Initial Review of Cardinal Newman College

May 2016

About this review

This is a report of an Initial Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Cardinal Newman College. The review took place from 18 to 19 May 2016 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Miss Maxina Butler Holmes
- Mr Matthew Kitching (student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Cardinal Newman 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 Initial Review, the QAA review team:

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

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

The QAA website gives more information about QAA and its mission.[2] A dedicated section explains the method for Initial Review[3] and has links to the review handbook and other informative documents. For an explanation of terms see the glossary at the end of this report.

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[1] The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code.
[2] QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us.
[3] Initial Review web pages: www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Initial-Review.aspx.

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Cardinal Newman College

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

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding body **is likely to meet** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **is likely to meet** UK expectations.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **is likely to meet** UK expectations.

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at Cardinal Newman College.

- The effective use of reflection in developing students as Early Years practitioners (Expectation B3).
- The integrated package of induction, transition and support arrangements, which enables students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential (Expectation B4).
- The proactive approach to providing students with learning resources that enhance student learning opportunities (Expectation B4).
- The active engagement with assessment grids, which promotes a shared understanding among both staff and students (Expectation B6).

Recommendations

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

By September 2016:

- strengthen processes for the internal approval of new provision (Expectation B1)
- ensure arrangements for the accreditation of prior learning align with those of the awarding body (Expectations B2 and B6)
- ensure action plans contain clear deadlines that are formally agreed and monitored (Expectation B8)
- ensure that the College Complaints Policy fully complies with awarding body requirements (Expectation B9)
- ensure clear and consistent reference to the role of the awarding body and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator in documentation relating to complaints (Expectation B9)
- formalise the process for providing comprehensive information to workplace mentors to support them in carrying out their responsibilities (Expectation B10)
- ensure that the approval of information is documented (Information).

By November 2016:

- ensure that programme-level annual monitoring informs institutional self-assessment processes (Expectation B8).

By December 2016:

- further develop and embed plans to engage students as partners in their educational experience (Expectation B5).

Affirmations

The QAA review team makes the following **affirmation** to Cardinal Newman College.

- The steps taken to augment the annual reporting process for the College's further education provision through the introduction of formal structures to promote effective oversight of higher education (Expectation B8).

Further explanation of the key findings can be found in the guidance available on the QAA webpage explaining Initial Review.

About Cardinal Newman College

Cardinal Newman College (the College) is an Ofsted Grade 1 college rated as an Outstanding non-selective Catholic sixth form college. It is situated in the centre of the City of Preston. The College caters for approximately 3,600 students, of whom 13 study higher education programmes.

The College Mission states that it is 'a community which aims to live out the gospel values of service and love. This means that:

- the individual student is central to all its endeavours
- the College values each individual as a unique person and regards each person,
- made in the image and likeness of God, as worthy of the utmost respect
- the College strives to develop each person intellectually, socially, physically and
- spiritually through an inclusive programme of study and enrichment
- the College values the spiritual journey of each individual and offers opportunities
- for each to engage appropriately in their spiritual search
- the College is committed to creating a culture that is open and welcoming, free from fear and from violence of any kind, in which all individuals feel safe, happy and secure
- the College provides learning environments that are stimulating, enjoyable and challenging to students, fostering their creativity, imagination and search for truth
- the College encourages individuals to contribute positively to the world in which they live, to challenge injustice and to seek out more cooperative, just and peaceful forms of human existence.'

This Mission is reflected in the College's core values for higher education, which are recorded in its Higher Education Strategy. This Higher Education Strategy also articulates its four key strategic drivers, which lead higher education development:

- Lancashire LEP and government priorities for Early Years foundation stage qualifications
- provision of an alternative to traditional routes into higher education, which meet the needs of individuals currently in the workforce
- opportunities for internal progression of College sixth form college students
- responding to employers' priorities and needs (employability).

The Higher Education Strategy reflects the College aims in providing higher education. These are as follows.

- To increase higher education provision at the College to reflect the needs of students, the local community and employers, and to capitalise on areas of expertise - the aim is to grow to a level of 100 students by 2020.
- To support the aim of 100 students by 2020 by further developing the College's higher education infrastructure for the delivery of higher education - this includes ensuring an effective staffing infrastructure to develop and support higher education staff as the College grows, as well as reviewing its accommodation plans.
- To develop and effectively manage partnerships in the development and delivery of higher education, and to work with employers, students, partner higher education institutions and other key organisations to develop a higher education based curriculum, which seeks to increase the employability of students and meet the needs of the community.
- To maintain high standards of learning, teaching, student achievement and progression.

- To maintain high standards of high quality learning and teaching within the higher education programmes, to develop responsive and higher education specific systems, and to provide a range of support services to ensure student achievement and progression to employment or further learning.
- To widen participation in higher education, to engage with a broad range of potential learners through targeted marketing and recruitment activities, to attract those who otherwise may not have access to or consider higher education.

The College offers two foundation degrees validated by Middlesex University, under a partnership agreement that requires the College to deliver the teaching, learning and assessment with its own higher education teaching team. These programmes were first offered in September 2015. The College has 13 higher education students (as of January 2016). Twelve students study on the Foundation Degree Teaching and Learning Support, and one student studies on the Foundation Degree Early Years.

Both these programmes have been designed to have shared common modules. Provision of higher education at the College is driven by the needs of current students, employer demands and professional body requirements. The courses are intended to meet an existing need and are currently not offered by any local higher education provider.

They are intended to be particularly relevant to the many students who enter an Early Years setting for full-time employment who have not progressed to higher education. The programmes will offer another option to those students who want to stay at home and study, whether for financial and/or cultural reasons. At the same time, the College would act as a bridge between further and higher education for students who would not normally take this route. The Foundation Degree Early Years is aimed at individuals who are working or aspire to work with children within the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum 0-5 Years. The Foundation Degree Teaching and Learning Support course is aimed at individuals who are currently or aspire to work with children in an educational setting in Key Stage 1 and 2.

The College's proposal to deliver these foundation degrees is strengthened by being part of the Caxton Group, an innovative collaboration of outstanding sixth form colleges that delivers higher education courses with shared resources. The lead institution and awarding body is Middlesex University. The lead college is Peter Symonds College, Winchester (Adult and Higher Education), which is willing to share the good practice and resources developed in its delivery of higher education programmes in a cost effective manner, while maintaining outstanding quality and creating excellence. The other top-performing sixth form colleges in the Group are King Edward VI College, Stourbridge, and Hills Road Sixth Form College, Cambridge.

Explanation of the findings about Cardinal Newman College

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1 Middlesex University, as the College's awarding body, assumes responsibility for ensuring that the requirements of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) are met. This is achieved through the validation process and in any subsequent review of programmes. The University's requirements for the validation of programmes are specified in the University's Learning and Quality Enhancement Handbook. Staff at the College have also worked with the University to map policies and practices against the Quality Code.

1.2 The review team found that the University has clearly documented arrangements for taking account of the FHEQ, as well as Subject Benchmark Statements and qualification characteristics. College staff are familiar with these arrangements and understand how they impact upon programme development, including learning outcomes. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.3 The review team tested the Expectation by meeting with College and University staff. The team also viewed the University's Learning and Quality Enhancement Handbook and the College's Academic Regulations.

1.4 College staff are involved in the development of the programme, which is validated rather than franchised. Through its internal development and approval process, University

validation events, and membership of the Caxton Group, the College provided the review team with evidence that it was aware of the role that the FHEQ and *Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark* play in ensuring that the level of the programme and its learning outcomes are appropriate.

1.5   In light of the significant role adopted by the awarding body, in addition to clear College understanding, supportive function of the Caxton Group, and clearly documented arrangements in relation to the development and approval of programmes, the review team concludes that the College is likely to meet the Expectation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Likely to meet
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.6   The College relies on Middlesex University's regulations in relation to the award of credit and qualifications. The College has responsibility, however, for developing content for the validated programmes it runs and for the construction of assessment, together with marking. The review team was provided with the College's own academic regulations for higher education provision, which had been developed based on University regulations and similar regulations produced by other members of the Caxton Group. During the review visit these regulations were retracted, and instead College documentation governing the operation of College provision is currently more dispersed.

1.7   The College operates a committee structure that is particular for its higher education provision and distinct from its further education programmes. This structure includes boards of study, Higher Education Internal Programme Progress Review, and the Academic Board. The work of these committees is informed by an annual monitoring report and an equivalent mid-year exercise.

1.8   Comprehensive regulations produced by Middlesex University, close liaison between programme staff at the College and University staff with responsibility for quality assurance, and a clearly delineated committee structure within the College, would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.9   The review team tested the Expectation by meeting with staff and students. The team also read the student submission to this review, and viewed the University's Learning and Quality Enhancement Handbook and the College's Academic Regulations.

1.10   Despite the fact that the College has not produced its own overarching academic regulations, there was evidence of a close partnership between College staff and key University staff. This has broadly resulted in a sound understanding of University requirements and the intersection between College's governance frameworks and those of the awarding body.

1.11   The committee structure, as noted elsewhere in this report, incorporates externality through external examiners. In addition, an external adviser from a local university is monitoring the early phase of its implementation. Key processes within the College's academic framework also benefit from guidance notes, such as internal programme progress reviews. Award boards, which due to the infancy of the provision have yet to meet, will do so under Middlesex University regulations.

1.12   In considering the significant role of the awarding body, and the College's committee structure, which incorporates externality and guidance notes for key College processes, the review team concludes that the College is likely to meet the Expectation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Likely to meet
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.13   Definitive programme information is maintained by Middlesex University, and programme specifications, which detail learning outcomes, are made available to students through their programme handbooks. Responsibility for the management of definitive programme information is detailed in the Memoranda of Cooperation. The procedure for making major and minor amendments to the programme specification is detailed in the Learning and Quality Enhancement Handbook, and the University's link tutor provides advice and support in relation to modifications when required.

1.14   The review team found that the clearly documented responsibilities in relation to the construction, modification and ownership of definitive programme information, together with the information made available to students through their handbooks, would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.15   The review team tested this Expectation by meeting with College and University staff and students. The team also scrutinised programme specifics, the Memorandum of Cooperation and programme handbooks, along with the University's Learning and Quality Enhancement Handbook.

1.16   The review team found that staff understand the University's expectations in relation to definitive programme information. Staff also have a detailed grasp as to how the programme specification guides their delivery. Students reported that programme information, including the specification, which is embedded in their programme handbooks, is readily available in hard copy and online.

1.17   Owing to the awarding body's centralised control of programme specifications, the high level of understanding among College staff, and the comprehensive and transparent provision of information to students, the review team concludes that the College is likely to meet the Expectation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Likely to meet
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.18   It is the responsibility of Middlesex University to approve programmes and ensure their alignment with the FHEQ under its approvals processes. The College operates within the academic and regulatory framework of the University. The Learning and Quality Enhancement Handbook provides guidance in relation to the academic framework and regulations. The development of a new University programme commences with the completion of an Academic Provision Approval Committee Form; this process was followed for the two foundation degree programmes. The University's Centre for Academic Partnerships provides advice throughout the approvals process.

1.19   The College's awarding body ensures that the qualifications delivered at the College meet the threshold standards.

1.20   The College's approach would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.21   The review team analysed documents produced by both the College and the University throughout the approvals process. The team also met senior staff, including the Principal, teaching staff and a representative from the awarding body.

1.22   The Middlesex University Panel that approved the programmes reported in January 2015. There were five conditions to which the College responded well in advance of the first cohort of students being recruited. A developmental action plan ensured that staff were prepared.

1.23   The arrangements for the design and approval of higher education provision operate in accordance with the frameworks and regulations of the College's awarding body. The review team concludes that the College is likely to meet the Expectation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Likely to meet
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.24   The College relies on the academic framework of its awarding body for ensuring the validity of assessment and for that the achievement of learning outcomes is demonstrated through assessment. The Middlesex University Learning Quality and Enhancement Handbook covers academic policies and award boards' procedure. The University's validation report noted that the approaches towards assessment, particularly the focus on reflecting on practice, aligned with the programme learning outcomes.

1.25   The University is responsible for the appointment of the external examiner. The College's Programme Lead is engaging directly with the external examiner through the assessment cycle. The external examiner's report will be considered by the College's Academic Board and inform the annual monitoring report which will be forwarded to the University.

1.26   Programme handbooks, approved at the time of validation, indicate the learning outcomes to be achieved against assessment. Module handbooks clearly show the nature and weighting of summative assessments in relation to learning outcomes.

1.27   This approach would enable the College to meet the Expectation.

1.28   The review team examined the documentary evidence provided in relation to assessment. Meetings were held with teaching staff, a member of the awarding body's quality team and with students.

1.29   The evidence reviewed showed the policies and procedures in relation to the achievement of learning outcomes through assessment to be effective in practice. Teaching staff are experiencing the process, participating in moderation meetings and have benefited through the training provided by the University along with an Away Day and Caxton Group meetings. The team heard that moderation meetings have taken place and that the Internal Programme Reviews have provided focus. Common grading criteria/grids are adopted by staff which are also replicated in student handbooks to 'promote a shared understanding' of standards.

1.30   The College's responsibility for assuring academic standards is through the Academic Board, the final meeting of which acts as an Assessment Board. This has yet to take place. For the first three years, the Board will be chaired by the University link tutor. Staff evaluate standards at Internal Programme Reviews and moderation meetings. The College is responsible for both first and second marking, with moderation being undertaken by the link tutor. The team heard that the link tutor was providing ongoing advice and guidance. Staff plan to use this year's marked assessments for standardisation exercises in subsequent years.

1.31   The review team concludes that the College is likely to meet the Expectation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Likely to meet
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.32   The College notes a key challenge as 'to develop an effective infrastructure to support Higher Education provision'; this is in the context of its growth plan towards 2020.

1.33   The Memorandum of Cooperation requires a Board of Study to be established; this had met twice by the time of the review visit. Staff from the University's Quality Office provide support for the College to develop relevant quality assurance processes; the University takes the lead in programme monitoring through the formal receipt of the AMR and conducting the assessment boards, both of which will identify areas for development.

1.34   The College refers to 'developing HE systems, processes, policies and procedures that are fit for purpose.' There is a higher education programmes monitoring cycle and HE Academic Board infrastructure including Board of Study, and HE Quality Review cycle in place. The overview quality assurance of programme monitoring cycle has been adapted from the PSC model. It is intended that the Programme Lead will present the AMR and action plan at a special meeting of the Academic Board.

1.35   The foundation degrees are located in Health and Social Care department. All curriculum areas produce a SAR and in addition an AMR will be produced in November.

1.36   The College has processes in place for programme monitoring and review which are designed to ensure that academic standards are being maintained. This would enable the College to meet the Expectation.

1.37   The team tested this Expectation by meeting with staff and students and examining documents relating to the monitoring and review of programmes.

1.38   The HE Academic Board is responsible for the maintenance of academic standards and will meet up to six times annually. The Quality Review cycle schedules the Academic Board Principal's Review paper to provide an early draft of the emerging AMR to be held in May. The AMER briefing paper was available for the team who heard that staff had found this to provide a developmental experience.

1.39   The Board of Study is chaired by the Programme Lead and has a university lecturer in its membership to advise on practices. It has met twice. Minutes are forwarded to MU and to the Governing body sub-committee, Curriculum Quality and Standards (CQS). The Vice-Principal presents the paper to the CQS meeting.

1.40   The College, in association with the awarding body, has appropriate processes in place for the ongoing monitoring and review of its higher education provision. The review team concludes that the College is likely to meet the Expectation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Likely to meet
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.41   The HE Strategy includes an aim to 'develop and effectively manage partnerships in the development and delivery of higher education, employers, partner HEIs and other key organisations'. The priorities of the Lancashire LEP and the requirement for increasing Level 4+ qualifications across the areas of Manufacturing, Energy, Creative and Digital, Health are cited as influencing portfolio development. There are plans to develop provision in Business and Management and Creative Industries covered in the Higher Education Strategy.

1.42   The College is responsible for maintaining the academic standards as set under the University's academic frameworks and regulations. There was consultation with employers in Early Years settings during the design of the programme prior to validation. The expertise of the external examiner appointed by the University is the main source of externality to confirm the achievement of standards.

1.43   The College draws on the external peer support network provided through the Caxton Group of sixth form colleges.

1.44   The approach taken by the College would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.45   The review team analysed documentation relating to the validation and approvals process, the Higher Education Strategy and minutes of meetings. The team met senior staff, teaching staff and students.

1.46   Although there have been limited opportunities to use external expertise, the team members noted the following. The College has been 'guided by' the programme specifications of Peter Symonds College, has arranged for peer staff development and staff participate in group meetings. The Caxton Group of sixth form colleges facilitate the sharing of good practice in relation to the programmes validated by Middlesex University. The College is using the services of a local university lecturer to guide practice; this person also sits on the Board of Study.

1.47   In light of the College's effective partnerships with the awarding body and colleges within the Caxton Group, the review team concludes that the College is likely to meet the Expectation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Likely to meet
Level of risk: Low

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

1.48   In reaching its positive judgement, the review team matched the findings against the criteria set out in the *Guidance for Providers Undergoing Initial Review*, published by QAA, December 2014.

1.49   The College's awarding body, Middlesex University, has ultimate responsibility for the setting of academic standards. All seven Expectations for this judgement area are likely to be met, and the associated level of risk in each instance has been assessed as low. A positive judgement in this area demonstrates that the College is aware of its responsibilities for maintaining those standards.

1.50   The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding body at the College **is likely to meet** UK expectations.

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

Findings

2.1 Responsibility for the design, development and approval of higher education programmes is shared between the College and the University as identified in the Memorandum of Cooperation. The College observed these processes for the foundation degree programmes as described under Expectation A3.1. There is new course proposal form for internal use. Within the College, the Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality holds responsibility for the design, development and approval of higher education programmes. Proposals for new provision are formally discussed at senior management team meetings and reported to the CQS Committee of the Governing Body. Options for new provision which align with the higher education strategic priorities were being explored at a senior level at the time of the review.

2.2 Through working with the University, the review team finds that the College has appropriate systems and processes in place for the design, development and approval of higher education programmes that would enable this Expectation to be met.

2.3 The review team read documents which were prepared for approval and the validating panel report, the Higher Education Strategy and minutes of senior team and Governors meetings. In addition, the team discussed the approach towards approvals and outline thoughts for the development of new programmes during meetings with senior staff including the Principal and teaching staff.

2.4 The design of the foundation degree programmes originated from existing provision at PSC but with the flexibility to adapt to suit the College context. During the development phase, the College drew upon the guidance and support from other colleges within the Caxton Group and a small group of staff worked closely with the Academic Partnerships Office staff at Middlesex University.

2.5 As noted in A3.1, the MU Academic Provision Approval Committee form was utilised to progress the approval process within the College. The University validation panel required five conditions which were met by the College and signed off by the University. A commendation was made in relation to: the emphasis on and support for reflective practice throughout the design of the programme; and the potential for PDP to support assessment, professional development and employability. The internal new course approval form is used within the College for programmes up to Level 3; however, this is very brief and does not present the academic case for a new higher education programme. The team members were informed that the College plans to produce a more appropriate document to promote discussion through the deliberative structure.

2.6 The Higher Education Strategy outlines the College's plans to extend the number of higher education programmes, perhaps with awarding bodies other than Middlesex University. There is a commitment towards developing programmes to meet employer needs and some of the regional economic priorities. Senior staff are aware of the challenges such

growth would present and discussions with the Board of Governors are proceeding at an appropriately considered rate. The academic infrastructure for higher education is operating in its infancy and to date only a very small number of staff have been involved in the provision. The first annual review exercise will provide the opportunity to reflect on progress and to agree plans for further developments. Within the context of growth, the review team **recommends** that the College strengthen processes for the internal approval of new provision.

2.7   The College has appropriate approaches towards the design, development and approval of its programmes. These operate effectively in partnership with Middlesex University and in liaison with other Caxton Group colleges. The review team concludes that the College is likely to meet the Expectation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Likely to meet
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.8   The College maintains its own policies and procedures in relation to recruitment and admission. These policies take the form of an HE Admissions Protocol which is approved by the College's senior management team and governing body. The HE Admissions Protocol contains information about the application process together with details about student support, disability, language requirements and the process for a student to appeal an admissions decision. Students wishing to complain about the College's admissions process are directed to follow the standard complaints procedure.

2.9   Staff from the teaching team conduct interviews and a standard template and interview pack is used to aid consistency and ensure applicants receive comprehensive information about the College's provision. A separate HE Admission, Application and Induction Process details the College's approach to interviewing students, making and communicating admissions decisions and the College's arrangements for induction, all of which specify timescales.

2.10   The College's thorough policies and procedures for handling admissions, integrated approach to identify students in need of additional support and clear timescales in relation to the different stages of the admissions process would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.11   The team tested the Expectation by scrutinising the HE Admissions Protocol and HE Admission, Application and Induction Process, together with the College's Academic Regulations. The team also met staff and students and considered the contents of the student submission and the College's admission pack

2.12   Students informed the team that they found the application, enrolment and induction process to be positive. Students considered the range of information available, prior to enrolment, to be comprehensive and stated that it equipped them for study. This was equally true for students progressing internally from Level 4 programmes and for students returning to education after some time.

2.13   The College's policy in relation to the accreditation of prior learning states that applications will only be accepted for students over the age of 21. The team found no evidence that this requirement was set out by the awarding body. The review team **recommends** that the College ensures arrangements for the accreditation of prior learning align with those of the awarding body.

2.14   In considering the detailed recruitment and induction arrangements, guidance for staff conducting interviews, consistency achieved through the role of the programme leader, and the high level of student satisfaction with the admissions process, the review team concludes that the College is likely to meet the Expectation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Likely to meet
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

2.15   The College has its own HE Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy. The objectives set out in the Strategy are embedded in a wider set of institutional policies and practice including peer observation, integral programme reviews and the way in which Boards of Study operate.

2.16   The College has a peer observation process in place which benefits from a link with the University of Central Lancashire where College staff are going to observe lessons. The College have adapted their process from another College working in partnership with their validating partner and students are involved in the evaluation of teaching.

2.17   A broad range of teaching methods are employed which recognise the diverse student cohort the College attracts and a broad range of academic support mechanisms are in place for students. The College operate a progress review process which enables staff to refer students for further support and enables students to reflect on their academic and personal progress. The College have invested in laptops solely for use by HE students following feedback from the Board of Studies meetings. Deadlines for certain activity are also set to aid students in preparation for learning. This includes for the return of assessment feedback for students which must be provided within 10 days of the submission deadline and the upload of lecture materials which must be online by 4pm the day before the scheduled class.

2.18   Teaching staff are able to reflect on their programmes in a number of ways including Internal Programme Progress Reviews and an HE away day which is planned for June 2016. Staff also record their delivery and then use the recording to enhance their practice.

2.19   The College assumes a broad definition of scholarly activity which recognises the fact the institution is focused on teaching. Scholarly activity is monitored through the annual staff development system and reported to Academic Board. The continuing professional development of staff is recorded on their curriculum vitae and the College maintains a staff development plan.

2.20   The College's documented strategy for Learning, Teaching and Assessment, together with systems for the approval of teaching staff, their observation and development would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.21   The team tested this Expectation by reading the College's HE Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy. The team also read the Procedure for Support for HE Students and viewed the template for progress reviews. In addition the team met students and staff and scrutinised the College's approach to peer observation.

2.22   The team found that the College demonstrates a real commitment to reflection as a means of enhancing student learning. The College operates a system of progress reviews with students designed to support them through the studies but also to reflect on the skills

needed to become effective practitioners. Progress reviews will also supplement personal tutoring by discussing pastoral issues. The College also operates a programme of personal development planning which students report as a beneficial component of their studies, which again aids critical reflection. In addition the College records students delivering presentations and then students watch the recording in order to enhance their skills in this area. The effective use of reflection in developing students as Early Years practitioners is **good practice**.

2.23   Students report that deadlines for making lecture notes available and returning assessment feedback are adhered to consistently. Students also confirmed that they are regularly involved in reviewing the programme despite the fact that the programme is only in its first year of delivery. Feedback is sought from students through module evaluations, student perception on course surveys, at programme committee meetings and more informally. Students praised the expediency with which the College responds to feedback and provided an example where students asked to submit more formative assignments prior to the initial summative assessment of the year, a change which has already been made.

2.24   Staff are able to access a range professional development opportunities. This includes attendance at partnership events organised by the awarding body, network opportunities through the College's membership of the Caxton Group and remission from teaching commitments in order to update their professional practice. The College also intends to increase the amount of remission for HE teaching staff from 2016-17.

2.25   Although not all staff had been subject to peer observation the College holds a real commitment to enhancing professional practice, offering staff development opportunities, which reflect the institution's teaching led focus, and providing students with wide ranging and supportive teaching activities and support. The review team concludes that the College is likely to meet the Expectation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Likely to meet
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.26   The College considers that their strategic and operational planning process enables them to identify how the needs of their diverse student body are best addressed. A HE Support Group meeting is in place to discuss student needs. To underpin this, the College, despite being in the early stages of this provision, has developed a wide range of feedback and monitoring arrangements that enable them to discuss the sufficiency and effectiveness of resources. These mechanisms are laid out in the HE Programme Monitoring Cycle and are supplemented by focus groups as and when required. The Higher Education Programme Lead and Work-Based Link Tutor play a vital role in gathering feedback which informs programme progress reviews.

2.27   The HE Programme Lead holds responsibility for ensuring academic skills support for students is in place. A documented procedure details the arrangements the College has in place for students. The institution works to identify students' learning support needs in a timely fashion which includes the application phase, where learning needs are explored during interview. An Additional Support Manager is in place to provide students with support, advice and where necessary referral and personal tutors, together with the rest of the teaching staff, are also able to provide support. The College place significant emphasis on personal development planning within the curriculum model for its foundation degree provision and view it as supporting induction and transition but also as key to developing students' professionally, academically and personally.

2.28   The College's established planning processes, clear monitoring cycle, focus on student feedback and the use of personal development planning together with the considered approach to embedding academic skills support and responsive nature of support services, such as the library, would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.29   The team tested this Expectation by viewing the minutes of relevant committees together with documentation that underpins the progress review process. The team also met staff and students and viewed information provided to students about resources and support services.

2.30   Students view the support arrangements provided by the College positively and consider them to be comprehensive and effective. As noted under Expectation B3, student progress reviews complement the personal tutoring system and the dedicated Work-Based Link Tutor in providing students with multiple support outlets to discuss their progress.

2.31   The College recruits its students from a range of backgrounds. This includes students from its Level 3 provision but also students returning to education after a period of absence. Students and staff informed the team that there is a wide spectrum of mechanisms in place to support students' transition to higher education. In addition to using the interview as part of the induction process, students are invited to an Open Evening, prior to the start of term, and provided with course materials in advance of scheduled teaching activities. In response to student feedback the programme team have also incorporated more formative assignments into the course prior to the initial piece of summative assessment in order to allow students more time to familiarise themselves with the requirements at Level 4. Central services contribute to induction activity so that students understand how to access services and facilities and students who had missed induction informed the team that they were

provided with the necessary information on an individual basis. Personal development planning affords students the opportunity to critically reflect on their practice and performance and therefore contributes to enabling students to develop their potential. The integrated package of induction transition and support arrangements, which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential, is **good practice**.

2.32   The College has taken every effort to provide students with suitable resources that also help to foster a HE ethos on campus. Higher education students are taught at a time when students from lower levels are not in the building and this provides students with a quiet, appropriate learning environment which they value. It also means staff are on hand to provide dedicated support. Feedback from students has led the College to purchase dedicated laptops which students, including those who commute, can use while on site. The College have also extended library opening hours to allow students to make use of the facility. Students commented positively about this along with the responsiveness of the librarian in sourcing extra materials they may need for their programme. Feedback from students has led the College to consider the introduction of a study skills module at Level 4 of the programme and the institution is also scoping the potential for a new HE building in line with its growth strategy. The proactive approach to providing students with learning resources that enhance student learning opportunities is **good practice**.

2.33   Information about support arrangements is also hosted for students on the virtual learning environment. Students report that they feel able to provide feedback to the institution, through formal mechanisms and more informally, where support mechanisms may be in need of improvement or where they can be enhanced. There is evidence of detailed discussion about student support arrangements at the dedicated HE Support Meeting.

2.34   High student satisfaction in relation to resources emanates from the College's responsive approach to student feedback. Clear consideration of resource implications takes place through College structures and has resulted in effective academic and pastoral support, manifest through programme and student progress reviews, the timetable and the learning environment for students. The review team concludes that the College is likely to meet the Expectation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Likely to meet
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

2.35   The College states that it 'promotes active involvement by students in all aspects of their learning and provides opportunities for students to influence their individual and collective learning journey', with this commitment being articulated in programme handbooks and echoed in the HE TLA strategy.

2.36   The Student Voice Cycle presents the range of mechanisms including the use of surveys, student representatives, focus groups and student membership of the Board of Study. The College has taken the MU Student Representative Guide to engaging in quality assurance and enhancement document and attempted to translate this into the local context. Student representatives have received some training with an MU presentation being used. The membership of the Board of Study and the Academic Board include a student representative.

2.37   The observation of teaching involves students in providing feedback. The College is beginning to use module evaluations along with a SPOC based on the NSS questions. Given the small number of higher education students, student engagement often occurs on a more informal basis between students and members of both teaching and support staff.

2.38   These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.39   The review team analysed the evidence presented in documents relating to the Student Voice Cycle including the minutes of meetings and surveys and also the student submission. The team also held meetings with staff and students,

2.40   The team heard that the SPOC exercise had produced a consistent set of positive results; some of the students had rather vague recollections of this exercise. There is some evidence of module evaluations having been completed, although this is at an early stage. One of the agenda items for the end of year Away Day is for the programme team to focus on the feedback received and how to develop the process. Students are able to comment on the strengths of modules along with areas for improvement. Given the small size of the cohort, along the mutual wish to learn and adapt in the first year of the programme, the team heard from both staff and students of minor changes being effected. There is no evidence yet of students being actively involved in analysing or leading developments in surveys.

2.41   The review team found that students were a little unsure of which meetings could be attended, but it was also noted that there had been an additional change of student representative during the year to support the original student. The Programme Lead acknowledged the need to strengthen student representative training in preparation for the role. While the College has some formal structures in place, such as student representation on the Board of Study and Academic Board and involvement in the observation of teaching, student engagement operates on an informal basis and lies in the early stages of development, reflective of the small cohort. The College wishes to expand the provision over the planning period to 2020. The MU document had not been implemented this year but is being customised with plans to use it to guide practice from next year. The review team **recommends** that the College further develop and embed plans to engage students as partners in their educational experience.

2.42   The College is taking early deliberate steps to engage its higher education students. The review team concludes that the College is likely to meet the Expectation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Likely to meet
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.43   The Assessment Procedure for Higher Education explains the purposes and principles of assessment and approaches to assessment design. This is supplemented by a Submission of Draft Assessment protocol. Assessment information is made available to students through the Programme Handbook and module handbooks. The Programme Handbook contains an overview of assessment methods and assessment feedback along with the arrangements for the receipt, submission, marking and return of work. There is a link to the University's website and the College's virtual learning environment for students to access the complete University Regulations. Module handbooks include dates for both submission of assignments and for feedback within the three week turnaround time. The validation report had contained a recommendation to provide an assessment calendar and clear statements in relation to assessment components. This has been implemented.

2.44   The College aims to ensure that the policies, regulations and processes relating to assessment are transparent and available on the virtual learning environment. The Appeals process and guidelines relating to academic misconduct covering the procedure, process and range of penalties are posted onto the programme's site.

2.45   The review team noted that there was a misalignment between the College Accreditation of Prior Learning policy and that of the University (discussed under B2), however none of the inaugural cohort had entered by this route.

2.46   Progression and Assessment Boards will take place at the College as identified in the Memorandum of Cooperation with results being conveyed to the University's Centre for Academic Partnerships. There are terms of reference for Progression Boards. Key members of staff attended a staff development session delivered by the Head of Academic Partnerships focused upon Assessment Boards and practices.

2.47   There are equitable, valid and reliable processes of assessment in place to demonstrate the achievement of learning outcomes that would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.48   The review team scrutinised documentation and met both teaching staff and students.

2.49   The Middlesex University guidance on marking and moderation is supplemented by the procedure for moderation of assessed work. An Assessment and Moderation cycle was produced for 2015-16 to guide the programme team members through the processes. Staff with whom the reviewers met all confirmed that they had benefitted through this developmental experience.

2.50   Programme Progress Reviews and moderation meetings provide the forum for staff to reflect on assessment processes. The evidence presented from these minutes, and meetings held with staff during the review visit, confirm that staff are ensuring arrangements for the recording of marks building up towards the formal end of year assessment boards.

The Board of Study minutes show discussion of engagement with academic policies including those for extensions, extenuations and electronic submissions. Progress Reviews are held with students where they receive feedback from formative and summative assessments; these reviews provide students with the opportunity to reflect on their learning experiences.

2.51   A guide to good practice in marking and feedback is issued to staff along with a University guidance document on consistency in marking. The front sheets include a prompt for feed forward. The common grading criteria/grids which have been adopted by staff are also replicated in student handbooks to 'promote a shared understanding'. Staff spoke enthusiastically of the way in which these grids play a practical role in communicating the requirements of assessment to students. Students confirmed that feedback is very constructive and given on an individual basis and that the grading criteria grids were being used in a developmental way that they were finding particularly helpful. The active engagement with assessment grids, which promotes a shared understanding among both staff and students, is **good practice**.

2.52   The College has secure processes in place for the processes of assessment. The review team concludes that the College is likely to meet the Expectation and the associated low level of risk.

Expectation: Likely to meet
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B7: External Examining*

Findings

2.53   The College nominated the external examiner for the programmes following the Middlesex University process. The external examiner will confirm that academic standards are appropriate and that the arrangements for assessment enable the achievement of stated learning outcomes. The external examiner will produce an annual report; this will be received by the University, the College's Board of Study and Academic Board and inform the AMR content.

2.54   The College has the systems and procedures in place which would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.55   The team met staff and students and scrutinised documents regarding the College's approach to external examining.

2.56   The Programme Lead has established contact with the external examiner for feedback on the assignment briefs. At the time of the review visit, an update was provided which confirmed that the external examiner had agreed marks and provided feedback to the teaching team. The students with whom the team met were a little unclear of the difference between the external examiner and the link tutor. The team members were informed that the external examiner report would be accessible and published on the virtual learning environment once received.

2.57   The review team concludes that the College is likely to meet the Expectation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Likely to meet
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.58   As noted under Expectation A3.3, the College has established an infrastructure to provide institutional oversight through the HE Academic Board, chaired by the Principal. There are clear terms of reference and agenda items to be formally discussed. The College is required by the University to establish a Board of Study for which a template agenda is provided along with guidance notes. This aligns with the University's LQEH academic framework. Programme Progress Review meetings provide the operational level reporting.

2.59   The College is also required to complete an AMR, using the awarding body's template. The AMR is reviewed by the University through its quality assurance systems and a link tutor is designated to work with the programme team on a continuous basis. It is envisaged that AMRs will link to the Strategic Plan. The Board of Study is chaired by the Programme Lead and has a university lecturer included in its membership to advise on practices. There have been two meetings of the Board of Studies. Minutes are forwarded to MU and to the Governing body subcommittee, Curriculum Quality and Standards. The Vice-Principal presents the paper to meetings of the CQS.

2.60   The Internal Programme Progress Review is chaired by the Programme Lead and meets twice yearly. This is an operational meeting for both teaching and support staff to discuss quality assurance matters including student surveys, lesson observations, the review of published information, resources and Board of Study actions. Student contribution to programme monitoring and review will be through module evaluations, the SPOC and membership of Board of Study.

2.61   These arrangements are designed to enable effective monitoring and review to take place and would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.62   The review team looked at the reporting lines and key dates in the quality review cycle and read the minutes of meetings to date as evidence of discussions taking place. The documentation also included the AMER as a 'rehearsal of actions' and formalisation of the mid-year position. The team members heard of the experience of preparation for the AMER and of plans for undertaking monitoring and review activities during meetings held with senior and teaching staff.

2.63   The review team **affirms** the steps taken to augment the annual reporting process for the College's further education provision through the introduction of formal structures to promote effective oversight of higher education. The Board of Study and HE Academic Board are operating effectively to provide a distinct focus towards assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities within the HE Quality Review schedule.

2.64   The Board of Study is fulfilling its remit. A student representative attends meetings and minutes are presented on the virtual learning environment. The team explored how effectively the Board is operating. The minutes of meetings capture discussion, however, the action plans lack dates for completion; the minutes of the March meeting indicate that the Board would not be meeting again until the autumn term. Although other meetings, such as the Programme Progress Review which reviews the Board of Studies action plan, would pick up on issues, this raises a question over the timing and frequency of the Board. The review

team **recommends** that the College ensures action plans contain clear deadlines that are formally agreed and monitored.

2.65   An evolving approach towards the AMR enabled the College teaching team to produce an AMER briefing paper, with a mid-year position report having been presented to Academic Board in May and also reported to the CQS of Governing Body. The AMER is progressed to the Academic Quality Standards Group at the University. The team heard from senior staff that the AMR would become an addendum to the departmental subject level SAR but also heard from the Principal that there would be a separate HE SAR. The provision is currently rooted in the one subject area; the College is committed, however, to expansion across other subjects which would bring other departments into the reporting process. The review team **recommends** that the College ensures that programme-level annual monitoring informs institutional self-assessment processes.

2.66   The College has appropriate systems and processes in place for the monitoring and review of its programmes. The review team concludes that the College is likely to meet the Expectation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Likely to meet
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.67   The College seeks to maintain open communication channels with students so that any issues can be addressed informally and effectively. Students have access to senior decision makers within the College such as the Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality who teaches on the programmes. Where informal resolution is not possible a number of formal policies are documented in the HE Procedures and Information section of the College's virtual learning environment.

2.68   The College has an HE Student Complaints and Grievance Procedure, a HE Procedure for making an Appeal against a decision of an Assessment Board and also an HE Appeal Procedure for students asked to withdraw. As noted under Expectation B2, students are also able to complain about the admissions process using the standard complaints procedure and a separate appeals procedure exists for students wishing to challenge an admissions decision.

2.69   The procedures include the grounds for making a complaint or an appeal and the timescales for handling complaints and appeals and detail which staff are to be involved at the respective stages. There is limited reference to the role of the awarding body in the procedures and no reference to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

2.70   Due to the fact the HE Student Complaints and Grievance Procedure does not inform students of their right to have an appeal heard by the awarding body or to progress a complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator, the Expectation is unlikely be met.

2.71   The team tested this Expectation by meeting staff and students and viewing the College's HE Student Complaints and Grievance Procedure, HE Procedure for making an Appeal against a decision of an Assessment Board, and the HE Appeal Procedure for students asked to withdraw.

2.72   The team found a lack of clarity and some inconsistency surrounding the College's complaints processes. While the College's HE Student Complaints and Grievance Procedure does reference students' right to take complaints that have exhausted the College procedures to the University, as the awarding body, they do not fully articulate the role of the awarding body in relation to complaint handling. The HE Student Complaints and Grievance Procedure also makes no reference to the role of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator in relation to complaints. The team considered that this gave rise to the potential for uncertainty on the part of future complainants. The review team **recommends** that the College ensures clear and consistent reference to the role of the awarding body and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator in documentation relating to complaints.

2.73   The team did find that the College maintains a commitment to resolving complaints at the earliest possible stage. The team were reassured that support would be provided for students submitting complaints, however there were inconsistencies between the College and University policies. For instance the College policy specifies that students have longer to refer complaints to the University than they do based on the contents of the University policy. It was not evident to the team that a mapping exercise had taken place to ensure that the College policy suitably inter-related with that of the University. The review team

recommends that the College ensure that the College Complaints Policy fully complies with awarding body requirements.

2.74   Although the College has yet to receive a formal complaint, there is an absence of clear information detailing the role of the awarding body and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator, in addition to inconsistencies in relation to timescales. The information available at the time of the review was insufficient to demonstrate that the College has accurate, accessible and timely policies in place to address student complaints. The review team concludes that the College is unlikely to meet the Expectation and that the associated level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Unlikely to meet
Level of risk: Moderate

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

2.75   The College supports students undertaking learning opportunities with other organisations in a number of different ways. Students are required to have a workplace mentor and a member of the teaching team acts as a Work-Based Link Tutor, who undertakes a termly visit to each student and completes a standard template detailing the outcome of the visit. The majority of students the College recruits are not already in a workplace setting and therefore need to source a placement. The onus is on the student to find a placement but the College also provides support where this proves problematic.

2.76   Learning in the workplace is not assessed and instead students must complete a minimum 100 hours workplace experience across study at Level 4 and 5. Although students report that in a number of cases they find the placement so beneficial that they often exceed the required number of hours. The majority of placements are paid, however a proportion of the students are undertaking their placements on a voluntary basis.

2.77   The College possess a supportive framework for the delivery of placements including help for students trying to identify placements, system of workplace mentors and role of the Work-Based Link Tutor. The presence of due diligence processes and a central database of approved providers, combined with that supportive framework, would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.78   The team tested this Expectation by meeting students and staff, including the Work-Based Link Tutor. The team also viewed programme handbooks, programme specifications and records produced following workplace visits.

2.79   Students reported to the team that they are satisfied with their experience of placements. While the emphasis is placed on the student to source a suitable placement opportunity, they are provided with assistance if this proves difficult. Students are assigned a workplace mentor who supports them during this phase of their studies. Additionally, the Workplace Personal Tutor visits the student in their setting and also meets with the mentor. A formal record of this visit is produced and kept on record.

2.80   The College informed the team that all necessary due diligence is conducted with new placement providers and a central register of approved organisations. The College currently communicate expectations to workplace mentors verbally and reaffirm this through written documentation on occasion. The College did inform the team that they intend to strengthen the information provided but that this work has not yet begun. The review team **recommends** that the College formalises the process for providing comprehensive information to workplace mentors to support them in carrying out their responsibilities.

2.81   Despite a recommendation that information produced for workplace mentors be formalised, the College has robust processes in place for the approval of placement providers, which detail outcomes from workplace visits and support provided to students looking to secure placements. The review team concludes that the College is likely to meet the Expectation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Likely to meet
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

2.82   The College does not offer postgraduate research degrees, therefore this Expectation does not apply.

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.83   In reaching its positive judgement, the review team matched the findings against the criteria set out in the *Guidance for Providers Undergoing Initial Review*, published by QAA, December 2014.

2.84   Of the 10 applicable expectations for this judgement area all are likely to be met a low level of risk, with the exception of Expectation B9 where the level of risk is moderate.

2.85   There are eight recommendations associated with this judgement area.

2.86   The review team makes recommendations under Expectations B1, B2, B5, B8, B9 and B10. Under B1 the recommendation focuses on the internal approval of new provision. Under B2 the recommendation orientates around the alignment of accreditation of prior learning with the awarding body process. This is also cross-referenced to Expectation B6. The recommendation under B5 is about the need to further develop and embed plans for student engagement. Under B8 the team made two recommendations. The first focuses on the need for action plans to contain deadlines that are monitored. The second focuses on the need to use programme-level annual monitoring to inform the self-assessment process. Similarly, the team made two recommendations under B9, which focus on alignment of the complaints policy with awarding body requirements, and on the rigour of reference to the roles of the awarding body and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator in complaints documentation. The final recommendation in this area relate to Expectation B10, where the team identified a need to formalise the process for providing comprehensive information to workplace mentors.

2.87   In addition to these recommendations, the review team identified four areas of good practice: the effective use of reflection in developing students as Early Years practitioners (Expectation B3); the integrated package of induction, transition and support arrangements, and the proactive approach to providing students with learning resources (Expectation B4); and the active engagement with assessment grids (Expectation B6).

2.88   The review team also made one affirmation in this area under Expectation B8, acknowledging the establishment of formal structures to promote effective oversight.

2.89   The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the College **is likely to meet** UK expectations.

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

Findings

3.1 The College's approach to information is governed by its Management of Public Information Protocol. The Protocol details where responsibility lies for programme publications and communications. Overall responsibility rests with the Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality.

3.2 The College has sought to provide detailed information about higher education on its website including its mission statement, programme handbooks which include programme specifications and key strategies. Programme pages also detail entry requirements, fee information and make clear the role of Middlesex University. Key Information Set data is available, as is information about careers and disability support.

3.3 Marketing messages are communicated across a variety of platforms including social media, internet search engines and at HE information events. Interviews are used as an opportunity to relay key programme information and students receive copies of the HE Student Handbook and their respective Programme Handbook at induction.

3.4 Handbooks are viewed as a central point of information for students studying at the College and these documents are also available in electronic format on the virtual learning environment.

3.5 Staff with responsibility for higher education provision are provided with several sources of information detailing requirements in relation to quality assurance. These include the Middlesex University Learning, Quality and Enhancement Handbook and the College's HE Quality Assurance of Programme Monitoring document.

3.6 The team found that arrangements for providing detailed content to applicants and students through the website, virtual learning environment, handbooks and at interview are comprehensive. This, together with the documented responsibilities for information and guidance provided to staff involved in higher education provision at the College would enable Expectation C to be met.

3.7 The team tested this Expectation by viewing the College website, virtual learning environment and handbooks produced for students. The team also read the Learning, Quality and Enhancement Handbook and the College's HE Quality Assurance of Programme Monitoring document. In addition the team met staff and students.

3.8 The team found that students were highly satisfied with the information they receive. This includes pre-arrival information which they feel is comprehensive and helps inform their decision as to where to study. Students were provided with their handbooks in advance of commencing their studies. They were also invited to attend open evenings and reported that interviews were used as an opportunity to underpin induction.

3.9 Once on the course, students also informed the team that the range of handbooks, from module level through to their HE Handbook, were detailed and available in hard copy and online. The virtual learning environment serves to reinforce information available

through the handbook, the latter of which also contains programme specifications, as noted under Expectation A2.2.

3.10   As discussed elsewhere in this report, including under Expectations B2 and B9, the team found instances where College processes, as articulated in documentation made available to students, were not aligned with the equivalent University policies. While responsibility for approval is assigned to the Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality, the team found that the locus of committee responsibility was less clear and that the approval of key information was not routinely documented. The team were of the view that the management of information would be strengthened by embedding this practice more fully. The review team **recommends** that the College ensures that the approval of information is documented.

3.11   Inconsistencies identified during the review have not as yet impacted on the quality of student learning opportunities, and would only require minor changes to documentation and processes to be rectified. Additionally, students reported considerable satisfaction with the accessibility, trustworthiness and comprehensiveness of information produced by the College. The review team concludes that the College is likely to meet the Expectation and associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Likely to meet
Level of risk: Low

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

3.12   In reaching its positive judgement, the review team matched the findings against the criteria set out in the *Guidance for Providers Undergoing Initial Review*, published by QAA, December 2014.

3.13   The review team made one recommendation in this area, which focuses on the need to ensure that the approval of information is documented.

3.14   The review team concludes that the quality of information about learning opportunities at the College **is likely to meet** UK expectations.

Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

e-learning
See technology enhanced or enabled learning

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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