessment opportunities which mainly focused on the production of essays.

1.40   The team also explored with students whether effective systems were in place to prevent the bunching of assessments, learning that assignments were generally well spaced. However, this was not the case for the BA Music or HND Music Performance, where there has been major staffing issues which have significantly impacted upon the provision and the quality of the students' learning experience. Not all students had received an assessment calendar, and this gave rise to inconsistent experiences by various groups of students.

1.41   The review team concludes that the College **meets** Expectation A6 and that the associated level of risk is low as assessment methods and feedback were, on balance, dealt with appropriately. Any inconsistencies resulting from variable experiences are mainly related to specificities of the various programmes, and the related content being delivered. The provider has acknowledged the need to review, more closely, these instances.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Maintenance of the threshold academic standards of awards: Summary of findings

1.42   In reaching its positive judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published Handbook. All of the Expectations for this judgement area were met and the associated levels of risk were low as the College follows awarding body procedures for the maintenance of threshold academic standards.

1.43   The team formulated a recommendation under expectation A4 related to strategic oversight of the annual monitoring process and the necessity to ensure the systematic application and consistent operation of the related procedures. The recommendation in B1, which highlights the need to strengthen formal internal processes for the design and approval of new higher education programmes, is also relevant for this area, more specifically for Expectation A4.

1.44   The team did not identify any instances of good practice and did not make any affirmations for this judgement area. The review team concludes that the maintenance of the threshold academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding bodies and awarding organisation at Canterbury College **meets** UK expectations.

2   Judgement: Quality of student learning opportunities

Expectation (B1): Higher education providers have effective processes for the design and approval of programmes.

Quality Code, *Chapter B1: Programme design and approval*

Findings

2.1   As noted in Expectation A4, overall responsibility for course approval and review rests with the awarding universities and Pearson. The team found that in discharging its contractual obligations, the College complies with the processes of the awarding bodies.

2.2   The team could not locate within the College a formally articulated planning process for the design and approval of programmes, mapped against the College's higher education strategy, though it is clear that some processes exist and there is discussion at various forums. The College does not have a higher education committee structure, which therefore makes it difficult to track where the formal debate and panel approval takes place. For instance, the main forum for suggesting new courses is an annual higher education development meeting which provides a narrative for suggestions, rather than a clear rolling plan of priorities. However, the team did find documentary evidence that the operation of course approval processes in some instances was effective with regard to, for example, the provision of appropriate learning resources.

2.3   The team was unable to find specific evidence of targeted employer involvement in programme design, aligned with market demand. The small group of employers, with whom the review team met, are not invited to contribute to programme design and they do not sit on any committees, although they have very productive informal working relationships with teaching staff and provide a variety of valuable student work experience placements.

2.4   Through discussions with students, the team heard that employers are not invited to contribute to the annual course review process, though there was evidence that employer views on new course proposals are sought informally. Therefore, the team **recommends** that by March 2015 the College strengthens the formal internal process for the design and approval of new higher education programmes (see also Expectation A4).

2.5   The team concludes that the Expectation B1 has been **met** and that the associated level of risk is low, however, further consideration should be given to strengthen processes as detailed above. The recommendation in A4 is also relevant for this area.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B2): Policies and procedures used to admit students are clear, fair, explicit and consistently applied.

Quality Code, *Chapter B2: Admissions*

Findings

2.6   The College has its own higher education admissions policy, which is reviewed annually and details the policy and implementation process. The policy document notes that there is provision for entry even though criteria may not have been met. The policy provides information of the appeals process where an application has been rejected. The College states that the higher education admissions policy references the Quality Code, but this appears to be merely as a source rather than active referencing. Applications through UCAS are shared between the College and the awarding university, but admissions decisions are taken by the College.

2.7   The College higher education admissions policy is posted on the College website. The College produces a separate prospectus, the Higher Education Guide 2014-2015, which is also published on the website. The prospectus provides detailed course information, entry requirements and application process. The team notes that some students whom they met thought that their course did not live up to expectations and that the website information did not match the course; additionally the team could not gain evidence of relevant data to substantiate some of the claims made in the prospectus and, hence, formulates a recommendation under Expectation C.

2.8   The team also heard that potential students were interviewed in person by admissions staff that were found to be helpful, including dealing with issues such as disability and visas. The team heard of the steps taken by staff and students to welcome new students, which were endorsed by positive comments from students on the induction/welcome process.

2.9   The team concludes that, on balance, Expectation B2 has been **met** and that the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and teaching*

Findings

2.10   The College is working towards achieving a stronger higher education ethos among students and staff with the new dedicated Higher Education Centre being key to this endeavour. The higher education faculty has a development plan, the Higher Education Quality Manual and triennial review documents, together with College-wide plans for training and ILT.

2.11   The team tested arrangements in place which support the development of an independent learner, the choice for preferred subjects and an enhanced capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking. To this aim, the team reviewed documentation submitted, especially the College learning resources policy, the teaching and learning assessment policy and student viewpoint survey, as well as a number of modules specifications and programme specifications. The team also met with various small groups of staff and students in addition to the Principal to explore how teaching and learning takes place at the College.

2.12   In most circumstances, students were appreciative of the teaching staff and especially of individual, frequently pastoral, interactions they had with staff. They found that staff were delivering a good learning experience and that they were provided with appropriate opportunities to develop. However, some students reported staffing changes which had a detrimental impact on their learning experience. The College acknowledged the difficulties with fluctuation of staff and had endeavoured to find appropriate replacements, however, there was a delay in resolving the situation. The students whom the team met did not find all replacements to be equally valuable, especially in regards to their industry experience. The College acknowledged that staff development for replacements needed to be accelerated.

2.13   The team understands from the self-evaluation document (SED) that the curriculum at the College is designed to give students the skills and knowledge they need to find and succeed in employment. The College does not have a structured approach to employer involvement but nevertheless provides a range of employer-led opportunities to enrich the curriculum and develop employability skills. In meetings, students advised the team that there were some opportunities to learn skills required for post-education employment. Students told the team that they especially appreciated the 'hands on' experience which one course arranged. Another group of students told the team that collectively they had positive and negative experiences.

2.14   The team found that there was variation with the level of engagement of employers and the consistency of experiences by students. The IQER had also raised issues regarding employer engagement, but the team was not shown evidence of developments in the IQER action plan. The team met a small sample of employers from four firms involved in three courses. Employers confirmed that placements were voluntary, informal and not part of the assessed curriculum; that administration varied according to the outside organisation; and that there was no formal system at the College to guide their input. The employers who met the reviewers had not been approached to contribute to programme design or

provide feedback, however, they were most complimentary about the individual subject tutors who facilitated their professional relationship with the specific programmes and the students. The team **recommends** that by March 2015 the College formalise the arrangements to develop employability skills to inform the curriculum, and ensures parity of student experience within higher education programmes.

2.15   A recommendation of the 2010 IQER was to establish more interactive approaches to the use of the virtual learning environment (VLE). Although the SED refers to VLE development and progress towards interactivity, and there is an aspiration to see the VLE used as a learning tool, the team saw little evidence of such progress. Interactivity is not mentioned in the minimum standards policy and the student submission indicates that students do not find the VLE particularly useful. In meetings, the team heard that usage by tutors was variable as a result of an absence of VLE strategy, leading to a conclusion that it is used as a repository of information and documents rather than an interactive learning tool.

2.16   In another meeting with staff, the team was told that staff development for VLE took place but that this was training on how to access the system rather than how to exploit its features for the benefit of student learning. The team was told by students that in some circumstances (for example, a plagiarism-detection project) assignments were uploaded by them to VLE and hard copies were also required by tutors. The team was told that the Higher Education Curriculum Development Officer (HECDO) and the Dean of Higher Education were jointly responsible for monitoring VLE content, and that there was no formal approval process for the content to be uploaded on the VLE. Students are not able to upload general/course information to VLE and they use social media among themselves instead. The team **recommends** that by December 2014 the College develops a strategic and consistent approach to maximising the effectiveness of the virtual learning environment as a learning and teaching tool.

2.17   In 2013, the College introduced a computerised plagiarism-detection system, for which training had been delivered, discussed at higher education staff meetings, and was to be included in student handbooks. Students told the team that they understood plagiarism but were less sure about copyright law and photocopying restrictions .The team was told that the plagiarism-detection tool was embedded within the VLE and that a pilot scheme was being rolled out to introduce this for some courses, while other courses provided their assessments in hard copy form. The team was told that there were plans to extend the use of the tool to all programmes, however, no further evidence was received to confirm this. The team notes that the plagiarism procedures, as applied currently, give rise to inconsistencies as students are exposed to varying experiences. The team therefore **recommends** that by December 2014 the College implements a systematic and consistent approach to plagiarism detection across the higher education provision.

2.18   The team heard from the Principal that the College supported staff development and sharing of good practice. There is a College strategy together with a higher education plan and a continuous professional development (CPD) plan produced as a result of the CPD evaluation process, and a ring-fenced budget. There is a formal route to be followed when a CPD need is identified for specific staff, which is also used at staff appraisal. Staff are able to apply for funding for staff development. In relation to individual staff teaching qualifications, the team were told that staff must either hold or be working towards a teaching qualification. There is an aspiration for increasing the level of staff with master's-level qualifications but the team did not see any supporting evidence of scholarly activity. The team heard from staff that there was an effective mentoring system with line management observation, peer observation and student feedback. Additionally, the team was told that there was a cross-College training officer, whom they did not meet, but understood that this was an administrative rather than strategic role. While there is evidence of staff development of individual staff members to benefit from, the team was unable to

collect evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness of CPD planning for higher education staff at the College. Additionally, the team was unable to gain understanding of how CPD is planned for to ensure it strategically aligns with the priorities the College sets for itself (currently 12 priority lines are identified) and how the monitoring of CPD relates back to these priorities and establishes the level of impact. In meetings, staff confirmed that their understanding of the approach to CPD was based on individual needs rather than college-wide higher education development plans. The team **recommends** that by December 2014 the College develops a strategic approach to the planning of higher education staff development, including scholarly activity, and ensure its impact is effectively monitored.

2.19   Overall, the team concludes that Canterbury College does **not meet** Expectation B3 and the level of risk is moderate; the main risks being represented by inconsistency across the higher education provision of student and staff experiences. There was also a lack of strategic oversight at higher education level to ensure that learning opportunities and teaching practices align with programme outcomes and appropriately facilitate student achievement. While there are some instances of constructive developments, the team found the planning and monitoring processes to be underdeveloped, insufficiently prioritised and not embedded in operational structures of the College. The College's response (via the IQER action plan) to the aims it sets for itself is slow and this leads to specific problems that could become generalised if not addressed. The recommendation in B4 is also relevant for this area.

Expectation: Not Met
Level of Risk: Moderate

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

2.20   The College states that it has a strong culture of supporting and developing students and the draft Higher Education Development Plan contains a target for student satisfaction.

2.21   The team sought evidence to verify what this entails and how various arrangements enable student support and development. The team found that such evidence was more difficult to see in documentation, other than the student submission and, in consequence, sought views of staff and students and any external contribution from employers to form a balanced view.

2.22   The establishment of a new, separate Higher Education Centre on the College campus is a major achievement in giving the higher education faculty a distinctive presence, and it is clear that this project has been a major undertaking. Students in their submission generally reflected positive comments on the higher education library. Notwithstanding the presence of the main College library, some students wanted more books at the higher education library and for this to open for longer hours. In order to enable students to meet their objectives, the Learning Resource Centre (LRC) and VLE are key, as shown in the learning resources policy statement (see further considerations under B3). The team heard that all students had a library induction and spoke well of the higher education library staff and support provided. There was evidence that some reading lists needed to be updated and that legal restrictions for photocopying were not understood by students.

2.23   The matter of LRC opening hours was raised in the student meetings in the context of the LRC closing before students attending part-time courses had finished their lectures. The team were told by students that this issue had been raised with the College to no effect. Staff acknowledged this was the case, however, they indicated that students wishing to use library facilities after the LRC closed had access to the College library, which had longer opening hours.

2.24   There appear to be informal arrangements for LRC staff to contribute to the annual course review and programme design processes, including attending a variety of meetings. The team were told that the LRC involvement in updating reading lists is in researching books for purchase which have been identified by academic staff, prior to Dean of Higher Education purchase sign-off. The team **recommends** that the College ensures that there is effective liaison between the Learning Resource Centre and the higher education teaching teams to develop systematic and consistent procedures to regularly review and update learning resources.

2.25   The team concludes that overall Expectation B4 is **met** with the associated level of risk being low. However, it recognises that there are still adjustments to be made for the LRC to become fully effective as a support mechanism for student development and achievement. The recommendations in B3 are also relevant for this area.

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

2.26   The College states that it has 'a well established system of student representatives and focus groups as part of its quality cycle'. The College also states that there are a number of mechanisms to obtain feedback and that it has an outstanding students' union, which supports students. One higher education student is a member of the governing body (the Corporation). The College outlines its engagement with students in a Student Voice Flowchart. The College prepared a document which maps the Expectation and indicators of *Chapter B5* with the internal activity. This lists a range of mechanisms by which the student voice is represented, including embedded student representatives, and induction programmes, the National Student Survey (NSS) and student liaison meetings.

2.27   To examine the effectiveness of the arrangements in place, the team met the Principal, groups of students and groups of staff, and examined documentation submitted prior to the review visit.

2.28   The focus of student engagement, as described by the College, is around student representation. The students confirmed that there was a student representative system in place. Student representatives are elected for each course. The College does offer training for student representatives through the students' union, however, students who met the team indicated that student representatives rarely attend, if at all. When asked about their role, students representatives were unclear and stated they were not aware of a role descriptor for representatives, even though the role is described in the handbooks. The College submitted evidence to demonstrate student contribution to staff-student liaison meetings, however, the student representatives who met the team could only confirm that they meet together as representatives, and not with staff. Complaints are sometimes raised through the students' union or student representatives, who then refer to Head of Higher Education faculty.

2.29   The review team found no evidence, beyond the representative system, to demonstrate that opportunities for working in partnership with students were defined or publicised. The College does not have a definition of student engagement or a specific strategy for its development. The students who met the team were unable to identify how they contributed to the quality enhancement and quality assurance processes which might lead to an improvement in their educational experience.

2.30   There is evidence of student matters being acted upon on a case-by-case basis, however, from the meetings which the team had with staff and students, this does not appear to be a coordinated, two-way process between students and the higher education team; rather students appear to collect views to pass on. Students, in meetings with the review team, said that they felt able to talk to staff informally about issues at programme-level, which were often resolved locally. In spite of the fact that the College does present a Student Voice Flowchart and indicates mechanisms of capturing student views, students whom the team met were less clear about such formal structures which might support the creation and maintenance of an environment where discussion might take place with the College at all levels to enhance the educational experience. The review team did not find evidence to show that evidence-based discussion resulting in mutual sharing of information occurred with students. The team **recommends** that by December 2014 the

College develop effective opportunities for student engagement and representation, including training and support for student representatives.

2.31   As an example of an opportunity to engage students, the team were told in a meeting to discuss the VLE that firstly, there was no online feedback questionnaire which could be completed on the effectiveness of the VLE and, secondly, that there was no discussion board facility which would enable real-time collection of student views. However, students did confirm that they had the opportunity to provide views on teaching and learning, more broadly, after every term and through online questionnaires.

2.32   In advance of this review, students had completed their submission which most of the student representatives said they had seen and all agreed with, although at another meeting, students were not certain they had seen the student submission. The team was told by staff that there was a discrepancy between issues raised in the student submission and the student viewpoint survey. However, the team found that the results table only showed areas of differentiation on some courses. The student submission prompted additional research to be undertaken with students, culminating in action points. In meetings, staff indicated that there are formal mechanisms to capture student opinion, but the team could not gain clarity as to why these had not been used proactively prior to the student submission.

2.33   The review team concludes that the approach adopted by the College does not engage with students effectively. There is a lack of definition for the role to be played by students. The students and their representatives are unsure of their roles and, notwithstanding the availability of training; there was no evidence that student representatives were actually trained. The College does not have a formal structure to consistently and effectively involve students in the higher education committee process and, from the meetings and documentation scrutinised by the review team, the approach towards enhancement of quality systems and process was not guided by a partnership with the students, limiting opportunities for students to make effective contributions to the assurance and enhancement of their learning opportunities. Therefore, Expectation B5 is **not met** and the associated level of risk is serious.

Expectation: Not met
Level of Risk: Serious

Expectation (B6): Higher education providers ensure that students have appropriate opportunities to show they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the award of a qualification or credit.

Quality Code, *Chapter B6: Assessment of students and accreditation of prior learning*

Findings

2.34   The College expresses confidence that all students have the opportunities captioned in this Expectation, citing internal verification and local arrangements in all higher education programmes, in addition to the external oversight of awarding bodies and external examiners.

2.35   The review team explored these claims both institutionally and at subject-level through the production of evidence and in discussions with staff and students.

2.36   Teaching staff confirmed that the higher education assessment policy is aligned with the regulations of the awarding bodies, but there is no discrete consideration of the Quality Code; the College relies exclusively on the quality assurance framework of the awarding bodies to underpin the policy.

2.37   Assessment is considered at approvals stage and a diversity of assessment methods is encouraged with training provided through Pearson. The College manages the whole assessment and verification process with a focus on inclusion and, according to some external examiners, the College provides feedback to students which is of a high quality.

2.38   The College has responded effectively to the recommendation of an external examiner about the over-assessment, with the outcome that the University of Kent's categorical marking scheme has been applied to the BSc Animal Science programme with each grade given relevant criteria. Student handbooks have been updated accordingly.

2.39   Board of Examiners meetings are attended by the whole teaching team and they are held annually. External examiner reports confirm that these Boards are effective and there are clear guidelines from the faculty's awarding bodies regarding processes and procedures.

2.40   Students who met with the team confirmed that expectations for assessment, including timings, format and marking schemes, had been clear in advance through the induction process and programme handbooks. The team heard that there was some variation in practice and not all students received assessment calendars (see Expectation A6), however, similar information was provided through the handbooks, if calendars were missing.

2.41   The team concludes that the College **meets** Expectation B6 and that the associated level of risk is low, as any identified inconsistencies are viewed to be minor and do not pose a risk. The evidence reviewed and the views of the staff and students with whom the team met, reassured the team that students have appropriate opportunities to show they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the award of a qualification or credit.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B7: External examining*

Findings

2.42   External examiners are appointed by the College's awarding bodies and awarding organisation, to which they also report. External examiners see a sample of work, review feedback and speak to students. The team reviewed the College's discharge of its contractual obligations, noting that issues arising in external examiner reports, such as assessment and marking criteria, are addressed through annual course review processes. Through meetings with staff and consideration of evidence, the team confirmed that matters arising throughout the reports are effectively addressed and a formal response is sent to the awarding body.

2.43   The review team noted that there is no consideration of external examiner reports in the College's Quality Committee minutes which were provided to the team. This omission is reflected in the recommendation made for Expectation A4 regarding strategic oversight of the annual monitoring process.

2.44   The review team heard from students that external examiner reports are made available to them through the VLE. The teaching staff do not discuss reports with the students.

2.45   The team concludes that the College **meets** Expectation B7 and that the associated level of risk is low. The recommendation in A4 is also relevant for this area.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B8): Higher education providers have effective procedures in place to routinely monitor and periodically review programmes.

Quality Code, *Chapter B8: Programme monitoring and review*

Findings

2.46   The university awarding bodies consider the annual monitoring reports produced by the College. Programme reviews are considered on a six-yearly basis. The College is responsible for the submission of annual monitoring reports for each programme to the universities; participation on programme reviews; and responding to any recommendations arising. The College is also responsible for the taking account of the views of students.

2.47   Pearson is responsible for publishing Rules of Combination within all HND/C programme specifications to allow for flexibility to suit local needs, and also for the provision of a customised validation service for centre-designed specialist modules. Staff have a clear understanding relating to these arrangements, but the team found that there was little awareness of the existence or knowledge of the application of the Quality Code.

2.48   Each programme is reviewed termly through the annual course review which is completed by the programme teams. Action plans address any identified areas for improvement and are signed off by the Section Manager and Faculty Head at the end of the academic year. The internal review process is formalised in planning documentation, which is usually submitted to the Principal annually.

2.49   The College has review processes for the withdrawal of programmes and the team examined documentary evidence of this process regarding a music technology programme which was subsequently discontinued

2.50   The review team examined the College's policies, procedures and practices and found that higher education matters are considered thematically by the College, in tandem with further education matters. In meetings with staff, there was a lack of awareness of the existence of, or engagement, with the Quality Code at both programme level and throughout the College's annual monitoring and review processes; apart from student services and the library service which has extensively mapped its provision against the Quality Code in the form of a useful live action plan.

2.51   There is no specific higher education committee structure. Staff confirmed that there are no terms of reference or remits of College committees. As a consequence the review team was unclear about where, within the College, the locus of responsibility lies for assuring the appropriateness of academic standards, though it is clear that there are informal structures and procedures. The review team **recommends** that by December 2014 the College ensures the deliberative committee structure has clear roles and responsibilities which formalise the consideration of higher education matters.

2.52   The review team concludes that Expectation B8 is **not met** and that the associated level of risk is moderate in light of the structures observed at the College, which the team found insufficiently effective for higher education provision. The College also needs to consider the recommendation made under Expectation A4 to allow strategic oversight and effective coordination of higher education matters.

Expectation: Not met
Level of risk: Moderate

Expectation (B9): Higher education providers have fair, effective and timely procedures for handling students' complaints and academic appeals.

Quality Code, *Chapter B9: Academic complaints and student appeals*

2.53   The College and its awarding partners identify jointly where the responsibility lies for managing complaints and appeals in a 'checklist of responsibilities'. These documents are mapped to the Quality Code, including *Chapter B9*, and distinguish between complaints of an academic and non-academic nature.

2.54   This information is also available for staff in the Higher Education Quality Manual. Clear procedures for complaints and appeals are set out in a diary which is given to students during induction, as well as in the student handbooks, and the VLE student complaints are identified as an area of activity in the Higher Education and Access to HE Directorate Development Plan 2013/14.

2.55   The team tested the operation of the complaints and appeals procedures by discussing with students their awareness of the procedures, and reviewing a range of documentation including the diary, student handbooks, Higher Education Quality Manual and VLE.

2.56   There are opportunities for students to raise issues and complaints informally with staff or through meetings of student representatives. Students informed the review team that they sought redress informally though tutors, or elevated their complaint to senior staff, and rarely sought support from the Students' Union.

2.57   The provider maintains a complaints log which details complainants, the complaint, and action taken, and this is monitored by individual senior staff in different sections.

2.58   In meetings with staff and managers the review team enquired how the log of complaints might be used to inform institutional oversight. The team discussed how the College Higher Education Directorate might use the complaints log to prevent the complaints recurring, or how good practice might be disseminated across the higher education team. The review team were advised that the higher education community did not meet formally to reflect on the nature and frequency of complaints, but were kept informed of complaints as they arose through regular weekly team meetings. This proved to be effective in managing individual student complaints as they arose, but the review team could find no evidence that complaints were routinely or annually reported and monitored collectively by the higher education team.

2.59   Overall the team was convinced that the provider has in place appropriate procedures for the reporting to institutional managers, and management of individual complaints and appeals. The reliance on operational meetings to report complaints as they occur did enable complaints to be managed effectively at an individual level. It did not, however, provide an opportunity for all the higher education community to reflect on the nature of complaints and how they might be alleviated in the future. Such an opportunity might also usefully enable good practice in one area to be shared. The team **recommends** that by December 2014 the College further develops mechanisms for institutional reporting and oversight of higher education complaints.

2.60   The team concludes that the students were aware of the complaints and appeals process and knew where to get advice if needed; therefore Expectation B9 is **met**. The team had some reservations about the monitoring and review processes at an institutional level, but were satisfied from evidence provide by staff that complaints were managed quickly via operational meetings. The absence of a reflective annual process where the number of complaints, type and frequency are considered did not pose a risk to the complaints being

addressed, but restricted the institutions ability to share issues and ideas that might reduce the number of complaints in future. Thus, the associated risk was agreed to be low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B10: Managing higher education provision with others*

Findings

2.61   The College makes use of a number of employers to support the delivery of the curriculum and to provide students with opportunities for educational visits and interactions with leading industrialists. In meetings with employers the review team were advised that formal agreements did not exist, other than in cases where legal obligations had to be met.

2.62   The College has recently changed its provision from foundation degrees to HNDs and, as such, its responsibilities for managing work-based learning have diminished. The review team heard of examples where students undertake informal work-based learning during the holidays which is valuable, but not credit bearing or part of a validated academic programme. The College remains responsible for brokering such opportunities and undertaking the relevant inherent risk assessments and health and safety obligations to enable it to secure its arrangements with employers (see recommendation under B3).

2.63   This Expectation was tested through the review of documentation. The review team also met a small sample of employers nominated by the College.

2.64   The employers who met the review team had professional working relationships with key members of staff at the College. They spoke enthusiastically about the College's reputation, the students who visited them and the way the College made use of their expertise in delivering the curriculum.

2.65   The review team concludes that Expectation B10 is **met**, but that more can be done by the College to secure its arrangements with employers. The recommendation in Expectation B3 on employer engagement is particularly relevant for this area.

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

2.66   The College does not offer research degrees.

Quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.67   In reaching the judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. Seven Expectations for this judgement area were met with the associated level of risk being low. Three Expectations were not met with the associated level of risk being moderate (B3, B8) and serious (B5). One Expectation does not apply to the College (B11).

2.68   Nine recommendations were formulated which highlight weaknesses in operation, and insufficient emphasis on appropriate planning monitoring and review (in the context of a higher education culture). Shortcomings in the rigour with which processes are applied lead to some inconsistencies in student and staff experiences, and a lack of sufficient institutional awareness of the significance of particular issues identified by the team. Additionally, there is little evidence of progress for some of the areas which had been identified as problematic in the 2010 IQER, some of which are reiterated in this report, where the actions planned have not resulted in significant redress.

2.69   The current recommendations refer to: the development of a strategic and consistent approach to the usage of the VLE as learning and teaching tool; the planning of staff development, plagiarism detection, institutional reporting and oversight for the annual monitoring process, as well as for complaints. Further recommendations indicate the lack of or necessity for review and update of learning resources; opportunities for student engagement; clarification of roles and responsibilities for deliberative committees; and the strengthening and further formalising of internal processes for design and approval of new higher education courses, as well as employer engagement. The recommendation in A4 is also relevant for this area. There were no affirmations or features of good practice.

2.70   The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at Canterbury College **requires improvement to meet** UK expectations, and the recommendations formulated clearly identify the areas where such improvement is needed.

3 Judgement: Quality of the information produced about its provision

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 produces information for a variety of audiences, including the public, present and prospective students (including existing further education students) and alumni, especially presented through the prospectus, website, handbook, diary and VLE. It has indicated that there are strong mechanisms for reviewing accuracy and quality; however, the IQER detailed some areas where it would be desirable to take action, including the VLE, work-based learning, the website and the prospectus.

3.2 In the student submission, the VLE and handbooks were criticised alongside some course information. Prompted by the adverse elements of the submission, the College conducted fresh research into the matters highlighted. The statement received by the team during the visit indicated that the research findings did not wholly support the student submission conclusions; nevertheless it recognised the validity of the issues and proposed actions to be taken forward. This statement also revealed some new areas of enquiry.

3.3 The team heard that the prospectus was benchmarked against other similar colleges and a draft discussed with a focus group formed of existing students.

3.4 The students confirmed, as did the demonstration of the VLE, that information relating to course content, assessment activity and assignment briefs were available in advance for students, although it was unclear what the process is for ensuring the accuracy of this information prior to publication. As reported in paragraph 1.14 the team acknowledges that an audit of the VLE content occurs after publication.

3.5 The prospectus contains phrases such as 'outstanding student achievements' and 'brilliant modern subject matter'. The team asked what these statements were based on and heard that they were phrases supplied by tutors to the marketing department, but no supporting evidence was provided. The team **recommends** that by December 2014 the College develops the existing mechanisms to ensure that promotional and publicity materials are trustworthy.

3.6 In the absence of policy documentation relating to the production verification and publication of information, the review team considered the mapping undertaken by the College in relation to Part C of the Quality Code and endeavoured to obtain a clear picture from meetings with staff on the formal procedures adopted to verify information on the VLE, website and prospectus. The team confirmed that in line with the mapping document referred to above, much of the information relating to pre-course and on-course information was accessible via the College website, but it was unclear how it was validated systematically prior to publication. The team heard that there were informal routes, mainly relying upon the HEDCO, and circulation of drafts for manuscript amendment. The team **recommends** that by December 2014 the College clarifies the responsibilities for the management of higher education information to ensure that it is fit for purpose.

3.7 The review team concludes that the informal approach adopted by the College to information production lacks the rigour to ensure a fair and accurate reflection of the higher

education provision to its various audiences. Expectation C is judged to be **not met** with a moderate level of risk. The recommendation in A4 is also relevant for this area.

Expectation: Not met
Level of risk: Moderate

Quality of the information produced about its provision: Summary of findings

3.8   In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published Handbook. The Expectation for this judgement area is not met, and the associated level of risk is considered moderate.

3.9   The team found that there are weaknesses and lack of rigour in the management of information which already resulted in untrustworthy claims being made in public-facing media. This also impacts on the VLE, where responsibility for version control was unclear. The College acknowledged the issues during the review visit, but there is no evidence to indicate that it had developed its own awareness and understanding of these problems, or that it had set any aims to address them. The current review also indicates that progress is slow in some areas already highlighted during the IQER.

3.10   Currently, two recommendations are thus formulated to address these major issues relating to trustworthiness of promotional and publicity materials, and clarity and effective operation of areas of responsibility for the management of higher education information. There were no affirmations, or features of good practice. The review team therefore concludes that the quality of the information produced about its higher education provision **requires improvement to meet** UK expectations.

4   Judgement: Enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

Findings

4.1   The HE Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy contains statements where the term 'enhancement' is used to imply that operational activity is subject to continuous improvement. Deliberate actions for enhancement, beyond standard operational activities of improvement, were not evidenced throughout the review visit. The team was told that responsibility for some aspects of enhancement/improvement rests with 'faculty', and external examiners also play a role.

4.2   The new Higher Education Centre is a manifestation of a major commitment to higher education which the review team recognises. The Centre provides a distinct higher education environment and resources to enhance the learning environment. However, beyond the physical spaces a deliberate approach to enhancement is not evident in other documentation, nor was it evident in conversations with staff or apparent in routine deliberations surrounding quality matters.

4.3   In meetings with staff, the review team was referred to three enhancement strands encapsulated in the HE Development plan. The review team was told that the strands focused on (1) the learning environment and resources, (2) an holistic approach to stakeholder involvement and (3) teaching and learning, academic standards and staff development. These themes were not recognised by staff and students in subsequent meetings. Meetings with other staff revealed that staff were generally unaware of this commitment to enhancement. The higher education team held regular meetings but it appeared to the review team that there were no deliberative structures where the consistent sharing of good practice occurred, or deliberate steps were taken to enhance learning. While the modifications to peer observation were recognised, the discussion with staff confirmed that an enhancement strategy did not exist.

4.4   To test this Expectation the review team considered a wide range of documentation, and discussed this Expectation with staff. The review team asked directly for any strategy documentation which contained evidence of deliberate steps at institutional level to enhance the learning opportunities, however, the team received no satisfactory evidence. The review team met senior staff, academic managers, teaching staff, and professional support staff and enquired directly about an enhancement strategy. Staff were also asked for practical examples of where the institution takes deliberate steps to enhance the learning environment. The review team met staff to develop an understanding of the nature and composition of the weekly meetings, which are a significant feature of life at the College. The review team explored with staff the character and nature of these meetings to assess if they were as a result of, or instrumental to, meeting this Expectation.

4.5   The review team recognises that a number of operational rather than strategic initiatives take place to develop learning and teaching, including a Teaching and Learning day and an updating on the Quality Code. Managers are attentive undertaking learning walks, observations and shadowing to monitor staff performance. The Principal chairs weekly Teaching, Learning and Assessment meetings and underperforming staff are observed and developed as necessary. National benchmarks such as Destination of Leavers Survey in HE (DLHE) and the NSS are used where appropriate. Student opinions via representatives and questionnaires are used to enable a management focus on themes

such as timeliness of feedback. While this contributes to regular monitoring and review with an immediate response being possible, there was little or no evidence of the provider reflecting on systems, policies or processes with the view to taking deliberate steps at a strategic level to enhance provision. The team **recommends** that by December 2014 the College takes deliberate steps at strategic level to effectively capture enhancement opportunities arising from quality monitoring processes.

4.6   The review team concludes that the approach adopted by the College focuses on operational detail, routine management duties and monitoring performance activity, and is not as a consequence of reflection and review by the higher education team, or a deliberate strategic activity, and therefore it is not adequate to support Enhancement activities as such. The College does not recognise the role Enhancement is meant to play for the higher education provision and the responsibilities associated with Enhancement, and as a result the College has not planned to address the needs related to a potential Enhancement agenda. In consequence, the team concludes that this Expectation is **not met** and the level of risk is serious. The recommendations in B3 and B5 are also relevant for this area.

Expectation: Not met
Level of risk: Serious

Enhancement of learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.7   In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published Handbook. The Expectation for this judgement area is not met with the associated level of risk considered to be serious.

4.8   The team acknowledges that there is operational improvement on a day-to-day basis, however, no conclusive evidence was received to assure the team that the College has a strategic approach to Enhancement or to demonstrate how it reflects on its higher education provision and, subsequently, takes deliberate steps within the available structures.

4.9   The team found that the approach taken is not adequate to support Enhancement activities and that the College does not recognise the relevance of Enhancement or the responsibilities associated with it. There are no plans by the College to address these shortcomings. One recommendation was formulated to address this lack in strategic management of enhancement-led activities.

4.10   There were no affirmations, or features of good practice. The review team therefore concludes that the enhancement of learning opportunities at Canterbury College **does not meet** UK expectations.

5   Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1   The Higher Education Review includes a thematic element which focuses on an area which is regarded as particularly worthy of further analysis or enhancement. For this review, it is Student Employability and the steps taken by the College to improve student employability.

5.2   The College states that the higher education curriculum is designed to give students the skills and knowledge they need to find and succeed in employment. The review team was told by senior staff that student employability was included in the (draft) Higher Education Development Plan.

5.3   The previous review (IQER) raised issues regarding employer engagement; this review team was not shown evidence of continuing assessment of target ambitions, but were told that oversight was by the Senior Management Team. The draft Higher Education Development Plan also does not contain evidence of continuous monitoring or evaluation.

5.4   The College has a centre for careers advice (Canterbury Training and Recruitment) which operates for the whole College and is not located in the higher education building. Student views were mainly positive but stated that 'most had never had to use it'. Skills development was in the hands of individual tutors

5.5   On request, the College produced for the team an outline of activities with an employability component. Students whom the team met confirmed that there were different opportunities within different programmes to learn skills required for post-education employment and that there were outside speakers brought in to the College. An outside exhibition for art at Canterbury Cathedral was mentioned as a positive development. Students told the team that they appreciated the 'hands on' experience which one course arranged. Another group of students told the team that collectively they had positive and negative experiences. The team were told of an employment opportunity from a higher education employability conference that had resulted in a company employing eight people from a business course.

5.6   Although the College states that employability skills are embedded in the teaching and learning, there was no evidence of the views of employers being sought formally in curriculum design. However, students told the team that although employers are not invited to contribute to the annual course review process, there was evidence that their views on new course proposals were sought informally. The team met employers from four companies involved in three courses who advised that they were not invited to contribute to programme design and do not sit on any committees. However, it was clear that they have very productive informal relationships with teaching staff.

5.7   Employer representatives who met the team were very complimentary and enthusiastic about the subject tutors and relationship with the College. The team heard from this small sample of employers that some of the placements were voluntary and not part of the curriculum; that administration varied according to the outside organisation - for one, there was a separate HR department to handle the details. In terms of learning and teaching, the team was impressed by the close and positive relationship between the four employers and three tutors, but there did not appear to be a structured approach to employer involvement. The employers had not been approached to contribute to programme design or provide feedback. The team did not find evidence of a formal policy or any procedures to govern the relationship between the College and employers.

5.8   There was no evidence offered of engagement with national initiatives, such as the Higher Education Achievement Report.

5.9   The team was told that there were some opportunities for staff to work shadow some employers to get industry experience. Some teaching staff were able to meet employers at Chamber of Commerce events. The College also makes use of a number of employers to support the delivery of the curriculum and to provide students with opportunities for educational visits and interactions with leading industrialists.

5.10   The review team concludes that although the College has success in gaining employment as a desired outcome, they did not find specific evidence of a planned, cohesive approach to provision of skills training or a systematic attitude towards engagement with actual and potential employers, aligned with market demand. In addition to establishing a formal risk policy and plan for student employability with appropriate objectives and monitoring, formal agreements should be established with employers because the team was advised that none existed (aside from where the employer had specific legal requirements) (see recommendation under B3).

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/about-us/glossary.

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* (FHEQIS).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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