

# Higher Education Review of Carshalton College

March 2014

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## About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Carshalton College. The review took place from 18 to 20 March 2014 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Professor Paul Brunt
- Professor Kris Spelman Miller
- Ms Harriet Brewster (student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Carshalton 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)<sup>1</sup> 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 learning opportunities
  - the information provided about higher education provision
  - the enhancement of learning opportunities
- provides a commentary on the selected theme
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice
- affirms action that the provider is taking or plans to take.

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

In reviewing Carshalton 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,<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> A dedicated section explains the method for [Higher Education Review](#)<sup>4</sup> 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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<sup>1</sup> The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/qualitycode](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/qualitycode).

<sup>2</sup> Higher Education Review themes: [www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/higher-education-review-themes.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/higher-education-review-themes.aspx).

<sup>3</sup> QAA website: [www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus).

<sup>4</sup> Higher Education Review web pages: [www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/higher-education-review](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/higher-education-review).

## Key findings

### QAA's judgements about Carshalton College

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Carshalton 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 **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of the information produced about its provision **meets** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

### Good practice

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

- The student-centred teaching and learning approaches that support and engage students as independent learners (Expectation B3).
- The arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with work-based mentors (Expectation B10).

### Recommendations

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

By September 2014:

- take steps to have student representation on the Higher Education Steering Group (Expectation B5)
- ensure the consistent and systematic use of data and action planning in the programme area reviews (Expectation B8).

### Affirmation of action being taken

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

- The steps taken to improve the identification of specific issues relating to the College in external examiner reports (Expectations A5 and B7).

### Theme: Student Employability

The College is very aware of its role within the local and regional community in contributing to economic prosperity, as well as the benefits that higher education can bring to individuals. The focus on student employability manifests itself at the programme design stage, where attention is paid to employer needs and students' opportunities on programme completion. The College's Learning and Teaching Strategy has an explicit focus on employability and professionalism.

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

## About Carshalton College

Carshalton College (the College) is a medium-sized general further education college located in the London Borough of Sutton. It is the only provider of higher education programmes within the Borough. The College is federated with Kingston College. The College's mission is to 'provide ever improving learning, teaching, support and progress to everyone from our community, working in close partnership within and beyond our Federation'.

The College offers a broad vocational curriculum from pre-entry to level 6. There are approximately 4,000 students enrolled on further education programmes and 270 full and part-time higher education students funded through the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). The College has taken the strategic decision to develop higher education programmes that are sought by employers and contribute to local and regional prosperity and stability.

The College works with three university awarding bodies for the delivery of foundation degrees, honours degrees and teacher training qualifications: the University of Roehampton, London South Bank University and Canterbury Christ Church University. The College also works with Pearson for the delivery of higher national qualifications.

Since the last review, the College has introduced a number of new awards including a Foundation Degree in Electrotechnical Industries, two level 6 honours programmes in education and learning and early years education, and higher national qualifications in music production and health and social care. In 2011 the College was awarded 121 additional directly funded higher education places by HEFCE.

The College's risk assessment identifies insufficient demand and the decreased participation of underrepresented socioeconomic groups as a result of funding changes as key challenges for the future of its higher education. Failure to keep pace with the need for appropriately qualified and experienced staff on higher education programmes is also identified as a possible risk. Actions to mitigate these risks include opening a new science, technology and engineering building in 2014 offering employer-focused programmes. The College also intends to extend its work-based higher education provision to attract non-traditional students, monitor the effects of fee levels on recruitment and review staffing arrangements for higher education programmes to attract staff to the College.

The College has maintained and built on the good practice and has addressed the recommendation from the Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review report published in 2009. Programme Boards are now scheduled at times to facilitate employer attendance and the mechanisms used for obtaining the views of employers have been embedded, resulting in the development of new provision. Systems to ensure the accuracy of published information are in place. The College is continuing the development of its Higher Education Learning and Teaching Strategy.

## Explanation of the findings about Carshalton 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 programmes have been developed in the context of a variety of partnership types with three university awarding bodies and Pearson. On some awards the College delivers all or parts of a programme designed by a university or Pearson. In these cases responsibility to ensure that the qualifications delivered are appropriately aligned to the FHEQ rests wholly with the awarding body or organisation. In other cases where the College has designed a programme of study, the University awarding body manages the validation process and similarly ensures that there is appropriate alignment to the FHEQ.

1.2 It is clear that the College and its partners consider the FHEQ to be an important reference point for higher education. Reference to it during the design and approval process promotes a shared understanding between the College and its awarding bodies and Pearson. The review team determined that this approach would enable the Expectation to be met. The College's approach was tested through discussion with staff and scrutiny of the minutes of approval and validation activities and inspection of programme specifications.

1.3 The nature of the partnership arrangements in respect of responsibilities for design and level are set out in the Memoranda of Agreement. Evidence from meetings with senior staff and from the minutes of approval and validation activities (and the resulting programme specifications) demonstrate a suitable awareness of the FHEQ and that programme outcomes are suitably matched to the FHEQ qualification descriptors.

1.4 The programme approval and validation processes also consider issues associated with the volume of study, so that the learning outcomes can be achieved. Some of the conditions of approval events detail required changes to assessment tasks to better align the programme to the relevant qualification descriptor. The College has developed a Higher Education Quality Strategy and an Assessment Strategy so that it is both consistent with the awarding body and the Quality Code, *Chapter A1: The national level*. Evidence from external examiner reports suggests that students are undertaking an appropriate volume of study to demonstrate their achievement of the required learning outcomes.

1.5 The analysis of documentary evidence, supported by staff responses in meetings, shows that the regulatory framework of each University and Pearson determines the academic standards of the award. The College, in turn, takes account of the requirements of the awarding bodies and Pearson through its policies and procedures for higher education. The approval and validation events overseen and managed by the awarding bodies and Pearson confirm that programmes are designed to align with the Expectation, as defined in *Chapter A1* of the Quality Code.

1.6 Overall, the team concludes that it has confidence in the College's management of its responsibilities as set out in its partnership agreements to ensure that each qualification is allocated to the appropriate level of the FHEQ. The close integration of the College with its

University partners and Pearson in this respect leads to the conclusion that the Expectation is met and the level of risk 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**

1.7 Approval and validation events for programmes of study are managed by the Universities and Pearson, and ensure that all programmes take account of the relevant subject and qualification benchmark statement. Subject benchmark statements and, where appropriate, the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*, are used to inform programme design. Due recognition of benchmark statements is required within the production of programme specifications, which are scrutinised at validation events for new programmes by the Universities. The College's approach meets the Expectation in *Chapter A1: The national level* of the Quality Code.

1.8 The team reviewed the effectiveness of the College's approach to programme development and the inclusion of subject and qualification benchmark statements by looking at the minutes of approval events, inspecting programme specifications, and talking to staff and employers. The team found the programme specifications refer explicitly to the use of relevant subject benchmarks, and those for foundation degrees also refer to the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*. Employers engage with the College to inform programme design of foundation degrees, and the programme approvals and periodic reviews undertaken by the Universities have external input from industry representatives. There are no programmes within the College that have specific professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) requirements.

1.9 The analysis of the documentary evidence and the explanation of staff within meetings show that the College's approach to *Chapter A2: The subject and qualification level* of the Quality Code is effective. Moreover, employers who met the team confirmed that they were able to make suggestions to programmes at the design stage, and via ongoing feedback.

1.10 The team concludes that College programmes take due account of the relevant subject and qualification benchmark statements. The external input, integrated nature of the College's university-validated programmes and ongoing dialogue with employers further secure the College's approach. As such, the Expectation in *Chapter A2* of the Quality Code is met, and the level of risk was found to be 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**

1.11 Definitive information on the aims, intended learning outcomes, and expected learner achievements of programmes are made available through programme and module handbooks in hard copy and electronically through the virtual learning environment (VLE). The agreements with the Universities clearly specify the mutual responsibilities for the production of this information. The College's processes operated in collaboration with awarding bodies meet the Expectation in *Chapter A3: The programme level* of the Quality Code.

1.12 The review team investigated all relevant handbooks and the information contained in the VLE. Although formats for the information vary by awarding body, all hard copy handbooks do provide definitive information that is consistent with *Chapter A3: The programme level* of the Quality Code. Handbooks are also made available on the College's VLE and the review team were informed that this was the means by which any subsequent updates were communicated. The team also found that, where relevant, progression opportunities from the current programme were clearly articulated in handbooks.

1.13 Documentary evidence shows that definitive information is approved at the initial programme validation. In addition to receiving this information in handbooks, students are guided through it at induction, tutorials and at the commencement of each module. Students confirmed these procedures and their awareness of and satisfaction with definitive programme information.

1.14 Annual programme reviews and external examiner reports provide the College with a means to oversee the extent to which intended outcomes are being achieved, and are consistent with the College's Assessment Strategy. Evidence from both these sources reveals that the College is maintaining and updating its definitive information through monitoring process amendments.

1.15 The analysis of documents and meetings with students demonstrates that the College's approach to making programme information available is effective. It is clear that definitive programme information is approved at programme validation and suitably disseminated. The College's monitoring and review mechanisms ensure currency, and the VLE is used to inform students of any updated information after the commencement of their programme.

1.16 Overall, the team concludes that due account is taken of all aspects of Expectation *Chapter A3* of the Quality Code, and the Expectation is fully met. The robustness of the College's quality assurance systems is such that the level of risk is low.

**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**

1.17 The College's Higher Education Quality Strategy, underpinned by the Assessment Strategy, the Learning and Teaching Strategy and the Higher Education Publishing Policy, articulates the College's systems and working practices, while the Higher Education Strategy 2013-16 defines areas for future development with respect to higher education. Pivotal to the College's oversight of the validity and relevance of programmes is the operation of the Higher Education Steering Group which is chaired by the Head of College and attended by the Director of Higher Education and programme representatives. The Group provides a locus for consideration of new programme proposals, approvals, regular programme monitoring and reviews. Additionally, the continuing relevance and validity of the College's programmes are ensured by the processes of periodic review and revalidation undertaken by the College's University partners and by Pearson (for higher national programmes) in accordance with their procedures for ensuring the currency of programmes.

1.18 The College has a management structure and processes in place to enable oversight of its higher education provision, and therefore to ensure that the Expectation is met. The team tested the College's approach by reviewing documentary evidence and minutes from the Higher Education Steering Group, and questioned staff in meetings about the process of review and oversight.

1.19 From the documentary evidence reviewed, supported by responses to questions in meetings, the team concludes that the College has effective processes to approve and regularly review provision in line with the Expectation of *Chapter A4: Approval and review* of the Quality Code. Programme teams regularly review existing provision by drawing on data from module-level feedback, student performance and external examiner feedback, and present this through the annual programme review process. Reviews of programmes are provided by convenors at the Higher Education Steering Group, although the form of this review, as a verbal update or formal document, differs. Information from programme-level review feeds into the self-evaluation document (SED) to Governors.

1.20 The College has oversight of revalidation and validation through its Higher Education Steering Group. The team saw documentary evidence of consideration of new programme development and validation events, and indication of discussion of new programme development. Employers engage with the College to inform programme design and new programme approval, and periodic review panels include relevant external representation.

1.21 The team concludes that the Expectation in *Chapter A4* of the Quality Code is met and the level of risk is low. The College has systems to enable oversight of the approval and regular review of its provision from module level to the senior levels within the College.

**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**

1.22 Externality in the management of threshold academic standards is met through the use of external examiners and the participation of external panel members in the approval and review of programmes. The College acknowledges the role of external subject expertise, both academic and professional, in setting and maintaining standards, and refers to the involvement of external examiners and external panel members at the stage of programme design and approval. The approach taken by the College to ensure appropriate externality enables this Expectation to be met.

1.23 The review team tested the College's approach by looking at documentary evidence and through discussion with staff and students.

1.24 The College Assessment Strategy and Higher Education Quality Strategy refer to the use of external examiners, appointed by the relevant awarding body and organisation, who report annually in accordance with the expectations of the awarding body. The review team saw evidence of external examiner reports, and an example of the scrutiny of the assessment brief by an external examiner. These reports are shared with the College, and the findings considered by the programme team and the Director of Higher Education. In the case of awards delivered through consortium arrangements, external examiners' reports are generic rather than specific to the College. The team heard that the College has put a system in place to invite the external examiner to the College to provide specific feedback to the programme team.

1.25 Through the process of programme annual/area review, programme teams reflect on external input. Programme annual review reports are taken to the Higher Education Steering Group and feed in to the SED to Governors. Canterbury Christ Church University holds a Programme and Partnership Annual Review Meeting which includes consideration of feedback from the external examiner. External examiners' reports are available to students on the VLE, although students do not always take up this opportunity. Programme and Course Board minutes reviewed do not make explicit mention of the external examiners' input.

1.26 The participation of external subject experts on review panels supports the College's intention to ensure employer-relevant provision aligned to external reference points. Minutes from approval events support the College's approach to employer engagement in programme design, approval and periodic review.

1.27 From documentary evidence, supported by responses in meetings, the team determines that the College takes account of external input in setting and maintaining standards. This is evident with respect to programme design, approval and review and in the input of external examiners at programme level. While external examiners' reports vary in format, as determined by the awarding body, and in the amount of detailed comment given, the College makes appropriate use of this input in relation to the standards of the programme. Where generic reports are provided, the team **affirms** the steps taken to improve the identification of specific issues in the external examiner reports relating to the College (see also paragraph 2.38).

1.28 The team concludes that it has confidence in the College's approach to externality in relation to standards. Across the differing requirements of the partnership agreements,

the College maintains appropriate external input in maintaining standards. The review team was able to conclude that the Expectation in *Chapter A5: Externality* of the Quality Code is met and the level of risk is low.

**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

1.29 The College's Higher Education Quality Strategy indicates the centrality of the College Assessment Strategy in setting out the principles of assessment for its higher education provision. While the conduct of assessment at programme level is regulated by the University awarding bodies and Pearson, the Assessment Strategy exists to inform overarching practices within the College. The Assessment Strategy is mapped on to the Quality Code, in particular *Chapter A6: Assessment of achievement of learning outcomes* and *Chapter B6: Assessment of students and the recognition of prior learning*.

The document sets out policy and procedure relating to higher education assessment, for example the design of assessment, responsibilities, student support, and procedures for determining outcomes, including marking, moderation and examination boards. Through the process of programme approval and validation, the individual assessment strategies for programmes are tested, and through standard programme review processes into which external examiners' reports feed, these are regularly reviewed.

1.30 Through the definition of an Assessment Strategy, the College's approach to the assessment of students reflects the Expectation of the Quality Code, *Chapter A6*.

1.31 The review team tested the College's approach by meeting with staff, students and employers, and reviewing a range of evidence including programme handbooks, validation reports, programme specifications, module and programme monitoring reports, and external examiner reports.

1.32 The College's responsibilities for assessment in respect of each University partner and Pearson are defined in Memoranda of Agreement and approval documents. Arrangements concerning marking, moderation and feedback from the external examiner vary according to the awarding body, as do the roles of individuals, such as course manager, link tutor and university moderator. Information concerning relevant academic regulations is made known to students through their programme handbooks.

1.33 The details of assessment within programmes are established at the point of validation, and are set in accordance with the regulations of the relevant awarding body. Documentation from approval events confirms the appropriate review of assessment, and through programme specifications and programme handbook content this is formally presented. Employer input at the point of design and approval enables consideration of relevant assessment tasks. Within the workplace, employers support the learning processes of the students but do not have a role in summative assessment (except, in particular programmes, confirming that satisfactory teaching observations have taken place). Regular programme monitoring through programme and course boards, student feedback sessions, and annual programme review reports include opportunities for reflection on the module review process, including assessment.

1.34 External examiners' reports offer opportunities to reflect on the nature of assessment, the consistency of marking and appropriateness of methods, and from samples reviewed these confirm that the assessment process is working well. Students comment positively on the information they receive from tutors, module and programme handbooks concerning the academic standards expected on the programme, and the level of support from individual tutorials, briefing sheets and study skills sessions. Feedback mechanisms

appear to be effective, with students reporting work returned in a timely manner where appropriate to inform subsequent work.

1.35 The team note from documentary evidence, supported by responses in meetings, that appropriate assessment practices are in place. During validation events the design of programme and module assessment is given consideration, and in practice, cross-marking and moderation events assure that standards are met within the requirements of the awarding or validating bodies. Through standard review processes, the College has oversight of the outcomes of its assessment. External examiners' reports and student module reviews contribute to this oversight.

1.36 The review team concludes that the Expectation in *Chapter A6* of the Quality Code is met and the level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

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

1.37 In reaching its judgement about threshold academic standards, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex two of the published handbook. All Expectations relating to the College's maintenance of threshold academic standards are met, and the risk is low.

1.38 The review team affirms the steps taken to improve the identification of specific issues in the external examiner reports relating to the College to further secure academic standards.

1.39 The review team concludes that the maintenance of the threshold academic standards of the awards offered at the College on behalf of its University partners and Pearson **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 The College has a strategic approach to higher education programme development based on long established local employer networks and its experience in providing work-based provision that attracts non-traditional learners. The College has no responsibility for the design and approval of its teacher training programmes delivered in partnership with Canterbury Christchurch University or higher national qualifications awarded by Pearson. For other higher education provision, the College follows the procedures for programme design and approval laid out by the validating body. In this context, the College has a coherent approach to programme design and approval which includes employer input through consultation and participation in approval panels. Working with the awarding body that manages the approval process, in accordance with the Memoranda of Agreement, the College ensures the provision is appropriately aligned to the FHEQ, credit framework and subject benchmark statements.

2.2 The review team considered a range of documentary evidence and responses in meetings to test the approach the College takes to programme design and approval.

2.3 In terms of its higher education provision, the College sets its strategic goals through its Higher Education Strategy 2013-16, and the Higher Education Steering Group exercises oversight of its progress in new programme developments. The wider management structures of the College gain oversight of these developments through the Higher Education Steering Group and annual SED to Governors.

2.4 Programmes are validated within the parameters of the relevant awarding body's regulations and processes as defined by the Memoranda of Agreement. Minutes of approval/validation activities (and the resulting programme specifications) demonstrate appropriate engagement with the FHEQ, subject benchmark statements and, where appropriate, the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*. The production of programme specifications similarly reflects due engagement with these reference points. Assessment methods and tools, including volume and load, are considered at programme validation/approval processes in relation to intended learning outcomes. Views of external experts, including from appropriate employer networks, are taken into consideration within the design and approval process.

2.5 The documentation reviewed and evidence from meetings demonstrates that the College is meeting the Expectation in *Chapter B1: Programme design and approval* of the Quality Code. With respect to external and employer engagement, it was clear that there were opportunities for input at design and approval stage.

2.6 The team concludes that the College fulfils its responsibilities with respect to programme design approval in line with the awarding bodies. The Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

**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**

2.7 The agreements with the University awarding bodies and Pearson set out mutual responsibilities for the admission of students. Admissions procedures and decision making are delegated to the College, although on awards of London South Bank University and Canterbury Christ Church University, the Programme Director at each awarding body has the final decision on matters relating to the admission of students. The College does not have a specific higher education admissions policy. Full-time students are admitted through UCAS and part-time students apply directly to the College. All applicants are interviewed and a record is kept of the outcome of the interview. Information about entry requirements is available in programme specifications and via the College's website on the programme information pages, and students have opportunities to receive information through attending open days and talking to staff. Arrangements to admit students with prior certificated and experiential learning are conducted according to the regulations of the Universities and Pearson.

2.8 The review team tested the operation of the admissions procedures by talking to students and staff, and by scrutinising information on the College's website and relevant documents.

2.9 The website contains explicit and detailed information on entry requirements and the application process for each programme. Students who met the review team confirmed that they found the admissions process clear and fair and the information to be accurate. Students have access to all the relevant information required during the application process through to enrolment and induction. Information evenings provide guidance on the UCAS application process, student finance and the interview process. Students found open evenings very useful and commented positively on the amount of guidance from tutors they had received during the admissions process.

2.10 The application process is overseen by the Higher Education Administrator who liaises with the programme teams to arrange interviews. Additional learning support needs are identified during the application and interview process. The team met with academic and support staff and it was clear in both meetings that staff had a good understanding of admissions procedures and applied the entry requirements and processes approved by the Universities and Pearson.

2.11 The review team concludes that the College has clear and consistently applied admissions policies and procedures which are accessible to students and well understood by staff. Therefore, the Expectation in *Chapter B2: Admissions* of the Quality Code is met and the 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**

2.12 The College sets out clear aims to inform learning and teaching in a documented Higher Education Learning and Teaching Strategy developed through dialogue with staff and students. The strategy is underpinned by curriculum design and teaching initiatives to develop students' capacities to be engaged and learn, as well as a commitment to staff development and the observation of teaching to maintain and improve practice.

The Teaching and Learning Strategy for each course is set out in the programme specification for each award. The College has mechanisms that report on the quality of teaching and learning through the annual monitoring process, using progression and achievement data, information arising from the observation of teaching, and student and employer feedback.

2.13 The review team met with staff and students, and looked at strategic documents, programme reviews and minutes of meetings where learning opportunities and teaching practices were discussed.

2.14 There is a well-developed system of regular teaching observation undertaken by course managers. Ungraded, developmental peer observations are encouraged on higher education provision. The findings of graded observations are moderated and the data used in the development of the College's SED presented to the Governors.

2.15 The management and delivery of staff development to support learning and teaching involves a combination of College, University partner and staff-directed activities. Staff development needs are identified through observation of teaching, annual staff appraisal and student feedback. Staff provided examples of development activities undertaken which have had a direct impact on their teaching. This includes studying for professional qualifications and higher degrees, and engaging in events organised by the awarding bodies and the College. The College has a policy of creating higher education-specific teaching teams to serve the needs of its higher-level provision. The qualifications and experience of staff are scrutinised as part of the validation process with the Universities, and the approval process with Pearson.

2.16 In developing curriculum structures, the College recognises the needs of diverse students, especially those from non-traditional backgrounds. For example, modules that include a focus on supporting students' academic skills and personal professional development have been introduced on the Foundation Degree programmes in Early Years Education, and Education and Learning in response to student feedback. On the FdSc Electrotechnical Industries, a mathematics bridging module is delivered free of charge to all prospective engineering students to facilitate their transition to higher education. The College works closely with employers on the development of programmes to ensure that the content and learning outcomes are current and learning processes enable students to develop graduate attributes required for employment.

2.17 The College has, over several years, worked with staff and students to identify the most effective teaching and learning approaches. The current Pedagogy in Higher Education

project, building on previous research in the College, aims to develop practice that recognises the diverse learning needs of students studying vocational higher education in a further education environment. The project is being piloted on University of Roehampton-validated awards, with the intention of developing and implementing findings on other provision in the future. Students who met the review team commented very positively on the enthusiasm of staff and their ability to make learning interesting and intellectually stimulating. As a result of this, students stated that they felt more confident in achieving their learning goals and in tackling unfamiliar problems. The team regards the student-centred teaching and learning approaches that support and engage students as independent learners as **good practice**.

2.18 The team concludes that the Expectation is met and the risk is low. The College has a comprehensive approach to learning and teaching focused on inclusivity, student engagement and continuous improvement.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

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

**Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling student development and achievement**

**Findings**

2.19 The College's senior management team is responsible for the strategic allocation of resources to enable students to develop their potential. Resources for higher education programmes are reviewed and determined through the annual business planning process. The allocation and monitoring of resources are also considered at regular managers' meetings and at programme validation and revalidation events. The College has a resource centre providing hard copy books and periodicals as well as online journals. Students also have library lending rights with the libraries of the partner Universities. Programmes are structured to support and engage students and arrangements are in place to facilitate work-related learning. All students have personal tutors and access to the range of student support provided to all students at the College. The College is developing the estate to improve facilities for teaching engineering. The College hosts a VLE which provides a range of materials to support students' learning. The quality of resources is monitored and evaluated through programme review drawing on student, staff and external examiner feedback. Through membership of programme boards, students are able to engage in dialogue with staff regarding the development of resources.

2.20 The review team tested the effectiveness of the College's approach to the provision and monitoring of resources in discussion with students, teaching and support staff, by scrutinising documents and looking at the use of the VLE.

2.21 Student guidance arrangements, including pre-entry guidance and induction, are effective. All students are interviewed and receive an induction to their programme. Students confirmed that they found the pre-entry guidance helpful and comprehensive. Support for students while studying addresses a range of needs. Students praised the tutorial support and the accessibility and willingness of teaching staff to answer questions and provide support. There is effective liaison between the teaching teams and the learning resource centres to select and maintain resources.

2.22 The College makes use of the VLE to support teaching and learning, although the College acknowledges that it is more developed on some programmes than others. There is a strategic commitment to using the VLE to support students and the College has agreed a basic level of required materials to be deposited on the VLE to guide staff and promote consistency across the provision. In their submission to the review team, students noted some difficulty in gaining access to the VLE from inside and outside the College. However, students met by the team did not identify this as a problem and all students indicated that they made use of the VLE. The College has appointed a Director of Information Technology who is in the process of developing an e-strategy.

2.23 Students benefit from a variety of specialist facilities which are required by the vocational nature of programmes offered by the College, and they are able to contribute their opinions on resources in a number of ways including representation at Programme Board meetings and feedback to staff through module evaluations and surveys. All students are required to have suitable concurrent work experience while learning or to undertake a work placement. If necessary, the College assists students in finding a work placement. The arrangements for the provision and support of work-based mentors to facilitate students' learning on foundation degrees is identified as good practice, as noted in paragraph 2.54.

2.24 The team conclude that the College meets the Expectation as defined in *Chapter B4: Enabling student development and achievement* of the Quality Code and that the risk is low. The College has a systematic and comprehensive approach to ensuring that students have access to the resources they require to develop their potential.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

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

**Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student engagement**

**Findings**

2.25 The role of students in assuring and enhancing their educational experience is articulated clearly by the College in its Higher Education Quality Strategy. This sets out a number of mechanisms whereby students' views of their experiences are captured and how these are to be used in the development and review of programmes. This includes student feedback through module evaluation each time the module is taught and programme surveys. Student representatives are elected by their peers at programme level and attend Programme Board meetings. Eligible students participate in the National Student Survey. Students on University awards also provide feedback on their experiences through mechanisms operated by the Universities.

2.26 The team tested the College's approach by discussing student engagement with staff, students and their representatives and scrutinising minutes of meetings and reports where student feedback is discussed.

2.27 Students confirmed that representation at programme level and module feedback is an effective way of communicating their learning needs. They also highlighted more informal methods, such as talking directly to teaching staff about their concerns or feedback through tutorials, as helpful. Generally students felt that their concerns are listened to and that staff act on their suggestions. For example, the decision to extend library opening hours was taken in response to student feedback. Students who are representatives on programme boards receive guidance and support in their role from the programme leader.

2.28 Consideration of student feedback in module evaluation is systematic and thorough, there is evidence of student participation in programme boards and discussion of their reports, and there is reflection on student feedback in annual programme review processes. At the time of the review, there was no representation of students at more strategic levels within the higher education committee structure. The team **recommends** that the College take steps to have student representation on the Higher Education Steering Group by September 2014.

2.29 The team concludes that the Expectation is met and the risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**



**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

2.30 Through its Assessment Strategy the College defines a set of common principles for assessment within its higher education provision based on the Quality Code, *Chapter B6: Assessment of students and accreditation of prior learning*. Programmes work within differing regulatory frameworks as determined by their relevant awarding body, and this leads to differing marking, moderation and Examination Board practices as set out in the Memoranda of Agreement. Students are made aware of the assessment requirements and academic regulations of their programme through programme handbooks, and through weblinks to awarding body information. Students have access to support both from teaching staff and central College resources to facilitate their learning.

2.31 Through its Assessment Strategy and the resources available to support students in achieving their intended learning outcomes, the College has appropriate systems in place to meet this Expectation. The review team considered a range of documentary evidence including programme specifications, programme handbooks, Programme Board minutes, external examiners' reports and module reviews, in addition to responses from meetings.

2.32 Student comments confirm a high level of access to tutorial support, including through work-based mentors and in work-based settings, and satisfaction with their learning experience. Feedback mechanisms are effective, with students reporting work returned in a timely manner where appropriate to inform subsequent work. Assessment briefs are flexible in relation to working contexts and there are opportunities for employers' views to feed into the design and delivery of the programmes, both through input on approval panels and regular interactions with the programme teams. The College's SED and the student written submission refer positively to resources available through the Learning Resources Centre, and this is confirmed through responses by support staff. External examiners' reports provide evidence of consistency of marking, appropriateness of methods, and achievement levels of students.

2.33 As articulated in the Learning and Teaching Strategy, the College has clear aims to facilitate and support students' learning opportunities. The establishment of a higher education culture within the College is being achieved through the informal exchange of good practice with respect to programme design and delivery, and opportunities for staff to further their understanding of the higher education context, for example through involvement in the Pedagogy in HE project, with a focus on academic literacy and learning and teaching practices.

2.34 The review team noted evidence of a clear strategy for assessment within the higher education setting, which gave a shared set of principles across the programme teams. Assessment methods are appropriately designed to provide opportunities for students to demonstrate the achievement of learning outcomes. There is an opportunity for assessment tasks to be related to the vocational nature of the programme, and to be flexible to the context of learning. Criteria and expectations for assessment are clearly presented to students, and feedback received is regarded by students as helpful and timely. Cross-marking and moderation events assure standards, and the regular reviews of programmes, which draw on evidence from external examiners, module reviews and student feedback, provide evidence of appropriate assessment practices within the College.



Opportunities exist for staff within the College to develop an understanding of and expertise in the delivery of higher education.

2.35 The team has confidence that the College meets the Expectation articulated in *Chapter B6* of the Quality Code, and considers the level of risk low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

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

**Quality Code, Chapter B7: External examining**

**Findings**

2.36 The University awarding bodies and Pearson determine the external examining arrangements within their programmes, including the appointment, training and support and the reporting requirements of examiners. External examiner reports are received by the Universities and Pearson and the College, and consideration of these is given at both programme and senior College level. Comments from the external examiners feed into the annual programme review process. The approach the College takes in relation to external examiner input enables this Expectation to be met.

2.37 The review team saw evidence of external examiner reports, and an example of the scrutiny of the assessment brief by an external examiner. These reports are shared with the College, and the findings considered by the programme team and the Director of Higher Education and where relevant other senior team members. In the case of generic external examiners' reports, the College has taken steps to invite the external examiner to the College to provide specific feedback to the programme team. Through programme annual/area review programme teams comment on feedback from the external examiners. Programme annual review reports are taken to the Higher Education Steering Group and feed into the SED to Governors. Canterbury Christ Church University holds a Programme and Partnership Annual Review Meeting which includes consideration of feedback from the external examiner. External examiners' reports are available to students on VLE, although students may not take up this opportunity. Programme and Course Board minutes reviewed do not make explicit mention of the external examiners' feedback except through reference to programme annual review.

2.38 The review team determined that the College makes appropriate use of external examiner input. While external examiners' reports vary as required by the awarding body in format and in the amount of detailed comment given, the College makes appropriate use of this input to inform the quality of its provision. As noted in paragraph 1.27 with respect to *Chapter A5*, the team **affirms** the steps taken by the College to improve the identification of specific issues relating to the College where these arise in generic external examiner reports.

2.39 The team concludes that the Expectation in *Chapter B7* of the Quality Code is met and the level of risk is low.

**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**

2.40 The College has a system of programme monitoring and review which is overseen by its Higher Education Steering Group. Through the operation of this group, the College maintains oversight of the reviews, both annual and periodic, of its higher education provision. Programme annual review reports, into which feed data from internal and external sources, including examiners' reports, module review information, and student management data, form the basis of an annual SED to Governors produced by the Director of Higher Education. The College has in place appropriate mechanisms to review its higher education provision at both module and programme levels. The team tested the effectiveness of the College's approach through looking at documents and in discussion with staff.

2.41 From documentary evidence, and from responses to questions in meetings, the team noted the use of module review focusing at a granular level on student achievement, content, learning teaching and assessment, and student feedback. In addition to module evaluations, other forms of student evaluation are in place, such as moderator meetings and student surveys. Module review informs the process of programme annual review, which although differing according to the awarding body requirements, provides a means for the College and partner to gain oversight of the health of the programme. Programme annual review or programme area review differs in format and level of detail, particularly with respect to the fullness of student management data and the inclusion of an action plan. In the case of the provision with Canterbury Christ Church University, a Programme and Partnership Annual Review Meeting is held with the College and forms the basis for consideration of the same range of indicators.

2.42 Through the operation of the Higher Education Steering Group, the College gains oversight of the programme-level reviews. Through membership of this group by course convenors and senior managers of the College (Director of Higher Education, Head of College and Principal), issues are brought to the attention of the College's senior management team, and then through a summary SED to Governors. Although feedback from external examiner reports and student evaluations is not taken directly to the Steering Group, key members of the senior team and all members of the programme teams see these directly.

2.43 From the documentary evidence reviewed, supported by responses to questions in meetings, the team determined that the College has processes to regularly review provision in line with the Expectation of *Chapter B8: Programme monitoring and review*. Programme teams review existing provision drawing on data from module-level feedback, student performance and external examiner feedback and present this through the annual programme review process.

2.44 The team found that although the annual reviews cover standard areas of programme information according to the expectations of the various awarding bodies, the format in which this information is presented and the coverage are not consistent across programmes. The team noted varying levels of detail with respect to student performance data and the lack in some cases of specific action plans for the programme to address. To support the College in its own oversight of the health of its provision, the team **recommends** that the College ensure the consistent and systematic use of data and action planning across its varying programme area reviews.

2.45 Consideration of reviews through both informal team discussion and formal reporting mechanisms are satisfactory given the current size of the team and provision. However, the team found it difficult to trace through formal meeting records evidence of exchange of practice across programme teams within the higher education community.

2.46 The team concludes that the Expectation in *Chapter B8* of the Quality Code is met and the level of risk is low. The College has systems to enable oversight of the approval and regular review of its provision from module level to the senior levels within the College and opportunities to build effectively on the review of its provision.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

**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**

**Findings**

2.47 The Memoranda of Agreement with the awarding bodies set out mutual responsibilities for procedures to handle student complaints and academic appeals. For the University of Roehampton, the Memorandum of Agreement outlines that the College should use its own procedures for investigating a complaint, but the University's regulations for academic appeals. Students are required to be made aware of this at induction and within their programme handbook. Canterbury Christ Church University outlines dual responsibility for investigating complaints initially and the University's own procedures for both complaints and academic appeals subsequently. Students are made aware via the University website and informed of this at induction. London South Bank University requires its procedures to be followed for academic appeals and a joint level of responsibility depending on the nature of the complaint. Students are required to be made aware of this at induction and within their programme handbook. Pearson programmes specify a complaints and appeals procedure via the Pearson website and require that students are made aware of this at induction and within their programme specification. The College also has its own Compliments, Complaints and Suggestions Form and set of procedures.

2.48 The provision of information for complaints and academic appeals as set out in the Memoranda of Agreement was tested and found to be consistent with the requirements of each awarding body and organisation. Where a link to a relevant website is required or details are needed within programme handbooks, the team were able to confirm that the College is acting consistently with the awarding body requirements. In meetings with staff and students it was difficult to identify any specific issues that had resulted in a formal complaint or academic appeal in recent years. Students who met the team showed an awareness of the means to make a formal complaint and satisfaction with this process. It was clear that no students had needed to undertake this, but strongly felt able to approach staff directly to informally resolve any issues of concern.

2.49 The review team regard the College's approach to providing information about the complaints and academic appeals process as effective, and appropriate mechanisms exist should a formal complaint or academic appeal be raised. The evidence demonstrates that the College is meeting the Expectation in *Chapter B9* of the Quality Code in respect of all Indicators of sound practice with the exception of Indicators 6, 9 and 10. The exceptions are due to the fact that there were insufficient formal complaints and academic appeals for the team to reflect on the outcomes of complaints for enhancement purposes.

2.50 The team concludes that although there was little evidence of complaints or appeals, the Expectation is met and there is a low level of risk. The College and awarding body requirements were found to be congruent with *Chapter B9* of the Quality Code, and there was a high level of student awareness and satisfaction.

**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

2.51 The College has a range of responsibilities for the provision of learning opportunities delegated by its awarding bodies. This includes the provision of work-based learning opportunities on foundation degrees and teacher training qualifications. The Memoranda of Agreement with the University partners do not specify a required level of engagement with industry in providing work-based learning, although in the delivery of the teacher training qualifications delivered in collaboration with Canterbury Christ Church University, the College is required to provide teaching observations in conjunction with the trainee's line manager or subject mentor. The College's Higher Education Strategy requires close association with employers in the design and delivery of programmes and this is undertaken through employer advisory boards, the provision of information to employers and work-based mentors, and ongoing contact by staff and the organisations, providing a setting for student learning. The College's stated approach meets the Expectation in *Chapter B10: Managing higher education provision with others* of the Quality Code.

2.52 The review team tested the College's arrangements for implementing and managing work-based learning opportunities through the scrutiny of programme information and guidance to employers and mentors, and meetings with staff, students, employers, placement providers and work-based mentors.

2.53 All students, with the exception of those on the FdSc Electrotechnical Industries, are required to identify a work-based mentor and confirmation of a suitable workplace setting is undertaken at the students' interview stage. Employers are involved in programme design, periodic reviews and, in some cases, provide feedback on student performance in the workplace. Work-based mentors are provided with information relating to their role and are invited to biannual training evenings. Work-based mentors and employers provide feedback to the College on curriculum currency and the efficacy of assessment instruments.

2.54 Meetings with students, workplace mentors and employers reported a high degree of satisfaction with processes associated with work-based learning. Students confirmed that an appropriate setting was approved at the interview stage, and mentors reported a very high degree of satisfaction with the information, training and ongoing guidance provided by the College. It was clear to the team that the College's procedures to investigate and judge the risks of each arrangement are robust, and that appropriate due diligence procedures are in place. Scrutiny of the work-based mentor handbook showed it to be thorough and informative, which makes a particularly positive contribution to the high degree of satisfaction reported by both mentors and students. The team regard the arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with work-based mentors as **good practice**.

2.55 Overall, the team found that the College has effective procedures in place to manage work-based learning in collaboration with employers. Students, employers and work-based mentors commented positively on the support they receive from the College. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation in *Chapter B10: Managing higher education provision with others* of the Quality Code is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

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

**Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research degrees***

### **Findings**

2.56 The College does not offer research degrees, therefore this Expectation is not applicable.



## Quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.57 In reaching its judgement about the quality of learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex two of the published handbook. All Expectations relating to the quality of learning opportunities are met, and the risk is low.

2.58 The team found two features of good practice in the area of teaching and learning and in the arrangements for the delivery of work-based learning. By working with staff and students, the College is actively developing its teaching practices to recognise the diverse learning needs of students studying vocational higher education in a further education environment. The training and extensive information provided to work-based mentors makes a particularly positive contribution to the experience of students and mentors.

2.59 The College's arrangements for annual programme review and student representation at senior committee level can be further developed to strengthen the quality of learning opportunities. The team made two recommendations. These are to have student representation on the Higher Education Steering Group and to ensure consistency in the use of data and action planning in annual programme reviews.

2.60 Overall, the team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the College **meets** UK expectations.

### 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 Partnership agreements with the University awarding bodies clearly state mutual responsibilities for the production of information and the requirements for approval prior to issue or publication. The College has its own Higher Education Publishing Policy which acknowledges *Part C: Information about higher education provision* of the Quality Code, and sets out procedures to manage the production of information relating to all of its higher education programmes.

3.2 The College's website is the main channel of communication for the dissemination of information about provision, the College's mission, strategic priorities and corporate information. The website has a dedicated section for higher education, which includes information on programmes for prospective students. A student-facing intranet site is available to support the needs of students after they enrol at the College. The College also maintains a VLE which hosts a range of programme-related information.

3.3 All students receive module and programme handbooks. The Director of Higher Education, working with course managers, is responsible for ensuring that the information in handbooks is accurate and meets the requirements of the awarding bodies. In the case of programmes delivered in collaboration with Canterbury Christ Church University, handbooks are directly produced by the University and distributed to consortium colleges. Work-based mentors who work with the College in supporting students on foundation degrees receive detailed handbooks.

3.4 The review team tested that information was fit-for-purpose, trustworthy and accessible by speaking to students, staff and employers, and by scrutinising documents and the relevant sections of the website and VLE.

3.5 Students whom the review team met confirmed that the information provided by the College prior to enrolment was satisfactory and that they had been able to find necessary information about the College via the website and by visiting the College to attend open days, speak to staff and collect written information. Employers regard the mentors' handbooks as providing a very good level of information to support them in their role. Programme handbooks are appreciated by students and provide extensive information on a range of topics including programme aims and learning outcomes, assessments, complaints and appeals, student support and learning resources.

3.6 The College's website is accessible and generally informative for prospective students. In their meeting with the team, a small number of work-based students commented that more information should be available to employers to explain the meaning of qualifications such as foundation degree and higher national diploma, and on the requirement to have a mentor on some programmes. Students confirmed that they are aware of how to make a complaint or appeal. The Director of Higher Education, working with staff in the College's marketing department, has the role of ensuring the accuracy of information on the website and liaising regularly with colleagues within the College and with

University partners. The review team saw evidence of the College working with the University awarding bodies on the development and approval of programme information contained on the website and in printed materials.

3.7 Overall, the team found that the College has effective procedures in place to monitor the production of information about its higher education provision. Students, employers and work-based mentors commented positively on the information they receive from the College. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation in *Part C: Information about higher education provision* of the Quality Code is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

## 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 two of the published handbook. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

3.9 The College provides a range of accessible and trustworthy information. Students and employers confirmed that information is fit-for-purpose. Arrangements are in place within the College and in partnership with University awarding bodies to assure the quality and accuracy of information.

3.10 Overall, the team concludes that information about higher education provision at the College **meets** 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 College's SED refers to embedded quality assurance systems; a dedicated higher education team; support for new staff; and a variety of approaches taken to higher education learning as measures to improve the quality of learning opportunities. The SED highlights a twofold approach to the enhancement of student learning opportunities. First, the expansion of the higher education portfolio in response to progression needs for students and employers. Second, a project to develop a bespoke pedagogy designed for non-traditional vocational learners. The Higher Education Strategy 2013-16 highlights a similar set of strategic aims for higher education. The College's overall Strategic Plan is focused on improving the quality of learning opportunities for the whole College community. It is noted that the most recent meeting of the Higher Education Steering Group that took place shortly before the review visit had agreed that an Higher Education Quality Enhancement Committee should be launched (to include student representation).

4.2 The College has a set of strategic aims that taken together have the potential to demonstrate an approach that would meet the Expectation. The review team scrutinised documentary evidence provided in strategy and planning documents and minutes of meetings, and met with staff to understand enhancement activities and how initiatives were planned and organised at strategic level.

4.3 The team found that the College was able to identify many examples of how it is taking deliberate steps to enhance its higher education provision. This includes the development of new programmes to promote participation and progression opportunities; development of the College's estate to improve learning facilities; the organisation of staff on higher education-only contracts; and implementation of a project on student learning. The College listens and responds to student feedback in a variety of ways and incorporates students' views into the development of enhancement activities. Programme review operates effectively to address and improve learning opportunities.

4.4 There is congruence between the strategic aims of the College and the reporting of the enhancement of student learning opportunities in meetings. The College's pursuit of enhancement is manifest in the range of current initiatives, and this helps the College to develop and reinforce an ethos in its higher education team that expects and encourages the enhancement of student learning opportunities. The Pedagogy in Higher Education project, in particular, has the potential to focus enhancement initiatives once it reaches a stage at which its outcomes can be disseminated across the provision. The College is developing the way in which it is integrating enhancement initiatives across its higher education provision, and the launch of a dedicated committee with suitable terms of reference and action planning could augment this.

4.5 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and that the level of risk is low. It is clear that relevant sections of the Quality Code are being incorporated into the working practices of the College. The College has systems to disseminate good practice and make use of its review mechanisms to identify opportunities for improvement. The organisation of staff on higher education-only contracts has helped to generate a group of staff who hold a common enhancement-led ethos. A range of enhancement initiatives are ongoing that are linked to the College's various strategy documents.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

## Enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.6 The College takes deliberate steps to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities. This is evident in strategic planning, staff commitment to continuous improvement, the implementation of a range of enhancement initiatives and through the quality assurance process.

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

## 5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

### Findings

5.1 The College is very aware of its role within the local and regional community in contributing to economic prosperity, as well as the benefits that higher education can bring to individuals. The focus on student employability manifests itself at the programme design stage, where attention is paid to employer need and students' opportunities on programme completion. The College's Learning and Teaching Strategy has an explicit focus on employability and professionalism.

5.2 All the College's higher education programmes are vocational. The range of foundation degrees reflect the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark* with regard to the integration of work-based and academic learning and the development of vocational skills. Most programmes require students to identify a work-based mentor and to have a suitable workplace setting upon commencement of the programme. The College assists students in finding appropriate work placements if required. Employers and mentors whom the team met all agreed that they found students to be developing the appropriate skills for personal professional development and the benefit of the organisation. The College tracks the employability of its students using the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education survey and through internal data collection.

5.3 The involvement of employers, their representative groups and prospective students, as well as consultation with local authorities, in the design and approval of programmes is a key feature of the College's approach to higher education development. The team heard of numerous examples of employer involvement in the initial development of programmes. For example, the BA (Hons) Early Years Education and BA (Hons) Education and Learning were written in response to the needs of local daycare settings and schools. The College's involvement of employers is commended in the London South Bank University report on the development and validation of the Foundation Degree in Engineering in Electrotechnical Industries.

5.4 Mentors and employers are invited to provide feedback to the College on curriculum currency and the efficacy of assessment instruments, to be involved in periodic programme review, and in some cases to provide feedback on student performance.



## 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 to 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/assuringstandardsandquality](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuringstandardsandquality).

User-friendly explanations of a wide range of terms can be found in the longer **Glossary** on the QAA website: [www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/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.

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© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2014  
Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB

Tel: 01452 557 000  
Email: [enquiries@qaa.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@qaa.ac.uk)  
Website: [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)

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